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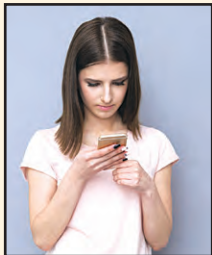
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SIGNING the dotted line

Are young and old at odds when it comes to church membership?

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

What once was the norm — joining a church by membership and putting your name on the roll — may be morphing into more of a “covenant relationship,” experts say, where involvement in mission and meaningful participation, instead of “joining” an organization, is more important to churchgoers. The theory holds true especially for Millennials (those born between 1980 and the 2000s) — research results tend to pit younger and older generations against each other.

But has that concept become a part of how Millennials in Alabama

view church membership?

According to Josh Sammons, pastor of Hillabee Baptist Church, Alexander City, there is a difference between younger and older generations when it comes to how they view and value membership.

Sammons, 40, said the division between viewpoints might stem from Postmodernism.

Strong commitment

“There seems to be more of an understanding of commitment from the previous generations ... than from the younger generations,” Sammons said. “Previous generations were very committed to the cause that they undertook. We see this played out in church

life for instance in attendance and tithing. ... They are steadfast and unmovable. ... However, the post-modern generation displays a great deal of emphasis on personal experience ... tending to favor more of a subjective approach to life.”

In a recent Baptist News Global (BNG) article, Travis Collins, director of mission advancement for the United States operation of Fresh Expressions, an international movement to help churches navigate postmodern culture, said churches today might need to be creative in finding alternatives to traditional membership, noting that improved language may do the trick.

“Some really good churches

now talk about something like ‘covenant relationships’ instead of ‘membership,’” Collins said.

Seeking to understand

Sammons said his church has not changed the way it does membership but it does reach out “to both (young and old) generations by seeking to understand both generational tendencies.”

According to the BNG article, the tendency is for older generations to see membership as a critical measure of success, logical and necessary, where younger generations see it as pointless and even hypocritical, noting that members often do not participate or

(See ‘It’s your,’ page 18)

Augmented reality

Exciting update

to The Alabama Baptist newspaper is here.
Check out page 5 for more details.

COMMENT

Augmented
reality

Life Unworthy of Life?

The nurse approached the hospital bassinet of the 3-day-old baby with needle in hand. In a not-so-caring way, the nurse jabbed the needle into the infant's one good leg and pressed the plunger. A sharp cry filled the room but no one seemed to notice. In a few moments the crying stopped. The baby grew still and then stopped moving altogether. He was dead.

The incident did not occur in the darkness of night. The nurse was not stealth-like in her movements. Administering a lethal dose of medicine to a disabled child was a routine, everyday occurrence. In 1939, Hitler had implemented a child euthanasia program that targeted disabled infants and toddlers for death.

Parents of children under 3 who had signs of severe physical or mental disabilities were encouraged to admit their child to a special pediatric clinic. In reality the clinics were killing wards where specially recruited medical staff murdered the children through lethal injections or by starvation.

What began as a program aimed at newborns quickly expanded to mentally and physically disabled children up to age 17. Researchers say more than 5,000 children died in the 20 months the program operated. There was no room for the disabled in the future envisioned by the Nazis. The disabled were "life unworthy of life."

Henry Friedlander in his book "The Origins of Nazi Genocide" documents that Germany's euthanasia planners also targeted disabled adults who were transported to 1 of 6 gassing locations for execution. Their bodies were then cremated and ashes returned to relatives along with a fake story about the cause of death.

Open secret

What was supposed to remain unknown soon became an open secret. Public protests led by German pastors caused Hitler to scale back his slaughter of the disabled but it never stopped completely. Instead it expanded to include geriatric patients and foreign-forced laborers. Later Hitler tried to kill whole races of people



THOUGHTS
By Bob Terry

including Jews and Roma. All were considered "life unworthy of life."

The United States has its own group considered "life unworthy of life" — the unborn. Researchers estimate more than 3,000 babies are legally aborted each day in the U.S. Since the infamous Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision of 1973, more than 58 million babies have been aborted, according to reliable research.

The Bible teaches God's first gift to humanity is the gift of physical life. God asks for His gift to be accepted, nurtured and cherished. Yet more than 1 in 5 pregnancies in the U.S. (22 percent) end in elective abortions. God's gift of life is rejected. Babies die. Life created in the image of God and by God is deemed "life unworthy of life."

Some attempt to justify the death of the innocent babies in the name of birth control or personal freedom. Society talks about it as

progress and liberty. Society should be weeping in shame for its brutality and rebellion.

Adding to the nation's disgrace are the recent revelations about Planned Parenthood. Although Planned Parenthood provides a number of services, it is best known as the largest provider of abortions in the U.S. Again researchers indicate Planned Parenthood performs about 325,000 abortions each year. Since 1970 the organization is credited with nearly 7 million abortions.

A series of videos by the Center for Medical Progress alleges that Planned Parenthood profits by selling fetal tissue.

Defenders have tried to explain away the videos as "heavily edited." They are. The interviews were hours in length while the videos can be seen in minutes. Some charge the videos present a false picture but that argument is fading as people read through the verbatim transcripts.

Tampa Bay Times in an article titled "The

Planned Parenthood video in context," which was written after reading the transcripts of the interviews, concluded "that the conversation indicates that at least some Planned Parenthood clinics do sell aborted fetal tissue."

The article attempted to defend the practice saying it is a legal service. Yet another video shows a Planned Parenthood executive explaining that procedures for abortions could be altered to preserve tissue and organs intact if that would make the tissue more desirable.

To do so would violate federal law, which states, "In the case of tissue obtained pursuant to an induced abortion ... no alteration of the timing, method or procedures used to terminate the pregnancy was made solely for the purposes of obtaining the tissue" (NIH Revitalization Act of 1993).

Cost of a liver

And what if it is legal, is it right? Hitler's child euthanasia program was legal but was it right? No.

It is hard to watch the bargaining over the cost of a baby's liver, heart or brain and to hear a Planned Parenthood official say, "If it (the price) is still low, then we can bump it up."

"Our faith calls us to say 'yes' to God's first gift. That includes life for the unborn, for the disabled, the elderly and all of God's children."

The videos have jarred the culture in America. Now everyone knows what happens to babies aborted by Planned Parenthood. Thankfully people are protesting the ghastly practices. On Aug. 22 people sickened by the reports about Planned Parenthood's practices turned out in protest in

more than 350 locations nationwide including three in Alabama. The combined protests have been called the largest protests in the history of the pro-life movement.

Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley yanked all state funds going to Planned Parenthood. The U.S. Senate got a majority vote to withdraw federal funds from the organization but fell short of the 60 votes needed for a final vote. The House of Representatives has two hearings scheduled trying to expand understanding of the practices of Planned Parenthood.

We commend Gov. Bentley for his prompt action and encourage national officials to carefully scrutinize the practices of Planned Parenthood and whether the organization is profiting from the sale of fetal tissue as the videos show.

The Bible stands against a culture of "life unworthy of life." Our faith calls us to say "yes" to God's first gift. That includes life for the unborn, for the disabled, the elderly and all of God's children. 🙏

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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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A cut to the missionary force

IMB plans to trim personnel by 600-800 to address budget shortfall

Hundreds of International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries will be asked to consider voluntary retirement after IMB leaders announced Aug. 27 that the organization had spent \$210 million more than was given to it in the past six years.

To address revenue shortfalls over these years, IMB has dipped into reserves and sold off property overseas — a move new IMB President David Platt said had been done by his predecessors with much prayer.

But the long-term plan for addressing the problem through missionary force attrition hasn't produced results fast enough to adequately address the shortfall, he said.

"We praise God for the reserves and property sales that made this possible and for leadership which chose to spend these resources for the spread of the gospel," Platt said. "But we cannot continue to overspend. For the sake of short-term financial responsibility and long-term organizational stability we must act."

IMB leaders reported that they believe the organization needs to restore its contingency reserves to six months' worth of its annual operating budget in order to be a financially healthy organization. At the current rate of spending, by the end of 2015, the IMB will only have about four months' worth of contingency reserves left.

And Sebastian Traeger, IMB's executive vice president, said that every six months that passes without the shortfall being addressed, IMB will lose another month's worth of reserves.

'Urgent' need to change

That makes the need for change urgent, according to Platt. And the only viable way to regain financial footing is to quickly scale back the organization's workforce by 600-800, he said. Currently IMB supports about 4,800 global missionaries and 450 staff in its Richmond, Virginia, headquarters.

The staff reduction will begin with a voluntary retirement incentive that will be



IMB missionary Heather McAfee (left) tells a Creation-to-Christ story to a Muslim shopkeeper in the West African nation of Ivory Coast.

offered to all eligible employees, including both missionaries and staff. While the parameters defining who is eligible are still being finalized, details of the incentive will be announced Sept. 10 and those eligible will be notified in the days following the announcement.

"Whether to accept the incentive is a voluntary decision completely up to the discretion of eligible individuals," Platt said. "This offers personnel who may already be considering a transition in their lives an opportunity to make that transition."

IMB leaders are calling this first step phase one. Phase two will focus on concluding a reset of the organization that addresses consolidating support services, recalibrating mobilization, assessing global engagement and re-envisioning training. Leaders also will continue to explore additional ways to recoup the budget as needed, such as further

personnel adjustments or sales of overseas properties.

The sale of less-strategic property with profit that could be returned to the U.S. was already done in previous years, Traeger said. These properties showed up as assets in Southern Baptists' financial reports during those years — but the reality was, they were just assets passing through, not assets sitting in reserves. Property is only denoted as an asset once it's liquidated, Traeger explained, and those liquidated funds went straight into addressing operating budget needs.

So did Lottie Moon Christmas Offering monies, which have fallen consistently short of the annual goal by millions of dollars.

'A healthy position'

All this spells a critical need for the missionary-support organization — a need leaders say they are taking swift steps to address.

Platt said, "We must get to a healthy place in the present in order to be in a healthy position for the future. We want to move forward with innovative vision, wise stewardship and high accountability to the churches we serve, the peoples we reach and the God we worship."

The announcement came on the heels of the IMB trustee meeting Aug. 25-26 in Richmond and was disseminated to IMB personnel through a town hall meeting Aug. 27 before the news was released to the public.

It also came exactly a year after Platt, former pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, took the helm of the massive organization. (TAB, IMB)



"We must get to a healthy place. ... We want to move forward with innovative vision, wise stewardship and high accountability to the churches we serve, the peoples we reach and the God we worship."

David Platt
president, International Mission Board



123rf.com

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

Teens have a natural curiosity about sex. That curiosity combined with technology can lead teens to make poor choices with serious consequences. Increasingly one of those choices is sexting.

NetSmartz Workshop, a program of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, defines sexting as “the exchange of sexually suggestive messages or images between minors via cell phone.” By some estimates, 40 percent of all high school students have sent or received a “sext” and 70 percent of teens admit to sexting with their boyfriend or girlfriend, according to TeenSafe, a smartphone monitoring service.

Often teens who are sexting do so within the context of a relationship, though sexting also can be a way to show interest in starting a romantic relationship, according to NetSmartz. While those who send the sexts may believe that the practice is safe from threats like pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases, sexting does have its own set of risks, said Lisa Keane, clinical director for Pathways Professional Counseling, a ministry of the Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries.

Need for acceptance

“It would seem that many teens find sexting to be perfectly harmless. To them, it seems like a way to fulfill their need for acceptance or to feel attractive, which keeps them from thinking through all the

negative outcomes that are possible,” Keane said.

Legal consequences are one possible outcome of sexting, said Anniston attorney Jennifer Weems, who prosecuted sex crimes as an assistant district attorney in Calhoun County. Alabama does not have laws that address sexting, which means that sexting, specifically sending or receiving nude photos, can be prosecuted under child pornography laws.

“Child pornography involves anyone under 17. There’s no age requirement for the perpetrator, so technically a child could produce child pornography of themselves,” Weems said.

In most situations when law enforcement gets involved, officials will meet with the teens and their parents and talk to them about the potential ramifications of their actions, Weems said. Some cases are prosecuted, often in juvenile court, but even those cases can have long-term consequences.

“A child pornography conviction, regardless of the perpetrator’s age, may require registration as a sex offender,” Weems said, which would negatively affect college admissions, job opportunities and the individual’s general reputation in the community.

There are significant emotional consequences as well, Keane said. A teen may think the photo they sent will be kept private, but that’s often not the case. Regardless of intent, once someone sends an image, he or she loses control of what happens with that photo.

“Sexting leaves teens vulnerable to images or messages being shared with any-

one. They ultimately give away all their power, and it can dramatically alter a life if it gets in the wrong hands,” Keane said.

Those “wrong hands” sometimes are in the porn industry, Weems said.

