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12th Street Baptist Church, Gadsden, purchased an empty Kmart store building in 2009 and relocated from Gadsden to the Rainbow City area.

Should you consider church revitalization?

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. In the past five years, have baptisms increased? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Did your church engage in three or more outreach events last year? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Is your Sunday School attendance growing? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. As pastor, is your vision for the church expanding? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Is your worship attendance increasing? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Is your missions giving increasing? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. Are a majority of your deacons under 60 years of age? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. Does your church have active missions organizations? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. Would you describe your church as missional? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. Does your church have an effective process of discovering, training and involving leaders? |

If you answered "no" to four or more questions, you may be a candidate for church revitalization.

REVITALIZE

Photo by Gary Hardin

Churches in decline seek help through conference at 12th Street Baptist

By Gary Hardin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Craig Carlisle knows firsthand the challenges of leading a church in a revitalization effort.

As the pastor of 12th Street Baptist Church, Gadsden, Carlisle led the church to purchase an empty Kmart store building in 2009 and to relocate from 12th Street in Gadsden to the Rainbow

City area several miles away.

Carlisle grew up in 12th Street Baptist, then in 2008, the Etowah Baptist Association church called him as pastor. Carlisle knew then he faced a challenge. The community around the church had changed and the historic 111-year-old church was in decline.

"I didn't come back to 12th Street (Baptist) to bury it. We had to face the truth that in 10 years there would not be a 12th Street Baptist Church," Carlisle said.

Today 12th Street Baptist meets at the newly renovated location. Attendance is up significantly. The church is successfully reaching out and has a long-range plan for additional refurbishing of the Kmart store turned renewed church.

Carlisle's experience with 12th Street Baptist, the relocation and the

revitalization the church has seen recently led him and the church staff to plan a conference that would help other pastors of churches in need of moving out of decline. They called the conference REVITALIZE.

Support and assistance

The event was held Jan. 25-27 at 12th Street Baptist's new location. The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions provided promotional support and LifeWay Christian Resources provided assistance as well.

Malachi O'Brien, associate pastor of prayer and church revitalization at First Baptist Church, Raytown, Mo., opened the conference in prayer.

"Most of our churches are at a point where we need not just prayer, but desperate prayer," O'Brien said. "Because so many of our Southern

Baptist Convention (SBC) churches are either plateaued or declining something has ... to happen. That process begins with prevailing prayer."

Across America, 340,000 churches are in need of revitalization and 7 out of 10 SBC churches are either plateaued or in decline, according to LifeWay Research.

Micah Fries, vice president of LifeWay Research, said, "A majority of evangelical churches in the United States are declining and nominal Christianity in America is in fast decline. A minority of these churches is in freefall and most will not be revitalized. But the majority of declining churches can be turned around."

Fries urged pastors and other church leaders of declining churches (See 'Lean,' page 6)

COMMENT

Called to Be Servants

It takes more than a casual reading of Mark's Gospel to note that every time Jesus told His disciples about His impending death, He followed that announcement with an emphasis on service.

In Mark 8:31, 9:31 and 10:33–34, Jesus plainly speaks of His approaching death. Each time, the next topic treated is Christian service. If Jesus thought teaching people about service was that important, perhaps we should look more closely at what He said.

Mark 8:31 describes the scene in Caesarea Philippi following the apostle Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus tells the disciples He will be rejected, killed and will rise again on the third day. Peter did not want to hear anything about Jesus dying and "rebuked" Jesus. That earned him a scolding like no other disciple ever received.

Jesus called Peter "Satan" and ordered Peter to get behind Him because Peter spoke from his own desires, not from understanding the mind of God.

Then Jesus called together all who would listen to Him and declared, "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." Were these words part of Peter's reprimand? Was Jesus saying Peter still followed his own agenda instead of being sold out to Christ?

Habitual action

We do know that when Jesus called for followers to "deny" themselves and "take up" their crosses He was talking about disciples making a once-and-for-all type decision. That is the meaning of the Greek aorist imperative form of the verbs used. The word "follow" is a present imperative verb meaning habitual action.

Jesus was calling for nothing less than redirecting one's life away from self and toward God as a lifestyle. That is not where Peter was in this episode.

Mark 9:31 occurs on the 27-mile walk back to Capernaum from Caesarea Philippi. Again Jesus tells the disciples about betrayal, death and resurrection. Again the disciples do not understand. Perhaps because after what happened to Peter they are afraid to ask questions. Perhaps because they were preoccupied with other matters.

After reaching Capernaum and settling in for the evening, Jesus asks what the disciples had been talking about on the road. The response is



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

silence. While Jesus had been talking about His impending death and resurrection, the disciples had been arguing about who was the greatest among them. Said another way, with Peter apparently in Jesus' doghouse who would be the new leader?

Jesus already knew what the disciples had been talking about so He calls them together and says, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last and the servant of all." The Greek word translated as servant is "diakonos." It is the word from which we get the word deacon. A "diakonos" was one who performed menial tasks.

Jesus' definition of greatness was different than the disciples. They thought of position, of being first in line. Jesus thought in terms of service to others.

Mark 10:33–34 takes place as Jesus and His followers near Jerusalem. Jesus is more specific now. The chief priests and the teachers of the law are the ones who will condemn Jesus and hand Him over to the Romans to be killed, Jesus says. He tells the disciples He will be mocked, spit upon, flogged and killed but will rise again the third day.

The way of the cross

By now Jesus' followers may have begun to understand what Jesus had been saying. After all this was the third time in recent days He had talked about suffering, dying and rising from the dead on the third day. Some of the disciples were

astonished at what Jesus said. Some were afraid (v. 32).

In the midst of this emotion James and John asked Jesus for the positions of honor when He comes into His glory; one seated on His right hand and the other on His left. Ever since Caesarea Philippi it seems the disciples have been primarily concerned about their own agenda and when one is concerned about a personal agenda, it is hard to hear what the Lord is saying.

As before Jesus responds with the theme of service. He contrasts the way of the world with the way of the cross. The world emphasizes lordship and authority (v. 42). The way of the cross is about being a servant or slave (v. 43). The way of the world is about pomp, power and privilege. The way of the cross is about suffering, rejection, even shame.

Greatness is not about how many people serve you but about how many people you serve. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve," Jesus declared.

On the last evening of His earthly life Jesus made one final effort to drive home the importance of being a servant. John 13 tells the story of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. After the task is completed He asks, "Do you understand what I have done?" In verse 15, He says, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

The reference is not about washing feet. It is about being humble enough to be a "diakonos," a servant of all.

The story closes in verse 17 with Jesus saying, "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." The word blessed is the same word found in the Beatitudes of Matthew 5:3–11. The word also can be translated "happy." Whichever way one understands the word, being blessed or being happy comes when we do what Jesus teaches — when we are servants.

Knowing the truth Jesus teaches is important but happiness or blessedness does not come from knowing all the right answers. For the Christian happiness is found in Christian service for we are called to be servants. 🙏

"Knowing the truth Jesus teaches is important but happiness or blessedness does not come from knowing all the right answers. For the Christian happiness is found in Christian service for we are called to be servants."

For He was teaching His disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him. And when He is killed, after three days He will rise." — Mark 9:31

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"If ye continue in My word, then ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
John 8:31-32

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Set up for the future

Mobile's Hillcrest gives property to VOA in exchange for continuing to worship there

Challenged by financial and membership declines, some congregations choose a merger and some become satellite campuses while others sell to developers or simply close the doors and turn off the lights.

Hillcrest Baptist Church, Mobile, chose none of the above.

Instead the once-thriving church on the city's west side voted to gift its 4.5-acre campus to Volunteers of America (VOA) Southeast in exchange for worshipping there for free and for as long as they choose.

And they'll be worshipping in style after VOA pays off the mortgage, landscapes the campus and performs about \$100,000 in long-overdue renovations.

"We're getting more than a fair shake on this," said Edie Daugherty, a current and founding member of the church.

But none of it has come easily, said Greg Shoemaker, most recent pastor of Hillcrest Baptist.

While the process that led to the VOA deal began more than a year ago, Hillcrest's challenges began long before that — in fact not long after its first full-time pastor, George Mason, departed for Wilshire Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas, in 1989.

Membership reached around 300 at that time but then began to decline steadily as the church saw a series of full- and part-time pastors come and go. Two splits also took their toll, Shoemaker said.

As the years went by, Shoemaker said, the congregation began to realize it faced the dilemma of being in a building far bigger than its now 40-member congregation required.

"It's teaching congregations to separate the church from the real estate — and that's far easier said than done," Shoemaker said.

Hillcrest did finally learn that tough lesson, he said.

"They're a great, Christian, God-loving people but they just had no idea what to do," he said.

It also took time.

"This has been a tough process — and it's been tough on them," he said.

The process also was complex and fraught with uncertainty.

One idea the congregation considered was gifting Hillcrest to another church.

Making the decision

Then there were commercial interests in the roughly \$1.5 million property, including a funeral home.

"But that just didn't seem right," he said. "Everybody said, 'Whatever we do, a church needs to be there.'"



BNG photo

Hillcrest Baptist Church, Mobile, voted to gift its 4.5-acre campus to Volunteers of America Southeast in exchange for worshipping there for free as long as they choose.

Because several small congregations were renting space from Hillcrest, some thought the church could become a ministry incubator.

"But the problem was we would need a property manager to use the space and do a lot of renovations," he said. That wasn't affordable.

Then VOA expressed interest and eventually offered the all-expenses-paid deal. For a congregation with about a \$90,000 a year budget, saving \$30,000 to \$40,000 in building upkeep annually was a huge gain.

"Now the church can put those dollars into ministry," Shoemaker said. "They're excited."

VOA officials said they are excited too.

The organization will spend the next year renovating the building and preparing the grounds to become its corporate offices for VOA Southeast, which covers Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi.

It also will move its current ministry center and eventually launch its first hands-on ministry center on the property.

VOA, which considers itself a church dedicated to helping other churches, provides services such as housing, senior care and other social services.

Wallace T. Davis, president and CEO of VOA Southeast, said, "I see it adding another dimension to the services we are currently providing."

The organization, which has no similar arrangements with any other churches, has helped just one developing church before. The center will be its first full-blown venture into that kind of ministry, Davis said.

It won't be a simple rental arrangement when ministries are using the Hillcrest site.

In addition to space Davis said he envisions coaches and mentors helping congregations and ministers learn to provide community-based ministries.

The agency also expressed gratitude that Hillcrest's congregation will remain on the site.

Learning through trials

Shoemaker said he learned much from his tenure at Hillcrest, which began in August 2013.

A bivocational pastor who had helped an aging Mississippi congregation gift its building to a younger church, he and Hillcrest members quickly saw their situation as unsustainable.

Hillcrest had only another year to pay off its mortgage and had money in reserves. But membership was dropping.

"It was revitalization or merger or the math would catch up with the congregation," he said.

Shoemaker ended his position at the church after the deal with VOA closed in January.

That's so he can focus on his full-time job in health care administration.

While it was a challenging tenure, he said he's glad the congregation is set up for the future.

"The mood around the church has improved since the uncertainty is gone," he said.

Daugherty said she's been optimistic about the church's future — even when she didn't know what it was.

But she did know all along that any solution the church found would have to involve staying in their building.

"I don't think our congregation could have withstood a transfer anywhere else," she said.

Much of the relief at Hillcrest comes from acceptance of their situation, she added.

"We realized we were never going to be the great big church we once were," Daugherty said. "And now we are looking at what we need to do." (BNG)

'COWBOY code'

Pike Road Cowboy Church encourages attendees to 'come as you are'

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Keith Green started a church in Pike Road in August 2014 and was intentional about selecting the strong cowboy culture in the area. Green's church is the first of its kind in Montgomery County — a cowboy church, utilizing the cowboy culture to preach the gospel.

"Believe it or not there are some folks who still live by the cowboy code, which stands for a lot of the things the Bible teaches everyone to do and live by," Green said. "We simply encourage the cowboy code along with the Word of God."

Pike Road is known for having one of the largest working ranches in the state, so Green knew it was the perfect location for such a church.

So far Pike Road Cowboy Church averages 30 in attendance each Sunday.

"A wise pastor told me many years ago to build your church congregation slowly because gaining a huge crowd very quickly would not mean that all will stick with you," Green said. "We want that steady, consistent growth each week at Pike Road

Cowboy Church and I get calls every week from folks wanting to know about our church and what we do there."

Perhaps as expected, Pike Road Cowboy Church uses Christian country and gospel music in their church services and their church slogan reads, "Come as you are." Despite the name the church isn't restricted to just those who embrace the cowboy lifestyle. Green said they encourage participants to wear whatever they

feel most comfortable in, whether that is a three-piece suit or jeans and boots. They even allow people to wear hats while worshipping.

In fact during warmer months church services at Pike Road Cowboy Church are held outside in a covered area.

Ben Atkinson has been attending the cowboy church for about three months and said he enjoys its welcoming vibe.

"I love the atmosphere.

No one is looking down on the other for what he wears and I also love the cowboy way of thinking," said Atkinson, who has been participating in rodeos for more than two decades. "We need a lot more thinking like that in this world — putting God back into every moment in our lives."



Pike Road Cowboy Church uses Christian country and gospel music in their church services. They encourage attendees to wear whatever they feel most comfortable in, whether that is a three-piece suit or jeans and boots.



Photos courtesy of Keith Green

Green has plans to keep spreading the word about his church around the community and plans to host several rodeo events this year.

"We already plan to host a horse whisperer event in May and a cowboy youth conference in August," Green said. "A lot of our youth rodeo with different associations in the state and we are wanting to work with any of those to reach out to our youth with the gospel. Some folks do outreach with basketball and softball, and we do outreach in the dirt of a rodeo arena."

Pike Road Cowboy Church is an Autauga Baptist Association church and Green strongly credits Bill Morgan, director of missions, with helping to get his church started, along with Fresh Rain Family Worship Center, a church located nearby.

Morgan said, "I'm excited to see how the Lord is using Keith Green to reach the cowboy culture. Keith is beginning a Thursday night Bible study on a farm in (the) Autaugaville area. Fresh Rain, sponsoring Pike Road, has a church planting heart."

Looking to the future

Green said he has plans to continue growing the cowboy church presence in the area through the Bible study.

