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INSIDE



Baptist pastor leads National Day of Prayer service in US Capitol

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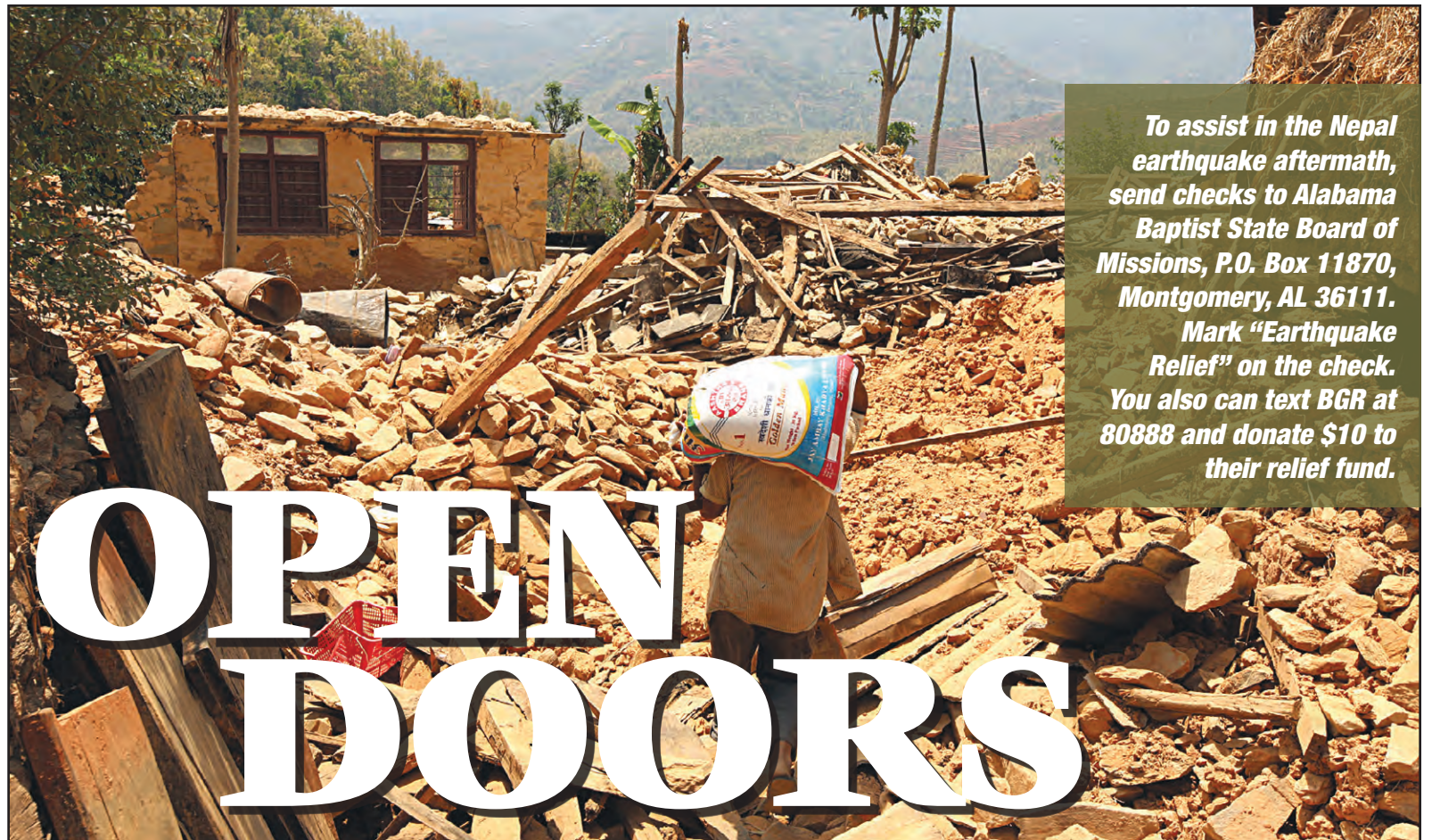
Alabama Bible Drill touches lives of students, children

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OPEN DOORS

BGR photo

A Nepali earthquake survivor carries a bag of rice through his devastated village. Baptist Global Response brought relief supplies provided by Southern Baptists into the community, which had received no outside aid in the week since the massive April 25 earthquake.

Southern Baptists share Christ's love to Nepali earthquake survivors

The small Nepali congregation started worship May 2 right where they left off the previous week — singing.

Two dozen voices gained momentum, clapping hands, dancing and raising their faces to heaven in song: “Still I will love You and spread Your love to the people.”

The congregation breaks into prayer, for this is the moment when the song was interrupted by Nepal’s magnitude-7.8 earthquake April 25.

They shed tears and cry in reliving the moment together. They were in the fourth-floor room that morning when the quake hit. Someone prayed aloud and others joined. The pastor, Rajaan Tamang, looked up and

saw the outer wall shaking and a crack forming in the wall beside him. He knew if they didn’t get off the fourth floor they all might die. They lurched down the stairs and gathered in the field outside, where they saw a building across the street begin to crumble. Seven people died in that building.

A week later during worship, a feeling of thankfulness washes over Tamang as he looks at the congregation.

God took care of them

They survived not just the earthquake but the week since. God has taken care of them — from finding an old tarp with holes for shelter that first night to a friend’s offer of a room for the church to meet this day.

Still the aftermath of the trauma is evident in their tired eyes.

At press time the quake that hit about 50 miles northwest of Kathmandu had claimed the lives of more than 8,400, injuring more than 14,500.

Baptist Global Response (BGR) was ready to respond immediately after the disaster and released \$50,000 for initial efforts. The organization called in a Disaster Assessment Relief Team (DART), which arrived May 1 and began working with a local coalition of churches in Kathmandu that had formed a disaster relief committee. Together DART and the committee began to assess and fill needs.

Francis Horton, BGR area director for Central and South Asia, said the disaster overwhelmed locals

but they have started to recover as best they can. Some shops in Kathmandu have reopened and people in heavily affected areas are rummaging through debris to find what possessions might have survived the quake.

Rehabilitation steps

“As people begin to dig through the rubble and regain those household items, those personal items, all of that is a huge step toward their rehabilitation just as a family,” Horton said. “The more they can do that, the better their attitudes and their mentality ... will be.”

Delivering some supplies, like tarps and rice, was difficult immediately following the quake
(See ‘Long-term,’ page 6)



COMMENT

The Worst Kind of Legislation

Republican State Sen. Del Marsh introduced what has to be the worst piece of gambling-related legislation in the history of Alabama in early May. Marsh, who is president pro tempore of the Alabama Senate, flip-flopped on what observers thought were principled stands against legalized gambling and became its chief proponent.

More importantly, Marsh is using the power of his office to lead efforts to have Alabama legalize a state lottery, approve full-blown casinos and form a compact with the Poarch Band of Creek Indians that would make American Indian gambling activities a permanent part of state life.

Any one of these proposals is controversial by itself. That all would be considered at the same time would have been inconceivable until Marsh's surprising and disappointing announcement.

The catalyst for the proposal is Alabama's economic crunch. State government is underfunded and has been for years. The Legislature has filled the income gap with borrowing and one-time funds, but those sources have been exhausted.

With no other place to turn Gov. Robert Bentley proposed increasing certain taxes but Marsh and other legislators are so scared of any new taxes that the governor's proposals could not even get a committee hearing until the legislative session was more than half over.

Financial burden

Instead Marsh and others purpose gambling as the fix for the revenue shortfall. They would prefer to balance the budget on the backs of those least able to pay rather than adopt a fair and just tax system. Lotteries place the financial burden on the backs of poor and working class people rather than on capital and corporations.

Pulitzer Prize-winning tax reporter David Cay Johnston points out that 11 states already raise more money per person through lotteries than they raise through corporate income taxes. That is not the direction Alabama should go.

Economist Richard D. Wolff added, "Simply put, lotteries take the most from those who can least afford it. Instead of taking those most able to pay, state leaders use lotteries to disguise a regressive tax that falls on the middle and even more on the poor."

For example Lenoir County, N.C., is one of that state's more economically depressed areas with 23.5 percent of the population living under the poverty line. Yet in 2010 enough scratch-off and lottery tickets were sold to account for \$423.92 worth of purchases for every adult in the county. That is more than twice the state average of \$200.11.

The California Budget Project reported that in 2007 "the poor, nonwhite, urban and less educated spend a higher portion of their income on the lottery than other demographics."



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

A 2008 study by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis found "a large portion of lottery profits come from people who receive some financial subsidy from the government, suggesting the lottery profits from those with the least disposable income."

One out of 4 children in Alabama already live in food insecure homes. One in 5 seniors in our state is food insecure. Poverty is above the national average. Surely the state Legislature can find a better policy to solve the state's financial woes than to prey on these people.

A state-sponsored lottery is one of the cruelest and most callous proposals the Legislature could make. A study by the Opinion Research Corporation for the Consumer Federation of America and the Financial Planning Association found that 38 percent of those earning less than \$25,000 annually believed the lottery is the solution to accumulating wealth. Perhaps that is why David Just, behavioral economics expert and director of graduate studies at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., said, "We find there are big jumps in lottery purchases when the poverty rate increases, when unemployment increases or when people enroll (in) welfare."

Unlikely odds

When the odds of winning a Powerball jackpot, according to The Mathematical Association of America, is 1 in 175 million, is that what state government should be promoting?

Should state government be like a sideshow huckster trying to separate hard-earned paychecks from its citizens? Should Alabama's government encourage get-rich-quick schemes over the proven disciplines of work, thrift and responsibility?