Child pornography

“There is a child pornography industry out there and predators who are scanning Facebook and the World Wide Web looking for underage pictures. The worst-case scenario is that your child takes a nude picture of herself, puts it where someone else can get it and that photo is sold into that industry,” Weems said.

NetSmartz warns parents and teens to be especially vigilant for adult predators who attempt to coerce or blackmail young people into sending sexually explicit images of themselves. Such cases are not sexting and should be reported to law enforcement immediately.

For all these reasons, parents should discuss responsible smartphone use with their children as soon as they start using a cell phone. That discussion should be ongoing and should include frank discussions about sexting and its consequences, Keane said.

“For a teen’s protection, it is vital that parents are continually dialoguing with them about how their actions today can

dramatically alter their future,” Keane said.

She suggests that parents specifically ask their kids if anyone has ever asked them to engage in inappropriate messaging. Questions open the door for conversations, and regular conversations will lessen parental anxiety surrounding the discussion.

Parents also can use technology to keep their teens safer. Several companies offer monitoring and parental control apps to help parents keep a watch on children’s online activities. Some focus primarily on internet searches, but others allow parents to track their kids’ texting and social media activity, including to whom texts are sent and the content of texts and posts.

A parent’s duty

Ultimately protecting kids from the dangers of sexting requires parental supervision and ongoing communication, Keane said. Technology is not going away and parents have a duty to teach children how to use it responsibly.

“You can’t expect a one-time conversation will be effective for the long haul. Our teens need to hear the risks, but they also need to know they can always come to you if they are ever tempted or asked to engage in this behavior,” Keane said. ☞

“For a teen’s protection, it is vital that parents are continually dialoguing with them about how their actions today can dramatically alter their future.”

Lisa Keane
clinical director, Pathways Professional Counseling

Have you tried it yet?

Augmented reality

‘Seemingly holographic’ version of *The Alabama Baptist* using augmented reality technology getting rave reviews

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Cool,” “neat,” “awesome,” “whoa” and any other adjectives you can think to say when you are impressed — that has been the initial reaction to *The Alabama Baptist’s* (TAB) new augmented reality version of the paper.

Launched with the Aug. 27 issue, the enhance-

ment to the print and digital editions of the paper is made possible thanks to a partnership with Samford University in Birmingham.

Chris J. McCaghren, assistant to the president for external programs at Samford, made the technology work for Samford as well as TAB.

“At Samford we are continually experimenting with new technologies to bridge time and space gaps for our students and faculty,” McCaghren wrote in the augmented reality introductory article in TAB’s Aug. 27 issue. “If you follow the steps outlined (on this page) and hold your smartphone or tablet over the pages in the paper marked with ‘augmented reality,’ then you will see this cutting-edge technology in action.

“Open the Aurasma app and hold your device as if you are taking a photo of the page and a seemingly holographic image will find its way on top of the page.”

In addition to expanded news coverage

and extra items offered by TAB staff and columnists, Samford’s Ministry Training Institute (MTI) will be offering free courses in the paper each week.

The photo below is the “classroom” and will be the same each week. A mobile device with the Aurasma app open is the gateway to watch the lecture.

The lectures will be eight to 10 minutes in length and will feature “some of the greatest theological and pastoral minds in our state,” McCaghren said.

Kevin Blackwell, assistant to the president for church relations at Samford, directs MTI.

“We are pleased to expand our MTI offerings to include readers of *The Alabama Baptist*,” Blackwell said. “MTI offers on-site Bible and ministry courses

at 20 locations throughout Alabama and the Southeast and now readers of *The Alabama Baptist* will get a sneak peek of upcoming courses.”

For instance the Book of Revelation will be taught at some sites during the second fall term and many other sites during one of the 2016 spring terms.

“As part of that course students will learn about the letters of Christ to the seven churches of Asia Minor, and beginning with this issue

readers of *The Alabama Baptist* will get a taste of what those classes will be like,” Blackwell said.

MTI exists to equip Christians to be leaders in their churches and communities through theological education and ministry training. For more information, visit www.samford.edu/go/mti.

Augmented reality version of TAB made possible by partnership with Samford University

How to get started

- 1** Go to your app store and search for Aurasma.
- 2** Download the free Aurasma app on any iOS or Android device.
- 3** Option to set up an account or skip (either one is OK).
- 4** Open the Aurasma app and tap the ▲ icon at the bottom of the screen.
- 5** Tap the magnifying glass at the bottom of the screen and search for “ALBaptist.”
- 6** Choose the “ALBaptist” profile and tap “Follow.”
- 7** Tap the [] icon at the bottom of the screen.
- 8** You will see pulsating dots. Hold your device over a page or image marked as augmented reality and watch the paper come to life (pp. 1, 2, 5, 17 this week).
- 9** When your next issue of TAB arrives, open the app and hold your device over articles and images marked as augmented reality.

Source: Chris McCaghren, Samford University

Watch your complimentary Ministry Training Institute lecture here



Photo by Bryan Gill

As part of your subscription to *The Alabama Baptist*, you will receive a complimentary eight- to 10-minute lecture taught by Samford’s Ministry Training Institute each week. Use your Aurasma app to watch the first of an eight-part series on part of the book of Revelation by placing your mobile device over this photo.

TV ads in Alabama portray a gentle-spirited community of neighbors wanting to help the state, but Florida leaders are seeing more aggressive moves from the same group.

Playing hardball



Wind Creek Casino in Atmore

Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Poarch Band threatens Florida with marijuana business if gambling compact isn't made

By Martha Simmons
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Gambling revenues are on the decline nationwide. And while casinos operated by the Poarch Band of Creek Indians (PCI) — 6,300 slot machines labeled as electronic bingo — deliver more than \$600 million a year in gross gaming revenues, according to *Global Gaming Business Magazine*, the group is looking to expand its businesses.

One business could be growing and selling marijuana.

'Pot-or-jackpots' ultimatum

Alabamians are being shown television ads with gentle tones portraying the Native American casinos as good corporate citizens willing to bail out the budget in exchange for exclusive gambling rights statewide. But Floridians are seeing a more aggressive side of the PCI casinos.

PCI tribal leaders threatened in February to grow marijuana on a one-acre plot of land

it owns in Escambia County, Florida, if the state doesn't agree to a compact allowing it to offer gambling at several Florida locations, according to a report by *The Florida Times-Union*. The threat followed a December decision by the U.S. Department of Justice stating that tribes could grow and sell marijuana on tribal lands in the same manner as states that have legalized it.

PCI has proposed a compact with Florida that would allow for bingo-style slot machines at pari-mutuels along I-10 in Jacksonville, Pensacola and Gretna, a small town near Tallahassee, earning nearly \$2 billion for the state in 10 years.

Tribal leaders have characterized the pot-or-jackpots ultimatum as merely a bargaining chip to make Florida Gov. Rick Scott and the Legislature take them seriously. So

far the governor remains adamantly opposed to the compact, the *Times-Union* reported, and PCI started building a warehouse on the one-acre Florida property near Atmore.

The Florida acquisition is a recent move following PCI's previous expansion to Montgomery and Wetumpka and the purchase of the Mobile Greyhound Park.

PCI launched its first gambling enterprise in Alabama — the Creek Bingo Palace in Atmore — in 1985 and then opened the Wind Creek Casino there in 2009. The new casino dramatically altered the rural Escambia County skyline along I-65 with a towering facility including the casino, hotel, casual and fine-dining restaurants and concert venue.

As the tribe continues to pursue compacts with both Alabama and Florida governors to allow for Class III gambling at their facilities in those states, tribal leaders also are working on business ventures that have nothing to do with gambling. Its businesses run by Creek Indian Enterprises Development Authority (CIE) reach from Huntsville to Mobile and into Florida.

PCI's investments reflect a widespread strategy of Native American tribes to diversify as a hedge against an aging customer base, declining profits, commercial competition and state and federal actions, according to multiple reports in *Global Gaming Business Magazine*.

Statewide business ventures

Along with 65-percent ownership in the Mobile Greyhound Park, PCI has acquired hotels and other gambling facilities, according to PCI's website and al.com:

- ▶ Town Place Suites at Redstone Gateway, Huntsville — a Marriott TownPlace Suites on 3.1 acres, with rights to build another hotel on the site
- ▶ The Westin Lake Mary, Orlando —

part ownership in a 14,000-square-foot hotel

- ▶ Hyatt Place Pensacola Airport, Pensacola — a \$24 million, 127-room hotel built in partnership with Innisfree Hotels

- ▶ Pensacola Greyhound Track and Poker Room, Pensacola — pari-mutuel betting and table games

- ▶ Creek Entertainment Gretna, Gretna, Florida — joint owner of a Florida Panhandle gambling facility offering pari-mutuel betting and poker

- ▶ Blue Collar Country, Foley — PCI owns a small stake in the entertainment project located on 500 acres and reserves the rights to build two hotels on the development

- ▶ Holiday Inn Resort, Fort Walton — majority owner of this \$25 million, 152-room resort

Other businesses run by CIE range from cattle and catfish to contact lenses and campsites:

- ▶ River Oaks Apartments, Wetumpka — a 78-unit apartment community

- ▶ Tallapoosa Lakes Golf Course/Lake-side Sports Grill, Montgomery — a 350-acre facility

- ▶ Magnolia Branch Wildlife Reserve, Atmore — a 5,000-acre recreation and camping area currently offering RV and primitive campsites, with plans to build a lodge and cabins

- ▶ Muskogee Technologies, Atmore — a 90,000-square-foot aerospace manufacturing company that provides government as well as commercial services such as metal fabrication, electronics, warehousing and engineering

- ▶ Creek Smoke Shop and Convenience Store, Atmore — an "upscale" convenience store near the entrance to Wind Creek Casino

- ▶ Perdido River Farms, Atmore area — manages the tribe's agricultural properties, including a 13-acre catfish pond and 500 head of cattle

- ▶ Premier Family Eyecare, Atmore — open to tribal members and the general public. ☞

For more information on PCI or casino gambling issues in Alabama, visit www.thealabamabaptist.org and search for "gambling."

How many casino-style facilities are currently operating in Alabama?

The answer isn't clear because the state's four dog tracks, two other large facilities and several smaller locations continue pushing for laws to allow legal casinos in their facilities. The Poarch Band of Creek Indians operates three casinos — Atmore, Wetumpka and Montgomery.

What are pari-mutuels?

Pari-mutuel facilities are based on a betting system in which all bets of a particular type are placed together in a pool and those that bet share the total amount of winnings minus a percentage for the management.

Issues in the courtroom

Atmore's Poarch Band of Creek Indians accused of desecrating sacred burial ground

By **Martha Simmons**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

While Alabama lawmakers and lobbyists continue to skirmish over a General Fund bail-out offer by the Poarch Band of Creek Indians (PCI) in exchange for exclusive gambling rights, the tribe is battling separate but potentially related issues in the courtroom.

In a lawsuit filed in December 2012, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation seeks to halt construction of a \$246 million expansion of a Wetumpka casino operated by PCI at Hickory Ground, a sacred ceremonial site and burial ground. Defendants in the case include PCI, construction contractors Flintco LLC and Martin Construction Inc., Auburn University and the U.S. Department of the Interior, according to Indian Country Today.

Graves relocated

The lawsuit accuses PCI of desecrating the Oklahoma-headquartered Muscogee (Creek) Nation's ancestral home by digging up and relocating approximately 57 sets of remains and preventing the land's use as a ceremonial site by developing it as a casino. Hickory Ground, which is listed on

the National Register of Historic Places, was the last capitol of the Muscogee Creeks and includes the graves of ancestors who lived and died there before the tribe was forced from its Alabama homeland on the Trail of Tears to Oklahoma.

The civil dispute also has spawned other courtroom battles. In January a Wetumpka jury overturned the conviction of a Native American activist for trespassing and disorderly conduct at the site when he tried to pray for his ancestors buried there, according to Indian Country Today.

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation lawsuit is still pending, and earlier this summer the dispute was taken to the U.S. House of Representatives.

In May, testifying before the House Indian, Insular and Alaska Native Affairs Subcommittee, PCI's Attorney General Lori Stinson accused the Muscogee Creeks of "misleading allegations" in the lawsuit.

Stinson told House committee members that PCI learned in 1980 that the Hickory Ground property was for sale and a "big box" store was planning to develop the 34-acre site. After PCI received federal recognition in 1984, the tribe was able to obtain a grant from the Alabama Historical Commission to purchase the property. Stinson said the tribe fulfilled its 20-year pres-

ervation covenant with the commission and contends it has sovereign authority over the property.

The Muscogee Nation of Oklahoma raised the issue again in a June 2 letter urging Gov. Robert Bentley not to sign a gambling compact with PCI because it would appear to convey the state's blessings on desecration of sacred Native American ancestral grounds.

Muscogee Principal Chief George P. Tiger wrote, "A gaming compact with the Poarch Band would implicitly ratify that desecration and fraud, because the revenues paid to your state would come from a casino built on our historical site, ceremonial grounds and ancestors' burial grounds."