"We have future plans of starting a cell group in Autauga County which we will call our 'cowboy camp,' and it will be an extension of what we do at Pike Road Cowboy Church," he said. "God has called us to the cowboy culture of the river region and we are here to stay no matter where the ride takes us along the trail." ❧

The Church at Pike Road to launch Feb. 22

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Another new church in the Pike Road area is The Church at Pike Road, which started in July 2014 as a church plant, hosting its first monthly worship service in September of the same year. The church will officially launch Feb. 22 and currently meets at The Fairfield Inn & Suites on Eastchase Parkway. Because the church also is just getting started like Pike Road Cowboy Church (see story this page), Steve Walters, pastor of The Church at Pike Road, said the two churches have been hugely important to one another.

"We are obviously praying for this important new neighbor church," Walters said of the cowboy church. "We have had the opportunity to attend worship with them in an attempt to encour-

age them. However, we have been encouraged by them much more through their warm and welcoming spirit and prayers."

The Church at Pike Road has about 35 regular participants and the church's mission is "To love God and worship Him as we reach and disciple people for Jesus Christ."

"We understand that most agree with the mission we are carrying out and most would likely agree that in some way they are living out this great purpose, but each church looks different. That speaks volumes about the amazing diversity, methodologies and character of God's Church and His desire to call people of every tribe, tongue and nation to Himself," Walters said. "In a nutshell we believe that mission drives our personality." ❧

"God has called us to the cowboy culture of the river region and we are here to stay no matter where the ride takes us along the trail."

**Pastor Keith Green
Pike Road Cowboy Church**

ALABAMA

UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Parker Memorial takes other church under its wing

Initially, Parker Memorial Baptist Church, Anniston, said no. But after prayerfully reconsidering the request of First Baptist Church, DeArmanville, for financial assistance Parker Memorial Baptist voted unanimously to financially come alongside First, DeArmanville, and breathe new life into the church.

Parker Memorial Pastor Mack Amis said the decision to financially and spiritually support the struggling church was carefully thought out and considered with much prayer over the course of seven months.

"We gave three weeks to set aside for prayer and seeking God's will," Amis said, referring to the 14-person team that approved the proposal. "After that everybody had a change of heart and was on board. ... It was really neat."

The DeArmanville location will be called Parker Memorial Baptist Church, DeArmanville campus, and is situated eight miles from its parent church. Amis said the new campus is its own church led by its new pastor, Joey Bentley.

"Financially it's tied to us, so we're all one fellowship but it is its own church," Amis said. "[Bentley] is an associate on Parker Memorial's staff, but his responsibility is to pastor the church. ... The key is he has the resources and the support of our staff."

Along with Bentley, the new campus also includes approximately 35 people from Parker Memorial who are committing to the DeArmanville campus for at least a year for additional leadership and support.

Amis said, "The neatest thing about the whole experience is that First, DeArmanville, had a humble enough spirit that when they needed help they asked for it."

The DeArmanville campus had a launch service Jan. 11 that featured Bentley; Sid Nichols, Calhoun Baptist Association director of missions; and Dale Huff, director of the office of LeadCare and church administration for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. (Maggie Walsh)

Billingsley's Taylor marks 50 years in ministry

In honor of his 50 years in pastoral ministry, Billingsley Baptist Church recognized William Thomas Taylor during a special worship service Nov. 23, 2014.

During the celebration Mark Wakefield presented Taylor with a plaque on behalf of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and Bill Morgan, director of missions for Autauga Baptist Association, presented a plaque on behalf of Gov. Robert Bentley. JT Lloyd, chairman of deacons at Billingsley Baptist, purchased 50 Gideon Bibles in Taylor's honor. Also in attendance were Travis Coleman, Bobby DuBois and Steve Whitehead, among others. The Lowery Quartet performed and a fellowship meal followed the service.

Taylor earned a bachelor's degree from Campbellsville University in Campbellsville, Ky., a master of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., a doctorate from Drew University in Madison, N.J., and took classes through Emory University in Atlanta.

He was ordained in 1964 and served as an Army chaplain for 22 years before retiring in 1996.

Besides serving as pastor of Billingsley Baptist for the last three years, Taylor also has served as pastor of churches in Kentucky, Georgia and Virginia.

He said, "It's a blessing to see how God has taken my life and used it."

"I'm very appreciative of the Cooperative Program and the missionary work that I've been able to do."

He and his wife, Peggy, have two children and four grandchildren. (Neisha Roberts)



TAYLOR

'Threat' to society

Evangelical-Catholic coalition addresses same-sex 'marriage'

In the wake of an interfaith Vatican conference on marriage in November 2014, a coalition of Roman Catholics and evangelicals — including Alabama Baptist Timothy George — has issued a statement calling the legalization of "same-sex 'marriage' a graver threat" to society than either "easy acceptance of divorce" or "widespread cohabitation."

"We must say as clearly as possible that same-sex unions, even when sanctioned by the state, are not marriages," the statement titled "The Two Shall Become One Flesh: Reclaiming Marriage," said. "Christians who wish to remain faithful to the Scriptures and Christian tradition cannot embrace this falsification of reality, irrespective of its status in law."

The statement was written by a consortium of Catholics and Protestants known as Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT), which articulates views shared by Catholics and evangelicals on theology, social issues and public policy. ECT is an initiative of the Institute on Religion and Public Life, an organization founded in 1990 by Catholic social commentator Richard John Neuhaus. The statement will appear online and in print in mid-February.

George, dean of Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, and the only Southern Baptist listed as a member of ECT, said "The Two Shall Become One Flesh" represents three years of work by the group.

Catholics and evangelicals "continue to disagree on lots and lots of issues," George said. Still the members of ECT "felt the complementarity of man and woman in marriage under God" was an issue on which evangelicals and Catholics could present a united witness.

Gay 'marriage' ruling threatens Alabama's ban

For Alabama Baptists, the definition of marriage isn't a debate. As Resolution No. 4 stated during the 2013 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting in Huntsville — "God established the family as the primary and most influential social institution of mankind and ordained that each human family begin only with the marriage of one man and one woman."

That view was upheld when the state approved Amendment 774 of Alabama's Constitution in 2006.

But Federal District Court Judge Callie Granade ruled otherwise. She declared Jan. 23 that marriage laws prohibiting the marriage of same-sex couples violates the due process and equal protection clauses of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

After rejecting the state's arguments for an open-ended stay to delay the ruling until the U.S. Supreme Court hears a same-sex case in June, Granade eventually

agreed to put a 14-day stay on the ruling which expires Feb. 9. Attorney General Luther Strange said the stay allows more time for his office to prepare a stay request to the 11th Circuit Court. He stated in the appeal that he disagreed that the equal protection clause requires states to recognize same-sex "marriage."

"We must say ... that same-sex unions, even when sanctioned by the state, are not marriages."

coalition statement

Among the other members of ECT are Catholics R.R. Reno, editor of *First Things*, and George Weigel, distinguished senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center. Other Protestants are Kevin Vanhoozer of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Robert Gagnon of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Gagnon is among the leading biblical scholars to challenge contemporary assertions that Scripture permits homosexual behavior.

"The Two Shall Become One Flesh" summarizes biblical teaching and historic Christian views on marriage, concluding, "Marriage is a unique and privileged sign of the union of Christ with His people and of God with His creation — and it can only serve as that sign when a man and a woman are solemnly joined together in a permanent union."

Despite the longstanding Christian consensus that marriage is only the union of one man and one woman, "marriage is in crisis throughout the Western world," the statement said. It also said declining marriage rates, sexual promiscuity and the normalization of gay "marriage" all undermine the foundations of society.

But same-sex "marriage" represents a particularly pernicious threat, the statement said.

"The revolution in our marriage and family law, already well advanced, marches under the banners of freedom and equality. But these noble ideals are here gravely misapplied. When society systematically denies the difference between male and female in law and custom, our fundamental dignity is diminished, the image of God within us is obscured, unreality becomes legally established and those who refuse to conform are regarded as irrational bigots," the statement said. (BP)

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Attorney General Luther Strange said the stay allows more time for his office to prepare a stay request to the 11th Circuit Court.

He stated in the appeal that he disagreed that the equal protection clause requires states to recognize same-sex "marriage."

Two cases

Cari Searcy and Kim McKeand, the plaintiffs in the case, said the Alabama law banning same-sex "marriage" prevented the recognition of their 2008 California marriage and Searcy as an adoptive parent to their son, whom McKeand gave birth to in 2005.

On Jan. 27 a second couple, James Strawser and John Humphrey, filed a suit seeking to make Alabama issue them a license citing health and medical reasons.

Granade again found that the couple was not allowed to exercise their fundamental right to marry.

In a letter to Gov. Robert Bentley, Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore said he would "continue to recognize the Alabama Constitution and the will of the people overwhelmingly expressed in the Sanctity of Marriage Amendment." Moore added that "nothing in the U.S. Constitution grants the federal government the authority to redefine the institution of marriage," according to a report on al.com.

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, wrote on ricklance.com, "As Alabama Baptists we will continue to stand for marriage as defined by Scripture."

"As Alabama Baptists we will pray for the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court. ... We also pray for other leaders in government and for those who disagree with us. We will pray for our churches as they continue standing strong in support of the biblical view of marriage." (Neisha Roberts)

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Lean on **GOD**

'Ask God to break you,' Southeastern Seminary's dean says

(continued from page 1)

to make honest assessments. "Too many churches are comfortable in their decline," he said. Fries noted that LifeWay Research has a "Transformational Church Assessment Tool" that provides a church with the ability to assess the health of the congregation, celebrate areas of strength and address areas of concern.

Chuck Lawless, professor of evangelism and missions at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., told conference participants, "In almost every declining or plateaued church is a lost focus on the Great Commission. And the plateau or decline is not the problem, but a symptom of the reasons for the decline. Churches must address these issues."

Lawless also is dean of graduate studies at Southeastern Seminary and serves as global theological education consultant for the International Mission Board.

Lawless believes that church leaders in declining churches must lean on God. "Ask God to break you over the condition of your church," Lawless said.

Matt Rogers, pastor of the The Church at Cherrydale in Greenville, S.C., shared with conference participants: "Getting off the plateau is messy, it's hard and it's costly."

Thom S. Rainer, president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources, also spoke at the conference.

Carlisle urged pastors of churches in need of revitalization to stay the course. "Have courage. Don't allow obstacles to intimidate you or sweep you off course."

Charles Dowdy, pastor of Stowers Hill Baptist Church, Attalla, also in Etowah Association, attended the REVITALIZE conference. He said, "I appreciated the emphasis on prayer and seeking God's direction for our churches. This conference will help me to stay faithful and not to focus so much on problems and obstacles."

Mark Bishop, pastor of Fellowship Baptist Church, Radcliffe, Ky., and former Army Ranger and chaplain, said after REVITALIZE, "I am leaving this conference committed to being faithful to the little things that make a big difference in a church." ☞

For more information or to begin the church revitalization process, call 1-800-264-1225, ext. 263, or email Dale Huff, director of the SBOM's office of LeaderCare and church administration, at dhuff@alsbom.org.

FBC Montgomery to host 'healthy church' workshop

Most church members and church leadership long for a "healthy church" — but many may not know the tools to use to get there.

First Baptist Church, Montgomery, will host "Ministry Workshop: Tips & Tools for a Healthy Church" on Feb. 10 from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

The workshop will share

church health principles, ministry ideas and helpful practices to assist churches in becoming "what God would have them be."

Multiple sessions will be offered featuring speakers Jay Wolf, pastor of First, Montgomery; Chip Colee, the church's minister of music; Kenny Hoomes, associate pastor for spiritual maturity/senior adults

at First, Montgomery; and other church staff.

Wolf said of the workshop, "We are simply sharing our ministry recipes that have produced some good Kingdom fruit to potentially help the Lord's work and workers."

To register, visit www.alsbom.org or www.montgomeryfbc.org. (TAB)

Former Highland Park secretary pleads guilty

Former Highland Park Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals, financial secretary Deborah Mansell pleaded guilty Jan. 15 to stealing more than \$130,000 from the church from July 2011 to April 2014.

Mansell, 63, faces a sentence of 46 months in jail but could receive probation for the charges that include first-degree theft of property and 20 counts of fraudulent use of a credit card. She also will have to pay back the money.

Mansell used the church credit card as though it were her own and took money from line items in the church budget in order to hide the transactions she was making.

She was arrested July 16, 2014. (TAB)

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Carl Watson Wasden



WASDEN

Antioch West Baptist Church, Greenville

Butler Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSES: Proverbs 3:5-6; John 10:27-29

FAVORITE HYMN: "How Great Thou Art"

HOBBIES: Hunting quail and pheasant; playing baseball and softball with grandchildren

FAMILY STATUS: Wife of nearly 62 years, Grace; daughters, Sandra Barrett and the late Deborah Atkins; three grandchildren; one great-grandchild

For 48 years, Carl Watson Wasden has either jogged or walked three miles each day. During the same span of time, Wasden — now 84 — has kept a similar pace in the ministry. On Jan. 7 he marked 48 years as pastor of the only church he has ever attended, Antioch West Baptist Church, Greenville. He was called as the church's pastor just a month after going into the ministry. In the 11 years prior to that calling Wasden was both music director and a deacon at Antioch West Baptist. From 1975 to 2000, he served as clerk-treasurer for Butler Baptist Association. A veteran of the Korean War, Wasden worked in civilian life in construction, lumber and building supplies. He received his education from Baptist Bible Institute (now The Baptist College of Florida) in Graceville, Fla.

and ended up in the hospital for three days. I fought it a long time. I loved construction — I still do. Eventually, I ended up in the hospital with almost a nervous breakdown until I surrendered to the ministry. I didn't enter (the ministry) because I wanted to enter it.

Q: What does the ministry demand?

A: It demands all my time, (or) just about. I visit nursing homes, two every week, and hospitals. I go to Montgomery a lot to visit when someone has asked me.

Q: What do you get from the ministry?

A: A blessing. I get a tremendous blessing.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: They have always supported me.

Q: How do you see yourself involved in this in the future?

A: I know my time is limited. I would like to make it to 50 years (in the ministry).

Q: What difference will this ministry make for you in the future?

A: I think that it will give me a satisfied mind, knowing I was able to do it through the years.

Q: What difference has Jesus Christ made in your life?

A: He has changed my thinking and my everything. ☞

Q: What influences in your life pointed you to Christ at the beginning of your faith journey?

A: I always went to church. I never made a decision until I was grown. I wised up one day and saw my condition and my need for Him. In fact, it was after my first child was born that it dawned on me my need for Him. I wasn't wild but I was as lost as I could be. I was 24 (when) Deb, the first child, was born.

