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INSIDE



Advocacy demonstrates God's power, love through acts of service

◆ Page 3



Birmingham dentist Powell named 2015 Outstanding Missions Volunteer

◆ Pages 4-5



Globe-trotting 87-year-old 'librarian' earns 2015 Lifetime of Mission Service Award

◆ Page 6



Spirit-Soul-Body



Photo courtesy of Union Hill Baptist Church, Oneonta

Members of Union Hill Baptist Church, Oneonta, (left) have spent almost a full year walking, running, biking and swimming more than 26,000 cumulative miles as part of the church's emphasis 'All to Jesus 2015 Spirit-Soul-Body.' Members set measurable goals to spur them on throughout the year and by this past Easter they had walked 6,500 miles, or the equivalent of walking to Jerusalem (pictured above).

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Oneonta's Union Hill seeks to make impact physically, spiritually

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Union Hill Baptist Church, Oneonta, is still sitting on the same soil it was in January.

But that hasn't stopped it from covering miles and miles of ground this year.

Ever since the church started its "All to Jesus 2015 Spirit-Soul-Body" emphasis Jan. 1, its people have walked, run, biked and swam a cumulative total of more than 26,000 miles — more than the distance of the circumference of the earth.

And it's rocked their world, Pastor Bill Barnett said.

"It's been remarkable," he said. "We started last January and our goal was to do three things — have the Lord impact our church physically, spiritually and in our relationships."

Personal testimonies

All three of those things have happened, he said. "If you could see the testimonials people write each quarter when we write down on cards what this journey has meant to them."

One person who struggled with health issues had lost weight and had gone five weeks without seizures. Another wrote that the emphasis had fostered more de-

pendence on the Lord than ever before.

And more people than ever walked their way into the aisles, pews and classrooms of the church.

"One of our commitments has been to participate more faithfully in worship and Sunday School attendance," Barnett said. "Back in September, August and July, we were in double-digit growth for both of those. It's had a lot of really good impact."

And setting measurable goals has spurred them further than they ever thought they'd go, he said.

First they set a goal of walking to Jerusalem by Easter — roughly

6,500 miles, Barnett said. "And we decided to keep going."

By September they made it to Hawaii, studying and praying for some of the countries they were "walking through" along the way.

And on Nov. 15, the church celebrated "Around the World Sunday," the day they finally made it back home.

Sanctified together

"It started out as encouragement to go deeper spiritually, exercise and eat well, and it turned out to be something more than we ever imagined," Barnett said.

They started with 1 Thessalo-
(See 'Church,' page 7)

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Check out page 10 for more details.

COMMENT

Is This True for Alabama Baptists?

Here is a shocking statement. It was made by Matthew Schiller, business and advertising manager for *Catholic New York*, after reading the 2012 study titled “Catholic New Media Use in the United States.”

He said, “Basically the study found that when the Church converted its distribution of news from print to online, there was a direct correlation with less giving, less volunteers and fewer (people) in the seats.”

Could the same thing be true for Alabama Baptists?

Most Baptists are aware that Cooperative Program (CP) receipts from the churches are falling. In 2008, for example, Alabama Baptist churches gave \$44,782,408 to missions and ministries through CP. In 2014, CP receipts were \$40,216,408. That is a decline of 10.2 percent. For 2015, projections are that CP receipts will fall short of the \$40-million mark.

Decline in total receipts

Alabama Baptist churches have faced their own declines. Stated simply churches are receiving less money in their collection plates. In 2008, Alabama Baptist churches reported \$788,334,331 in total receipts. In 2014, receipts totaled \$720,458,504. That is a decline of \$67.8 million or 8.7 percent.

Part of the reason for the decline in receipts is a decline in church participation. Again from information reported by the churches, the combined participation in worship services on an average Sunday for all cooperating Alabama Baptist churches in 2008 was 352,665. In 2014, that number had fallen to 291,380 participants on an average Sunday. That is a steep decline of 17.4 percent.

Like Roman Catholics, Alabama Baptists have fewer dollars, fewer people in the pews and fewer volunteers today than we did in 2008.

The decline cannot be blamed on the world becoming more secular. That is a part of the challenge, to be sure, but the 352,665 people in church on a typical Sunday in 2008 were people who were open to belief in God. In fact most of



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

them would have described themselves as Christians. Many of them, perhaps most, still live in the same communities and might still claim affiliation with the church. They just do not participate.

Said another way, local churches face the continuing challenge of communicating with members in an effective and efficient manner that results in participation within the body of Christ. Take away that information and disintegration begins.

That is why the Catholic study and its implications for Baptists is important.

Churches and religious organizations initially hailed the arrival of emails and websites as an answer to prayer. For little cost churches would be able to communicate with members anytime anywhere. Information could be placed on a website and everyone could be reached.

Unfortunately that vision of the future was little more than a pipe dream. The Catholic media use study found only 9 percent of Catholics visited a church website as often as once a month and only 4 percent regularly visited their local church website.

Lack of contact

Only 14 percent of Catholics reported visiting at least one Roman Catholic-related website in the last three months. Only 5 percent followed blogs related to Roman Catholics, the Christian faith or spirituality.

Adding to the lack of contact through digital communications is the ineffectiveness of such communications. Two studies by reputable secular organizations — Direct Marketing Association (DMA) and Chief Marketing Officers Council (CMO Council) reached the same conclusion. The response rate to existing customers for an email campaign was 0.12 percent. Part of the reason for such a low response is that almost 80 percent of all emails sent globally are spam, said CMO Council.

Catalog marketers compared results of a direct mail campaign with revenue generated from an email and website promotion. They found direct mail generated 65 percent more revenue than digital communications. DMA supported that conclusion by reporting that print results in a 10

to 30 times greater response than emails.

In addition to the lack of market penetration and lack of response is the problem of the way digital communications are read. A study reported in the *Washington Post* in September found readers of digital communications tend to skim on the screens, distractions are inevitable and comprehension suffers.

The study was done at American University in Washington and found that 90 percent of digital readers were likely to multitask while reading compared to only 1 percent for readers of hard-copy material.

When participants were asked what they liked least about reading print, a prominent response was, “It takes me longer because I read more carefully.”

To the surprise of many the survey found that Millennials (ages 18–35) strongly preferred print over digital for pleasure and learning.

The preference for print is not limited to Millennials. New York marketing firm JWT (formerly J. Walter Thompson) found 8 out of 10 Americans would rather read magazines in hard copy than online and 67 percent would rather read a book with a spine than one that glows. That is true for Baby Boomers, Gen X-ers and others.

Effective communication

Back to the Schiller statement. Many Alabama Baptist churches, like Roman Catholic churches, embraced a method of communication that does not reach the intended audience, generates minimal response, results in decreased comprehension and is not the preferred method for pleasure or learning. Should we be surprised that the result has been a decrease in the effective and efficient functioning of our churches and denomination?

The best communication strategies include digital and print communications. That is why *The Alabama Baptist* offers both print and digital formats for its regular edition and for local church editions. There is no better communications strategy available to a church than a local edition of the state Baptist paper in both print and digital form.

In one award-winning publication the news of what God is doing through Baptists in Alabama and around the world is combined with news and information of the local church. Each week members get the news that helps the church function effectively and efficiently as well as a report of issues facing Christians in America and around the world.

Every Alabama Baptist should read their state Baptist paper and every church should use a local edition. It is an efficient, effective and inexpensive way to provide the base of trusted information that makes cooperation possible and, perhaps, turn around the slide toward fewer dollars, fewer volunteers and fewer people in the pews. 📖

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

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'Demonstrative evangelism'

Advocacy shows God's power, love through acts of service

Imagine standing on a riverbank looking up at a roaring waterfall, watching as person after person washes over the edge, plunges into the water and drowns.

A caring person has two options — pull them out and try to save them one at a time or climb to the top and figure out why people are falling over the waterfall in the first place.

This hike to the top — searching for the cause and striving for change — is a good analogy for advocacy, said Kathryn Freeman, director of public policy for Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"Advocacy is another way to serve 'the least of these,'" Freeman said. "It's one thing to give hungry people food but if you see the same people coming to your church food pantry month after month, week after week, year after year, there might be something larger going on."

According to its most basic definition an advocate is "one who pleads the cause of another," Freeman said. The concept of advocating for others, especially the poor and vulnerable, is found throughout the Bible.

'Pray to the Lord'

She pointed to Jeremiah 29:7: "Also seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

Freeman said, "The Scriptures are pretty clear about God's care and concern for the least of these. James 1:27 says true religion is this — to care for orphans and to care for widows. Faith is personal but your personal relationship should have public implications."

Advocacy for the poor and downtrodden not only is a biblical mandate but also can be a tool for bringing people to faith in Christ.