Other legal battles

Closer to home, PCI is locked in two legal tussles.

Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange has filed suit in federal court seeking to make PCI comply with state bingo laws rather than run their casino-type machines.

Strange cites the 2009 U.S. Supreme Court case decision in *Carcieri v. Salazar* as his reasoning. That ruling said only Native American tribes recognized by the federal government prior to 1934 could benefit from the U.S. Department of the Interior's efforts to set aside state land for Native American reservation use. PCI was not recognized until 1984.

PCI's other legal issue is with James Hildreth Jr., the Escambia County tax assessor who is attempting to collect taxes on property the tribe says is not taxable according to federal law. Hildreth notified PCI in March that his office had completed an appraisal of the property, which includes the Wind Creek casino in Atmore, and would proceed with assessments. In May the tribe responded by filing a federal lawsuit against the tax assessor.

Some tax experts are questioning PCI's strategy of offering to bail out the General Fund by covering this year's \$250 million shortfall and helping longterm by paying new state taxes. If taxation is on the table, then why is PCI fighting taxation by a local government? ❏

"A gaming compact with the Poarch Band would implicitly ratify that desecration and fraud."

George P. Tiger
Muscogee Principal Chief

"Poarch Creek is extremely troubled by Muscogee's repeated inaccuracies about the history and events on Poarch Creek trust lands."

Lori Stinson
Poarch Band of Creek Indians attorney general



TAB photo

The Alabama Legislature will soon gather in a second special session to deal with the General Fund budget crisis. The legislators need to hear from you about your concerns.

To find the contact information for your state senator or representative, visit <http://capwiz.com/state-al/home/>

Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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

ALABAMA-CRENSHAW

► **Bethel Church, Glenwood**, will host a 50th wedding anniversary open house for Pastor Stephen L. Carson and his wife, Virginia, on Sept. 27, 2-4 p.m. The open house will be put on by the couple's children and grandchildren. Everyone is invited.

COVINGTON

► **Terry Mills** is the new associate pastor and music minister for



MILLS

Harmony Church, Andalusia. He will graduate in December with a bachelor's degree in music/worship leadership from The Baptist College of Florida in Graceville. He and his wife, Jennifer, have five children and three grandchildren. Greg Cotter is pastor.

CALHOUN

► **Antioch Church, Bynum**, will host revival services Sept. 13-16 with South African evangelist Cecil Teasley. Sept. 13 services will be at 6 p.m. and Sept. 14-16 services will be at 7 nightly. Barton Owens is pastor.

► **Hatchett Creek Church, Goodwater**, will celebrate its 175th anniversary Sept. 13, 11 a.m. Pastor Mark Zeladonis will speak and there will be special music. The Alabama Historical Commission will make a presentation. Lunch will follow.

CAREY

► **Zion Chapel Church, Elba**, will host Driven Quartet in concert Sept. 12, 7 p.m. Cary Maulden is pastor.

COFFEE

► **North Glencoe Church, Glencoe**, on Sept. 13, 7 p.m. The Blackwood Quartet will perform. Thom Harrison is pastor. ► **Mount Carmel Church, Gadsden**, will celebrate its 140th homecoming on Sept. 13, 10:30 a.m. Special music will be provided by The Fishermen and guest speaker will be Gary Williams, pastor of Fairview

ETOWAH

► **Community Church, Moundville**, will celebrate homecoming Sept. 13, 10 a.m. Guest singers will be The Stephens. Lunch will follow. Jerry Koster is pastor.

► **First Church, Axis**, will host a youth trip to Alligator Alley in Summerdale. For more information email pamlott@att.net. Justin Lott is pastor.

HALE

► **Vaughn Forest Church, Montgomery**, will host the women's conference "Your Divine Design" on Sept. 19, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Guest speaker will be Rochelle Frazier. Jaime and Ryan Bell will lead worship. To purchase tickets email vfg2wm@gmail.com. Scott Weatherford is pastor.

MOBILE

► **Oak Mountain Church, Pelham**, will celebrate homecoming Sept. 13, 10:30 a.m. Special music will be performed by Uplifted. Lunch will follow. James Blair is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Christopher Dewaal** is the new minister to children and families for **First Church, Pell City**. His first day was Aug. 25. He earned a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He previously served as youth pastor for First Church, Carmi, Illinois. He and his wife, Melanie, have two children. John Thweatt is pastor. ☞

SHELBY

► **St. Clair**

ST. CLAIR

► **Christopher Dewaal** is the new minister to children and families for **First Church, Pell City**. His first day was Aug. 25. He earned a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He previously served as youth pastor for First Church, Carmi, Illinois. He and his wife, Melanie, have two children. John Thweatt is pastor. ☞



DEWAAL

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Annette Spiers



SPIERS

First Baptist Church, Moody St. Clair Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSE: Romans 12:1-2

FAVORITE HYMN: "Precious Redeemer"

HOBBIES: Cooking and entertaining, gardening, listening to music

FAMILY STATUS: Wife of 55 years to husband, Jim; sons, David Spiers and Philip Spiers; daughter, Susan Jones; five grandchildren

Though retinitis pigmentosa has progressively damaged Annette Spiers' vision all her life and made her legally blind, she has not let that keep her from serving Jesus. For 45 years she taught Sunday School. She led discipleship classes and wrote workbooks for studies she conducted on Acts, Colossians and Romans. Spiers, 80, learned the method of inductive Bible study by attending Kay Arthur's Precepts Training Workshops. Over the years Spiers has been Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) program chairman, a member of search committees and a volunteer in the nursery.

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

A: I was in church for 15 years and no one asked if I really knew Jesus. One day, a pastor was preaching on Romans 3:23. When he got to the word "all," he said to substitute our name there. I put "Annette" there and it was like neon. Then later he preached on redemption. He said you can't be too good or too bad to be saved. It's all about Jesus, not you. You don't have to do anything but receive Him. That's when I was saved.

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

A: I was just asked to work with the children, to teach fifth-grade girls. I went to WMU and was asked to be program chairman.

Q: What does your ministry work demand?

A: A lot of study and prepa-

ration, a lot of prayer and getting to know class members and their life stories. It takes a lot of time to be a Sunday School teacher.

Q: What do you get from your ministry work?

A: I learn more than they do. The teacher always learns the most. I really like the study time and prayer time because I feel so close to the Lord then. The Word ministers to me as I study it. Also I get so close to the women in the class.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: My husband used to read the Sunday School material to me. My son, David, who is now in the ministry, used to read to me every Saturday night. We would study and talk about what it meant. That was precious time.

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

A: I hope to get back to teaching. People call me quite often to ask me where to find "this" or where to look in the Bible. I still get calls from people I taught years ago who want to know where in the Bible to find help to make a decision. In church, my goal is to be friendly and encourage other people to get to know each other better.

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

A: I'm a new person. He's everything to me. It was kind of slow coming at first because I knew I was saved but didn't know how to live a Christian life. But He is my friend; He is my confidant; I want everyone to know Him. ☞

REFLECTIONS

"MY PASTOR HAS WRITTEN TWO BOOKS, HAS A PH.D. DEGREE, AND WON THE PREACHING AWARD FROM THE NATIONAL HERMENEUTICS GUILD."

"YEAH, BUT HAS HE EVER WON A HEISMAN?"



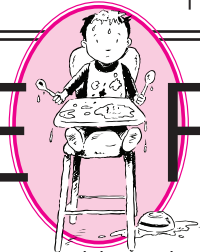
Alabama Baptist Convention **State Board of Missions**



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

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

A HERITAGE FROM THE LORD



Pam and I joined an elite club recently. It has all kind of benefits to the membership. The others in this club have some unique and special commonalities. They are often showing pictures to anyone who will look at them, sometimes even to total strangers. Their social media sites focus upon these kind of pictures as well.

By now, you have guessed that I am talking about the unofficial group of people who are grandparents. Georgia Noelle Linna ushered us into this distinct company of people who are now seeing their children have children. Our youngest daughter, Allison, and her husband are the proud parents of Georgia Noelle. The little one is named after her maternal grandmother and great-grandmother, Georgia, and she is further named after her Aunt Noelle.

Although this grandparenting experience is new to us, we have already begun the joy ride of enjoying a grandchild as well as viewing mother and father assume their new roles as parents. This new experience in life has caused me to reflect upon the blessing of children and how they change the world. I realize that marriage is not for everyone, nor is parenthood for

all people, but those so blessed to be parents and grandparents have an opportunity to contribute to the future with a strong calling of raising children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord."



By Rick Lance
State Missionary

Psalm 127 speaks to this calling. The first two verses resemble the language of Ecclesiastes. The word "vain" is used to describe a life devoid of God's guidance. Verse three has different tone. "Children are a heritage from the Lord." This is another way of saying that children are a gift from the Lord. Every time you look at a child remember that affirmation.

As I reflected anew upon this verse, I was enthralled by the word "heritage." "Children are a heritage from the Lord." That is a unique way of underscoring the reminder that God is the Giver of life and the Giver of life eternal.

Children have a special place in our hearts. You ask a parent who has numerous children and he or she will tell you that each child has a special place in the heart of a godly parent. I am pained when I discover children who have been abused or neglected. This is why

I believe in the ministry of the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. They offer ministry to children who do not know special love. These dedicated servants, among others, provide a special place in their hearts and in their homes for children who are in need.

Children are a special part of our history. For me personally, I began to think of our granddaughter's ancestors — people she will never know but people who led the way for her being who she is. I have not spent much time studying ancestry. I appreciate people who do have that passion and who have an understanding of their lineage. In a spiritual sense, the parents of our grandchild have become a part of a long stream of history in terms of Christians who have sought to live by the Word of God and follow in the footsteps of Jesus. That is the most important factor in the life of Georgia Noelle.

Children are a special provision of our hope for the future. Jesus Christ is our hope, but our Lord God has offered the gift of parenting and grandparenting to give us hope in the future. There is a cloud of hopelessness pervading our culture at present. It is a feeling of helplessness that leaves people in a state of dread and fear. Every time a child is born, there is a shout of hope for the future.

Things can change. Life can be different.

Just recently, someone said to me, "Why bring a child into this kind of world?" I did not respond except in my own mind. Having children and raising them up to abide in Christ is a missionary calling. Do we want Christians to cease having children? God forbid! No, we want Christian parents to do their best in shaping the lives of the next generation.

Like you, I was so dismayed and disgusted with the recent video depicting a lunch conversation which centered on harvesting body parts of aborted children. The subject was bad enough, but the casual nature of the discussion was indescribably despicable. Children are not machines to be broken apart and used in other ways. They are "a heritage from the Lord."

I want to thank all of you for congratulating us on grandparenthood. Pray that we will be positive influences in the life of this precious child. Pray for her sweet parents. Also, bear with us when we show you or send you photos.

Proverbs 1:7

WHY I BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

Our little church just rocked along slowly until our pastor invited a preacher to come from the State Board of Missions in Montgomery to preach a “stewardship revival.” Even as a kid, I enjoyed his explanation of tithing and his illustrations of supporting Gospel work. Our church was changed through that revival.

I was changed through a revival at another Alabama Baptist church. My parents allowed me to attend the revival the summer before my senior year of high school. I was born again. The following month, my pastor asked me to fill the pulpit for him. I respectfully and fearfully declined, but a home missionary — who was serving in New York state and speaking at our church — encouraged me to give it a try. That was 47 years ago.

The Alabama Baptist preachers’ school back then was Samford University. I applied and found that the Cooperative Program supported the school and “preacher boys” like me. I could afford to attend that beautiful and scholarly Baptist college because of Alabama Baptist churches giving through the Cooperative Program.

I was ordained at age 19, serving a church in Selma Association as summer youth director and interim pastor, teaching stewardship to members and encouraging stewardship as a church. Later, I served two half-time churches in Butler Association, one of which gave 24 percent through the Cooperative Program.

The closest to a church fight was the budget business meeting when we did not increase the percentage. The other half-time church began budgeting a regular monthly percentage, rather than giving a once-a-year offering.

After graduating from Samford and working a year on a church staff, I enrolled at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., a Cooperative Program-supported institution. Seminary was virtually free, except for matriculation fees and living expenses. I received a world-class education because of the Cooperative Program.

God opened the door to return to Alabama and serve again on the staff of a strong CP-giving church. They called me as their pastor, and I gladly encouraged increasing CP percentage. God began dealing with me about foreign missions service, and our family of six (four kids) entrusted our support to God through the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

For eight years, we learned two languages, and we worked to evangelize and congregationalize. It was humbling to be 100 percent dependent on the Cooperative Program giving I had been promoting for years.

Twenty years ago, God led me to the North Shelby Baptist Church and led them to call me as their pastor. We have always been strong in CP giving as well as Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong. Our kids benefited from Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions missionaries and ministries on the university campuses of Samford, Montevallo and Auburn.

