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Do You Know Your Neighbor?



TAB augmented reality

Using actions, words to share God's love vital to reaching internationals in US

By Susie Rain
International Mission Board

She spied them in the jewelry aisle. Their dress was a little out of place in an Alabama Walmart.

The two women were covered from head to toe in long, black hijab dresses and headscarves.

The petite grandmother made an abrupt U-turn with her shopping cart and screeched to a halt next to the Muslim women.

"Hey there," the grandmother said in a deep Alabama drawl.

"I really like the henna pattern on your hands. Did you do that?"

Look of relief

The Egyptian women looked down at their dye-stained hands and then stared at Anna Speir in disbelief. Was she really talking to them?

Speir, a member of First Baptist Church, Selma, and president of Ala-

bama Woman's Missionary Union, was used to the blank stare, followed by a look of relief and then

words gushing out.

Most internationals she encounters are lonely. And believe it or not, many

are from the same unreached people groups (less than 2 percent following Jesus) among

whom Southern Baptist missionaries live and work around the globe.

The grandmother smiled when she spoke about finding these unreached people groups in her own Alabama town.

"God is bringing the nations to us," she said. "What are we going to do about it?"

Speir's question is an interesting one. Most of us are not seminary-trained missionaries, ministers or

pastors. We don't speak multiple languages nor are we familiar with other cultures. How can we reach the 41.3 million immigrants and internationals living next door with the gospel?

I decided to throw this question out to the social media world for

some discussion. What came back was amazing — example after example of ordinary people following Christ's commandment to reach the nations. A men's group in Kentucky made weekly visits to the same coffee shop and now the Indian owner

joins in their Bible study. A Kansas farmer took a Chinese student out to work the field and told about Jesus' sacrifice.

Ministering to internationals in the United States is as simple as locating them, finding out their needs and serving them with the love of Jesus. Obtaining a visa is not a problem. Overcoming government opposition to missionary activity is not an issue. God moved these people across the globe to be our neighbors just so they have the opportunity to hear the gospel.

Two women stood at the back of the room, silently praying for God to give their new friends dreams of Jesus. In front of them women from many countries went through the ritual prayer to break a day of fasting — standing, bowing, prostrating and reciting. Until two weeks prior, Abigail Elizade, of

(See 'Meeting,' page 13)

"God is bringing the nations to us.

What are we going to do about it?"

Anna Speir
president, Alabama WMU

TAB augmented reality



Have you tried it yet?

TAB augmented reality is here.
Check out page 13 for more details.

COMMENT



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Do the Two Offerings Compete?

Alabama Baptists have two financial focuses during October. Some people wonder if the two emphases compete with one another.

October is Cooperative Program (CP) month. It is a time when churches are encouraged to celebrate the partnership between local churches, their state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). The genius of churches working together to do missions, education and benevolent work from the local community to distant parts of the world is a gift from God.

October 11 is Global Hunger Sunday on the denominational calendar. That is the new name for the World Hunger Offering. This Sunday many Alabama Baptist churches will call attention to the curse of hunger in Alabama, the nation and world and encourage members to make a special offering to help relieve those hunger needs.

CP is important and so is the Global Hunger Relief offering. Each fulfills a special need but they do not duplicate what the other does.

Years ago I was in Thailand at the request of the International Mission Board (IMB). Missionaries worked with refugees from Cambodia and Laos. Along with assisting families at refugee centers, they also practiced mercy at a detention center in Bangkok where people were locked in cages no larger than my office desk. In all cases the missionaries shared the gospel, helped feed hungry people and built relationships for additional sharing.

Assistance to displaced families

More recently I was in refugee camps in Jordan where Baptist workers regularly provide assistance to displaced families. The workers did not do the work for the expressions of gratitude coming from recipients although they were abundant. Workers invested themselves in food distribution and other ministries to demonstrate the love of God for people who lived in a culture that knew little of Jesus Christ.

In a New England state, I served food in a Baptist church that provided lunch to homeless and hungry people once a week. Again the pastor said feeding the hungry validated their



THOUGHTS
By Bob Terry

ministry in Jesus' name and opened doors of witness to individuals and the community.

In each case the ministries in which I briefly participated resulted from both the CP and World Hunger Offering. CP made possible the service of missionaries in Thailand, Baptist workers in Jordan and a pastor in New England.

Foundation for Baptist work

CP provides the foundation of Baptist work. It pays salaries and makes sure there are missionaries, Baptist workers and church planters to address ministry needs like hunger relief.

Resources for the particular ministry of hunger relief comes mostly from the hunger relief offering.

Without CP there would have been no one in Thailand, Jordan or New England to do the ministries. Without the World Hunger Relief offering there would have been few dollars to assist the hungry. That makes both funding channels necessary. They do not compete with one another. They complement one another.

In Alabama hunger is a special challenge. According to the latest study released by the Department of Agriculture, slightly more than 1 in 4 children (26.2 percent) live in a home with low or very low food security. That is a polite way of saying they live with hunger.

One in 6 (16.8 percent) of all state residents live with hunger and about 1 in 8 (12 percent) of seniors face hunger. All averages are above the national norms.

Thankfully Alabama Baptists care. According to statistics provided by the Alabama Bap-

tist State Board of Missions, Alabama Baptist hunger relief funds helped feed 185,365 people in our state in 2014. The reports also indicate 2,338 professions of faith as a direct response to hunger ministries.

As with all designated gifts, every dollar given goes directly to that ministry. A portion of the funds given through Alabama Baptist channels is earmarked for hunger relief projects in the state. SBC funds are divided 80 percent to international efforts and 20 percent to domestic programs.

Readers may know that fighting hunger is one of my gospel-driven passions. In addition to working in hunger relief, I continue to advocate for policies that prevent hunger. If Baptists can work for policies that prevent the sale of fetal body parts (and we should), then we can push for policies to curb or even eliminate hunger.

That is why I will continue to support hunger relief efforts financially. I urge you to consider giving to fight hunger as well.

But these gifts will not take the place of my CP support. As SBC declared when adopting the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force report, "The Cooperative Program remains the primary channel of missions giving." CP undergirds all missions efforts, whether in Alabama, an underserved area of this nation or some foreign land.

CP is more than missions. It is education. It is benevolent work. It is all Baptists do together. Experience has taught the value of supporting the total program of Southern Baptists through CP giving rather than having the various ministries compete with one another for all their funding.

Strength in numbers

When CP giving is strong the foundation of Baptist work together is strong. When CP giving is weak important parts of the foundation begin to crumble.

This month I will give my tithe to my local church and a portion of that will be forwarded to causes beyond the church through CP. And I will write another check for World Hunger Relief because I care about that cause and want it to have more support than possible through CP alone.

That is the difference between cooperative giving and designated giving. Cooperative giving such as CP promotes all Baptists do together. Designated giving provides additional support for areas reflecting the passion of the giver. Both are important but they accomplish different purposes.

That is why designated giving such as through the World Hunger Relief offering and CP giving do not compete. Instead they complement one another. 🙏

"Financial Responsibility, Missions Strategy" clarification

Officials of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, shared that in addition to the \$25,000 given through the Cooperative Program (CP) in 2014 as reported in the Sept. 24 editorial, the church also gave \$175,000 from its \$9.36 million budget to Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) causes through

the SBC Executive Committee. Officials said this was done to ensure more of the church's dollars went to support the International Mission Board (IMB) than was possible through regular CP giving. The church made other contributions to IMB projects and needs generally categorized as designated giving.



"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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Project SERVE



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UMobile cancels classes to send nearly 1,300 to serve community

University of Mobile (UMobile) sophomore Kathryn Gosselin and 50-plus-year-old Mark linked arms, twirling first one direction then another, dancing in the center of the activity room.

Beside them, university students in red "Project Serve" T-shirts worked at tables on crafts with residents of L'Arche, a community of people with and without disabilities that share life together.

"You're a good dancer," Gosselin told Mark, a huge smile on her face. "We've just been dancing this whole time, dancing our hearts away."

Gosselin was 1 of nearly 1,300 students, faculty and staff from the Baptist university in north Mobile County that took a day off from classes Sept. 25 to volunteer at 63 locations across two counties. It was the fifth annual Project Serve, a university-wide effort to celebrate volunteerism, community and faith. Students serve side-by-side with their professors, coaches and university staff to share God's love through the skills and knowledge they are gaining in the classroom.

UMobile President Mark Foley said at the morning rally on campus before teams departed to serve, "We get to be the representatives of Jesus Christ, in a real un-churchy way" by painting, cleaning, building, singing and ministering. He urged students to connect with those they are serving and "remember that you are being Jesus to them in that moment."

Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson was on hand to proclaim Sept. 25 as "University of Mobile Project Serve Day." U.S. Rep. Bradley Byrne had commended the university's commitment to community service with remarks in the Congressional Record, saying that, "While Project Serve will only last one day, I am confident the experience will lead to a lifetime of service for everyone in the University of Mobile community."

Prichard Mayor Troy Ephriam, a 1995 UMobile graduate who opened the rally with prayer, called the effort "a phenomenal task of service in our community. It means even more to me that it starts at my alma mater."



Photo courtesy of the University of Mobile

Nearly 1,300 University of Mobile students participate in the fifth annual Project Serve, a university-wide effort where students serve side-by-side with their professors, coaches and university staff to share God's love in the community.

Since its inception in 2011 during the university's 50th anniversary, Project Serve has impacted businesses, schools, health care facilities, city parks and countless individuals.

This year music majors sang at assisted living centers and a veteran's home; nursing majors took blood pressures, painted finger-

nails and visited with residents of Little Sisters of the Poor; education majors tutored children, cleaned classrooms and did yard work at public and private schools; ministry majors and student athletes painted a recreation center in the heart of the city; business students washed vans and painted steps at Dumas Wesley Community Center; and more.

The event impacted both those serving and those being served.

Amy Lowe, instructional partner at Chickasaw Elementary School where education majors worked side-by-side with elementary students to clean and organize book rooms and a uniform closet, said, "I don't know if you realize what it means for our students and our parents to see college kids who have a focus and a future come and partner with us."

Fifth grader Dawn Thomas, a member of the Chickasaw Elementary student council, said, "It's nice and kind when you are helping somebody else."

Principal Christy Amick said the experience was helping her elementary students see the possibility of becoming college students themselves. Also it teaches the children "that it's important to serve others and not just serve themselves," she said.

More than a career

Catharine Hardyman, a junior nursing major, said Project Serve brings home the realization that nursing is so much more than a career.

"I enjoy just sharing and offering the gift of my hands to help others through my talents, abilities, resources and knowledge," she said.

Senior nursing major Courtney Rhinehart said the day "helps bring the classroom into reality. Serving others and being compassionate and loving others is like the way God loves me."