"Advocacy is what people would call 'demonstrative evangelism,' which is just dem-

onstrating God's power and love through acts of service and love."

Advocacy also can serve as a strategy for engaging those who have a desire to transform their communities but have not previously considered the Church as a good avenue for such work. Freeman pointed out that many Millennials have abandoned organized religion, citing too much focus on power, money, politics and rules as some of their reasons for disengagement.

According to recent statistics from LifeWay Research, 47 percent of people who do not attend church say social action is "very important" to them. Advocacy then can be an important tool to engage the young and unchurched in the work of the body of Christ.

Advocacy also is a good way to build networks across churches. There are problems one church isn't going to be able to tackle on its own, Freeman said, but by joining others and working together, more can be accomplished. The best way to start, Freeman said, is to follow Jesus' example and begin in your own community.

Ask what issues your community is facing, she urged. What are the barriers and gaps? Where are the vulnerable most at risk for exploitation?

Freeman encourages choosing causes by thinking about the issues that break both your own heart and the heart of God. She offered human trafficking as an example.

"We think of women who are forced into sex trafficking or men and children into la-

bor," she said. "That's obviously not God's will or design for people to live under that circumstance, and maybe you have a heart for women who've escaped from that."

Freeman noted her own advocacy work was sparked by involvement in a teen mentoring ministry during college. Through her relationship with a teenage girl who wanted to be the

first in her family to go to college, Freeman's eyes opened to the inequity in education. So she and her fellow mentors worked to address these issues with school teachers, counselors and principals.

"Before my mentoring experience, because I was a good student and worked hard and did well in school, I thought that people didn't go to college simply because they didn't want to work hard," she said.

"I thought: 'It's on them. They're not doing what they need to do.' Through my experience as a mentor I met someone who was doing everything right — doing everything her teachers asked, listening in class, doing her homework, being respectful and a straight-A student, and still some factors outside of her control were negatively impacting her future."

Freeman recommended "leading with what you know" when having conversations with policymakers at every level. Tell them what you've witnessed in your community firsthand.

She urged advocates to focus on policies and people, not personal politics, and to keep in mind that solving problems and addressing needs, not winning at all costs, is the goal. (BNG)



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New report exposes hidden costs of hunger in health care

A new study commissioned by Bread for the World Institute shows that in 2014 alone, hunger and food insecurity increased health expenditures in the United States by \$160 billion. The study is highlighted in the institute's new report, "The Nourishing Effect: Ending Hunger, Improving Health, Reducing Inequality," released Nov. 23.

"Nowhere are the hidden costs of hunger and food insecurity greater than in health care," said David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World. "Access to nutritious food is essential to healthy growth and development, and can prevent the need for costly medical care. Many chronic

diseases — the main causes of poor health as well as the main drivers of health care costs — are related to diet."

Food insecurity is associated with higher rates of depression, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and other physical and mental health conditions. Food assistance programs such as SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) and school lunches save money in the long run by improving educational and health outcomes.

Government resources that could go toward programs such

as early childhood education or reducing the national debt are instead spent in emergency rooms and hospitals to offset the costs of hunger and food insecurity. The

\$160 billion is equivalent to more than a third of the U.S. government's annual deficit.

The study was carried out by John Cook of Boston Medical Center and Children's HealthWatch, and Ana Paula Poblacion of Universidade Federal de São Paulo in Brazil.

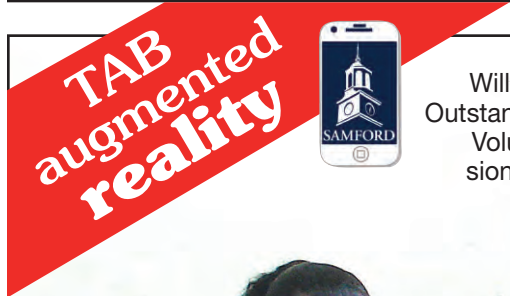
Asma Lateef, director of Bread for the World Institute, said, "The old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure

has never been more appropriate. Investments in federal nutrition programs are critical and much more needs to be done to ensure that vulnerable and underserved communities have access to healthy foods."

Being productive

Ending hunger and food insecurity will allow millions of people to do better in school, be more productive at work and live healthier lives. "The Nourishing Effect" report offers recommendations for health care providers, anti-hunger advocates and policymakers to help make a healthier, hunger-free U.S. a reality. (Bread for the World)

**For more information,
visit www.hungerreport.org.**



William 'Bill' Powell was named the 2015 Outstanding Alabama Baptist State Missions Volunteer. He has served on several missions trips to Central and South America.



One smile at a time

Photo courtesy of William 'Bill' Powell

Birmingham dentist Powell named 2015 Outstanding Missions Volunteer

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Whether at his dental office in Birmingham or on the missions field in Peru, 2015 Outstanding Alabama Baptist State Missions

Volunteer William "Bill" Powell seeks to spread the gospel and improve the lives of others one smile at a time.

'A way of life'

"For Bill missions is not just a trip you take once or twice a year. It is a way of life," said

Phil Boyles, pastor of the Midtown Campus of 3Circle Church, Mobile.

Boyles first met Powell as a college student in the early 1980s. Boyles was a student in Powell's Sunday School class at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, when

Powell took his first missions trip in 1981. The trip was into the mountains of Mexico during a year of increased rebel activity in the area.

"Bill had to deal with armed men from both the rebels and Federal Police coming into the compound where he was operat-

ing a dental clinic and sharing Christ," Boyles said. "I remember him saying upon his return, 'I don't think I will ever go back on a missions trip out of the country.'"

That frightening experience did not keep Powell from taking another missions trip, however.

Final Training Opportunity for



January 7, 2016, Samford University, Birmingham
Dwight M. Beeson Hall (next to the University Center)

The session will begin at 1 p.m. with check-in at 12:45 and end at 7 p.m. and will feature:

- ~ training in the evangelism strategies of CAST, Life Conversations and Media Evangelism ~ a free dinner meal ~ a great concert ~ a challenging message ~ free gifts for pastors and directors of missions

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Online registration is required at alsbom.org/sharingacrossalabama. Please register by January 2. Questions? Call 1-800-264-1225, ext. 245, or 334-613-2245 or email lmcough@alsbom.org.



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

“Dr. Powell has a desire to see the lost saved and he has a heart for the indigent. He has told me numerous times that all people need Jesus to get a life and good teeth to get ahead in life. He sees that he can help the whole person.”

**Pastor Danny Wood
Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills**

Since that first trip he has been involved in several medical missions projects, including leading teams to Honduras, Brazil, Dominican Republic and most recently Peru.

In July, Powell organized a missions team to conduct a medical, dental and optical clinic in a community outside Lima. Prior to the trip Powell raised funds to put a new roof on a church in the area.

“It (the roof) was a tool that was used to share Jesus with those who would wonder why these Americans would come down and work so hard in Lima,” Boyles said.

During the four-day trip more than 1,000 patients came through the clinic, and the medical and construction teams shared Jesus with hundreds more.

Around 300 people professed Christ publicly as a result of their outreach.

‘Highlight of their year’

“While the team was instrumental in this effort, the great miracle was the fact that the majority of this team had gone on multiple missions trips with Dr. Powell and considered this the highlight of their year,” Boyles said.

Danny Wood, Powell’s pastor at Shades Mountain Baptist, said Powell has led at least one missions team, and often several, each year during Wood’s 18 years as pastor.

“We have an Acts 1:8 strategy in our church which Bill has passionately embraced,” Wood said.

“In Birmingham, our Jerusalem, it is amazing that when I am talking to leaders of downtown ministries, somewhere

in the conversation Dr. Powell’s name comes up and they are telling me about free dental

work he provided for some of their patrons.”

Both Birmingham Baptist Association and Shelby Baptist Association have benefitted from Powell’s dental expertise in establishing clinics in the area. Other ministries, including the Lovelady Center and M-POWER Ministries in Birmingham and a community dental clinic sponsored by 3Circle Church, also have benefitted from his willingness to serve.

Powell knows how important a person’s smile is to their self-esteem and their ability to get a job, both common struggles among those who experience poverty. His service goes beyond medical care and personal hygiene, however. The gospel is always part of the mission.

‘Heart for the indigent’

“Dr. Powell has a desire to see the lost saved and he has a heart for the indigent. He has told me numerous times that all people need Jesus to get a life and good



Photo courtesy of William ‘Bill’ Powell
William ‘Bill’ Powell (right), a member of Shades Mountain Baptist, Vestavia Hills, uses his gifts as a dentist to share the gospel.



