

# THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



Aug. 6, 2015  
Vol. 180, No. 31

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Logan Chappell (front), a student from Spartanburg, South Carolina, paints a house in southwest Birmingham as part of a World Changers project July 21-24. Morgan Hope (back), also of Spartanburg, says she enjoys the work through World Changers and the ability to 'minister to people all over.'

# Change — the — world

Photo by Neisha Roberts

## World Changers volunteers from across US serve at 86 worksites in Alabama

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

A big smile stretched across Jay Murphy's face as sweat beaded on his forehead, the Alabama sun baking him and the teenagers carrying lumber back and forth behind him.

"It's hot, and I like my climate control," he said with a laugh.

But despite appearances, the heat wasn't the thing that "got him" that week as he worked on a World Changers crew in Birmingham in mid-July. Was it hot? Yes. Was it hard work? Absolutely.

But for Murphy, the thing that overwhelmed him was — Jesus.

### 'Jesus immersion'

"This has been like Jesus immersion," said Murphy, of Staunton, Virginia, who served as a World Changers crew chief. "You try

to soak it all in. You hear about people taking a trip to South America to immerse themselves in the language, but for us, this is like immersion in Jesus, which is pretty cool."

Christ was all around them, he said, as the group of about 20 students and adults from Virginia, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Maryland and Washington State worked on a house in southwest Birmingham. They worked from sunup to sundown, then cleaned up and had worship at night, got up and had worship in the morning too and then did it all over again.

And so did teams on 85 other worksites in Alabama as students and adults from across the nation descended on Birmingham, Florence and Tuscaloosa, freshening up paint, working on roofs and building decks and wheelchair ramps.

"It's Jesus all week," said Logan Chappell, a student from Spartanburg, South Carolina, who worked on the site with Murphy.

Morgan Hope, also from Spartanburg, agreed. "As World Changers, we enjoy the work and get to minister to people all over," she said. "For some people, offering to help them

with something they need meets a physical need and can lead to meeting a spiritual need."

It paves the way to share the love of Christ, Hope said. And it's such a great open door to the gospel that Birmingham Baptists keep it going year-round through the Metro Changers ministry, said Butch Henderson, executive director of Metro Changers.

"With Birmingham having nearly a 30 percent poverty level, there's a lot of need that's out there," he said. "Christians need to be aware of how many homes are in disarray and how many people are living in unsafe environments."

As the hands and feet of Christ, churches can help by painting or roofing a house or making it handicap accessible, "then go back and minister to that particular family

(See 'Jesus,' page 3)

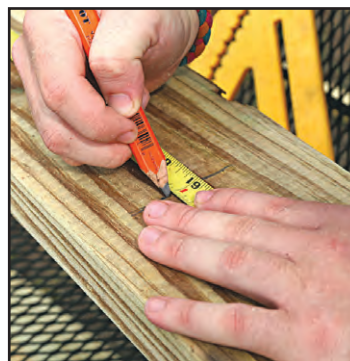


Photo by Neisha Roberts

Coming next week:

# BACK TO CAMPUS



# COMMENT

## Happening in Alabama

This morning Alex woke up in a safe, caring place. It is the only safe place he has ever experienced. Drugs and violence tore his family apart, aging him beyond his tender childhood years.

Thankfully the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH) was there to offer a helping hand. Alex is safe now. During the course of the last year of record, ABCH cared for 164 children like Alex on its campuses and group homes across the state. In addition, 263 children found homes with Christian foster parents. These parents demonstrate Christ's love to boys and girls, many of whom, like Alex, have never seen self-giving love.

At another site a homeless mother and her children have a safe, clean living space that will be theirs for a few weeks, another ministry of ABCH. Last year 105 homeless mothers and their children found a safe place to live through this Alabama Baptist ministry.

This week summer camps are filled with boys and girls from Alabama Baptist churches learning about missions as a lifestyle. Last year more than 400 boys participated in Royal Ambassador (RA) camps and other RA events in August alone. At WorldSong Missions Place, a camp owned by Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), more than 600 girls interacted with missionaries and learned about sharing Christ at summer missions camps.

It is a busy time at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega too. More than 20,000 people attend events at Shocco every summer. Last year's number was 21,104. Some come for church camps. Others come for camps like the camp for the deaf sponsored by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM). Last year the camp for the deaf attracted 87 campers and 27 of them made professions of faith.

### Thousands of decisions

All together more than 1,100 decisions for Christ were recorded from summer activities at the Alabama Baptist-sponsored conference center last year.

Few people now recall February's Vacation Bible School (VBS) training events but as summer ends and VBS reports are compiled, state missionaries remember their investment in the conferences. It was the first step in the VBS process. Alabama has the most extensive VBS training program among Southern Baptists and



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

it works. VBS is the state's largest evangelistic outreach with more than 7,400 professions of faith reported last year.

Colleges and schools will soon open and Baptist campus ministers are eager to welcome students back to campus. The 16 Baptist campus ministers serving the state's four-year schools enlisted 40,086 students in various programs last year. More than 2,500 college students were involved in weekly Bible studies led by campus ministers with 234 professions of faith.

### Christian education

Through Alabama Baptist-sponsored missions programs 1,807 college students served as student missionaries and the Lord used their collective efforts to lead 170 people to personal faith.

Alabama Baptist-related schools — Samford University, the University of Mobile (UMobile) and Judson College — will welcome about 8,000 students combined. In each place, students will find an environment emphasizing learning and faith. In addition to things like Bible courses, chapel and dorm Bible studies, Christian service is stressed. Last year Samford students participated in missions efforts in 10 states and 40 foreign countries. UMobile sponsored 16 missions trips and did more than 22,000 hours of service locally. More than 85 percent of Judson's students served in various Perry County ministries.

Reaching international students is another goal of Alabama Baptists. One work involves an International Friends Retreat, which drew 100 participants from five countries. The retreat allows participants to build relationships and to present the gospel in relaxed circumstances.

English as a Second Language (ESL) and literacy work are other tools. Last year Alabama Baptists trained 70 new workers in ESL and 65 were trained for literacy work. The Bible and other Christian literature are taught as people learn English and learn to read.

The yellow shirts of Alabama Baptists' disaster relief work are well known. Last year Alabama volunteers provided 15,180 days of disaster relief service. Every project is an attempt to communicate God's love through the love and

service of volunteers. Because the need is ongoing, so are efforts to recruit and train volunteers — a necessity before one can wear the yellow shirt. Last year Alabama Baptists trained 656 new volunteers.

Alabama's shifting population makes new church plants necessary. New churches are needed to serve the new housing developments in different parts of the state. New churches also are needed to reach the changing makeup of the state's population. One study said Alabama Baptists worship in 20 languages each week.

The state's goal is to plant 220 intentional church starts by 2020, and Alabama Baptists have already funded 50 of those.

Altogether more than 20,000 church workers will be trained in programs led by state missionaries this year. They will be Sunday School officers and teachers, discipleship workers, Bible Drill leaders, family ministry resource personnel and more. Their training will be reflected in thousands of churches through better teaching, better leading and better service.

Thousands of children will participate in Bible Drill competitions. Hundreds of youth will celebrate their faith at youth evangelism conferences. Churches and associations will be partnered with International Mission Board (IMB) affinity groups to work alongside IMB missionaries. Missions team leaders will be trained in safety and security.

### Training, care

State missionaries will work with hundreds of churches providing guidance in pastoral transitions, advising about technology needs, helping churches work through conflict that has escalated to dangerous proportions and providing resources for church constitutions, bylaws and policies to help churches run smoothly and to minimize risk in today's society. The list goes on and on.

Almost countless are the hours state missionaries will spend in visits, calls and conversations with pastors, staff members and church leaders all toward one goal — meeting the needs of the 3,286 local Baptist churches in Alabama.

Missions is happening in Alabama. Missions never stops. It is 24/7. It is evangelism. It is ministry. It is Christian education. It is church planting. It is strengthening churches and growing Christian disciples. Missions in Alabama involves every Baptist entity and every area of SBOM.

Your Cooperative Program (CP) gifts make it possible. When you give to missions through the CP you are helping share Christ locally through your church, across Alabama through your state convention and around the world through programs of the Southern Baptist Convention. 🙏

*Congratulations*  
**Dr. Terry**  
on 20 years as The Alabama Baptist's editor



"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.

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Individual — \$22.25

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of need that's out there.  
Christians need to be  
aware of how many homes  
are in disarray and how  
many people are living in  
unsafe environments."**

**Butch Henderson**  
executive director  
**Metro Changers**



Photo by Neisha Roberts

World Changers team members, led by crew chief Jay Murphy (right), work together on the deck of a southwest Birmingham home July 23.

# 'Jesus all week'

## Birmingham's Metro Changers works behind-the-scenes for World Changers

(continued from page 1)

or person as long as they want to," Henderson said.

And they can focus on ministry and let Metro Changers do the behind-the-scenes legwork, he said.

Through a close relationship with Birmingham's development office, Metro Changers chooses projects based on the homeowner applications given to the city.

Then they purchase the supplies for the project and the city reimburses them, Henderson said.

"This whole ministry comes at no cost to the church — only their time," he said.

Metro Changers has been working alongside World Changers for eight years, preparing the plans and materials before the teams arrive on the ground.

It's been a rewarding partnership, Henderson said.

But churches can do the same kind of project through Metro Changers at any other

time of year too, Henderson said. Since 2007 the ministry has facilitated work on more than 1,300 homes, impacted more than 2,500 people and seen the gospel shared countless times.

"It's really an astonishing thing to sit back and watch how homeowners react to volunteers," he said. "It's hard to put into words,

but it's really amazing to watch what God does." ❧

**For more  
information,  
visit [www.  
metrochangers.org](http://www.metrochangers.org).**

## Baptists react to Boy Scouts lifting ban on gay leaders

The Boy Scouts of America's (BSA) executive board voted July 27 to lift the Scouts' national ban on gay adult leaders and employees — a move Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Ronnie Floyd said may hasten the exodus of Southern Baptists from Scouting.

"Sadly and regrettably, I believe churches who stand on the biblical ethic of sexuality will have to cease their sponsorship and involvement in the Boy Scouts of America," Floyd said. "I also believe it is important that everyone understands that in reality it is the Boy Scouts of America that is walking away from their historic heritage that has been embraced by the vast majority of Americans."

The BSA executive board approved the policy change by a 79-percent majority, the Scouts' website reported. BSA will continue to allow troops chartered by religious organizations to exclude gays from

volunteer leadership positions if homosexual behavior is incompatible with chartering organizations' religious beliefs.

One Baptist leader told *The Washington Post* that concession may only be temporary, and churches could be forced eventually to accept homosexual leaders.

### What might come next

Roger S. Oldham, the SBC Executive Committee's (EC) vice president for convention communications and relations, said, "The next step, which may be a year or two down the road, seems obvious to us." Groups with Christian convictions, he said, "are being put into a situation where they have to either compromise their conviction or choose to leave. And for those for whom biblical sexual morality is a conviction, they have no alternative."

Legal analysts disagree on whether church-chartered troops could be liable to discrimina-

tion lawsuits for denying leadership positions to open homosexuals.

EC President Frank S. Page said the Scouts' latest decision represents a disappointing turn from their heritage of character and faith.

"The Boy Scouts used to instill principled courage and resolute character in its members," Page said in written comments. "Under pressure to conform to political correctness, courage withered. It deeply saddens us to see the white flag of surrender flapping in the morning breeze."

*The Los Angeles Times* reported a 13 percent decline in Scouting enrollment since 2013, when BSA began loosening its policies regarding homosexual membership. The Mormon Church, which sponsors more Boy Scout troops than any other organization, is considering starting its own version of the Boy Scouts, according to *TIME*. (BP, RNS)

# 'Time for the Church to act'

## Texas Supreme Court makes rare move in favor of pastors

The Texas Supreme Court has directed the Houston city council to abide by its own charter and repeal the controversial Equal Rights Ordinance or put it up to a citywide vote this November. The city has until Aug. 24 to comply or be compelled to do so by the high court.

In a rare move, the Texas Supreme Court conditionally granted a writ of mandamus stating "the legislative power reserved to the people of Houston is not being honored." In 2014, Mayor Annise Parker and then-city attorney Dave Feldman declared "invalid" a referendum to repeal the controversial city ordinance. Petitioners — a racially and politically diverse group of pastors and civic leaders — sued, alleging the mayor and attorney manufactured signature requirements in order to defy the city charter mandates. The court agreed with the petitioners July 24, stating the city secretary, not the city council, is obligated to evaluate petitions.

Enforcement of the ordinance is suspended.

"Simply put, the city secretary's certification started the process outlined in the Charter for reconsidering ordinances following a referendum petition, invoking the council's ministerial duty to carry out its obligations," the court wrote.

That is what Andy Taylor, attorney for the pastors' coalition, has said all along.

"The only person who calls balls and strikes is [city secretary] Anna Russell," Taylor told the Southern Baptist *TEXAN*. "They can't ignore her and force us to sue."

In a statement released July 24, Parker wrote, "Obviously I am disappointed and believe the court is in error with this 11th hour ruling in a case that had already been decided by a judge and jury of citizens."

At issue was the "validity" of petition signatures — those of the signers and the circulators. Attorneys for the city argued in court in February the signatures did not meet a prescribed standard and therefore invalidated the petition. Taylor countered that the city created the standards in an effort to keep in force an ordinance the mayor called "deeply personal."

The jury and judge disagreed, and the plaintiffs lost the initial trial. The coalition appealed to the Texas 14th Court of Appeals. And with a mid-August deadline for placing the referendum on the city ballot, plaintiffs asked for an expedited hearing. Their request was denied, and the appeal was put on the normative months-long track for a hearing. That would have put any ballot measure off until 2017.

### 'Special rights' for LGBT

Dave Welch, executive director of the Houston Area Pastors Council, the group that spearheaded the petition drive, was grateful for the mandamus ruling. The coalition charged the Equal Rights Ordinance created "special rights" for Houston's LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender) community at the risk of compromising the constitutional rights afforded citizens, especially people of faith. The ordinance also permits citizens to use the public bathroom of the gender with which they identify.