Our oldest child went on semester break and summer mission projects. Our second-born, Joy Love, was tapped at Montevallo to serve as a Baptist Campus Ministries International Mission Board student summer missionary in Mexico in 1999. She went home to heaven from there, due to the waves and currents of Hurricane Adrian.

Our Alabama Baptist and Southern Baptist family brought her body home and supported us. She had been an MK (missionary kid) and then got to serve on her own, because of CP support. She may still be cheering us all on from heaven to reach the world with the Gospel.

How can we fulfill the Great Commission? By praying, by going, and by giving — and there is no better way that we all can share in the work than by giving through the Cooperative Program!

— **Allan Murphy** serves as senior pastor of North Shelby Baptist Church, Birmingham, and is a member of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.



GOD IS AT WORK THROUGH CHURCH PLANTING IN ALABAMA

In his book *Experiencing God*, Henry Blackaby has taught us to find where God is working around us and join Him in that work. God is always on mission in the world. He invites us to join Him in writing redemptive history over the 21st century.

Whenever God is ready to do something in His kingdom, He always shares it with His followers. This was true of Abraham, Noah, Moses, the Apostles and it is also true today. It is true of Alabama Baptist church planting. God speaks through His people.

God spoke through the adoption of the Future Focus initiative for Alabama Baptists as we met in November 2012. Included in this proposal was the goal to start 220 new intentional, healthy churches by 2020.

Then, about a month later, Executive Director Rick Lance traveled to Manhattan to meet with me about the possibility of my coming to become the Lead Church Planting Strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

During the course of our conversation, Dr. Lance stated that he wanted us to become the “gold standard” for church planting in the Deep South. I know that Dr. Lance is a godly man, but never more clearly has the Lord ever spoken to me than on that day.

It was as if the Lord Himself spoke through Dr. Lance to say to me that He was about to do something amazing in the area of church planting in Alabama and beyond.

When God speaks, it means that He is up to something. He clearly invited me to come back to my home state to be here while He does this work. The work is not up to me. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus says that “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.”

Jesus builds His churches, but He calls men and women to join Him in this great work. I am just honored to be on His team.

Perhaps the Lord would have you to join

in this exciting enterprise of starting new churches as well. You can start by looking around your greater community to see where there are pockets of people who are not currently being reached for Christ.

It could be that you need to start a ministry to reach them to come to the church you are now attending. You might find, however, that if someone presses their face up against the glass in the door of your church and they don’t see anyone inside who looks like them, they don’t feel welcome.

Jim Slack, a researcher for the International Mission Board, has done a study of North America and has found that we have really been lied to. We are not the melting pot we have been told that we were. We are not like a pancake on which we can pour syrup of the Gospel over the top and know it went all over the surface.

We are more of a waffle, and we must get the syrup of the Gospel into every divot. People without Jesus are really good at building barriers. We must tear those barriers



By Lamar Duke
State Missionary

down in love with the Gospel. Sometimes that is best done through starting a new church.

Further evidence of the fact that our Father is at work in church planting in Alabama is that, at this writing, we have funded 50 planters through our office since 2013. We have also trained hundreds in Basic Training, scores in how to sponsor a church plant, and 40 men have been coached to date. I pray daily Luke 10:2 that the Lord of the harvest would send laborers and I have received, at least, one call per day this week.

If you are currently involved in church planting — as a planter, on a planting team or in a partnering church — or if you’re considering getting involved in church planting, the following events have been planned with you in mind:

LAST MINUTE REMINDER:

Church Planting Basics for Spanish
Friday and Saturday, September 11-12 and 25-26, 2015

First Baptist Church, Hamilton, Alabama

CHURCHES PLANTING CHURCHES

Birmingham Baptist Association
Thursday and Friday, October 29-30, 2015

CHURCH PLANTER NETWORK DINNER

3 Circle Church
Sunday, November 15, 2015
Ed Stetzer, speaker

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE: plantalabama.org

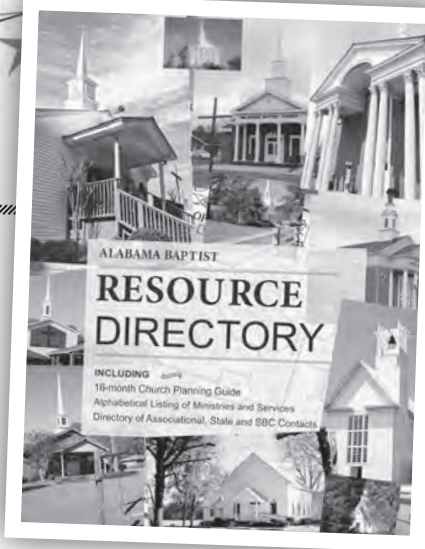
For more information about church planting among Alabama Baptists, please contact State Missionary Lamar Duke at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 332, or (334) 613-2332, lduke@alsbom.org.

FOCUS on One Mission



**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; or order online at alsbom.org/rd.

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

**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.

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.

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.

ONEMISSION: TheGreatCommission **ONEPROGRAM: TheCooperativeProgram** **MANYMINISTRIES: GreatCommissionMinistries**

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 or contact Crystal Akers at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 223, or (334) 613-2223, cakers@alsbom.org.

FOCUS on One Mission

PRAY

2015/16 CONVENTION EMPHASIS

Pardon us for our sin
Renew a right spirit within us
Accept our adoration and praise
Yoke us together in sacrifice and praise

**2015 Alabama Baptist State Convention
Annual Meeting**

November 17-18, Eastern Shore Baptist Church,
6847 Park Drive, Daphne

HOTEL GUIDE The following hotels have offered special rates to those attending the State Convention Annual Meeting. Remember to ask for the Alabama Baptist State Convention rate when you call. Rates listed do not include taxes. This information is provided as a service and not intended to be a recommendation of any kind. If you have problems making a reservation or securing the posted rate at any of these hotels, please contact Charleen Hobbs at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 231, or chobbs@alsbom.org.

1 Hilton Garden Inn Mobile East Bay/ Daphne • (Convention Hotel)
29546 North Main Street, Daphne, AL 36526
(251) 625-0020 • \$119 (king or double queen) • Breakfast buffet included

2 Best Western Plus Daphne Inn & Suites
8931 Sawwood Street, Daphne, AL 36526
(251) 625-6260 • \$89 (king); \$94 (double queen) • Breakfast included

3 Comfort Suites
29450 N. Main Street, Daphne AL 36526
(251) 626-1113 • \$89 (king); \$94 (double queen) • Breakfast included

4 Courtyard by Marriott
1300 Cypress Way, Spanish Fort, AL 36527
(251) 370-1160 • \$85 (king or double queen)
Book room: <http://cwp.marriott.com/mobsf/albaptist>

5 Fairfield Inn & Suites by Marriott
12000 Cypress Way, Spanish Fort, AL 36527
(251) 251-370-1160 • \$80 (king or double); \$90 (king suite) • Breakfast included
Book room: <http://cwp.marriott.com/mobsf/albaptist>

6 Hampton Inn Daphne Mobile East Bay/ Daphne
29451 US Hwy 98, Daphne, AL 36526
(251) 626-2220 • \$109 (standard); \$129 (bay side) • Breakfast included

7 Hampton Inn Fairhope
23 N. Section Street, Fairhope, AL 36532
(251) 928-0956 • \$99 (king or queen); \$109 (king studio) • Breakfast included

8 Holiday Inn Express Daphne
29725 Woodrow Lane, Daphne, AL 36526
(251) 621-1223 • \$99 (king or double queen); \$109 (suite king or double queen). • Breakfast included

9 Holiday Inn Express Fairhope
19751 South Greeno Road, Fairhope, AL 36532
(251) 928-9191 • \$89 (single or double); \$119 (suite single or double)

10 Homewood Suites Mobile East Bay/ Daphne
29474 North Main Street, Daphne, AL 36526
(251) 621-0100 • \$129 (studio king suite or one bedroom king suite); • \$149 (standard or deluxe double queen suite); \$239 (two bedroom suite) • Breakfast & dinner buffet included (M-Th.)

For complete information about the convention, including an interactive hotel guide, please visit abscannualmeeting.org.

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

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



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. For other information, please contact Ministry Assistant Debbie Dickey at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 218, (334) 613-2218, ddickey@alsbom.org.

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

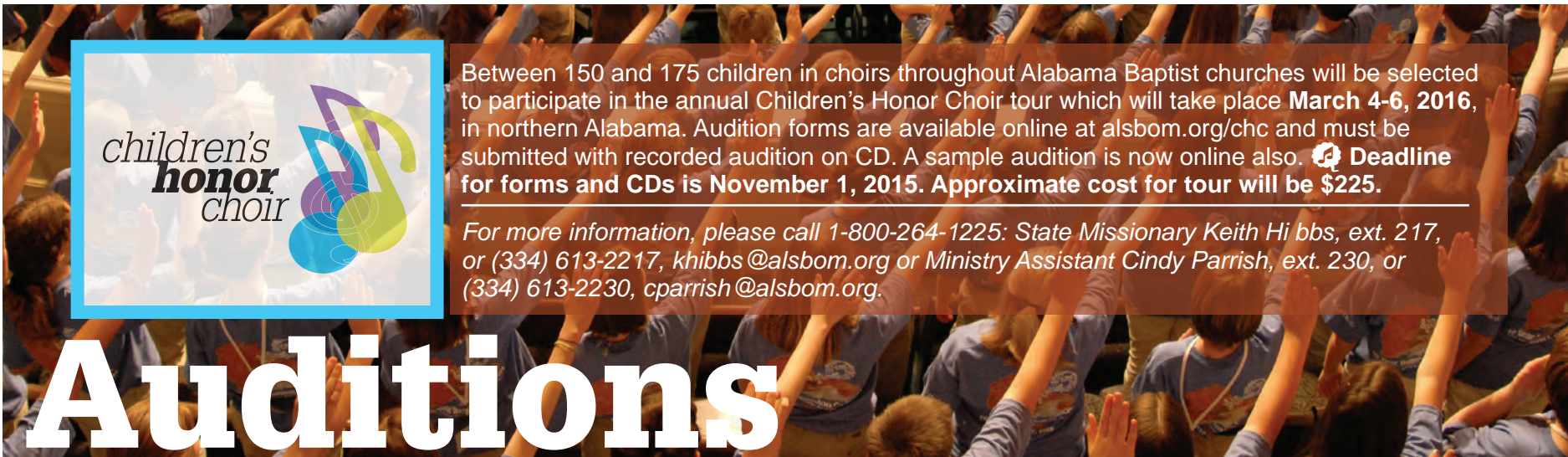


Alabama Singing Men & Alabama Singing Women ~ Retreats ~

Thursday and Friday, **SEPTEMBER 10-11**
 Shocco Springs
 ASM directed by Tom Smith
 ASW directed by Gayle Smith
 REGISTRATION/COST: shocco.org/events-calendar or **1-800-280-1105**
 OTHER ONLINE INFO: alsbom.org/singingretreats

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

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



Between 150 and 175 children in choirs throughout Alabama Baptist churches will be selected to participate in the annual Children's Honor Choir tour which will take place **March 4-6, 2016**, in northern Alabama. Audition forms are available online at alsbom.org/chc and must be submitted with recorded audition on CD. A sample audition is now online also. **Deadline for forms and CDs is November 1, 2015. Approximate cost for tour will be \$225.**

For more information, please call 1-800-264-1225: State Missionary Keith Hibbs, ext. 217, or (334) 613-2217, khibbs@alsbom.org or Ministry Assistant Cindy Parrish, ext. 230, or (334) 613-2230, cparrish@alsbom.org.

Auditions

CHURCH REVITALIZATION BOOK REVIEW:



Sticky Church, by Larry Osborne (Grand Rapids, Michigan 2008), 208 pages.

The Evangelism Office of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions has a strategy that we use with churches to help them have a comprehensive approach to reaching people. The A.L.O.N.E. strategy begins with an emphasis on assimilation just like Larry Osborne in *Sticky Church*.

The book points out that if the back door of a church is left wide open, then it doesn't matter how many people are coaxed to come in the front door or, for that matter, the side door.

I agree with the author that most churches give the back door scant attention. The book accurately points out that we have become so focused on reaching people that we have forgotten the importance of keeping people.

The author builds the book around his story as pastor of the North Coast Church in San Diego, Calif.

Three big changes took place at North Coast when the emphasis began on "closing the back door." First, the way he related to his lay leadership team changed. The second was in the way he taught and led the congregation. The third change involved launching a small group ministry focused primarily on building relationships rather than growing the church. The author says the back door slammed shut and more people than ever began coming through the front door.

A great deal of emphasis in the book is placed on small groups. In fact, the author says that groups changed everything. There is a significant discussion of "sermon-based small groups." While our author is big on small groups, he boldly says the Seoul, South Korea, model of the Full Gospel Central Church, pastored by

David Yonggi Cho, does not work in this country.

