

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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INSIDE



Having effective church leadership requires continued personal contact

◆ Pages 3-5



Sunday alcohol sales pass in 3 St. Clair County cities despite opposition

◆ Page 7



Heroes of the Faith: Prayer reformer's writings still significant 500 years after her birth

◆ Page 9



Incoming college freshmen participate in relay games at the MK Re-Entry Retreat on Aug. 3-7.

Jenna went from a remote village in Zimbabwe to a college dorm room with three roommates. She had never driven in the United States, used a soda machine or ordered fast food before last week. Life as a missionary kid had its rough moments, but she had no idea how she was going to navigate something as foreign as a college campus. She's never felt so alone.

From familiar to foreign

Photo by Neisha Roberts

MK Re-Entry Retreat helps incoming college freshmen prepare for school in US

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

College is a huge step for every high school student. From leaving friends and family behind to living on their own and making decisions about their future, the transition can be exciting, scary and nerve-racking all at once. But for missionary kids (MKs), going to an American college has an entirely different set of challenges.

The culture shock alone would paralyze most people from taking that step, said Linda Whitworth,

director of stateside assignment training for the International Mission Board (IMB).

"These kids have served overseas in vastly different cultures and then they come (to America) and everything is so different."

To help smooth the rocky transition for MKs, IMB partnered with Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) to host the annual MK Re-Entry Retreat on Aug. 3-7.

A time to process

Held at WMU's WorldSong Missions Place in Cook Springs this year for 94 MKs, the retreat is a

time for MKs to process the transition not only to college but also to life in the United States. The retreat provides a body of support for MKs, Whitworth said, as well as helping mentally and spiritually prepare them.

Emily Yount, an MK who graduated from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, said the retreat is much needed because it connects MKs who share "such a common bond."

"No matter how different the culture was that each of them came from, they feel connected by their experiences.

"Right before their first semester

starts, everything starts to hit all at once. Here everyone is able to be vulnerable with someone who understands. Just being with other MKs is such a healing experience."

Bonding with others

Through worship sessions, personal devotional time, free time and Q-and-A sessions with a panel of MKs who have already transitioned into college, MKs have an understanding environment where they can talk about the upcoming opportunities and challenges of college and bond with one another.

(See 'MKs,' page 8)

Exciting update to The Alabama Baptist newspaper coming next week. Be sure to look for it beginning in the Aug. 27 issue.

AUGUST

27

COMMENT

Our First Responsibility in Politics

Jim Daly is president of Focus on the Family, one of the most influential evangelical ministries in the United States during the last 50 years. When Daly speaks, evangelicals listen. If what he said at the recent “The Gospel and Politics” conference in Nashville is a sign of the future, there may be a new day coming in the way Southern Baptists and other evangelicals engage political issues.

The biblical image of the prophet is often at odds with the image of the Christian evangelist, Daly said at the conference sponsored by the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). For the past several years, evangelicals have lived out of the Old Testament model where we wanted to “straighten people out.” Referring to the “climate we are now in,” Daly said Christians must remember the tone in which they communicate because their first responsibility is that of the evangelist — to convey the gospel, not win a political argument.

Daly recalled that Focus on the Family and evangelicals generally were extremely critical of the Family Medical Leave Act adopted during the Clinton Administration. “When you now have time to reflect, giving a mom or dad time with a spouse in times of medical hardship or a new baby — it’s a good thing for families to pull together in those moments. I wish we had supported that.”

Changed perspective

Referring to this changed perspective, the Focus on the Family president went on to call for more civil exchanges in political debate saying Christians must always keep in mind how they treat people who disagree with them.

“We want the benefits of the kingdom of God,” Daly continued, “but we are not willing to do the work of the Kingdom that results in the fruit of the Spirit — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22–23).”

J.D. Greear, pastor of The Summit Church, Durham, North Carolina, was more blunt. “I may



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

be wrong about my position on climate change,” he said. “But I am not wrong about my position on the gospel.” Greear added that if he conveys both convictions with the same intensity, he creates the impression that if you disagree with one position, you have to disagree with the other because they are tied together. Greear called that a hindrance to the gospel.

ERLC President Russell Moore told the more than 600 participants at the national conference that Christians cannot spend their lives figuring out what “tribe” they belong to and then making sure all they do conforms to that tribe’s beliefs and standards. “Our first loyalty is to Jesus,” he told the audience, adding that a Christian will be out of step with every tribe from time to time.

Moore pointed out that the tendency of some to tolerate “lunatics and heretics” inside the camp as long as they agreed with the political goals of an organization illustrates the real values are political and not gospel values.

Another speaker declared, “Evangelicals are not all Fox News Republicans.”

Several examples from the past were mentioned as “over-reaches” by evangelicals. Moral Majority, an evangelical political action group active in the 1980s, was referenced as an organization that sometimes spoke authoritatively without sufficient biblical support. For example in some of its voter guides Moral Majority called opposing nuclear disarmament and international nuclear treaties “the” Christian position.

One speaker even referenced Southern Baptist icon W.A. Criswell, who had to apologize for his stand against civil rights for African-Americans before being elected SBC president in the late 1960s.

Speaker after speaker advocated citizenship based on a gospel-informed conscience that

included love of neighbor. For example Greear said about a third of The Summit Church congregation he serves is committed to issues around Christian justice. Another third prioritizes individual liberty issues. The challenge is to get the two groups to listen to each other and learn from each other because both reflect gospel values.

Unfortunately listening, learning and loving are not always the highest values in the political arena. Winning is the holy grail of politics and sometimes that means winning at any cost. Daly shared that professional marketers had advised him to “ramp up the fear factor” in all Focus on the Family messages in order to get a better response to direct mail, fund-raising efforts and member action.

When one’s motivation is fear, there is little room for love.

Those who “love their neighbor as themselves” are propelled into the public square to deal with issues that impact others. As we do so, we must remember that we are first and foremost ambassadors for Christ.

Some polls indicate that traditional Christian evangelical understandings may be minority positions in today’s society but being a minority does not make one a helpless victim. That ethic of the Church is not determined by the will of the majority or by Supreme Court decisions. Ethical positions are not determined by social and economic policies, cultural norms, political party identification or anything else. The ethic of the Church is determined by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the clearest example of that principle was illustrated in the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King Jr. At a time when the will of the

majority and the rulings of the Supreme Court were against him, King appealed to a higher law — the moral law of the gospel. Standing firm on that commitment he helped change a nation.

Christians do damage to their cause and to their Christ when they respond in anger and hostility to those who differ with their reasoning or their worldview.

Those who “love their neighbor as themselves” are propelled into the public square to deal with issues that impact others. As we do so, we must remember that we are first and foremost ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). Therefore we must communicate in ways that reflect our Savior.

If that approach begins to describe evangelical involvement in political issues, it could be a first step in turning around the incivility that characterizes so much public discourse. 🙏

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

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Enlist. Equip. Empower.

Having effective church leadership requires continued personal contact

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Twenty percent of the people do 80 percent of the work. That's the old adage that floats around churches. And many say they find it to be true, whether that be because of people's reluctance to volunteer, or the fact that time-crunched church staff members naturally turn to those they already know to be willing.

But Mike Jackson says there's a better way. "When the church or ministry seeks to implement an intentional strategy for discovering and developing potential leaders, I do believe it will help with the issue that is common in most churches that very few people are really involved in the work," said Jackson, director of the office of leadership and church health for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. "With effective development of potential leaders, continual equipping and training of those leaders and annual affirmation and evaluation, I think we will have better results in producing more leaders who are effective in Kingdom ministry."

A personal process

Jackson said a good model to follow is to enlist, equip, empower, release to do the work, encourage and evaluate.

And all the way through, the process is personal, he said.

Jackson starts the process of enlisting leaders by using two specific methods —



Photo by Kent Harville

mentoring and potential leader classes.

"I think mentoring is one of the most effective ways to discover good leaders," he said. "Pouring into the lives of others helps develop the needed skills and allows a mentor to observe the potential in a person for leadership."

And it moves people in a very natural way into leadership as they grow as followers of Jesus and are encouraged to find ways to mentor others, he said.

Potential leader training classes are another way to recruit and prepare volunteers, Jackson said. These classes "expose the

prospect to leadership and give them the chance to put into practice what they have learned in the sessions by doing 'student teaching.'"