And what could be more callous than the state's powerful decision makers purposely manipulating the vulnerable of society in order to

avoid having to shoulder a fair and just portion of the expense of government?

The casino proposal is equally misguided. Casino gambling cannibalizes the economy. That is because casinos divert spending that would have gone to buy cars, clothes, food and other goods and services.

A year ago when the New Hampshire Legislature rejected building a casino in the Granite State, Paul Davies, the Maggie Walker fellow at the Institute for American Values, said, "Public policy built around inducing residents to gamble away their hard-earned money is a bad way to fund the government." We agree.

Promises of gambling income are always exaggerated. In 2009, Ohio residents were told four proposed casinos would generate \$1.9 billion in annual tax revenue for the state. The actual revenue for the first year was \$839 million — off by more than \$1 billion. That is a big "oops."

That says nothing about the social problems ranging from increased criminal activity to suicides. In Gulfport, Miss., suicides skyrocketed 213 percent in the first two years after casinos opened there. In nearby Biloxi, suicides increased 1,000 percent in the first year alone.

Why would Alabama want to start something that is declining nationwide? In Atlantic City gambling revenues are down more than 47 percent since 2006. Casinos are closing. Others are filing bankruptcy. In Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin, Louisiana and other places the

reports are the same — gambling revenue is declining with no stop in sight.

Marsh's bill also places new casinos at the Birmingham Race Course, VictoryLand in Shorter, Greenetrack in Eutaw and the Mobile Greyhound Park. At least three of these facilities have been convicted of breaking Alabama gambling laws, some multiple times. Why would the state reward these lawbreakers with a casino site even if the proposal were adopted? Rewarding lawbreakers with casinos would be the wrong signal to send about the results of illegal conduct.

Sen. Marsh's proposals are based on flawed economics. They are based on bad public policies and are unworthy of responsible legislative leadership like he has provided in the past. Senate Bill 453 embodies values contrary to the Christian faith. This bill is a threat to the welfare of the state of Alabama and should be soundly defeated. ❏

**Casino gambling
cannibalizes the
economy ... because
casinos divert
spending that would
have gone to buy cars,
clothes, food and other
goods and services.**



"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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'Lord, Hear Our Cry'

Baptist pastor leads National Day of Prayer service in Washington

Pleas for revival and religious freedom were heard repeatedly at the National Day of Prayer (NDP) service May 7 in Washington, including the keynote address by Southern Baptist pastor Jack Graham and a letter he read from imprisoned pastor Saeed Abedini.

Graham — pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church, Plano, Texas, and former Southern Baptist Convention president — served as honorary chairperson of the NDP Task Force.

"We are facing a crisis in America. These are desperate days," Graham said to the hundreds gathered at the Canon House Office Building. "This is a crying time in America. It's a time for tears."

Graham called for extraordinary prayer, emphasizing the event's theme "Lord, Hear Our Cry," taken from 1 Kings 8:38.

'Extraordinary prayer'

"There's a time for ordinary prayer," Graham said. "But there is a time for what Jonathan Edwards, the great revivalist, called extraordinary prayer. Uncommon times call for uncommon prayer, and so we cry out to God. We cry out to God."

Graham prayed for Abedini, imprisoned for nearly three years for his faith in Iran, where officials have threatened to extend his current eight-year sentence to life imprisonment unless he renounces Christianity and embraces Islam.

"We should always remember to pray for suffering Christians, the persecuted church, martyred believers around the world," Graham said. "We must never forget them."

Abedini issued an open letter from prison to Christians for NDP, which Graham read.

Abedini urged Americans to make the most of religious freedom. "Change starts with us. Revival starts with us," he wrote. "The first step to revival is praying together in unity as a nation."

President Barack Obama hailed religious liberty in his official NDP proclamation, issued May 6.

A look at National Day of Prayer's history

While the tradition of national leaders issuing calls for prayer dates back to the founding of the United States, the practice wasn't formalized until 1952 during the Korean War.

Evangelist Billy Graham was invited by House Speaker Sam Rayburn to deliver a speech on the steps of the U.S. Capitol, in which he issued a call for a day of national prayer.

"What a thrilling, glorious thing it would be to see the leaders of our country today kneeling before Almighty God in prayer," Graham said. "What

a thrill would sweep this country. What renewed hope and courage would grip the Americans at this hour of peril."

A proclamation

The next day Rep. Percy Priest, a Southern Baptist deacon, introduced a bill in the House to establish a National Day of Prayer (NDP). Sen. A. Willis Robertson introduced the Senate version. President Harry S. Truman signed the joint resolution approved April 17, 1952, and became the first president to declare a NDP. Every president since has done the same.

In 1983, Campus Crusade for

Christ (now Cru) co-founder Vonette Bright formed the NDP Task Force to promote evangelical Christian prayer events across the country. In 1988 she backed legislation to establish a specific day for the observance on the first Thursday of May.

Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush each held one NDP event. President George W. Bush held one in the White House each year he was in office. President Bill Clinton held informal meetings but did not participate in NDP events. Neither has President Barack Obama. (BNG)

"Millions of individuals worldwide are subjected to discrimination, abuse and sanctioned violence simply for exercising their religion or choosing not to claim a faith. Communities are threatened with genocide and driven from their homelands because of

who they are or how they pray," Obama wrote. "The United States will continue to stand against these reprehensible attacks, work to end them and protect religious freedom throughout the world. And we remember those who are prisoners of conscience — who

are held unjustly because of their faiths or beliefs — and we will take every action within our power to secure their release."

The observance was among numerous prayer events held throughout the U.S. including events across Alabama. (BP, TAB)

FBC Prattville hosts Senior Adult Evangelism Conference



Photo by Doug Rogers

Evangelist Bob Pitman of Bob Pitman Ministries in Muscle Shoals speaks to those attending the Senior Adult Evangelism Conference at FBC Prattville on May 4. Other speakers included Charles Carter and Curtis Kelley. Special music was provided by Paid in Full.



123rf.com

Attention. Present Bible. Start.

Bible Drill teaches discipline of learning Scripture early in life

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Attention. Present Bible. Start. Many Alabama Baptists remember those words, called by a Sunday School teacher who gave them a book of the Bible or a Scripture reference to find.

Bible Drill hasn't changed much over the years because the goals of the ministry have remained the same.

"The main goal of Bible Drill is not competition but for kids to acquire Scripture knowledge and use it forever," said Belinda Stroud, an associate in the office of Sunday School and discipleship for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and coordinator of Alabama's Bible Drill ministry.

"We want participants to learn to use their Bibles to meet the challenges of life." Stroud said her department is seeing

an increase in the number of children and youth participating in Bible Drill ministry around the state. Part of that increase is motivated by parents, Stroud said.

"I meet so many adults that have children who participate in Bible Drill who are so grateful for it," she said. "They don't know Scripture or how to find verses like their kids do and they see how important it is for children to have God's Word in their hearts."



STROUD

Leaders and students alike can find it challenging to keep kids motivated to study their Bibles when so many other interests compete for their time. Students like Eden Walker, a 10th grader who attends First Baptist Church, Pell City, in St. Clair Baptist Association, often have music lessons, sports and other activities both at church and in their communities that keep them busy.

Walker's Bible Drill coach, Jessie Garrison of New Hope Baptist Church, Pell City,

in St. Clair Association said no one is busier than Walker.

Still they found time on Thursday afternoons to practice, and not only did Walker learn more about the Bible, she developed a great relationship with Garrison.

Like Stroud, Garrison believes students benefit from having God's Word in their hearts.

"They may not realize it, but when they need the Scripture, it will just come from deep inside them," Garrison said.

Walker's dad, Mark, the student minister at First, Pell City, agreed.

"Bible Drill gets the Word of God in their minds and hearts whether they go home with a trophy or not," he said. "Trophies will tarnish, but the Word of God will stay sharp." ❧

"Bible Drill gets the Word of God in [students'] minds and hearts whether they go home with a trophy or not."

Mark Walker
student minister, FBC Pell City



Photo by Carrie Brown McWhorter

Eden Walker (right), a 10th grader who attends FBC Pell City, reviews a Bible Drill card with her coach Jessie Garrison of New Hope Baptist Church, Pell City, prior to the start of the regional competition at Meadowbrook Baptist Church, Oxford, on April 21.



Photo by Doug Rogers

Tenth grader Audrey Richardson (right) of Liberty Hill Baptist Church, Collinsville, in DeKalb Baptist Association participates in the 2015 State Bible Drill at Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, on April 25.

Growing closer to God

Fellowship, competitive spirit drives Collinsville's Liberty Hill youth Bible Driller

By Audrey Richardson
Special to The Alabama Baptist

At first I didn't want to compete in Bible Drill. I wanted to learn the verses without the competition part. However, if you know me, you know I'm very competitive and hate losing, no matter what it is.

After a lot of encouragement from Ms. Ashley Wright, my mom and Mr. Rusty Chastain at the associational Bible Drills kickoff, I decided to give it all a shot.

About halfway through the season of studying and practicing, I wanted to quit all of it because I was extremely stressed. I felt like I never had time to study because I was juggling sports and family time as well.

I told my mom I wanted to quit and her reply was blunt: "I'm not forcing you anymore, but you have to tell Ashley." That gave me the motivation I needed. I knew I couldn't tell Ms. Ashley I wanted to quit, not after how much hard work she puts into Bible Drill. I decided to continue with Bible Drill and practice as often as I could.

At the beginning of Bible Drills in October 2014, I was on fire and excited. I studied for 25 to 30 minutes every day. I started with the "Key Biblical Passages" part of my card and got the hard ones out of the

way first. Then I went to the "Steps to Salvation" and finally the "What We Believe" section to learn large chunks of Scripture.