He points to three problems with the Cho model: a radically different view of Christianity, a radically different view of authority and a radically different society.

The eight appendixes are great helps for anyone serious about small groups and their structure. This is a must read

for any pastor who is serious about closing the back door and especially any pastor who wants to get serious about small groups to accomplish that task. *State*



By Sammy Gilbreath
State Missionary

Missionary Sammy Gilbreath serves as director of the Office of Evangelism. He may be contacted at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 320, or (334) 613-2320, sgilbreath@alsbom.org.

CHURCH REVITALIZATION TESTIMONY:

Mike Foreman, senior pastor, First Baptist Church of Level Plains, Enterprise: Our church has benefited from the investment that the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions has made through church revitalization. As a result, our Wednesday night program has more than doubled and our Sunday School attendance has increased. We have also been revitalized, encouraged and renewed in our vision to finish our seven-year building project of our Family Life Center so that we can expand our ministry to reach more people in our community.

For information about Church Revitalization among Alabama Baptists, please contact State Missionary Dale Huff at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 316, or (334) 613-2316, dhuff@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.

Four more identical events will be held this year 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:

~ **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. Deadline to register is 5 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



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

FOCUS on One Mission

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, 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.



WHAT IF ...

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

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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



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

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

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

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FEBRUARY 19-20, 2016
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THE CHURCH AND SEXUALITY CONFERENCE

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keynote speakers *Russell Moore* and *Timothy George*, two panel discussions and nine relevant breakout sessions



Russell Moore



Timothy George

February 29, 2016
10 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

First Baptist Church, Montgomery
(Preceding the State Evangelism Conference)

Cost of \$25 includes lunch and a copy of Russell Moore's latest book. Register at alsbom.org/cas16.

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

{SAVE the DATE}

alabama association of baptist secretaries **54th Annual Conference**

March 6-9, 2016 at Shocco Springs

And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this? — **ESTHER 4:14B (ESV)**

General Conference Leader: Becky Guinn, Valley

Worship Leaders: Adam & Marie Bishop, Frankfort, Ky.

Make plans now to join the Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries (AABS) for a time of spiritual, professional and personal growth through worship, study, fellowships and educational breakout sessions.

Registration will open in late fall 2015. More information will be posted at: AlabamaBaptistSecretaries.com

Also check our Facebook page for updates and additional information.

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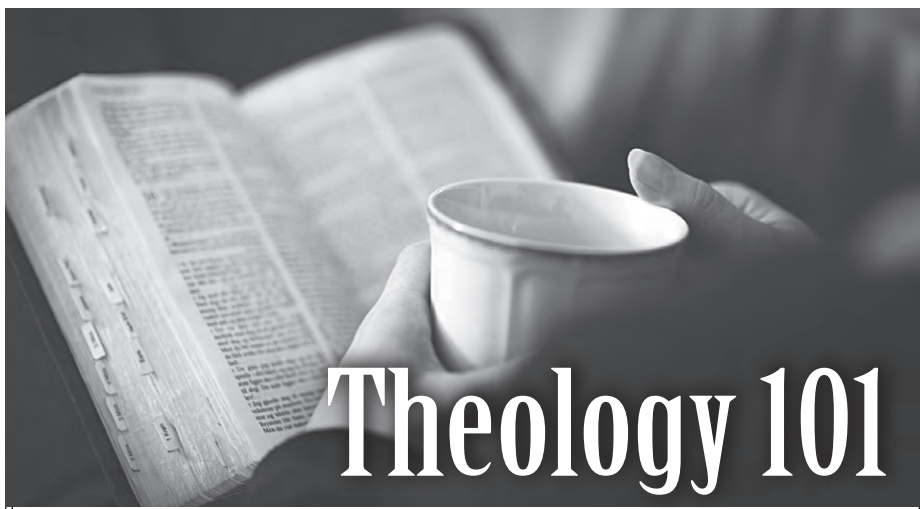
Jeff Iorg

Richard Ross

Allen Jackson

Ken Coley

Conclave is jointly sponsored by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and five other state conventions



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The Word of God Across the Ages

The Creating Word

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

Likely most of us think immediately of the Bible when we hear the phrase, “The Word of God.” That is a good and accurate connection to make. However, the idea of God speaking to human hearts is broader than the written Word, although the Bible is the culmination of God speaking to people across the ages. For several weeks Theology 101 proposes to think about the Word of God in its broadest sense.

The name Ferdinand Q. Blanchard is hardly a household name. He was a pastor and poet whose life spanned nearly a century. One of his poems appears in many hymnals under its title, “The Word of God, Across the Ages.” This hymn title gives us an apt title for these studies about God’s Word. Being eternal in nature, the Word of God is from everlasting to everlasting. So we begin with the opening chapter of the Bible, which takes us back to eternity past.

Effectual, powerful

The Bible opens with God speaking a creating word. “And God said” is the repeated phrase in that opening chapter of Genesis. He spoke the word and in sequence light, sky, earth, seas, vegetation, sun, moon, stars, animals and humans came into existence. We immediately conclude that God’s creating word is indeed effectual and powerful.

God’s creating word was a prominent aspect of Israel’s faith. For example Psalm 33:6 attests, “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host.” This same faith finds expression in the New Testament, “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible” (Heb. 11:3).

God’s creating word became a revealing word. God’s creation speaks to those who have ears to hear. Psalm 19:1–3 puts it like this: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.”

With reference to God’s creation, Romans 1:20 declares, “Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.” God’s creating word that brought the worlds into existence has an ongoing, nonverbal message to declare.

Just as the opening bookend of God’s creating word was its effectual power to bring into existence the physical universe, so the concluding bookend will be a similarly powerful but condemning word. Second Peter 3:5–7 puts it like this: “The heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.”

In the meantime God has a word that is re-creating. Being once dead in trespasses and sins, we needed to be brought to life. In the gospel, God has given us a word that brings life where death has been. God’s re-creating word is put like this in 1 Peter 1:23: “Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.”

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.



Investors: Don’t act in emotion when market ebbs; focus on long-term goals

By Timothy E. Head
GuideStone Financial Resources

The Aug. 24 stock market drop, on the heels of disappointing performance a few days before, led to headlines and some investor concerns. But long-term investors should continue to consider their objectives and time horizons, investment experts say.

David S. Spika, global investment strategist at GuideStone Capital Management LLC, said many observers have expected some level of correction to occur at some point given that markets had been on a long-term growth pattern since the market trough in 2009.

Active management firms, like GuideStone, are thought by many to be better suited for volatile markets, which create more dispersion and lower correlations among stock prices, giving the sub-advisors a better chance to identify companies that are undervalued, Spika said.

GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins said, “Long-term retirement investors should keep their focus on their goals and not on short-term market fluctuations. Participants should focus on being appropriately diversified, their long-term investment objectives and time horizon and less on day-to-day market moves.”

Four principles

When dealing with a period of volatility, GuideStone recommends keeping four principles in mind:

► **Always focus on your objectives, not your emotions.** Specifically regarding retirement participants, these assets are to serve needs for a long period of

time. Make sure your objectives and actions are consistent with your time horizon. Investors can choose to use GuideStone Advisor’s GPS: Guided Planning Services to assist in determining an age-appropriate investment allocation.

► **Avoid making impulsive decisions.** “Guard against making ad hoc changes in your portfolio,” Hawkins said. “Making changes based on short-term market movements is almost a guarantee for failure as it promotes ‘buying high and selling low.’”

The performance of your account moving forward will be determined based on results of the financial markets in the future, not the past. Selling today cannot avoid yesterday’s losses in a down market. Likewise, in an up market, you cannot buy yesterday’s performance by investing in the hottest fund.

► **Don’t count losses (or gains).** Consistent contribution to a retirement plan affords investors a systematic way of taking advantage of investment opportunities as markets ebb and flow.

► **Maintain realistic expectations about market behavior.** Financial markets in the short term tend to fluctuate in response to social, political and economic events. However, historically the markets stabilize and return to profitability over the long term, focusing on the underlying fundamentals.

“The next few weeks may be choppy for investors, but long-term investors should continue to focus on their objectives and less on the minute-by-minute headlines,” Hawkins said. ☞

Rubies for Life holds 2nd graduation



Photo courtesy of Bonnie Windle

On July 13 the Rubies for Life prison ministry program held its second graduation at Federal Correctional Institution in Aliceville, seeing 147 women complete the first phase of study. Gary Farley, director of missions of Pickens Baptist Association and Rubies for Life sponsor, said of the program, “It is seen as making a real difference in the culture of the prison. Christian values are the normative ones there. Service, love, patience, humility and sacrifice (are seen in the women). The ladies testified that it was no longer all about them. Many (of the ladies) have become Christians through the program. Many are making plans for a successful re-entry (into society).” Pictured are Rubies for Life volunteers in T-shirts along with Warden Arcola Washington-Adduci (far right) and Cindy Colvin (third from right, front row), Rubies for Life co-director.

'It's your relationship with the Lord ... that matters,' pastor says

(continued from page 1)
even attend the church where they are members.

Sammons said in any cultural setting he believes there will be members, both young and old, who do not participate at all and "those that attend once and want to jump in and serve."

Terry Sutton, pastor of First Baptist Church, Montevallo, said his church also utilizes traditional membership but he does see the potential need for an alternative term, depending on the situation and ministry.

"The (motto of) our church is 'The Connecting Place.' We really try to connect," said Sutton, who is 71.

Relational connection

And that approach has served the church well over the years.

"A good first contact helps ensure a good relational connection," said Sutton, who personally mails a card or calls new visitors.

He makes that small gesture each week because he sees the special emphasis Millennials tend to put on relationships.

Kaley McDonald, 24, attends Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, and has been involved in multiple churches in the past few

years. Why? Because, she said, she's a believer who wants to be a part of a community and serve through the Church, wherever that may be.

She grew up at First Baptist Church, Monroeville, served as an intern at Eastwood Baptist Church, Monroeville, in 2012 and served as interim music leader at Mount Olive Baptist Church, Monroeville, in 2013.

When it comes to traditional membership, McDonald said she thinks it can be a great aspect of a church but doesn't think it's vital for a church to thrive.

She said membership can "ensure commitment, stability and accountability" but that, over the years, many churches have "lost focus of the purpose of membership and in some cases it has become more of a competition of which church has the most members" — something that is a deterrent to her and others her age, she believes.

McDonald thinks the best thing a church can do to help Millennials with the idea of membership is to explain it more thoroughly.

"Explaining membership as a commitment and backing it up with Scripture rather than expressing, 'It's just what you're

supposed to do because that's what we've always done,' could ensure a better outlook on membership through the eyes of a younger (person)," McDonald said.

The BNG article reflected a similar idea.

Wanda Kidd, a college ministry coordinator in North Carolina, said young people "want to know what the advantage is (of membership)."

"If you tell them they can teach Sunday School or be on the finance committee that is not a good rationale for them."

Josh Cook, pastor of Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church, Hueytown, agreed.

"Younger people don't see much value in membership for membership's sake. If we could clarify what it means to be a member it would be more valuable to them," Cook said.

At his church, Cook, 36, makes sure church leaders clarify what

membership looks like by demonstrating what discipleship looks like.

"If you're a member then you're confirming that this is what a disciple looks like and what discipleship ought to be.

And this membership allows this discipleship process to take place," Cook said.

"Church membership gives other people permission to hold us accountable and be part of our lives. It's important to be officially part of a group ... with everyone grow-

ing in the discipleship process together."

Sammons agreed.

"Church membership is about joining a faith family to engage in discipleship and fellowship in order to grow in a relationship with Christ. Church membership is about serving Christ and serving others, not being served."

Kendall White, a member of

The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, also thinks membership is important.

"I do believe that the type of life-giving, encouraging, sanctifying Church that the Lord intends and desires for His people is best accomplished through traditional church membership," said White, who is 24.

'Mental commitment'

"As human beings we are so prone to wander. Being officially 'on the dotted line' committed to something is a relatively small act but it creates a huge mental commitment. ... Even if a person is very involved and a 'member' in their own mind but not a member in the traditional sense it still allows for some distance, like a safety net if things disappoint."

Ultimately church membership is "not a biggie," Sutton said. "It's your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ that matters," a sentiment that rang true with the others interviewed, regardless of stance on membership or age.

"What follows is a commitment to the Church," Sutton said. "That's why Christ has empowered and equipped the people of the Church to accomplish the task of the Church." ❧

"Church membership is about serving Christ and serving others, not being served."