Tressa McQueen, children's ministry director at Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, said that's the theory behind how her ministry recruits volunteers.

"When people show an interest in volunteering, we ask them what they are comfortable with — what ages, what activities, etc.," she said. "As we get to know them, identifying their strengths and skills, we are (See 'Leaders,' page 4)

Ministry Tips



COURTING WOMEN'S LEADERS

By Dawn Stephens

Women's Minister
The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham

I'm sure you've not heard the word "courting" in a long time but it's a word that accurately describes what it is like to help potential leaders in the church come to a place of committing to lead in our women's ministries.

I have had the experience the past two years of starting conversations with older women that I knew were about to retire from their full-time vocations, asking them to consider leading women in the future.

I believe these women are the lifeblood of any women's ministry, like the older women in Titus 2:3-5, who have a little more time and a lot more experience to impart to younger women who have the most influence over the next generation of believers.

Here are a few perspectives on "courting" future leaders for your ministries.

Be aware of seasons in women's lives and intentionally take advantage of these times to introduce the need for them to consider leading women.

Initiate conversations with women to

introduce this need, communicating the expectations of leadership and the time commitment.

Give them opportunities to shadow another seasoned leader to see for themselves what leadership might look like in their lives.

Set a specific time frame for them to make a commitment to lead.

I pray that you are aware of the many women in your churches who God has allowed this season to invest in other women and that He moves in their hearts to step into leadership. 🙏

CHURCH LIFE

Personal process

Mentorship plays big role in identifying, preparing new church leaders

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

When it comes to building new church leaders, doing it well is a lot like discipleship, Mike Jackson says.

The process is personal.

And it takes time, he said — it's done best in relationships, and it's done best when you don't take shortcuts.

"I think mentoring is one of the most effective ways to discover good leaders," said Jackson, director of the office of leadership and church health for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

One-on-one conversation

It starts with a one-on-one conversation, and that conversation continues, he said.

"Pouring into the lives of others helps develop the needed skills and allows a mentor to observe the potential in a person for leadership," Jackson said.

He knows this from personal experience — he's been on both sides of the equation.

"Almost 20 years ago, I began the process of asking someone to mentor me," he said. "I also began to look for a couple of people whom I could mentor by investing in them personally. To this day I still connect with my mentor to help me with ongoing feedback and encouragement."

And he still keeps up with some of the people he's mentored.

"I am a firm believer in mentoring oth-

ers," he said. "Give them the chance to step into leadership roles, then evaluate their progress together."

Tressa McQueen, children's ministry director at Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, said that's exactly what they try to do when they look for new leaders.

"We routinely let our membership know when we have a need for volunteers," she said. "When someone expresses an interest in a given area, we will usually pair them with a seasoned leader — someone who has been with us for a while and knows all the ins and outs of the job. Hands-on learning is often the best."

Jackson agreed.

"Hands-on learning is often the best."

Tressa McQueen
children's ministry
director, Cottage Hill
Baptist Church, Mobile



123rf.com

'Leaders are the lifeblood of any church and bring their own set of gifts,' minister says

(continued from page 3)
able to plug them in to a place that works with their God-given talents and abilities."

David Loyed, family pastor/education at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, said his church leadership uses a placement process called Heart to Serve to plug people in to the

places where they fit best.

"Our enlistment entails one-on-one meetings and interviews with the ministry leaders," he said. This helps them get to know potential leaders and decide what type of ministry works most effectively for their gifting.

Once people are enlisted and placed, equipping is vital,

Jackson said. "A willing heart of service can become effective when equipped with the proper training," he said.

Train and equip

Dawn Stephens, women's minister at The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, said her staff offers basic training then sets potential leaders up with more seasoned leaders to shadow them and learn from them.

"Leaders are the lifeblood of any church and bring their own set of gifts and abilities to the table," Stephens said.

But, she said, it's important to provide them with ongoing training and equipping through mentoring, books, blog posts and other resources.

McQueen said her ministry offers group leadership training for all volunteers once or twice a year.

More training opportunities are available at a local and state level, such as events offered by Jackson's office that can be

scheduled at your church free of charge (see list, page 5).

Web-based training exists too, like Ministry Grid, a program by LifeWay Christian Resources that Whitesburg Baptist uses as its long-term plan to equip and grow leaders.

Ministry Grid, found at www.ministrygrid.com, "allows them to train any time and any place and get better as a leader," Loyed said.

Evaluate

And Jackson said ongoing evaluation is important.

"We do a great disservice to people when we enlist them on the fly and say it will not take much to do the job," he said.

"We should be straightforward with what's expected if they serve."

Mentors should talk about the job description, the available resources, training opportunities and expectations — and then model them for new leaders, Jackson said.

Effective questions

"Like a coach, a mentor seeks to bring out the best in a person," he said. "The 'coach's' job is to move the person from one place to another by using effective questions to help the 'coachee' arrive at the anticipated destination/goal."

And that's what mentoring is all about, he said — getting God's work done together. ☪

"Reviewing with them annually their responsibilities and the expectations will encourage effectiveness and assure fruitfulness and fulfillment to the task," he said.

Jackson said he would make sure volunteers understand from the beginning that ongoing training will be expected as they continue on as leaders in the church.

"Most vocations require continuing education for those who serve and the church should have as high if not higher standards for our leaders and volunteers," he said. ☪

"A willing heart of service can become effective when equipped with the proper training."

Mike Jackson
director of the office of leadership and church health, SBOM

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“We do a great disservice to people when we enlist them on the fly and say it will not take much to do the job. We should be straightforward with what’s expected if they serve.”

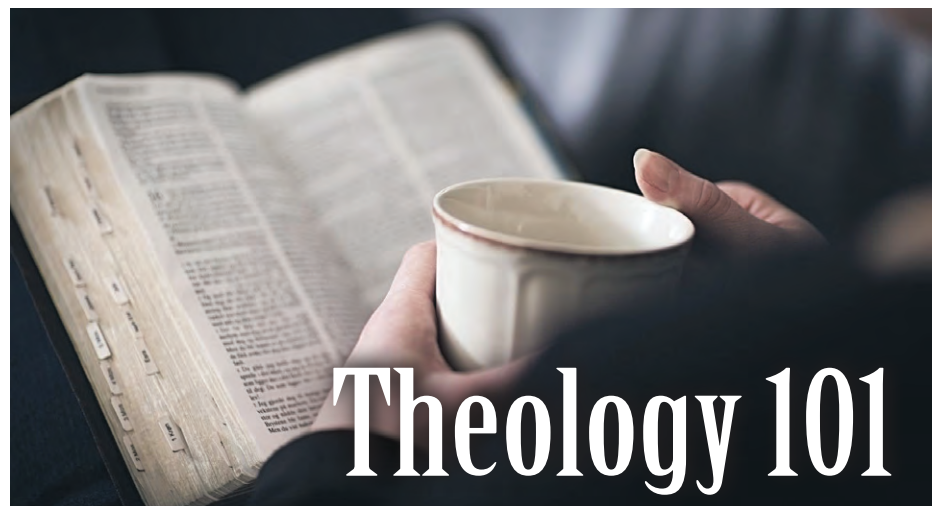
Mike Jackson
director of the office of leadership and church health, SBOM

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8. Building Healthy Church Relationships
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11. Spiritual Leadership
12. Questions Frequently Asked About Deacon Ministry
13. Church Prayer Ministry
14. How to Build Effective Pastor/Deacon Relationships
15. The Top Ten Leadership Challenges for Busy Pastors
16. Change Your Church, but Don’t Break It

For more information about scheduling an event at your church or association, contact the SBOM office of leadership and church health at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 210 or ext. 218, or visit www.alsbom.org/leadership.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Such a Great Salvation

Atonement

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

In theological circles probably no other term has occupied center stage when thinking about God’s provision of salvation more than the term “atonement.” The Old Testament has numerous references to atonement. The word is encountered in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, but especially in Leviticus. In Exodus for example when the people had sinned at the point of idolatry, Moses spoke to them, saying, “You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the Lord, perhaps I can make atonement for your sin” (Ex. 32:30). Later God instructed Moses to designate the 10th day of the seventh month as an annual Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:26–32).

