

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



June 4, 2015
Vol. 180, No. 23

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ROLE OF THE pastor's WIFE



123rf.com

Developing relationships outside church important for pastors' wives

Pastors' wives overall are happy with their roles, but it's imperative that they build a support network outside the church, a study of pastors' wives found.

Amy Stumpf, professor of religion and society at California Baptist University in Riverside, Calif., and a pastor's wife herself, was stirred to study Southern Baptist pastors' wives after she read a *Time* magazine article lamenting the unique struggles of being married to a pastor.

"Overall there was a notably negative tone to the 'lot' of most pastors' wives," Stumpf said of the *Time* article.

Personal interviews

Eager to compile her own data, Stumpf took an audio recorder to an annual retreat for pastors' wives in the California Southern Baptist Convention during summer 2013. Her husband, Paul, is pastor of Colton Community Church, Colton, Calif.

One of the main takeaways from the interviews, Stumpf said, was that pastors' wives who worked

outside the home, either part time or full time, had higher levels of satisfaction with their role, "partly because they had a broader sense of their own life and connections outside of the church."

"Particularly when there were seasons of conflict, that provided some helpful resources to them," she said.

The Alabama Baptist spoke with three Alabama Baptist pastors' wives about Stumpf's findings.

Julie Terry, wife of Pastor Zach Terry who serves at Capshaw Baptist Church in Limestone Baptist Association, said she agreed with Stumpf's findings.

Terry runs a business out of her home, homeschools her three children and tutors other students and said having those other outlets outside of church ministries has made her healthier and a better wife.

"For a pastor's wife, I think anything that is not hinging on her husband's calling can help her to be less dependent on a church's opinion of her and can bring joy," Terry said.

A main concern of the pastors' wives who were interviewed by

Stumpf — about 35 in all — was that so many of their family's eggs were in the basket of the church, Stumpf said. Their husband's job, their friendships, their children's friendships and more were centered in the church.

**"It's important that
(church members)
see us in real life.
And see that we're
living what we believe."**

**Julie Terry
wife of Pastor Zach Terry
Capshaw Baptist Church**

"While that's wonderful, they all had experiences of conflict where they realized how very vulnerable their whole life is," Stumpf said. "If something goes bad at the church, it's not just that their husband lost his job but they lost their entire community."

"So even those that were very happy with their church realized that there's an extra burden of having your work and your ministry and your primary community all in the same place," she said.

But Virginia Thomas, wife of Pastor Herb Thomas who has served at Circlewood Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, for 36 years, wouldn't have it any other way.

She has been on both sides of the workforce — having a job outside of the home and having a role solely in the churches where her husband has served.

"I've found that our church (Circlewood Baptist) is very loving and ... they're just our family and we love them that way too," Thomas said, noting that she disagreed with the idea that pastors' wives needed outside community.

Tracy Walsh, wife of Pastor Dave Walsh who serves at Ariron Baptist Church in Dale Baptist Association, said she agreed with Stumpf's findings.

"It (has been) much easier for our family as a whole to have me bringing my work culture or my social culture into our family," Walsh said, who works as a third grade teacher at Newton Elementary School in Dale County. "It relieved us at times of always living 'in the goldfish bowl' that is church life. ... Church leaders' lives are vulnerable. ... Without a strong commitment and God's wisdom and protection, ministry can be a minefield."

Terry also agreed with Stumpf's findings and said neither she nor her husband shies away from developing friendships in their own church family.

Real life

"For one thing it's important that (church members) see us in real life. And see that we're living what we believe," Terry said.

Women who worked outside the home, even just part-time, had a sense that they had eggs in other baskets, Stumpf said.

Terry agreed.

(See 'Proud' page 3)

COMMENT

Baptists Baptizing Infants

It may have been a first for a “Baptist” church. On Sunday morning, April 19, at First Baptist Church, Dayton, Ohio, Pastor Rodney Kennedy performed an infant baptism. For the congregation it was a special moment where the congregation spontaneously broke out in applause, Kennedy said. He called the service “just a really high and holy moment.”

However, performing an infant baptism moves Kennedy and the church beyond the definition of what it means to be Baptist because of the history of the term and the theological understanding of baptism generally embraced by Baptists.

Most scholars agree that Baptists grew out of the English separatist movement, which wanted to break with the Church of England and institute what they regarded as biblical practices. For those who became Baptists, a primary concern was the nature of the church. They insisted upon a church made up only of the redeemed.

In 1609, John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, early Baptist leaders, argued that baptism should be administered only to believers and that this voluntary confession/baptism should form the basis of the church. Since the church must include only true Christians, baptism must be applied only to professed believers, they said.

Believer’s baptism

Such reasoning flew in the face of the practice of the Church of England, Roman Catholics, Lutherans and some reform church groups like Presbyterians. These groups all embraced infant baptism and each baptized infant was then a member of the respective church.

By the early 1640s those advocating believer’s baptism and church membership only for believers began to be called Baptists. Other theological understandings also marked these early Baptists that separated them from those who shared only their belief in a “believer’s church.” Among those were religious liberty and congregational government.

But opposition to infant baptism was at the core because of its theological implications. Baptists argued salvation was personal. It was an act of God’s grace based on confession, repentance and faith. An infant could not confess, repent or believe the contended.

Church membership was only for “true



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Christians” — those who confessed, repented and believed. That excluded infants.

Baptism, as expressed in “A Declaration of Faith of English People” published in 1611 by Helwys, stated, “Baptism or washing with water is the outward manifestation of dying unto sin and walking in newness of life (Rom. 6:2–4) and therefore in nowise appertains to infants.”

Baptists argued the prevailing New Testament sequence was preaching, hearing, believing, repentance, confession and then baptism.

This view of baptism challenged the prevailing view of that day. Roman Catholic, Lutheran and other traditions taught that baptism was necessary for the remission of the original guilt that newborn infants have as descendants of Adam and Eve. Baptism, following the teachings of Augustine of Hippo, was able to take away that guilt.

Martin Luther specifically condemned those who advocated believer’s baptism for teaching that children are innocent until they attain the use of reason and could make a personal confession of faith.

Some reform traditions practiced infant baptism as a sign of a covenant of grace. This teaching held that infant baptism was a sign that the child belonged to the covenant community just as circumcision marked Jewish boys as members of God’s family. No later baptism was necessary.

Luther argued infant baptism was an ancient practice of the Church. Those who disagreed with him responded that infant baptism was introduced in the third century as a way of identifying infants with the Church.

Kennedy explained that baptizing infants is just the next step for First, Dayton, because the church has accepted into membership those with infant baptism from other Christian bodies for 50 years.

“I want to move closer to the ecumenical fellowship of the Christian Church and by accepting infant baptism, and then practicing it, we are not set off from Presbyterians and Methodists and Catholics,” Kennedy said.

If ecumenical fellowship is based on what the Bible teaches then Kennedy may be moving in the wrong direction. In 1982 the World Council of Churches published the now famous Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry papers of its Faith and Order Commission which met in Lima, Peru. Under Article IV, Baptismal Practices, is Section A, Baptism of Believers and Infants, the section reads, “While the possibility that infant baptism was also practiced in the apostolic age cannot be excluded, baptism upon personal profession of faith is the most clearly attested pattern in the New Testament documents.”

In a later paragraph of that section, the

World Council of Churches declared, “Baptism is an unrepeatable act.”

If the normal New Testament practice is believer’s baptism and baptism is an unrepeatable act, then it would behoove all Christian groups to consider practicing the clearest teachings of the Bible which, according to the World Council of Churches, is believer’s baptism.

Incorporating a child into the family of faith is im-

portant. Standing beside a family as members model and teach the Christian faith is important. The Christian community acknowledging responsibility to help a child grow in the Lord is important. Publically acknowledging these and other commitments is important.

‘Faith proceeds to baptism’

But infant baptism is not the way for Baptists to accomplish these goals. As English Baptist theologian George Beasley-Murray wrote, “In the New Testament it is everywhere assumed that faith proceeds to baptism and that baptism is for faith” and hence “faith comes to baptism. The idea of baptism creating faith is not on the horizon.”

Infant baptism is contrary to the Baptist understanding of salvation. It is contrary to the Baptist understanding of baptism. It is contrary to the Baptist understanding of the Church. It is contrary to the historical meaning of the word “Baptist.”

That is why a church that practices infant baptism does not stand in the historic and theological stream known as Baptist. ☪

Baptists and Baptism:

**An interview
with Timothy George,
dean of Samford
University’s Beeson
Divinity School, coming
in the June 11 issue.**

LETTERS
TO THE EDITOR

See page 21





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

(ISSN 0738-7741;
USPS 011-080)

© The Alabama Baptist, Inc. is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 1-800-803-5201. Fax: 205-879-6026. **Website:** www.thealabamabaptist.org. **Email:** news@thealabamabaptist.org or circulation@thealabamabaptist.org. Periodicals postage paid at Birmingham, Ala., and at additional mailing offices.

PRINT SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Church Budget — \$13.75
Individual — \$22.25

DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Church Budget — \$8.50
Individual — \$14.95

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Proud of Husbands

Most pastors' wives happy, fulfilled, professor's study finds

(continued from page 1)

"I think it's healthy for a wife to have other interests so your marriage relationship is not only about ministry. ... It gives your husband an emotional and mental break when you have other things to talk about. ... We have seen that it's more beneficial for (Zach) to come home and not have to unload everything (about his day)," Terry said.

Stumpf's study also included written surveys from about 100 women at the retreat, and she found that pastors' wives at churches where there was more than one staff member — and pastors' wives at larger churches — perceived that their churches were healthier. "That makes sense because the conflict is spread out," she said.

At the church where Stumpf's husband is the only pastor, she said it "doesn't matter if it's about the water fountain, the toilet, the paint on the wall or some theological issue, 100 percent of that conflict comes to my husband."

Sharing the burden

Thomas agreed with Stumpf's findings. She and her husband have been part of a church where her husband was the pastor, youth pastor, music minister and more and now they serve at a church where there are different ministers for each position. She agreed that church conflict and church life was more manageable when "all the burden is not just on the pastor's shoulders."

Another surprising finding, Stumpf said, was that the longer a woman was married to a pastor, the more she perceived negative effects of the ministry on her marriage.

Despite the challenges, most of the women did not regret being pastors' wives.

Stumpf recalled a woman who told her a terrible story about being run off by a church.

"At the end, I said, 'If you could do the whole thing over, would you do it?' She was one of my highest on (the scale of) 'I love being a pastor's wife. That's what God has called me to do. I wouldn't change it for anything.'"

Specific experiences

Stumpf found it interesting, she said, that the women differentiated between their feelings about being a pastor's wife in general and their feelings about their specific experience with a specific church.

"They didn't globalize or generalize that specific experience," she said. "They still liked the role. They just thought that church had a problem."

Women who claimed to have experienced a call to the role of pastor's wife had higher perceptions of their own influence in the pastoral ministry of their husbands, Stumpf said, and they were more content.

"A lot of the ones who didn't mention

a call tended to be the ones who said, 'That's what my husband does and that's a hat I wear, but it is not who I am and it's not my primary identity,'" Stumpf said.

Walsh said studies could describe the role of a pastor's wife "however they want, but it is a calling."

In regards to women not finding their "primary identity" in their husband's role in the church, Walsh said, "People categorize us by what they see so, like it or not, we are identified by the roles our spouses take in life. ... Dave and I and our children make

one divine statement as a family and that statement is based upon how God knits us together and our willingness to work as a unit. Dave's job is not, nor has it ever been, just a job. It is a lifestyle as well."

Terry said, "I cannot say that I was called to be a pastor's wife but I know God called me to marry Zach. ... God has shown me many times

in my life that my biggest ministry is to my husband. I'm Zach's wife first and then a pastor's wife. So whatever vocation, I'm with him."

Thomas said she and her husband married six years before he was called to preach, so she doesn't think a woman has to be called to be a pastor's wife.

"I feel like God called me to be a helpmate

(to my husband) with whatever he does."

The women who mentioned a call tended to be older, whereas the younger wives tended to say, "I married a guy who is a pastor," Stumpf said.

"Our church culture is increasingly aware that many of the pastors' wives will work outside of the home and won't make their primary place of vocation the church."

Churches that hired younger pastors tended not to have expectations of pastors' wives focusing on the church, Stumpf said.

Regarding what the pastors' wives in Stumpf's interviews said they wanted their

churches to know, "Mostly it was, 'Just be a loving, kind church. Don't get bogged down in conflict. Be kind to my husband,'" she said.

When asked what Terry may want to say to the Church as a whole, she said, "Pastors and their wives like talking about things other than church decisions in casual settings. They want real relationships and friendships just like anyone else."

Overall happy

Stumpf concluded, "Most of the pastors' wives really were very happy. So contrary to the article that started me questioning, they did experience isolation, they did experience stress, but overall they were quite happy," Stumpf said.

"They loved their churches. They were proud of their husbands and very fulfilled."

The study underscored for Stumpf the importance of pastors' wives developing relationships outside the church "because conflict will come, and when your primary support people are also the people who are in conflict with your husband then it makes it really hard."

"So they need to be very intentional about developing a good support network outside of the church." (BP, Neisha Roberts)



Julie Terry
Capshaw Baptist Church

"My biggest ministry is to my husband. I'm Zach's wife first and then a pastor's wife."

"I feel like God called me to be a helpmate to (my husband) with whatever he does."



Virginia Thomas
Circlewood Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa

"Dave and I and our children make one divine statement as a family and that statement is based upon how God knits us together and our willingness to work as a unit."



Tracy Walsh
Ariton Baptist Church



Members of FBC Southside participate in 'The Biggest Work Day Ever' on March 21 as part of 'Making A Difference' (MAD) Ministries.

Photo courtesy of FBC Southside

FBC Southside provides community with acts of service through MAD Ministries

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In 2014, Scott Hassell, pastor of First Baptist Church, Southside, asked his staff to share a vision for helping the church become more involved in its community. The church's secretary/treasurer, Allison Cleveland, suggested the idea of "Making A Difference" (MAD) Ministries, which ultimately came to fruition in October 2014.

Unlike many other ministries in the church, MAD isn't funded from the church budget but is self-funded by special events the ministry puts on.

Cleveland said, "MAD Ministries was started with the intention of making a difference for Jesus Christ in our congregation, community and world with one act of service at a time.

"It centers around Hebrews 6:10, which

states, 'God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped His people and continue to help them.' As Christians we are called to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves."