I found that a great way for me to memorize is to write the verses on a dry erase board and erase word-by-word or phrase-by-phrase, saying the words aloud until I have completely erased all of them and I can recite the verse or passage.

With shorter verses like the "Steps to Salvation," I say them aloud over and over until I know them. For the very long sections of Scripture, I try to learn one to two verses a day by writing them on a dry erase board. It normally takes five to seven days to learn a passage, depending on how long it is.

I enjoy the knowledge of the Bible I gain from participating in Bible Drill and

the competition is fun sometimes. However, what I really enjoy is the fellowship I get with my fellow Bible Drillers while growing closer to God.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Audrey Richardson is a 10th grader at Sand Rock High School in Leesburg. She participates in youth Bible Drill at Liberty Hill Baptist Church, Collinsville, in DeKalb Baptist Association. Her teacher is Ashley Wright. She competed at her church, associational, regional and state drills this year.

"I enjoy the knowledge of the Bible I gain from participating in Bible Drill."

Audrey Richardson
10th grade student

State Bible Drill & Speakers Tournament

2015 winners

The 2015 State Bible Drill and Speakers Tournament were held April 25 at Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery. The winners of each division are listed below.



YOUTH BIBLE DRILL
(L to r) third place, Joshua Lance, Antioch Baptist Church, Fyffe; first place, Hamilton Gill, FBC Theodore; second place, Lee Borowski, Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile

HIGH SCHOOL BIBLE DRILL

(L to r) first place, Paul Last, Harmony Baptist Church, Hillsboro; second place, Samantha Taylor, Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham



SPEAKERS TOURNAMENT
(L to r) third place, Hayleigh Sprague, Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile; first place, Erin Hall, Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham; second place, Arienne Borowski, Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile

Photos by Doug Rogers

Long-term REALITY

Pray for Nepali people to know Jesus as Savior

(continued from page 1)
because local shops had run out of such supplies. But by May 5 a source of rice had been secured. BGR Executive Director Jeff Palmer said, "Our team and their partners have been able to make deliveries to two communities (outside of the city). In one of these — a community of 45 homes that was completely destroyed — these were the first relief goods the community had seen."

Horton said the DART team and the local committee would continue to look for "the gaps" where other aid organizations and the government had not yet reached or had overlooked.

Other organizations working hard to aid the Nepali people are Baptist World Alliance, American Red Cross, Samaritan's Purse, World Vision, UNICEF and Habitat for Humanity International, to name a few.

Nepalis are beginning to get over the initial shock of the destruction and must now come to terms with the long-term reality of rebuilding their lives, said

Pat Melancon, BGR's managing director of disaster response and training.

"In the initial week after the disaster people are not sure what's needed for long term. Everyone is focused on just surviving,"

Melancon said. "Now the reality hits of getting past that stage and starting life."

For Tamang and other Christians in Nepal the earthquake may have been devastating but they believe God has opened doors to share the gospel through it.

"Our church may be small but we can do important work for the Kingdom," he said. "Now is the time. People will ask why

are we doing this. And we will simply say, 'Because our God loves you and so do we.'"

BGR leadership and Christians in Nepal asked believers to pray:

► For those who have lost their homes. Officials estimate that nearly 80 percent of homes built in Nepal are not "earthquake ready." They are made of mud bricks and many crumbled,

especially in the mountain villages.

► For the farmers. It's planting season. If they can't get crops planted now, the entire country will suffer with a food shortage next year.

► For the people of Nepal to know Jesus as Savior. Less than 3 percent of Nepal's 28.8 million people are followers of Jesus. (BGR, BP, TAB)



IMB photo

Worship leaders lead a song during a gathering in Nepal on May 2. It was the same song they were singing when an earthquake destroyed their church building one week earlier.

TAB says goodbye to 2 interns as they graduate



Intern graduates

Photo by Neisha Roberts

Dwight Davis (left) and Caitlin Lea work as interns at *The Alabama Baptist*. They recently graduated from seminary and college, respectively. Davis, who worked mainly with local editions at the paper, earned his master of divinity from Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham on May 6. Lea, who worked in the editorial department and in public relations, earned her bachelor of liberal arts in public relations degree from Auburn University on May 10. Lea will continue with *TAB* through the summer.

Ministry Tips



USING MULTIMEDIA IN WORSHIP

By Pastor Ray Cummings
Golden Acres Baptist Church, Phenix City

One of our roles as worship leaders is to help create an atmosphere where people experience Jesus in multifaceted ways.

A few years ago, we added two new worship screens on the outer

sides of our platform. We call these two the "side screens" and the larger two on both sides of the baptistry the "main screens."

► **Put Scripture on them during singing.** Sometimes when songs are displayed on our two main screens, we put corresponding Scripture verses on the two side screens.

This allows us to give scriptural foundations to the songs. The Scripture helps us focus more on Him as we are singing.

► **Leave the main points on them during preaching.** As the two main screens progress with supporting Scripture, the two side screens will still have the current sermon point.

This allows the congregation to follow the sermon more easily while allowing them to see the Scripture references and the points at the same time.

We try to use variety and create an atmosphere where visual learners can worship God and get a glimpse of His glory. 🙏

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Dot Bostrom

*First Baptist Church, Jackson
Clarke Baptist Association*

FAVORITE VERSES:
Psalm 100:1-5

FAVORITE HYMN:
"In the Garden"

HOBBIES: China painting,
reading, sewing

FAMILY STATUS: Widow for
seven years after 65 years
of marriage to husband,
Marion; daughters, Terri
Henley; Tena Hoyle;
Tam Horton; Tanya Overton and Tracey Nance; 12
grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren



BOSTROM

Dot Bostrom, of Jackson, has a heart for exceptional individuals. In fact, 54 years ago she established a Sunday School class for individuals with special needs and continues to teach it. Once a week she also goes to Clarke County Association for Retarded Citizens to read a book or Bible story to participants. In addition she has a love for China painting and teaches three classes on it each week. These classes, which she has been leading for more than 20 years, even attract participants from other counties. Bostrom, 90, describes China painting as "an old, old art," one that she learned from her grandmother, Imogen Kirven. Through the years Bostrom has been involved in her church's choir, Woman's Missionary Union, missions efforts and various community organizations.

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

A: When I was a little girl I went to Sunbeams (now Mission Friends) and to church every Sunday. My parents carried me to church and influenced me to do the right thing. I was about 8 years old when I was baptized.

Q: When and how were you led into your ministry work?

A: By my mother when I was a child. She led me by getting me up every Sunday morning and taking me to church.

Q: What does your ministry work demand?

A: I prepare a lesson for every Sunday and I'm there every Sunday.

Q: What do you get from your ministry work?

A: I stay with the Lord. I get peace, joy and fulfillment.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: They are very supportive. They have been brought up like that. They help me when my class has a party.

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

A: As long as I'm able.

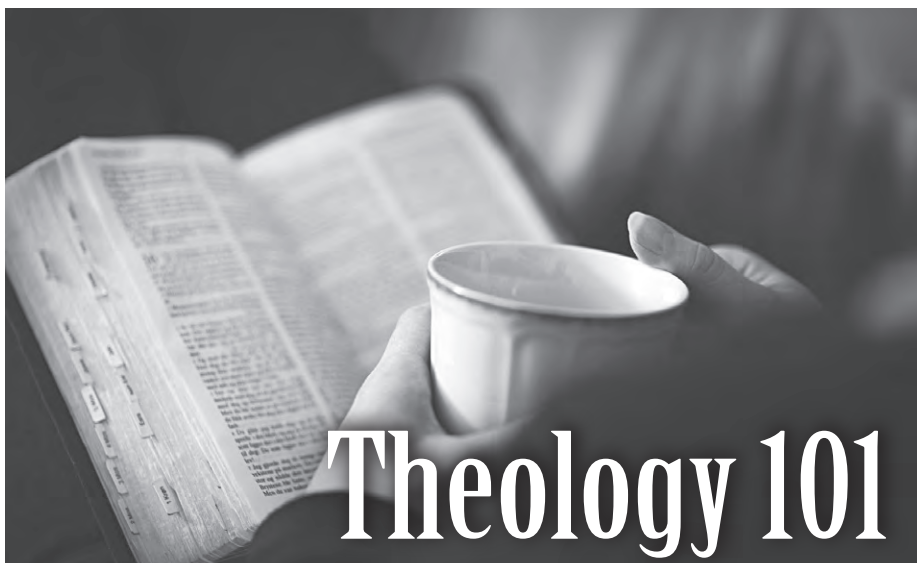
Q: What difference will this ministry work make for you in the future?

A: It will help keep me strong and keep my mind busy.

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

A: I can't imagine if I didn't have Jesus with me. 🙏

The "Someone You Should Know" column above is a corrected version of the column that ran in the May 7 issue.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Images of the Church

Church as Dispersion

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

The imagery of God's people as dispersion has roots in the story of His old covenant people, the Jews. By the time Jesus came, Jews had been scattered in many directions through forced deportation, living outside Palestine. The term "Diaspora" has come to be used to refer to the Jews who had relocated. This word speaks of a dispersion or scattering.

The idea of God's new covenant people, the Church, as a scattered people dispersed in the world is found in the New Testament. First Peter expressly refers to Christians in the churches in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia as "elect exiles of the dispersion" (1:1).

In the beginning, the Church was centered in Jerusalem. However, the persecution that arose after the stoning of Stephen resulted in a scattered Church: "There arose on that day a great persecution against the Church in Jerusalem and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria" (Acts 8:1). Although becoming a Church in dispersion, it did not cease doing what churches are charged to do. "Those who were scattered went about preaching the Word" (Acts 8:4).