Interestingly the term atonement does not itself appear in the original New Testament language. The closest thing to an occurrence is Romans 5:11 in the King James Version. There atonement is used at the end of this one New Testament verse to translate the normal Greek term for reconciliation. Later English versions reflect this fact by using reconciliation as the translation. Nonetheless the idea involved in speaking of salvation as atonement is present throughout Scripture. Atonement serves as a sort of theological shorthand by which to speak of all God accomplished through Christ’s sufferings, death and resurrection in order to provide His great salvation.

The heart of atonement is the saving death of Christ but not in disassociation from His perfect person, His compassionate ministry and especially His resurrection. Sometimes when we put the focus on the cross, we imply unintentionally that the saving virtue in the death of Christ was in the manner of His death. However, upon reflection we understand that how Christ died is not the saving message. Others died on crosses, most notably two robbers who died by crucifixion the same day. Prior to Christ’s death, a ruler named Alexander Jannaeus is said to have ordered the crucifixion of 800 Jewish opponents. Not

an ounce of saving virtue was found in the combined deaths of all others whose lives were poured out on a cross. The difference was not in how Christ died but who He was. The atoning death of Jesus rests in Him being the perfect sacrifice, something no one else could have achieved. Thus we can say the heart of the atonement includes both the person and work of Christ.

A saving death

Discussions of salvation as atonement usually include attempts to explain how the death of Christ was a saving death. These explanations furnish us with several important concepts that lie at the heart of the atonement. One such is that of satisfaction. Sinners have broken God’s law and thus have incurred His wrath. Christ took upon Himself the wrath due human sin, thus satisfying the decree that the wages of sin is death. Another term in discussions about the atonement is substitution. The idea involved is that Christ became a substitute sacrifice in the stead of sinners, taking our place under the just punishment for our sins. Thus the gospel speaks of the righteous dying for the unrighteous that He might bring us to God (1 Pet. 3:18).

A third term associated with atonement is liberation. Becoming a ransom for sinners, Christ died to set captives free not only from sin’s condemnation but also Satan’s dominion. In the Protestant evangelical tradition, atonement is generally understood to mean that the death of Christ met the just demands of God’s law, appeased the just wrath of a holy God and freed the soul of sinners from the bondage of sin and death. ☩

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.



Views on divorce divide Americans, LifeWay Research survey shows

Pastors believe not all divorces are created equal, but for many Americans any reason is as good as another according to new research from Nashville-based LifeWay Research.

"Pastors make a distinction about the rightness of a divorce based on the reasons behind it," said Scott McConnell, LifeWay Research vice president. "They want to account for the parts of Scripture that speak of possible rationales."

However, Americans view virtually all reasons for ending a marriage in the same moral light.

In a phone survey of 1,000 Americans, LifeWay Research found 39 percent say divorce is a sin when an individual's spouse commits adultery; 38 percent when the couple no longer loves one another; 38 percent when one spouse abandons the other; 37 percent when a spouse is abused; and 35 percent when a spouse is addicted to pornography. Close to the same (37 percent) say divorce is not a sin in any of these.

"About 1 in 7 Americans are saying divorce is a sin in all of these cases, more than a third don't think any of these would be a sin, and almost half believe some circumstances would be sinful, but not others," McConnell said.

Classifying divorce

In a separate phone survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors, less than a third want to classify as sinful an individual divorcing their spouse for adultery (32 percent), abuse (28 percent) or abandonment (27 percent).

Pastors are more likely to call divorce a sin when

a couple divorces over a pornography addiction (39 percent) and because the spouses no longer love one another (61 percent).

In their views on divorce, Protestant church members are much more closely aligned with the average American than with their pastor. Virtually the same percentage of Protestants believes a divorce is sinful when it is over adultery (44 percent) or an end to their feelings of love (46 percent).

Differences also exist between Americans from different regions of the country. Those in the Northeast and those in the predominately Protestant South are more likely to consider the various possibilities as sinful compared to those in the West. Westerners are the most likely to say none of the reasons would be a sin (51 percent).

Minorities also are frequently more likely to consider as a sin the particular reasons for a divorce.

Hispanics are more likely than whites to say it is sinful to divorce when one spouse commits adultery — 45 percent compared to 36 percent. African-Americans are most likely to believe divorcing over abuse is a sin. Almost half (47 percent) say yes, compared to 36 percent of whites and 32 percent of Hispanics. Only a quarter (26 percent) of African-Americans say none of the reasons given are a sin, compared to 40 percent of whites and 37 percent of Hispanics.

Differences also exist between evangelical and mainline pastors. Evangelicals are more likely to believe a divorce based on the couple no longer loving each other is a sin — 66 percent compared to 52 percent. (LifeWay)

**"About 1 in 7
Americans are saying
divorce is a sin in all
of these cases."**

**Scott McConnell
vice president, LifeWay
Research**



Lisman Baptist celebrates 100 years, closes doors

For William Cook, June 28 was a lot more than his church's 100th anniversary — it was the last day he'd attend a service at the little church where he'd grown up.

"I've been a member here since 1942," said Cook, a deacon at Lisman Baptist Church in Choctaw Baptist Association. The celebration, which was the church's last service before shutting its doors, was "emotional to me and everyone else," he said.

His sister, Joyce Norwood, came up from Florida for the day and decorated the sanctuary with flowers in honor of their parents, who had raised them in Lisman Baptist.

Pastor Rodney Tyson spoke during the celebration service, along with former interim pastor Joe Littlepage and former pastor Jerry McMullin. Bobby Jackson brought the special music, and Bill Wallace, director of missions for Cahaba Baptist Association and former pastor of Lisman, spoke and presented the church with a plaque for its years of service.

The service was followed by a lunch and a singing in the afternoon.

Tyson said he was glad the "faithful remnant" of remaining church members got to celebrate the church they remembered with a large crowd in attendance.

Cook agreed. "We had a church full," he said. "It was a really good day — I was really pleased with it." (Grace Thornton)

in Loving
Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders, friends

Bill Eugene Cross

Former Alabama Baptist pastor dies

Bill Eugene Cross, former pastor of Wilkes Baptist Church, Midfield, died Aug. 8. He was 68.

Cross earned a bachelor's degree in counseling from Samford University in Birmingham and served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War.

He served in ministry for more than 50 years. He was pastor of Wilkes Baptist then co-pastor when the church merged with Christian Walk Church in the area; West Highland Baptist Church, Bessemer; Grantswood Baptist Church, Irondale; Boyles Baptist Church, Tarrant; and a Presbyterian church in Vance.

He is survived by his wife, Martha, two children and two grandchildren. (TAB)



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BIRMINGHAM

► **Valley View Church, Leeds**, will celebrate its 60th homecoming Aug. 30, 10 a.m., no Sunday School. A covered dish luncheon will follow in the fellowship hall. Sam Hollis will be guest speaker. For more information call Pastor Chad Hayes at 205-699-8398.

MONTGOMERY

► **Catoma Church, Montgomery**, will host Down East Boys for its 5th Sunday Sing on Aug. 30, 5:30 p.m. A salad dinner will follow. For more information call 334-265-2881.

COFFEE

► **Coffee Association's Woman's Missionary Union** will sponsor a prayer walk at all schools in the Coffee County School System, Enterprise City Schools and Elba City Schools along with Enterprise State

Community College and Enterprise Preparatory Academy on Aug. 22, 9 a.m. A leader will be assigned to lead at each school. For more information call 334-894-6411. John Granger is director of missions.

SALEM-TROY

► **Bethlehem Church, Brundidge**, will celebrate homecoming Aug. 30 with singing at 10 a.m. and service at 11 a.m. Bo Weed will be guest speaker and the Lighthouse Ensemble will provide special music. For more information contact Pastor John Richburg at johnrichburg@yahoo.com or 334-344-0685.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Taylorville Church, Tuscaloosa**, will celebrate its 50th homecoming Aug. 30 with special music at 10 a.m., a short intermission and then the morning service at 11 a.m. Special guest

speaker will be Rick Mitchell and Mike Skipper will lead worship. A covered dish fellowship lunch will follow in the family life center. For more information call 205-758-0868 or email office@taylorvillebaptist.org. Curtis A. Kelley is pastor.

MARSHALL

► **Caleb Godfrey** is the new minister of music and media

for **First Church, Arab**. He holds a bachelor's degree in worship leadership from the University of Mobile.