**Pastor Josh Sammons
Hillabee Baptist Church
Alexander City**

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

MUSIC REVIEWER — 'A BLESSING'

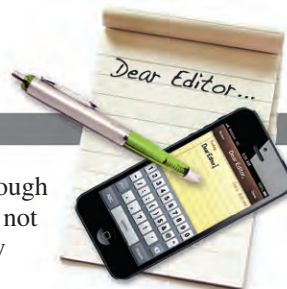
It was with great sadness that I received the news of Rick Sharp's passing. (Sharp was a music reviewer for *The Alabama Baptist*, see story in July 30 issue). Although I did not have a long-term acquaintance with Rick, I was blessed to be able to speak with him in January 2014 when I recorded an independent project for my worship evangelism ministry. In a time when

mainstream music releases are the focus of the music review industry, it was a refreshing blessing when Rick eagerly agreed to review my unknown project for *The Alabama Baptist*.

While I greatly appreciated the kind words that Rick wrote within his review for *The Alabama Baptist* in January 2014, I was more thankful for and forever touched by the heartfelt encouragement that he expressed to me and my ministry.

Although I did not know him very well, I quickly discerned that Rick was a true man of God through his witness and his Christ-like love, kindness and encouragement. Rick Sharp was a blessing to me and he will be greatly missed.

Scott Bouldin
Kennedy Baptist Church ❧



YOUR DIVINE DESIGN

2015 Annual Community-wide Women's Conference

Featuring Speaker and Author: Rochelle Frazier

Musician: Jaime and Ryan Bell

Saturday, September 19
9 a.m.-2 p.m.
(doors open at 8 a.m.)
Conference cost: \$20

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PARCA leader retiring; new director named

Since 2007, through *The Alabama Baptist's* "About Alabama" column, Jim Williams has sought to "familiarize readers with the different aspects of what's going on in Alabama, particularly focused on state and local government and public schools."

Covering topics such as budget reform, correctional systems, high school dropout rates, quality health care, public services and gambling, Williams said it has been "a joy working through the paper to inform an important state-wide audience ... and helping them understand the issues related to 'good government.'"

But Williams doesn't just write "About Alabama" columns. He has been the only executive director of the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA) since its inception in 1988. But after recently announcing his retirement Williams will hand the task of leading the nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization off to Ryan C. Hankins,



WILLIAMS



HANKINS

executive director of Birmingham's M-POWER Ministries (a former Birmingham Baptist Association ministry and now supported by the association and area-Baptist churches). Hankins will begin Oct. 1.

He said in a press release of his upcoming position, "I am honored and humbled to succeed Jim Williams and to continue the legacy established by Governor Albert Brewer. I look forward to working with (PARCA) staff, board members and leaders across the state to magnify (PARCA's) important voice and, together, navigate the difficult policy choices facing Alabama now and in the future." (TAB)

Sunday alcohol sales pass in Marshall County

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

Two more Alabama cities — Guntersville and Albertville — have voted to allow Sunday alcohol sales that the cities' leaders say will be good for businesses and tourism.

Marshall Baptist Association and area pastors were outspoken against the move, holding prayer vigils and community meetings to encourage residents to vote "no" Aug. 25.

Joey Beck, pastor of Cahill Baptist Chapel, Albertville, led a 21-day prayer walking effort prior to the vote that included 17 people from 5 churches of varying denominations.

Although close, the Albertville vote was 1,162-1,001 in favor of Sunday alcohol sales. In Guntersville the margin was larger with 940-409 in favor.

Rick Douglas, pastor of Creek Path Baptist Church, Guntersville, joined Beck and four other pastors on the radio in an effort to defeat the Sunday sales.

"The disappointing thing was that people didn't exercise their right to vote," Douglas said, noting he was surprised at the small number of votes cast about such a serious decision. "We need to be exercising that freedom that men and women have given us through sacrificing their own lives."

Beck echoed his sentiments, saying, "We (in Albertville) have roughly 22,000 residents and only 2,100 voted. That's a sad testimony to our community."

'Trying to help'

Marshall Association Director of Missions Randall Stoner said, "At the meetings we shared statistics from Alabama Citizens Action Program about (how) 1 in 8 people who drink become an alcoholic, so (by not allowing Sunday alcohol sales) we were trying to help them

from hurting themselves."

Douglas agreed. "People said it'd be a boost in economy and more tax dollars to school systems, but ... people don't realize the cost of alcohol-related problems on a community."

Still churches need to be prepared to minister to the community and its families just as it always has, he said.

"I think the main thing is just to know that we're not mad at people who vote differently than we do," Douglas

said. "We're going to continue to love people like we always have and use this as an opportunity to encourage and reach people for the cause of Christ."

'Send revival'

The Sunday sales will not start until all votes have been certified, a process that takes about a week on average.

Boaz and Arab, also in Marshall County, will vote on Sunday sales as well but the referendum was not scheduled at press time. ☩

Former member of Montgomery's Eastmont Baptist promoted to chief of Air Force chaplains, 2-star general

When Dondi Costin takes his place at the podium, it's not your average prayer.

Or at least so says *The Honolulu Star-Advertiser* of the Air Force chaplain who was double promoted to two-star general and took over as chief of chaplains at the Air Force headquarters at the Pentagon on Aug. 28.

"I can probably summarize it by the invocation that he gave at the Air Force Ball last year," said Col. Joseph Anderson, Pacific Air Force's command surgeon, according to the *Star-Advertiser*. "It is the first time I have ever seen anybody,

chaplain or otherwise, give an invocation and get a standing ovation."

Costin — along with his wife, Vicki — was formerly a member of Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery. He most recently served as chaplain of the Pacific Air Force in Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii.

'Proud of him'

One of Costin's Alabama relatives, Ben Chandler, director of missions for St. Clair Baptist Association, expressed praise for Costin, his ministry and his character.

"We are proud of him and need to pray for him as he

works with our military chaplains," Chandler said.

Costin, an ordained Southern Baptist minister, puts great effort into his daily ministry and his well-known invocations.

"That's what I've tried to do through the years: realize the great opportunity and responsibility that invocation holds, not just for the chaplain, but principally, for those in the audience," Costin said, according to the *Star-Advertiser*.

"We pray together, so hopefully, I'm trying to embody their prayers," he said. "I've tried to make them as personal as possible and as relevant as possible to the situation." (TAB)

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Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

Until last week I thought all my reverse mortgage competitors were ... well ... competitive. My thinking changed when I saw a competitor's proposal. Laid side by side my proposal was \$8,000 less in fees. I was certainly glad I had the opportunity to meet with the homeowners, because we are able to save them a boatload of money. Who would have thought that such a difference would have existed? "Live and learn" is an old expression that certainly has meaning today.

Speaking of learning I still offer free-of-charge informational visits. In other words, I'll come to you wherever you are in Alabama and be glad to sit down at your table, church or café and discuss reverse mortgage. If you have questions, I'll answer them. If you have family or friends that want to sit in — the more the merrier. Now if you live in or near Birmingham and you'd like to come to our office, we would be glad to show you around and meet here in our conference room. We have coffee, sodas and water and I'd love to introduce everyone.

By the way, before I finished writing this article the daughter of one of my customers called. She serves her mother as my contact person. She told me that she had a competitor's proposal too and that their fees were just a little higher, so I guess I'll stay competitive.

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, free reverse mortgage proposal or to set up an informational meeting, please contact him directly at 205-567-4800 or jdixon@mcgowinking.com.

Jimmy Dixon

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Study: 'Gay' teens have higher pregnancy rates

A Minnesota study that found lesbian teens four times more likely to become pregnant than their heterosexual peers has been called a predictable reflection of the homosexual community's apparent emphasis on sexual activity.

"Some people may be shocked by the high pregnancy rates among the lesbian and gay teens," said Evan Lenow, assistant professor of ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Experimentation

"However, this confirms what studies have shown for years. Individuals who identify as lesbian and gay are much more likely to experiment with sex and have many more sexual partners than their heterosexual counterparts. Some of these teens who identify as lesbian and gay may be

simply experimenting with all types of sexual partnerships and thinking less about the ramifications of such experimentation."

According to the 2015 Minnesota Adolescent Sexual Health Report, gay males and those questioning their sexual orientation are four times more likely than their heterosexual peers to report getting someone pregnant. Bisexual girls are more than five times more likely to get pregnant than heterosexual girls.

The survey of nearly 78,000 9th and 11th graders found that 2 percent of boys self-identified as gay or bisexual, with another 3 percent calling themselves unsure or questioning.

Among girls, 5 percent self-identified as lesbian or bisexual with another 3 percent unsure or questioning.

The study noted higher levels of sexual activity in general

among self-identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning (LGBQ) youth, with 50.9 percent of lesbians and 48.7 percent of gay males saying they have had sex. Only 23.5 percent of heterosexual girls and 25.9 percent of heterosexual boys reported having had sex.

Drugs and alcohol

The use of drugs and alcohol before sexual activity among LGBQ youth also was higher, according to the Minnesota study, which drew from data collected in 2013.

"The one thing we know for certain is that God's design for sexuality is still the answer for these problems," Lenow said. "God created us to express our sexuality through the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman. All sexual expression outside of this standard

is a violation of God's design."

Daniel Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, and author of "God on Sex" as well as a 2015 commentary on Song of Solomon, said, "The sexually promiscuous often are looking for meaning and significance. (But) they are looking in the wrong place. What they long for is found only in Christ.

"Sex is a good gift from a great God," Akin said in written comments.

"However, it is a dangerous gift that must be handled with care as God designed it," he added. "Any time we divert from the divine pattern, the consequences will be disappointing and tragic. And the further down the road we walk from His plan, the more will be our sorrow and pain." (BP)

Want to know GOD?

By Matt Lotspeich
Student pastor, FBC Jasper

Everyone wants to receive love not only by words coming off the lips of others but also by the actions produced by their lives. Romans 5:8 says, "But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

When I was 3 years old, my dad adopted me. Before my mother and my father were married, my mother told me I would always excitedly ask, "Is Tony coming over tonight?" I was excited for him to come over for two reasons. First every child has an incredible need to be loved by an earthly father. This is because God has designed and desires fathers to demonstrate the love God the Father has for them, their bride and their children. Second I was thoroughly excited that my future father was coming over because he "proved" his love for me over and over again. He proved his love by sacrificing his time and giving tremendous care to my needs.

God the Son, Jesus Christ, has proven His love for you as He willingly sacrificed His life to satisfy your greatest need — abundant life now and eternal life forevermore. Jesus is the only way. As someone once said, "By the cross, Jesus proves that He is willing to save you. By the empty tomb, Jesus proves that He is able to save you." Praise God that He doesn't tell you or me to clean ourselves before we come to Him. You can come to Jesus as you are and by His grace He will give you a new birth into the family of God.

This very day Jesus will give you the free gift of everlasting salvation (union with Christ) if you respond on His terms. Ephesians 2:8 reminds us that it is by "grace through faith and this is not from yourselves." Will you trust Christ alone? You can with confidence trust Christ alone because He has purposefully proven His sacrificial and saving love to you. The same power that raised Christ from the dead can raise you to new life in Christ today. With childlike faith, welcome Christ to be your Savior and Lord. 🙏

TAB* CLASSIFIEDS

For information about placing a classified ad, contact the advertising department of *The Alabama Baptist at 205-870-4720, ext. 102, or ads@thealabamabaptist.org. Copy deadline is two weeks before publication.

CHURCH POSITIONS

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Gulfcrest Baptist Church near Citronelle, Alabama, is seeking a SBC-trained, bivocational pastor. Salary consistent with the State Board of Missions salary study. Send resumés to: gulfcrestbaptistchurch@yahoo.com.

SONG LEADER

East Huntsville Baptist Church is looking to hire an energetic song leader leading us in a blend of traditional and contemporary music. Send resumé to: East Huntsville Baptist Church, ATTN: Personnel Committee, 808 Maysville Rd., Huntsville, AL 35801.

MINISTER OF MUSIC

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

MINISTER OF MUSIC

Rangeline Baptist Church of Demopolis, Alabama, is seeking a part-time minister of music. We enjoy a blended mix of worship music. Mail resumé to: Rangeline Baptist Church, ATTN: Music Committee, 5805 County Rd. 19, Linden, AL 36748.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC

First Baptist Church of Chalkville is accepting resumés for part-time minister of music. Send resumé to: FBC of Chalkville,

2100 Old Springville Rd., Birmingham, AL 35215-4031, or email to: fbcchalkville@att.net.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC

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

MINISTER OF STUDENTS, SINGLES & THEIR FAMILIES

Covenant Baptist Church, Collierville, Tennessee, seeks a full-time minister of students, singles and their families to provide leadership in developing and directing ministry to youth grades 7-12, college students, singles and their families. Send resumés no later than Oct. 31 to: Personnel Committee, Covenant Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1165, Collierville, TN 38027-1165, or to: drsam@mycbcc.org.

YOUTH PASTOR

Church seeking a called bivocational youth pastor. Send resumé to: Calvary Baptist, 7570 15th Street Rd., Concord, AL 35023, ATTN: Roger or boazroger@gmail.com.