The referendum garnered 55,000 signatures. Of those, Russell certified 17,846 — more than enough to send the ordinance back to the city council for repeal or vote by the citizens. If the city fails to act according to its City Charter, the writ of mandamus will be issued, forcing the city to comply.

"We fought for the right to vote and we look forward to that challenge," Welch said. "It's time for the Church to act." (BP)

## Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

### Henry Criswell



CRISWELL

*Moffett Road Baptist Church, Mobile  
Mobile Baptist Association*

**FAVORITE VERSE:** John 3:16

**FAVORITE HYMN:** "The Old Rugged Cross"

**HOBBIES:** Reading history and ministering through church activities

**FAMILY STATUS:** Widower for four years after 54 years of marriage to wife, Winnie; daughter, Susan Baker; two grandchildren (one living; one deceased); one great-granddaughter

*Through the years, Henry Criswell, of Mobile, has purchased more than 70 home-baked cakes to provide for families in grief and for bereavement meals. It is one of the ways the 83-year-old strives to show the love of Jesus to others. He also is a deacon, Sunday School teacher, assistant to the leader of the Celebrate Recovery program at his church and a member of the senior choir, sanctuary choir and counting committee. He also is a member of the church's Adults on Mission group. Criswell retired 26 years ago after a 34-year career at Scott Paper Co. He is a Navy veteran, having served during the Korean War.*

good about it and want to continue it as long as I can.

**Q: What does your ministry work demand?**

A: Time, of course, and preparation for teaching. Continuing to read the Bible for my comfort and leadership. I feel the desire to do it. I have a great time alone just preparing for teaching. It has become secondhand to me to do that.

**Q: What do you get from your ministry work?**

A: Knowing that I am doing the will of the Lord in my life. I get a comfort from that. That comes from God, although you get words of encouragement and thankfulness from members.

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

A: I would be happy to do everything that I'm doing as long as it's needed and as long as I'm able to do it.

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

A: A continuation of the fruit of the Spirit in my life in the church. He gives it and never takes it away.

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

A: Everything. I was successful before I knew Christ in the job that I had. (Coming to know Jesus as Savior) changed my way of thinking about using money, how I should relate to other people, on and on. He opens up new horizons in life as long as you want to please God and live by His Spirit. ☩

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

A: It was my wife. She was going to church when I met her. I was not raised in a Christian home. [She was] going to a Baptist church here in Mobile and I followed her there. Through the ministry there, the pastor and visiting evangelist came to my home. When they came to talk to me about it all, that was when I accepted Christ. I was 33, the same age as Christ when He ascended.

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

A: By the need that I was told about and by the needs that I saw. And also being led by Christ. Even in (military) service, I was led into leadership roles. When I was asked, I could not say no to anything related to the church. I just feel

## Sulphur Springs Church 'shreds the mortgage'



Photo courtesy of Sulphur Springs Baptist Church, Trussville

Sulphur Springs Baptist Church, Trussville, held a 'shredding the mortgage' ceremony June 28 as they celebrated paying off their \$700,000 note in 14 years and two months. Pictured are (left to right): Buddy Sewell, deacon vice chair; Rip Newton, deacon; Margaret Sims, church member; Mike Roper Sr., deacon; and Bobby Shipp, pastor.

# Fashion with a Cause

## Chatom-area Baptists hold standing-room-only fashion show to combat human trafficking

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

Sometimes really big ideas start in really simple ways.

That's what happened the day God pricked Susan Wilcox Turner's ears while she was poking around in a furniture store in Montgomery.

"A woman with an accent that sounded Russian or eastern European started helping me," Turner said.

So Turner decided to try out the few Russian words in her arsenal, words picked up on a recent Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) trip to Russia.

She had no idea where that connection would lead.

The woman, she discovered, was from Moldova and an international representative for Stella's Voice, an organization that aims to protect Moldova's orphans from human trafficking.

### Addressing an urgent need

"She was the second person God put in my path in a very short period of time who was involved in fighting human trafficking," Turner said. "And when God hits you over the head with something, you have to listen."

She did.

And listening set her on a path that led to putting on a huge, packed-out event that drew in more than \$5,000 to fight human trafficking.

She and others called it Fashion With a Cause, and on June 6, it was standing-room only as women took to the runway and shared stories of the urgent need to protect young women worldwide.

How do a fashion show and the issue of human trafficking go together?

Turner, a member of Spring Hill Baptist Church, Millry, said the whole idea was a "God thing."

After her conversation in the furniture store she began researching how to fight human trafficking, and that led her to attend the End it Alabama workshop held at First Baptist Church, Montgomery, earlier this year, where she met representatives from Hope Haven, another faith-based organization working to combat human trafficking.

At the same time, Turner was going through the home of her late mother, Edith Wilcox, who had left behind boxes and boxes of 1950s dresses in pristine condition.

And suddenly one day the lightbulbs came on.

Alicia Atcheson, who works with Turner, said they and others began to dream up an event that could build up young women and prevent them from being trafficked as well as raise funds to rescue girls who have already fallen victim to trafficking.

"We felt that combining the cause with a fashion show would not only entice a greater number of attendees but also serve as a platform to boost the self-esteem of those involved," said Atcheson, executive director of the Wilcox Foundation and Gallery, which began with Edith Wilcox as its benefactor.

The idea quickly took off and got bigger and bigger, she said.

### Educating the community

Working with Morrell Turner, a local fashion blogger and stylist, they put together a runway show involving Wilcox's vintage couture pieces, formal gowns from Angela's Formal Wear and several other pieces that highlighted the personal style of local teens.

About 60 models took part, and guest speakers used the opportunity to educate the packed house about trafficking and



Photo by Terrence Adams Photography  
Deborah Leigh Dixon (front), of Chatom Baptist Church, and Rebekah Jenks, of Tompkins Baptist Church, Grove Hill, participate in Fashion With a Cause.

the ways traffickers target young women and men.

The local police chief, for example, talked about what type of trafficking incidents he had seen in the area and ways families could avoid the risks.

"The event helped the community learn about what trafficking looks like, how to protect themselves and what agencies are fighting it," Atcheson said. "It was a great way to bring out teenagers and their parents and have them as a captive audience to be able to educate them about this issue."

Those who came to the event also saw "Chosen," a 20-minute film that tells the story of a young woman who was being

ushered into human trafficking.

"It was the biggest educational piece of the night," Atcheson said. "People were really moved by what they heard."

Turner said the video walked viewers through practical red flags that teens should notice in their own lives and the lives of their friends.

"All through the story of the young girl, it talks about how her friends helped her hide things, like her boyfriend who was buying her expensive gifts," she said. "It brought up questions that should be asked — how is this guy never working? What did he want you to do? Where does he want you to go? It's helping them know enough to ask questions and be a real friend to their friends."

Altogether, the fashion show was a "pretty heavy event," Turner said, and she believes it got a lot of people talking about hard issues.

The event was such a great success, she said, that the Wilcox Foundation and Gallery is already making plans for a second fashion show next year.

In all the event raised more than \$5,000 for Hope Haven, Stella's Voice and the WMU Foundation's Hayes Endowment, which is used to fight human trafficking.

### 'If we could save one'

"Our heart's cry was that if we could save one girl from trafficking, it was worth it," Atcheson said.

Turner agreed.

"It's all about Him and all for His glory," she said. "If we can save one young girl, it's a wonderful thing."

For more information about Fashion With a Cause, visit [www.wilcoxgallery.org](http://www.wilcoxgallery.org) for events. For more information about Stella's Voice, visit [www.stellasvoice.org](http://www.stellasvoice.org).

## Ministry Tips



### CREATING MASTERPIECES

By Pastor Jesse Reeder  
Moulton Baptist Church

A masterpiece is an amazing work of art created by a master artisan. "For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Eph. 2:10). God is the Master who is recreating

each believer into a masterpiece in Jesus.

A masterpiece also is unique. There is only one "Lord's Supper," "David," "Mona Lisa" and other such artistic works. Their uniqueness is what makes them so valuable. We know we all have different talents and abilities and the Bible says we also have different spiritual gifts. Paul uses the

illustration of the human body to emphasize the different but important function of each person in the family of God.

As leaders we are called to serve God and help Him in His work of creating masterpieces out of believers' lives. We must remember that we are called only to assist the Master and He alone knows what

the finished work will look like. So many times, good-intentioned leaders can hinder this process by trying to influence the masterpiece to become what they think it should be.

Remember our job is to encourage believers to discover and become who God wants them to be. 🙏

# Missional living

## Alabama WMU's Equip conference continues to grow

**M**ore than 400 women gathered at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega on July 24–25 for Equip, a training conference for Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) and women's ministry leadership from around the state.

With missionary testimonies, guest speakers, corporate worship, training sessions for all ages and relevant breakout sessions, the event has continued to grow in recent years. This year also featured a dramatic prayer experience for the entity's partnership with the International Mission Board's South Cluster in South Asia and Global Gates in New York City.

"We are thrilled with the attendance of course," said Alabama WMU Executive Director Candace McIntosh. "But more than the number of ladies, we are just blown away by seeing how God moved among us. It was truly a blessing, and I believe this weekend will have Kingdom impact for eternity."

In addition to the annual conference, Alabama WMU also held its biennial meeting. There was a special recognition for outgoing president Laurelle Stoudenmire as well as recognition of the board of trustees and the executive leadership team.

### New officers elected

New officers were elected for a two-year term, including 2015–2017 president Anna Speir, of Selma; vice president Michelle Wise, of Mobile; and recording secretary Kay Stewart, of Bay Minette. Karen Burnham, of Oxford; Charlotte Madison, of Huntsville; and Linda Peek, of Trussville, were each elected to a six-year term of service as trustees. Phyllis Ingram, of Montgomery, was elected to a six-year term as trustee at large. Pam



Photo by Janella Martinez

Breakout sessions at Equip featured a wide range of topics including missionary testimonies, church planting, budgeting for missions, Bible studies on biblical womanhood and prayer.

Newman, of Pike Road, and Stoudenmire, of Thomsville, were each elected to a two-year term as trustees. After the election of new officers and trustees, the membership voted to host the next biennial meeting July 22, 2017, at Shocco.

The membership of Alabama WMU also voted to support the historic establishment of the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering in memory of Dr. Martha Myers and Kathleen Mallory. The offering was approved by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions in May.

If approved by messengers at the Alabama Baptist State Convention, the new offering will launch in January 2016. It will replace Alabama WMU's Kathleen Mallory Missions Offering and merge with the Disaster Relief Missions Offering. The offering will go first to Alabama WMU (\$550,000), then to DR (\$200,000) and anything above those amounts would be divided among missions partnerships and church planting/church revitalization. (Alabama WMU, TAB)

**For more information about Equip or about Alabama WMU, visit [www.alabamawmu.org](http://www.alabamawmu.org).**

## Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

### Evangelicals concerned about impact of nuclear deal

VIENNA, Austria — The nuclear deal struck by Iran and six world powers led by the United States has drawn criticism from evangelicals for its potential ill effects on Israel and persecuted Christians in the Persian nation.

The deal, which was announced July 14 in Vienna following 20 months of negotiations, apparently does not include the release of American pastor Saeed Abedini from an Iranian prison.

Southern Baptist Convention President Ronnie Floyd said, "While still learning more about this deal made with Iran, I stand appalled that we would make any kind of deal that would not demand the immediate release of the four Americans held hostage, including Pastor Saeed Abedini."

According to *The New York Times*, the deal requires Iran to maintain a 98-percent-reduced stockpile of low enriched uranium for the next 15 years, reduce by two-thirds the number of centrifuges spinning at the nation's primary enrichment center and continue to limit its acquisition of conventional weapons among other provisions. In exchange the U.S. will lift oil and financial sanctions on Iran. (BP)

### LifeWay's offer on new 1.5 acre location accepted

NASHVILLE — LifeWay Christian Resources' offer to purchase 1.5 acres in downtown Nashville for a new office building has been accepted, according to an announcement July 21.

The city's Metro Development and Housing Agency, which owns the property, unanimously approved sale of the site for \$12.7 million, with a tax incentive of \$4.9 million that can fund specific aspects of the construction, effectively reducing the purchase cost to less than \$8 million.

Meanwhile LifeWay is moving toward finalizing the sale of its current 14.5-acre campus to a consortium of local and national developers later this summer.

LifeWay's new building, located one mile across downtown Nashville from the present campus, will encompass 216,000 square feet. The number of stories of the facility is in the design process. (BP)

## A reverse mortgage testimony

By Bro. Max and Carolyn Youngblood, retired pastor and wife

After more than 50 wonderful years in the ministry in Alabama, Carolyn and I found ourselves with a mortgage with more than 20 years left to pay. (Part of the reason for this comes from living in a pastorium for most of those years. Those years resulted in not having any equity in a home. Churches, if you are not already doing so, please consider giving your staff a housing allowance.)

I had heard of Reverse Mortgages but did not think we would qualify since we had less than 50 percent equity in our home. After I saw Jimmy Dixon's article in *The Alabama Baptist* I decided to give him a call. Jimmy came to our home and we had a great time of fellowship and gained a great deal of information on the subject. We were still skeptical but we completed an application.

To shorten a long story, that was more than 5

years ago, and we never left our home for any part of the process. We also received enough cash to do the things we need to do.

Carolyn and I highly recommend this to anyone 62 or over that could use this kind of help. It has been an answer to prayer for us.

*A word from Jimmy: This past year we've seen several changes in the reverse mortgage world. In the last couple of months, FHA has made some changes but the reverse mortgage is still benefiting tens of thousands each year. If you didn't qualify for a reverse before, perhaps you do today, so please give me a call and I'll be glad to run the numbers for you.*

For a free brochure or more information, call Jimmy Dixon direct at 205-567-4800 or email [jdixon@mcgowinking.com](mailto:jdixon@mcgowinking.com). Like The Alabama Baptist, Jimmy covers our state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. He is a Sunday School teacher and deacon at Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown.



Max and Carolyn

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# ‘Agents of transformation’

## BWA holds congress in Africa for first time, elects second African president

**A**s the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) held its first world congress in Africa, the global organization also transitioned to new leadership with a South African pastor taking the helm as president — only the second African to hold the top elected spot since BWA’s founding in 1905.