Q: When and how were you led into the ministry?

A: That was something I didn't want to do. I fought it

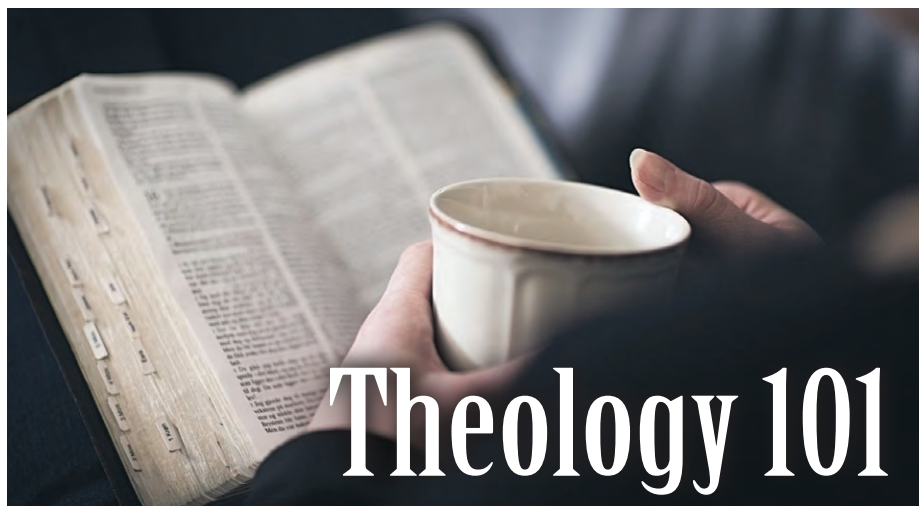
REFLECTIONS

"LET ME PUT IT THIS WAY— THE LORD WANTS YOU TO HAVE A FULL AND ABUNDANT LIFE."



Follow us on **Twitter** @AlabamaBaptist

If you know of a person who should be featured as "Someone You Should Know," send his or her name, a contact number and the reason you think he or she should be featured to: Someone You Should Know, c/o The Alabama Baptist, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209 or news@thealabamabaptist.org.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Images of the Church

The Body of Christ (Part 3 of 3)

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
Special to The Alabama Baptist

The imagery of the Church as the body of Christ calls our attention to the truth that all true believers throughout all time and in all places make up this body. A portion of the body is already with Christ, while a portion is still scattered throughout the whole earth and manifested in local congregations. This metaphor of the Church, which directs us to think about Christ as the Head of the body, also compels us to think of the members who individually compose the body.

Truths about the Church

This week we look more closely at the members who compose the Church. We can turn to 1 Corinthians for guidance in thinking about the analogy of a body as a window through which we glimpse truths about the Church. A reading of that epistle reveals a Church beset with problems and divisions. One of the points of contention had to do with understanding the place and function of spiritual gifts. Disagreement about such gifts became the background against which several aspects of the Church as the body of Christ had to be set forth.

Church unity

One of the truths flowing from the body analogy is the unity of the Church. "For just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12). A healthy body functions as a unit. No part of the body can go its own way and do its own thing without affecting the whole body. A wayward gland or a selfish organ that sought to detach itself and its functions from the whole would work havoc with physical health. Church life at its best is enjoyed when every member chooses to function in harmony with all other members.

Diversity

Another truth emerging from the body image of the Church is that of diversity. Bodily parts or members are certainly not all alike nor do they all

function the same. The circulatory system has its function, while the digestive system has its role. Arms do not work in the same way that legs work. Concerning the Church, it is put like this: "For the body does not consist of one member but of many" (1 Cor. 12:14). Diversity describes the many bodily parts. "If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell?" (1 Cor. 12:17). The ideal for the Church is that of diversity working together in unity.

Inward focus

The Bible attaches importance to our collective unity and fellowship as members of Christ's body. Here the focus is inward. In Christ's body this collective belonging to one another is not merely associating with the other members. It has to do with how genuinely we seek to help one another within the Church. We care about one another because we know if any part of the body is missing or malfunctioning, the whole life of the body is affected.

Outward service

In addition to every member belonging to one another in fellowship we are to share a mutuality of service. Here the focus is outward, having to do with how we together carry out Christ's ministry and mission in the world. We do not live simply to maintain healthy bodies. We maintain healthy bodies so we can function and be of use in the world around us. Healthy churches are not only attending to bodily health, but are striving to be Christ's instruments of compassion and caring in the world. ☞

Jerry Batson, retired associate dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and professor at several schools of religion, is pastor of First Baptist Church, McCalla.



Gathering leftovers

Russellville's Calvary Baptist helps reach community by bagging apples for local food donation groups

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

On Jan. 24, about 75 volunteers gathered in the parking lot of Calvary Baptist Church, Russellville, and spent the morning bagging 8,000 pounds of apples to give to local food donation groups to be distributed in the area. The event — appropriately called an "Apple Drop" — was coordinated by the Society of St. Andrew (SoSA), a faith-based national organization whose mission is to recover extra food at the farm level and distribute it to agencies that are feeding people.

SoSA partners with farmers to identify produce that would be going unused and then use teams of volunteers to collect, organize and distribute that produce to people in need. Named for the disciple Andrew, who brought the little boy to Jesus to feed the 5,000, the organization is inspired by Jesus' words in John 6:12 after the 5,000 had eaten their fill: "When they had all had enough to eat, He said to His disciples, 'Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.'" In 2014 in Alabama alone, SoSA recovered 980,000 pounds of produce — equaling just short of one million servings — with the help of 4,600 volunteers.

"We accomplish our goals with the help of many volunteers and on many levels," said Mary Lynn Botts, North Alabama gleaning coordinator for SoSA. "We do

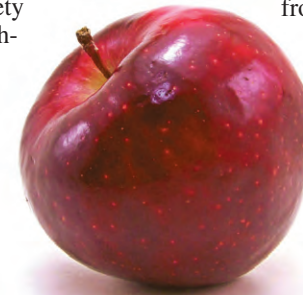
large salvage pick-ups like the 8,000 pounds of apples we bagged on the 24th. We also practice the biblical practice of gleaning, where our volunteers go into farmers' fields and harvest produce that might be otherwise left on the vine or is going to be plowed under."

The Apple Drop was held in Calvary Baptist's parking lot, and included volunteers — many of whom were youth — from Calvary as well as Moulton United Methodist Church; First Baptist Church, Haleyville; First United Methodist Church, Russellville; and Leadership Franklin County Youth. The apples came from Scott's Orchard in Hazel Green.

Tyler Malone, Calvary's minister to students, said, "This event came about when Mary Lynn contacted our church about hosting it. This is the first time we've had distribution at our church and we had a lot of support from not only our church but others in the area. People were happy to make a difference."

Botts said she opted to host this event at Calvary because she's had a strong relationship with Faith Mission Outreach, Russellville, for a couple of years and Faith Mission is supported by Calvary. Her contact at Faith Mission reached out to leaders at Calvary and they were excited to provide the space, many of the volunteers and support in the form of prayers.

The January event at Calvary resulted in donations to 15 area feeding agencies. ☞



To learn more about how to volunteer with SoSA, visit www.endhunger.org.



Photo courtesy of Paula Pounders

Volunteers help sort bags of apples as part of the Society of St. Andrew's Apple Drop held at Calvary Baptist Church, Russellville, on Jan. 24.



Across ALABAMA'S Associations

To submit news items, email news@thealabamabaptist.org or call 205-870-4720, ext. 100, at least three weeks prior to the event.

BIRMINGHAM

► **First Church, Pinson**, will host the Associational Pinewood Derby Race on March 1, 2 p.m. For information call the church at 205-681-9611. David Awtrey is pastor.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Missionary Church, Holly Pond**, will hold a third Sunday night singing Feb. 15, 6 p.m. Tim Frith and Gospel Echoes from Pearl, Miss., will perform. For information call 256-796-5986 or 256-590-4468. Randy Burtram is pastor.

LIMESTONE

► **First Church, Athens**, held a reception in honor and appreciation of Robert Fullerton and his wife, Ann, on Jan. 18. Fullerton retired as director of missions for Limestone Association on Dec. 31, 2014. He began serving May 1, 1999. A resolution of gratitude was presented

to Fullerton and his wife in the morning worship service. Edwin Jenkins is pastor.

CALHOUN

► **Calhoun Association** will sponsor the conference "How to Make Your Church a House of Prayer" on Feb. 12, starting at 9:30 a.m. at the associational office in Anniston. For more information and to register call 256-237-5171 or email publications@cbsbc.org. Sid Nichols is director of missions.

NORTH JEFFERSON

► **Pineywood Church, Gardendale**, will have a Prayer and Praise revival Feb. 22–25. The kickoff will start at 5 p.m. on Sunday and there will be a concert. Services will start at 6 p.m. each night. Speakers will be: Jimmy Moore, pastor of North Gardendale Church, Gardendale, on Sunday; Terry Trivett, pastor of Sharon Heights Church, Birmingham, on Monday; Jon

Ferguson, pastor of First Church, Mount Olive, on Tuesday; and Joey Hill, pastor of High Point Church, Albertville, on Wednesday night. Child care will be provided.

SHELBY

► **Ben Dailey** is the new pastor of **Underwood Church, Montevallo**. He holds a bachelor

degree of science in business administration from Faulkner University in Montgomery and a master of divinity degree in pastoral preaching from Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va. He previously served as pastor of Madedonia South Church, Montevallo. He and his wife, Kathy, have 5 children. ☞



DAILEY

GuideStone releases new edition of its tax guide

The 2015 edition of GuideStone's annual "Tax Return Preparation and Federal Reporting Guide, Ministers' Tax Guide for 2014 Returns" is now available. The handbook provides step-by-step instructions, sample forms and detailed help for active and retired ministers to understand the latest tax laws. The guide also has a special section

about important federal requirements for churches that will be useful for church treasurers and other church leaders.

The guide was written by Richard Hammar, a noted CPA, attorney and widely published author who specializes in legal and tax issues for ministers. The material is edited by GuideStone's compliance staff to

ensure that it addresses in detail the tax issues directly affecting Southern Baptist pastors.

"Each year federal tax law can change and ministers have come to trust in the Ministers' Tax Guide as they prepare their taxes or work with their preparer," said O.S. Hawkins, GuideStone president.

"It is a joy to hear from so many pastors who tell us how thankful they are for this guide and how much it helps them navigate the unique ministerial tax laws. We are blessed to be able to help them with the important task of ensuring that their income tax returns are correct." (GuideStone)

To use the 2015 edition of GuideStone's annual "Tax Return Preparation and Federal Reporting Guide, Ministers' Tax Guide for 2014 Returns," visit www.GuideStone.org/TaxGuide or request a free printed copy by calling 1-888-98-GUIDE (1-888-984-8433).

Retracted testimony

Publisher to pull book after boy says he didn't go to heaven

A Christian publisher will stop selling "The Boy Who Came Back from Heaven" now that the young subject paralyzed in a car crash said the story of going to heaven is not true.

Tyndale House told both NPR and *The Washington Post* that it will withdraw the best-selling 2010 book by Alex Malarkey and his father, Kevin Malarkey.

The publisher made the decision after Alex Malarkey wrote an "open letter" to LifeWay Christian Resources which said, "I did not die. I did not go to heaven." It was posted on the Pulpit and Pen website Jan. 13.

LifeWay issued a statement Jan. 15 in response to an inquiry from Patheos blogger Warren Throckmorton.

"LifeWay was informed this week that Alex Malarkey has retracted his testimony about visiting heaven as told in the book 'The Boy Who Came Back from Heaven,'" said director of communications Martin King. "Therefore, we are returning to the publisher the few copies we have in our stores."

The Malarkey book is one of a spate of best-sellers about and by those who say they have gone to heaven and returned. The best-known is "Heaven is for Real" by Todd Burpo, a No.

1 *USA Today* best-seller, which was turned into a movie.

"The Boy Who Came Back from Heaven" peaked at No. 46 on *USA Today's* list.

According to the publisher's description of the book, "in 2004, Kevin Malarkey and his 6-year-old son, Alex, suffered a horrific car accident. The impact from the crash paralyzed Alex — and medi-

cally speaking, it was unlikely that he could survive. 'I think Alex has gone to be with Jesus,' a friend told the stricken dad. But two months later, Alex awoke from a coma with an incredible story

to share. Of events at the accident scene and in the hospital while he was unconscious. Of the angels that took him through the gates of heaven itself."

But in his open letter Alex Malarkey wrote: "I said I went to heaven because I thought it would get me attention. When I made the claims that I did, I had never read the Bible. People have profited from lies and continue to. They should read the Bible, which is enough. The Bible is the only source of truth. Anything written by man cannot be infallible."

He also said, "Please forgive the brevity (of the letter), but because of my (medical) limitations I have to keep this short." (RNS, BNG)

"The Bible is the only source of truth."

Alex Malarkey

Ministry Tips



BEING CHRISTIAN IN CONFLICT

By Dale Huff

Director, LeaderCare & Church Administration
Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

Nothing will test your obedience to Christ like conflict. A person may normally be a smiley-faced, calm, gracious, Sunday-School-teacher-quality Christian until serious conflict appears. Then there can be drastic changes — a smile

becomes a frown and words become harsh and sharp-edged. There may never be a more challenging time to behave Christianly than when in the fracas of conflict.

Anger bubbles up easily in conflict and one angry eruption can neutralize a lifetime of sparkling testimony. One stormy business meeting can offset a decade of a church's good conduct grades. Do you

want a tough test to measure your spiritual health? Try conflict.

When having a potentially volatile meeting, it may be wise to confer with an objective outsider to anticipate what might occur and to plan a peacemaking response. Do what is wise and right to avoid that unguarded occasion when, in a fit of fury, you say or do something that will keep you

forever ashamed of the time when you violated Christian principles and dishonored the Lord.

Some good Bible verses to put in your Christian Conflict Management Toolbox: Matthew 18:15, Romans 12:18, Matthew 5:23–24. Again, nothing will test your obedience to Christ like conflict. Ace the test. ☞

Alabama Baptist Convention **State Board of Missions**



ONE MISSION: The Great Commission **ONE PROGRAM:** The Cooperative Program **MANY MINISTRIES:** Great Commission Ministries

news and features about missions and ministries from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions | (800) 264-1224 | www.alsbom.org

February Is Alabama Baptist Disaster Preparedness Month

We take weather seriously in our state. Alabama has always been known as part of "tornado alley." We are also a coastal state. Hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico are annual concerns for us.