At Harmon-Thomas Recreation Center junior intercultural studies majors Nathan Collier and Amber Jones painted the entrance sign outside, while students inside painted the auditorium and lobby in bright yellows and oranges.

Collier said many times people don't know how to get started to serve a community or lead a volunteer group, to put their faith into action.

"When it starts with your school, it's easy to join in," Jones added. "It's a great place to start." (UMobile)



Photo courtesy of the University of Mobile

University of Mobile sophomore Kathryn Gosselin (left) dances with Mark at L'Arche, a community of people with and without disabilities that share life together.

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'It's a movement'

New Erwin brothers film tells true-life story of revival, reconciliation

By Martha Simmons
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Can faith and football heal a racially divided community? Absolutely — according to a new movie made by and about Alabamians.

Due in theaters nationwide Oct. 16, “Woodlawn” tells the true-life story of revival and reconciliation at Woodlawn High School following government-mandated desegregation at the Birmingham school.

Birmingham filmmakers Jon and Andrew Erwin shot most of the movie in Birmingham in fall 2014.

The Erwin Brothers are a writing, producing and directing team who create faith-based and inspirational feature films. They are the sons of former Alabama Sen. Henry Eugene “Hank” Erwin Jr., a Christian evangelical broadcaster who served as Woodlawn’s chaplain during the 1973 and 1974 events that sparked the movie.

“‘Woodlawn’ is a story of redemption and overcoming through Christ in a very racially charged climate,” Andrew Erwin told *The Alabama Baptist*. “When we set out to make the movie, we had no clue of the timely relevance. We felt we needed at least another six months to prepare for the film but one of our executive producers and spiritual advisers, Pastor Michael Catt, told us the time was now. God wanted us to make the film immediately.

“So with our marching orders in hand we set out to make the movie,” he said. “The second week of filming, [the] Ferguson [unrest] hit the headlines and we realized the importance of the story we were telling. Not our story but a real story of what God did in the past. Our prayer is that God would move in our country and around the world like that again today.”

The movie depicts the turmoil accompanying the first African-American students’

entry into the school. Primary characters in the movie are Coach Tandy Gerelds, who was then a cynical agnostic struggling with a powder keg of anger and violence within the Woodlawn Colonels football team, and African-American football player Tony Nathan, who was eventually recruited to play for the University of Alabama’s Crimson Tide and then went on to play in the NFL.

More importantly “Woodlawn” traces the spiritual movement that swept through the football team and eventually united the



woodlawnmovie.com

A scene from ‘Woodlawn’ is shot at the old Hueytown High School football stadium.

team members, the school and the community. It is an example of what happens, as one character says, “when God shows up.”

Hank Erwin was there when God showed up, accompanying Birmingham evangelist Wales Goebel, who had been asked to address the players at their fall football camp. “We didn’t really know what to expect,” Hank Erwin said. “Wales gave a powerful testimony in the gymnasium and the athletes responded by coming down out of the stands and kneeling around Wales and giving themselves to Jesus Christ as their Savior. Nearly the whole team came down. It was the most powerful thing I’ve seen in my whole life.”

To help the newly converted athletes learn “how to walk the talk,” Hank Erwin became the team’s chaplain and experienced the transformation from a front-row seat. (In the movie, the fictional “Hank” combines the historical roles and persons of both Goebel and Erwin and narrates the story.)

Bedtime stories come to life

Hank Erwin’s experiences became fodder for bedtime stories for Jon and Andrew when they were children.

“The stories were so colorful and so profound,” Hank Erwin said. “When the boys were real small and wanted a bedtime

story, instead of telling them monster stories, I told them Woodlawn stories. They’d go to sleep at night with that in their heads and soon they would tell me, ‘Daddy, I’m going to make that into a movie one day.’”

‘More than a movie’

Fast-forward several decades and the bedtime story is now a movie, and at a reported production cost of \$25 million, the movie’s production values and explosive sports action should satisfy even secular moviegoers. But “Woodlawn” is unabashedly a Christian film produced in partnership with Christian movie studio Pure Flix and Provident Films, which develops, produces and markets faith-based films. The partners are determined to do more than just sell movie tickets. They want the movie to spark another spiritual revival.

“‘Woodlawn’ is more than a movie. It’s a movement” — this motto heads the resources page on the “Woodlawn” movie website, which offers both free and for purchase resources for churches, students and individuals. And in an effort to send 1 million students and student-athletes to see the movie free of charge, “The Woodlawn Movie Fund” has been established by the National Christian Foundation. Donations to the fund are tax deductible.

Several books also are being released in conjunction with the film.

As the clock ticks down to the premiere, the Erwins are deluged with phone calls and emails and people clamoring for their attention. Through it all though they aren’t going Hollywood, Hank Erwin said.

“I’m mighty proud of them,” he said of his sons, “for their skill, for their determination to serve the Lord and for their character.”

In theaters
OCTOBER 16

Directors
The Erwin Brothers

Producers
Kevin Downes and Daryl C. Lefever

Executive Producers
Roma Downey, Mark Burnett, Holly Ellis, Scott Ellis, Andrew Erwin

Produced and distributed
by Pure Flix and Provident Films

STARRING



SEAN ASTIN
as Hank Erwin, an outsider who brings the message of hope and love of Christ to a racially divided team.

ASTIN

NIC BISHOP
as Coach Tandy Gerelds, who finds his own redemption after watching the miraculous transformation of his team.



BISHOP



CALEB CASTILLE, himself a former Briarwood Christian School and University of Alabama football player, as star football player Tony Nathan.

CASTILLE

JON VOIGHT
as University of Alabama Coach Paul “Bear” Bryant, who recruited Nathan after the Woodlawn Colonels made it to the state playoffs.



VOIGHT





Photo by Doug Rogers

'Woodlawn' THE MOVIE

Dummies fill the stands during a 'Woodlawn' shoot Nov. 10, 2014, at the old Berry Middle School's Finley Stadium in Hoover. Such dummies are routinely rented from movie production companies to help give the illusion of a larger crowd.

Lessons learned

'Woodlawn' movie extra shares first-hand experience from being on film's set

By Doug Rogers
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Imagine Moses in "The Ten Commandments" descending Mount Sinai only to find two or three Israelites hanging around at the bottom. Or Rocky entering an empty arena to face Apollo Creed in that film's climactic boxing match. Let's face it, it's the extras, those background actors who populate various scenes, that bring life to a movie.

Such is the case with "Woodlawn," an epic production about revival, football and racial reconciliation that called for scores of extras, from football players and cheerleaders to students on campus and fans in the stands.

I first discovered the work of the Erwin Brothers when they released "October Baby" in 2011, the beautifully crafted story of a college freshman who discovers she was not only adopted but survived an abortion attempt.

They followed that film up with last year's "Moms' Night Out," the light-hearted and hilarious tale of three moms who simply want to spend an evening out while their husbands watch the kids.

Both films were shot in Alabama, primarily in the Birmingham area, and after the success of "Moms' Night Out," I vowed that if I had the opportunity to be on set for "Woodlawn," I would seize it.

Dreaming of stardom

And so it was Oct. 25, 2014, that my college-aged daughter, Emilee, and I decided to throw our names in the hat to be considered as extras in "Woodlawn." Dressed in our finest polyester — the film takes place in the early 70s — we showed up at the Pelham Civic Complex, ready to impress. We departed just a few minutes later, after filling out some paperwork and having our pictures taken, dreaming of the movie stardom that was to come.

Five days later I received a call inviting me to be a part of Bull's Group, a circle of five friends who sit in the bleachers with one of the film's antagonists, Bull, played by actor Steven Prince. The part called for no lines, just cheering and commiserating in the stands as we pretended to watch football games being played. But hey, I was an extra, and on top of that it was a paying gig!

Turns out there are two kinds of extras. The paid type, or featured extras, are hired to play a specific nonspeaking role like a policeman, a cheerleader, a football team member or in my case a specific group of

fans. There's also a "y'all come" category. These are opportunities open to those who have expressed interest and sometimes to the general public to be part of a crowd, perhaps helping fill up a stadium or walking around in the background on a campus and so on. Their pay is typically in the form of pizza and soft drinks and the thrill of being part of the production.

Series of shootings

For Bull's Group, what followed was three days of shooting scattered over five weeks in November and December. The first one, an outdoor shoot in Finley Stadium at the old Berry Middle School in Hoover, was a night event. We reported at 7 p.m., filled out some paperwork and headed to the costume department. Interestingly I was able to wear what I had brought — a pair of brown polyester pants I found at a thrift store and a long-sleeved blue polyester shirt that, sadly, was hanging in my closet.

After about four hours of waiting in a gymnasium, we were whisked into the stadium to be part of the crowd watching what would be several different football games in the film. The players were on the field, the coaches, played by Nic Bishop and Kevin Sizemore, were on the sidelines and Sean Astin, playing the part of Hank the chaplain, was just across the running track from us. Things were getting exciting. Plus we were surrounded by hundreds of dummies sitting in the stands, which were rented from a movie supply company to help make the stadium look full. Ah, the magic of making movies! After an hour or so of cheering on cue in between long periods of resetting the lights, we were let go around 1 a.m.

Candle lighting scene

Three weeks later, I opted to go to Legion Field for one of those unpaid opportunities, the shooting of the movie's pivotal candle lighting scene. It's an emotional moment in the film when Sean Astin's character, speaking to a large rally, recounts attending Explo '72 in the Cotton Bowl in Dallas, a key event in the Jesus Movement. It was an incredibly memorable experience to me largely because of the power of Sean's (Hank's) words in that scene, and I still have my candle as a reminder of that evening.

A week later Bull's Group was called in for our final two days of shooting at Ernest

F. Bush K-8 School in Birmingham. These were day shoots with 6 a.m. call times and would give us our first opportunity to meet Steven Prince, aka Bull. These scenes were shot on a section of football bleachers set up in a gymnasium, where sound and lights could be more closely controlled. These shots would focus on smaller groups of fans cheering and would be edited into the outdoor shots filmed earlier.

It was these two days of shooting which would demand the best efforts of our fledgling group of background actors. Cheering for players that weren't there. Pumping a victorious fist in the air. Mouthing lines like, "You're killing us, coach!" And knowing that at any given time, any one of us might be visible as close-ups of Bull were being filmed.

We felt the pressure of having to carry on the proud tradition of generations of extras who had gone on before us. Day one lasted around 12 hours, day two about eight hours.

Making the cut

And then almost as quickly as it started, it was over. We were cut loose but told to watch for emails in case they needed to call us back in to reshoot anything. I decided I wouldn't get a haircut for the next few weeks, just in case. But that December day was to be the end of the road for Bull's Group.