He previously served as minister of worship at Sage Avenue Church, Mobile. Clint Landry is pastor. ☞



GODFREY

Sunday alcohol sales pass in 3 St. Clair County cities

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

Supporters claim it will bring extra revenue to the local economies of Riverside, Moody and Pell City, but Alabama Baptists and others opposed to Sunday alcohol sales fear it will bring nothing more than alcohol-related problems.

On Aug. 11 these three cities in St. Clair County voted in favor of Sunday alcohol sales, something that wasn't completely surprising to Paul Brasher, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church, Pell City.

"It's just really sad. There wasn't much support to oppose the (referendum)," Brasher said. Brasher has opposed the leg-

islation since he heard about it four or five years ago, he said, but intensified his efforts in the last few months making phone calls, mailing letters and utilizing social media to get the word out and encourage Alabama Baptist pastors to vote "no" and encourage their congregations to do the same.

Ben Chandler, director of missions for St. Clair Baptist Association, said it was a "sad day" for the cities that approved Sunday alcohol sales.

"There's absolutely nothing good about alcohol sales."

The alcohol sales referendum vote came as a result of legislation sponsored by Sen. Jim Mc-

Clendon, R-Springville, during this year's regular legislative session.

In Pell City, where the most voters made it to the polls, Sunday sales were approved 1,213-659. In Riverside, officials said the measure passed 203-73. The city council plans to ratify the vote after its next meeting, making the change immediate. In Moody, voters approved Sunday sales 367-187 and at press time the city council said it would certify the results during a special meeting Aug. 18.

Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP), said the passage of Sunday alcohol sales is a reflection of several factors.

"First the pro-alcohol folks have a lot more money to promote a 'yes' vote than the opponents. All the proponents talk about is the money that will come to a community or the businesses that will come to the community," he said. "They will not tell the stories of people whose lives have been destroyed or the families that have been hurt ... by alcohol use."

Alcohol-related problems

"On the other hand churches that are fighting Sunday alcohol sales must scrape together a little money from their missions and ministry accounts in order to voice their opposition. Interestingly when alcohol-related problems increase in a community, it is the churches that are called upon to pick up the pieces of the lives and families that have been negatively impacted."

John Thweatt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pell City, who opposed the measure in his town, wrote about his opposition to alcohol sales and about what the Bible says about alcohol in a blog post on johnthweatt.com the day before the vote.

"I do not drink alcohol for several reasons," Thweatt wrote, who also serves as first vice president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention. "While I do not think the Bible ever commands total abstinence from alcohol I choose not to drink."

The process that led him to that decision, he wrote, was asking four simple questions.

"First is it helpful? (1 Cor. 6: 12). ... Second does it master? In the second half of 1 Corinthians 6:12, Paul said, 'All things are lawful for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything.' Does alcohol have the potential to master and enslave you? The answer is it can absolutely master you.

"Third does it cause others to stumble? (1 Cor. 8:13). ... Finally does it glorify God?"



Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

One Mission: The Great Commission One Program: The Cooperative Program Many Ministries: Great Commission Ministries

July 26, 2015

Dear Pastor:

We want to thank you, as a pastoral leader, for your support of giving through the Cooperative Program, which undergirds the ministries of the Southern Baptist Convention as well as the Alabama Baptist State Convention. Your church is a valuable member of the Alabama Baptist family of churches, and for that we are grateful.

As your leadership prepares the church budget for the coming year, we would like to encourage you to provide *The Alabama Baptist* for your resident family members. *The Alabama Baptist* continues to be an essential channel of communication for Alabama Baptists concerning the ministries supported through the Cooperative Program.

The theme selected by *The Alabama Baptist* is "*The Alabama Baptist ... serving you by helping you stay informed, stay inspired, stay connected.*" With this in mind, you will be able to stay apprised of information about missions in Alabama, in North America and around the world. The comprehensive coverage of the recent missions involvement by Alabama Baptists in various places represents a unique service on the part of *The Alabama Baptist*.

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If you already receive *The Alabama Baptist*, then we want to thank you for your support. To add to your subscription list or to begin participation, contact *The Alabama Baptist* toll-free at 1-800-803-5201, by email at circulation@thealabamabaptist.org, or correspond with them at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. You now have two options for subscribing to the paper — either in print or online.

As long-time readers and supporters of *The Alabama Baptist*, we highly recommend it to you as a valuable resource of information and inspiration. Thank you for all you do for the cause of Christ and also for your support of Great Commission Ministries through the Cooperative Program. God bless you and yours.

Your fellow laborers,

Rick Lance
Executive Director-Treasurer

Travis Coleman
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State WMU, churches, individuals minister to MKs

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

Although the annual MK Re-Entry Retreat is hosted by a different state's Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) each year, Alabama was the first state to host the retreat to help missionary kids (MKs) transition to collegiate life. It began in 1987 when retired International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries Bill and Audrey Cowley spearheaded the first retreat at Samford University in Birmingham.

Alabama hosts

Since that time the retreat has grown and is held at Alabama WMU's WorldSong Missions Place in Cook Springs when it is hosted in the state.

Each year IMB provides the curriculum for the retreat, and a state WMU plans the logistics. Tracie Griggs joined the Alabama WMU team temporarily to

help plan this year's retreat. "We tried to make the retreat very relational and we prayed that they would just feel a sense of community with the other MKs."

Griggs and the rest of the team made MKs feel excited about the transition to college by personalizing each MK's bed with paraphernalia from their college. At each bed students found T-shirts, sleeping bags, tote bags, water bottles and other items that had been donated to them by each of their colleges.

Making the atmosphere feel collegiate was important, Griggs

said, going as far as to have a tailgating party one night.

But more than anything, Alabama WMU organizers sought to keep MKs from getting overwhelmed by this next step.

"We wanted to show them how being an MK really prepares them for college life (by drawing parallels between) MK struggles and college struggles," Griggs said.

Churches and individuals also came alongside Alabama WMU and IMB to "adopt" MKs. Adoption consists of committing to sponsor MKs for one year and pro-



Photo by Candace McIntosh
Students were given goodies from their schools at the MK Re-Entry Retreat at World-Song Missions Place.

MKs encouraged to be 'catalysts of change where they are'

(continued from page 1)

While these things are important, the retreat's main purpose is to help the students stand out.

Whitworth said, "We want them to adjust to college life, but we want them to be catalysts of change where they are."

That's why the theme for this year was "Counter Culture," based on the book with the same title by IMB President David Platt. And because of all the social changes hitting Christians

today, the retreat also featured three breakout sessions — on grace and poverty; abortion and human life; and gender and sexuality — to help prepare MKs to understand the culture they are entering.

Courage and faith

Taking a step like this, Whitworth said, takes courage and faith.

"These kids are some of the bravest people I know." ❧

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vide them with small gifts, gift cards, etc., to encourage them during what could be a difficult first year of college. This year about 120 individuals adopted MKs, according to Candace McIntosh, executive director of Alabama WMU. This doesn't include the number of people who provided one-time gifts.


Churches contribute

North Shelby Baptist Church, Birmingham, was one of the churches that supported the retreat by offering resources and

by encouraging individuals to adopt MKs.

North Shelby Baptist Pastor Allan Murphy believes strongly in missions, as he and his family served as missionaries on the Caribbean island of Curaçao for eight years.

"Any opportunity we (as churches) have to support missions, whether it's through Cooperative Program giving or hands-on giving with retreats like this, we should go alongside and support our missionaries." ❧



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Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith



By Joanne Sloan

Joanne Sloan, a member of First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, has been a published writer of articles and books for 30 years. She has a bachelor's degree double majoring in history and English from East Texas State University (now Texas A&M-Commerce) and a master's degree specializing in English from the University of Arkansas (1978).

Prayer reformer's writings still significant 500 years after her birth

Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582) was a church reformer and author of spiritual classics. Her writings about prayer have influenced generations of Christians.

This year is the 500th anniversary of her birth. On Oct. 15, known as Feast Day of St. Teresa of Ávila in the Catholic Church, worldwide events will celebrate her life and teachings.

Teresa Sanchez Cepeda Davila y Ahumada was born March 28, 1515, in Ávila, Spain. Her parents were pious Catholics. When she was 14 years old, her mother died and Teresa was sent to the Augustinian nuns at Ávila for her education. She joined the Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation in 1535.

Two years later she contracted ma-

laria. After having a seizure, she fell asleep and awoke four days later to learn a grave had been dug for her. She was paralyzed for three years, during which time she developed a practice of “mental prayer” consisting of meditation and contemplation.