Mobile, and Alabama Baptists have generously supported the offering since.



By Rick Lance
State Missionary

Following the devastating tornadoes that struck Alabama in 2011, Alabama Baptists wisely saw the need to launch an annual state disaster relief offering to help ensure that funds would be available year-round to assist disaster victims. Prior to that time, it wasn't unusual for a major hurricane or a tornado strike to empty our reserves completely.

The Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Offering was approved by messengers to the 2011 meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention in

Each year February is being promoted as Alabama Baptist Disaster Preparedness Month. Of course, disasters know no season, but this month-long emphasis will allow churches to have the flexibility to focus on disaster relief ministry in a variety of ways.

It would be a good time for individuals, families and churches to make sure that they have necessary resources on hand in the event of a disaster and to take time to pray for Alabama's disaster relief ministry. It also gives every church the opportunity to choose a Sunday in

February to take up a disaster relief offering. The 2015 offering goal is \$200,000. Money collected will help purchase much-needed equipment and provide affected churches and individuals with assistance. Alabama Baptists have been generous in the past during weather-related disasters which come our way. The offering is a way for us to stay prepared for such events.



At www.sbdr.org/beprepared, you'll find several downloadable resources, including a church preparedness plan, a family preparedness plan and videos to help you promote the disaster relief offering. Posters, offering envelopes, bulletin inserts and other promotional materials are also available.

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief, under the capable leadership of State Missionary Mel Johnson, is a pacesetter in Southern Baptist Convention life and boasts an army of 7,000 trained volunteers ready and willing to serve in the aftermath of a disaster. It is my prayer that Alabama Baptists will take

advantage of this month-long opportunity to prepare ourselves and our churches

to not only weather the next disaster, but also to respond to its victims with Christlike care and compassion.

For more information visit www.sbdr.org/beprepared.

Proverbs 1:7

Together
@the springs
2015

a marriage event presented by
Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center with support
from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

February 27 - 28, 2015 (with additional night extended stay option available)

We hope you and your spouse make plans to join us for a weekend away together at Shocco Springs. If you are newly married, married for many years, struggling in your marriage or you are in a marriage that is fully grounded in Christ, there will be something for you at this event!

For registration or more information visit
www.togetheratthesprings.org or
call Shocco Springs at 1-800-280-1105.



ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Gospel

MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

You're invited to join God in church planting across Alabama and beyond. The year 2015 holds much promise of being a time when many souls come to Christ through new church starts. We are pleased to invite you to the following training opportunities:

"Alabama Church Planting Basics"
and "Churches Planting Churches"
(courses taught simultaneously)

TWO DATES/TWO LOCATIONS:

~ Thursday through Saturday,

March 5-7: Morningview Baptist Church, 125 Calhoun Rd., Montgomery

~ Thursday through Saturday,

April 9-11: The Baptist Church at McAdory, 4954 Eastern Valley Rd., McCalla

EACH LOCATION WILL OFFER TWO TRACKS TO CHOOSE FROM:

1 ALABAMA CHURCH PLANTING BASICS FOR CHURCH PLANTERS AND PLANTING TEAMS:

the ABCs of what it takes to plant a church from the planter and his team's perspective. We encourage every planter to attend and bring as many team members as possible (*if possible*). Participants will understand the structure on which to hang their vision, values, focus group, strategy, etc. Sessions will begin on Thursday at noon and conclude on Saturday at 4:30 p.m. All funded church planters are required to

2015
CHURCH PLANTING TRAINING EVENTS

attend all sessions. Meals and training materials are provided, therefore pre-registration is required. Registration is only \$25 for SBC-affiliated participants. Each participant is responsible for their own hotel accommodations if traveling from outside of the area. Non-SBC

participants are welcome to attend for \$100 per person. Register at alsbom.org/churchplantingbasics

2 CHURCHES PLANTING CHURCHES:

designed to examine the values underlying the rationale for becoming a sending church — to lead your church to support a new church plant. Then the six steps necessary to make this a reality will be taught in detail. This training is designed for a church that is seeking to learn how to start a new church or churches from the "sending" church perspective. Many people are fearful of the idea of planting a church because they're uncertain about how to approach the process. The information in this training will dispel anxiety and give a game plan for Kingdom success. Sessions will begin on Thursday at noon and conclude on Saturday at 4:30 p.m. Meals and training materials are provided, therefore pre-registration is required.

Each of the trainings runs parallel. Participants must select which training before beginning the seminar. A \$25 non-refundable registration fee is required to register for either of these events. Register at alsbom.org/churchesplantingchurches

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Andrea Towns at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 244, or (334) 613-2244, atowns@alsbom.org.

WHY I BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

I believe the Cooperative Program is the best



program to support missions since the Day of Pentecost. The Cooperative Program allows churches of every size to work together to carry out the Great Commission. The Cooperative Program allows all of our churches to participate in our effort to reach our world for Christ. It will be a step

backward if our churches move to a societal plan for giving. I urge all Alabama Baptists to support the Cooperative Program. — **Sammie Reid**, pastor, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Warrior

For more information about the Cooperative Program, please contact State Missionary Jim Swedenburg at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 283, or (334) 613-2283, jswedenburg@alsbom.org.

Royal Ambassador CONGRESS

Friday - Saturday, March 27-28, 2015, Camp Hobbs (15 miles north of Montgomery)

- **FRIDAY NIGHT:** Campout. Many good areas for each church to find a place. Missionary displays.
- **SATURDAY:** State R.A. Pinewood Derby Race. 21 Field Events & Competition: climbing wall, archery, air rifles, football throw, baseball throw, Frisbee throw, tomahawks, hammer throw, running relay, sprints, log saw, etc.

Cost: \$5 per person participation fee. \$2 per person tent camping. \$5 per person cabin. \$4 per person breakfast. \$4 per person lunch. (No participation fee for event volunteers.) Download registration form at alsbom.org/RACongress

For more information, please contact State Missionary Steve Stephens at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 268, or (334) 613-2268, sstephens@alsbom.org.



WHAT IF ...

- ... the mission team from your church was detained by a foreign government?
- ... a volunteer on your team was held by criminals in a foreign country?
- ... a natural disaster interrupted travel plans for your team?
- ... a volunteer became seriously ill or injured on the field?

ALL of these situations have occurred with Alabama Baptist teams!

We can help. Crowning Shield has you covered!

- ... in the event of natural disaster, health problem, government detention or criminal act.

Crowning Shield is offered to all who complete Faith Focused Safety Training.

UPCOMING TRAINING EVENTS:

- February 12**, Baptist Building, 2001 E. South Blvd., Montgomery
- March 19**, Liberty Park Baptist Church, Birmingham
- May 14**, Covington Association Office, Andalusia

LEVEL B (for team leaders):
April 20-22, Baptist Building, Montgomery
Register online at www.a18c.org/ffst

FOCUS on One Mission

ALABAMA BAPTIST
DISASTER RELIEF OFFERING
Helping Us Help Others

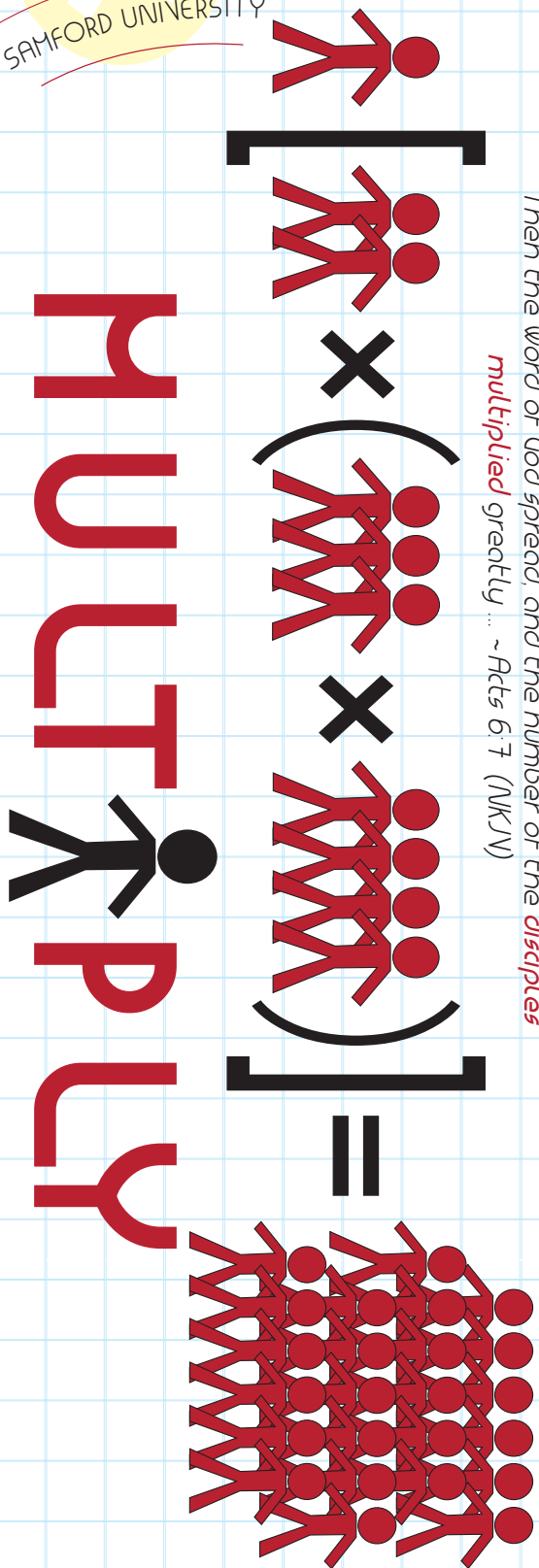
**FEBRUARY IS
ALABAMA
BAPTIST
DISASTER
PREPAREDNESS
MONTH**



For resources, visit
www.sbdr.org/beprepared
or call 1.800.264.1225, ext. 273.

youthevangelismconference
JULY 24-25, 2015
SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

WWW.ONEMISSIONSTUDENTS.ORG/YEC

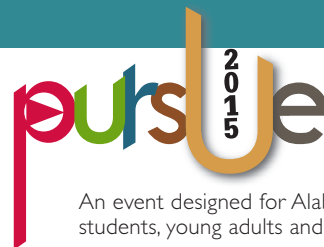


PURSuing AN INTENTIONAL, AUTHENTIC, CHRIST-CENTERED

LIFE Together

February 20-21

Westwood Baptist Church, Alabaster



An event designed for Alabama college students, young adults and their leaders

FEATURING

YEC

MUSIC

Unhindered

YEC

Chip Lutser
Ed Newton
Scott Kindig
Bryan Drake
Sarah & Caleb

this event is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the cooperative program.

FEATURING:

Mike Glenn
Jimmy Needham
Willie Alexander
Tracie Griggs
Matt Kerlin
Pat & Suzanne Powell

This resource is made possible by gifts from Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

Registration, Schedule and Event Information at www.onemissionstudents.org/pursue
\$25 per person includes conference, resources and Chick-fil-A lunch on Saturday

FOCUS on One Mission

FREE ADMISSION

2015 State Evangelism Conference

February 23-24

First Baptist Church,
Trussville

Monday at 6 p.m.
Tuesday at 9 a.m.

Speakers: Charles Carter, Robert Smith, Josh Lancaster, Dan Garland, Herb Reavis, Scott Dawson, Thomas Hammond, Kevin Hamm

Special Music: Daniel Crews with additional worship leadership by choirs from FBC Trussville and Gardendale FBC

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Amy Nelson at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 258, or (334) 613-2258, anelson@alsbom.org.



Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions
This event is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

GREAT COMMISSION PRAYER EVENTS

West Alabama Great Commission Prayer Conference

March 5-6

Fayette First Baptist Prayer rally on Thursday, 6:30-9 p.m.

Pastor/staff prayer gathering on Friday, 9 a.m.-noon

LEADERS: Greg Frizzell, John Franklin, Claude King and Elaine Helms

NO COST TO ATTEND

(Sponsored by several west Alabama associations)

Prayer Rally

March 6-7

Circlewood Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa

Prayer rally on Friday, 6:30-9 p.m.

Morning session on Saturday, 8 a.m.-noon

LEADERS: Greg Frizzell, John Franklin, Claude King and Elaine Helms

NO COST TO ATTEND

(Sponsored by Tuscaloosa County Baptist Association)

Unlimiting God: A Prayer Experience

March 13-14

Woodmont Baptist Church, Florence

Friday session, 6-9 p.m.

Saturday session, 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

FEATURED SPEAKER: Richard Blackaby

COST: \$10 per person (includes registration, materials and snacks)

(Sponsored by Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association)

For more information, visit www.alsbom.org/leadership.

FOCUS on One Mission

Cruisin' Through Life with the 66 Books of the Bible!

53RD ANNUAL Conference

Shocco Springs
March 8-11,
2015

Theme: *The Well*
(Isaiah 58:11)



Cost: \$276 per person (includes three nights double-occupancy room, eight meals and program fees).

Conference Speaker: Jodi Burbank, Westwood Baptist Church, Alabaster

Worship Leader: Libby Stokes Woolwine, Abingdon, Va.

For conference updates, check online www.alabamabaptistsecretaries.com.

2015 Regional and State Bible Drills

REQUIRED ONLINE REGISTRATION:
WWW.ALSBOM.ORG/
BIBLEDRIILLANDSPEAKERSTOURNAMENT
BY APRIL 13, 2015, FOR REGIONAL AND
STATE DRILLS

2015 REGIONAL BIBLE DRILLS

North Regional: East Highland Baptist Church, Hartselle • Thursday, April 16, 2015. Sign in begins at 3:30 p.m., drills begin at 4 p.m.

South East Regional: Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Dothan • Thursday, April 16, 2015. Sign in begins at 3:30 p.m., drills begin at 4 p.m.

North Central Regional: First Baptist Church, Pelham • Sunday, April 19, 2015. Sign in begins at 1:30 p.m., drills begin at 2 p.m.

South Central Regional: Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery • Sunday, April 19, 2015. Sign in begins at 1:30 p.m., drills begin at 2 p.m.

South West: College Park Baptist Church, Mobile • Monday, April 20, 2015. Sign in begins at 3:30 p.m., drills begin at 4 p.m.