I've had the opportunity to see "Woodlawn" four times during the past month at preview events, and I'm happy to report that I made the cut. I'm visible over Bull's shoulder in three shots, adding up to maybe six or seven seconds of screen time. But I can honestly say that even if I had ended up on the cutting room floor it would have been worth the effort, because somewhere along the way to my seven seconds of fame I realized I had learned several bonus lessons from the experience.

First patience really is a virtue. The phrase "hurry up and wait" definitely applies to an extra. It wasn't unusual to report at an early hour and get into your costume only to sit for several hours before being called on set. And even while you're on set, there's a lot of waiting as lights and cameras are set and reset. But that waiting around provided a great opportunity to soak up the experience — we're making a movie! — and get to know people you otherwise might never have met.

Second everyone's job is important. It

really doesn't matter how talented the actors are if the writers haven't provided a great script, or if the lighting crew hasn't done its job well or if the costumes are all wrong. And that's not to mention all the work that goes into sound and editing and props and sets and makeup and catering and on and on. It reminds me of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 12 about the body of Christ. It takes all of us, even extras, doing our job and using our abilities to accomplish the purposes God has for His Church.

And third on a movie set you must trust the often invisible force behind the scenes. Even when you don't see him, there's a director (or two in this case) who knows the master plan and is calling the shots. It requires the same kind of faith that we must exhibit in our Heavenly Father each day as we trust Him to put us where we need to be to play the part He has written for us in His master plan.

The experience also provided me with several unexpected blessings. A chance encounter with co-director Jon Erwin over lunch gave me the opportunity to hear firsthand about his passion for this project and his prayer for revival in our nation and world. During that same lunch hour, I had the privilege of shaking Sean Astin's hand and thanking him for being a part of this project.

Lasting friendship

Being part of Bull's Group led me to form a lasting friendship with Marc Hodges, pastor of First Baptist Church, Thorsby. Unfortunately Marc didn't fare as well as me in the final cut of the film, although you might be able to glimpse his arms or hands if you know what he's wearing.

I guess it would be stretching it a bit to say that I'm co-starring in a film with Jon Voight and Sean Astin. But what I can say is that "Woodlawn" is an amazing film about an amazing God who did an amazing thing in Birmingham in the early 1970s. It has the potential to impact our nation, even our world, in an incredible way, but that won't happen if people don't see it. You owe it to yourself to see this film when it opens on Oct. 16 and to encourage as many others as you can to go see it. And I would say that whether I was in it or not.

EDITOR'S NOTE — State Missionary Doug Rogers is director of communications & technology services for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and an avid movie fan. ☺



ROGERS

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.

AUTAUGA

► **First Church, Prattville**, will host Point of Grace in concert Oct. 22, 6:30–9 p.m. Allison Wilks will be the guest speaker. For tickets visit www.itickets.com/events/347604. For more information call 334-365-0606. Travis Coleman is pastor.

BETHEL

► **David W. Stidham** is the new pastor of **Providence Church, Gallion**. He earned his doctorate from New Orleans Seminary and previously served as pastor of Sulphur Springs Church, Hillsboro. He and his wife, Schawana, have one child.

CENTRAL

► **Kellyton Church** licensed deacon **Matthew Reams** to preach Sept. 20. Reams shared his first sermon during a special service that day. He is applying to New Orleans Seminary to attend classes at the Birmingham extension center. He and his wife, Dani, have one child.

CHEROKEE

► **East Centre Church, Centre**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 18, 10:30 a.m. John Allen and Leon Smith will be the guest speakers. New Ground will provide special music and lunch will follow the service. An afternoon service will begin at 1 p.m. Larry B. "Chip" Smith Jr. is pastor.

COFFEE

► **County Line Church, Enterprise**, will host a community "Country Fest" on Oct. 17, 4–6 p.m. The event will feature performances by The Jerry Gay Band and will have a hay ride, petting zoo, carriage rides, antique tractors, games, crafts, a peanut boil and door prizes. For more information call 334-347-6082 or visit www.clbconthe.net. Danny Wiggins is pastor.

COLUMBIA

► **Malvern Church** will host a gospel singing Oct. 10, 6 p.m. The concert will feature music by God's Messengers, of Hartford; The Strickland's, of Dothan; and Emma Branch. Refreshments will be served following the singing. Hosea Parker is pastor.

DALE

► **Chris Woodall** is the new pastor of **Pinckard Church**. His first Sunday will be Oct. 11. He

holds a bachelor's degree from the Baptist College of Florida in Graceville, and a master's degree from Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. He previously served as minister of students at Camp Ground Church, Ozark, pastor of Emmanuel Church, Arifton, and most recently served as pastor of Midway Church, Daleville. He and his wife, Stacy, have four children.



WOODALL

ELMORE

► **Calvary Church, Wetumpka**, will hold a one-night revival service Oct. 14, 6 p.m., with guest speaker Robert Smith Jr., professor at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham and Charles T. Carter Baptist chair of divinity. For more information call 334-567-4729. Anthony Rhodes is pastor.

GENEVA

► **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will host the 39er's C.L.U.B. nondenominational luncheon Oct. 13, 11 a.m., with guest speaker Wade Lewis, minister of music for First Church, Samson. For more information call 334-684-9617. Mike Shirah is pastor.

LIMESTONE

► **Mays Memorial Church, Toney**, will host a silent auction and chili supper Oct. 17, 5–7 p.m. All proceeds will go to the church's youth conference. For more information call Amanda Shaw at 256-431-4293 or email amanda031707@gmail.com. Anthony Perry is pastor.

MARION

► **First Church, Guin**, will host The Dixie Echoes in concert Oct. 18, 6 p.m. Doors open at 5 p.m. For more information call 205-468-3361. Kenny Hatcher is pastor.

MARSHALL

► **Sardis Church, Boaz**, will host a performance of the drama "The Scribe" on Oct. 11, 6 p.m. The production features acting and singing by Paul Pitts. For more information call 256-593-7762. Michael Goforth is pastor.

PLEASANT GROVE

► **Liberty Church, Adger**, will hold a yard sale and chili fundraiser Oct. 9–10, beginning at 8 a.m. All proceeds will go to the church's Woman's Missionary Union and Pleasant Grove Association's Christian Ministry Center. Mike Bell is pastor.

RUSSELL

► **Silver Run Church, Seale**, will host a fish fry Oct. 24, 7 p.m. Brother Billy Bob Bohannon will perform. Richie Ashburn is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Alan Cross** resigned from his role as pastor of **Gateway Church, Montgomery**. His last day will be Oct. 25. Cross graduated from Mississippi State University in Starkville and Golden Gate Seminary in Mill Valley, California. He will begin to work in the area of immigration reform in the southeast. He and his wife, Erika, have four children. ► **Open Acres Church, Montgomery**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 11, 10 a.m. Randy Atkinson, pastor of First Church, Hoover, will speak. Lance Driskell will lead in worship. A covered-dish luncheon will follow. Ron Davis is pastor.



CROSS

TUSCALOOSA

► **Unity Church, Tuscaloosa**, will hold a dedication service for its new sanctuary Oct. 11, 10 a.m. Joseph Morrison is pastor.

OTHER

► A homecoming/memorial service will be held at **Ray Cemetery in Wilsonville** on Oct. 11, 10:30 a.m.–noon. The cemetery homecoming was started by Prospect Church, Westover. Johnathan Muse will be the guest speaker and a covered dish meal will follow the service. Bring folding chairs and pictures from previous reunions if you have them. For more information call Tony Muse at 205-542-2326 or Terry Alverson at 205-678-9006. ☪

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Sarah Morris



MORRIS

*Northport Baptist Church
Tuscaloosa Baptist Association*

FAVORITE VERSE: John 3:16

FAVORITE HYMN: "Blessed Assurance"

HOBBIES: Reading and playing dominoes with friends

FAMILY STATUS: Widow for nine years after 56 years of marriage to husband, William; sons, Michael Morris and Carey Morris; five grandchildren

Eighty-six-year-old Sarah Morris, of Northport, seeks to be faithful in all she undertakes and treat other people the way she wants to be treated. At her church, Morris currently is a member of the chancel choir and hand bell choir and secretary of the Trailblazers senior group. She also has served on the nominating, stewardship and music committees and has taught children in Sunday School. In her community she is a poll worker and has been a volunteer at Northport Druid City Hospital for 10 years. A graduate of the University of Alabama, Morris worked 20 years at the former Reichhold Chemicals in Tuscaloosa.

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

A: I think my Christian mother, who sang hymns while she cooked and cleaned. I've had some great Sunday School teachers.

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

A: I became a member of the choir when I joined Northport Baptist in 1968. I've always enjoyed music. I saw how music helped others, including myself, become part of the worship service.

Q: What does your min-

istry work demand?

A: I think it demands responsibility primarily. Humility goes along with that and a willingness to serve others.

Q: What do you get from your ministry work?

A: I get the blessings and joy and there are too many to count. And the joy of knowing I can help others draw closer to God through music.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: My sons and daughter-in-law encourage me in whatever I'm involved in, always.

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

A: I'll keep on as long as the Lord lets me enjoy good health.

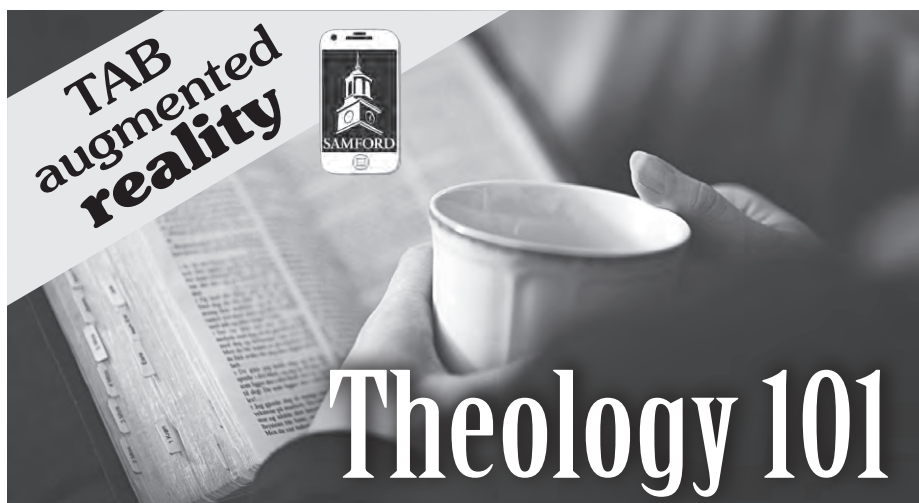
Q: What difference will this ministry work make for you in the future?