“Mental prayer means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us. The important thing is not to think much but to love much,” she said.

Teresa was a Christian mystic, a person who seeks closeness to God through contemplation and surrender. Not only Catholics but many Protestants believe in Christian mysticism. A.W. Tozer, American pastor and prolific author, explained a mystic as “a believer who practices the

presence of God.” C.S. Lewis believed a Christian mystic has “a direct experience with God.”

Teresa dealt with her personal experiences with an insight that enabled her to

explain clearly her mystical theology. Her writings on the soul's progress toward God are recognized masterpieces. “The Interior Castle,” her most famous work, describes the soul as divided into seven mansions, or dwelling places, with each level a step closer to God.

Teresa not only led a contemplative life, but she used her organizational skills to reform the Spanish Catholic Church. While the Reformation was transforming other parts of Europe, Teresa founded the Discalced

Carmelites, a reformed order that emphasized austerity. In 1562 with the authorization of Pope Pius IV she opened her first convent. She founded numerous other convents and worked with fellow mystic St. John of the Cross to start many reformed monasteries.

From 1567 until her death, Teresa made exhausting journeys on mules and in ox carts all over Spain, visiting convents and monasteries.

She died on one of her journeys on Oct. 4, 1582, at Alba de Tormes, Spain. Pope Gregory XV canonized her a saint in 1622. In 1970, Pope Paul VI made her a Doctor of the Church, the first of four women to have that honor. The title means that the writings and preachings of such a person are useful to Christians in any age of the Church. ☩



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August 27, The Shoals RTJ Golf Course, Muscle Shoals
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Alabama Baptist Convention
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

This event is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

Alabama Baptists continue goal of parity with SBC, hope for 50-50 convention funding allocation by 2020

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) unanimously voted Aug. 14 to recommend a 2016 Cooperative Program (CP) budget of \$40 million with 53 percent funding state ministries and 47 percent going to Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) ministries.

While the dollar amount is a \$500,000 reduction from the current year, it is the percentage

breakdown between state and national causes that is the big news.

The trend has been growing in recent years in Southern Baptist life for state conventions to forward more money to SBC.

Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) leaders have a goal of parity with the SBC and began moving that direction about five years ago.

ABSC is currently at a 45-45-10 split when ministries that are shared between the national

and state conventions are considered.

And while shared ministries are supported at all levels of Southern Baptist life, the phrase itself and the concept in general are no longer communicating the allocation of funds clearly, said SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance. So going forward, the budget language in Alabama will deal only with state and national percentages.

State convention ministries include all SBOM ministries, state convention entities (the colleges, *The Alabama Baptist*, etc.), Alabama Woman's Missionary Union and Alabama Citizens Action Program.

National convention ministries include all SBC ministries (International Mission Board, North American Mission Board, the six seminaries, etc.) as well as the SBC Executive Committee, GuideStone Financial Resources and SBC CP Advance.

The \$500,000 reduction for

Alabama Baptist ministries in the 2016 budget recommendation will come from an across-the-board cut of SBOM and convention entities' budgets.

The increase in SBC ministries in the 2016 budget recommendation will come from the allocations for Samford University in Birmingham, The Baptist Foundation of Alabama and SBOM. SBOM also previously absorbed a \$700,000 reduction from NAMB.

The goal will be to increase the SBC allocation by 1 percent annually, assuming a CP budget of \$40 million for ABSC. Any budget increases will go to SBC until the equitable distribution is met.

The 2016 budget recommendation will go to a vote of state convention messengers Nov. 17 at Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne.

More details about the budget will be provided in upcoming issues of *The Alabama Baptist*. ☞

Correction

In the Aug. 13 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*, WIRED 2015 was described incorrectly in the article titled "Dothan's Ridgecrest Baptist holds 7th annual youth camp." WIRED Ministries is a nonprofit, nondenominational ministry that serves the Wiregrass area of Alabama. Since 2008 it has held a week-long service effort each summer, called WIRED, that brings churches and individuals together to serve the region through a variety of community service projects. This year more than 1,200 people and 40 local churches from various denominations were involved in WIRED 2015, the 8th annual camp that took place June 21-26.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR MISSIONS EXPERIENCE



Photo courtesy of FBC Montgomery

16 come to Christ during Haiti trip

Beth Birchfield is "an amazing example of a completely committed follower of Jesus Christ who refuses to surrender to the darkness of our culture but shines a radiant light of witness for Christ," writes her pastor, Jay Wolf, of First Baptist Church, Montgomery.

Beth recently made her 18th trip to Haiti.

In mid-July I was in the beautiful mountains of Haiti with 13 Haitian sisters in Christ, along with a local pastor who is completely sold out for our Savior. He has discipled this church so they are on mission. Our mission was simple — share the gospel. We did door-to-door evangelism in the morning and held crusades in the evening by sharing the 'JESUS film.' We saw God do big things. We saw lost become found, lives were transformed before our eyes, and we experienced a sisterhood through the blood of Christ. These women of faith inspired me, loved me and taught me. I learned to love big because our God is big. But the greatest truth of all is that all of God's children have their citizenship in heaven. Therefore our location of natural birth is irrelevant in terms of forever. I thank God for this truth and the miracle of sharing the hope of the gospel that unites the body of Christ."

Because of their efforts, 16 people came to faith in Jesus Christ. ☞

Drop us an email about your experience along with a photo to news@thealabamabaptist.org.

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New Market Baptist Church, New Market, Alabama, is seeking God's will for a pastor. Please send resumés to: nmb-cpsc15@gmail.com, or mail to: New Market Baptist Church, P.O. Box 128, New Market, AL 35761.

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 Rd., Attn: Pulpit Committee, Trafford, AL 35172.

WORSHIP PASTOR

FBC Mount Sterling, Kentucky, seeks full-time worship pastor. Preferred candidate will lead worship with guitar or keyboard. Ministry description is available at www.fbcmtsterling.com. Send resumé and worship video to: fbcworshippastorsearch@roadrunner.com. Deadline for submission is Aug. 30.

MINISTER OF MUSIC

Bellevue Baptist Church, Gadsden, accepting resumés for minister of music. Email resumés

and hyperlinks to YouTube sites with samples to: secretarybellevue@gmail.com, or mail resumés and DVDs to: 150 Noccalula Dr., Gadsden, AL 35904.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER (WORSHIP LEADER)

Bynum Baptist Church is seeking God's person who loves the Lord, who will lead others to worship Him and is gifted in music. Send resumé to: Bynum Baptist Church, P.O. Box 326, Bynum, AL 36253, or 141 Victory Dr., Eastaboga, AL 36260, or email: BynumBaptistChurch326@gmail.com.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The Walker Baptist Association of Jasper, Alabama, is seeking a director of missions. Qualified candidates must be a committed Southern Baptist Christian who demonstrates a sense of call to mission service and evangelism. Candidate must understand Southern Baptist denominational issues and have the ability to work with diverse congregations. Resumés will be accepted until Sept. 10. Please send resumé by email to: westsidebc@charter.net, or mail to: DOM Search Committee, c/o Scott Argent, 1116

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2. **STEWARDSHIP.** Jesus tells us that, "where your treasure is there your heart will be also," (Matthew 6:21) and we are taught, "to whom much was given, much shall be required" (Luke 12:48). As stewards, not owners, of all of our possessions, we are to be generous to those in need.

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4. **WVJD?** Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). As followers of Christ, our excellent care for the fatherless removes hindrances from the children's ability to come to Christ.

Your gift of prayer support, time, and resources can make a huge difference in the lives of these children. Last year, your Children's Homes provided loving care to almost 500 of these children. With your help this year, we can care for more. If you would like more information about how you can be a "kinsman redeemer" to a child in need, please visit alabamachild.org or call 888-720-8805.



