



March 3, 2016
Vol. 181, No. 9

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IMB numbers after recent 'reset'
(number of people leaving IMB)

Voluntary Retirement Incentive
Missionaries: 702 / Stateside staff: 109

Hand Raising Opportunity
Missionaries: 281 / Stateside staff: 40

Other positions eliminated without incentives
Missionaries: 0 / Stateside: 30

Source: IMB

Efficient or harmful?

IMB force 'much healthier' with missionaries cut by 20 percent, staff by 40 percent

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

The recent move among International Mission Board (IMB) officials to allow missionaries and support staff to cut themselves from employment — both through retirement and resignation incentive plans — has resulted in 20 percent of the current missions force leaving the field.

IMB President David Platt announced during the Feb. 24 trustee meeting in Richmond, Virginia, that 983 missionaries of the 4,800 on the field and 149 of the 450 stateside

staff have transitioned out of IMB during the past six months.

He reported 702 missionaries and 109 stateside staff took the voluntary retirement incentive (VRI) and 281 missionaries and 40 stateside staff took the hand raising opportunity (HRO).

The number who have taken the HRO could decrease, however, because missionaries can rescind their decisions through April 19.

Another 30 staff members lost their jobs in January when the stateside communications department was eliminated.

And other missionaries have reportedly left the field since the Feb.

22 HRO deadline, but reports are unclear as to why.

Those leaving after the VRI and HRO options will not receive incentive packages.

'Stage now set'

"The stage is now set financially, organizationally and spiritually for IMB to work with Southern Baptist churches to create exponentially more opportunities for disciple making and church planting among unreached peoples around the world," Platt said.

"IMB is committed to a future marked by faithful stewardship, operational excellence, wise evalua-

IMB photo by Lexie Bennett
According to David Platt, president of the International Mission Board (IMB), and other IMB officials, there were 4,800 missionaries and 450 stateside staff prior to the downsizing process that began in August 2015. At press time, there were 'about 3,800 missionaries and about 300 [stateside] staff.'

tion, ongoing innovation and joyful devotion to making disciples and multiplying churches among the unreached."

The recent downsizing effort — referred to as an organizational reset — came after Platt's election as president in 2014 and a thorough investigation of IMB's financial situation.

It was discovered in 2015 that IMB had spent a combined \$210 million more than it had taken in between the years 2010 and 2014.

The financial shortfalls were covered by pulling from reserves and selling much of the IMB property (See 'Future,' page 3)

COMING NEXT WEEK ...

Church & Sexuality
Conference coverage



COMMENT

IMB's Heartbreaking Situation

The number of International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries and staff members who chose to accept IMB's invitation to "transition" away from IMB is not only surprising, it is shocking and disappointing. In one fell swoop, 20 percent of the international missions force and one-third of the stateside staff stepped away.

The exact numbers are 983 missionaries and 149 staff members who accepted offers by IMB to find other ministries (see story, page 1). IMB also eliminated an additional 30 staff positions meaning the staff has been reduced by 40 percent.

Speaking to Baptist state paper editors Feb. 16, IMB President David Platt said IMB needed at least 600 missionaries and staff members to leave IMB in order to achieve a balanced budget. He added that some projections placed the needed number closer to 800.

But when Platt spoke to editors during a news conference shortly after releasing the final numbers Feb. 24 he confessed surprise at the number of missionaries and staff members who opted out. The number was nearly twice as many as the 600 target.

Platt said, "The last thing I wanted to do when I stepped into this role 18 months ago was to see hundreds less people on the field. I want to see thousands more people on the field." Few, if any, doubt Platt's passion to see the gospel preached and churches planted among the nations for the glory of God.

It is important to remember that missionaries and staff members who accepted "transition" offers did so voluntarily. Platt emphasized that no missionary was forced to leave his or her field of service.

'The reality'

Still, he added, "I know the reality of so many IMB missionaries making transitions will set in and frustrate (people)" across the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). He is right. Southern Baptists care about international missions and about international missionaries. Alabama Baptists, for example, are working through their state convention and in other ways to assist returning missionaries as they move back to the United States and as they find new ministries.

Despite the concern for missionaries, the frustration is already finding outlets. Some blame churches for inadequate support of missions.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

While giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions has been at record highs — in 2015, Southern Baptists gave the second highest amount in history — the receipts have missed the offering goals by several million dollars for a number of years.

Some point a finger at past IMB administrations for deficit spending that resulted in a \$210 million financial hole during the past six years that threatened IMB's long-term financial future.

Some question the wisdom of trying to solve the financial problem in a single step. Beginning in 2017, IMB may have a balanced budget but it will be minus 20 percent of its missions force including many of its most seasoned missionaries. "Is that a real advantage?" they ask.