A: My purpose is to be faithful as long as I am here on Earth.

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

A: I am continually blessed by the Lord, not for what I do but because He loves me. He's constantly there for me in the good times and a comfort in the bad times. ☪

If you know of a person who should be featured as "Someone You Should Know," send his or her name, a contact number and the reason you think he or she should be featured to: Someone You Should Know, c/o The Alabama Baptist, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209 or news@thealabamabaptist.org.



BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The Word of God Across the Ages**The Apostolic Word**By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
Special to The Alabama Baptist

As the Incarnate Word, Jesus declared the mind of God to His hearers. However, He did not declare the totality of God's word to those who heard Him. The evening before His crucifixion Jesus informed the disciples of this fact saying, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" (John 16:12). The issue was not with Jesus but with the ability of the disciples to receive all that God wanted to reveal. Only with added experience and continued listening would they get the rest of the story. In the face of this limitation Jesus added this explanation, "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13).

After the promised Holy Spirit came upon the apostles and others at Pentecost the apostles began preaching the gospel. In fact persecution became the impetus that thrust them out in every broadening proclamation. Those who had been with Jesus and heard His words took His good news everywhere they scattered. God's continuing revelation through the Spirit began to fill out what still lacked in His revealed truth. Apostolic preaching became the channel for the spoken word of God for several decades before that Word took written form.

Apostles' writing, preaching

God's Word was heard not only in apostolic preaching but also in the writings of the apostles. From almost the beginning of the written epistles there was recognition that those writings carried revelatory authority. For example Peter referred to letters written by Paul as having the same status as other Scriptures, declaring in 2 Peter 3:15-16 that "our beloved brother Paul" wrote letters "according to the wisdom given him as he does in all his letters" before continuing with the frank acknowledgment that "there are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their

own destruction as they do the other Scriptures." The reference to "the other Scriptures" attests that some of Paul's letters were received on a par with other Bible books.

The apostolic preaching and writing were not considered a revelatory word from God simply because they were the activities of apostles. The Spirit of truth inspiring what they apostles proclaimed and wrote caused their words to be the very Word of God. Apparently some of the apostles wrote some letters that were not of this character. They were only ordinary correspondence.

Of particular note would be the correspondence the apostle Paul had with the Corinthian church. Within the two Corinthian letters that are part of the Bible are references to other letters that Paul wrote to the Corinthians. For example in 1 Corinthians 5:9, Paul referred to a prior letter he had written where he urged them to refrain from sexual immorality.

In Paul's case he was told at his conversion that God picked him as a chosen instrument to carry God's message to Gentiles and the children of Israel (Acts 9:15). Years later when writing to the Colossians, Paul mentioned that God had given him the responsibility "to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed" (Col. 1:25-26).

In short God used selected apostles and their close associates to fully reveal His Word through their preaching and writing. We can think of their message as the apostolic Word. ☩

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.

**Church vehicle safety****Following basic tips could lessen risks**

Well-trained and well-maintained" is a good motto for churches when it comes to vehicle safety, said Chip Smith, an associate in the office of LeaderCare and church administration at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

The National Transportation Safety Board reports that 36 percent of bus crashes are from driver fatigue and 20 percent involve improper maintenance.

"Everyone who drives a church vehicle should be trained and every vehicle should be regularly serviced," Smith said, noting the older 15-passenger vans often used by churches are high-risk for rollovers.

Passenger vehicles have less than a 10 percent rollover risk while 15-passenger vans filled to capacity have a 70 percent rollover risk, he said.

"There are several steps churches can take if they own one of these," Smith noted.

1. Remove the back seat.
2. Do not store luggage or other materials in the area where the back seat is removed.
3. Keep at least one-half tank of gasoline to provide stability.
4. Do not attach a top luggage carrier.
5. Do not attach a trailer.
6. Make sure the driver has a CDL license (required by the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration).

If a church has a choice, then it should consider using a bus rather than a 15-passenger van, Smith said.

According to the National Safety Council, buses are rated safer than any other mode of transportation. (Michael J. Brooks)

For more information, contact Smith at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 342, or csmith@alsbom.org.

"Everyone who drives a church vehicle should be trained and every vehicle should be regularly serviced."

**Chip Smith
associate in the office of LeaderCare and church administration
Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions**

OCTOBER IS COOPERATIVE PROGRAM MONTH.



Promotional resources are available at cooperativeprogramresources.org.



Graphic by SBOM

State Convention annual meeting

Daphne's Eastern Shore Baptist to host 2015 annual meeting around theme 'PRAY'

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

PRAY. That's the emphasis of the 2015 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting and something convention speakers, entity leaders and messengers will focus on during the Nov. 17-18 event at Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne.

The acrostic PRAY stands for: Pardon us for our sin; Renew a right spirit within us; Accept our adoration and praise; and Yoke us together in sacrifice and praise.

"We hope many Alabama Baptist churches will elect and send messengers to attend this year's annual meeting," said Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

Guest speaker Ronnie Floyd, Southern Baptist Convention president and pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, will share with messengers Nov. 17, 7:45 p.m. Contemporary classical vocal group Veritas will provide special music.

Veritas is "at home with the contemporary genre and the classical hymns as well," Lance said.

"Each year the Tuesday evening session provides messengers and other guests the opportunity for worship and inspiration and this year will be no exception," he said.

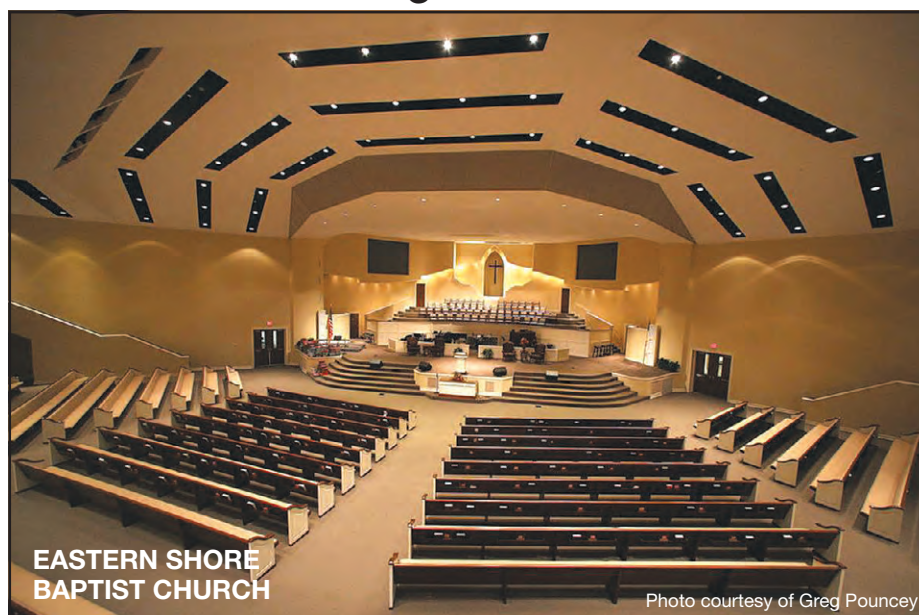


FLOYD

Three theme interpretation sermons will be presented at the annual meeting by Scott Guffin, pastor of Liberty Park Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills; Stuart Davidson, pastor of Eastern Shore Baptist; and Dale Huff, director of SBOM's office of LeaderCare & church administration. Buddy Champion, pastor of First Baptist Church, Trussville, will provide the convention sermon Nov. 18.

Messenger pre-registration information is currently being mailed to churches.

Use #ABSC15 for updates on Twitter and to follow along in the conversation. Follow *The Alabama Baptist* on Twitter @alabamabaptist, www.facebook.com/thealabamabaptist and alerts.thealabamabaptist.org. 📱



EASTERN SHORE BAPTIST CHURCH

Photo courtesy of Greg Pouncey

**2015 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting
Nov. 17-18 / Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne**

For more information including schedule, hotel information, auxiliary meetings and messenger cards, visit abscannualmeeting.org.

Ministry Tips



YOU MAKE THE CALL

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

Lesson learned
Some time ago I learned an extremely valuable lesson from a fellow church member whose occupation involves financial planning. His employer, an investment firm, required him to make 25 meaning-

ful, interactive and responsive touches each day.

Goal accepted

If my friend had such a lofty goal given to him in the realm of business, I reasoned that I should be able to make 20-25 additional touches weekly for the sake of God's kingdom. I began to make lists of people and intentionally increased my "extra" weekly contacts.

Lists made

Some were guests, some were prospects, some were celebrating life victories and some were people going through challenges. I included names of people who had visited the church and people who had been members of the church for years. People from the community at large were on my lists.

No longer "extra"

Every person I put down on the lists was

important to God and important to me. I made "extra" contacts during the week and I set aside time to make "extra" phone calls on Saturdays as a designated "calling day."

It was not always convenient but it was always fruitful. Along the way I realize now that there is nothing "extra" about these calls at all. 📱

A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

Psalm 23 series

Psalm 23:4 — Inside the Valley of the Shadow of Death

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me” (Ps. 23:4).

The video, filmed somewhere in Iraq, is filled with kneeling, blindfolded, orange-clad people. Hands tied behind their backs, the fate of these Christians will soon be realized. Seemingly the masked captors appear to be in control. Little do they know that God is in control and present at that moment.

Later in Charleston, South Carolina, a young man who has been living in the shadow of hatred and fear emerges from the darkness. He walks into the Bible study and sits down, engaging the small group in debate about what they are reading. Later this young man forces evil upon those who willingly invited him into the Light. Instead he brought the shadow of death with him.

The faintest of lights can penetrate the deepest darkness, but for a few brief moments in the two situations the deep darkness overcame the light — or so it seems.

Psalm 23:4 is not about death, it’s about the shadow of death. It’s about such a dark and lonely and frightening place that death seems very near. It’s about a place that seems so very far away from everybody and everything — including God — that we might even wish death would relieve us of the incredible fear and loneliness there.

I don’t know how many people live in the valleys, but there are millions in America who do. There are those who live in the valley of mental illness and homelessness. Some live in the valley of poverty and addiction. These people, if they could, would flee their lives of destitution, sickness and hardship.

But perhaps the worst valleys of the shadow of death are the valleys of bigotry and hatred. It seems as if those who inhabit these valleys want to be there.

These valleys of the shadow of death are evil and malicious. Most of us cannot begin to understand why anyone would not want to find their way out of those dark valleys as soon as possible. Why are some content to live in the



By Jeffrey A. Greer

Jeffrey A. Greer is pastor of Riverchase Baptist Church, Hoover. He and his wife, Ter-ran, have three daughters.