Photo courtesy of William ‘Bill’ Powell

Dentist William ‘Bill’ Powell (center), examines the teeth of a woman during one of his many missions trips to Central and South America. He most recently traveled to Lima, Peru.

teeth to get ahead in life. He sees that he can help the whole person,” Wood said.

Wood accepted the award on Powell’s behalf during the Nov. 17 session of the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting.

Wood called Powell’s mis-

sions involvement a “legacy” that inspires those who see his commitment to helping others and sharing the gospel.

“It’s a great challenge to our church to see a man take his talents and use them to invest in the world.”

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Eva Nell Hunter (left), a member of Central Baptist Church, Decatur, and recipient of the 2015 Lifetime of Mission Service Award, helps set up a library in the Philippines.

Volunteer for life



Photo courtesy of Eva Nell Hunter

Globe-trotting 87-year-old 'librarian' earns 2015 Lifetime of Mission Service Award

By Martine Bates Sharp
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

At an age when most people are sitting in recliners or at least slowing down, 87-year-old Eva Nell Hunter, a member of Central Baptist Church, Decatur, keeps a pace that would leave people many years younger in the dust.

Hunter, the 2015 Lifetime of Mission Service Award recipient, is best known to Alabama Baptists for her work in church libraries, but according to Pastor Rob Jackson, describing her as a librarian "is a vast understatement."

According to Jackson, Hunter has a heart for missions like no other. "I can think of no one in my 25 years in the ministry who comes close to being a missions volunteer for life like Eva Nell Hunter," he said.

Traveling the globe

Hunter has traveled across the United States and around the world on missions trips, setting up libraries for churches and training library workers. Her international

trips have included Austria, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Brazil and Switzerland. She intended to go to Ivory Coast in West Africa in 2014 to set up a library for a seminary, but her doctor refused to give her the necessary inoculations because of her age.

Although she was unable to go to Ivory Coast, Hunter still found a way to help. "I had Googled several hundred book titles sent to me in French [the official language in Ivory Coast]. I translated them into English in order to classify them. A gift of a laptop and a computer program enabled me to place the books in the computer program — back into French. I sent everything over and someone went to assist with the library there."

Since the 1980s she has dressed up as Lottie Moon at Christmas and Annie Armstrong at Easter and presented monologues in churches to support missions giving. She serves as 1 of 4 library specialists for LifeWay Christian Resources and hosts a library conference each year at Central Baptist, which draws people from all over the region. This year's conference included participants from four states, 42

churches and five denominations.

To date, Hunter has served as a volunteer in Central Baptist's library for 57 years and as volunteer director for 55 of those years. She said she was asked by the nominating committee to take the position for "one more year" for several years. Her answer was always the same: "I suppose I'll have to because I'm not caught up." After a few years, she said, "It was as if the Lord was speaking to me, saying, 'Eva Nell, how long is it going to take before you know this is where I want you to be?'"

At Central Baptist, Hunter has developed a library with around 20,000 titles, rivaling that of many small town libraries. The church library is open to the public on weekdays from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. and serves people from across the area, many of whom are homeschool teachers seeking wholesome reading materials and

teaching supplies for their children.

She and her volunteer staff prepare all teaching and learning materials for the church's missions trips. The staff also repair Bibles, prepare craft materials for Central Baptist's Vacation Bible School and provide die-cut materials for other churches free of charge, sending out as many as 1,300 one year.

central Baptist's Vacation Bible School and provide die-cut materials for other churches free of charge, sending out as many as 1,300 one year.

Mediagraphy

What's next for this energetic 87-year-old? Hunter is working on a juvenile mediagraphy, similar to a bibliography, except it is not confined to books. She plans to continue her work of encouraging and assisting others in church libraries.

"This is my whole life. It is

what has kept me going, especially after I lost my husband, Mark. I look forward to it every day."

And a trip to Spain is tentatively planned for 2016. ☪



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Reggie Quimby (left), State Board of Missions' office of global missions director, presents Eva Nell Hunter with the 2015 Lifetime of Mission Service Award.

"This is my whole life. It is what has kept me going, especially after I lost my husband, Mark. I look forward to it every day. ... If there's anything I know for sure, I'm where [God] wants me to be."

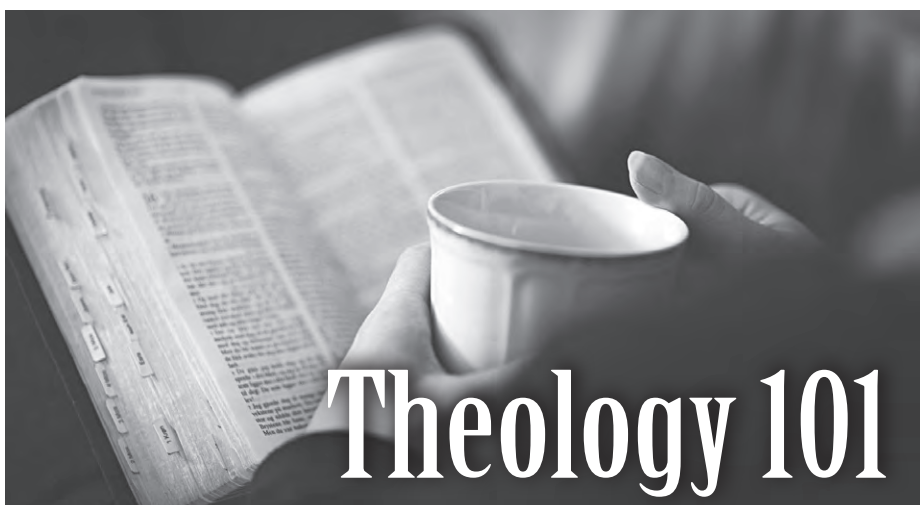
Eva Nell Hunter

member of Central Baptist Church, Decatur
2015 Lifetime of Mission Service Award recipient



Photo courtesy of Eva Nell Hunter

Eva Nell Hunter, a member of Central Baptist Church, Decatur, has been serving as a volunteer in the church library for 57 years.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Name Above Every Name

Immanuel

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

As we have seen in the past four weeks, Jesus is referred to often in the New Testament both as “Christ” and “Lord,” as well as addressed as “Son of David” on a number of occasions. However, only three times in the whole Bible does the name “Immanuel” occur. The first time is in the prophetic passage of Isaiah 7:14: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and shall call His name Immanuel.” The term occurs again in Isaiah 8:8 as part of a promise of hope for Israel in terms of the Lord’s promised presence with His people when He “will fill the breadth of Your land, O Immanuel.” Two verses later the translation of “Immanuel” is given as further emphasis on the basis for Israel’s future hope, “For God is with us” (Isa. 8:10).

The remaining occurrence of the term is in the familiar Christmas story passage of Matthew 1:23, which applies the term to Mary’s son, Jesus. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and explained Mary’s miraculous conception as an action of the Holy Spirit, under inspiration of that same Spirit, Matthew connected the forthcoming birth of Jesus with the ultimate meaning and fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14. In so doing the meaning of “Immanuel” found its ultimate application in reference to the virgin birth of Christ, “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, ‘God with us.’”

Overtones of incarnation

Thus at the outset of Jesus’ life we hear overtones of incarnation in this name as well as allusion to the divine nature of Christ. By the time His mission reaches its redemptive conclusion in shame, suffering a sin-bearing death, we hear strains of amazing grace in this prophetic name. God was indeed in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Think about it. While we confess our faith in the triune being of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we also confess our monotheistic faith that

declares there is only one true God. Consequently, Christian faith does not embrace one God who as Father condemns sin and another God who saves us by becoming our Immanuel in order that He might personally cover our sin debt with full payment. Rather we are left believing that the same God who sent His Son was, in fact, Himself incarnate in that Son. Blessed mystery indeed.

Paid on our behalf

Put another way the grace inherent in the meaning of “Immanuel” teaches us that the very God who decreed the wages of sin to be death came as Immanuel to bear our death-laden sins Himself. What God required of sinners He paid on our behalf.

When at Christmastime we think about the meaning of Christ’s coming as “God with us,” are we to think of God who is only in company with us or as One who also became as one of us? Did not the God who created us in His likeness take upon Himself our likeness? We read that He took flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14). The blood that flowed in Immanuel’s veins became the perfect sin covering. Sinners plunged beneath its flow are cleansed as white as snow, losing all their guilty stain.

Think about it like this: the fourth man in the furnace was simply with the three young Hebrews, lending his presence with them in their ordeal. The man-child in Mary’s womb was doing more; He was sharing our humanity for the purpose of eternal redemption. ☩

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 members set goals to challenge each other

(continued from page 1)
nians 5:23 as their base — “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Those three parts — spirit, soul and body — all need to be sanctified together, Barnett said.