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Brown, Paul Robert, Andalusia: Mr. & Mrs. Ottis Reynolds
Carter, Lois, Fayette: Mrs. D.E. Lollar
Clemmons, James, Alabaster: Robert Keith Jeffcoat, Ruby Elaine (Kitty) McMillan
Duck, Kathleen (Kaki), Bay Minette: Durant Chapel BC of Bay Minette
Fancher, Hershal "Sonny", Ethelsville: Janet, Lee, Levi & Luke Estis
Fendley, Joyce & David, Butler: Sarah A. Gibson
Franklin, Kathleen, Centreville: Centreville BC
Galloway, Mary Sue, Gadsden: Mr. & Mrs. J. Wray Pearce
Gann, Kat, Winfield: Mrs. D.E. Lollar
Gann, Rubye, Silas: Celena Doggett

Garvin, Lillie C., Gantt: Rusty Andrews
Gibson, Beth, Butler: Sarah A. Gibson
Gilmore, John, Maplesville: Centreville BC
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Goolsby, Ella Frances, Brewton: Roger Wiggins
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Roberts, Betty L., Jackson: Debra Odom
Shields, Emily, Birmingham: Mrs. D.E. Lollar
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Young, Linda K., Milwaukee: Pleasant Grove BC of Salem

Honors are listed below (The name of the honoree is bolded.)

Knowles, Edna, Brewton: Fidelis SS of FBC Brewton

THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who made a Grace Gift to Alabama Baptist Children's Homes. To learn more about Grace Gifts or how to make one, visit alabamachild.org/give or call 205.982.1112.

Giving sacrificially

Lakewood Baptist gives to help persecuted Christians

Jerry Wilkins said he knew he couldn't meet God that way, couldn't face the fact at the end of his life that he'd done nothing to help.

"I was reading some books about persecuted Christians,

especially those under ISIS as they move across Iraq and Syria. The way they are being killed tears your heart out," said Wilkins, a member of Lakewood Baptist Church, Northport. "And

as I was reading those eyewitness accounts of Christians who were running for their lives, living in tents, some whose children were beheaded, I said, 'Lord, what am I doing? I'm doing nothing to reach out to these brothers and sisters in need.'"

He decided that he could no longer do nothing. He talked to his church about it.

And together they voted to start a weekly fund for persecuted Christians in the Middle East.

"We started challenging our members to sacrifice something every week, whether that be a yogurt or a dessert or a new

shirt, and give the money each week from the item that they decided they could do without," Wilkins said.

And on Aug. 9 they collected the offering for the very first time in red and white en-

velopes and spent time in prayer for the persecuted Church in the Middle East.

They're planning to do that every week from now on.

"We called the International Mission Board, and they told us how to designate the offering through them so that it would go to Christians in that specific part of the world," Wilkins said. "If

only half of our members gave \$10 a week, it would be several hundred dollars a month, and thousands for the year. And what if more churches started doing the same thing?"

There's strength in numbers, Wilkins said. "We can make an impact together."

Sammy Gilbreath, director of the office of evangelism and discipleship for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, agreed.

Powerful testimony

"I was impressed with the Persecuted Christians Fund," said Gilbreath, who was the guest speaker at Lakewood Baptist the week the church began implementing the offering. "Jerry Wilkins did a great job explaining how many Christians die under persecution every day. It was a quick but powerful testimony with a clear 'how to' make a difference. I was moved to be a part of this effort." (TAB)

If your church is interested in giving in a similar way, call the IMB at 1-800-999-3113 and request more info on the Middle East Refugee Fund.

Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

While in continued education class last week I found myself surrounded with numerous mortgage professionals. The only difference: most of them had never done a reverse mortgage. Since I've been specializing in reverse mortgages for more than 10 years the instructor, Erin Tatum, asked me and a few other reverse mortgage folks if we'd help "student teach." I was glad to oblige even though our instructor had more knowledge than she first let on.

She told the class there are some myths floating around about reverse mortgages, and I was surprised she knew about them. One of the most often-heard myths is that a senior cannot do a reverse mortgage if their home is not paid off. Nothing could be further from the truth, because most of our

customers had at least one mortgage that we paid off. Now obviously a homeowner typically needs some equity in their home, but the amount of equity needed differs with age. In other words, we can pay off a higher percentage of debt for an older senior than for a younger senior. Now if you're wondering if we can pay off your mortgage, please contact me. I'd be more than glad to talk with you.



Jimmy Dixon

Remember, like The Alabama Baptist, Jimmy covers our great state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. He is a Sunday School teacher and deacon at Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown. For a free brochure or free reverse mortgage proposal, contact him directly at 205-567-4800 or jdixon@mcgowinking.com.



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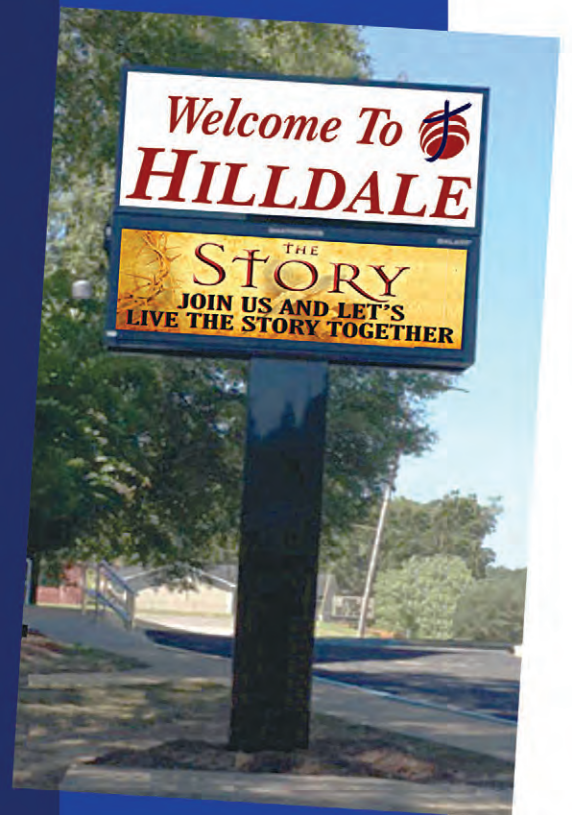
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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For August 23

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

JESUS DEFEATS SATAN Revelation 12:1-17

Satan Defeated (1-9)

Have you ever wondered if Satan will be victorious over God's people? Sometimes circumstances seem so bleak that we are tempted to think — if even for a second — that in the end Satan will have the upper hand. Rest assured that he won't. A child born to a woman will take care of him.

In this passage John depicts a woman in labor, about to give birth. Yet she is threatened by a powerful dragon. Judging by appearances, it seems the dragon has the upper hand. He will devour the child. After all, he is more powerful than a baby, right? What hope does a baby have over a dragon? However, this is not your average baby. This is Jesus Christ. The dragon, Satan himself, has no power over Jesus.

The picture of Jesus' birth in Revelation 12:1-5 echoes Micah 5:2: "Therefore He shall give them up until the time when she who was in labor has given birth; then the rest of His brothers shall return to the people of Israel. And He shall stand and shepherd the flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. And they shall dwell securely, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth" (see also Ps. 72:8; Zech. 9:10). The woman in this picture is Mary, "the maiden of Israel, the daughter of Zion, who gave birth to Jesus" (from James Hamilton's "Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches"). The birth of Jesus is the fulfillment of the central Old Testament hope: a child who would redeem God's people and rule over the entire world (Ps. 2). Satan has no power over this child — none whatsoever (Rev. 12:3-4).

In fact, this child is the promised seed of the woman who will deal a crushing blow to Satan (Gen. 3:15). Satan looks like he

has all the advantages. But appearances are deceiving. This small child is the King of the cosmos. There is no way He is going to be eaten by a stinking dragon.

John then says the child will be "caught up" to heaven (Rev. 12: 5). This brings to mind the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. When Jesus died, it appeared Satan had won. But again, appearances are deceiving. The tomb could not hold Jesus. He rose, declaring victory over death.

Do you believe in Jesus' victorious blow to Satan? The one who believes this message — this gospel — also has victory over Satan. The unbeliever, however, will be swallowed up by death.

The Lamb Praised (10-12)

On the basis of Christ's victory, Satan is driven from heaven and cast down to earth (vv. 8-10). The saints on the earth will not be defeated by Satan, for they have overcome him with "the blood of the Lamb" (v. 11). As the lamb's blood in the exodus story protected Israel from the plague of death (Ex. 12), Christians are shielded from Satan's wrath by the blood of Jesus. But woe to those who have not trusted in Christ, for they will experience Satan's hot wrath (Rev. 12:12).

Death Sought (13-17)

Though Satan has been defeated, he does not give up. He now pursues the woman, a pursuit that symbolizes his persecution of the Church, Hamilton writes. But Satan will not have victory over God's people. He will make war with them, but he will lose. In fact, he has already lost. Jesus has defeated him on the cross.