Special events

Since its launch MAD Ministries has hosted events that include: a coat/mitten/hat/scarf drive where MAD funds plus church donations purchased cold weather gear to donate to local elementary-aged children; the adoption of two area high school students for Christmas (MAD purchased clothes, shoes, food and other items for them); Christmas caroling at a local nursing home; a community Easter egg hunt; and "drive-thru blessings" — paying for meals of the car behind you in the drive-thru line and giving the cashier

a note to hand to the person whose meals have been purchased for them.

Brian Jones, who has been a member of First, Southside, since 1991, now heads up MAD Ministries, although he's been a volunteer since the ministry began. He's especially excited about the way MAD is set up to help the church form relationships with its community — ultimately allowing for opportunities to witness to community members.

"Sure, it's to help our community, but it's so much more than that," Jones said. "By helping our community and becoming more involved, we make connections with our community that in turn lead to more relationships with people in the community.

"It's by those relationships that we are able to share more with the people about Christ, as friends are more receptive of the salvation of Christ than strangers."

Most recently MAD Ministries hosted a yard sale to raise funds for future ministry events. The sale was held May 2 and church members brought gently used items to contribute. MAD also sold breakfast and lunch items and raised \$1,167.50 at the event.

Future events MAD Ministries is considering include a community patriotic event; a booth at Southside City Fest; baking homemade cookies for area teachers during school in-service days in August; and donating backpacks and school supplies to needy children in local schools.

'MAD' enough

Cleveland said, "When we become 'MAD' enough about the spiritual needs, suffering, brokenness and physical poverty in our world to do something about it, we become the hands and feet of Jesus Christ to His children here on Earth." ❏

Ministry Tips



READ THE BIBLE, READ ALL OF IT

By Edwin F. Jenkins
Recently retired pastor of FBC Athens

Over a period of approximately 1,600 years, using some 40-plus writers and encompassing 66 books, God has written an amazing love letter to mankind. We know it as the Holy Bible. We revere it because it truly is sacred literature.

It is, by its own testimony, God-breathed. The infallible, inerrant Word of God has literally nothing in human literature that can equal it.

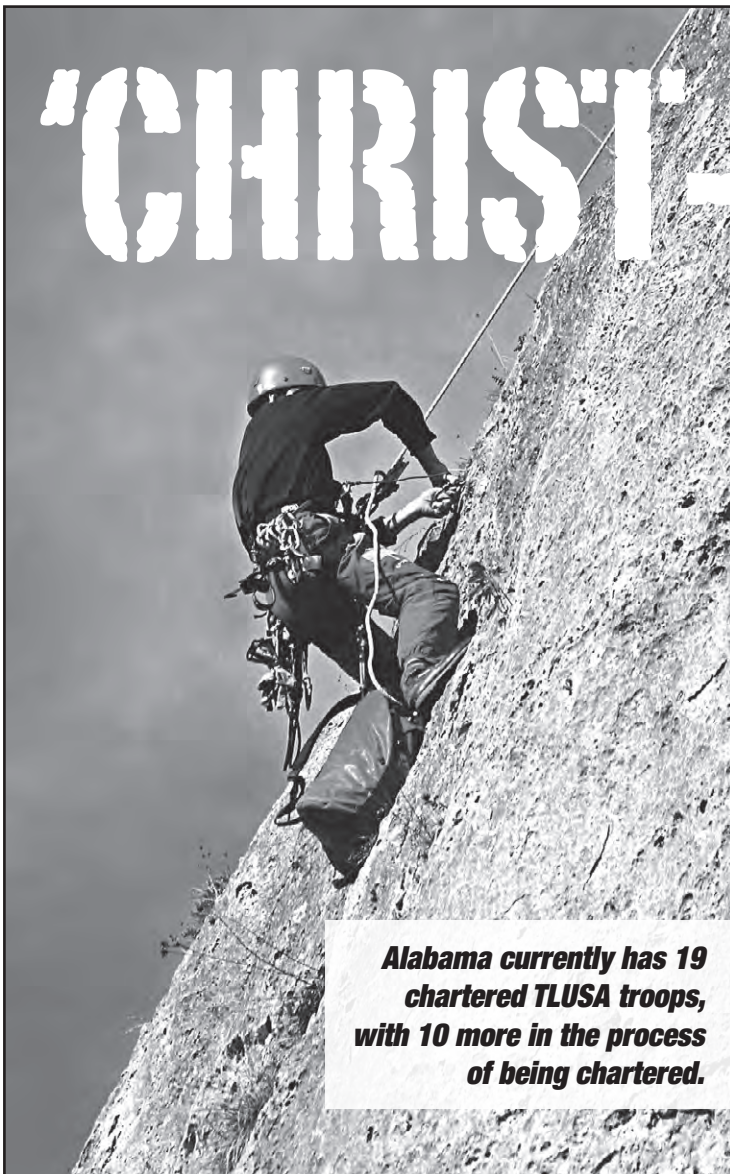
Human neglect

Yet, sometimes we betray ourselves and our testimony about the Bible by failing to read it. Even when we do, we have a

tendency to neglect large segments of the ultimate book.

Several years ago I became aware that "people of the book" must truly be "people of the book." My church family at First Baptist Church, Athens, embraced the idea. Beginning in 2008 we encouraged our people to read through the Bible in its entirety every year. By 2010 we

made printed calendar booklet plans available annually to all who would join us in the journey. Dozens of our members now make it a practice to read through the Bible, including genealogies and tabernacle details, every year. Those who have done so testify to the amazing value it has been to their personal lives. ❏



Alabama currently has 19 chartered TLUSA troops, with 10 more in the process of being chartered.

freemages.com

'CHRIST-CENTERED' program

Trail Life USA offers Bible-based opportunities

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

As the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) continues to relax standards related to homosexual behavior, many are looking to the faith-based outdoor adventure program Trail Life USA (TLUSA) as an alternative.

Based in Orlando, Fla., TLUSA was formed in July 2013, weeks after BSA voted in May 2013 to allow youth who identify as gay to join the organization. From the beginning, TLUSA's mission has been to provide a "Christ-centered organization" where "faith is woven throughout the program," according to its mission statement.

John Stemberger, chairman of the board of directors for TLUSA, calls it the "carrot cake analogy."

"Everything in our organization has symbolism and spiritual meaning,"

Stemberger said. "It's like carrot cake. You don't bite into a slice of carrot cake and get a big chunk of carrot. The carrot is throughout the cake. We don't want people to choke on something too religious or churchy, but everything we do has meaning."

TLUSA's programs include Bible-based discipleship opportunities, ministry activities and outdoor worship. The group's culminating rank, the Freedom Award, requires faith-building activities and servant leadership projects. The award signifies the real freedom that can only be possible because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Stemberger said.

That award, like the entire program, reflects TLUSA's commitment to biblical values and an unapologetic Christian worldview, according to the organization's website.

Churches or other organizations that charter a TLUSA troop must accept the basic tenets of Trinitarian Christian doctrine and be in agreement with the TLUSA Christian Statement of Faith and Values. In addition all adult leaders in a troop must be Christian leaders selected by the charter organization and they too must follow the organization's statement of values which emphasizes purity, service, stewardship and integrity.

Appealing alternative

Those values have made TLUSA an appealing alternative for Baptist churches who could no longer support BSA's policy changes, said Larry Morrison, minister of education and administration at First Baptist Church, Sylacauga, in Coosa River Baptist Association, who until February 2014 sponsored a BSA troop.

Another local church in Sylacauga took over sponsorship of the BSA troop there, but in Moulton the local BSA troop disbanded and has not restarted, according to Donnie Settles, minister of music at Moulton Baptist Church, in Muscle Shoals Baptist Association.

Moulton Baptist began a TLUSA troop in March 2014 when local Scout leaders left BSA.

Settles, whose son is in TLUSA, said they have 26 student participants and 29 parent volunteers. The majority of the participants are from outside the church, he said, and the program continues to grow.

"We have seen some outstanding growth with Trail Life," Settles said, noting that the troop has two Eagle Scouts who wanted to pursue the additional requirements for the TLUSA Freedom Award. They will be awarded the Freedom Award in June.

Stemberger expects TLUSA to continue to grow, especially if comments made by BSA President Robert Gates at the organization's 2015 annual meeting in Atlanta in May become policy.



TLUSA's approach to providing an outdoor adventure and character-building program for young men has been very successful. In the two years since its formation, membership has grown to more than 534 troops and 20,000 members by the end

TRAIL LIFE USA

of 2014, according to CEO Mark Hancock. More than 300 troops are waiting to be chartered. Also last fall, TLUSA was given

a 127-acre camp outside Greenville, S.C., where camps will be held this summer.

The fast growth of TLUSA happens as the number of troops and participants in BSA are declining, as reported in BSA annual reports (see graphic, this page).

In 1999, 3.19 million youth were registered in BSA troops. In 2000, 3.12 million youth were registered. In 2013, 2.3 million youth were registered.

Declining numbers

The number of troops has declined since February 2013, when 108,989 troops were registered nationally. One year later the number had dropped to 105,192. In February 2015, 100,926 troops were registered.

Gates, a former CIA director and U.S. secretary of defense, told those participating in the May 21 session of the BSA annual meeting that the longstanding Scout ban on gay adult leaders will no longer be enforced. Gates said he is not asking the national board to change the leadership policy immediately, but he said the Scouts must voluntarily accept gay leaders before a court forces them to do so.

Gates also said any new leadership policy should "allow all churches, which sponsor some 70 percent of our Scout units, to establish leadership standards consistent with their faith. We must ... preserve the religious freedom of our church partners to do this."

Gates' comments concerning religious freedom do not match BSA's increasing acceptance of homosexuality at all levels, however, which will continue to be a problem for churches, especially Baptist churches, said A.J. Smith, immediate past president of the Association of Baptists for Scouting and pastor of Bay Springs Baptist Church, Shelby.

"The BSA cannot pretend Trail Life does not exist or will go away. It will be a serious competitor," Smith said. "Its strongest appeal will be to conservative, evangelical churches. It is an explicitly Christian organization with definite commitments to core Christian doctrine and morality. BSA is going to have a hard time competing with that." ❧

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA *by the numbers*

Below is a list of Boy Scouts of America national chartered organizations using the traditional scouting program in Baptist churches

October 2008
Total units: 4,243
Total youth: 100,739

December 2012
Total units: 3,981
Total youth: 108,353

October 2009
Total units: 4,175
Total youth: 100,955

**Biggest drop
July 2013**
Total units: 3,573
Total youth: 74,606

October 2010
Total units: 4,121
Total youth: 102,726

**Second biggest drop
May 2014**
Total units: 2,472
Total youth: 48,665

December 2011
Total units: 4,121
Total youth: 110,131

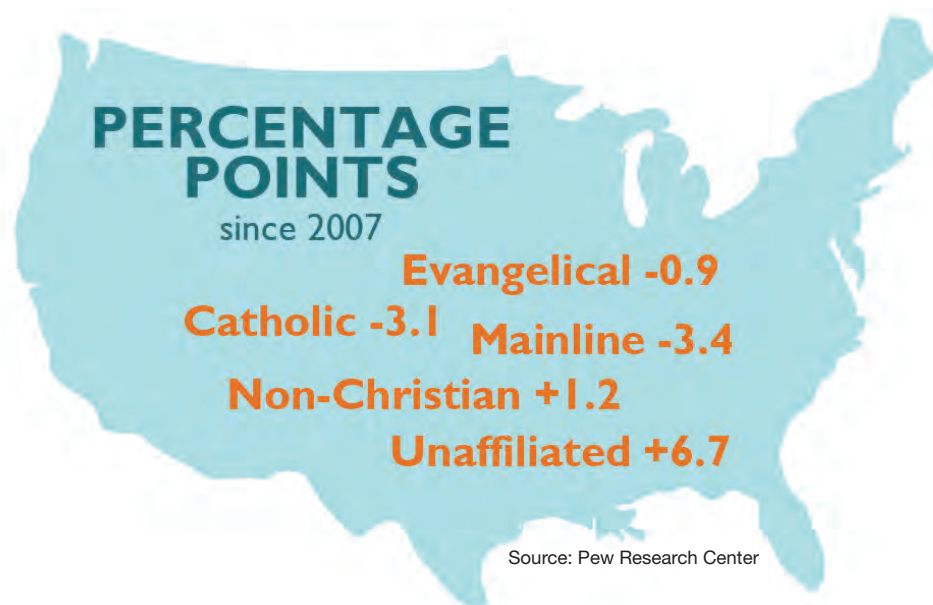
February 2015
Total units: 2,598
Total youth: 53,577

Source: Compiled from BSA reports

BSA units sponsored by Baptist churches have significantly dropped from 3,848 in February 2013 to 2,598 in February 2015 since the 2013 policy change.

(Units equal the total number of packs, troops and crews.)

‘Changing religious landscape’



Christians lose ground, ‘nones’ soar in new portrait of US religion, study shows

The United States is a significantly less Christian country than it was seven years ago. That’s the top finding — one that will ricochet through American faith, culture and politics — in the Pew Research Center’s newest report, “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” released May 12.

This trend “is big, it’s broad and it’s everywhere,” said Alan Cooperman, Pew’s director of religion research.

Christianity still dominates American religious identity (70 percent), but the survey shows dramatic shifts as more people move out the doors of denominations, shedding spiritual connections along the way.

Atheists and agnostics have nearly doubled their share of the religious marketplace and overall indifference to religion of any sort is rising as well.

New topography

Remember the familiar map of American religion? The South: a bastion of white evangelicals. The Northeast: cradle of Catholics. The Midwest: nest of mainline Protestants. The West: incubator of “nones” — people who claim no religious brand.

Scratch all that in the new topography. The shrinking numbers of Christians and their loss of market share is the most significant change between 2007 (when Pew did its first U.S. Religious Landscape survey) and the new, equally massive survey of 35,000 adults.

The percentage of people who describe themselves as Christians fell about 8 points — from 78.4 to 70.6. This includes people in virtually all demographic groups, whether they are “nearing retirement or just entering adulthood, married or single, living in the West or the Bible Belt,” according to the survey report.

State by state and regional data show:

Massachusetts is down on Catholics by 10 percentage points. South Carolina is down the same degree on evangelicals. Mainline Protestants, already sliding for 40 years or more, declined all over the Midwest by 3 to 4 percentage points. The Southern Baptist Convention and the United Methodist Church are each down roughly the same 1.4 to 1.5 percentage points. Every tradition took a hit in the West as the number of people who claim no religious brand continues to climb.