“Two years ago I was part of a ministers’ health emphasis at the hospital, and they encouraged a group of 20 ministers to participate to get ourselves in a regimen and routine of health,” he said.

“I really wanted to pass that on to the church family.”

And folks committed to join him.

It’s been great, he said.

“And we’re going to continue — it’s been too healthy and too good for us (to stop),” he said.

From youth to senior adults, church members have taken their fitness to heart,

both spiritually and physically, Barnett said.

While setting physical goals and a church attendance challenge, they’ve been memorizing Scripture together as a church.

“And other great things have happened too,” he said. “For example some of our ladies have started some low-impact aerobics and a Beth Moore study on Tuesday mornings. And we want to keep that going.”

Viva Sligh, who leads the aerobics class, agreed.

“This emphasis has been a very good thing for our whole church, and I hope we can keep doing it,” she said.

“It’s been good for everybody.

We’ve been study-

ing the Bible and getting healthier. It’s not that we’ve all lost a lot of weight — it’s that we’ve all become more conscious about what we’re doing and how we’re taking care of ourselves.” ☩

“We’ve been studying the Bible and getting healthier. It’s not that we’ve all lost a lot of weight — it’s that we’ve all become more conscious about what we’re doing.”

Viva Sligh
aerobics class teacher

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Photo by Chris McCaghren

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BCM BAPTIST CAMPUS MINISTRY

Alabama Baptist churches partner with college students, BCM to make Christ known

By Amy Jackson
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

One common way to describe the role of Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) is that it is an arm or extension of the local church body. Across Alabama many local church bodies have been actively involved in partnering with BCMs, working together to equip and strengthen believers while making the gospel known on campuses across the state.

One picture of local church bodies engaged and working in this kind of ministry is Momentum, a monthly worship service at Auburn University sponsored by Auburn's BCM as well as First Baptist Church, Parkway Baptist Church, Lakeview Baptist Church and Farmville Baptist Church, all in Auburn.

Through lots of planning, brainstorming and developing, Auburn's

campus ministers and local pastors were able to see an idea come to life in September with a worship service they call Momentum, held on campus in one of Auburn's ballrooms.

Building 'Momentum'

The collaborative worship service allows college students from different churches and BCMs to connect with one another.

Auburn student and BCM freshmen ministry leader Allie Plemons said, Momentum "has opened up friendships between everyone. ... [I] get to mingle with people I wouldn't necessarily have met before."

Momentum also has an evangelistic component. Students hand out flyers inviting others to the service on campus in hopes that people will come to connect with fellow believers and ultimately connect with God.

At the University of South Ala-

bama (USA), October's Engage 24 emphasis proved to be another picture of church bodies engaging and partnering with BCM to make the gospel known. Engage 24 is a nationwide collegiate ministry strategy, targeting a specific day in October to encourage believers to share their faith on their campuses. In Alabama the focus is usually Oct. 1-24.

In Mobile, Engage 24 featured 24 days focused on fasting, praying and training and mobilizing college students to share their faith.

Jerrod Brown, USA campus minister, described it as a time to "train students in personal evangelism, pray specifically for evangelism efforts on campus and mobilize students to share on campus both individually and as part of larger projects."

This emphasis is meant to be a catalyst for future evangelism on campus throughout the year.

And through partnerships with

local churches, that intention can become a reality. Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, has a history of cooperation with USA's BCM and partnered with them for Engage 24.

During the emphasis college students were invited to share their personal stories and hear stories of redemption through Christ. Dauphin Way Baptist and BCM partnered to host several "Story Tables" on campus, where they were able to engage college students by doing short surveys, passing out drinks and snacks, giving away Chick-fil-A gift cards and encouraging people to complete spiritual life surveys.

Brown said this year 25 students were trained and mobilized to share the gospel through Engage 24.

Destyne Pound, a USA junior who also is involved at Dauphin Way, said the time she was able to spend hearing people's stories was especially meaningful.

Need for the gospel

"We asked [college students at USA] about their stories and sometimes they were really heartbreaking," she said. "Sometimes we forget the urgency behind the need for the gospel in peoples' lives."

Justin Majors, also a USA junior, said his experiences with Engage 24 in 2014 helped teach him "to step up as a disciple — to be a disciple maker instead of just a believer being poured into by others."

By the end of the 2015 Engage 24, Brown said they collected more than 100 contacts to follow up with personally and shared the gospel with more than 40 students. In addition, one accepted Christ and many others were encouraged in their walk as disciples.

Brown said he and Jeremy Montgomery, student pastor at Dauphin Way, talked with a student who was a growing Christian and were able to connect him with both BCM and a local church.



Photo courtesy of Allie Plemons

Auburn University student Allie Plemons (left) passes out flyers on campus inviting people to Momentum.

So much of the ministry taking place on Alabama's college campuses would not be possible without the support of local churches.

"BCM exists as a partnership ministry between the State Board of Missions of the Alabama Baptist Convention and the local associations surrounding college campuses," Brown explained.

BCM's across the state need partners and the best partners are local, faithful churches helping support the work of BCM, he said.

Once a partnership is formed the missions opportunities are endless. For instance, Dauphin Way provided air mattresses for the USA BCM missions team on its fall break trip to New Orleans and will partner with USA's BCM for its 2016 spring break missions trip to Atlanta.

The cooperation also provides much-needed encouragement for campus ministers from other ministry leaders and allows students opportunities to be mentored.

Local churches can partner with BCMs by praying, giving and going. Pray for the work happening on college campuses throughout Alabama. Consider mentoring college students or serving a home-cooked meal as a way to get connected. ☪

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MINISTRIES



continue to make an impact across the state

Student pastor shares how joint worship service ministers to Auburn students

By Craig Hamm

Student pastor, Farmville Baptist Church, Auburn

It is finished; it is done. To the world, salvation comes. Hallelujah, we're alive. Hell was silenced when you cried, 'It is finished.'

That's what you would have heard being sung by more than 100 college students if you had walked into Foy Hall on Auburn University's campus on the last Tuesday night in October. While many of their classmates were enjoying their beverages in local bars or watching game one of the World Series, these students were worshipping Christ together.

This semester a handful of Baptist churches along with Auburn's Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) joined together to create a monthly worship gathering for college students in these churches and ministries. This monthly worship gathering is called "Momentum."

Momentum is the force or speed of movement of an object — or in this case, an idea and a person. That person is the Lord Jesus Christ and the idea is the fact that His gospel needs to be shared with the 27,287 students at Auburn University. This is one of the things that we hoped to accomplish when a few college pastors and ministry directors sat in an office in the Auburn BCM building in late April.

Mobilize and equip

Our goal was to mobilize and equip the students in our ministries to make disciples at Auburn University and one of the ways that we were going to achieve this goal was through gathering our students together once a month in order to worship together and encourage one another in this tremendous task. We wanted to build momentum in our college ministries as we seek to impact Auburn University.

That April meeting led to more questions. Where would these worship gatherings take place? Who would preach? Who would lead musical worship? How would we pay for everything?

These questions along with many others are the reasons why we met multiple times over the summer in order to plan for Momentum worship gatherings.

Becoming a reality

Our dream was quickly becoming a reality. But how would we let the students know about these times of worship?

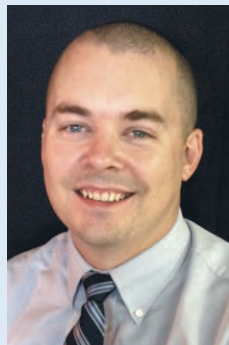
Obviously we would tell the students who were already involved in our ministries about it but we wanted the other students on Auburn's campus to know about it as well. So we decided to host a cookout on campus during the second week of classes.

We promoted it through passing out flyers and posting information about the free cookout all over social media. The free food that night allowed us to tell hundreds of students about the new worship gatherings.

Encouraging students

Ultimately the effectiveness of these events will only be determined in eternity. But as the college and youth pastor for a church that averages just over 100 in attendance on Sunday morning, Momentum has given our college students an opportunity to be encouraged through worshipping with many other college students in ways that we simply can't do at Farmville (yet).

And this all came about by asking the right questions. We didn't ask ourselves, "Can we do this?" We asked, "How can we do this?" The Lord has given us His answers to our questions and I trust that He will continue to bless Momentum. 🙏



HAMM



Photo courtesy of Jerrod Brown

Jeremy Montgomery (second from right) of Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, and University of South Alabama student Michael Cole (left) share the gospel on campus.

South Alabama student invests in local church, BCM

By Rebecca Shipman

Student, University of South Alabama

I have always grown up in church but I did not have a passion to share the gospel with others until I fully put my trust in Christ in my early teens. In the youth group at Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, evangelism and outreach were always emphasized. As a young student at the church I was trained to effectively share the gospel but I honestly never put my training into action.