Gathered and scattered

This week's image of the Church as a dispersion almost seems incongruous with last week's image of the Church as a citizenry. Citizenry implies cohesion and common location while dispersion speaks of a scattered people. When we think of the Church as all true believers in all places throughout all time, however, the Church universal is dispersed among all nations, tribes, peoples and languages.

In the case of the Church as a body of believers in a given location at a given time, in a sense even a local church is both gathered and scattered. On a typical Sunday the church gathers for worship but becomes a dispersed group between Sundays when it becomes God's scattered people. The congrega-

tion becomes dispersed to their homes, schools, workplaces and so forth.

One pastor said that if asked where his church was located, his proper answer would be, "It depends on what day of the week it is." His explanation was that if it was Sunday, his church was located at a certain intersection in his city, at least as many of the members as chose to honor the Lord's Day by participating in worship. However, if it was Monday, his church was in the marketplace, the office buildings, the schools and the homes scattered over the city. The Church is both the gathered and the scattered people of God.

The Church is the people

The imagery of the Church as a dispersion serves to remind us of what we all know: the Church is not the building but the people. What we look like and act like on Sunday should be what we look like and act like all the other days of the week. Although not gathered the other days, we are still the Church, the dispersed people of God. As a Christian "Diaspora," the Church is in its best position to be the light and salt that Jesus spoke about in the Sermon on the Mount. Scattered in the world, we are in the best position to be lights shining in a dark place by holding forth the Word of life by word and deed.

The ultimate hope of the Church is that it one day will no longer be dispersed throughout the world. John 11:52 tells us one purpose of Jesus' saving death is "to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad." 🙏

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.





Greg Moore, Birmingham Baptist Association disaster relief coordinator, who attends FBC Pinson, leads participants in a training session at FBC Trussville on May 1-2.



Photos courtesy of Birmingham Baptist Association

Above: Kyle Jeffreys (far right), Alabama Baptist's state feeding coordinator, leads participants in a demonstration. Below: Kyle Jeffreys (standing) leads a session at the disaster relief training event.

'Great opportunity'

Alabama Baptists learn about mass feeding units

More than 30 volunteers were trained on how to set up and run mass feeding units during a disaster relief training led by Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief leadership. The training was in partnership with Birmingham Baptist Association (BBA) at First Baptist Church, Trussville, on May 1-2.

Participants were shown the basics — from how to prepare meals to the process of serving on the front lines of a disaster or even operating The Salvation Army's mobile kitchen.

Kyle Jeffreys, Alabama Baptist's state feeding coordinator, led several training sessions.

"(The training) was a wonderful time of fellowship and ... the volunteers were so attentive," Jeffreys said. "They have a great opportunity to share Christ as they help hurting people during times of disastrous situations."

Greg Moore and his wife,

Becky, both BBA disaster relief coordinators, also led training sessions during the event. Mel Johnson, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions disaster relief strategist, opened the event and participated in several of the training sessions. (BBA, TAB)



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CHOCTAW

► **Towanda Gibson McLelland**, wife of retired Choctaw Association Director of Missions Franklin McLelland, died May 3. She was 66. She was active in church, teaching children's Sunday School and participating in Woman's Missionary Union and missions projects. She also was the association's ambassador to the Alabama Children's Homes & Family Ministries. She is survived



MCLELLAND

by her husband of 48 years, two children, three grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

MORGAN

► **Richard Richie** is the new pastor of **Blue Springs Church, Somerville**. Richie also serves as an Alabama trustee for the International Mission Board. He previously served as pastor of Flint Church, Decatur. He also served at Trinity Church, Roanoke. He holds a bachelor of science in operations management from Auburn University and a master of divinity from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. He is currently working toward earning a doctorate degree from Southern Seminary. He and his wife, Toni, have three children.



RICHIE

terprise, will hold Mega Sports Camp on May 31–June 5, 6–8:30 nightly. There will be basketball, baseball, cheerleading, football, frisbee and soccer fundamentals taught each night. For more information call 334-347-6082 or email clbc@clbconthe.net. Danny Wiggins is pastor.

MUD CREEK

► **Sparks Gap Church, Bessemer**, will hold a Fifth Sunday Singing on May 31, 1:30 p.m. The Waylighters will perform special music. Johnny Thacker is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Skyland Boulevard Church, Tuscaloosa**, will hold revival services May 24–27, 9:15 a.m., 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Sunday and 7 p.m. Monday–Wednesday. Bob Pitman will speak and Jim Young will perform special music. For more information call 205-553-7412. Jimmy Garner is pastor.

► **Corinth Church, Elrod**, will celebrate homecoming May 24, 10:30 a.m.–3 p.m. Lunch will be served at noon. The Songs of Faith will perform special music. Pastor Gene Dockery will speak. ☞

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Ukrainian church leaders call for unity, solidarity

Ukrainian church leaders called on the global Christian community to show solidarity with the people of Ukraine at an April 28 consultation in London.

Sixty delegates from faith-based and humanitarian agencies in Ukraine, Russia, the United Kingdom and across Europe grappled with questions about how the Church should respond to ongoing conflict being viewed by some as a holy war, according to BMS World Mission, which was founded in 1792 by Baptists in England and today is closely tied to the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

The delegates adopted the London Consultation Resolution on Ukraine which described "serious challenges in areas of religious freedom, human rights and religious diversity" in Crimea and parts of eastern Ukraine occupied by pro-Russian separatists.

'Monopolizing ideology'

The religious leaders are concerned that a "pan-Slavic Orthodoxy" ideal of restoring the so-called "Russian world" to the center of Eastern Orthodoxy prior to Communism "is now monopolizing ideology and practice in these regions."

"Orthodox confessions that are not affiliated with the Moscow Patriarchate face the constant threat of discrimination and persecution," the resolution said. "Catholics, Protestants and other religious minorities are likewise suffering violent persecution and are in need of our solidarity and advocacy."

Tony Peck, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation (EBF), toured eastern Ukraine in April with Ukrainian Baptist leaders. While the EBF delegation did not enter the areas occupied by pro-Russian separatists, Peck said, they met with pastors from the region who traveled up to nine hours to get to a meeting after being turned back at several checkpoints.

Nearly all the pastors reported that their churches opened doors to people displaced by the conflict. While some were initially reluctant, Peck said, attitudes changed — and so did churches. "I reflect especially on the strained relations between Russian and Ukrainian Baptists at the present time and what we can do as the EBF to provide a space for a coming together and, ultimately, healing and reconciliation," Peck said.

The resolution encouraged the global Christian community to respond to appeals for humanitarian assistance and urged relevant agencies "to collaborate more closely with the Church in Ukraine at the grassroots level to enhance the carrying out of relief efforts."

Delegates appealed to Christians worldwide "to demonstrate solidarity with the Ukrainian people, particularly with Christians who are suffering persecution in the occupied territories of southern and eastern Ukraine" and committed to "the development of formal and informal partnerships that will advocate for religious freedom and social justice in Ukraine through international networking and the sharing of resources." (BNG)

in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders, friends

Kathleen Vaughan Prude

Former TAB office manager dies at 93

Kathleen Vaughan Prude, who served at *The Alabama Baptist* for 20 years, died May 3. She was 93.

Prude attended Fairfield High School, Alabama College for Women (now the University of Montevallo) and Samford University in Birmingham.



PRUDE

She spent more than 60 years teaching Sunday School classes and wrote curriculum materials for youth and youth leadership. She was active in denominational life and served in different capacities at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center in North Carolina and Glorieta Baptist Conference Center (now Glorieta 2.0) in New Mexico.

She was an active member of Mountain Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham, for 45 years.

Prude's work at the paper lives on through information she compiled during her tenure for the monthly column, "Historical Highlights." When she began at the paper she worked at the front desk and later became the office manager.

She was preceded in death by her husband of 68 years, Marvin Louis Prude. She is survived by one daughter, three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. (TAB)

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CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR: First Baptist Church of Enterprise is seeking a full-time senior pastor. Salary based on experience and education. Send resumés to: Pastor Search Committee, FBC Enterprise, 302 North Main Street, Enterprise, AL 36330.

PASTOR: Thomaston Baptist Church in Thomaston, Ala., is seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumés to: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 131, Thomaston, AL 36783, or email resumés to: jeffladuron101@yahoo.com.

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, or email: tbohbarris@gmail.com.

MINISTER OF MUSIC & EDUCATION: Ridgecrest Baptist Church is accepting resumés for the position of full-time minister of music and education. Interested parties should mail resumés to: Ridgecrest Baptist Church, c/o Search Committee, 912 31st Street

E, Tuscaloosa, AL 35405, or email resumés to: rbcsheri@comcast.net.

MINISTER OF MUSIC: Five Points Baptist Church, Sylacauga, is accepting resumés for their bivocational minister of music position. Applicants should submit resumés to: Personnel Committee, P.O. Box 2447, Sylacauga, AL 35150 or jthayessr@gmail.com.

DIRECTOR OF STUDENT MINISTRIES: First Baptist Church, New Tazewell, Tenn., is accepting resumés for a full-time director of student ministries. Email resumés to: fbcnewtazewell@centurytel.net.

MINISTER OF YOUTH: East Highland Baptist Church in Hartselle is accepting resumés for a bivocational youth minister through June 12. Send resumés via email to: searchcommitteeehbc@gmail.com.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES: Shades Crest Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., is seeking a full-time associate pastor of children and families. Primary responsibilities include oversight of all 1st-6th grade ministries and the development

of ministries focused on 18-44 year olds. Shades Crest is a CBF/SBC congregation that is multigenerational, missions-minded, and family-friendly. Interested candidates should submit a resumé to: children.minister.search@gmail.com by May 31.

