



INSIDE



Alabama Baptist DR continue to serve in SC doing mud out/clean up

◆ Page 4



Christian workers reach out to Yemeni refugees during Houthi takeover

◆ Page 5



Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference to encourage pastors to 'Clear the Stage'

◆ Page 9

No tricks, only treats

Fall festivals as outreach events can be fun but proper precautions are vital

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Fall festivals are fun but broken bones, food poisoning and burns are not. That's why churches should take steps to protect themselves and their guests from unnecessary risks during special outreach events.

Before hosting any special event, a church should first make sure its insurance policy covers activities that are outside the normal ministry schedule.

"From a risk management standpoint, what often happens is that churches don't think about exposures. They are only thinking about having fun. Danger doesn't even cross their mind," said Arthur Williams, an account executive with insurance firm Byars Wright Inc. in Jasper.

However, some insurance policies have special events exclusions, which means if an injury or accident happens during the event the church has no insurance protection. A church needs to know the specifics of what its insurance policy will and will not cover.

"Check with your agent and confirm there is no exclusion and that the church does have liability and medical payments coverage for special events held on the premises," Williams said. "Most of the time, you should be able to get your insurer to include that within your policy if it's not already included."

Planning team responsibilities

Once insurance coverage is confirmed, the event planning team should consider every aspect of the event and take precautions to improve the safety of the participants and volunteers.

If vendors or volunteers who are not affiliated with the church will be involved,

it is important to vet those who will be on campus.

"One important question is do you know the volunteers," Williams said. "In terms of church insurance, volunteers who work with children have usually undergone a background check. Make sure you know the people who are working with children."

Outside vendors, like those who rent inflatable bounce houses or food carts, should have some insurance coverage for their business, Williams said. He suggests checking an operator's references and insurance coverage ahead of time so there are no surprises later.

Food safety concerns

No festival is complete without treats, which means food safety concerns are another area that should be addressed in event planning.

Mark Sestak, deputy director of the division of food, milk and lodging for the Alabama Department of Public Health, suggests three key precautions that can help avoid foodborne illnesses at special events.

One is proper temperature control of foods like meat and poultry, dairy products, cooked vegetables and pasta. Hot foods should be held at 135 degrees or above and cold foods at 41 degrees or below for optimal safety, Sestak said.

The health of volunteers or employees also is important. While it might seem obvious, Sestak says any workers or volunteers who have had fever, sore throat

(See 'Supervision,' page 3)



TAB augmented reality



Photo by Neisha Roberts

TAB augmented reality



Have you tried it yet?

TAB augmented reality is here.
Check out page 11 for more details.

COMMENT

Life at Good Shepherd Church

Good Shepherd Baptist Church was known as a good church. It was one of the larger churches in its corner of the county, located in a small town that some might call a village. The church counted educators, business owners and a few other professionals among its members, but most were farmers or workers in the light manufacturing plant on the edge of town.

Even though there were about 100 families at Good Shepherd, everyone still knew what was going on in the lives of everyone else. That is just the way life is in a small southern community.

Pastor Rae was proud to serve Good Shepherd and worked hard to be a good pastor. Every time he stepped into the pulpit he was prepared through study and prayer. His Bible teaching was easy to understand. He even carried peppermint candy in his coat pocket to give to the children who flocked around him after church. Pastor Rae loved little children.

In fact Pastor Rae loved everybody and everybody seemed to love him. One day he told his wife he would be content to spend the rest of his ministry right there serving Good Shepherd. The feeling was mutual. The members and townspeople would have been pleased for him to stay too.

No jobs nearby

Things were going well until the local plant closed. The plant manager was transferred by the company to an out-of-state location but all other employees were laid off. Many found work elsewhere but one of the leading church families was not so fortunate. The father had been a production manager at the plant and there was nothing available for him anywhere nearby.

Weeks stretched into months and soon the family's financial resources were used up. Financial difficulties created stress in the family. Arguments between husband and wife became more frequent. Accusations began to fly back and forth. The couple tried to put a good face on the situation but it was obvious to Pastor Rae things were not going well.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

The anxiety in the family took its toll on the children. Their teenage son began to act out in unhealthy ways. Their vivacious young daughter became moody and withdrawn. Her schoolwork began to suffer. The whole family became less active in church.

Pastor Rae prayed for the family regularly but as their circumstances became more dire he decided to exercise pastoral initiative and see if he could help. A visit with the couple in their home validated many of his concerns. Pastor Rae decided to do whatever he could to help. He wrote letters of recommendation for the husband and even called friends in surrounding communities to see if he could find a job opening for which the husband could apply.

He shared books with the family and even arranged for some professional marriage counseling at his expense.

Pastor Rae spent time with the son listening to his complaints about how life had changed, about what was going on at home and, eventually, remorseful confessions about his unfortunate choices. One afternoon the pastor bought the young daughter a Dairy Queen sundae and the two talked about a lot of things including what was going on at home.

One conversation became five and five became 10. Days of helping the appreciative family became weeks and then months. Other families at the church began to grumble. Pastor Rae spent less time visiting the homebound, they charged. Pastor Rae rushed in and out for hospital visits. Pastor Rae didn't check on those who missed church last Sunday. Pastor Rae even missed a committee meeting once in order to help the couple's son with a special problem.

The rumble of unhappiness began to build in the congregation until complaints were widespread. Some said the pastor was playing favorites by spending so much energy on one family. Some said the pastor was shirking his responsibilities by spending so much time with the needy family.

In a community where everyone knows everything about everybody, Pastor Rae soon became aware of the storm that was brewing over his ministry. He was going to have to make a decision and that decision would have consequences for him, the church and the needy family.

Would Pastor Rae conclude he had done enough for the family and he could help them no more? Would he agree he had neglected the needs of the

other families in Good Shepherd Church and now needed to devote his attention to them? Would he decide he could not jeopardize his ministry at the church just to take care of one family?

Most pressing needs

Would he determine he had to tend to the most pressing needs in the church congregation (the hurting family) and trust God for the consequences?

In Luke 15:4, Jesus said, "Suppose one of you has 100 sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the 99 in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?"

In Matthew's version of the story Jesus adds that when the shepherd finds the sheep "he is happier about that one sheep than about the 99 who did not wander off" (Matt. 18:13).

One longtime authority on pastoral ministry interpreted that parable to teach that "the wise minister will know how to weed out the trivia. ... He will be able to leave the 90 and nine who make unhappy noises and spend useful time with the one who is quietly withering under the curse, famished for the blessing."

What do you think it means? What advice would you give Pastor Rae? ☞

**"Suppose one of you
has 100 sheep and loses
one of them. Does he
not leave the 99 in the
open country and go
after the lost sheep?"**

Luke 15:4

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

CHANGES AT IMB

As retired missionaries, 22 years in Southern Africa, we are very concerned about the new trend in missions strategy taken by the International Mission Board (IMB) under the leadership of David Platt.

Our greatest concern is the statement, "no drop off in gospel wit-

ness will occur." How can he be so certain when he has no appointed experience in missions [and] neither do the "business" people he has appointed in the leadership? Removing 800 people from service who have given their lives to reach people for Christ and establish churches and then replacing them with short-term,

volunteer, student, retirees and business personnel — especially with them providing their own support — could never do the job of veteran missionaries. These
(See 'Letters,' page 13)





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

(ISSN 0738-7741;
USPS 011-080)

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

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

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

**DR. BOBBY S. TERRY
EDITOR**

Jennifer Davis Rash
Executive Editor

Neisha Roberts
Editorial Production Coordinator

Maggie Walsh
News Writer

Lauren C. Grim
Designer

Wanda Bergeron
Local Editions

Linda Harrison
Financial Administrator

Bill Gilmore
Advertising Director

Debbie Campbell
Director of Circulation
and Public Relations

NEWS SERVICES
Baptist Press (BP), Baptist News
Global (BNG), Religion News
Service (RNS), Forum 18 (F18),
Morning Star News (MS).

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
The Alabama Baptist
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209

ADDRESS CHANGE
Send old and new addresses,
and name of church to:
Circulation Department
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209
Allow two weeks.

To the best of our knowledge,
all of the ads in *The Alabama
Baptist* represent legitimate
companies and offerings.
However, one should always
exercise normal business
caution in responding to ads.

Full member of
Alabama Press Association

'Nation's Top Regional
Christian Newspaper'

1999, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009,
2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014
as judged by Associated
Church Press, Evangelical
Press Association or Religion
Communicators Council

Supervision is critical

Frequent hand-washing, traffic control help make festivals safe

(continued from page 1)

or symptoms of vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours shouldn't be involved in food preparation activities.

A third precaution is to set up hand-washing or sanitizing stations, especially in locations near food.

"Frequent hand-washing and no bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods by using gloves or tongs are very important in reducing the risk of foodborne illness," Sestak said.