Paul Msiza, pastor of Peniel-Salem Baptist Church, Pretoria, was installed during the Baptist World Congress held July 22–26 in Durban, South Africa. The congress, held every five years in various cities around the world, drew about 2,500 participants from about 80 countries.

As Msiza takes on his five-year role as BWA president, he said he aims to be guided by the organization’s theme for 2015–2020: “Jesus Christ, the Door.”

“The door speaks about freedom, emphasizes the issue of liberty — freedom of religion, freedom of worship, freedom for justice. The people need to be set free from all sorts of shackles.”

It’s an essential task, he said.

“We’re living in a world that is full of suffering. We need a message of hope, a message of the Door. ... We trust the Lord will use us to become agents of transformation.”

Msiza himself was an agent of transformation in apartheid-era South Africa, facing the uphill battle of separating Christianity from the state church that associated

with the oppressive legal and social systems that discriminated against blacks.

“Christians were seen as the ones who actually maintained the system of oppression,” Msiza said. “Whenever you said, ‘I’m a Christian,’ you were associated with the oppressors.”

Those realities meant “our commitment to Christ was tested almost every day,” he recalled.

### Spreading peace

“When you would talk to schoolchildren they would say, ‘don’t bring us the religion of the oppressors.’ And we had to be very clear that it was not only going to be a preaching of the Word, it had to be accomplished by action and with power.”

Msiza and others were largely successful. Christianity, he said, is embraced broadly in South Africa where almost 84 percent of the population identifies themselves as believers.

Another agent of transformation — Corneille Gato Munyamasoko, general secretary of the Association of Baptist Churches in Rwanda — was honored along with his wife, Anne Marie, during

the Baptist World Congress for his vision of “the church as a home of peace” in Rwanda.

Munyamasoko was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo to Rwandan parents who had fled ethnic violence in their home country in the 1950s. In 1994



Baptist World Alliance photo

New Baptist World Alliance (BWA) President Paul Msiza (center), of South Africa, shakes hands with outgoing President John Upton (left) and general secretary Neville Callam at the Baptist World Congress in South Africa.

as many as 1 million Rwandans were killed in tribal violence, primarily by Hutus against Tutsis.

In the wake of the genocide, Munyamasoko moved to Rwanda to help rebuild the nation.

He worked to help Rwandans “to understand the causes of the genocide, to seek and to extend forgiveness and to build relationships based on the principles of justice, mercy and faith, emphasizing the need for reconciliation with God, self and others,” said BWA general secretary Neville Callam in presenting the award.

Munyamasoko launched a peace camp movement, bringing together young survivors of the genocide with those whose parents were imprisoned for acts of geno-

cide. He has been a peacemaker encouraging Rwandans “to overcome national rivalries and ethnic differences,” Callam said. That included leading pastors who had condoned acts of genocide to seek forgiveness from the survivors.

### Caring for HIV/AIDS

Munyamasoko also led his association of Baptist churches to combat stigma associated with HIV and AIDS, training pastors to care for those infected by the virus.

Munyamasoko said, “This award is recognition of the resilience of all Rwandans. The award is a great encouragement to me to continue to strive for the wellbeing of my brothers and sisters. I feel re-energized in the calling to work for peace.” (BNG, BWA)

**For more information visit [www.bwanet.org](http://www.bwanet.org).**



Photo by Doug Rogers

## Students challenged to be disciple makers

**C**hristian music group Unhindered led worship during the recent Youth Evangelism Conference (YEC).

More than 700 students participated in the event held at Samford University in Birmingham, according to Mike Nuss, director of the office of collegiate and student ministries for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. In addition to being led in worship by Unhindered students heard messages from Chip Luter, Scott King, Ed Newton and Caleb and Sarah Farrow.

Of those attending:

- ▶ 63 students accepted Christ as Savior.
- ▶ 165 students recommitted their life to Christ.

▶ 405 students committed themselves to being spiritually prepared and to live for Christ each day.

▶ 437 students committed themselves to share Christ with others.

▶ 236 students committed themselves to some aspect of missions service.

### Finding your place

YEC is an annual event that encourages middle and high school students to discover Christ and deepen their faith.

Gifts from Alabama Baptist churches through the Cooperative Program fund the conference. YEC 2016 is set for July 22–23 at First Baptist Church, Trussville. For more information, visit [onemissionstudents.org](http://onemissionstudents.org). (TAB)



# Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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

## ALABAMA-CRENSHAW

► **Clay Crum**, director of missions of Alabama-Crenshaw Association, resigned from his position to become the new pastor of **First Church, Luverne**. He began July 5. Crum previously served as pastor of Magnolia Church, Lapine, and Bethel Church, Georgiana.



CRUM

## BESSEMER

► **Eastern Valley Church, Bessemer**, will host a homecoming service Aug. 16, 10:30 a.m. Guest speaker will be Frank Nelson, a former member, and Terry Barksdale, minister of music for First Church, Talladega, will lead music. A covered-dish luncheon will begin at noon following the service. Jimmy Bradford is pastor.

## BIRMINGHAM

► **Mark Enoch** is the new minister of music for **Ridgecrest Church, Trussville**. He is a graduate of East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma, and Golden Gate Seminary in Mill Valley, California. He most recently served as associate pastor of worship for Magnolia Avenue Church, Riverside, California, and previously served as associate pastor of worship for NorthPark Church, Trussville. He and his wife, Cheryl, have two children.



ENOCH

## CHEROKEE

► **Cherokee Association** will host an evangelism rally with

guest speaker Sammy Gilbreath on Aug. 12, 7 p.m. The rally will take place at Pine Grove Church, Centre. A pre-service concert will begin at 6:30 p.m. with Josh Feemster, formerly of Mercy's Mark. Wendell Dutton is director of missions.

## CALHOUN

► **Cory Hughes** is the new youth minister for **First Church, Oxford**.

He holds a bachelor's degree from Faulkner University in Montgomery. He previously served as college and career minister for Westwood Church, Alexandria. He is married to Kaci.



HUGHES

## FRIENDSHIP

► **First Church, Hayden**, will celebrate its 100th anniversary with the theme "A Century of Service," Aug. 14-16. An ice cream social and "Red Book" signing will be Aug. 14, 6:30 p.m. Music and a chicken/fish dinner will be held Aug. 15, 5 p.m. The centennial celebration will be Aug. 16, 9:15-10 a.m. with a break for participants to view historical displays and a continuation of the service at 10:30 a.m. Lunch will follow. For more information call 205-647-3357 or visit [www.fbchayden.com](http://www.fbchayden.com). John Hambright is interim pastor.

## EAST LIBERTY

► **David Toxey** is the new pastor of **Grace Church, Valley**. He served as interim pastor of the church since May 2014. Toxey earned a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Seminary. He previously served as pastor of Airview Church, Opelika; River Road Church, Tallassee; Mount

Pleasant Church, Enterprise;

Dry Valley Church, Lincoln; and Bay Springs Church, Shelby, as well as a church in Louisiana. He and his wife, Donna, have four children and three grandchildren.



TOXEY

## MORGAN

► **Lebanon Church, Falkville**, will host revival services Aug. 9-12. Sunday services will be 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday-Wednesday services will be at 7 nightly. Guest evangelist is Michael Mason and Paul Shutt will lead music. Randy Ashley is pastor.

## NORTH JEFFERSON

► **Glennwood Church, Morris**, will host Awesome August concert series every Sunday, 6 p.m. Performers will include: David Robinson (Aug. 9), Jesse Reece (Aug. 16), Jessica Webster (Aug. 23) and David Meece (Aug. 30). For more information call 205-681-4601 or visit [www.glennwoodbaptistchurch.org](http://www.glennwoodbaptistchurch.org). Tim Thompson is pastor.

## SAND MOUNTAIN

► **New Home Church, Pisgah**, will host Awesome Wonderful Wednesdays in August. Chris Guinn, pastor of First Church, Crossville, will speak Aug. 12. A community pep rally will be held Aug. 19 with guest speaker Brodie Croyle, associate executive director of Big Oak Ranch, and music will be provided by Pisgah High School Beta Club Band. David Talley, pastor of Mount Carmel Church, Fort Payne, will speak Aug. 26. David Smith is pastor.

## SULPHUR SPRINGS

► **Bethel Church, Dora**, will host Holy Destiny, of Clanton, in concert Aug. 9, 6 p.m. John Foles is pastor. ☞

# ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

## Reform's New Salem celebrates pastor's 40-year mark

"God planted me [at New Salem Baptist Church] and He's never moved me," said Mike Hall, who recently was honored for 40 years as pastor of the Pickens Baptist Association church in Reform.

During the June 28 service Hall shared about his years as pastor and a few "truths" he learned during his ministry: be flexible; one may be elected as preacher but one must earn the position of pastor; build and keep trust; and when God's people know the will of God they cannot be stopped.

Chip Smith, associate in the office of LeaderCare and church administration for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, also spoke during the service.

Hall became New Salem Baptist's bivocational pastor at age 23. He worked at a chemical plant in the 1970s and later became a disc jockey at a local radio station before eventually buying the station and running it for several years. Later he worked for American Family Radio for 13 years until retiring in 2011.

Hall and his wife, Davene, never had any biological children but he said they have multiple "children and grandchildren" they have adopted as their own at church. (Neisha Roberts)



HALL

## Pastor, chaplain retires after 49 years of ministry

Sonny Moore entered the ministry in 1966 with two simple goals: to preach the Word and love the people. Five civilian churches, 10 Army chapels and 49 years later, Moore has retired from full-time ministry.

At the age of 17, Moore felt God move in him at a revival meeting. That night he knew that gospel ministry "was the call of God on my life. I felt it was God's purpose for me."

Moore received his education from Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi; New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary; Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; and The Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. He also was awarded a doctor of humane letters degree from Waynesburg University in Pennsylvania.

Moore most recently served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Enterprise, and has served as pastor of churches in Mississippi. He was an Army chaplain at various posts including Fort Rucker.

Moore and his wife, Celia, will remain residents of Enterprise where he will be available for pulpit supply. The couple has three children and seven grandchildren. (Maggie Walsh)



MOORE

## Kellum joins SBOM's collegiate, student ministries office

Scooter Kellum has joined the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' (SBOM) office of collegiate and student ministries as youth ministry strategist.

In his new position Kellum will partner with youth ministers across the state to help reach young people for Christ, disciple them and "walk alongside" churches to develop and grow youth ministries.

Kellum holds a bachelor's degree from Mississippi State University in Starkville, and is currently pursuing a master of arts in Christian education degree at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Prior to joining SBOM, Kellum served as youth minister intern at Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea, and minister of youth and college outreach at First Baptist Church, Livingston. He also served in youth ministry positions at churches in Louisiana and Mississippi.

Kellum and his wife, Chelsea, have two children. (Maggie Walsh)



KELLUM

## Alabama congressmen co-sponsor bills to defund PP

Every Republican member of Alabama's congressional delegation has backed bills to defund Planned Parenthood (PP) as pressure mounts against the abortion provider.

Alabama Republicans Bradley Byrne, Martha Roby, Mike Rogers, Robert Aderholt, Mo Brooks and Gary Palmer are all co-sponsoring two bills that would restrict funding to the entity.

"The things we're just now finding out about the conversations involving the people at Planned Par-

enthood, where they're selling babies' body parts, is unbelievable and terrible," said Byrne according to *Yellowhammer News*. "The idea that they're getting any federal money is just not acceptable."

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said the Senate will vote on defunding PP before Congress' August recess. That timing for a vote appears unlikely, but pressure on Speaker John Boehner to schedule a vote is mounting, political news website The Hill reported. (TAB, BP)

Alabama Baptist Convention **State Board of Missions**

**Focus  
on**

# ONE MISSION

**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 | alsbom.org*

## What Do We Do Now?

Since the ruling released on June 26, 2015, by the U.S. Supreme Court — which changes the legal definition of marriage to include same-sex couples — I offered a brief commentary via a video email and composed a joint statement with our convention president, Travis Coleman.

These comments have been an attempt to express dissent in response to the ruling and to offer a word of encouragement to evangelical Christians as we all try to find our footing and move forward following this historic landmark decision by the highest court in the land.

I cannot conceal my deep sadness and intense grief concerning the action of the court.

In one decision, five of the nine justices have served to change the law and the culture of our nation concerning marriage. The implications of this change will be realized even more in the not-too-distant future. Additional changes are bound to come our way.

I believe this is a green light for other cultural activists to advocate for their agendas as well. The court has

now set a precedent for acting upon such advocacy.

People have asked me during the past several days,



By Rick Lance  
State Missionary

“What do we do now?” That is an appropriate question to consider. My response has

been that the laws of the land have changed but the laws of God do not.

Our calling has not changed. Our mission has not changed. Our Gospel has not changed. We are still on mission with the Great Commission.

Yes, now more than ever, we must be the people of God in the most faithful sense of our calling to serve Him and to represent Him.

We still believe in the biblical definition of marriage: that is that marriage is between one man and one woman. The U.S. Supreme Court has offered an opinion on the legal and civil definition of marriage.

Long before there was a Supreme Court and a nation called the United States of America, God created marriage as being a man and a woman

in a faithful relationship to Him and to each other. This is the teaching from Genesis to Revelation.

Indeed, God created marriage. Jesus affirmed it (Matt. 19:4-6), and the Apostle Paul interpreted it. From the biblical standpoint, there is no question about the definition of marriage.

### What do we do now?

First, we remain faithful to our Lord and to the mission He has given us. The court did not change our mission. It does not have the power to do so. There is a higher and holier authority than the U.S. Supreme Court. The Lord God Almighty reigns. He alone is sovereign.

Second, we are to remain hopeful. We are people of hope. We are in the hope business, if you will. Our hope is not founded or grounded in this world. It is hope in the eternal God. Our hope is in Christ Who has saved us and granted us a heavenly citizenship. We must not despair! We are to be the most hopeful people in the world.

Third, we are to remain truthful. We know the Truth and that Truth has set us free. Paul reminds us to speak the truth in love and to represent Christ in this fallen world; we must speak His Truth with His love. This

means we are not to be hateful people who despise and loathe those with whom we disagree. No, we are to have a missionary spirit, seeking to serve in a culture not inclined to look to Christ as the the Way, the Truth and the Life. We are to point the way to the cross, knowing that He has died for sinners and that we all have sinned.