CHILDREN'S MINISTER: First Baptist Church, Madison, Ala., is seeking a children's minister, part-time (20 hours per week). Please send resumés to: office@fbcmadison.net, or mail to: ATTN: Search Committee, 4257 Sullivan Street, Madison, AL 35758.

OTHER POSITIONS

KEYBOARD PLAYER: Wilton Baptist Church in Wilton, Ala. (near Montevallo), is prayerfully seeking a keyboard player. Send resumés to: gregsellors@yahoo.com or P.O. Box 160, Wilton, AL 35187.

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Want to know GOD?

Pastor Brett Burleson
Dayspring Baptist Church, Mobile

I don't know about you but I hate it when things break. In a perfect world things would work properly and continue to do so. But things do indeed break in this world. And when something is broken you have two options: fix it or replace it.

These options are simple enough if we're talking about something like a toy, an electronic device or an appliance. But what about our inner being? What do you do when you come to the point of realizing that your actual humanity is broken?

One option would be to fix it. But the problem is this option doesn't work for the human soul. Perhaps you have already discovered this. Frustrated with your own shortcomings, you've made resolutions and determined to turn over a new leaf only to know in your heart of hearts that there's still an inner depravity that isn't really getting any better. The anger? Still there. The lust? Still there. And it's not that you haven't tried. You have. But nothing has really changed. That's because we don't have the ability to fix our broken selves.

So what do we do about our depravity and brokenness? Simply stated, there needs to be a replacement. We need a new mind and a new heart. Our very nature needs to be replaced with a different one. And this is what makes the gospel of Jesus good news. Jesus offers new life.

The Bible teaches us: All of us are infected with a sinful nature (Rom. 3:23). The end result of sin is spiritual death (Rom. 6:23). Jesus, who knew no sin, died in the place of sinners (Rom. 5:8). Those who turn to Jesus are made new on the inside (2 Cor. 5:17). All of this is a gift from God, not something we earn or deserve (Eph. 2:8-9).

We don't have to live out our lives alienated from God. Jesus, with His own blood, has offered the perfect sacrifice for sin. And every single broken human who calls on His name will be saved and made new. That includes me. And it includes you. 🙏

A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

Portraits of Jesus

Jesus the Light — John 8:12

The setting and timing of “the Feast of Tabernacles,” also known as the Feast of Booths, sets the pace for us in this passage. The celebration, also known as Ingathering or simply “the Feast,” is rooted in history. It’s representative of the moment when the children of Israel are led from Egypt to the Promised Land. The Feast lasted seven days and came at the end of the year.

Each morning just before dawn the priests would go to the eastern gate of the temple and as the sun rose they would turn toward the temple reciting sacred words (Ezek. 8:16). Then they would draw water at the pool of Siloam for the day. That evening large lamps were lit that were located between the Court of the Women and the Court of the Gentiles. Music and dance would commence to celebrate the moment when God led them out of bondage to freedom, as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Ex. 13:21).

You know, it’s important we never forget where we come from. We are told the brightness of the golden lamps literally illuminated Jerusalem. It’s at that moment when our Lord steps forth and declares with authority, “I Am.”

Those two words take us back to that moment when Moses, somewhat fearful and hesitant, is being sent to Pharaoh to demand the release of God’s children. Moses asked reluctantly, “By what authority do I make this demand?” and “Who will I say sent me?” God tells him, “I Am” sent you (Ex. 3:13–14). J. Wash Watts defined it this way, “I Am what I Am, Who I always have been and always will be, I Am.” Jesus, the Great “I Am,” has the authority sent by the Father.

Moment of creation

In the brilliance of the light of this moment, Jesus declares, “I am the Light” (John 8:12); not a light but the Light. I think of that moment at creation, the earth without form, darkness on the face of the deep and God said, “Let there be light” there was and is to this day and then He said, “That’s good” (Gen. 1:1–5).

Earlier in John’s Gospel, which was written to a lost world, John writes, “In Him was life and that life was the light of men; the light shines in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not” (John

By Rusty Sowell

Rusty Sowell has been pastor of Providence Baptist Church, Opelika, for 31 years. He is a graduate of Clarke College in Newton, Miss.; Mobile College (now University of Mobile); New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary; and Drew University in Madison, N.J. He and his wife, Gina, have two children.



1:4–5). Literally “darkness could not suppress the light” or as another said, “The light chases away the darkness.”

Lord knows we need more light today. This darkness led by the Prince of Darkness can no longer be ignored. As the old spiritual reminds us, “Children, there’s a dark cloud rising.” It’s dark outside. “How dark is it,” you ask?

Precious life

Life in the womb is not sacred and we’ve reached the uncivilized point where life outside the womb is no longer precious. Now an epidemic has overtaken us to such despair that some have reached the point where they consider life no longer worth living. It’s dark outside.

Our Judeo-Christian values are not simply scoffed at but we now reside in an era where those values are abhorred, an era where our brothers and sisters in distant lands are not just persecuted but martyred for their faith. It’s dark outside.

Isaiah told us this day would come. A day where evil would be called good and vice versa and darkness would be called light (Isa. 5:20). The darkness that floods our land and souls today doesn’t need a light but the Light. No wonder the psalmist David declared, “The Lord is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear?” (Ps. 27:1).

Friends it is the Light that will guide us through this darkness and the danger we face in this journey called life. “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path” (Ps. 119:105).

“Whoever follows Me need never walk in darkness, but he will enjoy the light that means life” (John 8:12). As we reflect upon this word from God — the history of the

moment, the authority, the light — it is that phrase, “Whoever follows Me” that should enlighten us today. It speaks of a life given wholly to the One who gave His all for us. It is both an uncompromising expectation and a timely promise — for one to commit him- or herself without wavering to the example and calling of our Lord.

I remember hearing Ray Robbins say years ago that the essence of the Christian life is “a human life lived in openness to the living God” and “The more of your life you open to God the more of the life of God comes within you and the more like Him you become.” The more we allow His light within us the more light we have to chase away the darkness. It’s a promise from God Himself through His Son — we don’t have to walk in darkness. When our Lord stood in the midst of “the Feast” it’s a symbol of how the Hand of God was leading His people to the Promised Land. He said, “I am the Light.” Not a light but the Light, not a way but the Way, not a truth but the Truth. He’s telling us it’s going to be alright. I’ve got this, you can trust Me.

Therefore having seen the Light we don’t have to be afraid of the dark anymore, we’re going to make it to the Promised Land. Like the children of Israel we find ourselves between Egypt and the Promised Land but the Light has come and He will guide us through these dark and dangerous days.

Shine the Light

I love the story Timothy George tells of a personal experience with George Taylor, a pastor in New York City. Taylor told about preaching in Louisiana during those early Depression years.

He served an African-American church during both difficult and trying times. A single small light bulb was the only light in the small sanctuary. The power failed and there was total darkness way out in the rural area. Taylor, a young preacher at the time, struggled to know what to do. An old deacon shouted from the back, “Preach on, preacher. We can still see Jesus in the dark.”

Isaiah tells us, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light, those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them the light has shined” (Isa. 9:2). As the hymn reminds us, “Shine, Jesus, Shine.” ☪

Dedicated to learning

Samford names Hardin new provost

Samford University has appointed J. Michael Hardin as the new provost, effective July 1, according to a May 1 announcement by Samford President Andrew Westmoreland.

Hardin currently serves as dean of the Culverhouse College of Commerce at the University of Alabama (UA) and will replace J. Bradley Creed, Samford’s provost since 2002. Creed will become president of Campbell University in North Carolina on July 1.

In addition to his administrative duties as chief academic officer, Hardin will be professor of quantitative analysis in Samford’s Brock School of Business. At UA he serves as Russell Professor of Business and a professor of statistics, and he also is an adjunct professor of biostatistics in the School of Public Health at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Hardin’s appointment follows a national search that yielded more than 100 candidates. He was involved in several interviews with a 19-member, university-wide search committee and two days of on-campus visits with university leadership and representatives of various constituency groups.

“I count myself extraordinarily fortunate to receive and accept the invitation to become Samford University provost, a position enabling me to integrate my faith with my lifelong dedication to learning,” Hardin said. “I am grateful to share Dr. Westmoreland’s vision for Samford’s future, and I look forward to working alongside this man of high character and intellect at such a key point in Samford’s history.”

Diversity of experience

Hardin brings a diversity of experience to Samford, Westmoreland noted, in addition to his academic administrative experience. Hardin serves as a consultant to health care organizations in data analysis, sampling and program integrity. He is a prolific writer and guest speaker in the areas of database design and decision support systems and he is an ordained Baptist minister.

Hardin has been Culverhouse dean since 2011 and he oversees a college with a \$50 million annual budget and more than 8,000 undergraduate and graduate students.

He earned his doctorate from UA, where he also completed a master of arts degree in mathematics. Additionally he has bachelor’s degrees from the University of West Florida in Pensacola, a master’s degree in research design and statistics from Florida State University in Tallahassee, Fla., and a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. (Samford)



HARDIN

“And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?” 1 Cor. 14:8

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Defining identities

Two-thirds of Americans believe religious student groups should have right to not allow LGBT leaders

A dispute over who can lead student religious groups has left Americans uneasy, but few want to see groups punished for requiring their leaders to hold specific beliefs or practices.

A new study from LifeWay Research finds mixed opinions about whether student religious groups should be allowed to mandate leaders' beliefs or, because of their religious beliefs, restrict LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual

and transgender) members from leadership roles. Yet nearly 7 in 10 say colleges should not withhold funding or meeting space from such organizations.

Student groups say their belief statements and ethics define their identity. College officials — citing what are known as “all-comers” rules — insist groups and their leadership be open to all students.