West Central: First Baptist Church, Livingston • Monday, April 20, 2015. Sign in begins at 3:30 p.m., drills begin at 4 p.m.

North East: Meadowbrook Baptist Church, Oxford • Tuesday, April 21, 2015. Sign in begins at 3:30 p.m., drills begin at 4 p.m.

2015 STATE BIBLE DRILL AND SPEAKERS TOURNAMENT

April 25, 2015, Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery. Registration begins at 12:30 p.m., drills begin at 1 p.m.

For more information, contact Ministry Assistant Nancy Henderson, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 313, or (334) 613-2313, nhenderson@alsbom.org.

MINISTRY WORKSHOP:

Tips & Tools for a Healthy Church

Tuesday, **February 10, 2015**

9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

First Baptist Church, Montgomery

A time of sharing church health principles, ministry ideas and best practices to assist churches in becoming what God would have them be. Sessions to be led by the staff of First Baptist Montgomery including Pastor Jay Wolf, Chip Colee and Kenny Hoomes.



Jay Wolf

COST IS \$10 per person which includes lunch, snacks and all materials.

REGISTRATION & INFO:
www.alsbom.org/tipsandtools

FOCUS on One Mission

Senior Adult

Singin'



FOUR LOCATIONS IN 2015:

- March 17:** Skyland Blvd. Baptist Church, 3320 Skyland Blvd. E., Tuscaloosa
- March 19:** First Baptist Church, 223 Church St., Rainsville
- September 15:** Parkway Baptist Church, 766 E. University Dr., Auburn
- September 17:** First Baptist Church, 18200 Highway 104 W., Robertsdale

"... speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music from your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ..."

EPHESIANS 5:19-20 (HCSB)

Come celebrate the Lord together!

Frank Jones will be there to lead us as we sing hymns and worship God. The singin' begins at 10 a.m. and ends with lunch.

COST: \$10 per person (includes lunch)

REGISTRATION:
www.alsbom.org/senioradultsingin

For more information, please contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, emitchell@alsbom.org.

State Church Library Workshop



Friday - Saturday, March 20-21, 2015
Shocco Springs

THEME: "Celebrating 50 Years: Alabama Church Library Organization"

GUEST AUTHOR: Don Brown

REGISTRATION: 1-800-280-1105 or www.shocco.org

For more information, please call 1-800-264-1225: State Missionary Mike Jackson, ext. 210, or (334) 613-2210, mjackson@alsbom.org; Ministry Assistant Debbie Dickey, ext. 218, or (334) 613-2218, dddickey@alsbom.org.

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission **ONE PROGRAM:** The Cooperative Program **MANY MINISTRIES:** Great Commission Ministries

Spring Senior Adult Retreat



Shocco Springs
Monday through Wednesday,
April 13-15, 2015

As you plan for spring cleaning and planting, begin planning also to attend the Spring Senior Adult Retreat at Shocco Springs. Come away for worship, reflection, rest, fun and some great fellowship as you make new friends and reunite with others. You can leave refreshed, renewed and ready to continue the work and mission God has set before you. The retreat will begin with lunch on Monday and conclude with lunch on Wednesday.

Cost per person: depends on choice of lodging

Registration: 1-800-280-1105

For more information, please contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, emitchell@alsbom.org.

Renew

a day away
with friends

February 28, 2015
9:00am - 3:00pm

Heritage Baptist Church
Montgomery, Alabama

\$35 per person (includes lunch)
Registration deadline: February 19

For more information
visit alabamawmu.org/renew
email dwatkins@alsbom.org
or call 800.264.1225 ext. 226

#renew215



Bible study with

Kim Hardy



worship with

Shelly E. Johnson

a gathering for girls in grades 7 through 12

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\$35 PER PERSON
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 - Inspirational missionary testimonies
 - Practical life break-outs
 - Motivating missions & ministry break-outs
- ...all led by women!

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with
Kelly
Needham



WORSHIP
with
Hannah
Fain



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For more information: alabamawmu.org/complete
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#complete15



2015 Children's Missions Explosion

February 14, 2015 - Hillcrest Baptist, Enterprise
Liberty Baptist, Chelsea

February 21, 2015 - Chapel Hill Baptist, Northport
Mt. Zion Baptist, Huntsville

- Meet missionaries
- Get a taste of new cultures
- Experience ways to share God's glory with the world

As we focus on South Asia, we'll explore together how we can declare, "It's all for Him!"

Girls and boys,
grades 1-6, and
their leaders

**GREAT FOR MISSIONS
GROUPS (GA, CIA, RA)**

\$10 per person
T-shirts - \$10

FOR MORE INFO:
alabamawmu.org/cme
800.264.1225 ext. 226
dwatkins@alsbom.org

**REGISTER EARLY!
SPACE IS LIMITED!**



All 4 Him

#cme15

Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

Midwestern Seminary receives \$500,000 grant

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — A \$500,000 grant will help Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and College in Kansas City, Mo., launch a new program enabling students to earn a bachelor's degree and master of divinity degree within five years.

The Kern Family Foundation is providing the grant for Midwestern's new "Accelerate" five-year B.A./M.Div. program.

Midwestern President Jason Allen voiced gratitude to the foundation "for such generosity in assisting Midwestern College to provide an avenue for its students to graduate with high-level theological education in a significantly reduced amount of time."

"The legwork for this grant was accomplished by John Mark Yeats, our undergraduate dean," Allen added.

Yeats noted that the Kern family has expressed concerns about the time it takes for a pastor to receive training — typically four years for an undergraduate degree and three to four more years for an M.Div. — which can mire ministerial candidates in debt and keep them from serving effectively once in the field.

Other benefits for Accelerate students, Yeats said, include significant financial savings "because of the condensed program format — allowing them to jump more quickly into front-line ministries like church planting and missions."

The program is residential, with all coursework taking place on the Kansas City campus.

ERLC to address racial issues at leadership summit

NASHVILLE — The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) will seek to equip Christians to apply the gospel on national conversations about race at its 2015 Leadership Summit titled "The Gospel and Racial Reconciliation." The summit will take place March 26–27 in Nashville.

Some of the summit speakers include: Trip Lee, hip-hop artist, author of "The Good Life" and founder of Built to Brag in Atlanta; Derwin L. Gray, pastor of Transformation Church, Indian Land, S.C.; K. Marshall Williams Sr., president of the National African American Fellowship of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and pastor at Nazarene Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Pa.; Thabiti Anyabwile, assistant pastor for church planting at Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, D.C.; Russell Moore, ERLC president; Fred Luter, first African-American president of the SBC and pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, La.; and Frank S. Page, president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee.

Keynote addresses, panels and breakout sessions will focus on how churches can reflect the united kingdom of Christ and be a beacon of hope, clarity and restoration to a culture navigating complex questions about race.

The main sessions will be live-streamed on erlc.com. Follow the conversation on Twitter by following @ERLC and #erlcs Summit.

LifeWay moves forward with possible sale of property

NASHVILLE — Based on the positive results of a feasibility study, LifeWay Christian Resources is moving forward with the possible sale of its Nashville property.

In mid-2014, LifeWay announced a preliminary study of the feasibility of selling the ministry's 14.5-acre campus in downtown Nashville that would allow the organization to relocate to facilities better suited to LifeWay's future.

"The results of the study confirmed there was interest favorable enough for us to take another step," said Thom S. Rainer, president and CEO of LifeWay.

LifeWay has had conversations with local, regional and national entities about selling the property and accepted offers through mid-January.

"We'll then begin an involved process of studying, comparing and considering any offers we receive," Rainer said.

LifeWay's downtown campus includes nine buildings with more than 1 million square feet of office, warehouse and parking space.

If the property does sell, Rainer said his "very strong preference is for the ministry to stay in downtown Nashville." LifeWay is looking at several pieces of property in the downtown area as potential sites to build a new building. ☞

Ranked No. 1

Survey finds Birmingham most Bible-minded city in US

When it comes to U.S. cities that embrace the Bible, Birmingham tops the list. A newly released ranking from American Bible Society finds Birmingham residents have the highest combined levels of regular Bible reading and expressed belief in the Bible's accuracy. Another Alabama city ranking high on the list of America's Most Bible-Minded Cities was Huntsville, coming in at No. 12.

The news was not quite so positive for some American cities. Topping the list of America's least Bible-minded cities is Providence, R.I./New Bedford, Mass., metropolitan area for the third consecutive year.

American Bible Society's Bible-Minded Cities survey, conducted by Barna Group, uses Nielsen media market rankings as a proxy for city size.

The third annual study found that while the Bible Belt and smaller cities continue to perform strongly in Bible friendliness, East Coast cities and large cities continue to bring up the rear. While ranked No. 1 in Bible mindedness, Birmingham is the 44th largest media market in America. Just one of the top 10 Bible-minded cities ranks among the top 25 cities by media market. Knoxville — which ranked No. 1 in the 2013 Bible-Minded Cities' list — dropped out of the top 10 in 2015, coming in at No. 11. This year the largest city in America, New York City, entered the list's bottom 10 for the first time at No. 91.

To be considered Bible minded, respondents must state that they had read the Bible in the past seven days and that they believe strongly in the accuracy of the Bible. Nationally only 27 percent of the population was considered Bible minded.

The 2014 rankings from the study show many differences from usage statistics for American Bible Society's Bible search engine, Bibles.org. Louis-

ville, Ky., registered the largest number of searches on Bibles.org while Syracuse, N.Y., registered the fewest searches of any of the top 100 markets.

"Online rankings consider only one data point — Bible search behavior — while American Bible Society's Bible-Minded Cities survey examines both behavior and attitudes about the Bible to harvest a more authentic survey of each city's population. This provides a more three dimensional view of a city's Bible mindedness," said Andrew Hood, managing director of communications at American Bible Society.

The top 10 most Bible-minded cities are (previous year's ranking): 1. Birmingham (2) 2. Chattanooga, Tenn. (1) 3. Tri-Cities, Tenn. (n/a) 4. Roanoke/Lynchburg, Va. (3) 5. Shreveport, La. (5) 6. Springfield, Mo. (4) 7. Jackson, Miss. (9) 8. Charlotte, N.C. (6) 9. Greenville/Spartanburg, S.C./Asheville, N.C. (7) 10. Little Rock, Ark. (8)

The 10 least Bible-minded cities are (previous year's ranking): 91. New York City (89) 92. Phoenix, Ariz. (93) 93. Buffalo, N.Y. (95) 94. Hartford/New Haven, Conn. (94) 95. Las Vegas, Nev. (90) 96. Cedar Rapids, Iowa (96) 97. San Francisco, Calif. (97) 98. Boston, Mass. (98) 99. Albany, N.Y. (99) 100. Providence, R.I./New Bedford, Mass. (100)

'Starting point'

"This study provides us with a great starting point to understand where people are interacting with Scripture and what their views are of the Bible," Hood said. "We want to help people continue to grow their engagement with the Bible. Ultimately we want people to know that, whether they live in one of the most or least Bible-minded cities, the Bible can speak to their needs and challenges and help them make sense of life." (American Bible Society)

To be considered Bible minded, respondents must state that they had read the Bible in the past seven days and that they believe strongly in the accuracy of the Bible.

Judson makes top 10 list of safest colleges in US

Judson College, a private Christian college for women in Marion, has one of the safest campuses in the United States.

Using data from the Office of Postsecondary Education and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, College Factual ranked Judson as the third safest college in America. These findings, which were based on crime reports on campus, in the surrounding town or city, as well as in the surrounding region, are reported in *USA Today's* "10 of the Safest College Campuses in the U.S."

Only college in Southeast

Judson was the only college in the Southeast to make the article's top 10 list.

Katie Cooper, a Judson senior

from Loxley, said the sense of security on campus "helps make learning more achievable" for her. "I'm not worried about someone physically harming me here," she said.

Judson freshman Katie Owens, from Hanceville, added, "I definitely feel that our security staff goes out of their way to make sure we're safe. Feeling safe at Judson has definitely helped me adjust to college life more quickly."

Susan Jones, vice president and dean of students, believes Judson's close-knit community atmosphere helps contribute to the college's outstanding safety record.

"I think it makes our students watch out for each other in a way

that other college students don't," she said. "I also think it's why our staff members go the extra mile to help students feel safe."

Judson President David E. Potts also noted the outstanding support of the Marion community in keeping students safe.

'Deeply grateful'

"We are deeply grateful for the support we receive from our neighbors in Perry County as we seek to maintain a safe educational environment at Judson College. Of particular note is the fine work of our local law enforcement agencies and personnel, who are extraordinarily willing to help guarantee the safety of our students, faculty and staff." (Judson)

'The struggle ... is a long one'

As abortion rates decline, ERLC President Moore says there is still 'much to be done'

The number and rate of abortions continue to decline as America passes the anniversary of Roe v. Wade and the sanctity of human life observances that mark the ruling.

Meanwhile Planned Parenthood, the country's largest abortion chain, maintains its strong share of the diminishing market.

Millions of pro-life Americans, including many in Baptist churches, observed Sanctity of Human Life Sunday on Jan. 18. The annual observance on the Southern Baptist Convention's denominational calendar is one of many responses by pro-lifers to the Supreme Court's decision Jan. 22, 1973, that legalized abortion nationwide and has resulted in the deaths of an estimated 57 million unborn babies.

The latest statistics encourage efforts to educate Americans, help pregnant women and promote pro-life laws to reduce and end legal abortion.

The annual report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) showed the abortion rate dropped in 2011 to 13.9, the lowest rate since the lethal procedure was legalized 42 years ago. The rate is the number of abortions per thousand women ages 15 to 44. The federal agency released its statistics in late November 2014, reporting a total of 730,322 abortions from the states that cooperate with the CDC.

The Guttmacher Institute provides more thorough statistics and showed in its most recent report a total of 1.06 million abortions in 2011, the most recent year for which numbers are available.

For both the CDC and Guttmacher, the latest reports demonstrate the dramatic decline in the number of abortions from 1990, when the CDC reported 1.4 million and Guttmacher 1.6 million.

Southern Baptists' lead ethicist Russell Moore commented on the rate of pro-life progress, saying, "The struggle for human rights for the unborn is a long one."

'Progress on some fronts'

"We have made progress on some fronts but there is much to be done," said Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. "For Christians this is a matter of more than just culture and law. It's a matter of whether we will see the face of Christ in our unborn neighbors and in their mothers."

Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) continues to

resist the declining abortion rate.