Christians therefore have nothing to fear. Satan — that ugly dragon — cannot defeat us. He will stand "on the sand of the sea," desiring to devour us (v. 17). But as he could not swallow Christ, so will he not be able to swallow us. We will savor the sweet victory of eternal life with Christ. ☩

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

RETURN TO THE TASK Acts 13:1-3, 44-52

While the earliest Christians were unified, as last week's Bible study revealed, they also faced conflict, both from within and without. As a newly formed religious sect, these earliest believers were asking basic questions that would solidify who they were and what they believed.

What were the requirements for salvation? What practices would set these first-century Christians apart from the outside world? How were they to function or interact with the larger Greco-Roman world? Did Gentiles need to become Jews in order to follow Jesus? What kinds of people would comprise the Church's leadership? What was the role of Jesus for these early believers, following His death and resurrection? As we consider the theological history of these early believers presented in the Book of Acts, it is clear that these women and men had much to sort out.

The Book of Acts is important for many reasons, not least of which is its connection to the larger corpus of literature written by Paul. Acts is a travel narrative, penned by Luke, who was a travel companion of Paul. Luke was privy to Paul's engagement with various groups of people, groups who would ultimately form into churches. Acts is in part how the congregations Paul corresponded with formed — such as the Corinthians, the Philippians, the Colossians, the Ephesians, the Galatians, the Thessalonians and others.

God will lead a revitalized, united Church to send people out with the gospel. (1-3)

Contingent upon the spread of the gospel was the giving of the Parousia, the Comforter, promised by Jesus in John's Gospel. It is this giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that enables the earliest believers to

do "even greater works" than Jesus (John 14:12). Prior to Acts 13, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurs in Acts 2 for the Jews, in Acts 8 for the Samaritans, in Acts 10 for the Gentiles and later in Acts 19 for those few who had only been baptized by John's baptism of repentance. The multiplicity of this Pentecost event — the pouring out of the Holy Spirit — is important because it gradually shows the more ardent Jewish believers in the group, like Peter, that Christianity and the love of Jesus must spread beyond the Jewish community. The Holy Spirit is given to the Samaritans, whom the Jews hate, and to the Gentiles, whom the Jews felt superior to. Everything that God has called "clean" is in fact "clean," which means that all persons can be saved (Acts 10, 15).

We will experience rejection as some reject the gospel and joy as some embrace the gospel. (44-52)

Paul's Damascus Road experience, typically thought of as a conversion experience, should not be considered as somehow separate from his calling as an apostle. For Paul, "conversion" and "call" went hand in hand. He experiences both at precisely the same time (Acts 9:3-9, 20).

Paul does not "abandon" Judaism and trade it for Christianity. Rather Paul's experience appears to be more in keeping with the prophetic calls of the Old Testament. He experiences a calling to a specific task — the mission to the non-Jews — in the manner resembling the calling of the classical prophets. He refers to himself repeatedly as an "apostle to the Gentiles."

The Jews' rejection of his ministry — and his companions' ministries — opens the door for him to preach to the Gentiles. Paul's fortitude and perseverance, gifted to him by the Holy Spirit, is something for contemporary believers to emulate as we face the rejection of the outside world. ☩

Christian Crossword

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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Across

- To plop.
- There is a ___ here, which hath five barley loaves. (John 6:9)
- Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel on Mount ___. (Josh. 8:30)
- Then shall the ___ man leap as a hart. (Isa. 35:6)
- Age.
- A solo.
- The high and lofty One that inhabiteth ___. (Isa. 57:15)
- They passed through the ___ ea as by dry land. (Heb. 11:29)
- Thick.
- Spatter.
- Indebted to.
- Whatever ye shall ___ in my name, that will I do. (John 14:13)
- Ship's direct steering.
- Soon.
- From the beginning of the year even unto the ___. (Deut. 11:12)
- Where ___ the men which came into thee this night?

- (Gen. 19:5)
- Let us lay ___ every weight. (Heb. 12:1)
- Pekoe.
- In a place where two ways ___. (Mark 11:4)
- In the first year of Darius the ___. (Dan. 11:1)
- The love of God is ___ abroad in our hearts. (Rom. 5:5)
- ___ art thou, Lord? (Acts 9:5)
- Revise.
- ___ you this day whom ye will serve. (Josh. 24:15)
- What thou ___, write in a book. (Rev. 1:11)
- Gentleman. (German)
- Turn back thine hand as a grape ___ into the baskets. (Jer. 6:9)
- Annoys.
- Antelope.
- Pro ___.
- The smell of thy ___ like apples. (Song of Sol. 7:8)
- Droop.
- Break.
- Down
1. They ___ before the men of Ai. (Josh. 7:4)
- The Jews of ___ sought to stone thee. (John 11:8)
- Sign.
- There was not one feeble ___ among their tribes. (Ps. 105:37)
- Hawaiian garland.
- Where ___ thou? (Gen. 3:9)
- All the ___ of my life. (Ps. 23:6)
- British noblemen.
- No man ___ it unto them. (Lam. 4:4)
- Helps.
- To whip.
- I make all things ___. (Rev. 21:5)
- Window glass.
- Woe to them that are at ___ in Zion. (Amos 6:1)
- Sly.
- Eccentric wheel.
- Unrefined rock.
- They that weave ___ shall be confounded. (Isa. 19:9)
- The prophet of the Lord ... whose name was ___. (2 Chron. 28:9)
- Born.

- Mom and ___.
- Minor prophet.
- Cattle.
- I saw, and behold a white ___. (Rev. 6:2)
- Adjective suffix.
- Part of the face.
- Champion.
- As the partridge sitteth on ___. (Jer. 17:11)
- Of ___, the family of the Eranites. (Num. 26:36)
- Bristle.
- A ___ for him in the way. (Job 18:10)
- American Newspaper Association.
- Pull.

P	A	N	S	G	S	E	S	O	N	S
J	A	T	A	R	A	T	A	R	K	S
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L	A	B	L	A	D	L	O	P	L	O

WHAT ARE YOU READING?



Alabama Baptists share about what they are currently reading

WANDA BERGERON

The Alabama Baptist

“*Thriving in Babylon*” by Larry Osborne

Thriving In Babylon” is about why hope, humility and wisdom matter in a godless culture. He uses the Old Testament book of Daniel to take us on a journey with Daniel and shows us how, against incredible odds and in overwhelming circumstances, he was able to thrive in a culture that was much worse than what we live in today.

The increasing moral and cultural decay of our society is not something God is unprepared for. God has a plan. God wins in the end. We win in the end.

We should make sure that with all the fear and craziness of our world, we make God’s character, power and promises a major part of our daily input.

With humor and God’s Word, Osborne shows us how we can thrive in our own modern-day Babylon.

The darker it gets the brighter our little light shines.

This is a short, easy read with humor and positive biblical truths.

ROSALIE HUNT

Retired missionary

“*Vanishing Grace*” by Philip Yancey

I have never found a book by Yancey to be a disappointment, but this one is especially riveting. It is shocking to view so clearly how we, Christ’s followers, do such a poor job of letting our lives illustrate what grace really is. I gained insight into some amazing people in these pages, including Henri Nouwen and Martin Luther King Jr. Yancey makes a great case of getting us to see how we can all exemplify what grace is all about. He views believers in three categories: pilgrim, activist and artist. It’s a fascinating concept. Yancey gives us a reality check. I’m near the final chapter now and find fresh insight all the way through. This is a keeper.

MARY FRY

Member of Parkview Baptist Church, Eufaula

“*Hiding in the Light: Why I Risked Everything to Leave Islam and Follow Jesus*” by Rifqa Bary

This is a fabulous story. I had a hard time putting it down. The author’s parents threatened to kill her if she did not renounce her faith in Christ. She found ingenious ways to stay alive. This is a book all ages, male or female, will read and be thankful for Christ in their lives. 🙏

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 or send us a message on Facebook. You may also mail your information to 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.



All Sons and Daughters

Photo courtesy of Hoganson Media

Intentional worship

Acoustic duo seeks to be extension of local church

By Leann Callaway

Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When David Leonard and Leslie Jordan formed the musical group “All Sons and Daughters,” they wanted to choose a name that served as a personal reflection of their identity in Christ.