Since fall festival activities are often set up outdoors, supervision is a critical part of a successful event. For example hayrides are a popular activity at fall events, but injuries from falls off hay trailers can be significant, ranging from broken bones and concussions to fatalities. Even simple precautions, like making riders sit still, improve rider safety. It also is important for the driver to be an experienced adult and for the equipment to be in good shape with adequate safety lighting and warning signs.

Though hayride accidents that involve law enforcement are rare, they do happen, according to Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) spokeswoman Robyn Bradley Bryan. That's why responsible adult supervision is a must. ALEA

also urges hayride operators to stay off roadways and find alternate routes with little or no traffic, Bryan said.

Another common activity in the fall is a bonfire, which also requires careful supervision especially when children are present. Local fire departments can provide specific requirements and might even help manage

the event. Generally the ideal size for a bonfire area and flames is 3 feet around by 3 feet in height, according to Brotherhood Mutual Insurance. Fires should only be started with wood and lighters. Highly flammable accelerators like lighter fluid or gasoline should not be used.

If a bonfire is part of the event, then it is important to keep extinguishing equipment (buckets of water, garden hoses or fire extinguishers) nearby. Once the event is over, the embers should be completely extinguished before everyone leaves the area.

In addition to supervising specific activities, supervising traffic flow and walking paths throughout the event is essential to safety for everyone, especially young children.



Photo courtesy of NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville

Brotherhood Mutual Insurance recommends having separate areas for parking and activities. For example at a Trunk-or-Treat event designate an area for decorated cars and an area for visiting cars to minimize hazards. Supervisors should monitor the area where cars are moving and keep children as far away as possible.

Help from local police

Traffic control is one area where local police might be willing to help. Sharon Anderson, a member of the planning team for the Rock Run/Spring Garden Community Fall Festival in Cherokee County, said the police department is involved in their event which helps with safety and traffic flow. The fire department comes to help as well.

With planning, preparation and proper supervision, any church or organization can have a fantastic fall event that connects them with the community in a fresh way which is often the goal, said Anderson, whose husband, Michael, is pastor of Salem Baptist Church, Piedmont.

"Ours is a small community event with nine churches coming together to plan a day of fun," she said. "Outreach is definitely one of our goals. Many of our local churches have seen people who came to the fall festival and then started attending church, so we believe we are having a real impact on people." ❧



Photo courtesy of NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville

Ministry Tips

USE A FALL FESTIVAL FOR OUTREACH

By Chip Warren
Minister of education, FBC Albertville

Many churches of all sizes in our state have some type of fall festival. If you are not intentional about outreach as you plan the event, it will become just another fun event for your church. The outreach aspect will not happen unless you plan it. Here are a few suggestions on how to make your fall festival outreach-driven.

► Train your church members to have gospel conversations as they mingle in the crowd.

► Make candy/prize packets that include information about your church and a gospel tract. There are many "Halloween" themed gospel tracts for kids but also include adult gospel tracts.

► Register all who attend. Train the registration team to be sure the card

is complete. Be sure there is a place to indicate whether the person attends church anywhere regularly and if so where.

► Develop a plan to follow up with those who have no church home.

► Have a "live stage" with a kids/family gospel presenter or entertainer, Christian band, etc. Even those who may not sit in chairs in front of the stage are hearing the gospel. ❧



The Lord provides

Disaster Relief teams continue to minister in SC

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

It's been hard, back-breaking work for the Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (DR) volunteers and others who have given of their time the past two weeks to help those in need in South Carolina.

After record rainfall and disastrous flooding caused by Hurricane Joaquin, Alabama Baptist DR was called upon for assistance and teams began arriving in South Carolina around Oct. 11, according to John Hayes, an Alabama white hat who also arrived with the first team.

The first round of volunteers, totaling 62 from Bessemer, Etowah, Cleburne and Elmore Baptist associations, worked together on clean up/recovery/mud out teams, assessment teams, administration, a separate chaplain team and a feeding unit.

Hayes said teams from Alabama, South Carolina and Oklahoma are working together through an established operation center at North Trenholm Baptist Church, Columbia.

Go in, clean out

At press time, Hayes said teams had mainly been working on mud out operations because houses were flooded and the teams "go in and clean the stuff out and throw away the damaged items."

Alabama DR teams also have been sanitizing cleaned-out homes and helping families sort through their belongings because the two counties that Columbia sits in require the debris to be sorted into building debris, clothing, trash, etc.

"That part is time consuming and hard work but it's also a great opportunity to minister to the homeowners and work with them," Hayes said. "It's also a time to witness to the neighborhood as we work out in

the streets. ... These people are sitting there seeing everything they own piled on the street. We have a chaplain on every team and their primary purpose is to talk to and minister to the people [through this crisis]."



Photo courtesy of Charleen Hobbs
Members of a feeding unit team prepare meals for volunteers in Columbia, South Carolina.

Mel Johnson, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), said, "Alabama has been asked to assume complete onsite responsibility and coordination in the Columbia area for our volunteers as well as any incoming teams from other states. We have committed to manage the area-wide effort and will continue operations as needs dictate."

A second rotation of five teams deployed over the Oct.

17-18 weekend to work in clean up/recovery/mud out. Some team members also will work in administration, as a feeding unit and on a chaplain team. The teams serving Oct. 18-24 are from Alabama's DR districts 4, 7 and 12.

Mark Wakefield, an associate in the SBOM office of global missions and state chaplaincy strategist, was in Columbia until Oct. 15.

Sharing the gospel

He shared a story about an elderly Jewish woman in the city who lived in a severely flooded area. Her home was destroyed. She later shared her story of how she had cried out to God, not knowing who to turn to, when the doorbell rang. It was two Alabama Baptist DR chaplains. They ministered to her and got her connected to receive DR assistance.

"It's a phenomenal thing how the Lord provides," Wakefield said. "And in time maybe we will be able to lead her and others in her neighborhood to the Lord." ❏



Photo courtesy of Natalie Walker

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief teams from Bessemer Baptist Association work on removing debris from a yard in Columbia, South Carolina. Record rainfall caused severe flooding in the state.

ACADEMY OF THE ARTS
REGISTRATION
NOW OPEN
Classes for adults and children

FOR 10% OFF ART COURSES, USE CODE: ARTS10
Art 205-726-2739 • Music 205-726-4049
www.samford.edu/go/aota

CLASSES

- Piano
- Photography
- Painting
- Antiques
- Voice
- Drawing
- Creative Writing
- Other Instruments

"PLACING ARTISTRY IN YOUR HANDS"

SAMFORD ACADEMY of the Arts

MERCYME
GREATER THAN TOUR

88.1 WAY-FM
also on 99.5 wayfm.com

FEATURING

PHIL WICKHAM

TIM TIMMONS

JOHN LYNCH

MERCYME.ORG | COMPASSION | GRAND CANYON UNIVERSITY

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2015 / 7 PM
Von Braun Center Arena / 700 Monroe Street / Huntsville, AL

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT THE VBC BOX OFFICE AND AT WAYFM.COM

LOGOS

DR. RAMSAY NUWAYHID
FACIAL ESTHETICS & COSMETIC DENTISTRY

Crossroad Baptist Church's 2015
Holiday Craft Market

Saturday, October 24
9 a.m.-2 p.m.

CROSSROAD BAPTIST CHURCH
744 Dee Hendrix Rd., Hueytown, AL 35023

Overcoming the unrest

Christians reach out to hurting Yemenis during Houthi takeover

Yemenis tend to be laid-back, gentle and peaceful, says Shellby Voss, a Christian worker in the Middle East. She noted many of them seem to pride themselves on Yemen being one of the few Arab countries that had a nonviolent Arab Spring.

Disillusioned

However, the Houthi rebels' takeover of much of the country has been disillusioning for many Yemenis. When the Houthis first seized the capital city, Sanaa, in September 2014, the Yemeni people were confident they would be able to pull themselves together as a nation. But now, more than a year later, the Houthis also have taken the port city of Aden, President Hadi has fled to Saudi Arabia and peace talks in Geneva have produced no positive movement. Many

Yemenis are losing hope the fighting will end any time soon.

As the conflict carries on, more are looking to flee the violence. Djibouti is the most practical option for many refugees. Its borders remain open to them and it has an airport for those with passports and money. Unfortunately the sea provides the most reliable route to Djibouti, necessitating more than 13 hours on a barge.

Voss and her husband, Greg, recently visited Djibouti's Obock refugee camp to see what immediate needs they could meet. They said conditions in the camp were dismal at best, with no electricity and little water. The refugees who lived near the front of the camp had a few foam mattresses, though not nearly enough for their large families. Rice and noodles had been distributed randomly but most families had no fire or pots for cooking.



Photo by Shellby Voss

- ▶ **Ask God to provide safe places** for Yemeni refugees to go.
- ▶ **Pray Yemeni refugees will know God's love** as they flee their homes from the Houthi rebels' takeover.
- ▶ **Pray Christian workers will be able to help many Yemeni refugees** make it through these difficult times.

Husbands and fathers often make the trip to Obock alone to see if they should bring their families. Most decide it's better to stay in Yemen.