He previously served at Mountain Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham.

shadows — the shadows of death?

John the Gospel writer has an answer for that question, “And this is the judgment: the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the Light and does not come to the Light, lest his works should be exposed” (John 3:19–20).

The reality is this: we live in a world where evil exists and it has existed since the beginning of time. God has been fighting evil for eternity. That’s what He told Job.

Evil loves darkness

And evil loves the darkness. On that Wednesday night in Charleston, evil waited in the dark and struck at dark.

David, who wrote Psalm 23, found himself in the darkness of the valley where the shadow of death was upon him.

We too find ourselves in the valley of the shadow of death from time to time. We find ourselves in the valley of selfishness or greediness. We wander into the valley of revenge and retaliation. We willingly hike down into the valley of jealousy and envy, of strife and conflict.

The truth is, most of us can scratch and claw our way out of the valley. We can use our own strength and courage to find the way out of those valleys.

But death cannot be defeated by our sheer determination. Death, the mere shadow of death, is more than we can overcome. Only God can provide the way out of that valley.

The literal translation of verse 4 is, “Even though I walk through the valley

of deep darkness.” Life in the valley of the shadow of death means a life in darkness.

It is very interesting that David does not say God’s light will guide us out of the valley — that the Light of the world will illuminate our way out of the valley of the shadow of death/deep darkness. Rather it is the rod and the staff of the Shepherd that will comfort us and lead us out of the valley.

David used the shepherd analogy because it is a perfect picture of God. He is not detached from us; He is not distant; He is not aloof. God is in the valley of the shadow of death/darkness with us.

We hear the doubters ask, “Where was God when those people needed Him? When they needed His protection?” The answer is that He was right there with them, guiding them out of the valley of the shadow of death. He was guiding them home.

They were in the light. They knew the Light. They were being and doing everything that God had asked them to be and to do. Psalm 27:1 says, “The Lord is my Light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?”

I’m not saying our Christian brothers and sisters were not afraid as they faced their deaths. The shadow of death is frightening. I’m saying God never left them and never abandoned them.

So where do we go from here?

Some have suggested we abandon the missions field or arm our deacons with guns. I suggest we do what we were called to do: take the Light to the world. It is not a proposal or an idea. It is a command of what we must do. “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

We also must seek out those who live in the darkness. We take light to the darkness. We can take light to those in the valleys of deep darkness. But it will be God who guides them out by His rod and His staff. Guiding people out of the valley of the shadow of death is God’s job. We are here to assist and we should do so as often as we can. But it will be God who leads them. 🕊

Oregon shooter uses religion as reason to kill

Are you a Christian? If you’re a Christian, stand up. Good. Because you’re a Christian, you’re going to see God in just about one second.”

A gunman stalked onto an Oregon college campus Oct. 1 and opened fire, killing nine people and wounding nine as he ordered cowering students to stand up and state their religion before shooting them one by one.

The suspect, who witnesses say fired dozens of shots in a classroom full of screaming students, was slain in an exchange of gunfire with two police officers in Snyder Hall at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, ending the morning rampage.

The gunman was identified as Chris Harper-Mercer, 26, by multiple sources. It was unclear at press time whether he was shot by police or committed suicide.

In a photo posted on a MySpace profile believed to be his, a young man with a shaved head and dark-rimmed eyeglasses is seen staring into the camera while holding a rifle.

CNN reported the suspect was armed with three handguns, a “long gun” and body armor on the day of the shooting.

Eyewitness account

Stacy Boylan, the father of an 18-year-old student who was wounded but survived by playing dead, told CNN his daughter recounted her professor being shot point blank as the assailant stormed into the classroom.

“(The shooter) was able to stand there and start asking people one by one what their religion was,” Boylan said, relating the ordeal as described by his daughter.

Douglas County Sheriff John Hanlin said at press time, “The law enforcement investigation into the shooter and into his motivations is ongoing.” He also said three of the wounded victims were hospitalized in critical condition.

In an Internet posting on the Spiritual Passions dating and social networking site, a user posted a picture that appears to be Harper-Mercer under the user name IRONCROSS45, a handle Harper-Mercer used as his email.

On a torrent sharing website, a user using the same email linked to Harper-Mercer wrote a blog post about Vester Flanagan, the man who shot dead two reporters during a live broadcast in August before killing himself, calling the footage of the shooting “good.”

The massacre in Roseburg, a former timber town on the western edge of the Cascades some 260 miles south of Portland, was the deadliest so far in 2015, surpassing the nine killed in a gun battle between motorcycle gangs in Waco, Texas, in May, and the nine who died in the rampage of a gunman at a black church in Charleston, South Carolina in June.

Umpqua College remained closed until Oct. 5. (RNS)

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

CAMPUS News



UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **Annual University of Mobile Classic Golf Tournament Set for Nov. 13:** The 18th annual University of Mobile (UMobile) Classic Golf Tournament, a four-person scramble that benefits the UMobile Annual Fund, will be held Nov. 13 at Lakewood Golf Club in Point Clear. The tournament begins with registration at 8 a.m. and a shotgun start at 9 a.m. Lunch will be served around 1 p.m.

The deadline to register for the tournament is Oct. 30. To register online, visit umobile.edu/mobile-classic or contact Tonya Gollotte at 251-442-2917 or tgollotte@umobile.edu.

► **Bowland to be Featured Speaker at October Art Talk:** The University of Mobile's

(UMobile) Marilyn Foley Art Gallery will feature artist Julie Bowland at Art Talk on Oct. 22, 1 p.m., on campus. Bowland is a professor of art at Valdosta State University in Georgia and director of the university's Dedo Maranville Fine Arts Gallery.

Bowland's art exhibit, "Earthscares: Paintings in the Open Air," will be on display through Oct. 31 at the gallery. Admission to each is free.

For more information, contact the UMobile art department at 251-442-2283.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford to Host Workshop, Lecture by Science and Religion Scholar:** Samford University's Center for Science and Religion in Birmingham will host

a ministers' workshop and public lecture by scholar Denis Alexander on Oct. 19. The workshop will be offered 2-3:30 p.m. The lecture titled "Science and Faith: More Similar Than You Think" will begin at 7 p.m.

The evening lecture is free and open to the public. For more information on the ministers' workshop, email Josh Reeves at jareeves@samford.edu.

► **Samford Graduates Salluted by NCFR:** Hannah Newman and Claire Kimberly, recent graduates of Samford University in Birmingham, have received accolades for top achievement from the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR).

Newman won NCFR's Outstanding Undergraduate Research Paper Award for her senior research project, "The Relationship Between Parental Conflict Tactics and Sibling Conflict Tactics."

Kimberly was named NCFR's Cindy Winter Scholarship Award recipient for outstanding leadership or service in family studies.

JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson College Hosts Preview and Scholarship Day:** Judson College in Marion hosted its first fall Preview & Scholarship Day on Sept. 19. Prospective Judson students and their parents were invited to visit the Judson campus, explore the college's academic programs, meet current students and faculty and learn more about admissions and financial aid. Judson's fine and performing arts division also held its music and theater auditions, and performing arts scholarships were awarded in piano, organ, voice and theater. ☞

Want to know GOD?

By Jon LaMarque
Youth and outreach pastor
FBC Haleyville

My youth group recently went through a DiscipleNow weekend where the students learned about apologetics. One of the questions studied was, "How does a loving God send people to hell?" What a great question. It seems many in our culture try to make God so loving that He cannot do anything but allow people into heaven. To them it would seem that God sending anyone to hell would disqualify Himself of being loving. However, we must remember God is the standard of all that is right and good. He cannot do any wrong. Therefore God cannot tolerate sin and must punish it. When I break the law by speeding down the interstate I am punished by receiving a ticket and a hefty fine. In the same way we have all broken God's law and because He is a just God, He must punish us. Sin deserves eternal punishment in hell. God would not be just if He declared the guilty innocent. God is fair because He cannot be otherwise.

The good news is that Jesus satisfied God's wrath on the cross. When believers trust God for salvation they escape the righteous judgment of God. Although God punishes evil, He triumphs over it.

God does not force humans to obey Him. We have the capability to choose whether we wish to follow God or our own ways. We can choose to submit to Christ's Lordship in our lives or we can choose to be lord of our own lives. Therefore those who are in hell are there because they chose to reject God and all His goodness. It is unfair to ask how God can sentence sinners to hell when He has done all He can to stop them from going there. He sent Jesus to die in our place, to suffer instead of us so we can have the free gift of eternal life. He has given us His written Word and His Church to point the way. He has pursued us and He is not willing that any should perish. So what about you? Have you submitted to God's ways through faith in Jesus? ☞

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

PASTOR

Liberty Hill Baptist Church in Hampton, Georgia, is accepting resumés for full-time pastor. Please email your resumé to: LHBCpastorsearchcommittee@yahoo.com. Deadline for resumés is Nov. 1.

MINISTER OF MUSIC & EDUCATION

First Baptist Church of Mount Olive is seeking a minister of music and education to lead a growing congregation in blended worship and discipleship programs. Bachelor's required and two to five years experience preferred. Send resumés to: Stephanie@fbcmo.org.

MINISTER OF MUSIC & WORSHIP

FBC of Blakely, Georgia, is seeking a full-time minister of music and worship to replace the current retiring minister of music. We will receive resumés until Dec. 1. Please send resumés to: ldrew@fbcblakely.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.

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.

TWO POSITIONS

Mulberry Baptist Church is seeking to fill two bivocational leadership positions — minister of music and youth minister. For more information and to send resumés, contact Andy Mims: amims279@gmail.com or 205-755-6816.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR/STUDENT MINISTRIES

FBC Florence is accepting resumés for the full-time position of associate pastor/student ministries. Send resumé to: FBC Florence, 209 North Walnut St., Florence, AL 35630.

YOUTH MINISTER

University Baptist Church is seeking a full-time youth minister. Send resumés to: University Baptist Church, ATTN: Ashley Barrios/Search Committee, 904 Me-nard St., Thibodaux, LA 70301, or email: ubc@ubcthobodaux.net.

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.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH/CHILDREN'S MINISTER

River View Baptist located at 1311 California St., Valley, AL, is looking for a bivocational youth/children's minister. Church phone number: 334-756-3078. Send resumé to: Pastor, River View Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1472, Valley, AL 36854.

CHILDREN'S MINISTER

North Shelby Baptist Church is seeking a children's minister. Exciting opportunity for ministry to children and families. 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

SECRETARY/TREASURER

Mount Zion Baptist Church in Warrior, Alabama, is seeking a secretary/treasurer. Send resumés through October to: 2427 Corner Rd., Warrior, AL 35180. Phone 205-647-1938 for details.