Christian faiths are troubled by generational change — each successive group is less connected than that group’s parents — and by “switching” at all ages, the report shows. While nearly 86 percent of Americans say they grew up as Christians, nearly 1 in 5 (19 percent) say they aren’t so anymore.

Although evangelicals are part of the decline, their slide has been less steep. They benefit from more people joining evangelical traditions, but they’re hurt by generational change and by America’s increased diversity.

According to the survey, white “born-

again or evangelical” Protestants now account for 19 percent of American adults, down slightly from 21 percent in 2007.

Politicians should take note, said Mike Hout, a sociologist and demographer at New York University who also is a co-director of the General Social Survey, a biennial national demographic survey.

Opposite of tradition

“Traditionally we thought religion was the mover and politics were the consequence,” he said. Today it’s the opposite.

Many of today’s formerly faithful left conservative evangelical or Catholic denominations because “they saw them align with a conservative political agenda and they don’t want to be identified with that,” Hout said.

Catholics dropped both in market share and in real numbers. Despite their high retention rate for people reared in the faith, they have a low conversion rate. Today 13 percent of U.S. adults are former Catholics, up from 10 percent in 2007.

Generational shifts also are hurting the numbers. Greg Smith, Pew’s associate director of research, said “just 16 percent of the 18 to 24-year-olds today are Catholic, and that is not enough to offset the numbers lost to the aging and switching.”

Where are they going? To religious nowhere.

The “nones” are the new major force in American faith. And they are more secular in outlook — and “more comfortable admit-

ting it” than ever before, said John Green, director of the Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron in Ohio.

Their growth spans the generations, as well as racial and ethnic groups, Green said.

“Nones,” at 22.8 percent of the U.S. (up from 16 percent just eight years ago) run second only to evangelicals (25.4 percent) and ahead of Catholics (20.8 percent) in religious market share.

Atheists rose from 1.6 percent to 3.1 percent, and agnostics from 2.4 to 4 percent. Combined, there are more “nones” than Evangelical Lutherans, United Methodists and Episcopalians all together.

David Silverman, president of American Atheists, said, “It’s because we’re right.” He hadn’t yet seen the Pew findings but commented based on other surveys he said showed the rising number of “nones.” It’s the public attention given to nones in the last decade, combined with the wide-open access to anti-religious discussion on the Internet, that drives the change, Silverman said.

Lessening stigmas

And with these shifts the stigma of coming out as an atheist is lessening.

“It’s now impossible for an atheist to think he is alone in this world. They are automatically empowered,” Silverman said.

The bulk of the “nones” (15.8 percent, up from 12.1 percent in 2007) don’t even commit to any view on God. Instead they say they believe “nothing in particular.”

But among them there’s a distinct split between “spiritual” and totally indifferent “nones.” Thirty percent of all “nones” still showed “a sort of religious pulse” by saying that religion is still at least somewhat important to them, Cooperman said.

However, the bulk of this group (39 percent) are not agnostic, atheist or vaguely spiritual — they’re just not interested. Religion is not even somewhat important to them.

That same level of disinterest cuts into their social and political clout, Hout said.

The nothing-in-particular folks “don’t vote, don’t marry and don’t have kids,” at the same rate as other Americans, Hout said. “They are allergic to large, organized institutions — mass media, religions, big corporations and political parties.”

“None” is the winning category for religious switchers across society, particularly among gays and lesbians — 41 percent of gay or lesbian Americans say they have no religion, Cooperman said.

The survey was conducted from June 4 to Sept. 30, 2014. (RNS)

Religion not on life support, Baylor scholars assert

Reports about the imminent death of religion, the rise of secularization and the growth of atheism largely ignore facts or rely on faulty research, scholars from Baylor University’s Institute for Studies of Religion said during a recent conference.

Studies emphasizing the rise of “nones” and the massive flight of Millennials from organized religion greatly exaggerate — and sometimes misinterpret — hard data, said Byron Johnson, professor of social sciences at Baylor and director of the Institute.

“There’s a story some people want to report — that religion is on life support — but it’s just not true,” he asserted.

Surveys that report Millennials have left the faith of their parents often really

mean they have stopped attending church for a few years or identify with a non-denominational church rather than a Mainline denomination — not that they have abandoned Christianity, he said, pointing to findings from the Baylor Religion Survey.

Religious ‘switching’

While Mainline Protestant denominations declined 49 percent from 1960 to 2000, other religious groups including evangelicals registered dramatic growth, he said. Some researchers and reporters fail to consider the phenomenon of religious “switching” — moving from one Christian group to another, he said.

Johnson sees “switching” as evidence of religious health, rather than decline.

The Baylor Religion Survey, with more

than 350 religion-related questions, explores the nuances and complexities of how people self-identify in terms of faith, he said.

In contrast some of the hype around the growth of “nones” is based on a question on the American Religious Identification Survey or a misinterpretation of data from the Pew Religious Landscape Survey (see above), Johnson said.

For example he noted the Baylor study asked follow-up questions of people who indicated “no religion,” and many of those same people identified with specific congregations.

“When they do list a church, it’s often high-octane religion” such as non-denominational evangelical congregations, he added. (BNG)

When **CRISES** come

Good planning, preparation can help churches avoid unnecessary risks

By Michael J. Brooks
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Most churches will face property loss at some point, requiring the filing of an insurance claim. Some will even face the threat of a lawsuit. According to Lee Wright of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), many churches are

unprepared for these possibilities.

"I'd say 90 percent of our churches are underinsured in one way or another," Wright said.

Wright, coordinator of Church Compensation Services for SBOM, directed "Church Insurance: Protecting People and Property" conferences in May in Montgomery and Cullman. He was assisted by GuideStone senior account manager John Murphy, of Birmingham.

Wright reminded participants at the Cullman-area conference May 19 about the tornadoes that ripped through Alabama four years ago.

Disaster recovery plan

"These natural disasters caught many churches unprepared," he said. "Not only do churches need to take a serious look at their insurance coverage, but they also need a disaster recovery plan."

Murphy recommended that churches discuss the possibility of disasters resulting in property loss, and some possible ways the congregation might deal with these.

"For example, the most important thing you do is on Sunday morning," he said. "What would you do on Sunday if your sanctuary was destroyed on Tuesday? And who would be the 'point person' to answer questions and lead the church forward? A little forethought can make a big difference if the unthinkable happens."

Wright also shared data about lawsuits involving churches from Richard Hammar, attorney, certified public accountant and author specializing in legal and tax issues for churches and clergy. The top five issues bringing churches to court include sexual abuse of a minor, property disputes, zoning issues, personal injuries and the taxation of church property.

The most important thing churches should have is protection against sexual abuse incidents, Wright said.

"Background screenings for all members who work with children is a must," he said. "There's no cost reason not to do this since it's a minimal expense. LifeWay offers background screening, as do other organizations. And you should have proper supervision with two adult workers unrelated to each other present with children or youth."

Wright said a six-month rule is another good risk management tool.

"Child predators want quick access to children, so we recom-

mend that churches require a six month membership rule before assigning responsibility," he said. "It's sad that the way some churches deal with abuse is 'out of sight, out of mind' rather than reporting incidents to law enforcement. A church might have a predator who presents himself for membership and be unaware of his past."

Wright said another good policy is to have clear guidelines about the use of church facilities by groups. SBOM has a suggested use policy that can be adapted by churches. To view the policy, visit alsbom.org and click "Resources."

Murphy said churches can protect themselves, their ministries and their members in several ways against property loss through proper insurance coverage.

One way churches can protect themselves is to avoid risk.

"Especially with our young people, we want to avoid any activity that might be dangerous — maybe skydiving," he said with a laugh. "A great way to reduce liability is to avoid sponsoring activities with high risk."

Another safeguard is that churches avoid the misuse of church computers by having clear guidelines about access to church equipment and Internet service, and having a "no expectation of privacy" clause in their church use manuals, he said.

Murphy said churches might also transfer risk, such as hiring transportation for trips rather than maintaining church vehicles.

"The largest claims we have in Alabama are transportation related," Murphy said. "This includes

accidents involving church vans and personal injury."

One church he's familiar with actually hired a company to do valet parking for senior adults members. One of the reasons this wasn't done "in house" was to lessen the church's liability.

Churches might determine to assume risk for small losses, through self-insuring or establishing high deductibles, and thus reduce premium costs. But also it's imperative to insure adequately against the possibilities of loss in ongoing ministries, Murphy said.

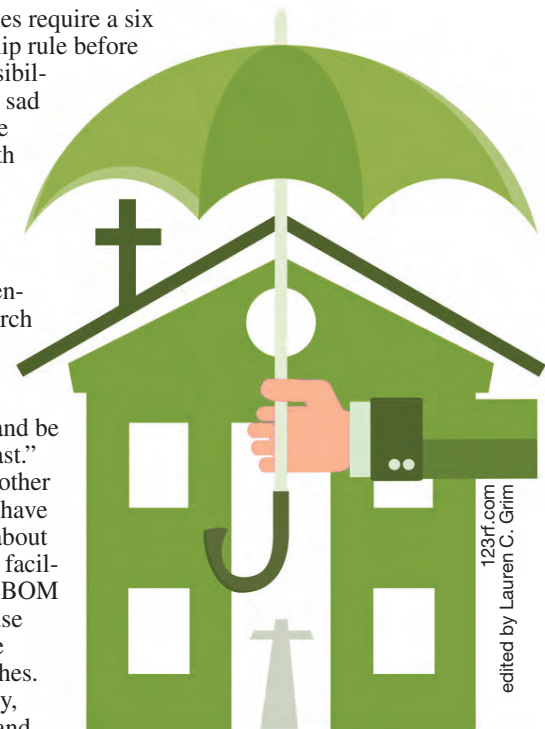
"Church property insurance should be reviewed at least every three years," he said.

Workers' compensation

Murphy further urged participants to be sure their churches had workers' compensation insurance.

"If a church has five employees or more, workers' comp is required," he said. "This is good insurance and includes a death benefit, medical payments and some loss of income payments, so it's a good idea to have it."

Murphy said GuideStone offers "as needed" policies for contractors hired to do work in churches. Another option is to ask contractors to sign a waiver of liability form or to have them reimburse the church for the cost of insurance. ☐



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edited by Lauren C. Grim

JULY

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HALE

► **Concord Church, Moundville**, will hold VBS on June 6, 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Children through sixth grade are invited to participate. The theme is "Planting Seeds for Jesus." Wyatt Rhone is pastor.

SALEM-TROY

► **Bethlehem Church, Brundidge**, will hold VBS on June 15-19, 6-8 p.m. Recommended for children from 4 years old to sixth grade but all children are welcome. For more information call 334-344-0685. John Richburg is pastor.

DALE

► **Ariton Church** will hold "Everest" VBS on June 8-12,

8:30-11:30 a.m. daily. Dave Walsh is pastor. ► **Holmes Church, Ariton**, will hold "Hayday" VBS on June 18-20. It will be held 5-8 p.m. Thursday and Friday and 8:30-11:30 a.m. Saturday.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Dawson Memorial Church, Birmingham**, will host "Self Defense and Safety Tips" on June 14, noon-2 p.m. in the social hall. Douglas E. Wilson, executive director of development at Samford University, will lead the session. Wilson is a former intelligence officer and speaks to corporate travelers, university students, missions groups and individuals about safety. All ages are encouraged to attend. For more information

and to make reservations, call 205-871-7324. Gary Fenton is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Underwood Church, Montevallo**, will hold VBS on June 15-19, 6:30-8:30 nightly. The theme is "Blast to the Past." There will be an interpreter for deaf children. The kickoff will be June 13, 10 a.m. with a parade, food and games. Ben Dailey is pastor.

BESSEMER

► **Pleasant Valley Church, Bessemer**, will host the Annual Community Revival on June 5, 7 p.m. with Pastor Jeff Isbell as the speaker. For more information call 205-942-8161. ☞

Nebraska passes bill to end death penalty

Nebraska lawmakers passed a bill May 20 to abolish the death penalty by a big enough margin to override a threatened veto by Gov. Pete Ricketts.

The measure passed 32-15 in the state's one-chamber Legislature. It would replace the death penalty with life in prison.

If lawmakers override the expected veto, Nebraska would become the first conservative state to repeal the death penalty since

North Dakota in 1973, the *Lincoln Journal Star* reported.

Although the Nebraska Legislature is formally a nonpartisan body, Republicans in practice hold 36 of the 49 seats.

In the final run-up to the vote, Ricketts issued a statement saying there was "overwhelming support" for keeping the death penalty, warning that its repeal would "give (the) most heinous criminals more lenient sentences."

"This isn't rhetoric," he said in a statement. "This is reality."

The opposition to capital punishment was spurred in part by a ruling from the Nebraska Supreme Court in 2008 that the electric chair was cruel and unusual punishment and therefore unconstitutional. The state then adopted lethal injection but, like many states, had problems acquiring the drugs.

The governor blamed the state's inability to carry out executions on a "management problem" that he said he is committed to correcting.

Maryland was the last state to end capital punishment in 2013. Three other moderate to liberal states have done so in recent years: New Mexico, Illinois and Connecticut. The death penalty is legal in 32 states. (RNS)

REFLECTIONS

"THERE'S NOTHING ELSE LIKE IT!"



Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

Romans 12:14-15

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Ruth Carroll



CARROLL

Mount View Baptist Church, Trinity Muscle Shoals Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSES: Psalm 23

FAVORITE HYMN: "Amazing Grace"

HOBBIES: Reading, sewing and gardening

FAMILY STATUS: Widow for 23 years after 49 years of marriage to husband, Marcus; daughters,

Carolyn Anderson and Janice King; son, Dennis Carroll; five grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren, six great-great-grandchildren

Eighty-eight-year-old Ruth Carroll, of Chalybeate Springs, has been on a mission for 58 years. Since 1957 she has been active in missions, serving at church in the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) and all its ministries (GAs, Acteens, etc.). In addition she was WMU director in her church, association and district and a WMU executive board member, and held a state leadership role with Acteens. For eight years she was a member of a lay renewal team for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. She has been on missions trips to Georgia and Pennsylvania and spent last summer making about 200 clothing items to be sent to Nicaragua. Carroll has taught every age group in Sunday School, sung in the choir, worked in adult and childrens' Vacation Bible Schools and served on nominating committees. She currently is Women on Mission director and Sunday School director for Muscle Shoals Baptist Association. Her life goal is to serve the Lord and be pleasing to Him.