MINISTER OF CHILDREN & THEIR FAMILIES

Covenant Baptist Church, Collierville, Tennessee, seeks a full-time minister of children and their families to provide leadership in developing and directing ministry to preschoolers and children from birth through twelve years old and their fami-

lies. Send resumés no later than Oct. 31 to: Personnel Committee, Covenant Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1165, Collierville, TN 38027-1165, or to: drsam@mycbcc.org.

FULL-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTER

North Shelby Baptist Church is seeking a children's minister. Exciting opportunity for growth in a fast-growing suburb of Birmingham. Previous children's ministry experience and seminary training preferred. For full job description, visit www.northshelbybaptist.org/employment. Send resumés to: jon@northshelbybaptist.org.

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 missions 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 22nd St. W., Jasper, AL 35501.

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RELIGION
in *America*
Compiled from Wire Services



Mormon church sticking with Boy Scouts

SALT LAKE CITY — The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) isn't going to lose its largest sponsor after all. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) announced Aug. 26 that the Utah-based faith will stick with the Scouts after threatening in July to bolt from the youth group and form its own international organization for boys.

"At this time, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will go forward as a chartering organization of BSA and, as in the past, will appoint Scout leaders and volunteers who uphold and exemplify church doctrine, values and standards," the church's governing First Presidency of Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said in a news release.

After the Scouts voted to accept openly gay leaders July 27, LDS said it was "considering creating its own international program for boys, separate from (BSA)" That could have had dire financial consequences for BSA. LDS is far and away the nation's largest Scouting sponsor, serving 437,160 boys in 37,933 troops.

While BSA insists that religiously affiliated troops, including those sponsored by LDS, can continue to ban gay leaders, many observers doubt such an exemption can be legally defended. (RNS)

U.S. blacklists 23 countries for human trafficking

WASHINGTON — The U.S. State Department has blacklisted 23 countries for failing to even try to meet minimum standards in fighting human trafficking, giving President Barack Obama authority to bar them from U.S. nonhumanitarian aid and key trade initiatives.

The countries' failures are summarized in the State Department's 2015 Trafficking in Persons Report. The report ranks 188 countries on their efforts to fight human trafficking, dividing them into four categories used to hold countries accountable for their policies and actions. Rankings range from the most favorable Tier 1 and fall to Tier 2, the Tier 2 Watch List and Tier 3, when judged by standards established by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000.

Blacklisted by the State Department are Algeria, Belarus, Belize, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Iran, North Korea, Kuwait, Libya, the Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Russia, South Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Yemen, Venezuela and Zimbabwe. Human rights activists and politicians have criticized the State Department for removing from the blacklist Cuba and Malaysia, two countries with increasing economic ties with the U.S. (BP)

A Day of New Beginnings

Transitional home helps women rebuild their lives

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

They got themselves in trouble; they can get themselves out."

That used to be Deborah Hood's opinion of those who battled drug and alcohol addictions. Then one day Hood heard about a young woman in the county jail who requested to stay two more weeks because she had nowhere else to go.

"I don't know about you, but jail is not a place where I want to be, much less ask to stay because I have no safe place to go," Hood said. "I don't know what was playing on my mind at the time, but I do know that God spoke to me."

And He spoke through three empty buildings in Rainbow City that had once been a church.

"I knew those buildings had been built to be used for the glory of God. God spoke to me in my spirit and said that He wanted a transitional home for ladies that had been incarcerated."

'Orchestrated by God'

She had no idea how to get started, but every step of the three-year process was "orchestrated by God," Hood said.

Now in its fifth year, A Day of New Beginnings transitional home has taken in about 21 women who are trying to rebuild their lives from the mire of addiction and incarceration through an eight-month program of community service, career skills training, Bible studies and educational classes at Gadsden State Community College. Although not all participants complete the program, those who do are thriving, Hood said.

"We are all about getting the heart right with God, loving people and serving others," Hood

said, emphasizing the gift of God's grace in every part of the program, including the name.

"Every day is a day to have a new start. If we messed up the day before, we have a new day, a day to have new beginnings, an opportunity to repent and start over."

Community service

Housing four girls at a time, New Beginnings participants have painted houses, worked on horse farms, cleaned homes, assisted at Vacation Bible Schools and worked with Etowah Baptist Missions Center as part of their community service efforts.

The women in the program also attend Sunday morning services and Celebrate Recovery classes at North Glencoe Baptist Church, Glencoe.

Because it is a nonprofit, New Beginnings depends on donations from individuals, churches and groups such as the Wallace Usry Sunday School class at

Macedonia Baptist Church, Gadsden. The class has been donating \$25 a month since the program's inception, said class member Linda Burke.

"Deborah is the only person (leading an organization) in this area that is there for these girls," Burke said, encouraging others to get involved with this ministry.

"If more people got involved, [New Beginnings] would have the resources to be able to take more clients" and impact more lives for Christ, Burke said.

New Beginnings is sponsoring a free concert for the community at North Glencoe Baptist on Sept. 13 at 7 p.m. featuring the Blackwood Quartet.

Hood said the concert is open to everyone and is a way of thanking those "who have helped us during our five years, whether by prayers or donations." ❧

**To learn more about
A Day of New
Beginnings, call
Deborah Hood
at 256-467-4433.**

Ministry Tips



THE PRIORITY OF PRAYER

By Edwin F. Jenkins
Interim director of missions
Morgan Baptist Association

Prayer can and must be a vital priority in the life of a minister. Prayer provides a primary avenue for direct access to God Himself.

We realize there is no substitute for quality time invested in prayer with the Lord.

Even so, we often spend more time talking about prayer than we actually involve ourselves in the practice of prayer.

Confession

During my years as a pastor and even as a state missionary there were times when I did not pray as much as I needed to or as much as I now do. I have now come to a new awareness and commit-

ment in my life and ministry. Prayer must be a personal priority.

Evidence

The evidence of this personal priority is found in the amount of time actually spent in prayer. Most ministers have preached about prayer and taught lessons on prayer. The issue at hand, however, is this: How much time do we actually spend in fellowship with God — speak-

ing, listening, meditating and relating to God Himself?

Suggestion

Permit me to make a suggestion. Whatever amount of time you are now spending in prayer, increase that time. We must, I repeat, must spend more time with God in His throne room. Jesus paid the ultimate price so that we could do so. ❧

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 6

Explore the Bible By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

GOD CREATES

Genesis 1:1-5, 26-31; 2:1-3

Genesis opens with a majestic description of how God first created the heavens and earth and then how He ordered the earth so that it may become His dwelling place. Genesis begins a true story. It's not just another story; it is the story that defines each of us. The opening verse staggers the mind. It is foundational, simple yet profound. The opening verse declares truth, refutes error and affirms faith.

Out of Nothing (1:1-2)

Hold out your hand palm up and examine it. What do you see? Nothing, you're thinking. And you are correct. Now meditate on the awesome biblical truth that God created everything that exists out of nothing. God is the Creator. He is mentioned 32 times in Genesis 1. The Hebrew translation of God is "Elohim," emphasizing His power, majesty and personality. God is a real person. He has a mind that thinks, emotions that feel and a will that acts.

Although Elohim is plural in form, the verb "create" is singular, indicating God is thought of as one being. Genesis is consistently monotheistic, which distinguishes it from other ancient Near Eastern accounts of creation. There is only one God.

The Hebrew verb "bara," or create, is always used in the Old Testament with God as the subject, that is, the One doing the action. Not every occurrence of bara is used to describe creation out of nothing but it does stress God's power and sovereignty. "The heavens and the earth" here means everything. These verses indicate that God created everything in the universe, affirming the fact that He created it "ex nihilo," Latin for out of nothing. The effect of the opening words of the Bible is to establish that God in His sovereign power is the Creator of all things.

By His Word (1:3-5)

Genesis 1 highlights the absolute power of God by the fact that He merely speaks and things are created. When God speaks, things happen. God created with a specific purpose in mind. He spoke light into existence and then declared it to be good. Everything He brings into being is good. This truth is repeated throughout the chapter.

In His Image (1:26-31)

Of all the beauty God created, the masterpiece was a man and a woman. God created Adam and Eve in His image to reflect Him. The statement "Let us make man in Our image" is a hint of the Trinity involved in the creation of humanity. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit were involved in the creation of the universe and in the creation of human beings.

The "imago Dei," or the image of God, is God's investment in humanity of God-like glory and moral capacity to reign and rule the earth as His representatives. These capacities set humanity apart from the animals.

These capacities include characteristics such as reason, language, a capacity for relationships governed by love and commitment and creativity in all forms of art. These insights enable us to see that the resemblances allow mankind to establish worthy relationships with God, with one another and with the rest of creation.

Human beings are to reign and be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth. God's beautiful design is that the whole earth should be populated by those who know Him and who serve wisely as His representatives.

For His Glory (2:1-3)

God has completed the process of ordering creation. God did not need to rest because of weariness. He rested because He was finished. All of creation was in harmony and was exactly the way it was supposed to be. ☞

Bible Studies for Life By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Religion, Samford University

GOD'S PROMISE OF FAITHFULNESS Psalm 89:1-2, 5-8, 15-18

The book of Psalms is perhaps best known for its many songs of praise and thanksgiving. "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord," "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth" — the words of these psalms and others like them have long been a regular part of the worship of God's people. But there are other psalms that have played a much less prominent role in the Church — the songs of lament. Despite comprising nearly half of the Psalter, the songs of lament are rarely featured in Christian worship. Emerging as they do from times of distress and even despair these psalms express emotions that can be uncomfortable to hear. Yet the sentiments are often just the sort of feelings we too experience when we encounter rocky patches in our walk of faith.

The psalmist who composed Psalm 89 had clearly experienced such a crisis. One of the great hallmarks of Israelite belief was the conviction that God had entered into an eternal covenant with King David, that there would never fail to be a Davidic descendant ruling the nation. In the words conveyed by the prophet Nathan, "Your house and Your kingdom will endure forever before me; Your throne will be established forever" (2 Sam. 7:16). But in the eyes of the psalmist these words had proved hollow. After an extended affirmation of God's covenant with David in verses 1-37 the psalmist's words turn to bitter lament: "But You have rejected, You have spurned, You have been very angry with Your anointed one. You have renounced the covenant with Your servant and have defiled his crown in the dust." After witnessing the humiliation and perhaps even the early demise of the Davidic descendant (vv. 40-45) the psalmist worried that God

had abandoned altogether His covenant with Israel's greatest king. In such a moment, worry could have turned into despair. Yet in the midst of his darkest moment the psalmist cried out not only with lament but also with words of hope.

God's faithfulness is a cause for praise. (1-2)

As is the case with most psalms, the theme of Psalm 89 is revealed in the first few lines. Although the rest of the psalm will move deliberately through moments of joy and sorrow, the overall theme of the psalm is captured in its first words: "With my mouth I will make Your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that Your love stands firm forever, that You have established Your faithfulness in heaven itself." The psalmist may struggle with doubt, but he knows that in the end God will prove faithful. His loyal love stands firm forever.

God's faithfulness is celebrated in heaven. (5-8)

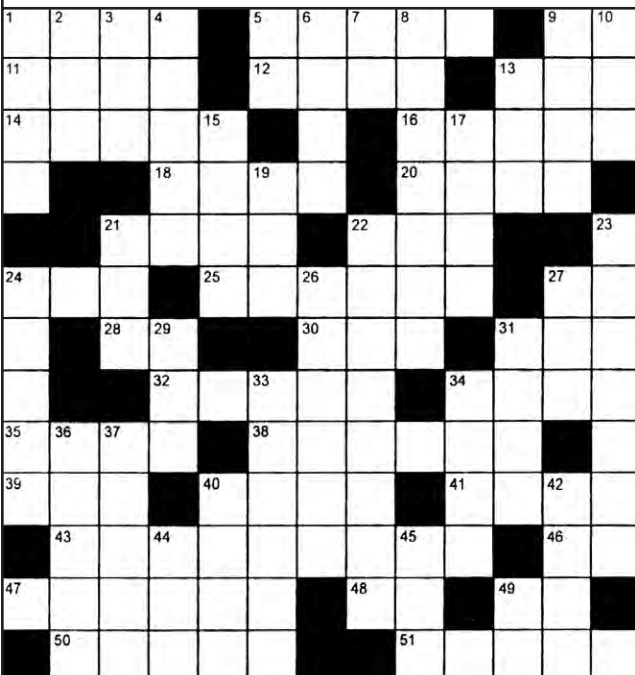
The psalmist is equally confident in the supremacy of God and His ability to restore the nation and its king to its rightful place. In verses 5-8 the psalmist extols the incomparability of God, celebrating the fact that Israel's God far surpasses the gods of the nations that surrounded her. The God who rules creation, the psalmist argues, will restore rule to the Davidic king.