Fourth, we must be careful to protect our religious liberties as Christians. There is a growing sense of encroachment upon these religious liberties. Christians and Christian institutions may well become the next step in the campaign for change in our culture.

The minority opinion expressed the sentiment that people of faith cannot take any comfort in the recent decision of the court. Those words are most disturbing. Our nation, historically, has respected people of faith. I pray that will continue in the future.

However, we cannot bank upon the past as a guarantee of the future. Whatever happens in the days to come may surprise us, but they will not catch our Lord off guard. He is able!

Blessings,

Proverbs 1:7

# GET ACQUAINTED DAY

**At the Baptist Building, 2001 E. South Blvd. in Montgomery  
Thursday, September 3, 10 am - 3:30 pm » 9:30 - 10 – Check-in and refreshments**

Meet your state missionaries » Discover how we can partner together to fulfill the Great Commission  
» Tour the Baptist Building » Spouses welcome » Lunch provided

Ideal for pastors, church staff, secretaries or associational staff who are new to Alabama, new to their position, or who have never attended a Get Acquainted Day

Register by calling or emailing Sheila Rikerd, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 249, or (334) 613-2249, srikerd@alsbom.org, or go online to alsbom.org/gad.

## WHY I BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM



alsbom.org/cp

I believe in the Cooperative Program, because I believe it is a biblical way to support the Lord's work locally and around the world. In the book of Acts, we see the early church giving generously to support the growth of Christianity.

But on a personal note, I believe in the Cooperative Program because it has been instrumental in my education and ministry since I was a young man. When I went to seminary, I benefited from the financial help that the Cooperative Program provided for my fees at Southwestern Seminary. That financial blessing was much appreciated.



Several years later, I became the Baptist campus minister at the University of North Alabama. I spent 18 years ministering to college students at UNA and daily experienced the blessings of the Cooperative Program. My salary and benefits were generously provided by Cooperative Program gifts.

The beautiful and very functional Baptist Student Center at UNA was built and maintained with Cooperative Program dollars. The Baptist Student Center was very instrumental in helping minister to hundreds of students each year. I believe our Baptist Campus Ministries are one of the best investments of our Cooperative Program dollars. Thousands of lives are impacted each year through our BCMs.

For the past nine years, I have been the director of missions for the Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association and have discovered many more ways our Cooperative Program helps our local association. Church planting assistance, hunger funds, assistance for evangelistic events, financial assistance with prayer events and help with Hispanic ministry are just a few of the areas where our association and many others have benefited from the Cooperative Program.

I have always been and will continue to be a big believer in the power of what we can do together as believers. I believe the Cooperative Program is one of the ways we work together best.

**Philippians 1:27 (ESV):** "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel."

– **Eddy Garner**, Director of Missions, Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association

# WHY CHURCH PLANTING IS IMPORTANT IN ALABAMA

There are approximately one million Alabama Baptists in 3,286 churches across our state. Why do we need to talk about more churches? The answer may surprise you.

There are just under five million people who call Alabama home. Consider that two million people in Alabama — the buckle of the Bible Belt — do not go to anyone's church.

If 40 percent of our state are

not attending any church, then we need to do something about that. Surely we have lots of churches who are plateaued or declining and in need of revitalization. But there are segments of our population that will never attend these existing churches, but would attend something new.

By Lamar Duke  
*State Missionary*



State Missionary Rick Lance, executive director of the State Board of Missions, has stated that we must look at this issue as two wings of the same plane: one for church revitalization and one for church planting.

I believe in both these endeavors. I am currently coaching three churches through the revitalization process, and it is my privilege to lead the church planting strategy for the State Board of Missions from which we offer support systems such as assessment, training and coaching for planters as they start new churches across this great state.

HERE IS A LAST MINUTE REMINDER OF A COUPLE OF TRAININGS WE HAVE COMING UP:

**Alabama Church Planting Basics**  
for Church Planters and their teams  
and

**Churches Planting Churches Training**  
for Mother/Sponsor/Sending Churches  
(Courses taught simultaneously)

**August 13-15, 2015**

Noon Thursday-4:30 p.m. Saturday  
Madison Baptist Association,  
2318 Whitesburg Dr. S., Huntsville

COACHING NETWORK ORIENTATION/  
INTRODUCTION

Learn about a new 12-month, in-person coaching network in Huntsville, designed to follow up the above Alabama Church Planting Basics training. These coaching sessions are designed for church planters but have proven very beneficial for pastors of established churches as well.

**Thursday, August 13, 10 a.m.-Noon**

Madison Baptist Association,  
2318 Whitesburg Dr. S., Huntsville

**Churches Planting Churches Training**  
for Mother/Sponsor/Sending Churches

**October 29-30, 2015**

Noon Thursday-5:30 p.m. Friday  
Birmingham Baptist Association,  
750 Montclair Rd., Birmingham

**Alabama Church Planting Basics in Spanish**

Friday and Saturday, September 11-12 and  
25-26, 2015

Hamilton First Baptist Church, 430 1st St. S.,  
Hamilton

**You may register for any of the  
above trainings at [alsbom.org/  
churchplantingtraining](http://alsbom.org/churchplantingtraining).**

ANOTHER EXCITING CHURCH PLANTING  
EVENT (open to all):

**Church Planter Network Dinner**

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

**You may register for this event at:  
[alsbom.org/churchplanterdinner](http://alsbom.org/churchplanterdinner)**

*For more information about any of these events or about church planting among Alabama Baptists, please contact Lamar Duke at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 332, or (334) 613-2332, [lduke@alsbom.org](mailto:lduke@alsbom.org).*

SHARING ACROSS **Alabama**

**THE LARGEST TRAINING IN 20 YEARS** is being 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.

Hopes are that each Alabama Baptist pastor will consider attending one of the remaining training sessions to learn more about equipping lay persons to share their faith in Christ. Each of the following events takes place on a Thursday:

~ **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

Online registration is required at [alsbom.org/sharingacrossalabama](http://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](mailto:lmcgough@alsbom.org)




## SENIOR ADULT CHOIR CELEBRATIONS

Thursday, October 22 - Dalraida Baptist Church, Montgomery, and Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover

Friday, October 23 - First Baptist Church, Opelika, and Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne



All Celebrations begin at 10 am  
To register, please go to [alsbom.org/seniorfest](http://alsbom.org/seniorfest)

## CHURCH REVITALIZATION BOOK REVIEW:

**Reaching the Summit: Avoiding and Reversing Decline in the Church**, by George Yates (Belleville, Ontario, Canada: Essence Publishing, 2012), 144 pages.

Encouraging, challenging, insightful and practical are words to describe the work George Yates has accomplished with his book *Reaching the Summit*. The subtitle of the book is “Avoiding and Reversing the Decline in the Church.” He methodically works through the five phases of decline: “Loss of Vision,” “Lack of Purpose,” “Denial of Reality,” “Grasping for Survival” and “Relinquishment of Ministry.”

Then he begins the process in section two of identifying the principles and strategies for “Reversing and Avoiding Decline.”

So much of what you read in his text is common sense to the observer but difficult for the practitioner. Using subtle humor and clear illustrations throughout helps the reader connect with the truths page after page.

The book is peppered with one-liners like:

- “Where there is no vision, the people will leave your parish.”
- “To reverse decline in a church or similar organization, you sometimes have to recognize the dead horses (ministries inside the church), dismount and find a new mount (a new ministry meeting the needs of the community).”
- “A person with passion will far outwork an experienced person with no passion every day of the week.”
- “Do not copy models. Capture principles.”
- “Without action your vision becomes only a dream.”

Included as practical tools in the appendices is a tool for “Evaluating

Ministries,” a tool for “Choosing a Consultant or a Coach” (with definitions of each), and a tool for “Building an Intentional Strategy for Small Open Bible Study Groups” (Flake’s Formula).

The author communicates in a clear and concise manner, always encouraging the reader to go further in being faithful to the calling God has placed on the ministries as well as their leaders. He challenges all readers to have a “vigorous face-to-face summit with reality” (a completely open and honest assessment personally and corporately).

I recommend this book to any who are seeking to move their organization from where they are to where God wants them to be. He has targeted the church with his text, but the truths are applicable to other types of ministries. A great read and a great tool!

State Missionary Rick Barnhart serves as director of the Office of Associational Missions & Church Planting. He may be contacted at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 220, or (334) 613-2220, [rbarnhart@alsbom.org](mailto:rbarnhart@alsbom.org).

By Rick Barnhart  
State Missionary



CHURCH  
REVITALIZATION



# coaching on the run

**september 10, 2015** SAMFORD UNIVERSITY  
 third floor of Sullivan-Cooney Family Field House \* 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

**Cost:** \$10 per person (lunch included)

Learn how to use coaching techniques to enhance your leadership skills, to be more effective in strategy planning, to be able to ask good questions and to strengthen the leaders around you. Coaching techniques will enable pastors and staff members to guide people through a process of discipleship and growth. **Bob Bumgarner**, certified coach and executive pastor of Chets Creek Church in Jacksonville, Fla., will be the conference leader.

To register, visit [alsbom.org/coachingontherun](http://alsbom.org/coachingontherun). For other information, please contact Ministry Assistant Debbie Dickey at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 218, (334) 613-2218, [ddickey@alsbom.org](mailto:ddickey@alsbom.org).

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



**Alabama Singing Men & Alabama Singing Women**  
 ~ Retreats ~

Thursday and Friday, **SEPTEMBER 10-11**  
 Shocco Springs

ASM directed by Tom Smith

ASW directed by Gayle Smith

REGISTRATION/COST: [shocco.org/events-calendar](http://shocco.org/events-calendar) or **1-800-280-1105**

OTHER ONLINE INFO: [alsbom.org/worship](http://alsbom.org/worship)

For other information, please contact Ministry Assistant Cindy Parrish at **1-800-264-1225, ext. 230**, or **(334) 613-2230**, [cparrish@alsbom.org](mailto:cparrish@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](mailto:sstephens@alsbom.org).

**FOCUS on One Mission**

**HUNTSVILLE**  
August 12

**ALABAMA VISION TOUR**

**MONTGOMERY**  
August 11

**BALDWIN COUNTY**  
August 10

Join us for the **ALABAMA VISION TOUR** as we work to bring together Alabama church planters with potential partners throughout our state.

- Monday, **August 10**, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Crossway Christian Fellowship, 12720 Springsteen Ln., Foley
- Tuesday, **August 11**, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Baptist Building, 2001 E. South Blvd., Montgomery
- Wednesday, **August 12**, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Madison Baptist Association, 2318 Whitesburg Dr. S., Huntsville

**INFO ONLINE:** [alsbom.org/alabamavisiontour](http://alsbom.org/alabamavisiontour)

For other information about this event, please contact Ministry Assistant Andrea Towns at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 244, or (334) 613-2244, [atowns@alsbom.org](mailto:atowns@alsbom.org).

**ONE DAY TRAINING FOR LEADERS OF WMU, WOMEN'S MINISTRY AND ROYAL AMBASSADORS**

**BAPTIST BUILDING,**  
2001 E. South Blvd.,  
Montgomery

**August 22, 9 a.m. - noon**  
Two hours of age-level training for leaders of preschoolers, children, students and adults followed by a one-hour session on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

**COST:** \$10 per person

For more information or to register, go online to [www.alabamawmu.org](http://www.alabamawmu.org) or please contact Kathryn Helms at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 325, or (334) 613-2325, [khelms@alsbom.org](mailto:khelms@alsbom.org).

**ORDER YOUR 2015-2016 RESOURCE DIRECTORY**

This new resource includes all the information **formerly published in our Church Planning Guide** (including a 16-month calendar of State Board of Missions events and emphases) and the Yellow Page Book.

Limit **20 COPIES** per church. To order, please **call, fax or e-mail** your request to Charleen Hobbs at 1.800.264.1225, ext. 231; 334.288.2693 (fax); [chobbs@alsbom.org](mailto:chobbs@alsbom.org); or order online at [alsbom.org/rd](http://alsbom.org/rd).

Be sure to **include** your name, church name, mailing address and number of guides needed (up to 20).

# Fall Missions Festival

## Fall Missions Festival for Children

Friday and Saturday, October 9-10 or 16-17, 2015  
WorldSong Missions Place, Cook Springs

**Cost:** \$50 per person (includes lodging and meals)

At Fall Missions Festival, children in grades 1-6 and their leaders will learn about what God is doing in Indonesia. They will also learn more about Alabama WMU's partnerships in south Asia and New York.

Join us to experience south Asian culture through food, customs and other activities led by young adults who love and serve the Lord and also have a heart for children and for missions.

Activities will begin at 5 p.m. Friday and conclude at 3 p.m. Saturday.

## Fall Missions Festival for Adults

Tuesday, October 20, or Thursday, October 22, 2015  
10 a.m.-3 p.m.

WorldSong Missions Place, Cook Springs

**Cost:** \$16 per person (includes lunch)

**Registration deadline:** Wednesday, October 14

Held on the beautiful campus of WorldSong, this year's festival will focus on the amazing sights and sounds of Indonesia. You will also learn more about Alabama WMU's partnerships in south Asia and New York. We'll pray together and enjoy other special activities. The Fall Missions Festival for Adults is open to adults of all ages.

For more information about these events, go online to [www.alabamawmu.org](http://www.alabamawmu.org) or contact Crystal Akers at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 223, or (334) 613-2223, [cakers@alsbom.org](mailto:cakers@alsbom.org).

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

## REGIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL & DISCIPLESHIP LEADERSHIP TRAINING

On  
Mission  
with the  
Great  
Commission

In the good old summertime, the good old summertime ... Ah! Summertime in Alabama means extra family time with vacations, backyard picnics and evenings under the stars.

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

For info or to register:

[alsbom.org/south](http://alsbom.org/south)

Contact: Jamie Baldwin,  
1-800-264-1225, ext. 240,  
[jbaldwin@alsbom.org](mailto:jbaldwin@alsbom.org)

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

For info or to register:

[alsbom.org/north](http://alsbom.org/north)

Contact: Daniel Edmonds,  
1-800-264-1225, ext. 285,  
[dedmonds@alsbom.org](mailto:dedmonds@alsbom.org)

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

For info or to register:

[alsbom.org/metro](http://alsbom.org/metro)

Contact: Jamie Baldwin,  
1-800-264-1225, ext. 240,  
[jbaldwin@alsbom.org](mailto:jbaldwin@alsbom.org)

## NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR OUTSTANDING 2015 MISSION VOLUNTEER

The Office of Global Missions of the State Board of Missions would like to honor an Outstanding 2015 Mission Volunteer.