Q: What does your ministry work demand?

A: I participated in whatever the organization I worked with was doing. I always tried to be trained in what I was doing.

Q: What do you get from your ministry work?

A: Satisfaction and blessings from the Lord.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: Carolyn and her husband back me in everything and go with me. When they can't do it, one of the other children will do it. Members of the church help me get to where I need to be. I have had a lot of backing from my church friends and family. I just enjoy every bit of it. I just thank the Lord for every one of them. I have had a lot of support. A lot of prayer has been prayed for me.

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

A: I see myself doing whatever comes handy for me to do that I am able to do. Whatever the Lord leads me into, that's what I plan to do.

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

A: I had Christian parents. They always carried me to church. When I was 12 years old I accepted Christ and I've never been sorry.

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

A: When we joined Chalybeate Springs Baptist Church, I had never been in any ministry organizations. They had WMU; they had Mission Friends and GAs. They invited me to join WMU. That was 58 years ago.

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

A: I think as long as the Lord leads me to do something, I'm going to be blessed. If I can be a blessing to someone else, the Lord will bless me. I see whatever I can do in the future as serving the Lord.

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

A: Oh my goodness. Oh my goodness. I cannot begin to tell you. He has carried me through so much in my lifetime. When it seemed there was no way to get by, He always made a way. ☞

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

Training Opportunities for Sharing Across Alabama

Some have said, "Pastors will be held responsible for the failure to train lay persons to share their faith," and Ephesians 4:11-12 does say "we are to equip His people for works of service."



Baptism numbers continue to decline nationally. Further, evangelism seems to have fallen off the radar, and we are told it does not work anymore.

So what can we do? Wow, I am glad you asked! The largest training in 20 years will be undertaken by the Evangelism Office in 2015 with a great implementation — called "Sharing Across Alabama" — planned for 2016.

There will be nine identical events at locations across Alabama, making it

possible for each director of missions and pastor to attend fairly close to home. Three strategic tools will be taught in each location:

- **CAST:** a great, easy way to share a three-minute testimony and tell one's story.

- **Life Conversation model:** how to share one's faith using three circles that can be drawn on a napkin or read from a tract.

- **Media Evangelism model:** an idea for hosting people in a home setting where a Billy Graham DVD will be shared or an iPhone app will be used to communicate the Gospel.

Each training session for Sharing Across Alabama will begin at 1 p.m. and adjourn by 7 p.m. Each event will include training materials, dinner, a concert and a challenging message — all

free of charge, thanks to the gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

I don't know about you, but I do not want to lose Alabama for the cause of Christ on any of our watches. I pray each Alabama Baptist pastor will consider attending one of these nine training sessions to learn more about equipping lay persons to share their faith in Christ:

- ~ **July 9:** Marriott Capitol Hill, Prattville
- ~ **July 16:** Hotel Capstone, Tuscaloosa
- ~ **July 30:** Siloam Baptist Church, Marion
- ~ **August 20:** First Baptist Church, Satsuma
- ~ **August 27:** The Shoals RTJ Golf Course, Muscle Shoals
- ~ **September 10:** Highland Oaks RTJ Golf Course, Dothan

- ~ **September 24:** Silver Lakes RTJ Golf Course, Gadsden
- ~ **October 22:** Guntersville State Park Lodge, Guntersville
- ~ **January 7, 2016:** Samford University, Birmingham



By Sammy Gilbreath
State Missionary

Online registration is required at alsbom.org/sharingacrossalabama. Deadline to register is 30 days before each event.

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Lori McGough at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 245, or (334) 613-2245, lmcgough@alsbom.org

WHY I BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM



I believe in the Cooperative Program as the only means of fully cooperating as a united body in the Southern Baptist Convention. It has proven over and over that many autonomous bodies can come together and do more than one can do alone. Our missionaries have benefitted so much more than those of independent churches as those missionaries need to raise their own funds and ours do not. I am so proud that our missionaries can actually spend their sabbaticals resting and catching up with relatives as opposed to raising funds. I am so glad that our Cooperative Program takes care of our missionaries.



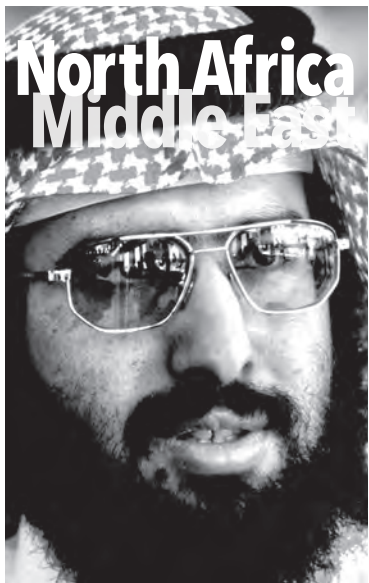
Our CP, however, also was set up to take care of many things. It helps fund associational missions. It helps in state convention Disaster Relief efforts and worker training. Our forefathers were wise in the planning and implementation of the CP. It has stood the test of time.

I grew up under the tutelage of my deacon father and a wonderful pastor who both taught the blessings of the Cooperative Program. My husband is a pastor and director of missions, and he believes in the CP. If more pastors today would teach about the CP, we would have more believers in the CP! — **Vicki Maddox**, member, New Providence Baptist Church, Mud Creek Association

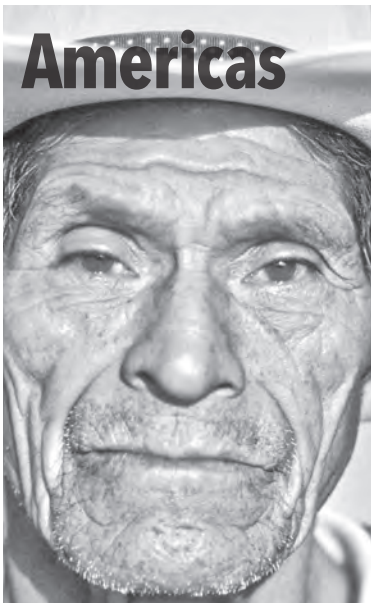
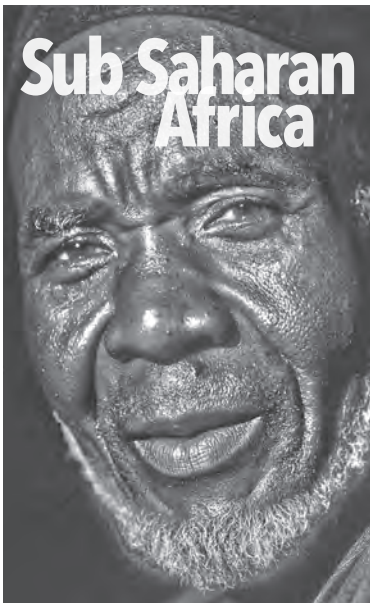
With gratitude, I will proudly support the Cooperative Program for the entirety of my ministry career. It paved the way for me to attend Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary by providing financial support that I could not have raised otherwise. The education I received has had a huge impact on how I approach the Bible and its message of the Gospel. — **Junior White**, pastor, Woodland Baptist Church, Phenix City



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DATE FOR 2015:
SUNDAY, JUNE 21
(FATHER'S DAY)

THEME:
"SPIRITUAL GIFTS:
PRAYER AND
DISCOVERY"

EMPHASIS: "WHO HAS THE GIFTS THAT GOD HAS GIVEN TO BELIEVERS FOR OUR CHURCH'S MINISTRY?"

Through prayer and a spiritual gifts survey, recognize the gifts that each man has to fulfill the mission of the church. A "Spiritual Gifts Discovery & Inventory" is available on the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions website at alsbom.org/men.

For a survey and other information, you may also contact Ministry Assistant Monica Thompson at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 227, or (334) 613-2227, mthompson@alsbom.org.



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Once you go to the webpage, enter contact information for yourself or your student. It takes less than three minutes and it will be networked to the campus of your choice!

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June 15-19, June 22-26, July 6-10, July 20-24

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June 8-10

Missions Adventure Camp for Teen Girls (teen girls completing grades 7-12):

June 15-19, July 6-10

Extreme Missions Adventure Camp for Teen Girls (teen girls completing grades 7-12):

June 8-10

Missions Adventure Camp for CITs (teen girls completing grades 11-12):

June 22-26

Missions Adventure Camp for Children (girls and boys completing grades 2-6):

July 13-17

Missions Adventure Camp for Mom and Me (moms and girls completing grades 2-6):

June 11-13

Missions Adventure Camp for Mom and Me Little (moms and daughters completing grades K-3):

June 19-20, July 10-11

For more information, go online to www.worldsongretreat.com or contact Kathryn Helms at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 325, or (334) 613-2325, khelms@alsbom.org.

Senior Adult

Singin'



TWO LOCATIONS IN 2015:

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.

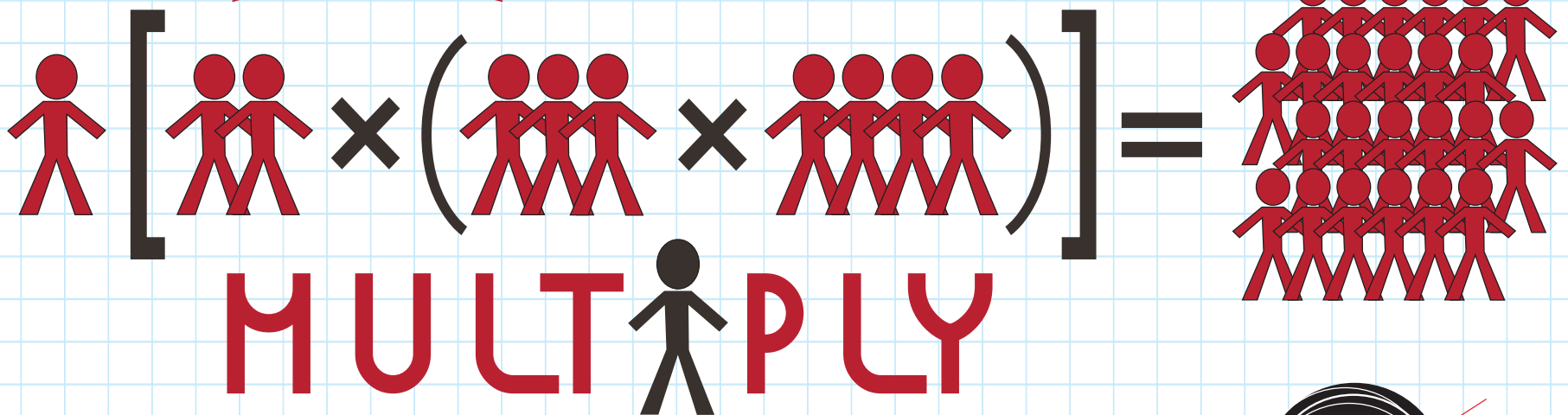
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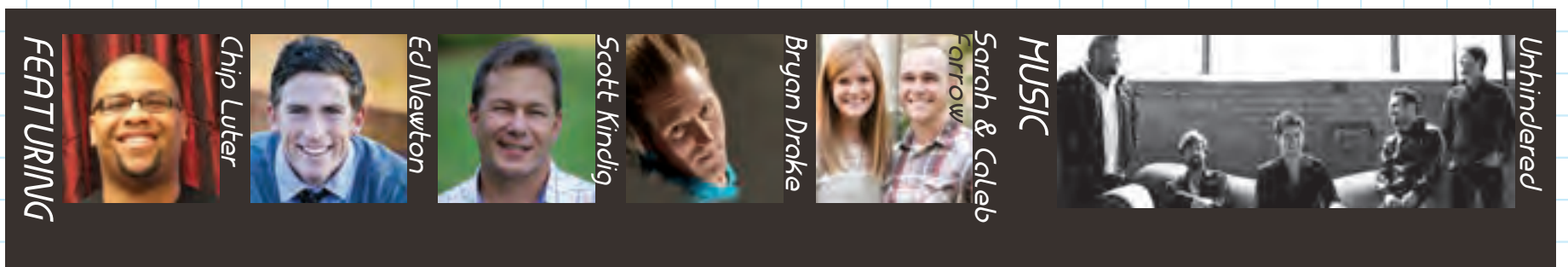
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Then the word of God spread, and the number of the *disciples multiplied* greatly ... ~ Acts 6:7 (NKJV)



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FOCUS on One Mission

Church Planter Network Dinner

Sunday, November 15, 2015, 6 p.m.,
3 Circle Church, 10274 State Highway 104, Fairhope.
Speaker: Ed Stetzer.

Ed Stetzer oversees all activities of the LifeWay Insights Division. He is the executive director of LifeWay Research, a prolific author and well-known conference and seminar leader. Stetzer has planted, revitalized and served as pastor of churches; trained pastors and church planters on six continents; holds two master's degrees and two doctorates; and has written dozens of articles and books. He also serves as lead pastor of Grace Church in Hendersonville, Tenn., a congregation he planted in 2011.

The cost is \$25 per couple or \$15 per person. Childcare will be provided by Alabama Woman's Missionary Union and the Disaster Relief Childcare Unit. The schedule will be as follows:

Registration opens at 5:30 p.m. followed by dinner, 6 p.m.; worship, 6:30 p.m.; inspirational message by Ed Stetzer, 6:45 p.m. At 7:15 p.m., a session for planters will be led by Stetzer and a wives' session led by Marybeth Culbreth. Adjournment and time for pickup of children will be at 8:30 p.m.

Those interested in church planting (planters, sponsors, sending, mother churches, etc.) are welcome. Make plans now to be a part of this family reunion of kingdom-minded Alabama

Baptists. Participants are urged to consider staying for the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference and State Convention meetings at Eastern Shore Baptist Church on November 17-18. Registration is open now at alsbom.org/churchplanterdinner.

By Lamar Duke
State Missionary



OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS:

* Alabama Church Planting Basics and Churches Planting Churches Training: Classes taught simultaneously. August 13-15, 2015. Madison Baptist Association, 2318 Whitesburg Dr. S., Huntsville.

* Alabama Church Planting Basics in Spanish, September 11-12 and 25-26, 2015. Hamilton First Baptist Church, 430 1st St. S.W., Hamilton.

For more information, please contact State Missionary Lamar Duke at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 332, or (334) 613-2332, lduke@alsbom.org.



Advancing Christ's Kingdom Through Discipleship

June 26-27

Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center

For all men and boys

For more info or to register call 1-800-280-1105 or visit AlabamaDeaconsRetreat.org.