Groups at more than two dozen campuses have lost their official standing over this disagreement. One dispute at the Hastings College of Law in California went be-

fore the U.S. Supreme Court. Lawmakers in several states have proposed laws that would bar colleges from applying “all-comers” rules to on-campus religious groups.

Ed Stetzer, executive director of LifeWay Research, observed, “Recent university restrictions on beliefs and practices of student group leadership are a sharp contrast to admissions offices that celebrate pluralism, residential programs that encourage diversity and schools that encourage new thinking. Oddly, these ‘all-comers’ policies lead to the idea that even Oscar Mayer should be allowed to lead the Vegetarian Club.”

LifeWay Research asked 1,000 Americans to respond to this statement in a phone survey: “Should student religious organizations, recognized by publicly funded colleges, be allowed to require their leaders to hold specific beliefs?”

About half (48 percent) said no. A similar number (46 percent) said yes.

Researchers also asked Ameri-

cans whether colleges should restrict student groups that do not allow gay and lesbian students to be leaders.

Funding, space

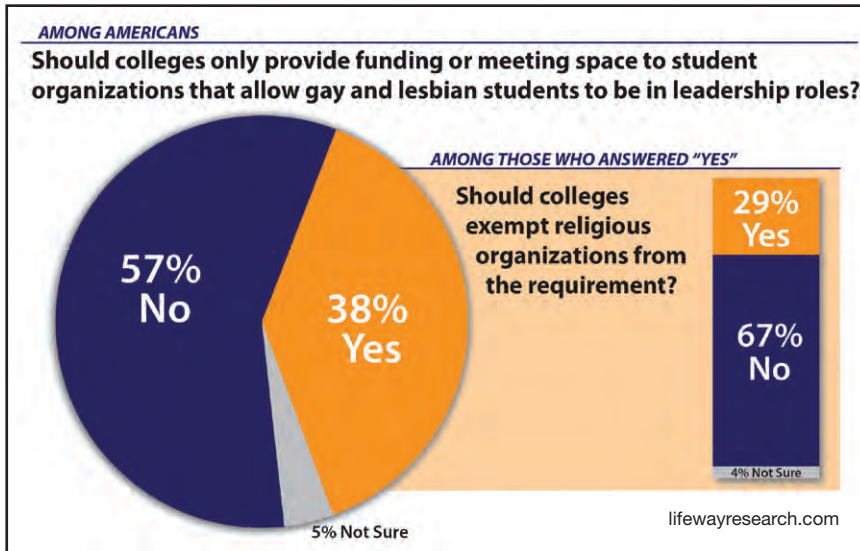
Just over a third (38 percent) said colleges should give funding and meeting space only to groups that allow gay and lesbian leaders.

Nones are more likely (48 percent) to want to see limits on groups that ban gay leaders than Christians (37 percent) or those from other faiths (25 percent).

Support for a restriction lessens when religious objections come

into play. Those who support the restriction were asked whether colleges should “exempt religious organizations that object to homosexual behavior from this requirement.” More than a quarter (29 percent) of this subset affirmed religious organizations should be exempt.

The combined response to the questions indicates 68 percent of Americans believe colleges should not withhold funding or meeting space from religious student organizations that do not allow gay and lesbian students to be in leadership roles. (LifeWay)



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TRUE HOPE Malachi 1:1-11

True Love (1-5)

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament, written around 430 B.C. He was writing in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah after the captives had come back to Israel and the temple had been rebuilt. However, there was a spiritual lethargy among the people. The Israelites were questioning God's love for them, but in verses 2-5 God lays out how He has in fact shown love to them.

We may be tempted to do the same thing. We may question whether or not God loves us because we look at our circumstances and they don't seem to show His love. However, we need to look at things the way God sees them.

It is easy for us in America to look at our situation and think we would be better off if things were different. We may not have gotten that promotion at work or lost a job or even a loved one. How does God love us when bad things happen?

First we need to remember our circumstances do not dictate God's love for us (Rom. 8:35). God loves us even when things don't seem to be going our way. Do not fall into the trap that some have of thinking that if God loves us we will be well-off financially or that we will be "happy." It is common in America to hear the phrase "God wants me to be happy" to justify all sorts of sinful behavior, from cheating on taxes to getting divorces. God doesn't want us to be happy, He wants us to be obedient and joyful in all circumstances (1 Thess. 5:16).

Second we don't have to look far to see that God does in fact love us. There is no clearer indication of this than in Romans 5:8 which states, "But God demonstrates His love for us in this — while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." God's love for us is shown through the death of Christ, not through our circumstances.

True Worship (6-10)

In spite of God's love for His people,

the Israelites were living in disobedience. The priests were offering unsatisfactory animals on the altar. In the sacrificial system, God only asked for the first fruits to demonstrate dependence on God and love for Him. Bringing a blind or lame animal meant the offerer was putting his own interests over obedience to God.

We also need to be on the lookout for "bad priests" today. There are many pastors who do not teach God's Word. For example many pastors teach that God's blessings are manifested in financial well-being. Others teach that God does not love all people and others teach that living an actively homosexual lifestyle is not sinful. We need to be on our guard against false teachers and be sure to know what the Bible teaches so we won't be led astray.

True Greatness (11)

The Jews were not honoring God with their sacrifices because their offerings were worthless. However, God pointed out that one day all nations would honor Him with their actions and attitudes. This does not suggest that all nations are currently doing this through their own religious systems. Other religions are not honoring to God at all — they are all false.

There is only one way to God the Father and that is through Jesus the Son (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Any religion that does not teach this is false.

Instead this passage is saying there will be a day when God is truly honored in all the nations when Jesus returns. The Second Coming of Jesus is when the nations will be judged but those who acknowledge Jesus as Lord will be saved and, as we can see today, the name of Jesus is being taught and proclaimed in nations throughout the world. This is a task we need to continue to promote with our lips, pocket-books and actions. We need to be supporting missions around our cities, nation and world because God's name deserves to be honored by all peoples and it is through the proclamation of the gospel that this happens. 📖

Bible Studies for Life By Michael K. Wilson, M.R.E. Director, Resource Center for Pastoral Excellence, Samford University

STICK WITH SERVICE Galatians 5:13-15; 6:1-5, 10

Winston Churchill once said, "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." If we truly want to have relationships that are durable and life enriching, we need to understand the importance of giving. Our giving can and will take many forms and may at times seem small and insignificant in terms of benefit to others. This should not prevent us from offering what we have in service of others.

When we focus on helping others more than helping ourselves we discover durable relationships are one result. This Sunday's lesson helps us understand why this is the case.

Show your love by serving the other person. (5:13-15)

The Galatian Christians were dealing with teachings of the Judaizers, who believed followers of Christ should also observe the teachings of the Law. In the case of the Galatian church, circumcision became the "hot button" issue and a source of contention. Paul's word to the Galatians was they were freed from burdensome rules and ritual requirements of the Law.

As a result of Christ's grace, new law persons can truly experience freedom to live with joy and peace and hope.

However, Paul offers a cautionary word. This freedom can become a starting place for all kinds of temptation. What can be done to help? "Through love be enslaved to one another" (v. 13b). All of the Law's rules and rituals and regulations are fulfilled by "love your neighbor as yourself" (v. 14). This one word, "love," is used in the sense of a commandment. Paul says the one who loves his or her neighbor has fulfilled the Law (Rom. 13:8-10) and all the other commandments are summed up in this one.

Without that love of neighbor, arguments and disagreements about doctrine or right living can become contentious. The vivid, figurative caution against al-

lowing disagreements to become like "biting and tearing each other to pieces" (v. 15) is relevant for us today. It's far better to be slaves to one another, loving each other in the same way as we love ourselves.

Serving others means helping to carry their burdens. (6:1-5)

The old Southern saying "every tub has to sit on its own bottom" fits Paul's counsel to the Galatians — and to us as well. However, Paul is not suggesting we are without help as we live the life of discipleship. Indeed we are each responsible for our own words and deeds.

But when our relationships are built on love for one another, we take an interest in what is happening in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We have compassion and empathy for them in their times of struggle, whether with temptation or with calamity.

Each of us knows what it feels like to be disappointed by the words or deeds of others. More often than not, rather than recalling disappointments by others, we remember those who reach out to help when our burdens seem overwhelming.

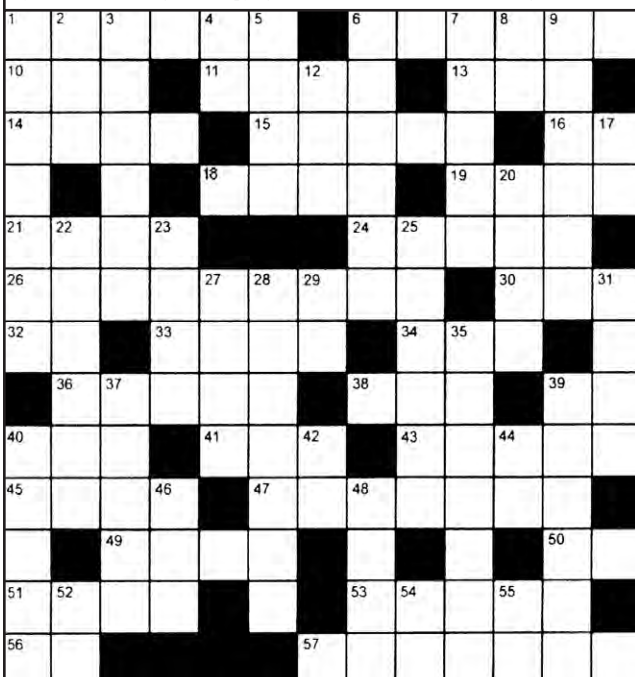
Our burdens may be in the form of making Christ-honoring decisions or choices. Knowing we have relationships with others who care deeply, who come alongside to help bear our burdens can make all the difference. Their prayers, willingness to listen, caring hearts — or honest and frank words that convict — make the Church a community with relationships of care and compassion unlike any other.