**YOUR HELP IS NEEDED.**

Please think about lay people you know whom you feel are worthy of such recognition, and let us hear from you. We realize that there are many who could fit this requirement; however, for this purpose only one individual (or couple) will be selected.

Your recommendation will make a difference. The following information is required if a person (or couple) is to be considered:

1. The name, address and phone number of the person (or couple) being nominated.
2. The name, address and phone number of the nominee's pastor, the church to which he/she/they belong and their association.
3. A list of volunteer mission service: their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and Uttermost where he/she/they have participated during the past five years, including locations and dates. (If the nominee(s) has not served in at least three of the Acts 1:8 areas, please do not nominate that person.)
4. Statements supporting your nomination as **Outstanding 2015 Mission Volunteer** (why you feel he/she/they should be recognized in this manner).
5. Your signature with address, phone, church and association.

To access an Information Sheet and Nomination Application, go online to [a18c.org/volunteeroftheyear](http://a18c.org/volunteeroftheyear).

If you do not have web access, request your Information Sheet and Nomination Application by contacting Ministry Assistant Virginia Gardner at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 238, or (334) 613-2238, [vgardner@alsbom.org](mailto:vgardner@alsbom.org).

Requests may also be made by mail to Global Missions Office, Attn: Virginia Gardner, P.O. Box 11870, Montgomery, AL 36111-0870.

**Please Note: No phone calls or e-mail recommendations and/or endorsements accepted! Nominations must be received, not postmarked, no later than Monday, September 21, 2015.**

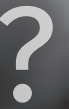
**FOCUS on One Mission**

**PURSUE** >>>

**FEBRUARY 19-20, 2016**  
Valley View Baptist Church  
Tuscaloosa

What is your  
**LIFE'S FOCUS?**

yourself  
relationships  
school  
money  
job



**A DISCIPLESHIP EVENT**  
for Alabama college  
students, young adults  
and their leaders

**PURSUEAL.ORG**



**Life in Focus**  
Hebrews 12:2

Pursue 2016 is designed to help you  
live a life focused on Jesus Christ,  
**THE AUTHOR AND FINISHER OF OUR FAITH.**

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

**NORTH ALABAMA CHURCH LIBRARY CONFERENCE**  
**NORTH ALABAMA CHURCH LIBRARY CONFERENCE**  
**NORTH ALABAMA CHURCH LIBRARY CONFERENCE**  
**NORTH ALABAMA CHURCH LIBRARY CONFERENCE**

**Saturday, November 7,**  
Central Baptist Church, 2801  
Highway 31 S., Decatur

**COST:** Free, including lunch

This is the 15th annual training event for those from north Alabama and others who wish to attend. Conferences will cover all areas of library work plus history, copyright, cardmaking and training in both concourse and atrium. Lunch will be provided at which time an author will be guest speaker. Registration begins at 8 a.m. with general session beginning at 8:25. The conference will conclude at 3:30 p.m.

There will be a book swap and lots of free items.

To register or for other information, please contact Eva Nell Hunter (256) 353-5912, ext. 245, or (256) 303-7739 (cell), library@cbcdecatur.org or eva\_hunter@att.net.

**September 19**  
**Shoal Creek Baptist Church,**  
13214 Holtville Road,  
Deatsville, AL 36022

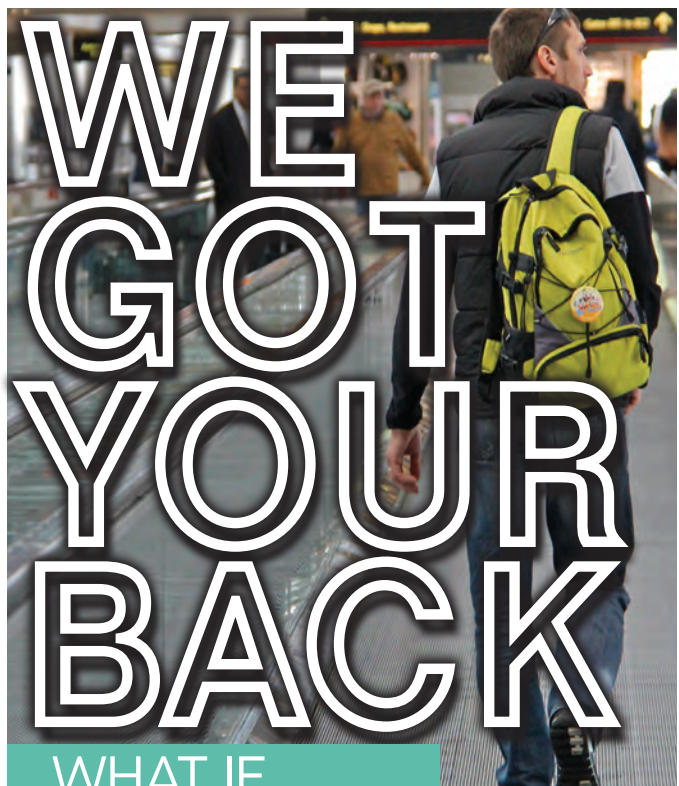
**Central Alabama LIBRARY WORKSHOP**

This library training event will offer classes in all areas of library work. Anyone that is involved in any type of library work is invited (*church, Christian school, public school or private school, even public library*). The information provided will help your library grow.

**The cost will be \$5** to help with the noon meal expenses. **REGISTRATION WILL BEGIN AT 8:30 A.M.** and the conference ends at 3:30 p.m. Swap table will be available.

**To register please contact** Marty Woodall, **(334) 569-3854** or martybooks1@juno.com.

**FOCUS on One Mission**



**WHAT IF ...**

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

**ALL of these situations have occurred with Alabama Baptist teams!**

**We can help. Travelers' Shield has you covered!**

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

**Travelers' Shield** is offered to all who complete Faith Focused Safe-Travel Training.

**FAITH FOCUSED SAFE-TRAVEL TRAINING**

LEVEL A (\$45 per attendee)

**August 13**, Central Baptist Church, Decatur

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

**November 5**, Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer

LEVEL B (\$250 per attendee)

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

*Register online at [a18c.org/ffst](http://a18c.org/ffst)*



**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:** [alsbom.org/senioradultsingin](http://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](mailto:emitchell@alsbom.org).*

**NOMINATIONS SOUGHT**

The Troy L. Morrison Leadership/Church Health Awards will be given to those individuals who have demonstrated evidence of leadership that has advanced the church in four key areas: kingdom growth, ministry advancement, missions involvement and numerical growth.

The recipients will be from three categories – New Work (church less than ten years old), Established Work (church older than ten years), and Bivocational (church where pastor holds dual employment).

Nominations may be made by visiting [alsbom.org/leadership](http://alsbom.org/leadership), then clicking on "Resources" to access Troy L. Morrison information and download a form. Or you may contact our office

for a copy (see contact info below).  
 Send your nomination form to

**Troy L. Morrison Leadership/Church Health Awards**

≈ Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions ≈ Office of Leadership & Church Health ≈ Attn: Debbie Dickey ≈ 2001 East South Blvd. ≈ Montgomery, AL 36116

**The deadline for receiving nominations is October 10, 2015.**  
 For more information call or email Debbie Dickey, ministry assistant, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 218, or (334) 613-2218 or [ddickey@alsbom.org](mailto:ddickey@alsbom.org).

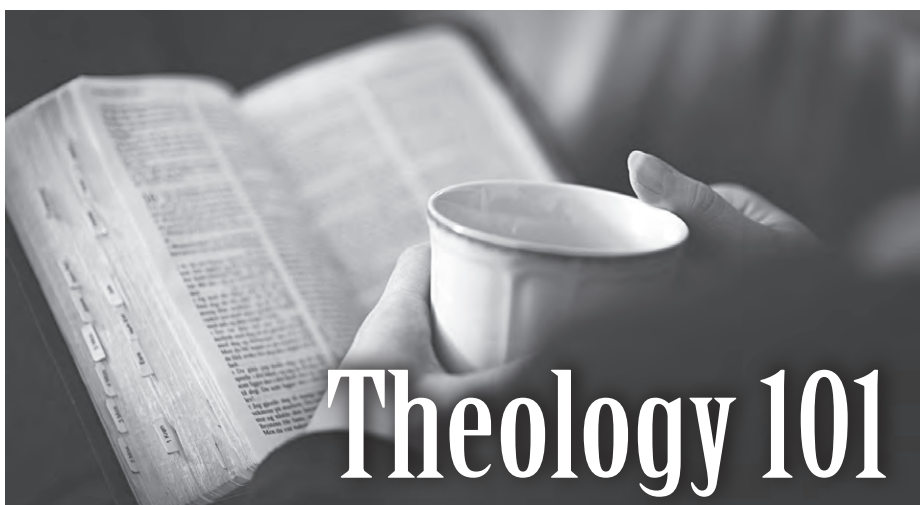
**Fall Senior Adult Retreat**  
 October 12-14, Shocco Springs

*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](http://www.shocco.org)  
 For other information, please contact Eileen Mitchell, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, [emitchell@alsbom.org](mailto:emitchell@alsbom.org).



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Such a Great Salvation

# Adoption

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

Last week Theology 101 looked at salvation in terms of regeneration. We noted that regeneration refers to becoming children of God through a spiritual birth. Birth is a helpful and often-used analogy by which to think about our great salvation. Jesus Himself used it in John 3 to help Nicodemus understand the way into God's kingdom.

Several New Testament passages use the analogy of adoption to describe becoming children of God. Human families have children either by biological birth or by legal adoption. In God's family every child is God's both by spiritual birth and by adoption. This week we think about salvation in terms of being God's children by adoption.

### God's family

One of the clearest statements about salvation as adoption is Galatians 4:5: "When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." Christ's coming had enabled sinners to be adopted into God's family.

Just as the new birth is spoken of as being through the agency of the Holy Spirit (John 3:6), adoption also is connected with the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:15 puts it this way: "You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, Abba. Father." Salvation involves the work of the Spirit whether we think in terms of birth or adoption.

When thinking of adoption as a biblical metaphor of our salvation, we can draw parallels between the human practice and the spiritual illustration of adoption. Adoption begins with a child born into a family as the natural offspring of a father and mother. However, any number of circumstances might lead to those parents giving up the child to adoptive parents. Essentially the child is legally taken out of one family and placed in another family.

Applying this basic process to our great salvation, we might think of salvation as the work of divine grace that begins with a person who belongs, spiritually speaking, in the devil's family. In fact, on one occasion Jesus directly charged some in His audience as being of their father, the devil (John 8:44). Adoption speaks to us of God's gracious action of taking repentant and believing sinners out of the devil's family and placing them into God's family.

The analogy of adoption has another dimension relating to salvation. Adoption in the New Testament has not only an "already" meaning but also a "not yet" meaning. The "already" meaning presents adoption as a past fact of the Christian life, a truth concurrent with one's conversion.

The "not yet" meaning of adoption in its future sense is closely akin to glorification and is connected with the believer's future bodily resurrection. Romans 8:23 puts it like this: "We ourselves who have the firstfruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."

### Present and future

With biblical warrant, Christians can say both "I have been adopted" and "I am awaiting adoption." While already adopted into God's family spiritually during our earthly sojourn, as Christians we will one day be in His family in heaven for eternity. This latter meaning of adoption awaits that great resurrection morning. ☞

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.



# Conduct church 'decently' with proper, written documents

By Michael J. Brooks  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In recent years the Church has found itself in the legal arena more than it ever saw coming.

The years between 1996 and 2004 saw a 600 percent increase in lawsuits filed against churches. It's an upsurge that, in large measure, was precipitated by the sexual abuse revelations in Roman Catholicism, according to Prattville attorney Chuck Grainger.

But today's lawsuits cover a whole gamut of topics in church life — not just abuse, Grainger said.

"We live in a litigious society and may face persecution in the future," he said. And that doesn't even touch nonlegal conflict that happens in churches.

During a recent Church Administrative Guidelines conference, Grainger outlined a number of ways churches can protect not only themselves but also the people entrusted to them.

"Churches shouldn't sponsor high-risk activities, such as a youth bungee-jumping trip," he said during the conference, which was sponsored by the

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' office of LeaderCare and church administration. "[Churches] should do background screenings on all those who work with minors and have two adults with minors at all times, preferably two adults unrelated to one another. And they should have adequate liability coverage."

Grainger, a member of First Baptist Church, Prattville, explained that incorporation is a means of protecting a church's liability.

"Incorporation creates a 'fictitious person' so that leaders and members of the church aren't singled out for lawsuits except in case of gross misconduct by individuals," he said.

### Nonprofit corporations

Grainger said it has been common for churches to file articles of incorporation, but now it is recommended they file as nonprofit corporations — a procedure that may offer greater protection. In either case, documents should be filed with the county probate judge who will, in turn, provide a copy to the secretary of state.

Incorporation documents can be viewed by the public, but a church's bylaws are not considered public documents, he said.

"Bylaws explain how a church operates and are updated from time to time," Grainger said. "Be sure your incorporation documents mention the bylaws, but don't include them in incorporation filings. We

don't want to re-file incorporation documents every time we change bylaws."

Another way congregations can protect themselves is to have worker's compensation insurance for all employees. Grainger also said churches can post signs prohibiting firearms on site. Alabama's concealed carry law trumps church policy, he said, but firearms are prohibited in day care or child-care facilities by state law.

### Bylaw restriction

Churches also should consider a specific bylaw restriction in a leadership section prohibiting "continued participation in homosexual behavior," Grainger said.

"We want to be welcoming and loving toward all people, but a church has the freedom of association to restrict leadership positions to people of Christian maturity," he said.

Chip Smith, associate in the office

of LeaderCare and church administration and director of the conference, said many churches bundle constitution and bylaws together like salt and pepper, but the documents are separate and unique.

"A constitution is what unincorporated churches have instead of articles of incorporation," he said. "The current edition of 'Robert's Rules of Order' (11th edition) states that the term 'bylaw' is preferred and that's what we now recommend."