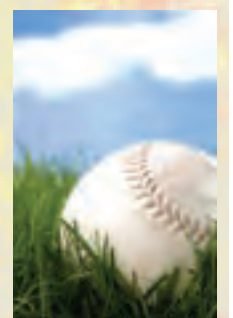
Baptist Men's Softball Tournament

August 7-8, 2015
Lagoon Park & Fain Park, Montgomery

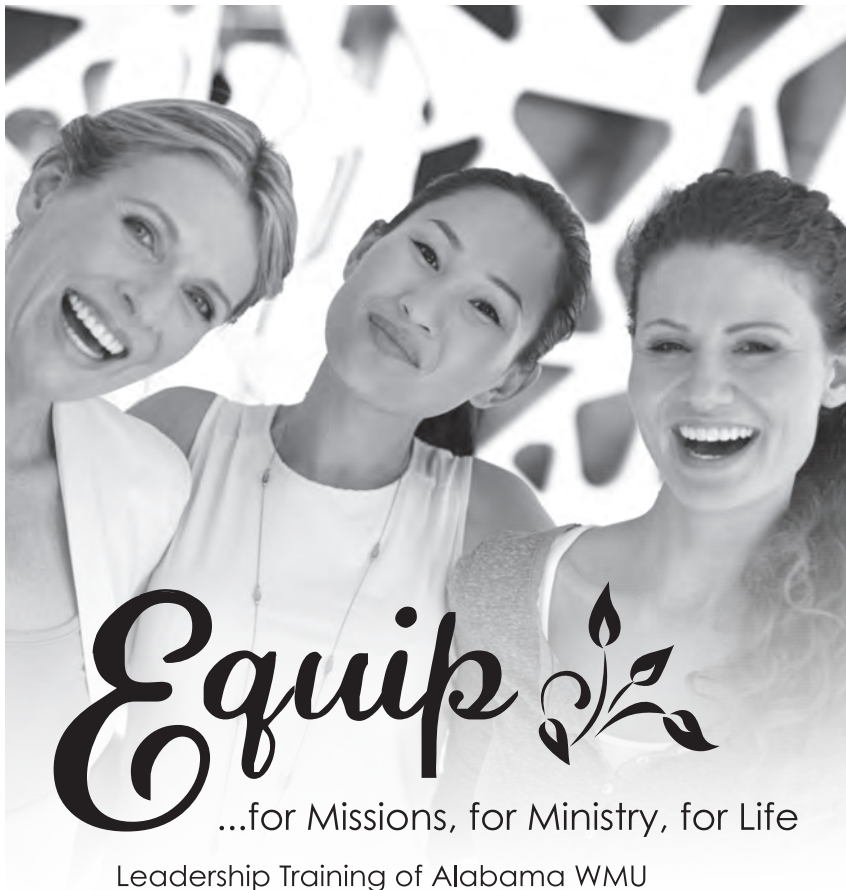
- 40-team maximum • ASA sanctioned • Round robin tournament • ASA-sanctioned teams only • Single elimination in championship round of 16 teams

Cost: \$165 entry fee
Each team will play at least four games.

For entry requirements to participate and an information packet, please contact Ministry Assistant Mondene Coker at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 273, or (334) 613-2273, mcoker@alsbom.org.



FOCUS on One Mission



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July 10-11, Shocco Springs**



Children's Choir Summit is an exciting, hands-on leadership conference training that will allow you to:

Discover new ways to make choir a favorite for kids.

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- ♪ Create an ideal opportunity for children to experience worship.
- ♪ Network with outstanding clinicians from across the U.S.
- ♪ Network with other people in similar situations.

Cost: \$110 per person (based on 3-4 persons per room and includes lodging, 3 meals, 8 sessions & dessert buffet). \$20 deposit per person due upon registration.

Clinicians: Artie Almeida, Steve Roddy, Pam Andrews, Paula Farrar, Teresa Granger, Sandy Stephenson, Carol James.

For more information, visit www.alsbom.org/children-summit or please call 1-800-264-1225: State Missionary Karen Gosselin, ext. 318, or (334) 613-2318, kgosselin@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland, ext. 279, or (334) 613-2279, scleveland@alsbom.org.

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONEPROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANYMINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

MEN'S

**NIGHT OUT
August 15, 2015**

First Baptist Church, Athens

with

Brodie Croyle and Tommy Bowden
SATURDAY, **AUGUST 15, 2015**
First Baptist Church, Athens

Cost: \$10 per person (includes dinner and door prizes). Limit of 500 tickets available.

Sponsored by First Baptist Church of Athens, Limestone Baptist Association and the State Board of Missions.

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

FOCUS on One Mission

ALABAMA BAPTIST BOYS CAMPS

JUNE AND JULY 2015

Alabama Baptists have provided summer camps for boys for more than 70 years. Steve Stephens has 23 years of experience directing the camps. Most of the camp counselors are college-age young men who have been recommended by their churches or campus ministers. Background checks and three current references are required. Reference information includes personal relationships, emotional and spiritual maturity, working relationships, and leadership ability. The most important question asked of a reference is: "Would you put your own child in the care of this young man?"

Camps feature outdoor worship, swimming, patriotic services, archery, outdoor cooking, Bible studies, rope craft, slingshots, air rifles, tomahawks, canoeing, Frisbee football, blow darts, compass course, hiking and nature identification, and missions classes with Southern Baptist missionaries.



June 22-25 June 25-27	Southeast Alabama Southeast Alabama	The Vineyard Christian Retreat Center, Ariton (near Ozark) The Vineyard Christian Retreat Center, Ariton (near Ozark)	4th-12th Grade Boys Camp 1st-6th Grade Lad and Dad or Mom Camp
July 6-9 July 9-11 July 13-16 July 16-18 July 27-30 July 30- Aug. 1	Northeast Alabama Northeast Alabama Northwest Alabama Northwest Alabama Central Alabama Central Alabama	Marshall Retreat Center, Guntersville Marshall Retreat Center, Guntersville Earle Trent Assembly Baptist Camp, Florence Earle Trent Assembly Baptist Camp, Florence WorldSong Missions Camp, Cook Springs WorldSong Missions Camp, Cook Springs	4th-12th Grade Boys Camp 1st-6th Grade Lad and Dad Camp 4th-12th Grade Boys Camp 1st-6th Grade Lad and Dad Camp 4th-12th Grade Boys Camp 1st-6th Grade Lad and Dad or Mom Camp

For a registration form, brochures or other information, go to alsbom.org/boyscamps or contact State Missionary Steve Stephens (the camp director) at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 268, or (334) 613-2268, sstephens@alsbom.org.

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission **ONEPROGRAM:** The Cooperative Program **MANYMINISTRIES:** Great Commission Ministries

Fall Senior Adult Retreat

October 12-14, Shocco Springs

Theme: My Inheritance

If you made it to the Spring Senior Adult Retreat, you will surely want to return to Shocco Springs in the Fall for more great fellowship with other senior adults. If you weren't able to come in April, then you will not want to miss the Fall retreat! Bring some friends to enjoy the beautiful surroundings as you worship together.

State Missionary Eileen Mitchell asks, "Have you thought about your spiritual inheritance? What has God promised you, and what is the spiritual legacy you are leaving others?" Eileen and other leaders of the retreat ask you to come and consider these important questions. The retreat will begin with lunch on Monday, October 12, and end with lunch on Wednesday, October 14.

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

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

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On Mission with the Great Commission

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For Alabama Baptists, it also means high-quality Sunday School & Discipleship Leader Training. Regional training is available in three different parts of the state. Choose the location and date that is best for you.

There are three one-hour conference times at each location with multiple topics for each age group. Registration is \$5 per person before the early registration deadline, \$10 per person after the deadline.

SOUTH: Government Street Baptist Church, Mobile, August 15
EARLY REGISTRATION DEADLINE: August 13

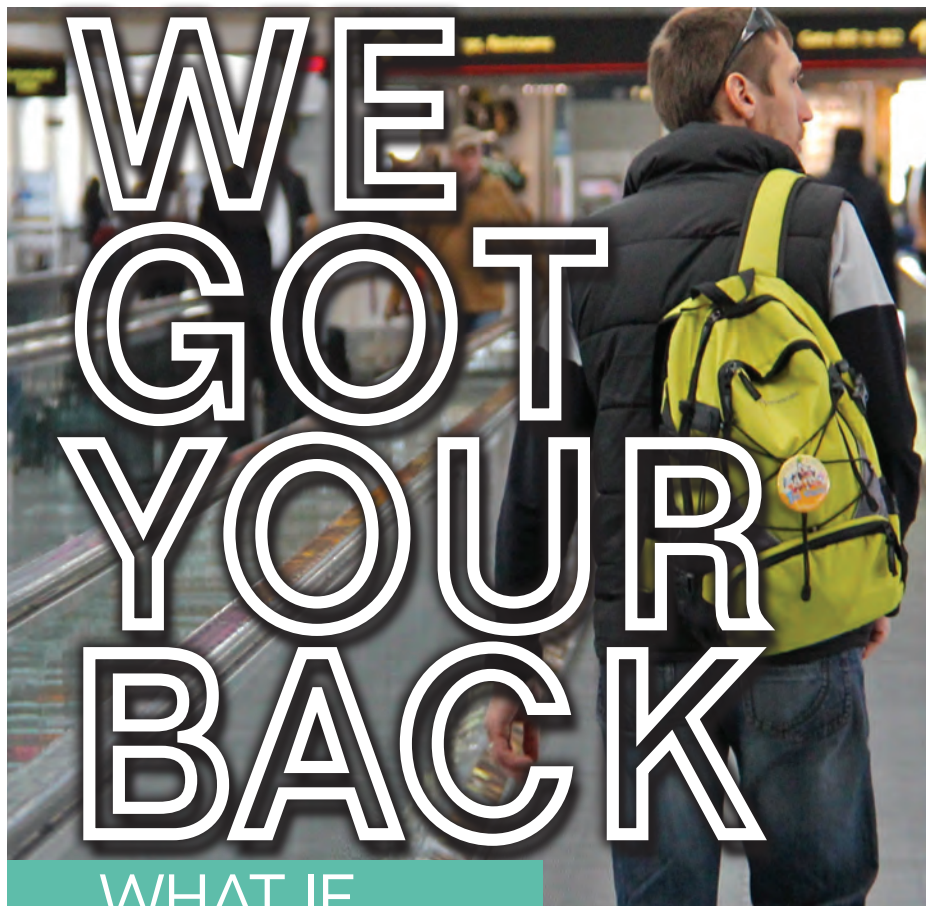
NORTH: Lindsay Lane Baptist Church, Athens, August 22
EARLY REGISTRATION DEADLINE: August 20

METRO: Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, August 29
EARLY REGISTRATION DEADLINE: August 27

For info or to register:
www.alsbom.org/south
Contact: Jamie Baldwin, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 240, jbaldwin@alsbom.org

For info or to register:
www.alsbom.org/north
Contact: Daniel Edmonds, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 285, dedmonds@alsbom.org

For info or to register:
www.alsbom.org/metro
Contact: Jamie Baldwin, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 240, jbaldwin@alsbom.org



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August 13, Central Baptist Church, Decatur

August 15, Iron City Baptist Church, Anniston

October 1, Baptist Building,
2001 E. South Blvd., Montgomery

November 5, Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer

LEVEL B (\$250 per attendee)

December 8-10, Baptist Building,
2001 E. South Blvd., Montgomery

Register online at a18c.org/travelersshield

TRAINING FOR CHURCH LEADERS

THE SUMMIT

SHOCCO SPRINGS, JULY 31-AUGUST 1, 2015

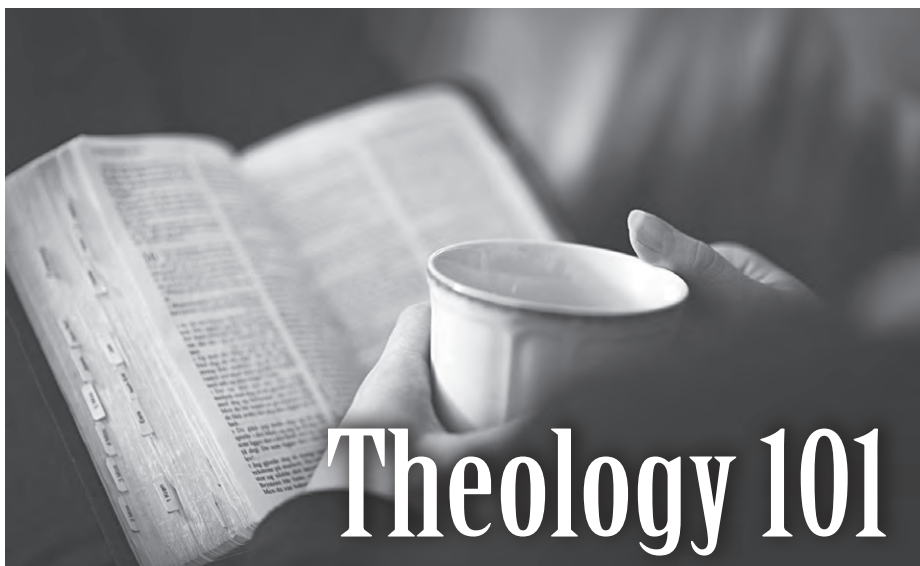
Do you have plans for the summer? Consider adding a trip to "The Summit: For Church Leaders" at Shocco to those plans. Ministers and other professionals in many different areas of church life and ministry will be on the Shocco campus to lead training sessions. From preschool to senior adult ministry, all age groups will be represented.

Whatever your areas of interest or ministry in your church, you will have opportunities to gain new insights, hear new ideas and develop skills not only through training, but also through networking with others who serve in their churches.

The Summit begins on Friday, July 31, with Early Bird Mega Conferences from 1:30 to 3:30, followed by a worship rally beginning at 3:45. Supper will be served beginning at 4:45, followed by two conference times at 6:15 and 7:45. **Saturday's schedule:** breakfast beginning at 6:30, with conference times Saturday morning at 8:00, 9:30 and 11:00. Lunch will be served at noon.

The Summit is for pastors, other ministers, teachers and other workers and leaders. Watch your mail and check online at alsbom.org/summit for updates. You may go to shocco.org or call 1-800-280-1105 for pricing information and to register.