"Everybody I talked to at the camp said, 'We discovered this was not a place we wanted to bring our families.' So they were waiting on a way to get back," Greg Voss said.

Shellby Voss added, "They'd rather die in Yemen quick than in Obock slow."

The Vosses met one refugee who was doing everything he could to help other refugees as they came to the camp. At first he handed out bottles of water to newly arrived refugees. Now he helps them find their way around the city and locate apartments or hotels where they can stay. Before the Vosses left Djibouti,

they gave the man some funds to help his efforts.

Meeting immediate needs

Over the next year the Vosses hope to find more ways to meet immediate needs of the refugees in Djibouti. Pray they will be able to effectively coordinate efforts to meet the physical needs of the Yemeni refugees and show them God's love.

To donate to Baptist Global Relief efforts in Yemen, visit gobgr.org/donate/paypal and type "GR12374A02 – 2015 South Y Relief" under Donation Note. (BP)

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names changed for security reasons.

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 last 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 11.

Robertsdale's Bethel Baptist dedicates new property



Photo courtesy of Harvey Earls

Bethel Baptist Church, Robertsdale, recently purchased 10 acres of land adjacent to its property that is currently a cotton field. On Oct. 11 the church celebrated the fact that the 'fields are as white unto harvest' and dedicated the property for future ministry use. Pictured here are Pastor Harvey Earls (front row, fourth from right) and the deacon body.

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.

BETHLEHEM

▶ **Matt Brown** is the new pastor of **Poplar Springs Church, Uriah**. His first Sunday was Oct. 4. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of South Alabama in Mobile and a master's degree from Liberty University School of Divinity in Lynchburg, Virginia. He previously served as associate pastor/youth pastor for Excel Church; youth pastor for Calvert Church; and assistant director at Camp Whispering Pines in Citronelle. He and his wife, Sara, have one daughter.



BROWN

Gardendale, will host "Trunks or Treat" for children Oct. 24, 2-4 p.m. There will be free hotdogs, popcorn, games and a cake walk. **Allen Davis Sr.** is pastor. ▶ **North Clay Church, Center Point**, will host 1517, a family friendly dramatic re-enactment of the events surrounding Martin Luther's nailing of the 95 thesis to the door of Wittenberg Castle. The event will be Oct. 31, 2-5 p.m. and Nov. 1, 5-8 p.m. For more information contact Josh McDaniel at 205-305-3612 or email josh.mcdaniel@north-clay.org. Tim Evans is pastor.

of First Church, Glencoe; First Church, Rainbow City; South Chapel Hill Church, Decatur; Blooming Grove Church, Jasper; and as associate pastor of Trinity Church, Gadsden. He and his wife, JoAnn, have four children.

CAREY

▶ **First Church, Ashland**, will celebrate its 150th anniversary Nov. 1, 10:30 a.m. Each Sunday in November will continue the celebration. Rusty Craig is pastor.

COFFEE

▶ **Zion Chapel Church, Elba**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 25, 10:30 a.m. John Granger, director of missions for Coffee Association, will be the guest speaker. Lunch will follow the service. Cary Mauldin is pastor.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

▶ **Lookout Mountain Association** will host its annual Lookout Mountain Children's Home Benefit Concert on Oct. 24, 6 p.m. at Mount Bethel Church, Lyerly, Georgia. Special music will be provided by The Redemption Trio. Andy Kellert is pastor. ▶ **Shady Grove Church, Collinsville**, will host revival services Oct. 25-28. On Oct. 25 services will be at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. Oct. 26-28 services will be at 6:30 nightly. David Patty, director of missions for Sand Mountain Association, will be the guest evangelist. Donald Vaughn is pastor.

SHELBY

▶ **Siluria Church, Alabaster**, will host Rick Lance, executive director of the State Board of Missions, on Nov. 1, 11 a.m. For more information call 205-663-7904. Michael J. Brooks is pastor.

WALKER

▶ **Northside Church, Jasper**, and several other area churches will host a community fall festival Oct. 30, 6-8 p.m. on the square in downtown Jasper. There will be food, games and inflatables. Tim Bertram of God's Graffiti Ministry will be a guest presenter. David Byrd is pastor.

WASHINGTON

▶ **Frankville Church** will celebrate its 110th anniversary Nov. 1, 10 a.m. Brandon Rainey, former pastor, will be the guest speaker. Lunch will follow. Grant Barber is interim pastor. ☪

ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Circlewood's Thomas celebrates 50 years in ministry

For the past 50 years, Herb Thomas has sought to accomplish three goals: "to reach the lost, to strengthen the Church and to give pastoral leadership to the congregation." For the latter 36 of those years he has served as pastor of Circlewood Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, a role that has been a "privilege."



THOMAS

Thomas received his education from Walker College in Jasper and Luther Rice College and Seminary in Lithonia, Georgia. Before serving as pastor of Circlewood Baptist, he served as pastor of Lookout Valley Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Sayre Baptist Church.

He has served as first vice president and president of the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference, Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee member, chairman of SBC's administration committee, moderator for Tuscaloosa Baptist Association and Southern Baptist Foundation trustee. Thomas also has served on the board of regents for the University of Mobile.

Circlewood member Robin Lunceford said of Thomas and his wife of 56 years, Virginia, "They are wonderful examples of selfless servants of Christ for all of us at Circlewood. The members love and appreciate them very much for sharing God's love in good times, trying times and bad times."

Looking back on his years of ministry, Thomas said, "I count it a great joy to preach the gospel and serve in the churches. God is good and gracious and I thank Him for the privilege to preach His Word."

The couple has two children and six grandchildren. (Maggie Walsh)

Centre's Pine Grove celebrates with pastor of 30 years

At age 19, Ricky Pollard felt called to preach and he didn't let that calling grow stale. He immediately began preaching at youth events and just before he turned 21 was called as pastor of Asberry Baptist Church, Jacksonville.

While Pollard would lead that Calhoun Baptist Association church for 11 years, he would later end up serving as pastor of another church for 30 years, Pine Grove Baptist Church, Centre. He marked his three decades of service at the Cherokee Baptist Association church Sept. 22.

Pollard said the church made him feel honored and even blessed him with a love offering during a special celebration that day.

Pollard studied at Jacksonville State University and Luther Rice College and Seminary in Lithonia, Georgia. He later earned his doctor of ministry degree from Covington Theological Seminary in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia.

When asked about a major lesson he's learned during his years of service, Pollard said, "I believe it's important to preach the Word of God and that's what I've tried to do throughout the years. And to love people."

He and his wife, Joan, who serves as the church's children's director, have one daughter. (Neisha Roberts)



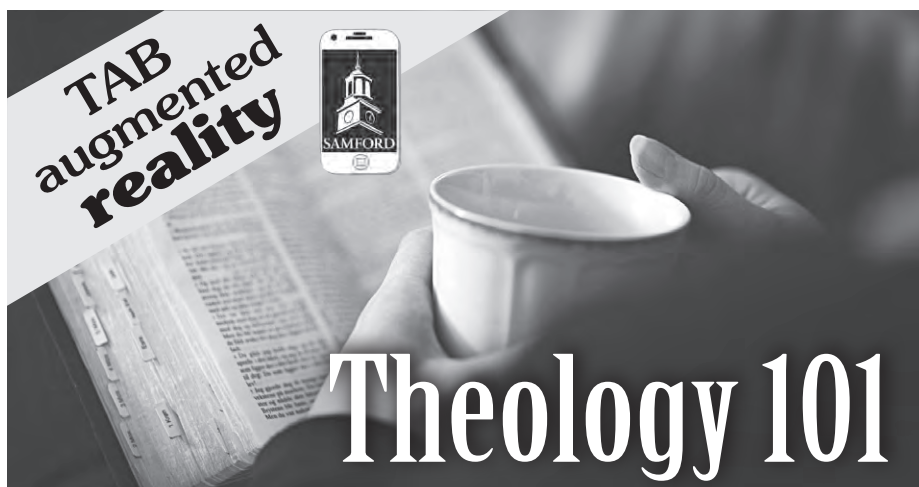
POLLARD

REFLECTIONS



Find us on Facebook

The Alabama Baptist newspaper.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The Word of God Across the Ages

The Encrypted Word

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

As the written Word of God was being completed, opponents of the Church inflicted severe persecution on Christians. As a means of hope in a difficult time, the last book of the Bible speaks to the consummation of God's redemptive program. The title Revelation means "unveiling" or "disclosure."

In order to speak words of comfort and hope while protecting the persecuted Church from enemies, God's Word to His people was encrypted, meaning much of it was conveyed using symbolism. For one thing, this made it difficult for opponents to "get the message" by deciphering the symbolism. Thus in Revelation we find the Lord's words of hope and assurance couched in a variety of symbols. We read of animal figures such as the frequent picture of a Lamb that signifies Christ. We also read of a red dragon and a beast; one arises from the sea and one arises from the earth. We find quite a few symbolic numbers such as two witnesses; four living creatures; seven seals, bowls and trumpets; and 24 elders. There also is symbolism expressed in precious jewels such as when speaking of the heavenly Jerusalem. We encounter vivid and almost grotesque figures such as a dragon with 10 ears as well as a scarlet woman on a scarlet beast that has seven heads. We get the drift: God's completing Word of Scripture is an encrypted Word.