Smith said bylaws explain how a church relates to its members and shouldn't include "legalese" or be overly technical — they should just give general guidelines.

"A sixth grader should be able to read the bylaws," he said. "Specificity comes in the policies."

And policies are important for a church to have, Smith said. "I've known some churches who claim they don't have policies. Some say they follow only the Bible. This is a good practice, but every church has policies — the way they do things — whether written or not.

"Policies relate to employment benefits or handling money or church discipline, and these documents are very specific," he said. "Sometimes policies are approved by the congregation and sometimes they're written by specific committees or teams in the church to govern their procedures and need not be approved by the congregation."

Smith said written and proper documentation helps the church follow Paul's exhortation that everything "be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40).

"Proper documents help us do our work efficiently, save time and avoid disagreements as we seek to serve the Lord." ☞

**For more information,  
contact Chip Smith at  
1-800-264-1225, ext. 342,  
or [csmith@alsbom.org](mailto:csmith@alsbom.org).**

**"Proper documents help us do our work efficiently,  
save time and avoid disagreements."**

Chip Smith

associate in the office of LeaderCare and church administration, SBOM

# Status of the state

## Child poverty, migration out of state on the rise

By Neisha Roberts  
The Alabama Baptist

With an increase in child poverty throughout the state and a decrease in county populations, life in Alabama could be seen as weakening rather than improving.

According to VOICES for Alabama's Children, an annual report released July 21, about 298,000 Alabama children live in poverty — a 5 percent increase from what was reported in 2008.

Those numbers equate to 27 percent of Alabama's children living in poverty, 5 percent more than the national average, according to the 2015 KIDS COUNT Data Book. In that annual report based on findings for 2013, Alabama ranked No. 45 in the overall list of child well-being.

Poverty, as defined by the Department of Health and Human Services, is an income of less than \$24,250 for a family of four.

### Economic well-being

In terms of a child's economic well-being, Alabama's stats also worsened in the following categories:

► Children whose parents lack secure employment — 34 percent in 2013 up from 30 percent in 2008

► Children living in households with a high housing cost burden — 31 percent compared to 30 percent in 2008

► Children living in high-poverty areas — 17 percent up from 13 percent in 2008

According to nonprofit Alabama Possible's most recent report, which is compiled from the census and other agencies, every county in the state has a higher poverty rate among children than the state's overall population. Houston County's poverty rate, for example, at 18.1 percent is better than the state average, but its poverty rate among children, 30.1 percent, is worse than the state average.

Despite the rise in child poverty rates, the health of children in the state is improving, according to the KIDS COUNT report. In 2008 there were 40 child and teen deaths per 100,000, compared to 33 in 2013. Other health-related stats that improved in 2013 compared to 2008 are:

► Low-birthweight babies — 10 percent compared to 10.6 percent

► Children without health

insurance — 4 percent compared to 8 percent (Nevada is the worst state on the list at 15 percent of children living without health insurance and Massachusetts ranks No. 1 with only 2 percent of children living without health insurance).

► Teens who abuse alcohol or drugs — 6 percent compared to 7 percent

Education is one way out of poverty, which is why Melanie Bridgeforth, executive director of VOICES for Alabama's Children, praises the state's expanded pre-kindergarten education program.

"When we look at what is being done to combat poverty in Alabama, pre-k is one of the most important accomplishments," Bridgeforth told *The Alabama Baptist*. "It's an example of the governor, Legislature and businesses coming together to do something right."

Addressing conditions that keep people in poverty is essential to improving the financial outlook for poor Alabamians, especially the children in the state. There is a need for jobs, for education and for diplomas, Bridgeforth said, but there is a need for hope as well.

"Poverty is a demography not a destiny," she said. "Growing up in poverty does not mean that one's path is set."

Economic well-being, health, education and other factors may play into the state's population.

Forty of Alabama's 67 counties saw a decrease in population in 2014 from 2010, according to the recently released U.S. Census Bureau estimates.

Macon County lost 10 percent of its residents and Coosa and Perry counties saw a 7 percent drop in population.

### Census insights

Other population insights from the census include:

► Population in rural areas is rapidly declining. Counties that saw the largest increase in population were clustered around large universities, the beach and metro areas.

► Tuscaloosa and Madison counties, the most densely populated counties in the state, are growing. Jefferson and Mobile counties, which include major metro areas, grew some and only Montgomery saw a decline in population, with 1.4 percent fewer people in 2014 than in 2010.

► Jefferson County lost 8,450 residents to domestic migration since 2010 but gained about 3,200 people through international migration. This may convey that it is not an appealing area to locals but is appealing to internationals.

► Lee County saw the largest gain in population from international migration, followed by Pike, Coffee, Dale, Montgomery, Franklin, Shelby and Madison counties. (Carrie Brown McWhorter contributed)



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# A church you can walk to

## Churches from around state come alongside Tarrant church to help reach community

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

One day when Cedric Brown was just a little kid growing up near Tarrant, his mom stopped going to church.

“When my grandmother passed away, my mother had a faith crisis. She couldn’t believe God would take her mother away,” said Brown, pastor of Destiny Covenant Church, Tarrant.

So the family started skipping Sundays, until one day the young boy realized he was missing something.

“I got up, put on my little suit and walked myself to the nearest church,” he said.

His mom was stunned when he came back and she learned where he had been. But eventually she started sending his siblings with him, then sent some offering money. Eventually she came back to church and to God.

“Children can lead their parents to church,” Brown said.

### ‘God wants to do something’

And that’s exactly what his hopes are for Destiny Covenant, the church that through “a movement of God” moved into the north Birmingham community near where he grew up.

“We wanted to be a church in a community where people could walk to church,” Brown said.

That’s been their goal ever since the church started in Hotel Highland in Birmingham’s Five Points South neighborhood in 2009. They moved from there into another rented space in a commercial

building downtown, then out to a skating rink on a major highway in Tarrant.

The church was growing, but it was never quite in the position to be a presence in a neighborhood like Brown and others prayed it would be.

That’s when Central Baptist Church, Tarrant, came on the scene.

“I was talking about our vision with a friend and he told me I should get in touch with this pastor in town,” Brown said, referring to James Parnell, Central Baptist’s pastor.

Parnell and his congregation — whose youngest member was “about 70” — had been praying about how to best transition their church to reach the community around them.

So when Brown contacted Parnell, the two began to meet up on Thursdays to talk and pray, Parnell said. They had “no agenda,” he said.

But, Brown said, it became quickly apparent that God had one.

“I remember Bro. James saying, ‘I don’t know what God wants to do, but I know He wants to do something,’” he said.

It wasn’t too long before that “something” got started by Destiny Covenant moving into Central Baptist’s chapel.

And on the very first Sunday there, Brown saw his prayers answered.

“I was preaching on the passage where Jesus said, ‘Put your nets on the other side of the boat, and you’ll catch some fish.’ We felt like that’s what God said to us when He moved us to the other side of the highway in Tarrant. And in the middle of the sermon, two men from the neighborhood walked in,” Brown said. “It was amazing.”



Photo by Grace Thornton

Keith Tankersley, pastor of Carolina Baptist Church, Andalusia, helps a young boy with his martial arts form during MEGA Sports Camp at Destiny Covenant Church.

And it only grew from there.

After a big Easter event, 20 visitors from the community came to the church, and Destiny Covenant and Central Baptist together began to dream even bigger.

### ‘Everything we needed’

“We made our theme ‘All in for outreach 2015,’ but we didn’t have enough people in our congregation to do the kind of outreach we wanted to do,” Brown said.

So they began praying for God to send some people to help them do it.

Enter Smoke Rise Baptist Church, Warrior, and Carolina Baptist Church, Andalusia. Parnell connected Destiny Covenant with the two congregations, as well as with the greater Baptist family — the church joined Birmingham Baptist Association in July. And as a joint effort, everyone began to work toward an evangelistic effort with a clothes giveaway and MEGA Sports Camp.

“God sent everything we needed,” Brown said.

Volunteers from Smoke Rise Baptist prayer-walked the neighborhood, handing out flyers and telling people about the event. And Carolina Baptist brought a team full of coaches and teachers to run the sports camp, which offered cheerleading,

basketball and martial arts classes for about 45 neighborhood children. Their parents came too. And everyone heard the gospel.

Keith Tankersley, pastor of Carolina Baptist, said it was a good way for his church to use “our God-given talents to reach out.”

Jonathan Jones, also with Carolina Baptist, agreed. “Destiny Covenant is a great church trying to introduce itself to the community,” he said. “We were glad to be able to help them do that.”

Brown said the evangelistic efforts are gaining momentum and boosting his faith, and Parnell said the whole thing has been a blessing to him and his church.

“Our mindset at Central Baptist is that we want to be in the community, and we don’t know how much longer we will be around, age-wise,” Parnell said. “My role is to lead us in the direction that God wants our church to go.”

And that direction, he said, is to support, equip and encourage Destiny Covenant for ministry inside and outside the walls of Central Baptist’s building.

Brown said his church is thrilled about that. “We’re just trying to find what God is doing and join Him, and He continues to open doors.” ☞

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SUMMER SALE  
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# BGEA's Festival of Hope comes to Bartow Arena

The Billy Graham Crusades impacted millions with the gospel message from the 1940s until Graham's final crusade in 2005. Now 10 years later the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) is bringing the gospel message to Birmingham through a familiar format with the Greater Birmingham Festival of Hope with Franklin Graham, Billy Graham's son and BGEA president and CEO.

Rod Barnett, director of the North American Festivals for BGEA, believes the country is ready for a movement of God.

"I think right now, in the state of our country and around the world ... there's a need for a message of hope," he said, according to local news media.

And through Christian artists and additional prayer events, the Aug. 14-16 Festival of Hope will be sharing the gospel to bring people to Jesus and then plug them into a local church body for growth.

## Newsboys, Kari Jobe, others

The Festival, sponsored by area businesses and churches, will be held at Bartow Arena and is free to the public. Each night Amena Brown and DJ Opdiggy will act as hosts.

Headliners include Kirk Franklin, Newsboys, Lacey, Flame, Kari Jobe, Michael W. Smith, Dae-Lee and Tasha Cobbs. The festival will start at 7 p.m. Friday night, 6 p.m. Saturday night and 5 p.m. Sunday night with Franklin Graham closing out each night with a gospel message. Doors will open 90 minutes

before the festival begins each night.

For more than a year volunteers like David George, president of Woman's Missionary Union Foundation, have been working to make this event a reality. George has been encouraging and working with organizations and individuals who want to support the festival, but his role hits home on a more personal level.

"The last time that Billy Graham came to Birmingham my dad, Tom, was on one of the planning committees. I remember we rode buses from Roebuck into downtown to attend

the Crusade at Legion Field. So to be involved in the planning of this festival ... was an honor I could not pass up."

Prayer events also have been taking place in preparation for the festival. From a student prayer rally at Briarwood Presbyterian Church on Aug. 4 to a general prayer gathering at the Greater Birmingham Festival office Aug. 14, organizers are seeking to unify the community with the love of Christ.

For more information, visit [greaterbirminghamfestival.org](http://greaterbirminghamfestival.org). (Maggie Walsh)

## Stalwart Samford trustee Brock dies

Harry Blackwell Brock Jr., a giant of the banking industry and stalwart trustee of Samford University for more than 50 years, died July 29. He was 89.

In 1964, Brock and a group of his friends opened the first new bank in Birmingham in 18 years. He was instrumental in the passage of the Statewide Bank Merger bill in 1980, allowing branching across county lines.

Brock served as chairman and CEO of Compass Bancshares from 1987 until his retirement in 1991.

He was named to the Samford board of trustees in 1962 and served for 53 years, including four years (1985-1989) as chairman. He was elected a life trustee in 1992. Samford's business school was renamed

as the Brock School of Business in 2007.

"For those of you who have been around Samford for several years, you are aware of Mr. Brock's legendary efforts to lend support to this institution," said Samford President Andrew Westmoreland. "While he wasn't a Samford graduate, he adopted this place as his own and thousands of individuals have benefitted as a result."



BROCK

Brock was a graduate of the Tennessee Military Institute and the University of Alabama and held a certificate from the American Institute of Banking. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War II.

He is survived by his wife, Jane; three children; six grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. (Samford, TAB)

## Want to know GOD?

By Evangelism Office  
Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

God wants to have an intimate relationship with you. He has placed an emptiness in every person that only He can fill. People often seek to fill this emptiness with things other than God: material possessions, success in business, sports, alcohol, immoral sex and so forth. Nothing can permanently satisfy this emptiness other than God Himself.

The problem is our sinfulness keeps us from having this relationship with God. The Bible teaches "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Our sin is separating us from a holy and just God. Moreover God's Word makes it clear that "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

Our only hope rests in the love of God demonstrated in that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

As is stated, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Jesus lived a sinless life totally in submission to God's will. Christ is the spotless sacrifice to remedy our sin problem. He paid the wages of our sins by His death upon the cross. He died for our sins, was buried and rose again on the third day.

You can receive this salvation by turning from your sins and placing your faith in Christ alone. "That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." (Rom. 10:9).

This very moment you can have eternal life if you will:

1. Admit you are a sinner.
2. Be willing to turn from your sins.
3. Believe Jesus died for you on the cross and rose from the grave.
4. Through prayer, invite Jesus to be your Lord and Savior. 🙏

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### CHURCH POSITIONS

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Steele Baptist Church, Steele, Ala., is seeking God's will for a bivocational pastor. Please send resumés to: Steele Baptist Church, 3811 Pope Ave., Steele, AL 35987, or email to: [steelbaptistchurch@gmail.com](mailto:steelbaptistchurch@gmail.com). For more information, call 256-538-6612.

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

County Line Baptist Church, County Line, Alabama, is looking for a bivocational pastor. We are a small church who loves the Lord who has been together since 1897. Send resumé to: 74 Smith Mill Road, Attn: Pulpit Committee, Trafford, AL 35172.

#### 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](mailto:secretarybellevue@gmail.com), or mail resumés and DVDs to: 150 Noccalula Dr., Gadsden, AL 35904.

#### MINISTER OF YOUTH

East Highland Baptist Church in Hartselle is accepting resumés for a bivocational youth minister.