When I transitioned to college at the University of South Alabama, I remained involved at Dauphin Way Baptist but I also got plugged into Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM). BCM has provided incredible resources to help me mature in my faith. I have really been able to take ownership of what I believe. BCM and my local church (Dauphin Way) have always had a great relationship with each other, partnering for outreach opportunities, evangelism training and worship events.

As a second-year college student I have seen the importance of the church and BCM investing in college students. Dauphin Way and Metro Mobile BCM work hand-in-hand to help Christian college students strengthen their faith and even inspire

them to reach out on their college campus.

This year my local church and BCM partnered together for Engage 24, a nationwide focus for collegiate ministry that encourages students to share the gospel on their campuses. To prepare for this time both Dauphin Way and BCM focused on training students to make disciples on our campus. It was truly an awesome experience — getting to take the training I had received at my local church and actually putting into action through the ministries of BCM. I can honestly say that I have had the opportunity to share the gospel more this month than I ever have before. Dauphin Way and BCM have given me the push to be bolder about taking advantage of the many opportunities I have to share the gospel on my college campus.

Being a part of a BCM and a church that are working together to make disciples has encouraged me and created a passion in me to make disciples on my college campus. Engage 24 has definitely ignited a passion to be more intentional about sharing the gospel with the world around me. Both Dauphin Way and BCM have been a huge influence on me by investing in my life and working together to help me grow as a disciple and disciple-maker. 🙏



SHIPMAN

LifeWay looks for new headquarters

LifeWay Christian Resources is stepping away from the purchase of a 1.5-acre site in downtown Nashville to look at other sites for a new headquarters, LifeWay President Thom Rainer said Nov. 16.

Rainer said LifeWay does intend to complete the sale of its 14.5-acre campus, also located in downtown Nashville.

LifeWay stated in July that its new headquarters would encompass 216,000 square feet in facilities best suited for the ministry's future.

LifeWay's current site encompasses several buildings with more than 1 million square feet of office, warehouse and parking space.

About 1,100 of LifeWay's employees work in the downtown offices, utilizing about a third of the workspace.

The Southern Baptist Convention entity also operates 186 LifeWay stores and a national conference center in Ridgecrest, North Carolina, with a total workforce of more than 4,000 in 29 states. (BP)

Elegant 80-plus ladies honored at FBC Butler



Photo by Sharon Shepherd

First Baptist Church, Butler, celebrates its Elegant 80-plus ladies Nov. 5 during a special evening service. Special music was provided by the Choctaw Baptist Association church's ladies ensemble, New Beginnings. Hostesses were members of the Esther Sunday School class, assisted by Kaitlyn and Kinsley Webb. A meal was served during the celebration and the women were recognized for their years of steadfast faith. Rebecca Sorrells, wife of Pastor Jeremy, read from Proverbs 31 and each woman was given a time to share some words of wisdom. Sharon Shepherd, a member of First, Butler, who participated in the event, said, 'It was heartwarming to hear what these special women had to say and quite fun.'

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Wedowee, Alabama, is accepting resumés for a full-time pastor. Please send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 594, Wedowee, AL 36278.

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.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC

Faith Baptist Church, Moulton Alabama, is seeking a bivocational minister of music. If you are interested in this position, please submit your resumé to: Faith Baptist Church, 3979 County Rd. 434, Moulton, AL 35650, ATTN: Personnel Committee. The church phone number is 256-974-9351.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC

Bivocational minister of music. Contact Bro. Jason Meaux at jmeaux@turnervillebaptist.org.

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.

STUDENT PASTOR

Mineral Springs Baptist Church, near Jemison, Alabama, in Chilton County, Alabama, is currently accepting resumés for a full-time student pastor. Five years experience in proven, healthy student ministry is mandatory. Only emailed resumés will be accepted. Please send resumés, ministry philosophy and a cover letter to: pastorjasongreen@yahoo.com.

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- 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.

Church ANNIVERSARIES



Pleasant Hill celebrates 175th anniversary

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Sardis, in Selma Baptist Association celebrated its homecoming and 175th anniversary in a joint service Oct. 18.

Angela Spear, a soloist with the Highland Park Baptist Church, Panama City, Florida, choir, sang special music and former pastor Jerry Gunnells brought the message. Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative Laura Leavell presented a certificate to the church for its years of service.

Each participant received a laminated bookmark designed by church member Jackie Burton. The bookmarks pictured a replica of a painting of Pleasant Hill Baptist's three buildings which was painted by Burton's grandmother, Eunice Simmons, in 1973.

A barbecue lunch closed out the celebration. David B. Thomas is pastor. (Maggie Walsh)

Ephesus marks 150 years of service

With the theme "Ephesus — Through the Years," Ephesus Baptist Church, Marion, celebrated its 150th anniversary as well as homecoming Nov. 1.

The service, beginning at 11 a.m., started with recordings from the music of Annie "Mama B." Huey, who started playing the piano at the church at age 12. Laura Leavell, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative, presented a plaque recognizing the church's 150-year milestone to Pastor Henry Levert. Barbara Wallace gave the presentation of the Woman's Missionary Union commemorative Bibles. Former pastor Roger Willmore and Bill Wallace, Cahaba Baptist Association director of missions, both spoke during the service.

A lunch was served in between the morning service and afternoon celebration program. Thomas Nichols, long-time mem-

ber, was the keynote speaker of the afternoon service and shared the history of the church. (Hannah Muñoz)

Loachapoka Baptist celebrates 175 years

Loachapoka Baptist Church celebrated its 175th anniversary Aug. 29. That's right, on a Saturday.

"We wanted to invite back former pastors and former members from out of town," said Pastor Phillip Nelson. A Saturday service gave "everybody the opportunity to come and it worked," he said.

Loachapoka Baptist averages 30 people each Sunday and approximately 125 people participated that day. The service was full of special guests including Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association Director of Missions Bill King, who spoke. Several former pastors shared about their time as pastor and memories of the church. Our Hope performed special music and a plaque was presented by Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative Calvin Milford. Lunch was served following the service. (Hannah Muñoz)

FBC Georgiana marks 150 years

In a joint service Oct. 25, First Baptist Church, Georgiana, celebrated its 150th anniversary, homecoming and the 10-year anniversary of being in its current building.

"We were blessed to have a full house of both past and current members as well as former pastors," said church member Betty Henry.

A plaque from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission (ABHC) was presented by former member and ABHC representative Dalton Campbell to Pastor Allen Stephenson. Also, Stephenson presented a plaque that was given by Butler Baptist Association Director of Missions Allen Winn earlier in the month. A special presentation made by former member Franklin Hayes honored Ray Lowe, former minister to senior adults, for his many years of faithful service and dedication to the church and his Lord. Special music was sung by Holly Lowe, Caitlin Kline and Erin Chavers. Former member Michael Williams was the guest speaker. A

fellowship meal followed the service. (Betty Henry)

Brundidge's New Hope celebrates 175th

The 175th anniversary celebration of New Hope Baptist Church, Brundidge, "started just like every other church service," said church clerk Judy Atkinson. Participants gathered together in the sanctuary for the collective Sunday School lesson before splitting into individual Sunday School groups.

But during the service minister of music Faye Allen performed special music and guests presented plaques to the church. Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented the first plaque to Pastor Lanny Shepard and Coffee Baptist Association Director of Missions John Granger presented the other. Several lifetime or long-time members were recognized as well.

There were 150 participants in the service and at the dinner on the grounds afterward. (Hannah Muñoz)

Spring Hill Baptist uses 'footprint' theme

With the theme "Footprints of the past, present, future," Spring Hill Baptist Church, Millry, celebrated its 75th anniversary Oct. 11.

Pastor Jim O'Neal opened the 10 a.m. service by welcoming participants and former member Andy Williams led congregational singing. He also provided special music. Historical presentations were made by John Reid, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative, and Randy O'Neal, Washington County Historical Society representative. The service also featured a time of recognition of former and present deacons and former pastors. Jamie Baldwin, associate in the office of Sunday School and discipleship of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, brought the message and Chatom Mayor Harold Crouch also spoke.

After the morning service participants took a group picture before the fellowship meal. Participants received a 78-page history book and anniversary bookmark as gifts.

Southern gospel quartet New

Dawnings performed after lunch. Anniversary committee chairwoman Carolyn Reynolds said the celebration was "a full day and a great day." (Maggie Walsh)

West End Baptist commemorates 75 years

West End Baptist Church, Aliceville, in Pickens Baptist Association focused on "Sharing the Savior's Love" as it commemorated its 75th anniversary and homecoming Oct. 18.