For more information about The Summit, please contact State Missionary Jamie Baldwin at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 240, or 334-613-2240.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Such a Great Salvation

Introducing our Great Salvation

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

An early warning passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews cautions readers against drifting away from what we have heard about our salvation. The heart of the warning is against neglecting “such a great salvation” (Heb. 2:3). People who have grown up in church have heard many of the Bible terms that help describe this salvation, terms such as justification, reconciliation, redemption, sanctification and regeneration.

We tend to take these words and their concepts for granted until someone who is not familiar with them asks us to explain one or the other of these salvation words. When that happens, we often struggle to communicate what we mean. So whether it is for greater self-understanding about our own Christian experience or for clearer ways of explaining God’s saving message to others, the review of some of the Bible’s ways of referring to this great salvation can be a profitable venture.

Salvation terms

For several weeks Theology 101 will explore what these words seek to communicate to us. Of course theologians have written lengthy essays and whole books on one or the other of these terms. However, our survey of these meaningful salvation concepts will seek to put them down at street level where all of us can renew our basic grasp of their meanings. We will not try to compete with learned explanations that probe into intricacies of meaning or tentacles of implications that might extend from them. After all Theology 101 implies a basic course.

Of all the terms used in the Bible most of us view our theme word “salvation” as the comprehensive, as well as most common, term by which to refer to God’s saving action in behalf of sinners. This term, along with its companion verb “save,” have very ordinary meanings apart from their spiritual references.

For example when Jesus invited Peter to step out of the boat in the midst of

a storm and walk to Him, Peter found himself sinking. In desperation Peter called out, “Lord, save me” (Matt. 14:30). His plea was urgent and simple. We get the message.

Delivered to shore

Peter wanted Jesus to rescue him from drowning. In response Jesus took his hand and delivered him safely to shore (Matt. 14:22–32). From this incident we can glean two helpful ideas to keep in mind as we explore salvation as God’s spiritual provision for sinners: rescue and deliverance. Salvation involves both ideas.

When Jesus saves us we are rescued from serious danger and delivered into a new situation in which the danger no longer exists. So we always hold in mind that salvation includes what we are saved from and saved to. Our consideration of Christian salvation not only must deal with its positive and negative aspects, but also with its time dimensions.

Since salvation is a broad term we will begin by spending several sessions thinking about Christian salvation in its three dimensions — past, present and future. These time dimensions lead many to say, with equal biblical justification for each statement, “I have been saved,” “I am being saved” and “I will be saved.” Several of the biblical terms that are mentioned in the opening paragraph in Hebrews related to our great salvation have their setting in one of these three time dimensions, as we will see next week. ☞

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.



Lifetime achievement

Dendy receives disaster relief award

By Gary Hardin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

A jewel of a chaplain and a model example in disaster relief ministry.” That’s how James Dendy is identified in Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (DR) and also is part of why he was awarded the Disaster Relief Lifetime Achievement Award on April 10.

The office of global missions of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) presented Dendy with the award during the annual DR training held at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega.

Dendy, of Cropwell, serves as a disaster relief chaplain in St. Clair Baptist Association and is a member of First Baptist Church, Pell City.

“James ministers to people during crises and then takes upon himself to follow-up on those people long after the crisis,” Mel Johnson, SBOM disaster relief strategist, said of Dendy. “As a result he’s led many people to the Lord.”

‘He loves the Lord’

Glenn Pender, also a DR chaplain from St. Clair Association, expressed his appreciation for Dendy. “In my opinion, James is the best disaster relief chaplain. He loves the Lord Jesus and wants to see people saved.”

Pender pointed out that Dendy’s leadership has been instrumental in assisting the St. Clair team to be one of the best-equipped in the state.

Johnson agreed. “Since serving with the St. Clair team, Dendy has helped shape that team into one that our state relies on often. The St. Clair team has invested heavily in disaster relief

training and equipment,” Johnson said.

DR ministry started for Dendy in the early 1970s when a tornado struck Center Point, where he was living at the time.

Dendy said, “A bunch of us volunteered to help with cleanup and ministry to some of the people affected by the storm. I sensed back then the need for a formal disaster relief ministry.”

Later Dendy was involved in formal DR ministry when a storm rolled through Atmore in 2002. He served on the chainsaw team.

Dendy also ministered after the string of 2011 Alabama tornadoes, Hurricane Sandy in 2012 and the tornado that hit Athens that same year.

When asked why he gets pleasure from chaplain ministry, Dendy said, “I enjoy seeing relief and hope on people’s faces when they see us come in. Our army of yellow-

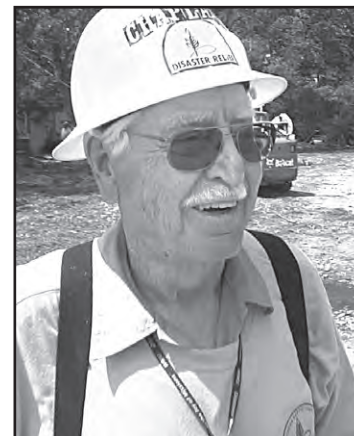
shirt volunteers makes a powerful impact on people. Victims of disasters hug you and thank you.”

One of Dendy’s most memorable ministry experiences occurred in Athens, he said, after a tornado destroyed many homes there.

“Our team from St. Clair was taking down a tree that was about to fall on a mobile home. I got to talk with the family and saw three of them come to Christ. Later I followed up on them. They are attending a church today,” Dendy said.

During the recent DR training at Shocco Springs Dendy addressed participants. “As a disaster relief chaplain you must listen to people before you can minister in action.”

Dendy, who is almost 84, doesn’t let his age stop him. He serves as chaplain for the Pell City Police Department, conducts a monthly chapel service at a nursing home and gives a weekly devotion at an assisted living center. ☞



DENDY

Ireland legalizes gay ‘marriage’ by vote

Ireland on May 22 became the first country to hold a public vote amending its constitution to allow gay “marriage,” but the change will not force houses of worship to perform the unions.

Instead gay couples will be able to enter into “civil marriage,” a separate institution from but affording all the legal benefits of “religious marriage,” according to the Yes Equality civil group that spearheaded the drive for the constitutional change.

“Churches will be able to continue with religious ceremonies and will not be required to conduct wedding ceremonies for same-sex couples,” the group’s website reads.

Ireland’s Justice Department plans to draft a marriage bill that will permit those taking vows in civil ceremonies to choose either to be “husband and wife” or “spouses of each other,” satisfying the demands of religious groups including Catholics, Protestants and Muslims that no church will be required to perform gay “marriage” in the country.

62.1 percent ‘for’

According to official results announced May 23, votes in favor of the change totaled 1,201,607, while 734,300 voted against it.

Ireland is the second country in 2015 to approve gay “marriage,” following Finland. (BP)

Outstanding Student Award

Alabama Baptist minister receives New Orleans Seminary annual award

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

Jennifer Blair Foster didn't even know the Outstanding Student Award for the master of divinity in Christian education existed until she got an email from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) telling her she had won it.

When Foster began taking classes for her master of divinity degree at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in 2000, she expected to earn the degree within the usual three to four years. But plans don't always pan out as expected.

"Oftentimes you have a plan for your life and you think things are going to work out a certain way," Foster said.

"But the Lord interrupts your plans for life and there are other priorities that come up.

'A call for your life'

"Even through the broken places and the difficult times of uncertainty there is a call for your life."

Earning a master's degree after 15 years of dreaming and chipping away is a "sweet gift" from God, she said. Through NOBTS classes at the Central Alabama Extension Center which is hosted by Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, where Foster serves as minister to children and women, she was able to walk down the hall from her office to class and complete the majority of her degree work

in the last three years. The flexibility the extension classes offer is a large part of how Foster was handed a master's degree at her May 16 graduation ceremony.

"It's a real challenge for the adult learner to go back to school, but New Orleans has made it so accessible to pursue a Christian education."

To stay motivated with her studies, Foster looked to a special person for strength.

"My husband is an amazing model of perseverance in life," she said. Foster's husband battles a chronic illness but consistently seeks to "struggle forward," a motto that she has

applied to her academic pursuit.

Judi Jackson, associate dean of students and coordinator of women's programs at NOBTS, said of Foster, "Jennifer is truly an example of the motivated learner. Although she is already

leading church ministries and teaching in a variety of settings, Jennifer poured herself into her school work believing that each

course had something to offer for both her present ministry as well as whatever God has in store for her."

Outstanding minister

Unlike Foster, her pastor at Heritage Baptist, Teman Knight, wasn't surprised when she was given the Outstanding Student Award.

"Jennifer has served in an outstanding fashion as our children's and women's minister so it was no surprise to us that she was an

outstanding student as well," said Knight, who also serves as director of the extension center. "This accomplishment was a long journey for her, but one she was finally able to accomplish because of NOBTS's commitment

to make quality theological education available to ministers everywhere."

As an educator, Jackson hopes Foster's story will

encourage others to fight through hardships that accompany higher education.

"I would hope other individuals — men and women — would understand that formal ministerial training enhances, undergirds and strengthens their current ministry efforts and has no age limit.

"Sure there's a bit of a distraction when a 15-page paper is due, but when the content of that paper encourages the writer to attempt new ministry challenges it is so worth it." ❧



Photo by Reid Foster

Jennifer Blair Foster

For more information about NOBTS's extension centers, visit www.nobts.edu/extensions.

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LEANNE MESSER
Business development coordinator, Brookdale Senior Living

“ We decided to have [the Dealing with Mental Illness in the Church Luncheon] at Brookdale Place because I read an article in *The Alabama Baptist* a few months ago and it really just inspired me. ... The article was about dealing with mental illness in the Church ... and we're always looking to be a solution for the people that we work with. ”



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Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

How would you like to get rid of your monthly mortgage payment and/or have a line of credit growing at over 4.7 percent? With a reverse mortgage it's certainly possible. I sent a quote to a lady in Huntsville last week who is 78 years young who has a home worth around \$170,000 and owes \$49,000. I told her we can pay off the \$49,000 plus set her up with a growing line of credit with around \$50,000. Do you know

if the rate averages 5 percent in 12 months that her line of credit will have grown to over \$53,000? In 3 years it will be over \$60,000, and at age 85 it will be around \$82,500. If rates during this time go up (and they can't go down much lower), she could be gaining much more.

About a week ago we closed on a reverse mortgage for a couple who lives northwest of

Birmingham, and I pointed out the amortization schedule to the closing agent. It showed their line of credit would be growing at over \$7,000 a year at the current rate. You can imagine that with such a way



Jimmy Dixon

to help folks build a nest egg or pay off a mortgage or both that I've been extremely busy, and I have, but I'm not too busy to talk with you, answer your questions or send you information. Please call me. I will be glad to talk with you.

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 children's worship leader at Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown. For a free brochure or free reverse mortgage quote, contact him directly at 205-567-4800 or jdixon@mcgowinking.com.



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Filling a void

Iron City Baptist's Angel Mission sewing ministry reaches out to the invisible

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

They go to those who feel invisible, show them God's love through fellowship and encouragement

and press a small, hand-stitched angel into each person's hand as they say goodbye.

What started as four women from Iron City Baptist Church, Anniston, making lap blankets for the homebound in the church's old fellowship hall in 2005 has grown into about 20 women and a few men meeting every Monday from

8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the old Methodist church across the street. Iron City Baptist bought its Angel Mission Ministry (AMM) the building when it continued to grow and expand its ministry reach.

"My husband wants to say

that we have a playhouse," Joyce Vaughn said with a laugh. Vaughn was one of the founders of AMM. "But we are fellowshiping with God's people."

Some of the group's most frequently visited places are nursing homes. AMM has ministered to almost every nursing home in the area, but the group doesn't stop

with the residents. The staff members and nurses also receive goodie bags, angels and whatever AMM members are handing out that particular day — acts of kindness that are appreciated because no one ever recognizes them, Vaughn said.

For Brenda Sevelius this aspect of AMM holds a special place in her heart. Sevelius' mother was a recipient of several angels from AMM before passing away more than a year ago.

"My mother had been in a nursing home three years and I was in a loss," Sevelius said.

"Joyce knew I was in a bad place" and asked her to come be a secretary for AMM. "This place has filled a void in my life," she said.

One of Sevelius' duties is to keep track of the birthdays of more than 90 shut-ins and make sure AMM sends a birthday card to each person.

Rosa Pickard, AMM member for eight years, said, "It's very important to minister to those who

can't get out or the ones who are confined in a nursing home because they don't have families and we try our best to make things and bring smiles on their birthdays and at Christmastime."

Started by necessity

Pickard started sewing her daughter's clothes out of necessity but has learned to love the skill that allows her to "bring cheer" to others.

But AMM isn't just a ministry for those who can sew, stressed

Sylvia Brooks, also one of the founders of the ministry. From organizational skills to a willingness to deliver angels and cards, AMM is always open to new faces and skillsets.

That's why the group hosted an open house May 31 — "to get people to see what we do and we have," Brooks said.

"We hoped to show people that we have places for them," she said.

With Iron City's support, AMM has made backpacks, dresses and quilts for children and families in the coal mining area of Lotts Creek, Ky.; lightweight blankets for people in Haiti; drain tube bags and heart-shaped pillows for breast cancer patients; dresses for girls in Swaziland, Africa; and the list goes on and on.

"When you start looking, there are so many needs," Brooks said. "Ours is a ministry for encouragement ... we try to uplift and encourage everyone that we can. That's how we started out and that's how we'll continue."



Photo by Lauren Brown

To donate to Angel Mission Ministry, contact Joyce Vaughn at 256-452-2243.

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Burundi crisis

Baptists in east-central Africa ask for prayer as violent protests continue

Tensions remain high in Burundi as protesters continue to oppose President Pierre Nkurunziza's bid for a third term. Baptists in the East African country are expressing grave concerns, according to Baptist World Alliance (BWA).

"We ask you to continue to pray for us because some have left their jobs, homes and churches," said Juvenal Nzosaba, general secretary of the Union of Baptist Churches in Burundi. "Many people do not have food. It is a major problem."

Presidential election

The crisis began in late April after Nkurunziza's ruling party nominated him to stand again in the June 26 presidential election. The situation worsened when a top general staged a failed coup attempt May 13 while Nkurunziza was in Kenya in meetings to resolve the country's issues.

The country's constitution says a president's five-year term may be renewed only once.

Many people have been injured in the midst of almost daily protests against Nkurunziza during May, sources reported.

More than 110,000 people have fled from the politically-based violence to neighboring countries, according to the United Nations. Cholera has broken out in refugee camps in Tanzania, killing at least 27 people.

The crisis has begun to take an economic toll on one of the world's poorest countries.