The result of all the symbolism is that through the centuries devout students of the Bible have sought to decode the encoded message conveyed by the various images. The results of these efforts vary greatly, yielding a variety of theories or explanations of end time events. So varied are interpretations in their details that someone quipped, "If you want a book about the meaning of Revelation with which you can totally agree, you'll have to write it yourself."

However, no one can read Revelation

without finding its message of hope. This message finds expression through visions that promise "a new heaven and a new earth" or "a new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God" (21:1-2). A loud voice from God's throne also declares for all time and eternity, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God" (21:3).

God's encrypted Word in Revelation becomes a straightforward Word at the end. In language that abandons encryption, believers have this word about God, "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (21:4).

Message of hope

While detailed meanings may seem elusive and sometimes puzzling, the overall message of hope for the people of God and the doom of His enemies comes through clearly. After one has made a valiant attempt to decipher the encrypted message of the Bible's last book, it also is noteworthy that its final message is simply stated in an invitation to eternal salvation, expressed in God's favorite word to His wayward world, "Come." Thus we read, "The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price" (22:17).

When the written Word has been read to its end the takeaway message is one of saving grace. 🙏

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.



'Unprovoked violence'

Religious Freedom Report released, calls out ISIS, al-Qaida, others

Secretary of State John Kerry called terror groups the world's greatest threat to religious freedom Oct. 14 when he released his department's International Religious Freedom Report for 2014.

The report, considered the most comprehensive accounting of religious freedom violations worldwide, covers nearly 200 countries and territories. But it is nonstate actors, Kerry said at a State Department news conference, that are today "the principal persecutors and preventers of religious tolerance and practice."

He called out these groups by name, topping the list with the Islamic State but referring to it as "Daesh," a term with derogatory undertones used by other governments and many Arabs. Kerry continued with similarly violent groups: "al-Qaida, al-Shabab, Boko Haram."

"All have been guilty of vicious acts of unprovoked violence," Kerry said, describing the groups' murder and enslavement of the innocent. "Children have been among the victims."

Kerry released the report alongside Rabbi David Saperstein, the ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom, who has been on the job for 10 months and highlighted other worrisome trends.

Saperstein decried blasphemy laws

and apostasy laws in countries including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Sudan.

"The United States uniformly opposes such laws, which are used to oppress those whose religious beliefs happen to offend the majority," Saperstein said. "Such laws are inconsistent with international human rights and fundamental freedoms, and we will continue to call for their universal repeal."

'Prisoners of conscience'

He also pointed to governments that abuse their citizens "for simply exercising their faith or identifying with a religious community."

"We see this dramatized by the plight of countless numbers of prisoners of conscience," Saperstein said, and spoke of his travels to Vietnam, where he "saw firsthand how religious groups are forced to undergo onerous and arbitrary registration process to legally operate."

The report did not include what is often the most anticipated aspect: the listing of "Countries of Particular Concern (CPC)." CPCs are not always tied to the report and will be released soon, said a State Department spokesman.

The countries currently on the CPC list are: Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. (RNS)

Pickens Association ministers at FCI Aliceville



Universal Children's Day

Photo courtesy of Pickens Baptist Association

More than 200 children, mothers and caregivers gathered at the Federal Corrections Institute (FCI) in Aliceville for its third annual Universal Children's Day on Aug. 15-16. Organized by Vickie Fason, member of FCI Aliceville's Education Department and First Baptist Church, Aliceville, and assisted by Pickens Baptist Association volunteers, the two-day event featured entertainment by Heaven Bound Clowns. Eutaw Baptist Church Pastor Rick Williams served as host. Children also enjoyed face painting and balloon animals. Gary Farley is director of missions for Pickens Association.

What have you placed before God?

Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference to encourage participants to 'Clear the Stage' of their lives

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When ministry leaders gather at Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne, on Nov. 16 for the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference, they will be inspired to "clear the stage" of their lives and allow God to move.

The theme for this year's conference, "Clear the Stage: Making Room for What Matters," is inspired by the lyrics of the song "Clear the Stage" by contemporary Christian artist Jimmy Needham. Pastors Conference President Greg Pouncey, pastor of First Baptist Church, Tillman's Corner, in Mobile, said the theme idea came to him during a time of prayerful consideration of some situations in his own life.

"I was pretty busy with a lot

of stuff on my plate at the time, and I heard the song, which has a powerful message about allowing the Lord to clear the stage of your life so He has space to work. My hope for the conference really starts with that idea," he said.

The messages throughout the day will connect to that theme as well. Ted Traylor, pastor of Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola, Florida, will bring the opening message, "Clear the Stage for the Presence of God," to set the tone for the day, Pouncey said.

Ministry idols

Following Traylor, Ed Stetzer, executive director of LifeWay Research, will address ministry idols, or "the things we put ahead of God and allow to drive us as pastors and staff members," Pouncey said. Alan Floyd, pastor of Cot-

tage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, will bring a message about evangelism to conclude the morning session.

The afternoon session will focus on God's grace and the gospel with messages from evangelist Len Turner, of Woodstock, Georgia, and Jason Allen, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri.

Turner's personal testimony of God's restoration of his enthusiasm for ministry will encourage everyone who hears it, Pouncey said. Allen's emphasis on allowing the gospel to permeate the individual believer's life will resonate with participants as well.

Willy Rice, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Clearwater, Florida, will bring the final message of the afternoon session. His message, "Clear the Stage for Vision and Leadership," will focus on "how we as pastors make space for God to direct our ministry and lead us so we can lead others," Pouncey said.

John Avant, pastor of First Baptist Church, Concord, Tennessee, will bring the first message of the evening session. His message on revival will lead into the final speaker of the session and the day, Don Wilton, pastor of First Baptist Church, Spartanburg, South Carolina.

"Throughout the day, these speakers will challenge the pastors to take everything off the

Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne — Nov. 16



TRAYLOR



STETZER



FLOYD



TURNER



ALLEN



RICE



AVANT



WILTON

2015 OFFICERS:

President — Greg Pouncey
Vice President — Rob Jackson

President-elect — Teman Knight
Treasurer — Bobby Freeman

MainStreet Family
URGENT CARE

CALL US FOR YOUR LIGHTED SIGN NEEDS

Reliable SIGN SERVICES

1-800-729-6844
205-664-0955
www.reliablesigns.com

Christmas Village
An Alabama Tradition

arts, crafts, & gifts show

November 4, 2015
VIP/No Stroller Day (Sold Out)

November 5-8, 2015
Public Shopping

Birmingham Jefferson Convention Complex

OVER 700 BOOTHS!

(205) 836-7173

Call for Ticket Info or visit
www.christmasvillagefestival.com

Unlock the cash in your home
A Cash Out Refinance from CIS is perfect for that vacation, home project, or more!

CIS Home Loans
800-844-4845
Mortgage lending from your Alabama neighbors

With more than 25 years of mortgage experience, let us be your guide down the lending path. Put us to work for you while rates are low!

CIS Home Loans
Hamilton, AL 35570
www.cishomeloans.com

NMLS #93140
NMLS Consumer Access at
www.nmlsconsumeraccess.org

stage of their lives and then to allow God to speak to them and put on the stage those things that are most important," Pouncey said.

Music worship during the day will include two ensembles from the University of Mobile (UMobile), Voices of Mobile and RamCorps. The evening session will feature a combined choir and orchestra composed of 150-plus members of Cottage Hill Baptist and First, Tillman's Corner.

'Historic time'

Pouncey called this year's event "a historic time for Baldwin County," since this will be the first conference held on Baldwin's Eastern shore.

Another first is the pastors' wives dinner that will be held 4:45-6 p.m. at the church. The banquet, sponsored by UMobile,

will be a time of fellowship and encouragement for pastors' wives.

Cheryl Rice will be the featured speaker. As a pastor's wife for nearly 32 years, Rice knows the challenges women in ministry often face. The theme for the event, "Sailing to an Abundant Life," uses Psalm 21:1 as its support verse, Rice said.

"I will be focusing on how we can experience the promised abundant life, even in the midst of suffering, by finding our joy in His strength, by stripping our faith down to its barest form of simply following Jesus and continually learning from Him in the midst of our circumstances, not in spite of them," she said.

Registration is required for the pastors' wives banquet. Space for the dinner is limited and will be restricted to the first 150 who register. 🙏

LEEDS STAINED GLASS, INC.
SINCE 1995

Toll-free: 888.699.9679
AL local: 205.699.9679
Call for **FREE on-site consultation**
Ask for Terry Barnes, Owner

information@LeedsStainedGlass.com
Visit **www.LeadsStainedGlass.com**
for online gallery!

Related meetings

Other groups set to meet in conjunction with convention annual meeting

Each year at the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting, various groups meet to connect and conduct business.