Send resumés via email to: [searchcommitteeehbc@gmail.com](mailto:searchcommitteeehbc@gmail.com).

#### YOUTH/CHILDREN'S PASTOR

Nazareth Baptist Church, located in Rainsville, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a youth/children's pastor. Candidates for the position must have a passion for reaching and discipling the youth/children with a strong emphasis on reaching families through this ministry. Must also be a strong leader and communicator, have excellent organization skills and demonstrate a faithful walk with the Lord being an example to the youth/children. Youth experience is preferred. Our church asks that you be in prayer for God's direction as we pray for the one He will send. Send resumés to: [nazarethoffice@farmerstel.com](mailto:nazarethoffice@farmerstel.com), or mail them to: Nazareth Baptist Church, P.O. Box 541, Rainsville, AL 35986.

### OTHER POSITIONS

#### MINISTRY ASSISTANT

A vibrant growing SBC church family seeks a full-time Ministry Assistant in the quad cities area of Bessemer, Helena, Hoover and McCalla. Resumés can be sent to Canaan Baptist Church,

2543 Morgan Road, Bessemer, AL 35022 — [cteague@canaanbaptist.net](mailto:cteague@canaanbaptist.net).

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***“The gospel is supposed to go to the uttermost parts and those places can be hard to get to. We have to equip ourselves to go there as well.”***

**Otis Corbitt**  
director of missions, Covington Baptist Association

# Traveling safely



iStock photo

If you were arrested while on a missions trip overseas, would you know what to do? To be prepared and have tools to put to use in tough situations, go to a Faith Focused Safe Travel Training (see schedule below).

## Faith-focused training prepares Alabama Baptist volunteers for travel

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

**T**raveling to unfamiliar countries to work with unfamiliar cultures is challenging, especially when something as innocent as a misspoken word can bring the trip to a screeching halt.

To better prepare missions volunteers for service, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) offers two levels of Faith Focused Safe Travel Training as part of its Alabama Acts 1:8 Connections ministry.

“Traveling internationally or nationally on missions is a big undertaking and many things can go wrong,” said Reggie Quimby, SBOM global missions director. “Whether you are going on a missions trip or shopping at your local grocery store, you can be taken advantage of. We want to give people some tools they can put in their tool belt to use in these situations.”

The SBOM offers two levels of safe travel training: Level A and Level B.

Level A is a one-day course that provides basic training for those who travel occasionally to low-risk areas and covers

topics like travel safety, general conduct, crime survival and basic crisis policy.

Level B is more extensive, with four sessions of instruction. Level B covers the same topics as Level A with additional information about dealing with unfriendly governments, detention and questioning. In Level B training participants have the opportunity to role-play difficult situations and practice their responses.

At both levels the goal is to get participants to think about the risks and get prepared.

### ‘We need to be prepared’

“Sometimes when we talk about robbery or detainment, people say ‘that’s not going to happen to me.’ We want people to stop and think about the risk that we’re currently under, not only internationally but also in the U.S., and how we need to be prepared to have safe travel,” Quimby said.

Faith Focused Safe Travel Training is really about helping missions volunteers make better decisions so the goals of the trip can be accomplished, Quimby said.

“It’s for the whole team,” he said. “Good training protects nationals on the

field, missionaries on the field and the volunteer team. Anybody traveling can be detained if they don’t have the right answers or the right details. Immigration and customs, even in countries that are our friends, can be friendly or unfriendly. Safe travel training helps everyone travel more safely.”

Covington Baptist Association recently hosted a Level A training course. Otis Corbitt, director of missions and a former International Mission Board missionary, said he is convinced churches do not do enough to prepare adequately for the dangers inherent in travel.

“Our churches prepare very well for the logistics of trips and for the ministry that will take place, but they don’t think enough about the problems that can come up,” he said. “My concern is that it will only take one big disaster to happen with a volunteer team that could lead to teams not going at all.”

Even “honest but human mistakes” can lead to big problems, Corbitt said. Using the wrong word in the wrong context can lead to a volunteer being denied entry into a country. He gave the example of the word “work” used to describe a ministry effort.

“In some countries, that word might suggest you are planning to take a job from someone local, and they may turn you around and send you home,” he said. “Then if they stamp your passport as ‘denied entry,’ other countries may not let you in later.”

Safe travel training is not just to prepare for terrorism or robbery, or even for traveling in closed countries, Corbitt said.

“It’s about knowing how to present yourself correctly so that even the governments won’t think you’re bad,” he said. “It’s even for those responding to disasters

or humanitarian needs, like the earthquakes in Nepal.”

Michael Evett, a member of Willow Street Baptist Church, Scottsboro, in Tennessee River Baptist Association, has been traveling with missions teams for two years. He said the training has helped him lead teams and teach others how to be more aware of their words and actions.

“When we go into hard areas, I want people to consider how things look,” Evett said. “It’s so much easier when missions teams have a mindset of not necessarily being afraid but being aware and avoiding situations that might be dangerous.”

Brian Gay, minister of missions at First Baptist Church, Montgomery, in Montgomery Baptist Association, agreed.

“It’s good that team leaders and members go through all the preparations they can to be safe and to appropriately share the gospel in whatever context they go to,” he said. “Some of that involves knowing what to say and when.”

### Other resources

Evett also values other resources provided in the training, such as emergency contact information and updates about current events that might present dangers or challenges in the country.

“I’m thankful to know there are people working behind the scenes to make sure our team travels as safely as possible,” Evett said.

Corbitt said that while most teams go to places that are relatively easy and convenient, there are many people groups in places that aren’t safe.

“The gospel is supposed to go to the uttermost parts and those places can be hard to get to. We have to equip ourselves to go there as well,” he said. ☞

## Upcoming training events

### Upcoming Level A training events

Aug. 13 — Central Baptist Church, Decatur

Oct. 1 — Baptist Building, Montgomery

Nov. 5 — Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer

**Level B training** is scheduled for Dec. 8–10 at the State Board of Missions building in Montgomery.

*The fee for Level A training is \$45.  
The fee for Level B training is \$250.*

# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For August 9

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

### THE WORTHY LAMB Revelation 5:1-14

#### The Search (1-4)

John sees an awesome sight in heaven. Before him stands a mighty angel proclaiming, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" The scroll to which the angel refers evokes the image of Ezekiel's words: "And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. And he spread it before me. And it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe" (Ezek. 2:9-10). The opening of the scroll and the breaking of its seal spells affliction for unbelievers (Rev. 6).

But again the question: Who is worthy to open the seal and its scrolls? Who is qualified to unleash the cataclysmic chain of events to follow?

John sees no one in heaven or on earth who is worthy for such a task. In fact no one is qualified even to look into the scroll. Upon this realization, John begins weeping — not just any weeping, but loud weeping, the kind that characterizes severe lament.

#### The Discovery (5-7)

But John's sorrow comes to a quick end. One of the elders in heaven tells him to look at the Worthy One, the "Lion from the tribe of Judah" and the "Root of David." The former title alludes to Genesis 49:9 and the latter to Isaiah 11:1-2, underscoring that the one worthy to open the scroll is none other than Jesus, the conquering King from the line of David.

John then looks and sees "a lamb standing as though it had been slain." The notion of a "slain lamb" echoes the Passover lamb in the Exodus story, whose blood spared Israel from the plague of death. It also resonates with Isaiah 53:7, which speaks of the lamb being led to the slaughter, depicting

the sacrificial death of the suffering Servant.

In light of this, the identity of the "lamb" is Jesus Christ, the one who suffered and shed His blood for our sins. He is one and the same with the "Lion of Judah" and "Root of David." Fittingly He is the one worthy to open the scroll and its seals.

#### The Honoring (8-14)

When the Lamb takes the scroll, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fall before Him. They exclaim that He is worthy to open it because His blood not only redeems Israel but people "from every tribe, language, people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). He has made such people a Kingdom and priests who will reign with Him on the new earth (Ex. 19:6).

Notice that Jesus' blood was not slain to redeem one particular ethnic group, whether Anglo, African-American, Asian, Hispanic, etc. His blood redeems people from every nation.

Do the nations worship God separately in their own specified spaces? No. They worship Jesus together in the new earth. We see a clear picture of this in Revelation 15:4: "All nations will come and worship You, for Your righteous acts have been revealed."

If eternity will be composed of a diverse company of believers honoring Jesus, should not our churches reflect this reality? Should not people from different nationalities be able to worship under the same roof? Would this not be an amazing testimony to an unbelieving world, that the blood of Jesus, the Lamb who was slain, the one worthy to open the scroll, washes away the sins of bigotry and hate that once divided us and unites people who were once at enmity with one another? Would this not give unbelievers a foretaste of the Kingdom, beckoning them to join us in worshipping Jesus? I think so. Better yet, I know so. 🙏

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

### RETURN TO GOD'S WORD Nehemiah 8:1-8

Every Sunday at my church, two passages of Scripture are read, after which the rector proclaims, "This is the Word of the Lord." Those of us in the congregation then respond, "Thanks be to God." This rhythm has been part of my church life for as long as I can remember. It's a reminder to me that these texts we read and affirm are not just words on a page. They are not molecules of black ink on white sheets of paper. Rather these words are living and active, as the writer to the Hebrews attests (Heb. 4:12). Moreover these words have taken on flesh in Jesus Christ (John 1:14) and, as a result, these words are to be fleshed within us as well (Heb. 4:12).

#### Be attentive to God's Word. (1-4)

During the Second Temple Period (539 B.C.E.-70 C.E.), the children of Israel are permitted to return home to Yehud. They are permitted to rebuild the ancient ruins. They are permitted to rebuild their relationships with each other. And they are permitted to rebuild their understanding of God and of what God wants from them through the words He spoke to their forebears long ago and through the leadership of the priest Ezra and the governor, Nehemiah.

For the first time in a long time the words of God are physically written on scrolls that are available for the entire community. One of Ezra's key functions within the community of Yehud was to read aloud God's Word.

#### Respond to God's Word with worship and obedience. (5-6)

The people's response to the Word of the Lord is akin to the response to former leaders such as Moses and Joshua — "Amen." For contemporary Christian believers, our "amen" or "thanks be to God"

is at heart more than verbal affirmation. It is an "amen" that we live daily, gratitude for the Word of God in whatever form it happens to take.

Theologians such as Eugene Peterson and Barbara Brown Taylor have both affirmed that God's Word is not merely a thing "external" to us but is rather something that should alter how we live. Taylor said, "The whole purpose of the Bible, it seems to me, is to convince people to set the written Word down in order to become living words in the world for God's sake. For me, this willing conversion of ink back to blood is the full substance of faith."

The "thanks be to God" and the "amen" after the reading of the Word is an invitation not only to imbibe what we hear but to allow that Word to change us, to come with us on our journeys where our stories connect with God's story.

Similarly Peterson has said, "We are fond of saying that the Bible has all the answers. And that is certainly correct. ... But the Bible also has all the questions, many of them we would just as soon were never asked of us, some of which we will spend the rest of our lives doing our best to dodge. The Bible is a most comforting book; it also a most discomfiting book."

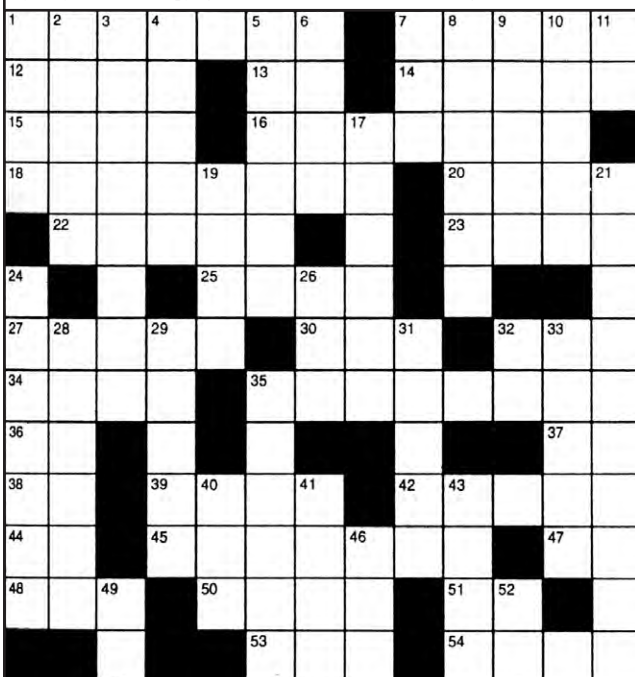
#### Study God's Word to ensure your full understanding. (7-8)

Part of the reason we study God's Word is to understand experientially and not only intellectually. When we do that, we may likely see that Peterson is correct — the Bible is discomfiting for many reasons, chief of which is that the Bible is not only a thing to be read but a thing that reads us.