Gilbert Niyongabo, professor of economics at the University of Burundi in Bujumbura, told the *New York Times* he expects an economic collapse to occur in a month because of the impact of the crisis on rural areas of the country. When harvest season comes "there will be no customers for the agricultural products," Niyongabo said.

According to the *Times*, many

fear the political unrest will take on an ethnic dimension, much like the fighting between the majority Hutu and the minority Tutsi in the Civil War from 1993 to 2005, which left at least 300,000 dead.

Internally displaced

Baptist leader Nzosaba told BWA that, at press time, more than 20 people have died, more than 100 have been injured and about 600 have been arrested, among whom were children and

youth participating in the protests. In addition to those fleeing the country, thousands more are internally displaced.

Opposition groups said the president's actions jeopardize a peace deal that has kept ethnic tensions in check since the Civil War ended in 2005.

Burundi has some 50,000 Baptist members in approximately 300 churches affiliated with two BWA member organizations. (BNG, TAB)

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CHURCH POSITIONS

MINISTER OF EDUCATION/ADMINISTRATOR: Sardis Springs Baptist Church (Limestone Baptist Association) is accepting resumés for the position of full-time minister of education/administrator through June 30. Interested parties should mail resumés to: Sardis Springs Baptist Church, 18310 AL Hwy 251, Athens, AL 35613, or email resumés to: sardis1@integrity.com.

MINISTER OF MUSIC: Bellevue Baptist Church, Gadsden, accepting resumés for minister of music. Email resumés and hyperlinks to YouTube sites with samples to: secretarybellevue@gmail.com, or mail resumés and DVDs to: 150 Nocalula Dr., Gadsden, AL 35904.

SONG LEADER: East Huntsville Baptist Church is looking for an energetic song leader to lead us in a blend of traditional and contemporary music. We are a small church with no choir. Send resumé or contact Personnel Committee at: easthuntsvilleba@bellsouth.net.

MINISTER OF MUSIC/WORSHIP LEADER: Eastside Baptist, Birmingham, is seeking a part-time worship leader for a blended style of worship music. Send resumés to: bfmurphy@bham.rr.com.

PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER: Raleigh Avenue Baptist Church in Homewood is seeking a part-time music minister. Send resumés to: RABC, ATTN: Personnel Committee, 309 Raleigh Ave., Homewood, AL 35209, or jeantowry@rabc.org.

PART-TIME MUSIC LEADER: Antioch West Baptist Church, Greenville, Ala., is seeking a part-time music leader. Resumé may be sent to church, c/o 3200 Pettibone Rd., Greenville, AL 36037, or call 334-368-0049.

BIVOCATIONAL CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP LEADER: The Lighthouse Community Church in Harpersville, Ala., is seeking a bivocational contemporary worship leader responsible for planning and preparation of worship service. Please email resumé to: heath.flowers@thelighthousecommunitychurch.com.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC: Siberton Baptist seeking part-time minister of music. Send resumé to: Don Leverton, 605 Hannah Ave., Attalla, AL 35954 or Siberton Baptist Church, 620 Jones St., Attalla, AL 35954, ATTN: Zac Clay.

MINISTER OF MUSIC & STUDENTS: Linden Baptist Church is accepting resumés for the full-time position of minister of music and students. Interested candidates may submit their resumés by email to: scraft@servpro9855.com.

MINISTER OF MUSIC & YOUTH DIRECTOR: East Gardendale Baptist Church is accepting resumés for these two bivocational positions. Applicants may submit resumés to: EGBC, 360 Tarrant Rd., Gardendale, AL 35071, ATTN: Cathy Edwards or cathyegbc@att.net.

STUDENT MINISTER: Student minister for Turnerville Baptist Church. Looking for someone who is led to work with students, bivocational. Send resumé to: Turnerville Baptist Church,

13882 Roberts Rd., Chunchula, AL 36521. Phone: 251-675-3782 or email: turnerville3610@bellsouth.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.

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES: Lakeside Baptist Church is located in the Hoover area of metro Birmingham, Ala. We are seeking our next director of children's ministries to lead an already vital, growing area of our church to the next level of outreach and ministry. Lakeside averages approximately 700 in total Sunday School attendance with children from multiple area schools. Requirements: provide leadership and oversight to all aspects of the church's ministry for children (grades 1-4) and preteens (grades 5-6) in a multi-staff team environment. Contact Greg Corbin: pastor@lakesidebaptist.com. 205-822-1240.

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Want to know GOD?

Pastor Jimmy Tidmore
Monte Sano Baptist Church, Huntsville

Any knowledge we have about God is a result of Him purposely and intentionally revealing Himself to us. He has done this at many times and in many ways. In fact, for all eternity God's people will continue to be amazed as He reveals more and more about Himself to us. And because the wonders and glories of God are inexhaustible, this revelation will never cease. Certainly one of the greatest joys of heaven will be experiencing the delight of receiving new knowledge about God day after day for all eternity.

But as great as this will be it is hard for me to imagine any knowledge I receive about God in eternity being more delightful than what He has revealed to us about Himself on the cross of Jesus Christ. Do you want to know what God is like? Look to the cross.

The cross teaches us at least two things about God. First the cross shows us how seriously God takes our sin. Because of our treachery and rebellion against God, His perfect Son, Jesus Christ, had to die a death He did not deserve. That's how seriously God takes sin.

But we also learn something else about God at the cross. For God to willingly place His one and only Son on the cross also shows us something of the depth of God's love for the world. Romans 5:8 tells us, "God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

The cross was indeed the place where God's wrath against sin and His love for His people were simultaneously put on display for the whole world to see. And because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross, I can know God personally and so can you. Paul says in Romans 5:10, "While we were [God's] enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." Yes, "Christ ... suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18).

Want to know God? Look to the cross and trust in and consider the forgiveness and salvation Jesus purchased for you there. ☩

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR



AMERICAN SOCIETY

When I think of the decline in American society today I am reminded of a line from the movie "Gone With The Wind" when two characters were in a buggy trying to seek refuge out of Atlanta. The last of the Confederate soldiers were slowly retreating, blocking the road and the buggy's escape. Rhett Butler made the comment about

the poor souls who said they were going to win the war in a week, to which Scarlet replied that the whole lot of them made her sick and she was glad to see them go. Rhett reminded her that she should not be so hasty to see them leave, as they were the last remnant of law and order in Atlanta.

So do not gloat or be so hasty to see Christianity retreat from

American society, because when it goes we will all be at the mercy of citizens with no morals or code of conduct other than to "do unto others before they do unto them." America's ever-rising crime rate is a testament to this.

Billy E. Price
Ashville, Ala.

THANK YOU

Many thanks for your excel-

lent publication. *The Alabama Baptist* arrives here on Wednesdays and I read it literally cover to cover. Of special interest to me always are Joanne Sloan's "Heroes of the Faith" and "Someone You Should Know." Recent standouts for me have been the lessons on Habakkuk — in Explore the Bible Sunday School lessons (especially the last chapter, a favorite of mine); the column on the Church as a letter (in Theology 101); and the articles on the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and the Historic Cemetery Program in the Feb. 12 issue.

The latter articles gave me the push I needed to begin the effort to put our cemetery on the Historic Cemetery Register. I appreciate the paper keeping us aware of what's happening in the world as well as events here at home.

Aileen Henderson
Brookwood, Ala.

DEFINING MARRIAGE

I noticed that in the front page article in the April 30 issue, "5 arguments to watch as Supreme Court considers gay 'marriage,'" about the United States Supreme

Court debating the "marriage" of sodomites, there was not a

whisper of reference to biblical truth, which can settle the issue forever within a few moments. Since our only guide to faith and practice is God's Word as revealed in the Bible, it comes as no surprise that there is no value to be found in the "five arguments to watch."

Both sides are simply arguing with human knowledge and reasoning. This is doomed to fail since man's heart is desperately wicked, his mind is contaminated and easily deceived and his ways are 180 degrees opposite of God's ways. We are watching a directionless ship wallowing in a sea of sin without a rudder. Yes, this is *USA Today* (source of the article).

Regardless of what the U.S. Supreme Court chooses to do, we may be certain that God's law will not be altered in any way by their decision and that all unbelievers will ultimately be judged by His law in His higher court.

Bob Cosby, M.D.
Birmingham, Ala. ☞

"I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT BEING COLD, HUNGRY OR GOING WITHOUT MY MEDICINE. IT IS SUCH A BLESSING TO KNOW I CAN PAY MY BILLS ON TIME."

— VIRGINIA PANGLE, widow of Rev. Hazen Pangle

They call it Dignity. We call it a Mission. GuideStone's Mission:Dignity ministry provides critical financial assistance to thousands of retired Southern Baptist ministers, workers and their widows. **But we can't do it without you. DONATE AT MissionDignitySBC.org.**

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in Loving Memory
of Alabama Baptist leaders, friends

T.A. 'Buck' Duke

Retired Alabama Baptist pastor dies at 84

T.A. "Buck" Duke, who served as pastor of several Alabama Baptist churches, died April 18. He was 84.



DUKE

Duke earned his bachelor's degree from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham, and earned his master's degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

He served as pastor of Fairfield Highlands Baptist Church, Midfield, for 24 years and as pastor of Woodward Avenue Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals, and Hook Street Baptist Church, Tuscumbia. He served other Alabama Baptist churches while in seminary as well as churches in Mississippi.

He is survived by his wife, Alice Jo; four children; eight grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren. (TAB)

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For June 7

Explore the Bible By Miguel Echevarria, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

THE TRUTH PRESENTED 1 John 1:1-4

Witnessed by Many (1)

John and his associates bear witness to the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. From beginning to end, they heard His words, saw His deeds and touched Him with their very hands.

They are reliable witnesses who confirm that Jesus is the Word of life. That is to say, He is the pre-existent Son of God, the second person of the Godhead, through whom all things were created (Gen 1:1; 1 John 1:1).

How marvelous it must have been for the earliest Christians to have had a firsthand encounter with their Creator and Redeemer. The story of Jesus is therefore not a fairytale. He really had (and has) flesh and bones. This is the doctrine of the incarnation.

The incarnation has been a stumbling block since the days of John. Some will believe in Jesus if He is only a spiritual reality who had a spiritual, as opposed to physical, resurrection.

This undercuts the gospel. Jesus, fully God, became a real man who suffered on the cross for our sins and rose from the grave. There is no gospel, and thus no salvation, without the incarnation of Jesus.

Revealed as Life (2)

John and the earliest Christians again bear witness to Jesus' full humanity.

Those who doubt that Jesus took on flesh have to contend with the eyewitness testimony of those who saw Jesus and bore witness and testified about Him to mankind. To doubt their testimony is to accuse them of lying or being deceived.

The truthfulness of Scripture does not permit for either of these to be a valid option. Skeptics must find a clever way to dismiss firsthand proof about Jesus, who is eternally existent with the Father and handed over His flesh to suffer on a cross to redeem His creation.

Those who believe this will have eternal life.

Provided True Fellowship (3-4)

Christians have the conscious enjoyment of fellowship with those who have an orthodox view of Jesus — that He is both fully man and fully God. To claim that He only fits one, or none, of these descriptions disqualifies one from communion with the saints.

To believe in Jesus is to believe what John and other early Christians claim about Him. Such belief brings one into fellowship with likeminded Christians throughout the ages. Common among churches is basing fellowship on shared experience or familiarity. This is a dangerous and oftentimes unexamined practice.

Believers need to look to the words of John which make clear that there is no Christian fellowship with those who do not share the same doctrine of Christ. Shared Christology is the basis of Christian fellowship.

Furthermore an orthodox faith in Jesus brings one into fellowship with the Father and the Son. Such sweet communion is only possible through right doctrine.

Churches need to place a high priority on teaching and preaching Christology so that sinners might be brought into a relationship with the Godhead, which also includes the Holy Spirit.

To see this kind of faith brings John immense joy. And rightly so, for true Christians believe his eyewitness testimony about Jesus — that the Creator of the universe took on flesh to redeem humanity and bring them into a relationship with Himself and other believers. This is the good news that brings John unspeakable happiness.

Believers have the responsibility to spread John's testimony to all people. After all, it is the gospel of Jesus Christ that must be taken to the nations.

John's gospel-centric witness thus brings lasting fellowship and joy centered on a shared doctrine of Jesus. 🙏

Bible Studies for Life By Noel Forlini, Ph.D. Adjunct Professor of Biblical Perspectives, Samford University

ACCEPT YOUR LEADERSHIP ROLE Joshua 1:1-9

My favorite seminary professor used to begin each morning with the following prayer: "Lord, You knew when You called me what You had to work with. Make me ready for whatever this day brings." The fruit of this daily prayer was evident in her life. In the nearly 10 years I've known her she has never failed to exemplify the old adage "in omnia paratus," or ready for anything. It's vital to recognize that we are all leaders in some capacity and our preparation for leadership can assume many forms. In examining Joshua 1:1-9, three aspects of leadership emerge: God called Joshua to lead, God equipped Joshua with His Word and God equipped Joshua with His presence. Each reality is applicable in the life of today's leader.

God calls you to lead. (1-6)

The Bible is rife with examples of God's call, and Joshua is no exception. Prior to the call to lead the Hebrew people into the Promised Land, Joshua had been preparing for leadership under Moses. He had been with the people during their wilderness wandering. When they lacked faith, Joshua remained faithful.

For the Christian, both the example of Joshua and the words of Jesus ring true — whoever is faithful in small things can be trusted with big things (Matt. 25:14-23; Luke 16:10). God will call and it is incumbent upon the believer to be ready whether the task is big or small.

Theologian Henri Nouwen once remarked, "When I think of the many lecture invitations I declined with the argument that I had no time to prepare, I see now how I looked at every speaking engagement — be it a lecture, a sermon or commencement address — as a new performance that calls for new preparation. As if I had to entertain a demanding audience that could not tolerate any poor performance. No wonder that this attitude leads to exhaustion and

fatigue ... now I see that I was all mixed up. The question is not, 'Do I have time to prepare?' But, 'Do I live in a state of preparedness?'"

Hearing God's call and accepting one's leadership role is not about keeping a frenetic pace. It is not about attempting to win over the masses with impressive skill. Rather, preparation for leadership involves daily obedience to God and a willingness to submit to His voice when we hear it. Above all else, being ready is about connection to God (John 15:1-11). Being ready is about establishing a rhythm of faith so when God does call, we are prepared to lead.