Meeting alongside this year's convention, which will be held at Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne, on Nov. 17-18, are:

► **Alabama Church Planter Network** — The Alabama Church Planter Network will host a dinner Nov. 15, 6 p.m. at 3 Circle Church, Fairhope. Special guest speaker will be Ed Stetzer, executive director of LifeWay Research and pastor of Grace Church, Hendersonville, Tennessee. Following the dinner, separate sessions will be held for church planters and their wives. Registration will open at 5:30 p.m. and child care will be provided. To register, visit abscannualmeeting.org/alabama-church-planter-network-dinner.

► **Volunteers in Missions** — The Volunteers in Missions will host a banquet at Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne, on

Nov. 17, 5 p.m. This dinner is a time of fellowship for those who have volunteered on missions trips. Deadline to register is Oct. 23 and seating is limited. To register, visit abscannualmeeting.org/vimbanquet. For more information, contact Virginia Gardner at 334-613-2238 or vgardner@alsbom.org.

► **Alabama African-American Pastors** — The Alabama African-American Pastors Dinner will be held Nov. 16, 4:45 p.m. at Faith Family Fellowship, Spanish Fort. Special guest speaker will be Mark Croston, national director of LifeWay's Black Church Partnerships in Nashville. Deadline to register is Nov. 11. To register, visit abscannualmeeting.org/africanamericanpastorsdinner.

► **Alabama Network of Christian Community Ministers (ANCCM)** — ANCCM will meet Nov. 16 at First Christian Church, Mobile. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the program begins at 9 a.m. Speakers will be Matt and Tara Armbruster of Ransom

Ministries. Lunch is included. Annual dues also are to be paid at the meeting. For more information about annual dues or to register, contact Lisa Rose at lrose@mgbaptist.org or 334-271-6794.

► **Director of Missions** — The Director of Missions meeting will be held Nov. 16 at First Baptist Church, Fairhope. There will be a time of fellowship at 10:30 a.m., followed by a business meeting at 11 a.m. Alan Cross, former pastor of Gateway Baptist Church, Montgomery, will be the guest speaker during lunch. To register, contact Elmore Baptist Association Director of Missions Jim Jackson at 334-567-7321.

► **Pastors Conference** (see page 9).

To request messenger cards for the state convention annual meeting, go to <http://cards.alsbom.org>. For more information, contact Sandy Harmann at 1-800-264-1225 ext. 266 or sharmann@alsbom.org. (TAB)

Want to know GOD?

By Pastor Daven Watkins
First Baptist Church, Pelham

Without a doubt John 3:16 is the most familiar verse of the Bible. We see it on bumper stickers, interstate billboards and even on posters at various sporting events. Within this one verse John conveys God's tremendous passion for people. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." The sending of Jesus into the world is based solely on God's passion for people.

Elsewhere the apostle Paul says, "God demonstrated his own love for us in this: while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Both the sending and the sacrifice of Jesus were motivated by the passionate love that God has for humanity.

If God didn't love you so much then there would be no Christmas story and Easter would not be possible. If God didn't love you so much there would be no prospect of salvation and no shred of the abundant life. If God didn't love you so much then He would have poured out His rightful wrath against you because of your rebellion. But God does love you that much so He sent Jesus to the cross as your substitute. God's love is not based upon your performance but upon His passion.

Many times we try to do good things for God in order to somehow win God's favor but the reality is that God is head-over-heels in love with you and this love is not based on your ability but upon His attributes. He loves you not because you are all that good but because He is all that great. Knowing God through the person of Jesus Christ is a gift from God. Your job is to receive it. You receive it by faith. By faith you talk to God in prayer, turn from your sin and trust Jesus as Savior. It was John R.W. Stott who said, "The only function of faith is to accept what grace offers." God offers you salvation today. It is yours for the taking. 🙏

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

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.

MUSIC/WORSHIP DIRECTOR

Mount Enon Baptist Church, small church in Dale County, Alabama, is in search of a part-time music/worship director. Contact Lomax Kelly at 334-795-6679.

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 Meard St., Thibodaux, LA 70301, or email: ubc@ubcthibodaux.net.

PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER

Cypress Shores Baptist Church is seeking a part-time youth minister. If interested, please send resumé to: Cypress Shores Baptist Church, 4327 Higgins Rd., Mobile, AL 36619.

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

GREAT PRICES

Stair-lifts, walk-in tubs, lift-chairs and lightweight take-apart scooters. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658.

CHURCH CONSTRUCTION SERVICE

Lewis Webb Builders, Inc., active in church construction service for over 30 years. Remodel, rehab, repair. Call 334-285-9302.

TIME TO REPLACE THAT OLD CHURCH SIGN?

Reliable Sign Services, a Christian-operated, full-service sign company for two decades, is ready to assist you as you expand your church sign ministry. From electronic message boards to traditional signs, Reliable will fabricate and install statewide or ship anywhere. www.reliablesigns.com. 1-800-729-6844, 205-664-0955.

TRAVEL/VACATION

BIBLE LAND TRAINING TOURS

Send your pastor away. Special rates for "Double Honor Bible Land Training Tours" that will forever enhance his preaching and passion for the Lord. www.pilgrimgtours.com. 1-800-322-0788.

LOG CABIN

Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to www.paradisevista.net to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

FOR SALE

BUS FOR SALE

2007 Starcraft on a Ford 450 chassis. Excellent condition. Less than 20,000 miles. Contact Danny Dean for more info. 334-537-9674.

MISCELLANEOUS

HELP OUR VETERANS IN NEED

Greeters for Veterans' Outreach are needed. Fund-raise at assigned department/grocery stores and special events. P/T ... 2-3 days a week. Travel paid for. Seniors welcome. 866-212-5592 or email ehenry@veteransoutreach.org (501c3 non-profit and not affiliated with the U.S. Government or DOD)

JUDGMENT DAY

Evangelistic drama. Cottage Hill Baptist, Pleasant Grove, AL 35127. Oct. 24-25, 6-10 p.m. Oct. 26-27, no presentation. Oct. 28-29, 6-9 p.m. Oct. 30-31, 6-10 p.m. Reservations: 205-744-8521.



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.

Admission of guilt?

Planned Parenthood changes policy but investigation continues

Planned Parenthood's decision to forego federal reimbursements for fetal tissue donation serves as an admission of its guilt and should not halt the congressional effort to defund the organization, its critics say.

The Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) announced Oct. 13 that none of its centers will accept federal reimbursement in the future for expenses accrued in tissue donations from aborted babies for research. In a letter to Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health, PPFA President Cecile Richards said the action was taken to "completely debunk the disingenuous argument" used by opponents in the wake of undercover videos providing evidence that the country's leading abortion provider trades in baby body parts.

The letter followed the release of 10 secretly recorded videos that show various PPFA officials in different locations discussing the sale of organs from aborted

children. The videos recorded and released by the Center for Medical Progress (CMP) also display PPFA employees acknowledging their willingness to manipulate the abortion procedure to preserve body parts for sale and use. In addition the videos include evidence of the dissection of live babies outside the womb to remove organs.

Continual denial

In the three months since CMP released the first video, Richards and other PPFA officials have denied any legal wrongdoing or profit from fetal tissue donation. They attacked CMP, alleging that the videos are fraudulent and deceptively edited.

Southern Baptist ethicist Russell Moore said PPFA's announcement "is an acknowledgment of what they have denied all along."

"They traffic in human organs from nonconsenting victims," said Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty

Commission (ERLC), in a written statement. "This is essentially Planned Parenthood's way of saying, 'We never did this and we won't do it again.'"

"It is time for the United States government to hold this predatory corporation accountable."

Rep. Diane Black, R.-Tenn., sponsor of a bill approved by the House of Representatives to defund PPFA, found it curious that PPFA officials say they have done nothing wrong but "still find it necessary to change their policy following the recent undercover videos. Clearly this was a decision motivated by optics rather than the organization's conscience."

The announcement "does not change my conviction that PPFA should not be subsidized by American taxpayers," Black said in a written release.

The Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) said Richards' letter

does not address charges that PPFA affiliates have participated in what it says appear to be various crimes related to trafficking in baby organs for profit, modifying the abortion technique to procure intact body parts and performing partial-birth abortions.

Richards' letter "amounts to an admission of guilt," said Kellie Fiedorek, ADF litigation counsel. "The fire that Planned Parenthood's misdeeds started has been too hot and [Richards] mistakenly thinks this will put water on it."

Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, chairman

of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, said the investigation into PPFA will continue because the letter does not explain why "a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization reporting approximately \$125 [million] in revenue over expenses annually needs a subsidy from the American taxpayer." (BP)

"It is time for the United States government to hold this predatory corporation accountable."

Russell Moore
Ethics & Religious Liberty
Commission president

DON'T FORGET!