Others ask about the present culture of IMB. "What is there about an organization that causes such a large percentage of its seasoned leadership — both missionary and staff — to step away when they are offered an opportunity?" they ask.

Still others raise questions about the missionaries. "Were 20 percent of the missionaries anxious to leave the field?" they want to know.

For some missionaries the Voluntary Retirement Incentive (VRI) may have been a God-send. Platt shared stories of missionaries for whom the VRI seemed to be an answer to prayer.

Other missionaries talk about the uncertainty of the process. Originally a second round of cuts was envisioned if enough people did not accept the VRI. Officials said a second offer would not be as generous as the first if that happened. Some missionaries felt that if they declined the VRI they could still get fired.

Others said they took the VRI to protect the educational benefits for their children. Others needed assurance of medical insurance.

Most missionaries remain silent saying that to talk about the process or their decision could jeopardize their severance agreements. Missionaries had to agree not to "disparage" IMB as part of the VRI agreement.

When editors asked Platt if he would "release them (missionaries) to speak to us (state

papers) with truthful statements" about IMB, the VRI process and/or their decision, Platt said, "So for the protection of the IMB — and I am confident that this is for the good of not just the IMB but the SBC — and I am going to encourage our missionaries to do everything that legally they've agreed to do."

Already some who signed the statement are asking what "disparagement" means and to whom is a remark disparaging. "Is truth disparaging?" they ask. One who accepted the VRI recently contacted this writer offering to do an article on his experiences and observations with IMB. But after being reminded of the disparagement clause decided he could not risk a possible court battle and loss of benefits.

What is done is done

Personally I am at a loss to describe my feeling when Platt declined to affirm his support of "transitioned" missionaries and staff speaking truthfully to fellow Southern Baptists about their experiences. I hope he misunderstood the question but it was asked two different times and each time drew a similar response.

The bottom line is what is done is done. It cannot be undone and few have the stomach for more controversy. God in His providence will reveal if this is a blessing or a blunder.

In the meantime Platt was correct when he told state paper editors, "I know there's an adversary who'd love to use that (the returned missionaries) to bring discouragement and division and disunity." To allow that to happen would be to compound the tragedy of losing 20 percent of our international missions force.

The blame for what happened stretches from the smallest Baptist church to the highest SBC entity leader. It starts with tithes and offerings of church members and goes all the way through entity priorities, policies and personnel decisions.

But so does the responsibility for salvaging the floundering ship of international missions. It cannot be done by a president alone, no matter how gifted. It cannot be done by more missions volunteers alone or by simply putting more money in an offering plate.

As we have said before, like interlocking parts, Baptists must partner to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. That means all parts working together — more money in the offering plates, more missions volunteers, more Cooperative Program giving. It also means conventions and entities honoring the faithfulness of their constituents with wise and prudent leadership.

If we fail to work together in trusting and transparent ways, then we are likely to have more hand-wringing, finger-pointing, heartbreaking situations like this announcement from IMB. †

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TAB
THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

"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.

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Graham says 'only One who can ultimately make America great again'

When Pope Francis suggested presidential candidate Donald Trump wasn't a Christian in mid-February, several evangelical Christians came to Trump's defense.

One of those was Franklin Graham, president and CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

Graham also appeared in the Feb. 18 article in *The Alabama Baptist* "Evangelical Friction: American evangelical Christians split on whether or not to support Trump," agreeing with Trump on some of his positions.

The article also stated Graham had officially endorsed Trump, but later reports clarified that

Graham has not endorsed him, according to Graham's public relations firm and *The Huffington Post*, which originally reported the endorsement.

Graham posted on social media in January (see graphic below) that only God can make America great again, not a party or politician. To emphasize that concept he is traveling to every state in 2016 to hold prayer rallies, preach the gospel and challenge believers to take a stand and take action, according to decision-america.com.

Alabama's event is April 14 at noon on the front steps of the state Capitol (terrace on west side facing Dexter Avenue) in Montgomery. (Jennifer Davis Rash)

Franklin Graham
January 27 at 8:00am · 🌐

Donald J. Trump said he's not going to show up at tomorrow night's Republican presidential debate because of Megyn Kelly. I am praying for the upcoming elections to bring us leaders at all levels who will look to God for wisdom and direction. There is no debate about this—there's only One who can ultimately make America great again, and it's not a political party or a politician—it is Almighty God. For that to happen, we need to do what God tells us in His Word: "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