BUSINESS

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TRAVEL/VACATION

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TAB augmented reality



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 University's Ministry Training Institute each week. Use your Aurasma app to watch the sixth of an eight-part series on part of the book of Revelation by placing your mobile device over this photo. App instructions noted on page 13.

Baptists in Europe, Serbia, Croatia minister to flood of refugees

Baptist World Aid, the relief and development arm of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), distributed more than \$65,000 in emergency refugee support in Europe during September.

In addition to Germany, Hungary, Sweden and other European nations, Baptists in Serbia and Croatia are providing aid to some of the thousands of refugees that are pouring into these countries.

Dane Vidovic, general secretary of the Union of Baptist Churches in Serbia, clarified that refugee assistance has been given by Serbian Baptists over the past three years "because refugees from those countries are passing through Serbia all that time." However, the situation has intensified over the past several months as refugees "are coming in hundreds and thousands. The situation became desperate and we have intensified our involvement."

Most refugees passing through Serbia "are from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and other Asian, Near East and African countries," Vidovic said. He said church members have volunteered and congregations are distributing food, water and other needs.

Working with Red Cross

In Croatia some 30,000 refugees have entered the country, reported Zeljko Mraz, general secretary of the Baptist Union of Croatia. Mraz said the Croatian government has built a refugee camp with a capacity for 4,000 persons and that the Baptist union received government permission to offer support to those inside the camp. Croatian Baptists also are volunteering 14 students from its school nursing program to work along with the Red Cross.

"We want to be Christ's witnesses to our countrymen and foreigners passing through our country," Mraz explained.

The 2015 European migrant crisis arose through the increasing number of refugees and migrants traveling to the European Union across the Mediterranean Sea or Southeast Europe. A majority of the refugees are from the Middle East, such as Syria, Yemen and Iraq; and Africa, such as Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan.

'More complex by the day'

Baptists in the Middle East also are extending assistance to refugees and other displaced persons in the region.

Alia Abboud, director of development and partner relations for the Baptist-affiliated Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development, said, "The needs both in Syria and in Lebanon are staggering and the situation gets more complex by the day."

Lebanese Baptists offer monthly sustenance to more than 2,000 Syrian families and 400 Iraqi families in Lebanon, nearly 6,000 families in Syria and more than 140 families inside Iraq. Support includes food distribution and health care as well as vocational training and education for 300 Syrian refugee children.

"Again and again we are witnessing God's hand at work both within our partner churches in Lebanon and in Syria, and through them," Abboud said.

Donations may be made online at www.bwanet.org/give or sent to Baptist World Aid, c/o Baptist World Alliance, 405 North Washington Street, Falls Church, VA 22046. (BWA)



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on October 11, 2015
for 50 years of faithful service
in the Ministry with special services
in Tuscaloosa, AL. The Thomas
family has served for the past 36
years at Circlewood. Please
join us for these special services.

Schedule of Events
10:30 a.m.
Praise and Worship/Sanctuary
Guest Speaker: Dr. Junior Hill

2 - 4 p.m. Reception
Christian Life Center

6 p.m.
Praise and Worship/Sanctuary
Guest Speakers:
Rev. Jeremy Burrage
Dr. Ken Cheek
Dr. Sam Day
Rev. Jimmy Garner

REFLECTIONS

"HE NEVER MENTIONS
SPORTS IN HIS MESSAGES.
THAT TAKES A LITTLE GETTING-
USED-TO, BUT I THINK I
LIKE IT."





International Friends Retreat

Photo by Chris Mills

Retreat creates atmosphere for relationship building

WorldSong Missions Place in Cook Springs hosted the third annual International Friends Retreat on Sept. 25-26. The retreat, co-sponsored by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' office of collegiate & student ministries and the Alabama Woman's Missionary Union, seeks to encourage relationship building between international students and American students. The egg-toss game, shown here, was one of several activities at the retreat. About 115 students and leaders from 15 countries who attend Troy University, Judson College, Samford University and other schools participated in the retreat. (TAB)

Texas megachurch Prestonwood Baptist to host Oct. 18 presidential forum

Republican presidential candidates Ben Carson, Ted Cruz, Rick Santorum and Mike Huckabee are reportedly confirmed for a "North Texas Presidential Forum" on Oct. 18, 3 p.m., at Prestonwood Baptist Church, Plano, Texas.

The debate is co-sponsored by the 40,000-member megachurch led by Jack Graham, former Southern Baptist Convention president, and the Faith & Freedom Coalition, a group founded by Christian Coalition organizer Ralph Reed.

Graham said, "As Christians, it is critical that we take seriously our rights as citizens of this great country by educating ourselves on all candidates in any election and to participate fully in the election process by voting our values."

'Great opportunity'

"We cannot afford to stand on the sidelines as our Christian values are continually trampled. This forum is a great opportunity to hear from each of the candidates seeking to lead our country," he said.

Most of the Republican candidates — including Marco Rubio, Donald Trump, Chris Christie, Carly Fiorina, Rand Paul, Jeb Bush, Bobby Jindal and Lindsay Graham — also are invited. So are Democratic candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders. Participants will be invited

to address the audience for 10 minutes, followed by a 10-minute center stage discussion with Graham about the importance of faith in public life.

'Increasingly concerned'

Timothy Head, executive director of the Faith & Freedom Coalition, said evangelical Christians and faithful Catholics "are increasingly concerned about perceived hostility toward faith in America."

"Leading voices of faith are taking a clear stand for the fundamental American principle that no one of any faith should be compelled by government to violate their conscience or deeply held faith," Head said.

"The North Texas Presidential Forum will be an excellent opportunity for prospective leaders to convince thousands of faith-filled Americans that they too will stand unflinchingly for the fundamental rights of faith and freedom." (BNG)

Birmingham authors team up for ministers' writing seminar

Authors Denise George and Lyle Dorsett are teaming up Nov. 5 for The Writing Minister, a one-day seminar that will teach pastors and church leaders about the publishing opportunities available to them.

The seminar will focus on teaching pastors how to write and publish material in books and magazines and adapt previously written sermons, Bible studies, etc., for publication.

George, who is the wife of Beeson Divinity School Dean Timothy George, is the author of 30 books and has published more than 1,500 articles.

Dorsett is the Billy Graham professor of evangelism at Beeson and has published 20 books.

The Writing Minister is sponsored by The Book Writing Boot Camp, an organization founded by Denise George that "equips writers to produce high-quality books and articles" to compete in publishing marketplaces.

The seminar will be 9 a.m.-4 p.m. at Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, and lunch will be provided. The first 50 participants to register using the promotional code "GRANT" will get free registration. (Maggie Walsh)

To register for The Writing Minister or to view other seminars, go to www.bookwritingbootcamp.org.

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TAB augmented reality

Follow these instructions

1 Download the Aurasma app from your app store.

2 Choose the "ALBaptist" profile under channel and tap "Follow." You will only have to do this one time. (Any ALBaptist options will allow you to follow *The Alabama Baptist*.)

3 Tap the [] icon at the bottom of the screen.

4 You will see pulsating dots, which indicate the app is searching for a target. Once it finds a target the dots will turn to a bull's-eye. The bull's-eye will remain until the augmented reality image loads.

5 Hold your device over a page or image in *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) marked as augmented reality and watch the paper come to life.

6 If the image is slow to load at any point, then it may be your data speed or Wi-Fi strength. Change locations and try again.

7 Each week when TAB arrives, open the app and hold your device over the augmented reality articles.

Meeting real needs

Building relationships important to reaching internationals, immigrants

(continued from page 1)

Massachusetts, had no idea this mosque was practically in her backyard.

She "googled" it.

The schoolteacher wanted to learn more about Ramadan, so she went straight to the source — an Islamic

center. They offered classes to outsiders in an effort to build relationships with the community. Elizade grabbed a friend and they began a month-long adventure in learning and understanding the Islamic faith so they would

know how to share their own faith.

"We fell in love with these women from different countries and we couldn't keep Jesus to ourselves," Elizade said.

'Good works' system

"They were amazed that we didn't get anything from God for being nice to them," Elizade said, noting that Muslims believe in a "good works" system.

Becky Gilbert, of Georgia, didn't want to spend her retirement years sitting at home. She looked around the community and saw a growing Ethiopian population. She approached the director of the Ethiopian Community Center and asked a simple question: How could she help meet a need?

The leaders of the community

saw immediately that this retired schoolteacher was exactly what their children needed.

They asked her to tutor the kids and get them ready for school.

Four years later, this tutoring program is a two-week camp before school starts. The program even features a class for parents called "Parenting in America."

And building deep relationships with internationals takes time, just like with any other friendship.

For Dean and Lisa Sides, members of

The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, this process started in the classroom helping medical students with terminology. The couple said they don't bombard the students with the gospel.

They take time to learn the culture of the students and ask God to show them who is seeking Him.

Lisa Sides admitted that she's often surprised at who God brings to them.

"The last person I'd have expected came up to me after class," she said about a student who wasn't a faithful attendee of the study group and never appeared interested in God.

But the student surprised the Sideses when she said, "Every time I come to class there is

"We fell in love with these women from different countries and we couldn't keep Jesus to ourselves."

**Abigail Elizade
Massachusetts schoolteacher**

Tips for reaching international neighbors

- ▶ **Ask someone's story.** They will share if you will listen.
- ▶ **Don't blast people with the Bible** from the first sentence. That's offputting to anyone.
- ▶ **Look for ways to share Scripture.** Make sure it is bilingual so they can better understand in their own language.
- ▶ **Frequent a gas station, restaurant or shop** owned by internationals and form relationships there.
- ▶ **Invite international students to hang out** with your family.
- ▶ **Offer extra help** with English.
- ▶ **Get past the surface stuff** and be a part of their lives.
- ▶ **Don't just share a meal.** Cook together. Teach them a dish and let them teach you.

Tips compiled from interviews by Susie Rain, IMB

such a peace here. Where does that peace come from? Is that from your religion?"

The medical student explained that her mother and grandmother prayed to Buddha back home in China, desperately trying to find this same peace but he never answered. The student put her arm on Lisa Sides' shoulder and said, "I

want that peace. I want to know your God."

God orchestrates opportunities for all people to hear His message. Now is the time for the Church to reach the nations in its own backyard. It's obvious by these examples that methods will vary. But the basics stay the same — using both actions and words to communicate Jesus' love and sacrifice. 🙏



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 11

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

SCATTERED Genesis 11:1-9

United by a Sinful Purpose (1-4)

This story presents a unified humanity using all its resources to build a city that is the antithesis of what God intended when He created the world. The tower is a symbol of human autonomy and the builders of the city see themselves as determining and establishing their own destiny without any mention of God.