Annual Enrollment Period is
OCTOBER 15 - DECEMBER 7



Membership has its *Perks*

- ✓ Plans starting at \$0 per month¹
- ✓ Preventive screenings included in every plan
- ✓ One-on-one Guardian Agent support
- ✓ Dental and Vision on some plans
- ✓ Highest Member Satisfaction Score² of any Medicare Advantage Plan in Alabama
- ✓ No referrals needed to see most contracted specialists
- ✓ See more perks at: makingmedicareeasy.com

VIVA MEDICARE 1-888-830-VIVA (8482) or TTY users dial 711
Mon - Fri: 8am - 8pm, Oct. 1 - Feb. 14: 7 days a week, 8am - 8pm

¹You must continue to pay your Medicare Part B premium. ²Based on the 2016 Medicare and You Handbook of Alabama. VIVA MEDICARE is an HMO plan with a Medicare contract and a contract with the Alabama Medicaid Agency. Enrollment in VIVA MEDICARE depends on contract renewal. The benefit information provided is a brief summary, not a complete description of benefits. For more information contact the plan. Limitations, copayments, and restrictions may apply. Benefits, formulary, pharmacy network, premium, and/or co-payments/co-insurance may change on January 1 of each year. The Formulary, pharmacy network, and/or provider network may change at any time. You will receive notice when necessary. H0154_mcdoc1607A CMS Accpted 10/11/2015

Download Our Free Church Bus Buyers Guide.



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, ASHLAND
83558 Hwy 9 • Ashland, AL 36251 • www.fbcashland.info

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

NOVEMBER 2015



- NOV. 1**
- Anniversary Choir
 - Presentation from Alabama Baptist Historical Commission
 - Unveiling the Historical Marker
- NOV. 8**
- Anniversary Choir
 - Messiah's Messengers (FBCA drama team reunion)
- NOV. 15**
- LifeSong (Trinity Baptist College)

- NOV. 22**
- New Ground (Southern Gospel)
- NOV. 29**
- Ole' Fashion Singing (Pea Ridge Singers)
 - Rev. L.C. Harris (Mount Olive Baptist Church North)
 - Dinner on the Grounds
 - Open Time Capsule

Please
JOIN US FOR



OPEN
HOUSE

We're opening up **OUR HOME to YOU!**

Would you like to know more about how to partner with us to help children and families in your community? We'd love for you to attend our Christmas Open House to find out! Tour our Campus Care homes and see how our children have decorated for Christmas, while enjoying holiday treats at every location. **Save the date for the free Open House event near you:**

Dothan

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4
5:30-7:30 PM

Decatur, Mobile, Oxford

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6
2:00-5:00 PM



Alabama Baptist
CHILDREN'S HOMES
& Family Ministries

Full details can be found at
ALABAMACHILD.ORG/OPENHOUSE
or call (888) 720-8805

LETTERS



(continued from page 2)
 people would be answerable to no one. Forget signing the Baptist Faith and Message. They would effectively be independent missionaries.

Instead of asking the most experienced over 50 to retire why not ask the most recent ones to come back? Do we want the future of Southern Baptist Convention missions to be run by amateurs? Do we think nationals will commit to following anyone who is not committed to them and their culture? Our missions

program will get weaker and eventually we will be in constant decline. Keep the experienced people on the field and stop appointing anyone until this is cleared up.

It is my understanding that trustees did not vote on this but the leadership had the final say and action. We are already trusting missions to "amateurs." Is it too late to do something?

Bob Williamson
 Wetumpka, Ala. 🇺🇸



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH
 Open Doors
 LIVE WEBCAST OCTOBER 30, 2015



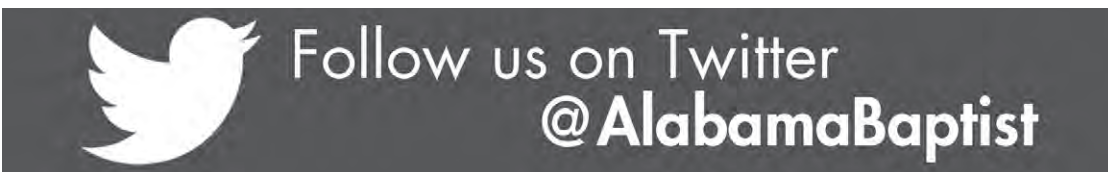
MISSIONLAB

LEARN MISSIONS. DO MISSIONS. BE A MISSIONARY.

WHY MISSIONLAB? FOR OVER 15 YEARS, YOUTH LEADERS HAVE COME THROUGH MISSIONLAB TO TRAIN THEIR STUDENTS HOW TO LIVE ON MISSION.

WHY NEW ORLEANS? IT IS QUITE LITERALLY A MISSIONS LABORATORY WHERE YOUR GROUP CAN LEARN AND EXPERIENCE MANY DIFFERENT ASPECTS AND AVENUES FOR MINISTRY THAT YOU CAN THEN TAKE BACK AND APPLY IN YOUR OWN HOME TOWN!

1 - 800 - TRY - MLAB WWW.MISSIONLAB.COM



CALL TODAY!
Times are limited.

Have you made your appointment yet?

Schedule your annual HEARING CHECK-UP before the holidays so you can enjoy them

Stay healthy with this FAST, CONVENIENT and FREE hearing screening.

Answer these questions and bring them with you to your appointment:

FREE

Hearing Screening

Offer good October 22-31, 2015.

FREE

Video Ear Exam

Offer good October 22-31, 2015.

*Most insurance plans accepted.
 Benefits expiring at the end of the year?
 We'll help you find out!*

1. Do you have ringing in your ears? YES NO
2. Does it seem like people mumble? YES NO
3. Do you have trouble hearing in noisy places, like a restaurant?
 YES NO
4. Have others said you have the TV volume too loud?
 YES NO
5. Is it difficult to hear on the phone? YES NO

beltone.com

CALL YOUR NEAREST BELTONE LOCATION FOR AN APPOINTMENT

Athens: 256-278-4857
 Bay Minette: 251-517-4117
 Bessemer: 205-267-4767
 Cullman: 256-841-4518

Decatur: 256-274-4296
 Fairhope: 251-517-3099
 Florence: 256-263-5417
 Foley: 251-517-3099

Gadsden: 256-485-4040
 Gardendale: 205-413-8867
 Grove Hill: 251-275-4901
 Jackson: 251-247-0071

Jasper: 205-282-4529
 Mobile (Airport Blvd.): 251-342-7000
 Mobile (Sage Ave.): 251-479-9409
 Saraland: 251-652-3851

Trussville: 205-383-3094
 Tuscaloosa: 205-409-3205
 Vestavia: 205-238-6201
 Winfield: 205-487-4300

Benefits of hearing aids vary by type and degree of hearing loss, noise environment, accuracy of hearing evaluation and proper fit. Beltone Hearing Care Centers are independently owned and operated. Participation may vary. © 2014 Beltone

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 25

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

WAITING FOR THE PROMISE Genesis 15:1-7, 13-16

Abram's Frustration (1-3)

After Abram's rescue of Lot and his blessing by Melchizedek in Genesis 14, Abram's heart slows and spasms with fear and doubt. He is tired, fearful and despondent. He has reasons to fear reprisals from the eastern coalition. He also has plenty of time to think about his situation. His great victory has not brought him any nearer his promised inheritance.

When he had first responded to God's call, Sarai was barren. Their journey had begun in barrenness but with hope in God's promise. But the 1,000-mile journey, the sojourn in Canaan, the fiasco in Egypt, the return to Canaan and the victory over the kings were all carried out under the shadow of barrenness. Now barrenness persists. Abram's servants have children but not Abram himself.

The Lord knows Abram's frustration and speaks to him to encourage him. Abram speaks to God and he is unhappy. He apparently concludes that God's promise had been of no effect, so that a household servant like Eliezer would be the heir.

God's Promise (4-5)

God deals tenderly and lovingly with His stumbling servant. God responds that Eliezer will not be his heir but Abram's own son. Three times previously God promised Abram a multitude of descendants (12:2, 7; 13:14-16), but what God says now is new. A son from his own body will be his heir.

God has Abram walk outside and look up into the night sky. God assures him that one day he will have so many offspring no human will be able to number them. This former moon worshipper is familiar with the planets and the astral trails. Now he is alone with the Lord God. Abram is

humbled, awed and hushed. He says nothing. He is speechless.

Abram's Faith (6)

Abram does not speak but the Scripture does: "And he believed the Lord." The idea here is that Abram believes the promise of God and keeps on believing in the Lord. How did Abram get such faith? He simply rests on God's promise.

In this moment of time God's word was not a theory about how things would turn out but the voice around which his life is organized. Abram also must have repented. But ultimately his faith can only be attributed to God. His faith was not a human achievement or the result of his moral will. Abram's faith came from God just like Peter's confirmation of Christ in Matthew 16:16. How did Peter get the correct answer? "And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven'" (Matt. 16:17). In the same way Abram moves from protest to confession by the power of God.

No other Old Testament text has exercised such an influence in understanding faith and on the New Testament itself. Abram, who is originally destitute of righteousness, is now counted as righteous through faith in God. His belief brought him into relationship with God.