God equips you with His Word. (7-8)

Being ready also involves equipping oneself with the promises God has made and being obedient to the commands He gives. For Joshua this involved keeping the Torah central to his leadership. For the Hebrew people the Torah was not merely an external set of instructions. Instead the Torah was to be the heart and soul of their connection to God and to one another. It was intended to be internalized from the beginning — to be bound to everything the people did (Deut. 6:1-9). In the same way, the Word of God is to take on flesh in the life of the believer.

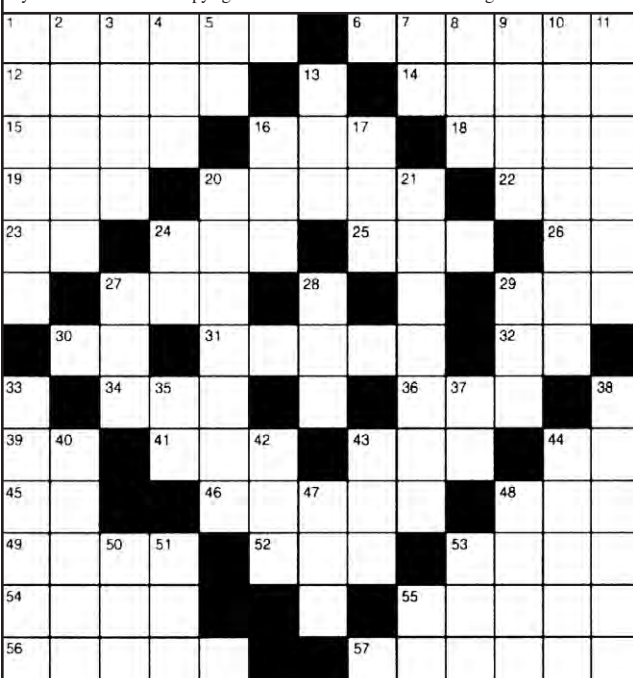
God equips you with His presence. (9)

Being ready and accepting God's leadership role requires an acknowledgement that we cannot function on our own. Obedience to God means we rely on the presence of God — "the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Josh. 1:9b). When God calls, God equips, yet God frequently calls us to tasks that are bigger than we are.

God's call requires humility, a willingness to trust ourselves to God and to others who know more than we do. It is about a willingness to say, "Lord, You knew when You called me what You had to work with. Make me ready for whatever this day brings," and to trust that God's presence will go with us. 🙏

Christian Crossword

By Martha Wall Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. Compassionate. (James 5:11)
6. Pleasant and mild.
12. Musical saga.
14. Mount. (Esther 6:8)
15. Inquisitive.
16. Behold.
18. ___ weigh the path. (Isa. 26:7)
19. Taken in adultery in the very ___. (John 8:4)
20. Seat of affection. (Phil. 1:7)
22. Eccentric joker.
23. Left hand. (abbr.)
24. Introducing new angle. (Matt. 5:22)
25. Words of a talebearer ___ as wounds. (Prov. 26:22)
26. His banner over ___ was love. (Song of Sol. 2:4)
27. A memorial of ___. (Matt. 26:13)
29. For each.
30. Invitation to partake. (Isa. 55:1)

31. Herein is a marvelous ___. (John 9:30)
32. Hath translated ___ into the kingdom. (Col. 1:13)
34. High priest. (1 Sam. 1:9)
36. He that hath an ___. (Rev. 2:7)
39. Either.
41. This ___ thing I do. (Phil 3:13)
43. Woman's name.
44. Any one of God's children. (abbr.)
45. In regard to.
46. Merrily.
48. There's more.
49. Goliath's hometown. (1 Sam. 17:4)
52. Part of clay, part of iron. (Dan. 2:41)
53. Pagan city. (Isa. 37:13)
54. Resound.
55. Friendly expression.
56. Where your treasure is, ___ of gold in pictures of silver. (Prov. 25:11)
2. Period.
3. Snug habitat. (Ps. 84:3)
4. Root out of ___ ground. (Isa. 53:2)
5. Each. (abbr.)
7. Wordless question.
8. East of Eden. (Gen. 4:16)
9. Describing metal or mettle.
10. Takes for granted.
11. Often a treasured communication.
13. Satan's affirmative. (Gen. 3:1)
16. Place.
17. Historical time.
20. Feeling pain.
21. A great sadness.
24. Exist.
27. Gardening tool.
28. Reward: death. (Rom. 6:23)
29. To destroy them, and had cast ___. (Esther 9:24)
33. God does not ___. (Isa. 49:15)
1. Levels of intonation.
35. Look.

37. Associate in Arts.
38. Scratches.
40. A measure to ___ even unto you. (2 Cor. 10:13)
42. If any man ___ of this bread. (John 6:51)
43. Beverage.
44. Not fresh.
47. A charged subatomic particle.
48. Their feet run to ___. (Prov. 1:16)
50. An article.
51. Aaron's resting place. (Num. 20:25)
53. An evil creature.
55. Spanish. (abbr.)



TOP 10

best-selling Christian books

FICTION

1. **Chasing Sunsets**
By Karen Kingsbury (Howard)
2. **The Love Letters**
By Beverly Lewis (Bethany)
3. **Angels Walking**
By Karen Kingsbury (Howard)
4. **The Harbinger**
By Jonathan Cahn (Frontline)
5. **The Decision**
By Wanda E. Brunstetter (Shiloh Run)
6. **On Her Own**
By Wanda E. Brunstetter (Barbour)
7. **Unlocked**
By Karen Kingsbury (Zondervan)
8. **The Oregon Trail Romance Collection**
By Amanda Cabot (Barbour)
9. **Going Home**
By Wanda E. Brunstetter (Barbour)
10. **The Shack**
By William Paul Young (Windblown)

NONFICTION

1. **Jesus Calling – Hardcover**
By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
2. **The 5 Love Languages**
By Gary Chapman (Moody)
3. **I Am A Church Member**
By Thom S. Rainer (B&H)
4. **Get Your Hopes Up!**
By Joyce Meyer (Faithwords)
5. **The Art of Work**
By Jeff Goins (Thomas Nelson)
6. **The Total Money Makeover**
By Dave Ramsey (Thomas Nelson)
7. **Ghost Boy**
By Martin Pistorius (Thomas Nelson)
8. **Nobody's Cuter Than You**
By Melanie Shankle (Tyndale)
9. **You Can, You Will**
By Joel Osteen (Faithwords)
10. **Jesus Today**
By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)

Source: Christian Book Expo at press time



Jon Guerra

Photo courtesy of Provident Label Group

Passionately pursue God

Guerra inspires listeners through 'Little Songs'

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

With his personal and prolific approach to songwriting, Jon Guerra hopes to inspire a new generation of worshippers to passionately pursue God with all their heart.

His debut album, "Little Songs," is designed to introduce listeners to his unique style and encourage responses of faith.

"At the core, these songs are an offering to God and a way to connect others to Him," Guerra said. "I want people to enjoy these songs and to be moved by God's grace and His infinite love."

In addition to leading worship and performing concerts Guerra's innovative approach to songwriting has opened doors to write jingles for companies like Comcast, Chase Bank and Allstate Insurance.

Guerra was featured on the "Rock and Worship Roadshow Tour" and is currently performing with singer/songwriter Matt Maher on the "Saints and Sinners Tour."

When he isn't on the road, Guerra serves as a member of Vertical Church Band and leads worship at Harvest Bible Chapel, Chicago, Ill.

"Lately I've been touring nonstop," Guerra said. "When my album came out, I was laying in bed extremely sick for almost a week and completely lost

my voice. I had to cancel shows and other plans, but it was during this time that I really felt the nearness of God and was reminded of 2 Corinthians 12:9. It's not by my own strength or my own efforts, it's really by the grace of God that I'm able to make it through each day. I've been cherishing the sweetness of that truth."

Powerful message

During concerts Guerra is capturing the attention of audiences around the country while playing multiple instruments and incorporating a powerful message into his songs.

"I received an email from a man sharing about how his family played the song 'I Will Follow' when his father was dying from cancer," Guerra said. "As his dad took his last breaths on earth, his family was encouraged by the message that provided a glimpse into eternity and the hope that we have as believers. As a songwriter you never expect how these songs will impact people. To hear stories like this is so humbling and inspiring."

"Knowing that these songs are relatable to people and that they express a deep feeling, sentiment and experience we have with God is what keeps pushing me forward and challenging me to write more. When I hear stories from people about how they were encouraged to see that God loves them through their weakness and shines through their stains, that is the most fulfilling aspect."





BP photo

Naomi Jansen hosts a group of village girls, weaving in jewelry making with conversations about Bible stories. The Jansen family teaches Bible stories to 60–80 village children each week.

Village queens

Honorary status helps family share King Jesus in South America

Most girls dream of becoming royalty, but few have the opportunity to realize that dream. For Naomi and Hannah Jansen, teenage daughters of Southern Baptist missionaries among an unreached tribe in South America, it wasn't quite like the fairy tale of wearing bedazzled ball gowns and living in spacious castles.

Their skin and hair were what was decorated when they were inducted by the tribe to be ceremonial queens of the village, tribal peacemakers who hold positions of honor and reflect a high level of respect given to their parents.

The most notable sign a girl has been deemed a village queen is that locals are not supposed to argue in her presence or it brings shame upon the families. Naomi and Hannah haven't been called into service yet, but they know their role is to silence an argument should one erupt among villagers.

"The main reason they wanted me and my sister to do this was because they respected my father," Naomi said. "For someone's daughters to be queens, it's a huge honor for the parents."

Adopted into a family

Besides Naomi and Hannah's honorary status, each member of the missionary family has been adopted into a family within the tribe, including their father, Jacob.

"When someone comes into this village, they like to adopt you to accept you as one of them ... so they'll know who you are, where you fit in," Naomi explained.

As part of being introduced into this familial society, villagers ask: Who is your family here? Who is your mother here?

Jacob said, "Until they know who your mother is, they really don't know where you fit in. We were each adopted so that we would have a mother and

a family that we fit into, and then everyone knows their relationship with us. They know whether to treat us as an uncle, nephew or brother."

The International Mission Board missionaries thought they knew a little about rural living. But there's rural and then there's remote — the family is about four hours away from any kind of supplies.

Cooperative effort

Despite their honorary titles as village queens, Naomi and Hannah help their mother with cooking and other chores — no princess complexes allowed here. The couple's son, youngest daughter and Jacob similarly pitch in with household duties. As with the villagers, most everything is a cooperative effort.

The people group the family works with is unreached with less than 2 percent of its population being evangelical Christian. The ethnic religion is deeply rooted in the people's identity and conversion to Christianity can equate to feeling separated from one's culture.

Language learning is a hurdle for the Jansens, since villagers speak a tribal language different from the region's primary language.

When Jacob tells Bible stories in the village, a member of his adopted family translates the stories into the tribal language. Jacob tells stories chronologically from Old Testament to New Testament to give the people a fuller understanding of God's Word, since most don't read.

"The only way they can really have their hearts opened in a good way is to hear the stories of God in their own language," Jacob said. "So we are motivated, we are driven, not by our desire to learn another language but by our desire to communicate clearly the gospel."

So far six believers in the village have been baptized and meet together weekly.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names changed for security reasons. (BP)

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Schools burglarized, Christians attacked in India

NEW DELHI — Each day children on their way to Mount Carmel School in New Delhi, India, pass through gates under the watch of armed security guards, and now city police officers stop there on government orders after a nearby Catholic convent and school were broken into.

The vandals stole money, tampered with security cameras and ransacked the principal's office at Mount Carmel on Feb. 13.

The crime rippled through other Christian schools. The attack was the sixth in 2015 in an ongoing series targeting Christian communities and schools across India.

Also it was the turning point for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to address the growing safety concerns of India's minority Christian community. Modi immediately asked the Delhi police commissioner to investigate the attacks, saying, "Government will not allow any religious group, belonging to the majority or the minority, to incite hatred against others overtly or covertly."

In May the annual report of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom cited an "increase of harassment and violence" among India's Christian community.

The attacks have come against a background of fear, triggered by Hindus in Modi's party, that Christians are increasing their efforts to proselytize — especially in schools.

At Mount Carmel, Principal Vijay Williams does not hesitate to explain his affinity for Christianity to visitors and students.

"Students are not forced to convert or even take a Bible class," he said. "God converts them — we don't convert them." (RNS)

Pastor, more than 60 Christians killed in Nigeria

FORON, Nigeria — Gunmen killed a church pastor and more than 60 other Christians in Plateau state of Nigeria in May.

Setting fire to church buildings and houses in attacks that continued through late May, Fulani Muslim herdsmen killed Luka Gwom, pastor of the Church of Christ in Nations on May 2 in the town of Foron, Barkin Ladi Local Government Area (LGA).

A member of the slain pastor's congregation identified only as Paulina also was killed. A Christian community leader in Foron, Ishaku Pam, confirmed the killing of Gwom, whom he said was his pastor, and said Paulina had gotten married in the church two weeks before.

Muslim herdsmen also launched attacks May 11 in Plateau state's Riyom LGA. The attacks left seven Christians dead, according to anonymous sources.

In the Barkin Ladi LGA a mass burial took place in Foron on May 4 for 27 Christians killed May 2. Another area source confirmed the deaths.

In two other attacks in the area May 2, 17 Christians were killed in Vat village and 13 other Christians were slain in Zakupang. The victims included women and children.

Prior attacks added at least four more Christians to the death toll. (MS)

Boko Haram rebels attack, kill 29 Christians

PAMBULA-KWAMDA, Nigeria — Islamic extremist attacks in Nigeria's Adamawa state have killed at least 29 people after weeks of Boko Haram rebels losing ground to government forces in the northeast, sources said.

Suspected Boko Haram members slaughtered 10 Christians on May 22 with machetes in Pambula-Kwamda, a Christian community in Adamawa's Madagali Local Government Area (LGA).

"They destroyed the telephone mast first before invading our community — this was to prevent us from telephoning and requesting help," said an area pastor who requested anonymity.

Maina Ularamu, council chairman of the Madagali LGA, confirmed the 10 deaths in a statement to journalists May 25, saying reports had reached him only that day due to insecurity in the area and communications difficulties caused by Boko Haram.

Boko Haram was suspected in a suicide bombing of the Christian community of Garkida in Adamawa state May 19 that killed nine people and a shooting attack May 16 in Wagga, Madagali LGA that took the lives of 10 Christians, sources said. The violence was seen as a gesture by Boko Haram to reclaim territory lost to the Nigerian military. (MS)