Moses' description of humanity's settlement is brief but informative. All of the earth had one language (literally, "one lip"). This common language ought to have promoted a God-honoring oneness of faith but sin was alive and well among Noah's descendants.

As people wandered eastward from Ararat they settled in Mesopotamia on the broad, flat plain of Shinar in what the Talmud calls "the valley of the world." Moses' statement that they settled there is not incidental because settled is the opposite of dispersed. Their settling was in direct opposition to God's post-flood command to "fill the earth" (9:1).

They are going to come together and build for themselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens. They want to make a name for themselves. The Babel enterprise is all about human independence and self-sufficiency apart from God. They do not believe they need God. Their know-how and social unity give them confidence in their own ability and they have high aspirations.

Contrary to God's plan that people should fill the earth, the purpose in building the city and the tower is to prevent the people from being dispersed over the face of the whole earth. Its builders supposed that God was localized, in direct contradiction to the teaching in Genesis. The people had created a god in their own image. Also

their belief that man by his hard work could reach God betrays the fatal delusion of all man-made religion. This delusion is at the heart of every religion apart from the gospel because the world's religions all teach that works result in pleasing God. We must always preach to ourselves the truth that God's pleasure in us is not based on our performance for Him but rather on Christ's performance for us.

The city and tower builders were a broken people. The fact that they feared being scattered is proof that their fellowship with God and their unity with each other had been shattered by sin.

Reviewed by God (5)

Moses is utilizing irony as he writes that the Lord has to come down in order to see the city and the tower. It's as if God stoops down like a man on His hands and knees and lowers His face to the earth to see the great tower. In comparison to the Creator God, the tower was microscopic. The psalmist writes: "He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision" (Ps. 2:4).

Scattered by Confusion (6-9)

Acknowledging the potential danger of a unified, self-confident, sinful humanity, God goes down and confuses their language so they cannot understand one another. God was not threatened by a unified, sinful humanity. He was troubled by what would happen to humanity if the human rebellion was left unchecked. They would build up a delusion of self-sufficiency through their false religion, corporate security and political uniformity. They would attempt to throw off God and seek to rule the earth for themselves. And in their delusion they would never turn to God.

The hammer falls and God's judgment is swift. God confuses their language. This has the desired effect of dispersing the people throughout the world. ¶

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

GOD'S PROMISE OF A NEW HOME Revelation 21:1-8

Back when I was still a teenager the options for distracting oneself during a boring sermon were decidedly limited. Cell phones did not yet exist and passing notes was only fun for a little while. One's only escape in such dire circumstances was to turn to some Bible passage more interesting than the one the pastor was droning on about.

Finding myself in this difficult spot once upon a time, I turned to what is surely the most interesting part of the Bible, the book of Revelation. It was here that I stumbled upon a passage that, frankly, I found scandalous: "The first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea" (v. 1). While I recall being somewhat ambivalent about the notion that God would one day create a new heaven and earth, the idea that God would create a new world without what I considered to be the best part of the present world — the sea — was outrageous. It would take decades of study to understand where I and the biblical author had parted company.

For a modern person the sea conjures up pleasant notions, but the ancient Israelites harbored no such notions. Although bordered by the sea for the length of their country, the Israelites avoided the sea at all costs. Their directions faced east, calling the south "right," the north "left" and placing the sea at their backs. Unlike most of their neighbors, they had virtually no navy. When the prophet Jonah set out to sea he had to do so under the command of foreign sailors. The very fact that Jonah went to sea rather than to Egypt is instructive, the prophet was not trying to escape Nineveh, he was trying to escape from God. Even Jonah, a prophet of Israel, believed God was not in control of the sea.

When we turn to Genesis 1, it is fascinating to note that creation begins with God's exertion of control over the sea. The ancient Israelites did not think of the sea as a benign natural force. On the contrary, the sea was regarded as a malevolent power, opposed to the creative will of God. Over the course of the first half of the creation week God extended His control over the sea, separating water from water and water from land. Importantly, at the end of the creation week, while the sea had been controlled it had not been done away with altogether. At any moment it stood ready to break out again and wreak havoc.

The author of Revelation understood Genesis 1, so he borrowed the imagery to say one day God would finish His creative work. There would one day come a time when there would be no more sea.

Our new home will be in God's presence. (1-3)

Revelation 21 begins with a clear allusion back to Genesis 1. One day, the author assures, there will be a new heaven and a new earth and the malevolent sea will be no more.

Our new home will be perfect. (4-5)

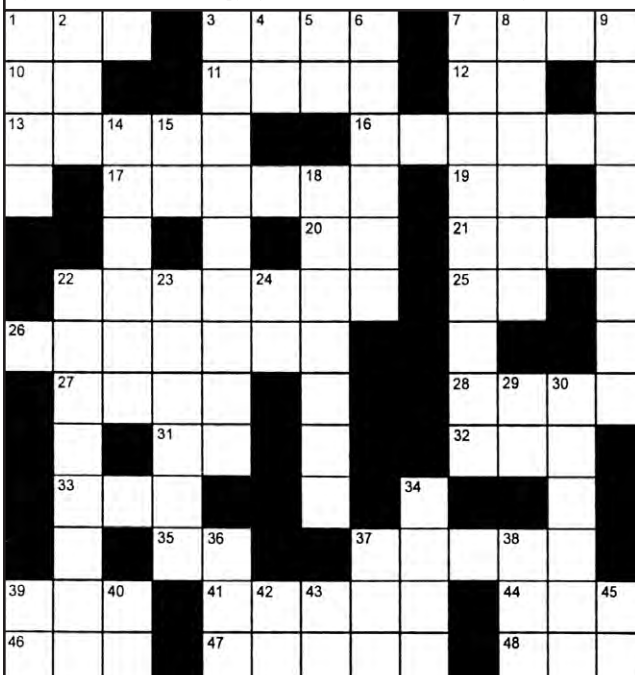
"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." The basis for this renewal of creation rests in the work of God's Son. He is the One who proclaims, "Behold, I make all things new."

Our new home is based on our relationship with Christ. (6-8)

But all may take part in this new creation. After all, the same One who announced He would make all things new also said, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life." ¶

Christian Crossword

By Susan F. Weimer Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- The ___ that covereth the inwards. (Lev. 3:3)
- Went to sojourn in the country of ___. (Ruth 1:1)
- Jehu destroyed ___ out of Israel. (2 Kings 10:28)
- He placed ___ the east of the garden. (Gen. 3:24)
- ___ also to save them to the uttermost. (Heb. 7:25)
- Associated Press. (abbr.)
- Nor height, nor ___, nor any other. (Rom. 8:39)
- The Lord sent ___ unto David. (2 Sam. 12:1)
- Unto ___ the prophet the son of Amoz. (Isa. 37:2)
- Short for "hello."
- Bureau. (abbr.)
- Zimri, the son of ___, a prince. (Num. 25:14)
- He shall send them a ___. (Isa. 19:20)
- Her Highness. (abbr.)
- In thee shall all ___ be blessed. (Gal. 3:8)
- An eagle stirreth up her

- ___ (Deut. 32:11)
- Ye shall find the ___. (Luke 2:12)
- Hi in the mirror.
- Of fowls also of the ___. (Gen. 7:3)
- In addition, also.
- New Jersey. (abbr.)
- Nehemiah the son of ___. (Neh. 3:16)
- Not on.
- Being a wild ___ tree. (Rom. 11:17)
- Though they be ___ like crimson. (Isa. 1:18)
- Short for "good-bye."
- The name of it called ___. (Gen. 11:9)
- There was no room for them in the ___. (Luke 2:7)
- Obadiah. (abbr.)
- Alabama. (ZIP code abbr.)
- These are their names: ___ in the hill country. (1 Kings 4:8)
- David comforted ___ his wife. (2 Sam. 12:24)
- The son of a Benjamite. (1 Sam. 9:1)
- Heard them speak in his own ___. (Acts 2:6)
- ___ then went out unto them. (John 18:29)
- Tensile strength. (abbr.)
- Proud, ___, disobedient to their parents. (2 Tim. 3:2)
- ___ them through thy truth. (John 17:17)
- Seal up the ___ and prophecy. (Dan. 9:24)
- To be upon.
- Joshua had taken ___. (Josh. 10:1)
- Because of unbelief they were ___ off. (Rom. 11:20)
- ___ had six sons.

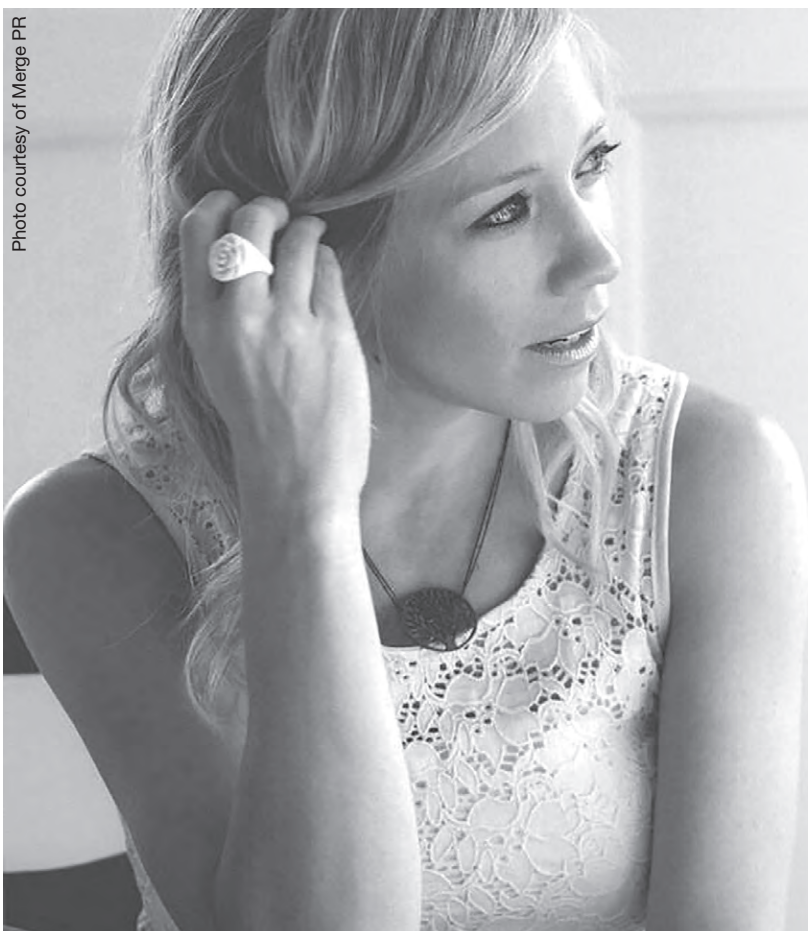
Down

- Shall the rich man ___ away. (James 1:11)
- Men ___ the bread of angels. (Ps. 78:25)
- The three and 20th to ___. (1 Chron. 25:30)

- (1 Chron. 9:44)
- These three men, Noah, Daniel, and ___ were in it. (Ezek. 14:14)
- Avenue. (abbr.)
- I have called by name Bezaleel the son of ___. (Ex. 31:2)
- Obstetrics. (abbr.)
- Chemical symbol for iron.
- The sixth tone of the diatonic scale.
- Ibidem.
- Daniel. (abbr.)