God's Plan (7, 13-16)

The means by which Abram's descendants would possess the land would be a terrible ordeal. God foretells Abram that his descendants would be enslaved for 400 years in an undesignated land (we know that land was Egypt). They will be afflicted and oppressed by their captors and then God will judge that nation for its mistreatment of Israel and Abram's descendants will come out of captivity with great possessions. His descendants will possess the promised land according to God's plan. 📖

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

PRAY FERVENTLY Daniel 2:13-21, 26-28a

The stories preserved in the Book of Daniel were written to give encouragement and instruction to Jews who found themselves subject to the rule of a foreign potentate. A careful reading of these stories suggests the author understood that not all of his hearers would face the same challenges while living in exile. In some cases God's people would face the terrible dilemma of having to resist or even defy royal decrees that ran contrary to God's own mandates for His people. The refusal of Daniel and his companions to eat the king's undoubtedly tasty but certainly non-kosher meat in Daniel 1 fell into this category. Later in the book Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego would have to keep faith by refusing to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's idol. Later still Daniel would have to decide how important it was for him to continue to pray each day when the king's decree outlawed such prayers.

In other cases though the stories preserved in the Book of Daniel appear to have less to do with defiant fidelity to God's laws and more to do with wise maneuvering through the torturous paths of life as a servant in the royal court. Daniel's interactions with Nebuchadnezzar in Chapter 4 and with Belshazzar in Chapter 5 certainly fall into this category. Daniel 2 presents a similar situation.

When problems arise, take time to seek God. (13-16)

The opening verses of Daniel 2 describe an extraordinary circumstance. Troubled at night by a series of dreams, the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, found himself unable to sleep. His first instinct was to summon his "magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers" to gain some understanding of the importance of his

dreams. But here Nebuchadnezzar abandoned the script that would normally have guided the resolution of such a situation. While the Babylonian king summoned the royal counselors for a dream interpretation, he refused to tell them just what the dream had been. Perhaps as a test, perhaps as an indication that the king had been burned by dream interpretations before, Nebuchadnezzar insisted that the royal diviners first discover what the dream had been and then provide its interpretation.

The magicians protested but the king insisted and the punishment he decreed was death. Unfortunately a decree of this sort would ensnare all of the king's magicians and this included Daniel as well.

Pray persistently while awaiting God's response. (17-21)

Daniel's response was to look for wise counsel. He first asked the king's servant to give him a full accounting of what had transpired and then implored his friends — Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah — to take up the matter in prayer. On a practical level Daniel purposed to act as wisely as possible. On a more important level though Daniel knew the only hope for him and his three friends lay in their utter dependence upon God in prayer.

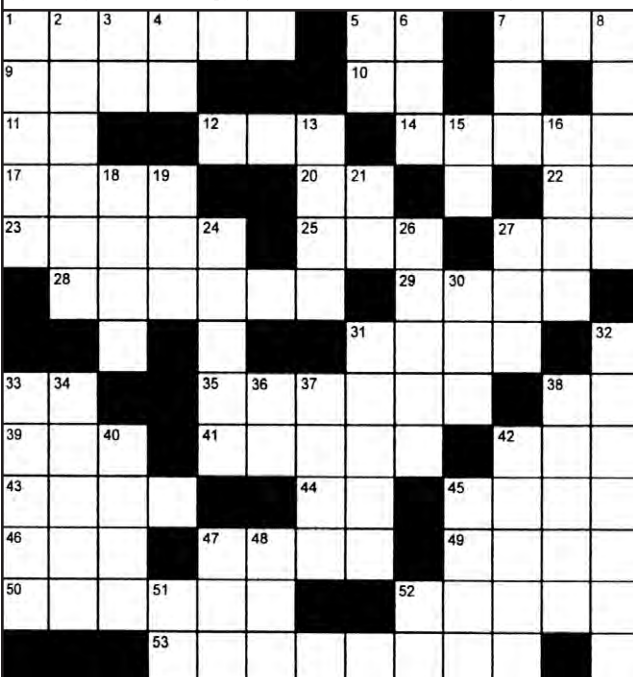
Acknowledge God as the source of the answer. (26-28a)

It was in a vision at night that Daniel received the explanation of the king's dream. Daniel could have maneuvered the situation to ensure he received all the credit for the revelation but he did not do that.

When asked whether he could interpret dreams such as the one Nebuchadnezzar had had, Daniel put his life in jeopardy by replying, "No." Only God could reveal the king's dreams, he said. His actions showed that faith and prayer were the first and most important steps in weaving through the maze of the king's court. 📖

Christian Crossword

By Beverly Barnes Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- By their ___ ye shall know them. (Matt. 7:20)
- Jesus loves ___.
- Lean ___ unto thine own understanding. (Prov. 3:5)
- Bad grammar.
- ___ are of God, little children. (1 John 4:4)
- Intensive Care. (abbr.)
- The beginning and the ___. (Rev. 21:6)
- A little ___ than the angels. (Heb. 2:7)
- I will never leave ___. (Heb. 13:5)
- Each. (abbr.)
- Delaware. (abbr.)
- I am meek and lowly in ___. (Matt. 11:29)
- American Medical Association. (abbr.)
- Let thy words be ___. (Eccles. 5:2)
- Opposite of "brave."
- Unto us a child is ___. (Isa. 9:6)
- The head of the ___, the Church. (Col. 1:18)

Down

- Postscript.
- Opposite of "depart."
- ___ be it.
- A hot cereal, ___ meal.
- ___ him, and let him go. (John 11:44)
- A bicycle's handle___.
- A little bird.
- Missouri. (ZIP code abbr.)
- Leave these out of your diet.
- Cause thine ___ to hear (Ps. 10:17)
- A has___.
- A continent.
- One who works in a bellfry.
- Jesus saith unto her, give me to ___. (John 4:7)
- ___ evil with good. (Rom. 12:21)
- The Lord is ___ shepherd. (Ps. 23:1)
- Moray ___.
- If any man be in Christ, he is a ___ creature. (2 Cor. 5:17)
- ___ stones at him. (2 Sam. 16:13)
- Was ___, and is alive again. (Luke 15:24)
- Ohio. (ZIP code abbr.)
- God sent him forth from the garden of ___. (Gen. 3:23)
- Charity ... toward ___ other. (2 Thess. 1:3)
- Period of time in history.
- I ___ the way. (John 14:6)
- The ___ of your faith. (1 Pet. 1:7)
- Every perfect gift is from ___. (James 1:17)
- To cook in a skillet.
- Musical poem.
- Buffalo.
- He will not fail thee, neither ___ thee. (Deut. 31:8)
- All ___ is given unto me. (Matt. 28:18)
- Abram took ___ his wife. (Gen. 12:5)
- Rule out. (abbr.)
- All Jews to depart from ___. (Acts 18:2)
- Silk and ___.
- Sea bird.
- Famous musician, Count ___.
- Old MacDonald had one.
- Nickname for Beverly.
- Before (poetic).
- ___ ye and teach all nations. (Matt. 28:19)
- ___ all to the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10:31)



WHAT ARE YOU READING?



Denominational staff share about what they are currently reading

RACHEL MCRAE

LifeWay Christian Resources, blog.lifeway/shelflife
"The Art of Losing Yourself" by Katie Ganshert

One of the chief things I appreciate about Katie's stories is that she's not afraid to tackle tough issues through her characters. In "The Art of Losing Yourself" she takes us through a dying marriage, multiple miscarriages, loss of a job and a teen struggling to discover her own identity in the midst of growing up with an alcoholic mother and a broken home.

Like all of Katie's books, I love to recommend them to moms and their teen daughters to read together. "The Art of Losing Yourself" contains discussion questions at the end that will help guide your conversations together.

JENNIFER DAVIS RASH

The Alabama Baptist, rashionalthoughts.com
"Every Day Can Be a Great Day" by Gary Hardin

The Psalms have become a great source of comfort and strength for me this year, so when my friend Gary sent me a copy of his latest book, I started reading it right away.

Focusing on Psalm 34, Gary walks through the verses in eight easy-to-read chapters, explaining the "treasure-trove of promises from God" and how to apply them to our everyday lives. The book is a smooth, seamless read and almost feels like you are having a conversation with Gary in person.

Gary says, "The premise behind this book is that when we trust the promises of God, every day can be a great day."

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

Award winning

Lecrae named Artist of the Year at 2015 Dove Awards

Lecrae, called "one of the leading lights in the gospel-rap movement" by Billboard, was named Artist of the Year at the 46th annual Dove Awards on Oct. 12 in Nashville.

It marks the first time the top award has gone to "a rapper," according to *The Tennessean*, though the newspaper added a qualification: "rap-pop artist" TobyMac was named Artist of the Year in 2008.

Lecrae also won Dove Awards for Rap/Hip Hop Album of the Year for his 2014 release "Anomaly" and song of the year, "All I Need is You," in the same genre among 40-plus categories.

Lecrae, who had a tour date in California, accepted the Artist of the Year honor by video.