Seize every opportunity to serve. (6:10)

"Compassion fatigue" is weariness that sometimes comes to those who serve others. We are called to serve just as Christ served. What are we to do when the persistent needs of others seem to exceed our capacity to give? If we all practiced "love one another" as Jesus commanded (John 15:12) with all people, there would be no such thing as compassion fatigue. 📖

Christian Crossword

By Jennifer Breeding Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. ___ them that are rich in this world. (1 Tim. 6:17)
6. Gurgle.
10. Electrically charged atom.
11. Pungent scent.
13. Expend.
14. Temporary dwelling. (Ex. 33:10)
15. Happily.
16. Transit Authority. (abbr.)
18. They went into the ___ of swine. (Matt. 8:32)
19. What Eve does to the fruit. (Gen. 3:13)
21. Earnest enthusiasm.
24. Ye see how ___ a letter I have written unto you. (Gal. 6:11)
26. The Lord my God will ___ my darkness. (Ps. 18:28)
30. Do not ___, my beloved brethren. (James 1:16)
32. Thou shalt have ___ other gods before Me. (Ex. 20:3)
33. Spoke.
34. Leah's relationship to Rachel.

Down

36. Whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day ___ the seventh day. (Ex. 12:15)
38. Nocturnal bird of prey.
39. Bachelor of Arts. (abbr.)
40. Long ___ and far away.
41. Tender loving care. (abbr.)
43. Rebuke not an ___, but entreat him as a father. (1 Tim. 5:1)
45. Unfreeze.
47. And the world passeth away, and the lust ___. (1 John 2:17)
49. Heavenly headpiece.
50. For anger resteth in the bosom ___ fools. (Eccles. 7:9)
51. Snoopy.
53. Rocking ___.
56. Emergency Room. (abbr.)
57. Refrigerator.
5. He does not what the ___. (Eccles. 10:10)
6. Harness for guiding a horse.
7. Let not the ___ rejoice, nor the seller mourn. (Ezek. 7:12)
8. Bachelor of Science. (abbr.)
9. Serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the ___. (Rom. 7:6)
12. Paddle.
17. But as many ___ received him, to them gave he power. (John 1:12)
20. "Rock of ___, Cleft for Me."
22. Lest there be not ___ for us. (Matt. 25:9)
23. Itemize.
25. A soft ___ turneth away wrath. (Prov. 15:1)
27. The stride of a horse.
28. A small mountain peak.
29. Touchdown. (abbr.)
31. To raise a child.
35. Against the law.
37. Belonging to the

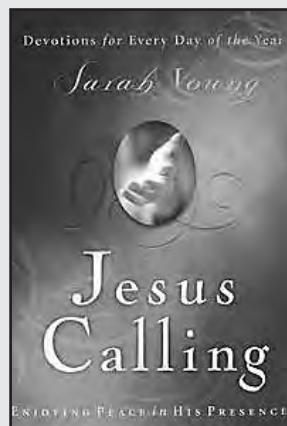
- world's most famous boat builder.
39. ___ the mountains were brought forth. (Ps. 90:2)
40. Pay the penalty.
42. Chapter. (abbr.)
44. Who by him ___ believe in God. (1 Pet. 1:21)
46. I am the ___, the Truth, and the Life. (John 14:6)
48. Every one.
52. ___ what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matt. 16:26)
54. Greeting.
55. Illinois. (abbr.)



TOP 8

best-selling books

CHRISTIAN LIVING



1. Jesus Calling
By Sarah Young
(Integrity Publishers)

2. The Best Yes
By Lysa TerKeurst
(Thomas Nelson)

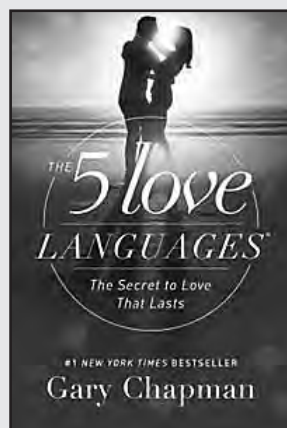
**3. Jesus Calling:
Large Print Deluxe
Edition**
By Sarah Young
(Thomas Nelson)



4. Counter Culture
By David Platt
(Tyndale House)

5. A Mother's Prayer
By Thomas Nelson writers
(Thomas Nelson)

**6. God's Promises for
Graduates**
By Jack Countryman
(Thomas Nelson)



**7. What to Do When
You Don't Know
What to Do**
By David Jeremiah
(David C Cook)

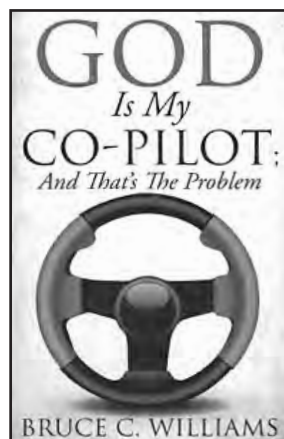
**8. The 5 Love
Languages**
By Gary Chapman
(Northfield)

Source: lifeway.com at press time

Media reviews

By Martine Bates Sharp

God is My Co-Pilot; And That's the Problem



Bruce C. Williams.
Maitland, Fla.; Xulon
Press, 2014. 102 pp.
(Paperback).

This little book is the result, according to the author, of a sermon he preached in 2001. We all remember the bumper sticker from a couple of decades ago that inspired the title. Bruce C. Williams contends that if God is your co-pilot, you have a problem.

The book is divided into sections that discuss what it means for Jesus to be in the driver's seat of your life, in the passenger seat, in the trunk (to be pulled out in case of emergency, like a spare tire) and not in the car at all, with a section on backseat drivers (those who tell Jesus how things should be done).

The book is a mix of scriptural teachings and personal anecdotes written in an engaging style. It would have been easier to follow if there had been a table of contents that showed the chapter titles; it took me a while to figure out where the book was going — or, more accurately, how it was going to get there. It helps the reader to have the “big picture” laid out; it is easy to get lost otherwise. Yes I am that church member who has a hard time following the sermon if the outline is not projected on the screen behind the pastor.

Williams is pastor of Goodman Baptist Church, Enterprise, in Coffee Baptist Association.

The Greatest Rural Church in America: How One Man's Vision Became an Amazing Reality

W. Scott Moore.
Rogersville, Ala.: El-
eos Press, 2014. 230
pp. (Paperback).

There is a place in Gulf Shores that claims to have the best fried chicken in the world. We keep meaning to stop at that service station and

see if the claim is true because my husband loves fried chicken. But a service station?

How about the greatest rural church in America? Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Moulton? In nearby (to me) Lawrence County? Hmmm. I had to read about this.

I soon discovered “The Greatest Rural Church in America” is not really about Pleasant Grove Baptist at all; it is about a former pastor, the late Jackie Shelton, and how he grew the church. The author served under Shelton's leadership on two occasions but focuses in the book on the period from 1984 to 1987, a period of tremendous growth. While Shelton's techniques might not work everywhere, the author tried them in Ohio and had quite a bit of success.

I sometimes complain about authors failing to give their readers enough information; Moore must have been reading my reviews. He included an author's note, a foreword (by the beloved evangelist Junior Hill, no less), an introduction and enough charts, graphs, photos and references to satisfy even the most demanding reader.

All this and an interesting, well-written book too? Ah ... I'm happy.

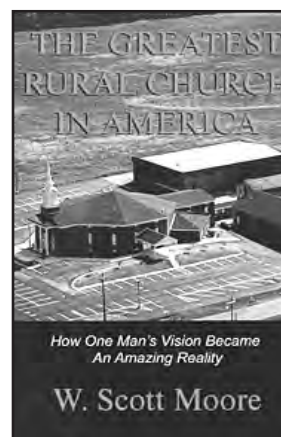
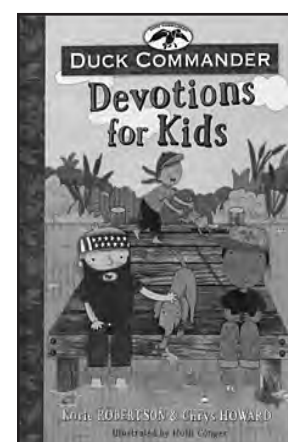
Duck Commander Devotions for Kids

Korie Robertson and Chris Howard. Nashville: Tommy Nelson, 2015. 223 pp. (Hardback).

Those Duck Commander people sure are prolific — Bibles, devotionals and an entire display at Cracker Barrel. “Duck Commander Devotions for Kids” is written by the wife of one of the Robertsons, Korie, and her mother.

I loved this book on sight — it has cute, colorful illustrations that would appeal to children from the front cover to the back cover and every page between. The fonts are kid-friendly, the devotions are short and each devotion includes activities and ideas for extending the concepts.

Going deeper, I thought the devotions were especially well-written to engage young children's imaginations. Each one opened with a Bible verse and all of the devotions featured members of the Robertson family, which would surely appeal to children who watch the program. The book lives up to its promise of “down to earth Bible lessons that teach kids how to dig into God's Word and practical ideas that show kids how to put young faith into action.”



Enjoy a free month on us!