Photo courtesy of Merge PR



*“I don’t know where the road will lead
... the only thing I know is that I’m
supposed to keep my eyes on Him.”*

Ellie Holcomb
Christian artist

‘Singing truth’

Scriptures inspire new artist Holcomb to ‘step forward in faith’ into new career

By **Leann Callaway**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

While searching through Scriptures for songwriting material, Ellie Holcomb was immediately moved by Hosea 6:3, “Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge Him.

As surely as the sun rises, He will appear; He will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth.”

With this verse serving as the catalyst for Holcomb’s debut album, “As Sure As The Sun,” Holcomb’s poignant lyrics deeply impacted audiences around the country.

“God doesn’t promise that life will be easy,” Holcomb noted. “There will be many trials in life, but we know that Jesus understands each element of suffering and He is with us every step of the way. Jesus is right there walking with us and pressing on with us. God is able to heal any broken heart or broken situation.”

‘Healing and redemption’

“I know this to be true because God has taken the most broken parts of my story and He has brought healing and redemption. I’ve seen Him do the same thing in the lives of my friends who are walking through such trials where you wonder how Romans 8:28 can be true, and you wonder how God can work all things for the good of those who love Him and have been called according to His purpose.

“You wonder how God is going to show up, then lo and behold, He always does. The story of the cross reso-

nates because there was great pain, great suffering and great betrayal. Praise God that wasn’t the final outcome because Jesus walked out of the grave. No matter the situation or heartbreak, Jesus is greater because He has victory over death. If our hope is in Him, we can abide in His overwhelming love, grace and redemption.”

Continuing to honor God

While garnering New Artist of the Year honors at the 2014 Dove Awards in Nashville the accolades haven’t changed Holcomb, who is 1 of only 2 independent artists who have won this award. She continues searching for ways to honor God through music and blessing others with her gift.

Before starting her musical journey Holcomb taught English to middle school and high school students.

Although she enjoyed teaching, she began to develop a passion for music while watching her husband perform with his band, Drew Holcomb and the Neighbors.

By seeking God’s guidance and direction, Holcomb sensed God was calling her to leave the classroom and pursue music full time.

With her new role and ministry taking shape, Holcomb realized the importance of connecting teenagers and young adults to Christ’s redeeming love.

“Where there is truth, there is freedom,” Holcomb said. “I’ve also learned that freedom is grace [in] being

fully known with all of my mistakes and shame, and still being fully loved because of what Jesus did on the cross.

“One of my songs, ‘Marvelous Light,’ is based on 1 Peter 2:9, which talks about praising the One who has called us out of the darkness and into His marvelous light.

“When I think about what I want to be doing, it’s singing truth into the darkness. If I can play any part of inviting people into the joy and freedom that I’ve found in coming just as I am to the foot of the cross, I want to be a part of that story. I want to encourage the wounded and weary in the church pews.”

As Holcomb performs concerts around the country, she loves to tell stories through songs and create conversations for audiences to enjoy.

“I never really planned on being an artist, but I took one step forward in faith,” Holcomb said. “When I felt God calling me into music I also felt called to help refresh and encourage the hearts of believers and bring freedom where there is none. When I felt that stirring in my heart, that’s when I knew to say ‘yes’ to this vocation.

“With each step forward, it’s been incredible how God has opened

doors and provided in ways I never could have imagined. I’m just walking in faith and following where God leads. I’m just glad to be along for the ride. I don’t know where the road will lead, but the only thing I know is that I’m supposed to keep my eyes on Him.”



*“Freedom is grace [in] being fully known with all of my mistakes and shame,
and still being fully loved because of what Jesus did on the cross.”*

Ellie Holcomb, 2014 Dove Awards New Artist of the Year



God's creation

Photo by Lauren C. Grim

SBC leader helps draft statement on animal welfare

A Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) leader helped draft a statement against animal cruelty released Sept. 30 that is being hailed as a possible tipping point for raising animal-rights awareness among evangelicals.

On the heels of Pope Francis' June encyclical terming any act of animal cruelty "contrary to human dignity" and just before the Oct. 4 feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, which liturgical traditions observe with a special ceremony called the Blessing of the Animals, a group of evangelical pastors, scholars and theologians issued a declaration titled "Every Living Thing: An Evangelical Statement on Responsible Care for Animals."

The statement, drafted with participation by Barrett Duke, Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission vice president for public policy and research, calls for "confronting any and all cruelty against animals, seeing it as a violation of our rule and an affront to the ultimate Ruler who created, values and sustains these animals."

While Scripture teaches that God gave mankind authority to rule over the animals and to use them for food, the statement says, "This does not mean we can treat them as objects or act cruelly toward them."

Unveiled in a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, the statement is a first step in a comprehensive campaign aimed at uniting evangelical Christians in a Scripture-based call for animal welfare.

Compassionate care

The movement began in 2011 with a discussion involving Duke and two other co-authors, Michael Cromartie, of the Ethics & Public Policy Center, and Mark Rodgers, of the Clapham Group, at a lunch of evangelical leaders discussing how Christian faith compels believers toward compassionate and thoughtful care of God's creatures.

Discussing the tradition of animal welfare gleaned from past leaders such as Methodist founder John Wesley, British abolitionist William Wilberforce, author C.S. Lewis and evangelist Billy

Graham, the trio determined it an issue that needed to continue in their Christian legacy.

In a survey commissioned by Every Living Thing, LifeWay Research reported Sept. 30 that 89 percent of Protestant pastors said Christians have a responsibility to speak out against animal cruelty. Two-thirds, however, said they seldom or never preach about the treatment of animals and 4 in 5 said their churches are not involved in animal welfare issues in the community.

Scott McConnell, vice president of LifeWay Research, said the disparity between pastors' beliefs and churches' action represents "a noteworthy gap" that merits exploration.

The statement affirms that God created humans as distinct from and superior to animals, but when sin entered the world it corrupted relationships not only between humans but also between humankind and animals.

"God included animals in the covenant He made after the flood and commands us to show the same respect and concern for the life and welfare of animals that He does," the statement says.

An accompanying background essay rejects and disagrees with arguments that the Bible mandates a vegetarian or vegan diet. It notes, however, that the Hebrew word in Genesis 2:7 translated "the breath of life" describing the creation of man also is applied to animals in Genesis 1:30.

"We resolve to rule and treat all animals as living valued creatures deserving of compassion because they ultimately belong to God, because He has created them, declared them good, given them the breath of life, covenanted with them and entrusted them to our responsible rule," the statement says.

"We resolve to examine all our practices relating to how we treat the domesticated animals that live among us and provide us with companionship, food and service as well how we treat animals that live in the wild apart from us.

"We resolve that because all kinds of animals are created by God and are sustained by Him, we need to work for the protection and preservation of all kinds of animals God has created, while prioritizing human needs." (BNG)

"We resolve to rule and treat all animals as living valued creatures."

'Every Living Thing: An Evangelical Statement on Responsible Care for Animals'



World of RELIGION
Compiled from Wire Services

Pope addresses UN about abortion, environment, more

NEW YORK CITY — Pope Francis told world leaders gathered at the United Nations on Sept. 25 they must work to protect creation because "a true 'right of the environment' does exist" — a right he said was bound up with a moral duty to assure the basic needs of "the vast ranks of the excluded."

The global environment and the world's powerless, he added, "are closely interconnected and made increasingly fragile by dominant political and economic relationships."

Francis called for world leaders to secure for all people, and especially families, an "absolute minimum" of "lodging, labor and land" as well as "spiritual freedom which includes religious freedom, the right to education and other civil rights."

"Without the recognition of certain incontestable natural ethical limits and without the immediate implementation of those pillars of integral human development," Francis said, the goal of social progress "risks becoming an unattainable illusion or, even worse, idle chatter which serves as a cover for all kinds of abuse and corruption or for carrying out an ideological colonization by the imposition of anomalous models and lifestyles which are alien to people's identity and, in the end, irresponsible." (RNS)

Brazil, Peru break ties with PCUSA over gay 'marriage'

LOUISVILLE, Kentucky — In another example of Christian discord over gay inclusion, Presbyterian churches in Brazil and Peru have ended their partnerships with the Presbyterian Church (USA) after the U.S. denomination changed its constitution in March to allow clergy to celebrate same-sex "marriages."

The loss of the South American partnerships comes on top of the 50 U.S. congregations that formally split from the 1.8 million-member denomination since the church policy changed, PCUSA officials say.

In its letter ending the partnership, the Brazilian church praised PCUSA for its "notable contribution to the expansion of God's kingdom." It also called the U.S. church's stance on LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender) people "against the principle of the authority of Scripture over the life and faith of the Church."

The breaks mean the denomination can no longer participate in some programs in Brazil and Peru. (RNS)

British Parliament rejects controversial right-to-die bill

CANTERBURY, England — British parliamentarians soundly rejected a right-to-die bill Sept. 11 that would have allowed people with less than six months to live to end their life legally. Assisting a suicide is a crime in the U.K., punishable by up to 14 years in prison.

Only 118 members of Parliament voted in favor of the bill while 330 voted against it. Prime Minister David Cameron opposed any effort to legalize assisted dying.

The bill was largely modeled on assisted dying bills already in place in five U.S. states including Oregon.

A letter written by Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and signed by leading representatives of the Roman Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and Sikh faiths claims the proposed bill crosses "a legal and ethical Rubicon" which would turn suicide into a social norm. (RNS)

Mass. pastor accused of persecuting LGBT abroad

SPRINGFIELD, Massachusetts — Scott Lively, president of Abiding Truth Ministries in Springfield, Massachusetts, is being accused of persecuting LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender) people abroad by Sexual Minorities Uganda.

Sexual Minorities Uganda, an LGBT advocacy group, alleges that Lively conspired with Ugandan religious and political leaders since 2002 to incite anti-gay sentiment in that country that has resulted in housing and employment discrimination, arrest, torture and the murder of gays and lesbians. The case, filed in 2012, is expected to go to trial in early 2016 in a U.S. district court in Massachusetts. If convicted, Lively could face a fine. (RNS)