PPFA's latest annual report issued in late December 2014 showed its affiliates performed 327,653 abortions during the period from October 2012 to September 2013. That was an increase of nearly 500 from the previous year. PPFA also distributed 1.44 million "emergency contraception" kits, a decrease of about 150,000 over the previous year, with the "morning-after" pill designed to cause abortion.

Planned Parenthood reported only 1,880 adoption referrals, a decline of more than 300 from the previous year.

Institutional bias

Randall O'Bannon, the National Right to Life Committee's director of education and research, commented on PPFA's report, "[I]n a nutshell, even as the culture around them grows increasingly uncomfortable with their signature product, Planned Parenthood is as committed to abortion as it ever was and is looking for ways to defend and expand its abortion empire."

The report shows Planned Parenthood's "clear institutional bias" in favor of abortion, O'Bannon said. Its breakdown of services for pregnant women, he said, is prenatal care, 5.4 percent; adoption, 0.5 percent;

and abortion, 94.1 percent.

"For all their talk about 'choice' and allowing women to make their own determinations with regard to their [pregnancies], the services such women receive at PPFA clinics are decidedly one-sided," O'Bannon said.

In other news about abortion: A total of 60 abortion clinics in the country closed permanently during 2014, according to a report by the pro-life organization Operation Rescue. Of those, 47 were surgical centers and 13 were facilities that provided only medication abortions. Another 13 clinics closed but were allowed to re-open during the year. Since 1991 the number of surgical abortion centers has declined by 75 percent, from 2,176 to 551, Operation Rescue reported.

Louisiana gained the ranking as the country's most pro-life state for the sixth consecutive year, Americans United for Life (AUL) announced Jan. 13. Following Louisiana in the top 10 states for protecting unborn children and their mothers through public policy were (in order): Mississippi, Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, Indiana, North Dakota, Nebraska and Texas. AUL ranked Washington as the least protective state for the sixth consecutive year. The next nine least protective states were

(in order): Vermont, Oregon, California, New Jersey, Hawaii, New York, Montana, Nevada and Connecticut. States have enacted almost 220 laws in the last four years to protect women and unborn children, according to AUL.

New bill on abortion

A new approach to restricting abortion was unveiled Jan. 14 when the Unborn Child Protection From Dismemberment Abortion Act was introduced in the Kansas Senate. The National Right to Life Committee predicted it "will transform the landscape of abortion policy" in America. Kathy Ostrowski, Kansas for Life's legislative director, said, "With the discussion about and passage of this bill the public will see that dismemberment abortions brutally

and unacceptably rip apart small human beings who have all of their internal organs and who have perfectly formed fingers and toes."

Abortion training debuted on the Internet in October 2014. The University of California at San Francisco offered a free, six-week class to train future doctors how to perform the procedure. Nearly 3,000 people signed up for it. Donna Harrison, the executive director of the American Association of Pro-life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, said many doctors don't refuse to do abortions because of a lack of education. "Any OB-GYN knows how to empty a uterus at any stage," she said. "It's just that most OB-GYNs recognize that there are two patients." (BP)

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Reverse Mortgages to Change

By Jimmy Dixon

Starting March 2, 2015, FHA will require a credit analysis and proof of a certain amount of income for anyone applying for a reverse mortgage. They've been talking about this for some time and now will drop the ax very soon.

I plan to give you more details after the lenders study and discuss the 78-page memorandum and issue their policies on compliance.

Meanwhile, if you or someone you know is considering a reverse mortgage, you may want to encourage them to think about applying before March 2 to avoid the added paperwork and scrutiny.



Jimmy Dixon

In FHA's defense, they are implementing these changes to make sure seniors are able to pay for their homeowner's insurance and property taxes. By the way, all lenders of mortgages require homeowner's insurance.

Remember, like The Alabama Baptist, Jimmy covers our great state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. He is a Sunday School teacher and deacon at Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown.

For a free brochure, quote or discussion, call him direct at 205-567-4800 or email jdixon@mcgowinking.com.



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- Should be IMMEDIATELY REMOVED FROM PLAY/ACTIVITY
- Should be urgently assessed medically
- Should not be left alone
- Should not drive a motor vehicle

www.ChildrensAL.org/concussion

In a medical emergency, call 911 or go directly to your local ER



JUDSON COLLEGE

► Judson to Host Scale Back Alabama for Seventh Year:

Judson College in Marion will once again serve as a public site for Scale Back Alabama, a free statewide weight-loss program designed to encourage Alabamians to get healthy and to have fun while doing it. This is the seventh consecutive year Judson has served as a public site. The 2014 weigh-in week for Scale Back Alabama was Jan. 19–25. Weigh-out week is scheduled for April 6–12.

For more information about on-campus Scale Back activities or to sign up as a participant, contact Marsha Ford at 334-683-5204 or mford@judson.edu. For more information about the statewide Scale Back Alabama, visit www.scalebackalabama.com.

► Judson Earns Community Engagement Classification from Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching:

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has selected Judson College in Marion to receive the 2015 Community Engagement Classification. Judson is 1 of 361 colleges and universities in the nation and the only independent college in the state of Alabama to hold this designation.

As recipient of the 2015 Engagement Classification, Judson's application successfully documented its many achievements in civic engagement and academic service-learning.

Only 5 percent of colleges and

universities in the United States have achieved the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► 'Foremost Living Scholar' on C.S. Lewis to Speak at UMobile:

The University of Mobile (UMobile) will hold a free lecture by one of the world's pre-eminent scholars in C.S. Lewis studies, Michael Ward.

Ward will speak on "C.S. Lewis on Imagination and Reason in Science and Religion" on March 13 at 1:30 p.m. in Weaver Auditorium on the UMobile campus. The talk will focus on "The Magician's Nephew" book in the Narnia series, as 2014 marks the 60th anniversary of its publication.

Ward is a senior research fellow at Blackfriars Hall of University of Oxford and author of the groundbreaking study of Lewis' writings, "Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C.S. Lewis."

For more information, contact Stephen Schuler at 251-442-2426 or email sschuler@umobile.edu.

► Annual Miss UM Pageant to be Held on Its 50th Anniversary Date:

A dozen University of Mobile (UMobile) students will compete for the title of Miss UM during the 50th anniversary of the pageant Feb. 7. Themed "The New Classic," the Miss UM pageant will feature a live band performing classic songs. Former Miss UMs will perform throughout the evening

in tribute to the pageant's 50th anniversary.

The pageant will begin at 7 p.m. at the Saraland Performing Arts Center at Saraland High School.

For more information, call UMobile's Center for Performing Arts at 251-442-2383 or visit umobile.edu.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► Submit Nominations for The Alabama Men's Hall of Fame:

The Alabama Men's Hall of Fame (AMHF) seeks nominations by March 15 for its 2015 induction class. The AMHF annually recognizes men who are native Alabamians or who are closely identified with the state. Nominees must have made significant contributions on a state, national or international scale and have been deceased for at least two years.

For more information and the nomination form, visit samford.edu/alabama-mens-hall-of-fame/nominations.aspx.

► Samford University to Host Luncheon with Anita Renfroe:

Samford University will host a luncheon with Christian comedian Anita Renfroe on Feb. 19.

For more information, visit www.samford.edu/legacyleague.
► Samford Appoints Staff in New Administrative Roles: Samford University in Birmingham has announced two administrative appointments to support the university's business, financial and legal needs.

Lisa Imbraglio has been promoted to associate vice president for business and financial affairs, effective immediately.

She most recently was assistant vice president for business and financial affairs and general counsel.

Imbraglio will oversee the offices of human resources, investments, decision support and financial strategy, student financial services, risk management and insurance and business services.

Birmingham attorney W. Clark Watson has been named Samford's



WATSON

general counsel, effective Feb. 1. Watson has been a partner with the Birmingham-based firm Balch & Bingham LLP since 2000. Watson has served on Samford's board of trustees since 2003 and was chair from 2007 to 2011. Watson and his wife, Debbie, have two daughters. The Watsons are members of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham.

► Samford's Lay Academy of Theology Announces Spring Schedule:



IMBRAGLIO

Lay Academy of Theology, coordinated by Beeson Divinity School, will offer three courses during the spring semester. Evening courses meet once a week for six weeks.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ in the Book of Psalms taught by Allen Ross, professor of divinity, will meet Monday nights, 6–8 p.m., beginning Feb. 23.

Theology of Women in the Gospels taught by Sydney Park, associate professor of divinity, will meet Tuesday nights, 6–8 p.m., beginning Feb. 24.

Letters to Difficult Churches taught by Frank Thielman, Presbyterian professor of divinity, will meet Thursday nights, 6–8 p.m., beginning Feb. 26.

To register, visit www.beesondivinity.com/layacademy or call 205-726-2731.

► Samford Completes Purchase of Southern Progress Property:

Samford University in Birmingham has completed the purchase of property adjacent to the campus that has served as the headquarters for Southern Progress, Inc. The \$58 million sale was finalized Dec. 31, 2014. Samford will renovate two buildings to house its College of Health Sciences (CHS), which includes the schools of health professions, nursing, pharmacy and public health. Some CHS administrative offices will relocate to the new space in early February but Samford will not move full operations and classes until sometime in 2016, according to Harry B. Brock III, Samford's vice president for business and financial affairs. ☐





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Student Pastor, North Highlands Baptist Church

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Free of charge (\$30 fee for C.E. credit)

Wednesday, Feb. 25 • 9 a.m.–3:30 p.m.
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Cost is \$90 (includes continental breakfast, box lunch and C.E. credit)

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'Successful conclusion'

Samford's Cumberland School of Law exceeds campaign goal

Samford University's Cumberland School of Law has exceeded its "Pride. Promise. People." campaign goal.

As of the Dec. 31, 2014, conclusion, gifts and pledges totaling \$17,208,602 had been received from 2,374 donors, representing the largest fundraising effort in the law school's 168-year history. The public phase of the campaign ran from fall 2013 through 2014 with the unprecedented goal for Cumberland of raising \$15 million.

Individual gift amounts ranged from \$5 to \$2.8 million.

Campaign co-chair Stan Starnes said the campaign objectives were to raise funds to support student scholarships, academic programs and faculty enhancements.

"It is an extreme joy to celebrate the successful conclusion of the

Cumberland capital campaign conceived in the depths of the recession. Never has it been more difficult in the history of the nation for a law student to secure an affordable education," said Starnes, chairman and CEO of Birmingham-based ProAssurance and a 1972 Cumberland graduate.

Campaign results

As a result of the campaign: 28 new student scholarships were formed; 116 existing student scholarships and special funds increased in size; 554 Public Interest Fellowship stipends were granted; 10 law faculty research stipends were granted; and two professorial chairs were created and endowed.

Henry C. Strickland, Cumberland School of Law dean, said, "Even with the campaign's co-chairs Stan Starnes, Gov. Albert

Brewer and Brad Bishop boldly launching the campaign in difficult economic times, friends and alumni of the law school responded to assure that Cumberland will continue to prepare exceptional, ethical lawyers committed to serving

their clients and communities."

The successful Cumberland School of Law campaign was part of the university's recently completed "Campaign for Samford" that raised more than \$202 million. (Samford)

Shocco to host preteen weekend

Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega will host its Pre-teen Extreme Weekend on Feb. 27-28 for fourth, fifth and sixth graders in the Adventure Camp facilities at Shocco.

It will be an "incredible weekend for preteens" said Ric Callahan, retreat director. Grades four through six are "some of the most important years spiritually and relationally for children. ... We think a weekend away from home is the perfect opportunity for preteens to really dig into their faith and learn what it means to be a disciple of Jesus."

The weekend includes activities like hiking in the woods, bonfires, paddleboats and many more extreme games.

Paige, who went to the 2014 camp, said, "The games were crazy and the canoes were fun too."

According to the 2014 campers, they are able to have fun with friends while worshipping God together.

Jack, who also attended the 2014 camp, said, "I really liked getting to know some new friends from other churches."

The 2nd annual extreme tribal challenge will take place Saturday and illusionist Scott Humston will be the special guest for the weekend.

According to J.T., a former camper, it is a great time to make new friends, study God's Word and worship the King of Kings but don't expect to get much sleep.

Worship and teaching times are a big part of the weekend but it also is packed full of fun activities, Callahan said.

For more information about the event, contact Callahan at 205-283-3246 or ric@fbcpell-city.org. (Caitlin Lea)

Want to know GOD?

By Pastor Harvey Earls
Bethel Baptist Church, Robertsedale

This year our church's annual outdoor "Walk Through Bethlehem" presentation coincided with a majestic display of God's creation. As the gospel message was presented to more than 2,400 people, the beautiful Geminid meteor shower was occurring overhead.

We witnessed God's beauty flash across the western sky over and over again as "oohs" and "aahs" were heard from participants and cast members alike. God was simply showing off.

It reminded me of the nights spent on a missions trip to Neshuro, Zimbabwe, in 2009. As darkness arrived our team beheld a starlit sky so rarely seen anymore — stars too numerous to count, southern hemisphere constellations we had never learned about and creation as we had never witnessed. There were no man-made lights to dim its beauty. We were speechless. Perhaps we were experiencing Psalm 19:1: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands."

Psalm 19:8 further reads, "The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes."

As amazing and vast as God's creation is, we don't have to wait for the next celestial event to be amazed by God. His desire is that we live in His wonder and amazement every day. God's command is radiant, giving light to the eyes.

The same God who made stars so distant that we have not yet discovered them sent His Son Jesus to be near instead of far, personal instead of unknown and glorious above all of the heavens. And by knowing Him we can realize the truth of His words in John 8:12: "I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." All of the stars in the sky pale in comparison to the beauty, significance and importance of the Light of the world, Jesus Christ. ☩

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CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR: Loxley First Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a senior pastor. Send resumé to: info@fbcloxley.com or to: First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 114, Loxley, AL 36551.

SENIOR PASTOR: Bellevue Baptist Church in Gadsden, Ala., is seeking a full-time senior pastor. Interested parties please send resumé to: jmc@copelaw.com or mail to: Bellevue Baptist Church, 150 Noccalula Drive, Gadsden, AL 35904. Church website: www.bbcgadsden.com.