During the 9:45 a.m. service, former pastors Mike Griffin and Blake Thompson spoke and two ladies' ensembles sang special music. Current members Lori McGlawn and Teresa Gibson sang with former members Marnetta McDaniel and Julie Gray, and the second ensemble was composed of former members Rebekah Owen, Anna Katherine Thompson and Emily Griffin.

Following a short break the celebration began again at 10:50 a.m. where the two ensembles sang and Pastor James Hammack spoke. A history of the church was read by Billy Joe Reece and former pastor Jimmy Wilson brought the message. Angie Cooper, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative, made a presentation. Lunch concluded the celebration. (Maggie Walsh)

Pisgah Baptist shares about church's founding

How the church came to be was a very special story that members and visitors of Pisgah Baptist Church in Sand Mountain Baptist Association were able to hear at its 150th anniversary celebration Aug. 23.

Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative Tom Allen presented the church's history as he offered a plaque celebrating the church's years of service.

Nancy Rhyne, who played a key role in organizing the celebration event, said, "Our church was full that day." There were several visitors, including previous church members that "came back home."

Ted Traylor, Pisgah native and pastor of Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola, Florida, brought the message and Tim Lett performed special music. A "feast" followed the service. Terry Grant is pastor. (Hannah Muñoz)

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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.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Daniel Wilson** is the new pastor of **First Church, Pleasant Grove**, beginning Dec. 13. He comes from West End Church, Clanton, where he served as pastor since 2012. Wilson previously served as an associate in the State Board of Missions' evangelism office and as pas-



WILSON

tor of Dry Ridge Church, Dry Ridge, Kentucky, and Raleigh Avenue Church, Homewood. He and his wife, Erin, have two sons.

COLUMBIA

► **Malvern Church** will host The Kingsmen Quartet in concert Dec. 3, 7 p.m. Refreshments will be served in the fellowship hall following the service. Everyone is invited. Hosea Parker is pastor.

ETOWAH

► **First Church, Glencoe**, will host the sixth annual

Christmas Light Show, Dec. 5 through Dec. 31. Hours are Sunday–Thursday, 5–10 p.m. and Friday–Saturday, 5 p.m. to midnight. A hot chocolate stand will be set up Dec. 5–6, 12–13 and 19–20, 6:15–8:15 p.m. For more information visit www.facebook.com/glencoelights. Anthony Gomez is pastor.

MUSCLE SHOALS

► **Faith Church, Moulton**, will host a Christmas concert with The Kempters in concert Dec. 4, 6:30 p.m. Jeff Griffis is pastor. ☞

Palestinian 'Savior' film coming to Alabama

Westerners watch from afar as the Middle East continues to be torn apart by violence, pain, fear and untold human suffering. The situation seems overwhelming, possibly even a lost cause.

But is it possible a film could be the key to changing everything? Possibly so because "nothing is impossible for God" (Luke 1:37).

An extraordinarily fresh film directed by and starring Palestinians, "The Savior," offers a new revealing of Jesus.

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Luke narrates the story of the divine mystery, wonderment and impact of the Savior.

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"The Savior" has been seen by millions of Arabic-speaking people across the globe and in some of the most hostile and violent places on earth.

The film has been broadcast on some of the most popular secular stations in areas such as Northern Africa, the Middle East, Europe and Australia. And now the film

comes to Birmingham.

The premiere showing of "The Savior," dubbed in English by the original Palestinian actors, will be Dec. 14, 6:30 p.m., at First Baptist Church, Birmingham. Producers suggest parental guidance for the two-hour film because of the nature of the story.

To watch the trailer, meet the cast and explore the website, visit <http://thesavior.net>. For more information, email thesavior@pobox.com. (TAB)



The Lord will protect him and preserve his life; He will bless him in the land and not surrender him to the desire of his foes. The Lord will sustain him ... and restore him from his bed of illness.

Psalm 41:2-3



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Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

How would you like to get rid of that monthly mortgage payment? You don't have one? Well, how would you like to have some money growing at 5 percent? What's the catch, right? Thank the Lord, there is no catch with a reverse mortgage. Contrary to some myths (nice word for falsehoods) floating around, when a person gets a reverse mortgage, their name stays on the deed to the home and it's their home!

They can add a room, paint it pink, purple or polka dot. They can sell it since it's their home, right? Right! Now, what obligations would they have? I'm glad you asked because there are three obligations. They must pay for homeowners insurance just as they are required to do with any mortgage. They are required to pay property tax unless they are exempt from property tax. And last of all, they are required to maintain the home. That means if the

paint starts peeling and wood is exposed to the elements, FHA wants you to keep it from deteriorating and they'll expect you to put some paint on it.

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



Jimmy Dixon



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UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **University of Mobile Professor Presented Paper at National Meeting:** Miguel Echevarria, assistant professor of Christian ministries at the University of Mobile, presented a paper and served as a moderator at the national meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Atlanta on Nov. 17.

His paper was titled "Genesis 2:24: The First Gospel" and he moderated a session on Pauline Epistles.

JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson College's Equestrian Team Competes in Intercollegiate Horse Show:** The Judson College equestrian teams traveled to Rome, Georgia, on Nov. 7-8 to compete in the Intercollegiate Horse Show hosted by Berry College in Mount Berry, Georgia.

On the Hunt Seat team Kailee Ramsey, of Somerville, competed

in intermediate flat, placing 6th, followed by her jumping class placing 5th. Sheila Palmer, of Hoover, and Sara Alsbrook, of Centreville, received ribbons for placing 4th from advanced walk, trot and canter. Sara Jean Lane, of Conyers, Georgia, placed 3rd in walk and trot.

On the Western team Mary Kilpatrick, of Dothan, showed in open reining and placed 3rd. Alex Huber, of Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, placed 5th in advanced horsemanship. Cricket Wise, of Pensacola, Florida, placed 2nd in novice horsemanship. Chloey Guy, of Navarre, Florida, was reserve rider.

On Nov. 8, Ramsey placed 4th in her flat and in jumping class. Huber placed 4th in novice flat. Lane placed 5th, Palmer placed 3rd, and Abigail Wood, of South Cape, Africa, placed 5th in different divisions of advanced walk, trot and canter. Lane placed 3rd in walk and trot class.

► **Marion Police Chief Receives Judson College President's Award:** Judson College President David Potts presented

the President's Award to Marion Police Chief Carlton Hogue in a special ceremony Nov. 9. The ceremony and award honored Hogue for the contributions he and the Marion Police Department have made to ensuring the safety of Judson students and employees.

Hogue has served as Marion's chief of police since 2010 and is the pastor of New Great First Baptist Church, Thomasville.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford University to Help Build Habitat for Humanity Home:** Samford University once again will partner with Habitat for Humanity to build a home for a Birmingham family during the Christmas season. "Home for the Holidays" is coordinated by Habitat and Birmingham's ABC television affiliate.

Samford's build day is Dec. 5, from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information or to volunteer contact Allison Strickland at ahubbard@samford.edu or 205-726-4065.

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December 4-11

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For December 6

Explore the Bible By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D. Dean, School of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

THE WAY PREPARED Matthew 3:1-12

Matthew highlights the Kingdom in John's message: "Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (v. 2). After all the former tax collector focuses on the royal nature of Messiah, presenting Jesus as the King of the Jews (1:1; 2:2; 27:11, 29, 37) and the King of heaven and earth (28:18-20).

Others prepared the way before John as Matthew indicates. Abraham prepared the way through whose seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 22:18; Matt. 1:1, 2; Gal. 3:16). David prepared the way through whom the everlasting King would reign (2 Sam. 7:15; Matt. 1:6). Zerubbabel prepared the way serving as a signet ring for God and the line of David (Hag. 2:23; Matt. 1:12-17). Joseph and Mary prepared the way, being careful to follow God's directions (1:19-23).

Preparing the Way (1-6)

Matthew does not delineate when "those days" were, so we are indebted to Luke. He informs us that it was during the reign of Tiberius when John announced the coming of Messiah (Luke 3:1-2). Matthew records what the other Gospels affirm — that John was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of the voice crying in the wilderness, "Behold, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord" (Isa. 40:3).

Like Elijah before him (2 Kings 1:8), John endured a harsh existence. People gathered to hear what God had to say through this lonely figure. His message was not intended to bring any attention to himself, unlike the false prophets of that day or today. When followers wondered if he was the Messiah (Luke 3:15), John humbly explained that he was not worthy to be considered a servant to the Christ. Later when asked his thoughts regarding

Jesus' growing notoriety, John responded by saying, "He must increase but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

Proclaiming the Truth (7-10)

John distinguished truth from falsehood. Serpents have represented deceit and death since the earliest recordings in the Torah from the serpent in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1) to poisonous asps that bit blaspheming Israelites during the wilderness wanderings (Num. 21:4-9). By referring to religious leaders as serpents John announced that their teaching offered no life for God's people. Their ways were deceitful and destructive.