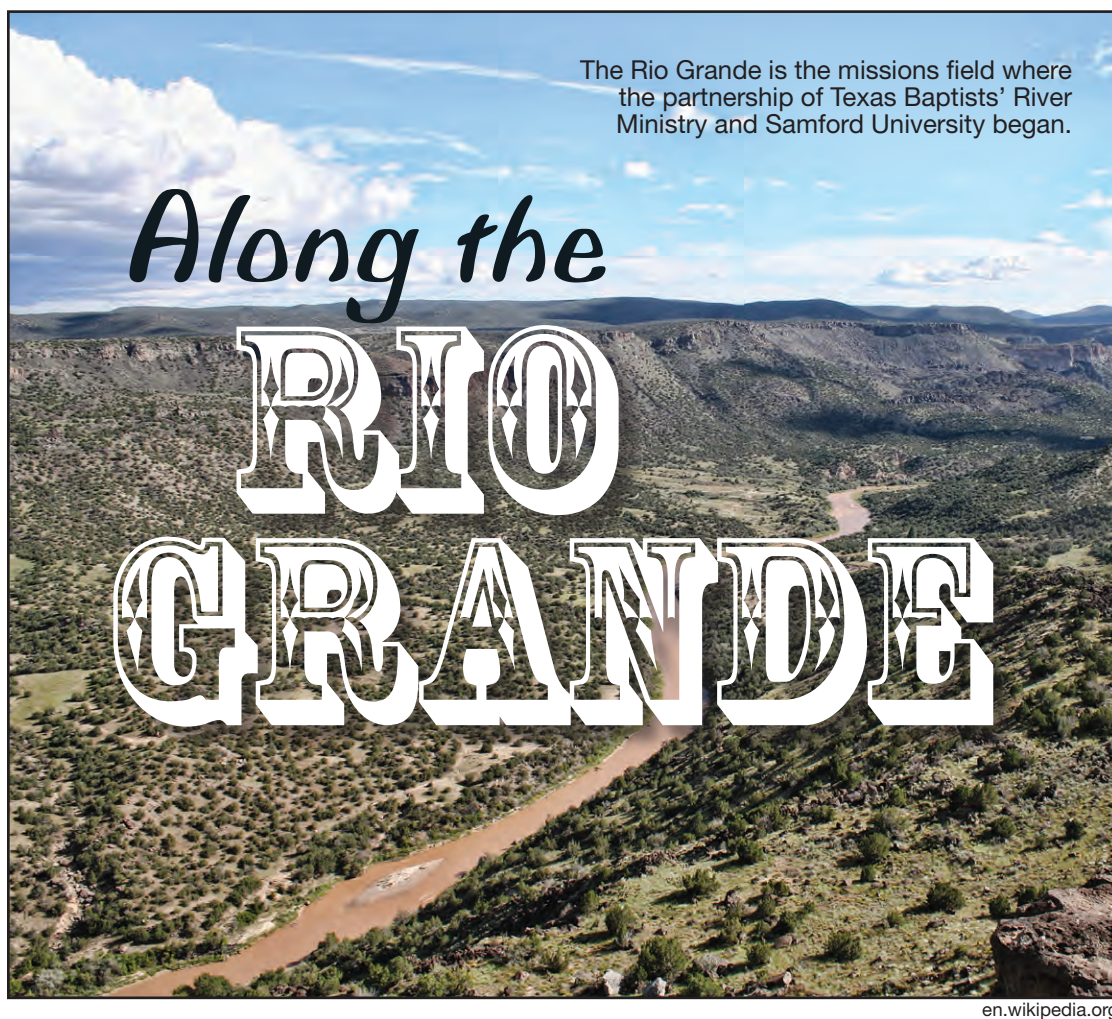
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The Rio Grande is the missions field where the partnership of Texas Baptists' River Ministry and Samford University began.

Along the

RIO
GRANDE

en.wikipedia.org

Samford professor's book remembers summer missions

A new book by Myralyn Allgood, professor emerita of Spanish at Samford University in Birmingham, celebrates the long-term role of students from an Alabama Baptist school in Texas Baptists' ministry along the Rio Grande.

Nearly 40 years ago Allgood journeyed from Alabama to Texas to learn how Samford students could participate in a summer missions program along the Texas-Mexico border.

Allgood, who served 24 years as chair of the world languages and cultures department at Samford, met with Elmin Howell, founding director of Texas Baptists' River Ministry. Out of that contact grew a missions partnership that continued nearly three decades.

The missions experiences of students along the Rio Grande continued to inspire them long after they left the river, she noted — a theme that emerges throughout "Summer Missions on the Rio Grande." She called the book "a collective memoir" of Samford students who served with River Ministry between 1975 and 2003.

"From time to time, from here and there — a student's journal entry, a casual word between friends, encounters with River Ministry alumni over the years — there has been an ongoing echo of the same theme: 'Señora, when are we going to write a book about all this?'" Allgood wrote in the book's preface.

That question led Allgood to a three-year exploration of the materials and memories that became the book.

"I think we all sensed from the outset that God's hand was on this project, and watching Him move in the lives of those involved was a remarkable thing to behold — and to recount," she said.

However, Allgood was quick to point out the col-

laborative project never would have developed had it not been for Howell's directorship.

"It was Elmin who opened the door for us to join hands with Texas Baptists in this ministry and whose creative thinking produced a series of life-changing projects for us," Allgood said.

In the book's foreword, Howell likewise praised Allgood and the students she enlisted to serve as summer workers alongside missionaries and border-area pastors, working 10 weeks during summers with only room and board provided.

"Sometimes the room and board was lacking, but the summer missionaries did not complain," Howell noted. "The people they were there to help had much less, and the less fortunate did not complain either. Samford University could not have sent out more effective ambassadors."

The book primarily focuses on alumni reflections, newsletters, correspondence, candid photos and news clippings, most reproduced in their original forms to create the appearance of a scrapbook.

Students who participated in the ministry and have read the book praised Allgood's effort in recording the history of the summer missions project.

Linda Ables observed, "It is absolutely amazing and a tribute ... to all those who were blessed to have this life-changing experience." She and her husband, Ed, were career missionaries in Ecuador and Argentina. After they retired she taught Spanish and led missions projects at Samford.

Larry Sharp, pastor of First Baptist Church, New Tazewell, Tenn., spent the summers of 1976 and 1977 working with River Ministry. His wife, Susan, worked with River Ministry as a nurse in villages near Big Bend in 1977.

"So many opportunities and memories. ... I have been truly blessed," he acknowledged after reviewing Allgood's book. (BNG)

'Summer Missions on the Rio Grande' can be ordered online or by calling 205-726-2834. River Ministry summer missions alumni receive a discount. Samford's Howard College of Arts and Sciences also has made the book available as a free downloadable PDF file.

**PERSECUTED
CHURCH**

Compiled from Wire Services



Church leaders jailed in Sudan could face death penalty

JUBA, South Sudan — Sudanese authorities have charged two South Sudanese pastors under laws that call for the death penalty, their attorney said.

National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) officials have charged Yat Michael and Peter Yein Reith with undermining the constitutional system and spying — offenses punishable by death or life imprisonment — and waging war against the state, which calls for the death sentence, said the pastors' attorney.

They also are charged with inciting organized forces to complain and assaulting religious beliefs, which call for prison sentences, the attorney said.

"The charges are serious," their attorney said. "However, we are doing everything possible to ensure their release. We hope to hear good news about their release in coming days."

NISS is manned by hard-line Islamists who are given broad powers to arrest Christians, black Africans, South Sudanese and other people lowly regarded in the country that President Omar al-Bashir has pledged will be fully Arabic and Islamic. The charges appear to be based solely on the two pastors' nationality, race and faith, sources said.

Michael was arrested Dec. 21, 2014, after visiting a church service in Khartoum, South Sudan. Reith was arrested Jan. 11 after submitting a letter from leaders of their denomination, the South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SSPEC), inquiring about the whereabouts of Michael.

Their location was unknown for months, violating international human rights agreements, but April 30 they were transferred from Khartoum's downtown police station to a NISS detention center in Khartoum.

NISS officials have demanded \$12,000 from SSPEC secretary general Philip Akway Obang for the release of the pastors.

Local church leaders expressed their outrage at the attempt to buy the pastors' freedom, saying they fear NISS would arrest other Christians and make the same demand in exchange for dropping charges. (MS)

Saeed Abedini weathers Iranians' added pressure

WASHINGTON — Iranian authorities heightened pressure on U.S.-Iranian pastor Saeed Abedini in April, threatening to keep him in prison indefinitely.

Authorities seem to be taking a "carrot-and-stick" approach to Abedini — leveling new, "petty" charges while promising him freedom if he abandons his faith in Christ and returns to Islam, said Tiffany Barrans, international director at the American Center for Law and Justice.

"They have said, 'Don't think you'll get out after eight years. We'll add additional reasons to keep you,'" Barrans said. "That's the kind of threat in conjunction with an uptick of 'If you recant, if you return to Islam, we will let you go.' That's not anything new, but it's a very concentrated, intense time in the prison at present."

The psychological weight of new charges against other Christians "certainly has been taking its toll, because Saeed has seen it come to reality for so many others," Barrans said.

Barrans said pressure on Abedini comes and goes in waves, with the current round of ill treatment likely related to international efforts to limit Iran's ability to produce nuclear weapons.

September will mark Abedini's third year in prison. According to Iranian law, most criminal offenders can apply for clemency or parole when they have served one-third of their sentences. Barrans said Abedini's family is in the process of applying for that.

So far their efforts for clemency have met with no results.

Abedini, whose 35th birthday was May 7, became a U.S. citizen in 2010.

His wife, Naghmeh, and their two children live in the United States. The Iranian government does not recognize his U.S. citizenship.

Barrans said that if the U.S. government "leaves the table without getting Abedini's freedom, it makes things much more difficult to get his release." (BP)