To come to a greater understanding of God's Word is to come to a greater understanding of who we are in light of Jesus Christ. 🙏

## Christian Crossword

By Jody Ellis Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



### Across

1. First book of New Testament.
7. In like manner also, that women \_\_\_ themselves in modest apparel. (1 Tim. 2:9)
12. Solomon's son was Rehoboam, \_\_\_ his son. (1 Chron. 3:10)
13. Alcoholics Anonymous. (abbr.)
14. Train station.
15. Ice skating arena.
16. Unto \_\_\_, my own son in the faith. (1 Tim. 1:2)
18. Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the \_\_\_. (Num. 32:12)
20. And Zanoah, and Engannim, Tappuah, and \_\_\_. (Josh. 15:34)
22. He left the \_\_\_ cloth, and fled from them naked. (Mark 14:52)
23. Grain storage place.
25. That the \_\_\_ men be sober. (Titus 2:2)
27. Artist's stand.
30. Upon the great \_\_\_ of his right foot. (Lev. 8:23)

32. Anger.
  34. Facts.
  35. For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our \_\_\_. (Isa. 33:22)
  36. Doctor. (abbr.)
  37. Iowa. (abbr.)
  38. Executive order. (abbr.)
  39. A \_\_\_ without blemish. (1 Pet. 1:19)
  42. Sow the fields, and \_\_\_ vineyards. (Ps. 107:37)
  44. Tin symbol.
  45. Imitate.
  47. Yes. (Spanish)
  48. Teaspoon. (abbr.)
  50. Hammer.
  51. Direction.
  53. Latter-day Saints. (abbr.)
  54. Whereby the world that \_\_\_ was perished. (2 Pet. 3:6)
- Down**
1. Follows 1 across.
  - \_\_\_ the Arbathite. (1 Chron. 11:32)
  - Tasting the most of tin.
  - When Joseph had \_\_\_ the body. (Matt. 27:59)
  - For John the Baptist came neither \_\_\_ bread nor drinking wine. (Luke 7:33)
  6. Or ministry, let us \_\_\_ our ministering. (Rom. 12:7)
  7. Why make ye this \_\_\_, and weep? (Mark 5:39)
  8. But thou shalt utterly \_\_\_ it. (Deut. 7:26)
  9. And Chepharhaammonai, and \_\_\_ and Gaba; 12 cities with their villages. (Josh. 18:24)
  10. If ye fulfill the \_\_\_ law according to the Scripture. (James 2:8)
  11. New Testament. (abbr.)
  17. Even out of the \_\_\_ of Gibeah. (Judg. 20:33)
  19. Concerning \_\_\_, persecuting the church. (Phil. 3:6)
  21. Let your \_\_\_ be known unto all men. (Phil. 4:5)
  24. Thou \_\_\_ thy people like a flock. (Ps. 77:20)
  26. Estimated Time of Arrival. (abbr.)
  28. Eleazar \_\_\_ son. (Ex. 6:25)
  29. Though thou exalt thyself as the \_\_\_. (Obad. 4)
  31. Princes shall come out of \_\_\_. (Ps. 68:31)
  32. Four. (Roman numeral)
  33. He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my \_\_\_. (Lam. 3:13)
  35. It is not for kings, O \_\_\_. (Prov. 31:4)
  40. Ampere. (abbr.)
  41. Emitted blood.
  43. Therefore also I have \_\_\_ him to the Lord. (1 Sam. 1:28)
  46. Opposite of question (abbr.)
  49. Ma and \_\_\_.
  52. Inquiry. (slang)



## WHAT ARE YOU READING?



### Alabama Baptists share about what they are currently reading

#### JASON DEES

Valleydale Church, Birmingham

“*Preaching and Preachers*” by Martin Lloyd Jones; “*The Principle of the Path*” by Andy Stanley; “*Onward*” by Russell Moore; and “*The Real All Americans*” by Sally Jenkins

I am always reading a few books at once. I just finished ‘*Preaching and Preachers*.’ It is a classic that every pastor should read on the high calling that God has given every man that works from the preacher’s desk. I read it in seminary but we take our interns through it every year. I am reading ‘*The Principle of the Path*’ with my men’s group. It is a good, practical book on the importance of making wise decisions. I also am reading ‘*Onward*.’ I think Dr. Moore is one of the great voices of our day on gospel and culture. I also just started ‘*The Real All Americans*,’ a great story about football at the Carlisle Indian School. It is one of the most interesting stories in American history, I think, and it is a big part of the development of football.”

#### ALEX WOLF

FBC Montgomery

“*Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*” by Barbara Kingsolver

It’s a memoir about moving her family from the American Southwest to Appalachia in order to grow their own food for one whole year. The book is amazing and so eye-opening because it sheds light on just how removed the average Westerner is from the food they consume each day. The writing and ideas are not necessarily spiritual, but so many spiritual parallels can be drawn about how the Lord intended us to work for and consume food.”

#### JAY WOLF

FBC Montgomery

“*Counter Culture*” by David Platt

In ‘*Counter Culture*,’ David Platt examines a wide array of important moral issues through the lens of a Christ-centered worldview. David’s compelling reasoning fused with practical application provides helpful tools for any Christ-follower to use as they seek to form and articulate their worldview. This book is destined to be a classic that will equip countless people to serve as more effective disciples of King Jesus.”

**Tell us what you are reading, a quick summary of what it is about and your response to it so far. Email [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org) or send us a message on Facebook. You may also mail your information to 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.**

# Nationwide message

Jor’Dan Armstrong



## Millennial Tour focuses on equipping believers

By Leann Callaway  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In response to the tremendous success of the 2014 blockbuster movie “*God’s Not Dead*,” the film’s executive producer, Troy Duhon, desired to follow up with audiences by continuing the dialogue on the road.

So he created the Millennial Tour, a unique experience geared toward helping high school and college students become rooted in their faith so they can engage in challenging conversations with nonbelievers.

The tour features a variety of young actors, speakers and musicians with insightful messages about tough topics. Each message is specifically designed to encourage and equip a generation of believers as they prepare to defend their faith among skeptics.

One of the performers on the Millennial Tour is Jor’Dan Armstrong, a 2015 Stellar Award nominee and Billboard charting gospel R&B artist. Armstrong has seen firsthand the positive impact this tour is making on audiences across the country.

### Immediate responses

“As soon as we leave the arena, we are seeing posts all over social media about how the message impacted young people,” he said. “With all the artists coming together and presenting this message, it’s really a life-changing experience seeing how God is at work in this generation.

“I’ve even heard from parents who have told me that their kids are doing better in school and being more respectful. That’s the confirmation I really en-

joy and it motivates me to keep sharing this message and impacting this generation. There is no greater feeling than knowing you have helped change someone’s life by leading them to Christ.”

The tour speakers also give practical tips and advice to help students better reach their peers.

“I think this generation is searching for guidance,” Armstrong said. “One of the lessons I’ve learned

personally is that a lot of things that mattered to me at a young age don’t matter anymore. I’ve learned that you have to focus on the things that are unchanging. God’s Word will never change.”

While addressing relevant topics on the tour, speakers also emphasize the importance of taking a bold stand for Christ.

“With this tour, we are promoting the importance of standing up for what you believe in and promoting the gospel,” Armstrong said. “For those who are not already Christians, our prayer is that they will have a life-changing

experience as they realize their need for a Savior because we are proclaiming that Jesus is our Savior, and we are living for Him.

“We’ve heard from students who tell us they don’t want to be left out, considered uncool, weird or crazy by being labeled as a Christian. We are really emphasizing to them that you can be cool and be a Christian.

“I’m excited to be a part of this tour and promoting this message. Being around others who share the same beliefs, it’s really an amazing opportunity for students to be encouraged in their faith.”

For more information, visit [www.themillennial-tour.com](http://www.themillennial-tour.com).

**“I think this generation is searching for guidance. ... We are really emphasizing to [students] that you can be cool and a Christian.”**

**Jor’Dan Armstrong  
gospel R&B artist**

# Every coin counts

## Ga. mobile home park residents give to missions

**P**ennies. Nickels. Dimes. Quarters. For many people it's pocket change: Coins found in the cup holder of their car. In the cushions of their sofa. In the pants they haven't worn since last year.

But for residents of Conestoga Mobile Home Park in Monroe, Georgia, it's valuable money, quite possibly the only money they have.

And they're willing to give this money — the coins they can't really spare — to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO) for International Missions so people they have never met in places they have never heard of can hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"They are more than happy to give what they don't have so that others throughout the world can come to know the Jesus that they have come to know," said Pam Whitehead, a North American Mission Board missionary who serves the people who live at the trailer park.

Called to serve at Conestoga, Whitehead shared the gospel with the people there, many of whom were so immersed in poverty that they had no interest in the world beyond their own broken-down front doorsteps.

Once dubbed the "doorstep of hell" by Whitehead's late husband because of its notoriety for violence, drug trafficking, transience — even satanic rituals — the trailer park has cleaned up a lot since the Whiteheads began leading the Southern Baptist ministry there about 10 years ago.

For some residents, financial desperation is the

product of years of poor decisions; for others, it seems more a result of circumstances, of falling through the cracks of assistance for mental or physical disabilities.

Still the people have learned from the tireless missionary, now a widowed mother of four young adult children, including one son with Asperger's syndrome, not to let their circumstances dictate their obedience to God.

### Pulled from the darkness

"Our adults know the darkness they were in. They know the darkness that the Father has delivered them from, and they want others to know that too," Whitehead said.

Since 2007, The Lighthouse at Conestoga Mission, through Whitehead's persistent leadership, has set an annual goal of raising \$100 for LMCO.

Most churches collect their international missions offering in December. The Conestoga Christians begin collecting their offering in February, and continue to collect for about six months, before the financial pressures of the holidays take hold.

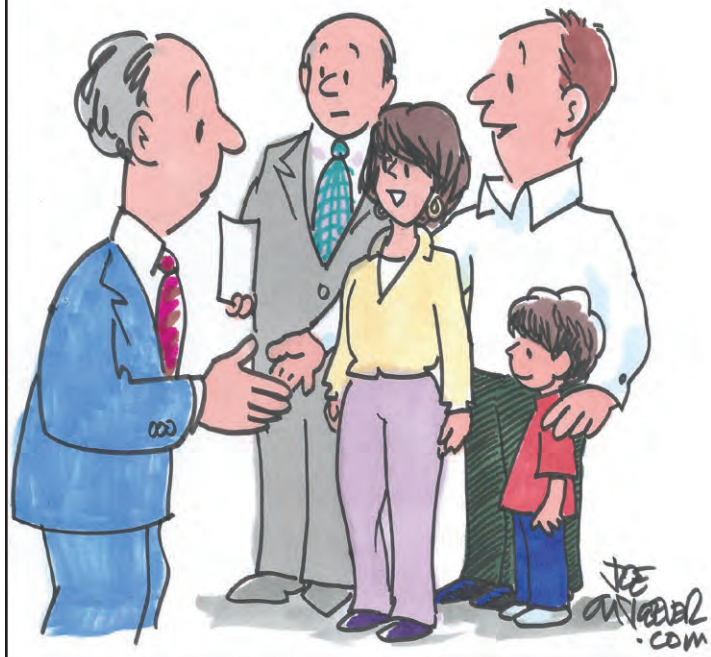
For the Conestoga believers, \$100 is a huge goal.

Every coin given by the Conestoga Christians is cause for celebration.

"One of the little boys in the park came running in one day, screaming and hollering and waving his hand, saying, 'Miss Pam, I have 50 cents. I have 50 cents, and the people over the ocean can hear about Jesus,'" Whitehead recalled. (BP)

## REFLECTIONS

"WE WILL BE JOINING YOUR CHURCH TODAY, PASTOR. MEET MY WIFE AND OUR SON. OUR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE, MR. ALLGOOD, HAS THE NECESSARY LEGAL FORMS FOR YOU TO SIGN."



## WMU's New Hope named publisher of the year

**W**oman's Missionary Union's (WMU) publishing arm, New Hope Publishers, was awarded publisher of the year by the Advanced Writers and Speakers Association on June 28 at the annual Golden Scroll Awards ceremony in Florida.

The award recognizes a Christian publishing house that "demonstrates outstanding ministry partnerships with their authors."

New Hope Publisher Judy Patterson said, "We are deeply grateful to our authors who share our missional goals and whose inspired contributions are reflected in this recognition. ... It is a blessing to be a ministry partner with each author."

Also during the ceremony, Joyce Dinkins, managing editor for New Hope, received a merit award for nonfiction editor of the year and two New Hope authors, Brendy Poinsett and Elaine Helms, received merit awards for nonfiction. (New Hope)

## PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



### Christian's execution suspended by Pakistan's court

**LAHORE, Pakistan** — Pakistan's Supreme Court agreed July 22 to review the case of a Christian mother sentenced to death on a blasphemy charge, temporarily suspending her execution.

Aasiya Noreen, commonly known as Asia Bibi, is the first woman to be sentenced to death for blasphemy in Pakistan. Attorney Saif-ul-Malook said he had a strong case for demanding Bibi's acquittal.

"Asia Bibi has claimed that she had not made any blasphemous remarks and that rather her fellow villagers had leveled the allegation against her based on a personal feud," Malook said. "The FIR (First Information Report) against my client was registered five days after the alleged incident had taken place. The mala fide intent is quite visible as the prolonged delay in lodging the case implies that the complainants had plenty of time to cook up the allegations against Asia Bibi."

In Nankana Sahi district in 2009, Bibi, 50, was accused of making derogatory comments about Muhammad after a Muslim woman told her she had defiled a bowl of water she had touched because she is a Christian. The Muslim woman and her sister were the only two witnesses in the case, but the defense failed to convince the judges that their evidence lacked credibility.

Following her lawyers' unsuccessful appeal in Lahore's High Court in October 2014, the current appeal is now the last chance of a ruling that her conviction was wrong in the absence of credible evidence. (MS)

### Nigerian church discovers 2 bombs on its premises

**JOS, Nigeria** — A congregation in a central Nigerian city continued worshipping July 12 after a security man found a bomb and tossed it over a fence before it exploded, the pastor said.

Authorities later discovered a second bomb on the church premises and disposed of it, said Ezekiel Omidiji, pastor of Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) Gospel 1 in the Tudun Wada area of Jos, Plateau state.

"Members were scared, but we were able to control them not to rush out into danger again," Omidiji said.

In some attacks on churches in Nigeria, assailants have sprayed Christians with bullets as they rushed out of worship buildings that had been bombed.

The church's chief security officer found the bomb in the bathroom. Omidiji immediately called military and police agencies, which rushed to the site and found another bomb "waiting to explode," he said.

Christians make up 51.3 percent of Nigeria's population of 158.2 million, while Muslims account for 45 percent and live mainly in the north. Islamic extremist group Boko Haram was suspected of planting the two bombs at the ECWA site, though the church has been targeted by other Islamic extremists since its inception 30 years ago. (MS)

### Police arrest Islamic cleric in mob attack on Christians

**MAKKI, Pakistan** — In a rare move by Pakistani police, an Islamist cleric was taken into custody July 3 for inciting a Muslim mob to try to kill a Christian couple for alleged desecration of the Quran, a police official said.

Area residents and rights activists said hundreds of Muslims in Makki village, near Farooqabad in Sheikhpura District on June 30, attacked Owais Qamar, 35, and his wife, Rukhsana, after a neighbor complained that they were sleeping on a salvaged advertising sign inscribed with a quranic verse.

The frenzied mob beat Qamar, a father of four, shaved his head and dragged him through village streets. Rukhsana and two other women of the family also were tortured and their faces blackened with dirt before police rescued them. Such police intervention is relatively unusual in Pakistan, where mobs furious over alleged blasphemy are often left to wreak havoc. (MS)