PASTOR: Brent Baptist Church is accepting resumés for a full-time pastor. Cut-off date is Feb. 4. Please send resumés to: Brent Baptist Church, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 246, Brent, AL 35034. No electronic resumés will be accepted. Please visit www.brentbaptistchurch.org for more information.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR/CHURCH PLANTER: Bay Side Baptist Church, Lillian (Gulf Shores area), seeking a bivocational pastor/church planter. Send resumés to: P.O. Box 533, Lillian, AL 36549.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC: Are you called to help God's people worship Him with sincerity and joy? Westwood Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala., is eagerly seeking a part-time minister of music. Contact Pastor Steve Potts (phone: 205-798-3341, email: steve.potts@wbclive.com).

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER: Community Baptist Church, Maylene, Ala., (Alabaster area), is seeking a bivocational music minister. Send resumés to: cbcsearchcomm@gmail.com.

STUDENT MINISTER: FBC Pleasant Grove is accepting resumés for the position of full-time student minister. Please send resumé to: Donna Wilson at dwilson@fbcp.org or mail to: FBC Pleasant Grove, 724 4th Street, Pleasant Grove, AL 35127. Church website: FBPCPG.org.

STUDENT PASTOR: The First Baptist Church of Meridianville, Ala., is seeking a student pastor for grades 7-12. A seminary degree and a minimum of three years experience is preferred. Submit resumés to: jarichburg1969@gmail.com.

OTHER POSITIONS

PART-TIME MINISTRY INTERN POSITION: Fifteen hours per week including Sundays and Wednesday nights. Work with students grades 5-12. Some teaching required. For information or to apply, contact Southcrest Baptist Church at 205-425-4991 or southcrestchurch@att.net.

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS: Limestone Baptist Association is accepting resumés for director of missions through Feb. 28. Please send to: P.O. Box 1530, Athens, AL 35612 or robert@limestonebaptist.org.

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'Well equipped'

National Woman's Missionary Union welcomes new staff members

Amy Boone and Lena Plunk joined the staff of national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) on Jan. 5 as ministry consultants on WMU's adult resource team.

Boone will be responsible for providing development, direction and leadership to WMU's adult missions organizations, including Women on Mission, Adults on Mission and myMISSION for collegiate and young women.

Plunk will be responsible for coordinating Christian Women's Job Corps (CWJC) and Christian Men's Job Corps (CMJC), as well as connecting volunteers with missions opportunities.

These include hands-on missions trips through WMU's Missionsfest, Familyfest and International Initiatives as well as managing WMU's Pure Water, Pure Love ministry.

"We are thrilled to welcome Amy and

Lena to our staff," said Carol Causey, director for WMU's missions resource center. "Both of these women are well equipped to provide leadership in key areas for us."

For the past two years, Boone has served with the Lawrence County Board of Education in Mount Hope, working with children in grades K-8 of Native American ancestry in the areas of reading and math. She and her husband, Mike, also served 14 years as missionaries with the International Mission Board in Mozambique and South Africa where she helped plant churches,

train teachers, write curriculum and lead retreats and weekly Bible lessons, among other ministry opportunities.

She earned a master's degree in religious education from Southwestern Bap-

tist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and a bachelor's degree in music education from Samford University in Birmingham.

Since May 2013, Plunk has served as program director and satellite coordinator for the Nashville location of CWJC of Middle Tennessee. From 2003-2013, she served with the North American Mission Board through the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania/South Jersey in a variety of roles, including ministry evangelism consultant, church planting catalyst in multi-housing and web evangelism/children's missions and ministry consultant.

Plunk holds a master's degree in social work from Temple University in Philadelphia, Pa., and a bachelor's degree from Blue Mountain College in Mississippi.

Also new to the national WMU staff is Jennifer Dodd, senior marketing strategist. In this role she will give direction to the development and execution of marketing strategies for WMU missions organizations in the church and related resources. These organizations include Mission Friends for pre-schoolers; Girls in Action, Royal Ambassadors and Children in Action for children; Acteens, Challenges and Youth on Mission for students; myMISSION for collegiate and young women; and Women on Mission and

Adults on Mission.

Dodd served for the past 12 years as marketing and public relations manager for Princeton Baptist Medical Center in Birmingham. She earned bachelor's degrees from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and Henderson State University in Arkadelphia, Ark.

Dodd is a member of Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover. (WMU)



BOONE



PLUNK



DODD

New Study Links DEMENTIA to HEARING LOSS



Hearing Aids Can Help Reduce Multiple Alzheimer's Symptoms.

Has a loved one been diagnosed with dementia or Alzheimer's disease? They'll face many challenges, but untreated hearing loss shouldn't be one of them.

Research shows that treating hearing loss with hearing aids can help lessen common Alzheimer's symptoms, including depression, disorientation, anxiety, social isolation and general cognitive decline.

Help your loved one be their best.

Call Beltone today to schedule a FREE HEARING EXAM.



A Hearing Evaluation Is Your First Line Of Defense.

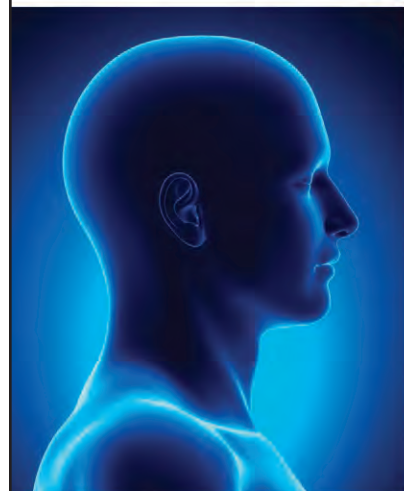
A major study recently found that untreated hearing loss may increase the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

Those with mild hearing impairment were nearly twice as likely as those with normal hearing to develop dementia. The risk increased three-fold for those with moderate hearing loss and five-fold for severe impairment.

The good news — hearing aids can delay, or even prevent, dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

Why take a chance? Get your hearing tested today!

At Beltone, we'll thoroughly test your hearing and be the first to tell you if you don't have a hearing loss. But if you do need hearing help, be assured we'll find the solution that best fits your needs. **So, don't delay, call now.**



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 8

Explore the Bible By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D. Dean, School of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD Nehemiah 8:1-12

Until this point in the narrative Nehemiah has been the central character, other than some pesky opposing leaders. Readers are re-introduced to Ezra the priest/scribe more than a decade after his initial relocation from Babylon to Jerusalem. In contrast to the corrupt high priest Eliashib, Ezra was a spiritual leader while Nehemiah served as a godly civil leader. Nehemiah was responsible for rebuilding the walls and securing the inhabitants of Jerusalem, whereas Ezra was rebuilding the faith in God by reminding Judah's remnant of the covenant recorded in the Law (Torah).

Nehemiah led the civil government knowing that he was a steward entrusted with leadership responsibilities by God. His function as a spiritual leader was limited — as all governmental roles are — with actions speaking louder than words. Moral leadership reflecting the character of God and His authority would come from those who were qualified to teach the Law. Ezra and selected Levites would communicate the message and call the people back to God.

Desire the Word (1-3)

Tishri, the seventh lunar month, marked three annual events prescribed by the Torah. The first day of the month marked the Feast of Trumpets. Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, was to be celebrated on day 10. Days 14 through 21 marked Sukkoth, the Feast of Booths. Each event was a reminder of God's faithfulness and provision for His people through the years of transition from Egypt until they reached the Promised Land.

In the seventh month of the year recorded in Nehemiah 8, a solemn assembly was called for the public reading of the Torah. Men, women and children were invited to the assembly. Their express purpose for gathering was to listen to the Word of God.

Prepare to hear (4-8)

A wooden platform was constructed upon which Ezra stood as he read from the scroll.

As the scribe opened the Law the people stood. Ezra blessed the Lord, perhaps beginning with the words used in modern Hebrew worship before reading the Torah: "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has chosen us from among the peoples and given us the Torah." When he finished praying, all the people together said, "Amen, Amen."

As Ezra read the Hebrew text, Levites explained its meaning. Not only did they provide an exposition of the narrative, they also translated the reading into the other languages of the people since many did not even speak Hebrew (Neh. 13:24).

One of the great sins of this period was that men of Jerusalem (including priests) were divorcing their wives and marrying unbelieving Gentile wives from the region (Ezra 9:1-2; Neh. 13:23-29; Mal. 2:1-16). They produced unbelieving children who did not even know the language of Scripture.

Listening to God's Word is more important than acting upon impulse or emotion. Christians often listen to their own flesh and the counsel of the ungodly. As a result they make decisions that dishonor God, their families and themselves. They fail to recognize, as it says in Jeremiah 17:9, that "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?"

Act upon the Word (9-12)

The writer of Hebrews described God's Word as "sharper than any two-edged sword ... a judge of the ideas and thoughts of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). As the people of Jerusalem listened to their ethnic and religious history, they were convicted of their rebellion against the God of the covenant. They wept bitter tears because they realized they were guilty before the Holy One who created them, who sustained them, yet whom they had utterly rejected.

The seventh month was a time for celebration, so weeping was not appropriate for the occasion. There is a time for weeping and a time for rejoicing (Eccles. 3:4) so the people were instructed to eat, drink and celebrate the faithfulness of God. ☞

Bible Studies for Life By Kevin Blackwell, D.Min. Assistant to the President for Church Relations, Samford University

READY WHEN SEX DESTROYS Ephesians 5:1-10

Luke writes of a great revival that came to Ephesus in Acts 19 that so greatly impacted the city that Paul's life became threatened by the local business owners. Ephesus was home to one of the seven great wonders of the ancient world, the temple of Diana (Artemis). Located in the center of the temple was a statue of the Diana that the Greeks believed fell from heaven. Since Diana was the goddess of birth and fertility the Greeks believed this statue had powers of fertility.

The temple was populated by servants of the goddess who were nothing more than prostitutes. The Ephesians believed intercourse with these temple servants was a legitimate act of worship to Diana so the region became highly sensual and debased. This was the ministry field Paul was serving.

Thus it is no surprise that Paul renders such strong words to the Ephesians when it comes to sexual ethics.

The conduct of purity. (1-4)

The highest conduct of purity is to imitate God. It is important to note that you cannot imitate someone you don't know. Therefore it is vital that a person walks in an intimate relationship with Jesus so that he or she can be an imitator of God. We are most like him when we walk in sacrificial love according to verse 2. To do this we must realize our bodies don't belong to us, they belong to Him.

Our bodies should imitate His life. Therefore we must abstain from sexual immorality, greed and impure speech. For the Ephesians this called for a total change of mindset toward their local religion.

Diana beckoned the citizens, "come and indulge — the more sensual you are the more I approve of you." Their new belief in Christ called for them to completely avoid sexual temptation. No other temptation trips up God's people quite like sexual temptation. Satan is a master at twisting the

beautiful things God created into something that is hardly recognizable with its original intent. Paul is calling the Ephesians to a lifestyle of holiness. Some translations say, "Let there not be a hint" of immorality or may it "not be named among you."

Godly purity doesn't allow even a hint of sexual impurity, whether in act or thought. As imitators of God our lives should reflect the "fragrant aroma" of the life of Christ.

The consequences of impurity. (5-6)

These verses are a stern warning of dire eternal judgment to those who continue to live in open rebellion to the call of Christian purity. Our society embraces the sexually perverse lifestyle as being an "alternative" lifestyle. Couples now "cohabit" with no regard to the biblical prohibition of sex before marriage. The lifestyles we now celebrate are the very lifestyles Paul spoke so strongly against. Similar passages are found in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Galatians 5:19-21 and 1 John 3:7-10.

Though we don't like to talk about it, the Scriptures consistently speak of the eternal judgment of the unrepentant sensualist.

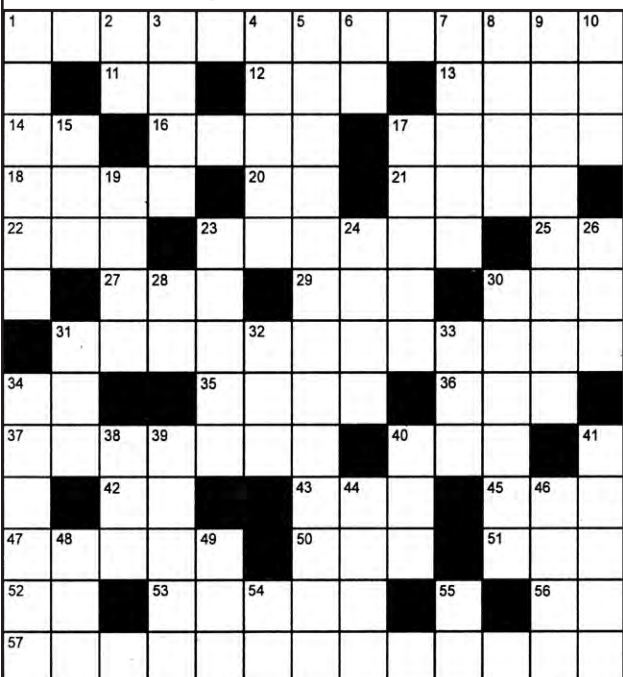
"Let no one deceive you with empty arguments" or "empty words." This speaks to those who would argue for justification of these lifestyles. It is amazing how these words from Paul speak so clearly to our situation today. Culture consistently speaks empty arguments that seek to justify the perversion of God's original gift of sex.