By contrast fruit represents life. If John's hearers were truly repentant then they would demonstrate their spiritual vitality through transformed lives. Jesus later explained that apart from Him we could bear no fruit (John 15:1-5).

Pointing to the King (11-12)

John distinguished his ministry from that of the coming King. He baptized with water but the Messiah would baptize with fire and the Holy Spirit. Water accompanies repentance, which God requires for ceremonial cleansing (Lev. 15-17). This precious commodity also was used for sacrifice (1 Kings 18:33) and for healing (2 Kings 5:1-14). Like the Essenes of his time John used water to be a public representation of repentance. In order to receive the King, John's hearers first had to repent.

Throughout the Scriptures fire means judgment for all and transformation for some. In the Prophets, for example, judgment fire comes upon sinful cities (Amos 1-2) and the refiner's fire purifies precious metal (Mal. 3:2-3). The Holy Spirit is the agent of new birth. John distinguishes his ministry of calling for repentance with that of the coming Messiah who brings the Spirit's new life and fire's transformation.

The King is coming. ☞

Bible Studies for Life By James R. Strange, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Religion, Samford University

ADOPTED INTO GOD'S FAMILY 1 John 3:1-10

Although Christian tradition credits John the son of Zebedee with writing the letter, the author doesn't name himself. In fact he writes in the first person plural as if more than one person took part in writing. The (primary) author is probably the same person who wrote 2 and 3 John, in which case he calls himself "the Elder" (2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1). He writes with authority.

Although brief the three letters of John have provided the Church with some of its most powerful language of community love, moral living and faith in Jesus. In today's passage it is clear that John sometimes writes about ideals that are difficult to attain.

In His love, God the Father makes us His children. (1-3)

The full passage probably begins in 2:28 because the ideas introduced there continue in the verses that follow (many of them such as "abiding in God" he introduced earlier). It is customary to talk about God as Father because of creation but John emphasizes the special relationship we have with God as believers (v. 1) through God's love — that is, not because of something we did. God's love makes it possible for Christians to love one another. Nonbelievers (the "world") have trouble understanding this kind of mutual love (vv. 11-17). We should add, "When we have this kind of love." It is not often that a community of Christians succeeds in loving in such a confounding way. I, for one, can't think of a single example (but that doesn't mean that you can't).

Notice how John can say that "we will be like Him [Jesus] when He is revealed," yet at the same time tells us to behave

like Jesus right now. Like Paul, James and Jesus Himself, he expects Christians to begin living now as they will in the life to come. That is a tall order.

In His love, God the Son removes our sin. (4-8)

The real challenges begin in this passage. What in the world can John mean by what he says in verses 6, 8, 9 and 10? Do Christians really not sin? Are non-Christians the only ones who sin and are they truly incapable of good deeds? This sort of "ethical dualism" is common in Proverbs, Job and Revelation. On one hand it probably reflects John's high standards for his readers. He wants them to strive to be morally "pure" (v. 3) in every way. On the other hand, despite his strong language here he knows Christians sin and he knows about our need for forgiveness (1:8-2:2; 5:16-17).

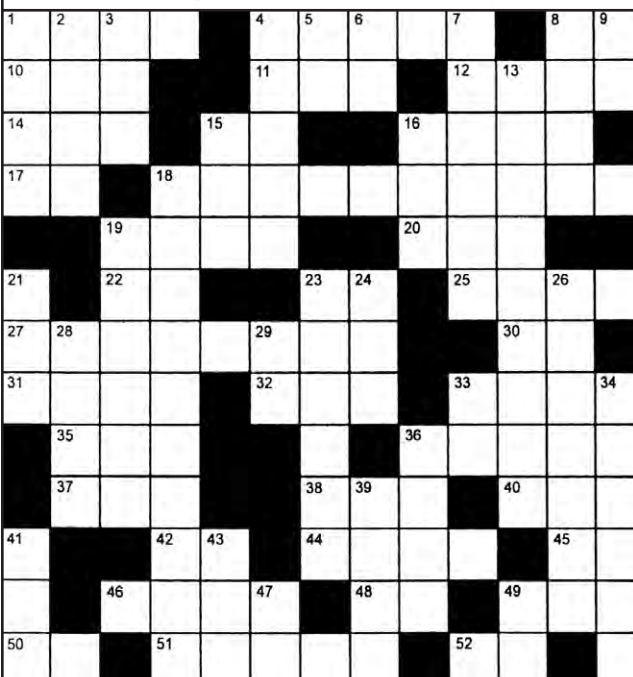
In His love, God imparts a new nature to His children. (9-10)

The word "seed" in verse 9 probably refers to God's Spirit (3:24; 4:13; John 14:16-17). John has been pounding on the theme of mutual love among Christians but it finally sinks in at the end of verse 10. The particular "sin" that he keeps talking about is apparently the failure of Jesus' followers to love one another and it reveals one of John's anxieties: the disintegration of a Christian community because of animosity, probably brought on by false teachings and the resulting schisms (2:18-19, 22; 3:12).

It is too easy to say "Amen" when Paul, James, John and Jesus Himself call for mutual love in the congregation. Loving our brothers and sisters means loving that so-and-so over there. Yes the person who strikes us as contrary and even dishonest is the very brother or sister we are to love. Now we know why John uses such strong language. ☞

Christian Crossword

By Janet Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- For God cannot be tempted with _____. (James 1:13)
- The voice of doves _____ing upon their breasts. (Nah. 2:7)
- From. (French)
- Feather scarf.
- Grow old.
- Highest point.
- He shall pour _____ upon it. (Lev. 2:1)
- Prayer book. (abbr.)
- Father, forgive _____. (Luke 23:34)
- North Dakota. (abbr.)
- He that goeth about as a _____revealeth secrets. (Prov. 20:19)
- Let God be _____, but every man a liar. (Rom. 3:4)
- Absence. (abbr.)
- Egyptian sun god.
- He had sent messengers to _____king of Egypt. (2 Kings 17:4)
- Now the first lot came

- forth to Jehoiarib the fourth to _____im. (1 Chron. 24:7, 8)
- So can no _____ both yield salt water and fresh. (James 3:12)
- Citizens band radio.
- Spanish aunts.
- Prefix meaning "before."
- Ye shall not fulfil the _____ of the flesh. (Gal. 5:16)
- Liquified natural gas.
- Then _____ and the other apostles answered, we ought to obey God. (Acts 5:29)
- Steamer. (abbr.)
- Hubbub.
- Before. (poetic)
- Each. (abbr.)
- It is a _____ thing that the king requireth. (Dan. 2:11)
- Part of speech. (abbr.)
- Naum, which was the son of _____. (Luke 3:25)
- Return unto _____.
- _____ boweth down. (Isa. 46:1)
- What shall we _____? (Acts 2:37)
- _____ women shall take hold of one man. (Isa. 4:1)
- 3.14159.
- Black wood. (poetic)
- Faith is made _____. (Rom. 4:14)
- Adjective suffix.
- Thou preparest a _____ before me. (Ps. 23:5)
- Symbol for the element silver.
- Exist.
- Belonging to a notable harlot.
- Greek community.
- Former.
- And I will _____ them with the sword. (Jer. 29:18)
- The name of his city was _____. (Gen. 36:39)
- Beverage.
- I am purposed that my mouth shall not _____. (Ps. 17:3)
- Absent without permission.
- Ship's stern.

- Indian nobleman.
- They were afraid both _____ and other. (Jer. 36:16)
- Ye _____ days, and months. (Gal. 4:10)
- Greases.
- News service.
- French article.
- _____ clef.
- Skin opening.
- Condemn to everlasting punishment.
- Receive him not, neither _____ him God speed. (2 John 10)
- Tavern brew.
- Roman numeral 4.
- At intervals of two.



WHAT ARE YOU READING?



Alabama Baptists share about what they are currently reading

JENNIFER DAVIS RASH

The Alabama Baptist, rashionalthoughts.com
“90 Minutes in Heaven,” 10th anniversary ed.
 by Don Piper with Cecil Murphey

I never slowed down to read “90 Minutes in Heaven” when it first came out, so when I saw the 10th anniversary edition I decided it was time to read it. I’m glad I waited because this edition adds updated comments from author Don Piper, his wife, his son, co-author Cecil Murphey and the book’s publisher. Hearing from them 10 years after the book was originally published gave an interesting insight into how the success of Piper’s book as well as the demand for him as a guest speaker has affected his family. The book also shares personal stories from people walking through tragedy and how reading “90 Minutes” helped them in their situation.