God's faithfulness is experienced by His followers. (15-18)

In another affirmation of his faith the psalmist goes on in verses 15-18 to pronounce a blessing on those who remain steadfast in their praise of Israel's God. Whatever difficulties may befall the nation and its king the psalmist remains confident that deliverance lies with God alone. Even in his darkest moments the psalmist insisted, "Our shield belongs to the Lord, our king to the Holy One of Israel." ☞

Christian Crossword

By Joann Horn Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' _____. (Matt. 23:2)
- Opposite of "thin."
- _____ that cometh from above is above all. (John 3:31)
- Window glass.
- God had sworn with an _____ to him. (Acts 2:30)
- Uncooked.
- After the _____ of Melchizedek. (Ps. 110:4)
- Seek things which are _____. (Col. 3:1)
- Rip or pull apart.
- The Lord is on my _____. (Ps. 118:6)
- _____ shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matt. 16:26)
- Did eat.
- Tree of the olive family.
- _____ than hell. (Job 11:8)
- Spanish for "yes."
- Word _____ God abideth in you. (1 John 2:14)
- A male child.
- To gain a victory.

- Abstain from fleshly _____. (1 Pet. 2:11)
- Sung in praise of God.
- To kill.
- How large a _____ I have written. (Gal. 6:11)
- As a _____ doth gather her brood under her wings. (Luke 13:34)
- Part of foot.
- Let it be so.
- A contract.
- Agriculture. (abbr.)
- When he returned, he found them _____. (Mark 14:40)
- God _____ loved the world. (John 3:16)
- My yoke _____ easy, and my burden is light. (Matt. 11:30)
- Type of bear.
- Dwellings.
- Down
- Be found _____ without _____, and blameless. (2 Pet. 3:14)
- Used for hearing.
- To sit on my right hand _____ on my left.

- (Mark 10:40)
- Plural of "tooth."
- I go _____ prepare a place for you. (John 14:2)
- Covering for head.
- Baptism of John, was _____ from heaven? (Mark 11:30)
- Discipline by punishment.
- Thou shalt _____ treasure in heaven. (Mark 10:21)
- Female sheep.
- A staff or scepter.
- Philip _____ heard him _____ the prophet Isaiah. (Acts 8:30)
- A coffin.
- Took the little book and _____ it up. (Rev. 10:10)
- And Jesus said, _____ touched me? (Luke 8:45)
- Sent to preach the gospel.
- _____ with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (Col. 3:16)
- Tossed about by waves.
- Let each _____ other better than themselves.

- (Phil. 2:3)
- Transgression.
- They _____ away as an eagle toward heaven. (Prov. 23:5)
- For their _____ shall not die. (Isa. 66:24)
- Drowsy.
- Chair, bench or stool.
- He that is _____ in _____ heaven is greater. (Matt. 11:11)
- To fish with a hook.
- Take ye _____, watch and pray. (Mark 13:33)
- Sun rises here.
- Primary color.
- No way.
- Opposite of "out."



TOP 10

downloaded songs from iTunes

CHRISTIAN & GOSPEL



1. **Flawless**
By MercyMe
(Welcome to the New)



2. **First**
By Lauren Daigle
(How Can It Be)



3. **Touch the Sky**
By Hillsong UNITED
(EMPIRES)



4. **Holy Spirit**
By Francesca Battistelli
(If We're Honest)



5. **Feel It**
By tobyMac
(This Is Not a Test)

6. **Worth**
By Anthony Brown and group
therAPy
(Everyday Jesus)

7. **At the Cross (Love Ran Red)**
By Chris Tomlin
(Love Ran Red)

8. **Through All of It**
By Colton Dixon
(Anchor)

9. **Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)**
By Hillsong UNITED
(Zion)

10. **Same Power**
By Jeremy Camp
(I Will Follow)

Source: www.popvortex.com at press time



Photo courtesy of Hoganson Media Relations

Life-changing encounters

The Neverclaim's personal devotions inspire new album

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

With uplifting songs on their new album, "The Joy," the contemporary group The Neverclaim hopes to remind worshippers about the excitement of singing praises to the Lord.

The Neverclaim is made up of Jeremiah Carlson (lead singer), Chuck Hill (bass), Mitchell Maldonado (guitar/keys) and Beji George (drums).

During concerts the group desires to emphasize a powerful message to help people remember that believers can rest in Christ's love, reflect in their identity found in Him and rejoice in His victory.

"Almost every song on the new album is centered around the joy of the Lord as our strength, our identity in Christ and the victory that's won in Christ," Carlson said.

"Although we still face hardships in life and times of struggle, we have access to a greater reality that fills our hearts with joy. We believe that people are hungry for authentic joy — a joy that is not based on circumstances, but on the fact that God is for us, so nothing can be against us."

'Experience revival'

In 2013, The Neverclaim made an impressive debut with the release of their self-titled album, which ranked No. 34 on Billboard's Top Heatseekers Albums chart.

Desiring to connect people to the life-changing love of Christ through music, the group spends time reading the Bible together and discussing

ways to incorporate Scripture into their songs.

The Neverclaim's goal is to provide a life-changing encounter with God no matter where they perform. This fall The Neverclaim is appearing on "The Promises Tour" with 7eventh Time Down and Manic Drive.

"During concerts our main goal is that people would experience revival in their hearts and change the world around them," Carlson said.

"Our message really is so simple: Jesus is all you need to change the world."

In an effort to encourage people to reach out and make a difference in the lives of others, The Neverclaim is committed to helping raise awareness for One Child Matters, an organization that sponsors more than 40,000 children in 16 countries all around the world.

More than having a passion for music, the group has a calling to touch lives, Carlson noted.

"Our group name means that we never want to claim God's glory for our own," Carlson explained. "We want to surrender our own desires, allowing God to work and inviting people to worship Him. With these songs we want to inspire people and create opportunities for them to experience and encounter God in a real way."

"These songs come from a deep place in our hearts, from our own devotions and worship to the Lord. I believe the heart's cry of every believer is to connect with God. I believe the songs resonate in that way — creating adoration toward Jesus, proclaiming who God is and the great story of redemption." ❧

"We believe that people are hungry for authentic joy."

**Jeremiah Carlson
lead singer
The Neverclaim**

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Reflect Christ

Generals center fielder drawn to faith after father's death

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

He is never there but always present. Every game Ian Miller plays and every at-bat he takes is dedicated to his late father. On Nov. 28, 2010, Mark Miller died at home from a blood clot in his leg. He was 54. Ian Miller, then 18, also was at his Dowingtown, Pennsylvania, home studying for an exam.

"I was in shock. I didn't feel anything. I didn't really know what was going on," Ian Miller said. "I hate to see my mom (Jennifer) cry. It was one of the few times I have seen her cry. It was tough to take."

Following the funeral, Ian Miller returned to Wagner College in Staten Island, New York. His father's influence never left. Mark Miller passed foundational principles of life and his moral beliefs and values on to his son.

"Everything that I center my life around today is what my dad taught me," Ian Miller said.

A baseball player at the University of California, Los Angeles, Mark Miller was drafted by the Cincinnati Reds in 1979 and played two years in its minor league organization. And his passion for baseball became his son's.

"He would be ecstatic to be here and see where I am and how far I have come," said 23-year-old Ian Miller. "I know he is watching me."

Miller is a center fielder — like his dad — with the Jackson Generals, the Class AA Southern League affiliate of the Seattle Mariners.

Jackson manager Roy Howell said of Miller, "He has good character that he brings to himself and his teammates. We admire watching him go out and work hard."

'Jesus means everything'

When his father died, Miller became more drawn to his own faith. It became a daily part of his life.

"My faith helped me with everything," he said. "It was the biggest thing staying positive. It's incredible — I play a game where you fail 7 out of 10 times. You've got to deal with failure, and at the end of the day, fall back on something bigger. Jesus means everything. I wouldn't be here without Him."

"I have had struggles with faith. I tend to shy away from it but then I always find a way to come back to it," he said, finding his way back through prayer and Bible study.

"This game is so hard mentally on you. It's tough not to go home and read Scripture. Everything I have ever prayed about or prayed for has worked out."

Miller also is encouraged through chapel services with teammate Zach Shank, who plays third base.

Shank said, "[Chapel] keeps you grounded and on the right path. Absolutely faith means a lot."

Desiring to reflect Christ by the way he carries himself, Miller said he strives to be a good person on and off the field and set a good example. He wants to focus more on using baseball as a faith platform.

"I take a knee before every at-bat. I thank God and say a quick prayer to Him," Miller said.

Drafted in the 14th round, Miller was the first position player taken from Wagner since 1999. He finished second in school history in career stolen bases with 93 and 12th in hits with 171.

The fastest base runner in Seattle's 2013 draft class, Miller can race to first in 3.6 seconds when he bunts.

As a junior he stole a Northeast Conference-record 46 bases, which ranked him second nationally and put

him as the fastest runner in the Northeast.

In addition to his speed, Miller's skills at the plate make him competitive. At Clinton, Iowa, the Mariner's Class A affiliate in the Midwest League, Miller batted .271 in 2014. He stole 16 bases in 18 attempts and hit five doubles, four triples and 13 RBI.

Starting the 2015 season in Bakersfield, California, Miller led the High-A California League in steals with 21 in 26 attempts.

He also hit .296 in 39 games with five doubles, two triples and six RBI.

Howell said, "He goes out there every day to get better and do his job. He is always the guy that is working hard and making sure his teammates are doing the same thing."

Going forward Miller dreams of playing major league baseball, a dream that has stayed with him since childhood.

"The Mariners gave me confidence when they gave me an opportunity," he said. "I have a strong belief in myself and in my faith." ❧



Ian Miller

Photo by Nat Thomas/Jackson Generals



World of
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Jewish extremist poses threat to Holy Land Christians

JERUSALEM — The church body authorized by the Vatican to oversee the Catholic Church's property in Israel has asked Israel's attorney general to indict a Jewish extremist who it says recently incited violence against Israel's Christian churches.

In a letter sent to Attorney General Yehuda Weinstein on Aug. 9, the Custody of the Holy Land said Benzion Gopstein, sometimes spelled "Gopshtein," head of the Jewish extremist group Lehava, poses a threat to Holy Land Christians.

The letter cited comments by Gopstein who, during an Aug. 4 panel discussion for yeshiva students, quoted the 12th-century Jewish philosopher Maimonides' ruling that Christianity constitutes idolatry. Gopstein said the biblical Book of Deuteronomy calls for the destruction of idol worship.

The letter was the Christian world's latest plea to Israeli authorities to find and prosecute the people responsible for more than 50 attacks against Christian and Muslim holy sites during the past few years. Israeli police are investigating the crimes, presumably carried out by far-right-wing Jewish extremists. (RNS)

Vatican, Palestinian leaders sign historic legal treaty

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican on June 26 signed a historic agreement recognizing the state of Palestine and calling for a two-state solution with Israel, a move criticized by the Israeli government as damaging the peace process.

The comprehensive agreement was signed at the Vatican by the Holy See's foreign minister, Archbishop Paul Gallagher, and his Palestinian counterpart, Riad al-Malki.

The accord is the result of years of negotiations and is the first legal treaty between Palestine and the Holy See.

Under the agreement — containing 32 articles in eight chapters — the Holy See officially recognizes Palestine and calls for a two-state solution through direct negotiations with Israel.

But the agreement sparked instant criticism from Israel. "This hasty step damages the prospects for advancing a peace agreement and harms the international effort to convince the Palestinian Authority to return to direct negotiations with Israel," said Israeli foreign ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon. (RNS)

New laws in Myanmar threaten religious freedom

NAYPYIDAW, Myanmar — Advocates for religious liberty are concerned about a new law passed by the parliament in Myanmar making it harder for a person to switch religions.

Human Rights Watch, an international nongovernmental organization, urged President Thein Sein not to sign the Religious Conversion Bill, one of four so-called "race and religion" laws that would enable the state to regulate religious profession and conversion. It would establish a Religious Conversion Scrutinizing and Registration Board in each township. Anyone over 18 wishing to change religion would file an application stating the reasons for conversion.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom called the laws "tools the government uses to continue to violate the freedom of religion and related human rights." (BNG)

Vatican backs plan to name Rome square for Luther

ROME — The Vatican has given its backing to a central Rome square being named after Martin Luther, a church reformer excommunicated by the pope nearly 500 years ago.

A German Catholic priest and theologian, Luther was a key figure in the Protestant Reformation and sparked considerable controversy. He denounced the corruption he saw among clergy and believed salvation came through faith alone — views that did not sit well with Pope Leo X. Luther was excommunicated in 1521 and was never allowed to return to the Catholic Church, but now the Vatican's views have changed.

In October a hilltop square in Rome is set to be named Piazza Martin Lutero, in memory of Luther's achievements. The site chosen is the Oppian Hill, a park area that overlooks the Colosseum. (RNS)