The 36-year-old's music has garnered multiple awards, including a Grammy for Best Contemporary Christian Music Performance/Song in February and earlier Dove Awards for rap/hip hop album and song of the year. "Anomaly," his seventh album, premiered last year atop the Billboard 200 Album Chart and Gospel Album Chart — the first-ever to do so in both genres, in addition to topping several other Billboard categories.

A book by Lecrae, titled "Unashamed," is slated for a May 2016 release. According to a LifeWay news report, Lecrae will write of how his Christian faith lifted him from a difficult past that included childhood abuse and struggles with drugs and alcoholism.

"As an artist my ambition is to make honest music, and I feel the same way about writing this book," Lecrae said.

"I want to be honest about where I've come from and what I've learned along the way. I want to influence culture, to help catalyze and inspire and help other people find understanding. If they find some inspiration and some clarity for their own lives as they follow my journey, then I will have succeeded."

Other winners included:

▶ for KING & COUNTRY, Contemporary Christian Artist of the Year.

▶ Matt Maher, Songwriter of the Year — Artist.

▶ Michael W. Smith, Christmas Album of the Year for 2014's "The Spirit of Christmas."

▶ Tasha Cobbs, Gospel Artist of the Year.

▶ Gaither Vocal Band, Southern Gospel Artist of the Year.

▶ NEEDTO-BREATHE, Rock Song of the Year, "Brother."

▶ Oak Ridge Boys, Country Song of the Year, "Sweet Jesus" with Merle Haggard.

▶ RED, Rock Album of the Year, "Of Beauty And Rage."

Lauren Daigle, from Lafayette, Louisiana, was named New Artist

of the Year while her song "How Can It Be" was named Pop/Contemporary Song of the Year.

Co-hosts for the awards ceremony were Sadie Robertson of the "Duck Dynasty" TV series and author of "Live Original: How the Duck Commander Teen Keeps It Real and Stays True to Her Values," and Erica Campbell, five-time Grammy winner and WETV star of "Mary Mary." Campbell garnered a Dove Award for Contemporary/Gospel/Urban Song of the Year for "I Luh God."

For the full list of this year's Dove Award winners, visit doveawards.com/awards/2015-winners. (BP)



Lecrae

BP photo

"I want to be honest about where I've come from and what I've learned along the way. I want to influence culture ... and help other people find understanding."

Lecrae, Dove Award-winning Artist of the Year

PARABLES
TELEVISION NETWORK



Enjoy a free month on us!

We want to introduce you to Parables TV, the only Christian entertainment network featuring on demand and streaming television.

Right now you can start watching movies, television shows and interesting documentaries on Parables TV anytime and anywhere with your favorite devices including your tablet, phone, computer or television.

For your free month, visit <http://parables.tv/welcome-alabama-baptist-members>



Photo by Anwar Abbas

Islamists demonstrate against Pakistan's Supreme Court verdict outside Karachi Press Club.

'Brave decision'

Pakistan's Supreme Court rules against extremism

A Supreme Court decision to uphold the death sentence for an Islamist who killed Punjab Gov. Salman Taseer because of his objections to Pakistan's blasphemy laws signals government resolve against Islamic extremism, human rights advocates said.

On Oct. 7 the high court upheld the October 2011 death sentence for Mumtaz Qadri, who as Taseer's bodyguard shot him to death in Islamabad on Jan. 4, 2011. Qadri said he killed Taseer over the governor's outspoken opposition to Pakistan's blasphemy laws and his public support for Aasiya Noreen (Asia Bibi), a Christian mother of five who was wrongly convicted and sentenced to death for blasphemy.

Qadri's execution likely will be seen as a key moment in Pakistan's attempt to combat Islamic extremists following the Dec. 16, 2014, Taliban massacre of more than 130 schoolchildren in Peshawar, which prompted the government to scrap an informal moratorium on the death penalty.

"This is just the beginning," said Rufus Solomon, a Christian politician from the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. "The Supreme Court decision is a very strong sign that the state is trying to recover the space it ceded to violent extremists."

Solomon said he hoped the ruling also would reverberate in acquittals in cases of blasphemy accusations motivated by personal rivalries or monetary disputes. Bibi's case grew out of an argument with her fellow field workers in which anti-Christian prejudice was clearly evident.

First step

"I have a strong feeling that Asia Bibi and all other innocent Christians who have been subjected to the blasphemy laws will be freed by the Supreme Court," Solomon said.

Saroop Ijaz, head of Human Rights Watch in Pakistan, said in a statement that upholding Qadri's murder conviction was a "brave decision" and "the first step in introducing some rational discourse on blasphemy."

The chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Asma Jahangir, said the ruling "sent a very clear message that the court will not give in to external pressures."

The court decision runs against avid support for Qadri, whose supporters are calling for the execution of Bibi before the government proceeds with his execution. Public support for Qadri at the time of the murder was so great that then-army chief Gen. Ashfaq Kayani reportedly told Western ambassadors he could not publicly condemn Qadri because too many soldiers sympathized with the killer.

'Rule of law'

Taseer's daughter, Sanam, said that even though she opposes the death penalty in principle, she would welcome Qadri's execution because she thinks the verdict was "wonderful for the country because it shows there is rule of law."

Qadri enjoys special prison perks and has recorded best-selling albums of devotional songs. In 2014 he was found to have incited a prison guard into attempting to kill an elderly British citizen held in the same building for alleged blasphemy.

Qadri's defense contended that in accordance with Islamic jurisprudence he was obligated to kill Taseer because the governor had committed blasphemy by criticizing the blasphemy laws, an argument the Supreme Court was compelled to consider.

Justice Dost Mohammad Khan, 1 of 3 judges on the Supreme Court bench, said, "We have to look into whether the deceased [Taseer] indeed committed the act of blasphemy or he commented adversely on the effects of the blasphemy law."

In a late-night protest outside the Lahore Press Club on Oct. 7, Pakistan Sunni Tehreek activists shouted chants against the three justices that upheld Qadri's death sentence.

The only thing now standing between Qadri and execution is an appeal for a presidential pardon, which few expect to be granted. (MS)

RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services



Physician-assisted 'dying' legalized in California

SACRAMENTO, California — Physician-assisted "dying" became legal in California under a bill signed into law Oct. 5 by Gov. Jerry Brown.

The law, based on a similar measure in Oregon, allows terminally ill people to seek a doctor's prescription for a lethal medication. As in Oregon two doctors must agree the person has only six months to live and is mentally competent.

In a rare statement, Brown, a former Roman Catholic seminarian, said he closely considered arguments on both sides of the controversial measure, which makes California only the fifth U.S. state to legalize assisted "dying."

The bill was strongly opposed by religious groups such as the Roman Catholic Church as well as advocates for people with disabilities, who said unscrupulous caregivers or relatives could pressure vulnerable patients to take their own lives. Opponents also said the bill would invite insurance companies to take advantage of poor patients by offering to pay for the cost of life-ending drugs but not for the treatments that could save lives.

National and state surveys show majority support across all religious groups for medical aid in dying. A 2013 survey by Pew Research found that most said the moral right to die exists in cases of incurable disease (56 percent) or when a person is suffering great pain and has no hope of improvement (62 percent).

As written the law will expire after 10 years unless extended, a compromise with lawmakers who were worried about unintended consequences such as the targeting of the poor, elderly and disabled. (RNS)

Fantasy leagues 'not harmless fun,' being investigated

NASHVILLE — As news breaks of a federal investigation into the fantasy sports industry, Baptist commentators warn that betting in fantasy leagues is not harmless fun.

The FBI is currently investigating [the] daily fantasy sports business model to see if it violates federal law, zeroing in on fantasy websites DraftKings and FanDuel. The entire industry is confronting accusations of "predatory tactics" and improper handling of insider information.

In daily leagues "filling slots on your fantasy team becomes more like a slot machine, feeding the obsessive compulsion to turn small amounts into large winnings in a day," said Mike Whitehead, an attorney in Kansas City, Missouri, who has served on the staffs of two Southern Baptist Convention entities.

John Babler, professor of counseling at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, said the problem with fantasy sports is that for some, it "dominates [their] lives and to some degree holds [them] captive."

Even when it is not an addiction, Babler said, "the problem and allure of betting is not related to the amount of money won or lost, but that it is a distraction from God's purpose and intent for us in regard to work and reward." (BP)

Okla. 10 Commandments removed from Capitol

OKLAHOMA CITY — The Ten Commandments monument that has been on Oklahoma's Capitol grounds since 2012 was moved to the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs (OCPA) just a few blocks from the Capitol on Oct. 5.

OCPA is a privately funded public policy research organization that provides research data and information to legislators about state-level issues from a free-market perspective.

The move ended a long culture war in which state lawmakers tried to save the monument but in the end only opened the door for other groups, including Satanists and the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster, to apply for permission to erect their own monuments on Capitol grounds.

The Oklahoma Supreme Court ordered the removal of the monument a few months prior, ruling that it violated the state constitution's ban on the use of state property for the benefit of religion. The deadline for removal was Oct. 12. (RNS)