The call to purity. (7-10)

The clear call of purity is to run from the darkness of sexual perversion and into the light of purity. Only light can reveal true purity. Darkness only hides and distorts. Notice Paul said, "For you were once" living in this darkness. It can be said of every Christian that "we were once" in darkness, but God has called us to live in His light. Christians are the "light of the world" (Matt. 5:14) and we are called by God to spread that light in a way that penetrates the darkness of this perverse world. ☞

Christian Crossword

By Keith Graham Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

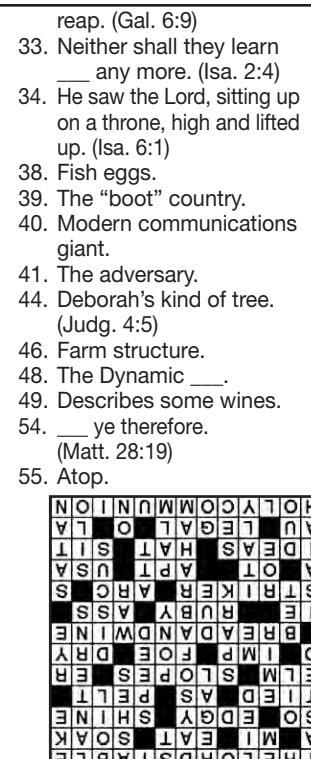


Across

- Special worship event. (1 Cor. 10:21)
- Number of Arabian nights. (Roman numerals)
- Whether therefore ye ____, or drink. (1 Cor. 10:31)
- To gorge with water or delete of money.
- Therefore.
- Nervous.
- The Lord make his face ____ upon thee. (Num. 6:25)
- Condition of Jesus' steed in Mark 11:2.
- ____ the hart panteth after the water brooks. (Ps. 42:1)
- Animal hide.
- Shade tree.
- Inclined territory.
- Speaker's interjection of hesitation.
- Mischief one.
- What 41 down is to God and man.
- What shall be done in the ____? (Luke 23:31)
- Elements used in 57

Down

- That is. (Latin abbr.)
- ____, topaz and the emerald. (Ezek. 28:13)
- Rebuker of Balaam (Num. 22:28)
- A bishop must be ... no _____. (Titus 1:7)
- A portion of a circle.
- This comprises most of the Bible. (abbr.)
- A bishop must be ____ to teach. (1 Tim. 3:2)
- Said by many to be an ex-Christian nation. (abbr.)
- Children of the mind.
- Gloves' companion.
- ____ thou at my right hand. (Ps. 110:1)
- Symbol for a precious metal.
- Lawful.
- Usually follows "tra" in tandem.
- Another name for 1 across.
- Printer's measure.
- What 41 down did in Eden.
- Kingly.
- Famine that was in the _____. (Gen. 26:1)
- A thoroughfare of a holy one. (abbr.)
- They were to be poured out without the camp. (Lev. 4:12)
- Leviathan makes the deep do this. (Job 41:31)
- Judas' mob came with these to arrest Jesus. (John 18:3)
- ____ out a living.
- See thou hurt not the ____ and wine. (Rev. 6:6)
- Rate of travel.
- An Arabian ruler.
- Man is born unto trouble, as this flies upward. (Job 5:7)
- Youthful equestrian's steed.
- A grain.
- Myself.
- Track and field projectile.
- Wager.
- In ____ season we shall





Photos courtesy of MERGEPR

“This earth is very subpar when it comes to the paradise that we have been promised.”

Tedashii Anderson, hip-hop artist



‘Assurance of ETERNITY’

Hip-hop artist Tedashii uses latest album to share heartache, strength of Christ

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Hip-hop artist Tedashii Anderson, who goes by Tedashii, uses his latest album, “Below Paradise,” to explore his heartache and grief following the sudden death of his 1-year-old son, Chase, in 2013 — and tell about the strength he finds in Christ.

Through his music and message, Tedashii hopes to encourage audiences to make an eternal difference by showing compassion to hurting people and connecting them to Christ.

“This album takes a very honest look at the world around us,” Tedashii said. “This earth is very subpar when it comes to the paradise that we have been promised, the hope that we have as believers. There is a stark difference in what the Bible promises heaven to be like and what we have here on earth. Crime, sickness, disease, pain, suffering and loss — those things we won’t find in heaven.”

Eternal value

“Many times, people value the things of this earth so much that they don’t think about the things of eternal value until they are forced to. Within the last year of my life

I have been forced to. But it’s caused me to become more considerate and compassionate toward other people who are struggling and facing tough situations. By sharing these songs and my own struggles my hope is that people would begin to think about living for what matters most and thinking about the eternal weight of glory.”

While walking through this unexpected journey Tedashii and his wife, Danielle, have relied on their faith in Christ to sustain them every step of the way.

The young couple found encouragement in the overwhelming support they received from their home church, as well as from ministries and fellow musicians who have rallied around them.

“The Christian community and other artists really rallied around my family in amazing ways,” Tedashii said. “As a member of the body of Christ, when a fellow brother or sister is suffering, you are hurting as well and want to reach out to them. Throughout the past year I have seen the genuineness and sincerity of other believers coming alongside and grieving with my family.



Many people have been so engaged and present through our suffering.”

After taking several months off Tedashii resumed his concert schedule with a renewed passion to share the gospel and later began recording songs for the new album.

“My wife and I have spent a lot of time reading Scripture together and that has really helped us,” Tedashii said. “One of the key passages that we have been clinging to throughout this journey has been Galatians 2:20: ‘I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.’ Without a

relationship with Christ life would be hopeless. But the promises found in God’s Word give us the assurance of eternity.

“I really want to encourage people to embrace the awareness that needs to be there when it comes to the reality of the world we live in. It’s evident when I leave home and go to other major cities. When you go downtown and see the homelessness. When you see the storms that hit each town. When

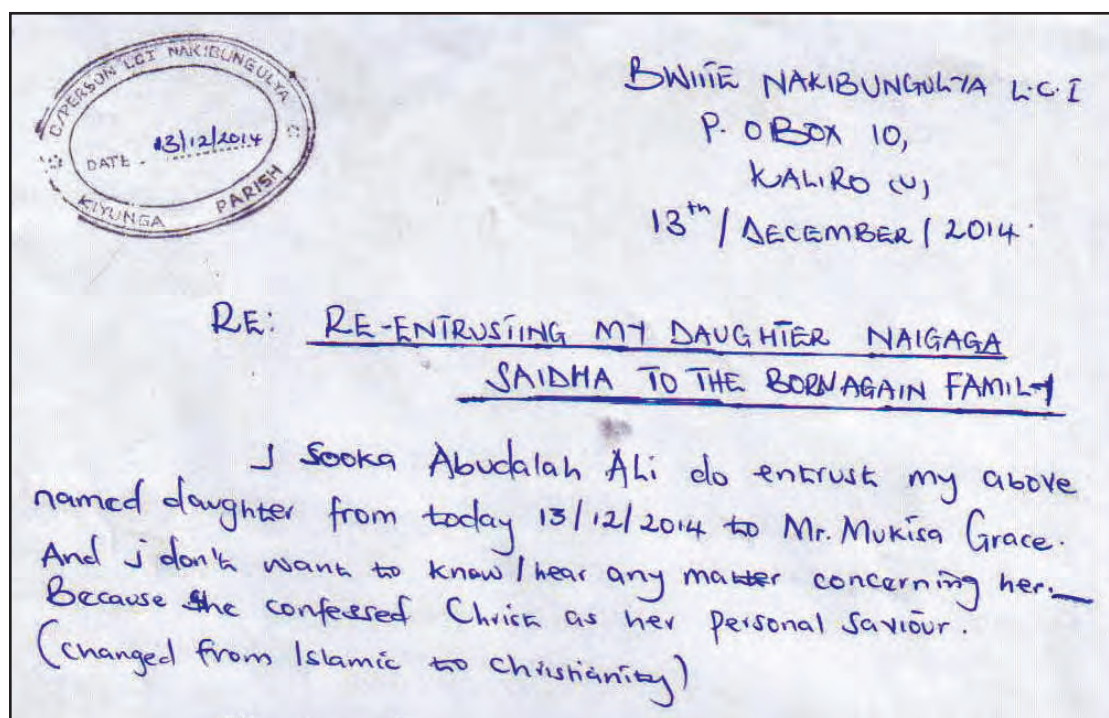
you hear stories about a child who lost their parents and are now living with their elderly grandparents. Those situations convict me to pray for them and find ways to help. I really want to help bring awareness to people about these situations and remind them of the opportunities to show Christ’s love during these times of struggle.”

God’s unfailing love

At his concerts Tedashii shares about God’s faithfulness and unfailing love during life’s darkest moments.

“Lately my music has been reaching people who are also suffering and they have thanked us for sharing our story,” Tedashii said. “There have been a lot of people who have said what I’ve been able to communicate has been very encouraging. I wrestle with that honestly. I still feel so weak right now and the fact that anyone is taking anything away and being reminded to press on is an encouragement to me.

“This was never a ministry that I would have expected but God has been faithful to give opportunities to draw people closer to Him. By sharing my story and struggles I hope people will realize that we are not promised tomorrow. I hope people are motivated to think about where they will spend eternity and make sure they are living for what matters most.”



MS photo
Pictured above is a portion of Imam Abudalah Ali's statement disowning his daughter for converting to Christ.

Leaving Islam

Father allegedly beats daughter to death for converting to Christ

A 12-year-old girl was hospitalized for two weeks after her Muslim father beat her and her sister for converting to Christ in December 2014. She is traumatized after learning her sister died from the assault, sources said.

Naigaga Saidah's father, Imam Abudalah Ali of Bwita mosque in Kaliro District, Uganda, allegedly beat to death her 15-year-old sister, Namugonya Jamirah, on Dec. 11 after the sisters put their trust in Christ at a five-day evangelistic event that ended that day. Beaten unconscious, Saidah did not learn of her sister's death until a pastor had transferred her to safety in another town Jan. 7.

"Saidah needs prayers, trauma counseling and medication for the left side of her hip that was injured by the father," according to a source whose name is withheld for security reasons.

After the Dec. 7-11 evangelistic campaign at Bwita trading center in the Nakibungulya area of Kaliro District, a neighbor told Ali that his daughters had become Christians, sources said. That afternoon 17 Muslims arrived at the venue of the evangelistic meeting but the participants had left, a source said.

Attacking Christians

"Their father got the information that his daughters have converted and he organized a small group of fellow Muslims — about 17 people — to go and attack the Christians," a source said. "He found the campaign had finished but went back to his home and waited for the daughters. When they went back home the father picked up the club and started beating them badly till one called Jamirah died."

Saidah managed to escape when her father went inside the house to look for water to splash her back to consciousness, the source said. She arrived limping in blood-stained clothes at a pastor's house.

The following day the pastor and another Christian leader went to Ali's home, learned that Jamirah was dead and reported it to police. Officers arrived at Ali's house Dec. 12 and arrested him. He was charged with murder but denied it, claiming

that Jamirah died from a motorcycle accident.

His wife and two sons supported his statement, and Ali was released on bail Dec. 13. The same day Ali officially disowned Saidah for leaving Islam for Christianity before a Kaliro Local Council official.

Saidah described her ordeal by phone.

"My father took us to the house and then locked the house," she said. "He questioned us why we attended a Christian meeting and started beating us up with a club. My sister was hit on the forehead and fell down. I tried to hide myself in the bed, but he got me out and began beating me up as my sister lay down bleeding."

Saidah began shouting for help but her father covered her mouth with such force that she nearly suffocated, she said. She fell down, unconscious.

"Later on I realized that my clothes were soaked with water as I regained my consciousness, and my father had left," she said. "I got up and went to the pastor's house, which is about 30 minutes' walk. I arrived there at 7 p.m."

The pastor took her to a medical clinic where she was treated for two weeks while her father began organizing area Muslims to kill her, sources said. The pastor sent her to a Christian leader in another undisclosed town Jan. 7. When Saidah learned that her sister had died, she fainted and remained another two days in a nearby hospital.

"The police were later bribed and accepted the words of Ali and he was released on bail," one source said.

"When he came home he went to the [local] chairman and said that he had disowned Saidah, and that if she tries to go back that she will be killed just like her sister, and that he is leaving Saidah in the hands of born-again Christians."

The chairman summoned the Christian leaders and informed them of what Ali had told him. They told Ali to put his decision to disown her in writing.

"Saidah has been traumatized, is still limping and she is in a need of the prayers, counseling, medical support and school fees because she is going to primary seventh grade this year," the chairman said. (MS)

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Christian gunned down in retribution in Egypt

AL DABAYA, Egypt — Police in Upper Egypt have arrested a man who, according to eyewitnesses, gunned down a Christian on Jan. 13 for what family members believe was their refusal to drop charges against the suspect's relatives in other killings in 2013.

Hasan Baghdadi was arrested Jan. 14 in connection with the slaying of 38-year-old Shaheed Nesemis Saroufeem — a cousin of a Christian who was killed along with three other Copts in July 2013.

Witnesses said Baghdadi and his brother, Mohamed Baghdadi, were following Saroufeem, a bus driver in Luxor Province who was on a motor scooter at the time of the attack where they ambushed him with machine-gun fire from their motorcycle.

Saroufeem was shot to death a day after a hearing in the trial of Baghdadi's relatives for the 2013 murders.

Police are still seeking the second brother whom local Copts said is an Islamist who regularly incites violence against Christians in the area.

Muslim Fulani murder ministry leader in Nigeria

BANTAJE, Nigeria — Muslim Fulani herdsmen killed a father of two Jan. 23 in Taraba state of Nigeria whose pastoral ministry had brought education, medicine and clothing to thousands of impoverished people.

Pastor Joshua Adah was returning to his mission station in Bantaje, a village near Jalingo, from an evangelistic outreach to some villagers when his vehicle broke down, a ministry supporter said.

"A few kilometers from Jalingo he had car issues along the Wukari-Jalingo road," said a supporter of Adah's ministry. "He was mercilessly hacked to death by Fulani herdsmen and Boko Haram."

Joseph Kwaji, a police spokesman for the Taraba State Command, confirmed that Muslim Fulani killed Adah.

Adah had left the comforts of city life to start a boarding school in a hut. The school, just one part of his ministry, provided free education to a student population that grew to more than 400 pupils.

Muslims storm Christian school, demand its closure

BANNU, Pakistan — Among several protests across Pakistan against French satire magazine *Charlie Hebdo's* cartoons of Islam's prophet Muhammad, hundreds of Muslims in a terrorist-infested northwestern province stormed a Christian school Jan. 26, demanding its closure.

Some 300 protesters from local schools and colleges entered the premises of Panel High School for Boys in Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan, after jumping its outer walls and forcing open the gates, principal Fredrick Farhan Das said by phone.

Das said the chaos caused a stampede that left four students of the school with minor injuries.

Police had deployed three officers at the school, who looked on as protesters, many of them armed, ransacked the school, he said. The protesters used their guns and stones to break windows of several classrooms as they shouted anti-Christian slogans.

Second South Sudanese pastor arrested without charges

KHARTOUM, Sudan — The second pastor of South Sudanese descent in less than three weeks has been arrested without charges in Khartoum, the Sudanese capital, sources said.

Sudan's National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) arrested David Yein Reith of the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church on Jan. 9 as he returned to his home at the Gerif West Bible School in Khartoum from a prayer meeting, according to a source who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Reith received a phone call earlier that day from someone threatening to "arrest" his wife and 1-year-old son if he failed to go to his home immediately.

Though of South Sudanese descent, Reith has always lived in Khartoum. On Dec. 28, 2014, NISS officials arrested a visiting South Sudanese pastor from Juba, Yat Michael, after Sunday worship at Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church on Dec. 21. At press time he was still in custody. ☞