Their group name is based on 2 Corinthians 6:18: “I will be a Father to you, and you will be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

With songs such as “Great Are You Lord,” “Oh How I Need You” and “All the Poor and Powerless” becoming a staple among contemporary worship services across the country, this acoustic duo is making an impression on young worshippers through well-crafted lyrics and deep theological truths.

“Every song we write comes from a Scripture or prayer,” Jordan said. “When I was in college, I began to fall in love with worship music. When I started leading worship, I was able to see the beauty of how these songs helped connect people to God.”

While impacting churches across the country with their engaging songs, the duo has been named *Worship Leader Magazine’s* “most enchanting sound emerging in the worship genre.” In an effort to assist fellow musicians and worship leaders, their song charts are available for free on their website.

Leonard said, “We really want to be intentional and want our songs to be an extension of the local church. We also want to give people the tools and resources that will allow them to dive in and find the truth of who God is.”

As they tour around the world and share songs from their self-titled album, the duo hopes to encourage students and young adults

to find their role in God’s story.

Present and available

Jordan said, “God is setting up something beautiful with His story. Each season of life is always leading to the next season, so we really want to be present, be available and be in the moment when we are leading worship and be sensitive to how the Holy Spirit is moving.” 🙏



“When I started leading worship, I was able to see the beauty of how these songs helped connect people to God.”

Leslie Jordan, All Sons and Daughters

Character is key

Royals GM sees importance of instilling virtues in others

Kansas City Royals general manager (GM) Dayton Moore was headed off the field during 2012 spring training when a Royals minor league coach approached him. “Dayton,” the coach said, “God asked me to tell you something.”

“Sure, what do you have, kid?” Moore replied.

Moore says he will never forget the response: “Do your fighting on your knees.”

The coach’s message was impactful in part because of the temptation to lash out at critics. The Royals had lost at least 90 games in 5 of the previous 6 seasons, with nearly 30 years since their last playoff appearance — and fans were growing impatient with Moore. But the GM, now in his 10th year with the Royals, knew that patience, trust in Christ and an emphasis on character within the organization marked the path to turning around the franchise.

Moore explained why character is important for a winning team in Major League Baseball (MLB).

Professional baseball players “are genetically gifted to play this sport,” he said. “They’re very talented. It’s the choices they make off the field that are going to allow their natural ability on the field to take over.” That’s why the Royals “have a lot of character and leadership programs put in place, and we talk a lot about the importance of being a great brother, a great son and someday growing up to be a great husband.”

Two years after the spring training message, Moore’s emphasis on character appeared to pay off as the Royals won the American League title and fell in Game Seven of the World Series by just one run. Thus far in 2015, they have the best record in the American League.

‘More than a season’

Saved in the third grade, Moore recommitted his life to Christ as a junior college baseball player in Kansas — a recommitment described in his 2015 book “More than a Season: Building a Championship Culture.” As a follower of Jesus, becoming more Christ-like and instilling virtue in others played a role in Moore’s career as a player, coach, scout and eventually Major League GM.

When he arrived in Kansas City in 2006, Moore established three questions that had to be answered of all prospective Royals leaders. First among them was, “Are they able to apply moral principles in their lives?”

“Our goal from day one here in Kansas City

was to create an organization we’d want our own sons and family to be a part of,” Moore said. “With scouts that we hire, [we ask] would we want this particular scout in our home representing the Royals, talking to our son about joining the Royals? Would we want this coach, this instructor, this manager around our sons on a daily basis?”

Cultivating character among minor league players was particularly important to Moore because of his goal to establish a winning team with a majority of the players developed through the Kansas City farm system. Consequently minor leaguers with the Royals hear speakers address morality and they participate in character and leadership development programs.



Kansas City Royals photo

Dayton Moore (right) seeks to make the Royals ‘an organization we’d want our sons ... to be a part of.’

The investment in minor leaguers seemed to yield dividends in 2014, with 12 of 25 players on Kansas City’s World Series roster coming up through their farm system and four others acquired in trades for minor league players.

Though many players are young and unmarried, family is another important emphasis for Moore. He wants players to be exemplary husbands and fathers and seeks to model that with his own wife and three children. Following the 2013 season, for example, when the Royals narrowly missed the playoffs, Moore took his family on a two-week tour of the Holy Land rather than

attend MLB general manager meetings.

To help players spiritually, Moore encourages them to get involved in MLB’s chapel program. Chaplains “pour into the lives of the players” and help them make “quality, consistent, good choices through [their] faith,” Moore said.

At times being a Christian GM means giving a second chance to players and coaches who have made bad choices, like using steroids, but then repented, Moore said. One Royals minor league hitting coach was hired after serving 17 years in a federal penitentiary, where he committed his life to Christ, Moore said.

In the end, Moore cited perseverance and willingness to forgive as traits that should set a Christian general manager apart from his peers. While his ultimate goal is to please God, Moore hopes those traits also will contribute to a World Series title.

“The only thing we try to do each and every day as a leadership team is to lead ourselves well, make sure that we are the fathers and the husbands that we need to be,” Moore said.

He added, “If we lead ourselves well, it’s going to transition on down to our coaches, our scouts, our players.” (BP)

RELIGION

in America

Compiled from Wire Services



Houston to vote on equal rights ordinance

HOUSTON — Houston’s City Council voted Aug. 5 to put the controversial equal rights ordinance (known as HERO) on the Nov. 3 ballot after a vote to repeal the law failed but not before debate arose over the ballot language.

Council members opposed to the ballot language cautioned Mayor Annise Parker the city could find itself again on the losing end of a legal battle over how the city chooses to parse its words for the voters.

The vote marked a “dubious” anniversary for HERO opponents, spearheaded by the Houston Area Pastors Council. It was one year ago — Aug. 4, 2014 — that Parker and then-City Attorney David Feldman called a press conference to declare “invalid” a referendum to repeal the equal rights ordinance, which gives protected class status to LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) individuals. And on Aug. 5 the Houston City Council, at the direction of the Texas Supreme Court, was forced to accept the referendum petition and vote to repeal the ordinance.

The repeal of HERO failed, 12–5, and with council refusing to repeal the ordinance, city charter mandated council to put the ordinance to a citywide vote. (BP)

Iowans plan 1,000 anti-gay ‘marriage’ billboards

GRIMES, Iowa — After months of controversy, the Gortz Haus closed its doors in late July in the wake of declining revenue — first, for its refusal to host gay weddings, then for discontinuing its wedding business altogether. A Des Moines couple filed a complaint with the Iowa Civil Rights Commission in 2013 because owners Richard and Betty Odgaard refused to let them rent the venue for a same-sex ceremony. In a settlement last year, the Odgaards agreed to pay the couple \$5,000 and to not discriminate against same-sex couples. They did that by choosing not to offer wedding services to anyone — straight or gay — a decision the Odgaards said caused the business to fold.

But the Odgaards have no plans to put aside their campaign against same-sex “marriage.” The Odgaards say they plan to erect 1,000 billboards advertising their belief in upholding “traditional” marriage between one man and one woman. The first billboard, a 14-foot by 48-foot black-and-white sign, went up outside of Durant, Oklahoma, in late July. (RNS)

Christian psychology pioneer Narramore dies

PASADENA, California — Clyde M. Narramore, 98, pioneering 20th Century Christian psychologist, author, evangelist and radio broadcaster, died July 27.

Narramore was the prolific author of more than 100 Christian books and booklets, including best sellers “The Encyclopedia of Psychological Problems,” “This Way to Happiness” and “The Psychology of Counseling,” which was featured in William and Randy Petersen’s “100 Christian Books that Changed the Century.” According to Petersen, Narramore “gave evangelicals permission to consult modern psychology and psychiatry alongside the Bible for the answers to their problems.”

In 1970, Narramore became the founding president of the Rosemead School of Psychology, now affiliated with Biola University in La Mirada, California. He also began annual missionary kid (MK) re-entry conferences to support MKs as they faced the culture shock of returning to the United States after living abroad. (EPA)

Evangelicals back carbon reduction plan

WASHINGTON — More than 170 evangelical leaders have sent President Barack Obama a letter backing a Clean Power Plan that will reduce carbon dioxide emissions from coal-burning power plants. The plan, released Aug. 3, aims to cut carbon pollution by 30 percent from 2005 levels. Coal industry leaders have said the plan will increase costs and have a minimal effect on climate change. (RNS)