And while Piper’s recounting of his heaven experience is certainly inspiring and an exciting reminder of what is to come for those of us who have given our hearts and lives to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, it was the details of the struggles he has endured while here on earth that captivated me the most. His story especially spoke to me about how we truly are all in this journey together and can learn from each other, help when it’s our turn to help and allow others to help us when we need it.

MAGGIE WALSH

The Alabama Baptist, Ariton Baptist Church
“Redeeming Love” by Francine Rivers

I love Francine Rivers’ books and this one is a classic. “Redeeming Love” is a re-telling of the story of Gomer and Hosea, set in 1850 in gold-rush California. Michael Hosea obeys God’s call to marry Angel, a prostitute who wants nothing to do with Michael or his God. She has never experienced anything but evil from men and pushes both Michael and God away at every turn.

What I love about this book is that it shows so clearly how we run from the best of what God has for us just so we can cling to what we know. Even if what we know is beyond standard, the fear of the unknown and our own insecurities can chain us to a lifestyle or circumstances that are worthless compared to God’s design. I’ve read it several times and have never ceased to be struck by the power of God’s love shown in “Redeeming Love.” ❧

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.

MercyMe



Photo courtesy of The Media Collective

‘Pointing to CHRIST’

MercyMe seeks to refresh Christmas classics on new album

By Leann Callaway
 Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

By adding a modern approach and updated style, MercyMe hopes audiences will find new meaning in Christmas classics as they share songs from their album, “MercyMe, It’s Christmas!”

Along with traditional carols, the album includes fun and festive original songs designed to brighten spirits while reminding audiences about the purpose of the holiday season.

Their first Christmas album, “The Christmas Sessions,” released in 2005 and earned widespread appeal which landed them on “The Tonight Show” as well as ABC’s annual Disney Christmas Parade.

Since their debut in 2001 the group has sold more than 6 million units and has garnered an impressive array of achievements including an American Music Award, multiple Dove Awards and Grammy and Billboard Music Award nominations.

Song of decade

In 2009, *Billboard Magazine* named their song, “Word Of God Speak,” the Christian song of the decade. In addition MercyMe received the prestigious honor of being named the Christian songs artist of the decade.

MercyMe also made history as their hit song,

“I Can Only Imagine,” surpassed 2 million digital downloads, becoming the first song in Christian music to go platinum and double-platinum in the digital domain.

Focus of group

The group is made up of lead singer Bart Millard, guitarists Barry Graul and Mike Scheuchzer, bassist Nathan Cochran and drummer Robby Shaffer.

In spite of the accolades and achievements the group remains focused on shining the spotlight on Christ. MercyMe is currently on the “Greater Than” tour and performed at Von Braun Civic Center in Huntsville on Nov. 14.

During their December concerts MercyMe wants to help audiences reflect on the reason for the season.

“We hope people will take away a great sense of the holiday spirit and the lyrics speak for themselves by pointing straight to the birth of Christ,” Graul said.

“All the emotions that go along with the holidays — happiness and challenges

along the way — are conveyed in these songs. “We love what this season truly means and the special times spent reflecting with family and friends about our Savior’s birth and the reasons we have to rejoice.” ❧

“We love what this season truly means and the special times spent reflecting ... [on] our Savior’s birth and the reasons we have to rejoice.”

**Barry Graul
 guitarist, MercyMe**



BP photo

International Mission Board missionary Dave Daggett (left) meets with Rodel Manalo at his home to discuss Manalo's ministry with the deaf Filipino community.

Next generation

'Shadow' missionaries disciple young leaders in Philippines

When someone shouted, "Your uncle is coming," everyone in the Philippine village knew the code meant "run and hide." Neighbors disappeared into small concrete homes until International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries Dave and Ivette Daggett had come and gone.

A few, however, including 13-year-old Berlyn Familiaran, stuck around to hear what the foreigners had to say.

The curious teenager planned only to sit in and listen during the Saturday Bible studies, nothing more. But even that angered her parents and the host of other family members living in her poor community.

That's because they are among an unreached Filipino people group considered predominantly Catholic, but, as Dave Daggett explained, steeped in idol worship and animism, insular and fearful of anything new that threatens religious traditions.

"We felt like that was such a difficult community, if we could ever see anything prosper there, surely it would prosper anywhere in the city. So we just kept going back," he said.

Familiaran kept going back too.

These foreigners knew about the drugs and violence in her community and about her dad, who was in and out of jail. Yet they encouraged her, she said, and they kept praying for her family. Familiaran was baptized just a little more than a year after meeting the Daggetts.

Familiaran said, "The joy was really in my heart. I can feel the presence of the Lord, even when we have problems in our family. I want to be the testi-

mony to my community."

As Familiaran continued sharing the gospel with her family and inviting them to Bible studies with the Daggetts, the walls of resistance crumbled.

Before they knew it, the Daggetts and Familiaran were starting a church.

Dave Daggett said, "It's the younger ones who have stepped up in leadership. They share the gospel with their friends and are going with us to evangelize in other areas.

"We're just doing what we believe is the heart of God. Somehow you sense His heart and when you go that direction, He just provides in supernatural ways."

Equipping local believers for ministry was always the plan, so the Daggetts disciple those who step up, despite their youth. They even disciple deaf youth and adults, and God has used them to start several deaf churches.

Financial gifts through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions and Cooperative Program help make

it possible for the Daggetts to serve in the Philippines and host weekly training sessions and Bible studies that equip youth to lead their churches and to train others to lead.

"Berlyn, you want to come up now?" Dave Daggett said as he handed over the microphone so she could lead worship during a Saturday evening training session with leaders from her church.

That's how it usually goes for these self-proclaimed "shadow missionaries" who push forward their young Filipino leaders.

"If we want to reach Filipinos, what better way than with other Filipinos? We can't do it all," Dave Daggett said. (BP)

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PERSECUTED CHURCH

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Christian activist detained, threatened in China

ZHEJIANG, China — A Christian activist writing against the harassment of churches in China's Zhejiang Province was temporarily detained and threatened in November and an attorney representing area churches is still missing.

The detentions are the latest signs of a government crackdown on at least 230 human rights lawyers and activists since July.

China's National Security Bureau on Nov. 3 raided the home of writer Zan Aizong, who had been blogging on violations of religious freedom and the destruction of crosses on church buildings in Zhejiang Province that officials have undertaken since 2014, according to the *South China Morning Post* (SCMP). Authorities accused Zan of inciting subversion of national security and threatened and intimidated him before he was released.

Zan said he was prohibited from speaking or posting online, and his computer and cell phone were confiscated among other items, SCMP reported.

At the same time, a Christian attorney for churches in Zhejiang, Zhang Kai, has not been seen since Aug. 25, according to Elizabeth Kendal of the Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin. Chinese security forces seized Zhang in Wenzhou on Aug. 25, along with assistant Liu Peng and several area pastors.

Zhang, 37, had taken up residence in a Wenzhou church building for a year in order to help the legal cases of area fellowships whose church buildings or crosses had been destroyed. Officials cited church violations of zoning rules, while pastors and advocates asserted that the government only sought to diminish the churches' effectiveness.

Zhang is one of an estimated 230 lawyers and activists that have been detained, with 26 still being held, according to Amnesty International. He was first detained in Wenzhou by state security police late at night July 10, according to Hong Kong-based Inition Media. One of Inition's correspondents reported Zhang telling him earlier that day, "Christianity teaches us to submit. But what we ought to submit to is the constitution and morality, not to illegal people and conduct." (MS)

Ethnic Kachin displaced by artillery, air strikes

YANGON, Burma — Artillery and air strikes by Burma (Myanmar) government forces on rebel bases in Kachin state displaced hundreds of ethnic Kachin, a predominantly Christian people long targeted in part because they are not Buddhist.

Lama Yaw of the Kachin Baptist Convention, who visited areas near Mohnyin where the offensive intensified Nov. 15, said 200 civilians took shelter in area churches after attacks by a jet, helicopter gunships and artillery against the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). Another Christian leader in Mohnyin told *The Irrawaddy* newspaper that some 300 villagers had fled their homes Nov. 19 and were taking shelter in his church.

The Kachin are one of several ethnic groups vying for more autonomy, and advocacy organization Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) reports that decades of conflict in the ethnic states have left hundreds of thousands of people internally displaced or as refugees in other countries.

Burma on Nov. 8 held its first general elections since the military junta quashed 1990 voting results but CSW noted political reforms are still fragile.

The KIA has an estimated 10,000 troops and is the second-largest armed ethnic group. (MS)

VOICE YOUR OPINION

SPEAK UP on issues in the Baptist world by writing a letter to the editor of *The Alabama Baptist*.

Remember to:

- Include your name and address
- Focus on issues, not people
- Be as concise as possible