#DecisionAmerica Tour #PrayforAmerica #Christianvotesmatter

Franklin Graham
February 18 at 4:03pm · 🌐

The Pope has suggested that Donald J. Trump is not Christian because he wants to build a wall between the U.S. and Mexico. He said, "A person who thinks only about building walls wherever they may be and not building bridges is not Christian." I agree that as Christians we should try to build bridges with everyone that we possibly can, but that doesn't mean that we should compromise our national security. Donald Trump isn't the only one who wants to build a wall—other Republican candidates Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, Dr. Ben Carson, and John Kasich as well as millions of Americans, also want to build a wall—in order to protect America from enemies who want to use the U.S./Mexican border as a way to enter our country and do us harm. Are they not Christian either? My advice to the Pontiff—reach out and build a bridge to Donald Trump. Who knows where he may be this time next year!



Pope Francis on Trump: Building walls 'is not Christian'

Pope Francis said GOP frontrunner Donald Trump "is not Christian" if he pledges to build a wall between the United States and Mexico.

CNN.COM | BY DANIEL BURKE

Future plans for IMB to be shared in March 3 livestream

(continued from page 1)

around the world, but it was determined a reduction of personnel was the only way to balance the organization's budget.

IMB leaders determined reducing the personnel by 600 to 800 people would secure a healthy place for the organization because 80 percent of IMB's budget covers salaries, benefits and support expenses.

Platt moved quickly to announce a two-phase process in August 2015 that would result in the reductions needed.

Phase One was the VRI offered to missionaries and staff 50 years or older who had been employed by IMB for at least five years.

Phase Two was the HRO that was offered to everyone, including those who had been offered the VRI and declined it.

The VRI deadline was Dec. 11, 2015, and the HRO deadline was Feb. 22.

"Even though a more involuntary process would yield more precise and predictable results, IMB chose a voluntary process that would leave as much decision-making as possible in the hands of IMB personnel," Platt said. "Knowing that such a voluntary process

would yield more imprecise and unpredictable results, we believed that we should trust God with this process and every individual within the IMB. This process remained entirely voluntary for all IMB missionaries. No IMB missionary has been required to leave the field during this time. IMB missionaries have been encouraged to make a transition off of the field only if they sense the Lord leading them to do so."

Reactions vary

Reactions to the IMB downsizing efforts have varied among Southern Baptists. Some have applauded the move while others have questioned the motive behind it.

"I doubt [they] have any clue how badly they have hurt some of us," one former IMB employee said.

But Platt told members of the Association of State Baptist Publications (ASBP) at a meeting in Puerto Rico on Feb. 16, "I assure you that eliminating those positions was an agonizing decision. Agonizing because, well, the IMB is a \$250 million a year organization but it is also a family, fellow brothers and sis-

ters. And as a result every part of this process has been agonizing."

And while the full story of Platt's vision and future plans for IMB will be unveiled during a March 3 livestream at 10 a.m. (imb.org/live), he shared a sneak preview of one effort with the ASBP members.

"I look at the globalization of today's marketplace and I see limitless opportunities," Platt said. "[B]ut right now ... we've limited our capacity and that's just not tolerable for me. I can't pray Matthew 9:37-38 and ask the Lord to send out more workers to His harvest field and then when He answers, say, 'Not through us.' We've got to better partner with churches ... in ways that do not in any way undercut the foundations on which we stand. Obviously, that would be foolish."

The new way to make this work is called GC2 where churches can go through IMB for missionary training and support but the church will pay the missionary's full salary.

"In order for a church to do this, they are required to continue to keep their giving to the Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon both strong and we (will) monitor it." 🙏

'Church resetting'

Shanghai Baptist, FBC Athens partner in revitalization effort

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Shanghai Baptist Church, Athens, realized they needed to make a major change if they wanted to keep their doors open.

"We'd been struggling, trying to grow a church and we didn't seem to be able to get it off the ground," said Lynda Messer, a Shanghai Baptist member for nine years. "Our youngest member is in their 50s and we have no children who attend. We couldn't attract younger couples and you have to have them if a church is to last."

The church — which happens to be in a good location — had tried reaching out to its neighboring community through outreaches like trunk or treat events, Vacation Bible School (VBS) and more but nothing was working. They only had about 20 members and all were older.

In Fall 2015, Kevin Ward, director of missions for Limestone Baptist Association, preached at Shanghai Baptist one Sunday when its interim pastor was out of town.

"After I preached there I started talking to them about their church," Ward said. "I tried to find out what the story was and found out they'd been searching for some help. They didn't want to give their church up. They wanted it to be something of value and to thrive."

Ward and members of Shanghai Baptist began discussing options, and the church liked the idea of a partnership with another church. Ward reached out to Joel Carwile, pastor of First Baptist Church, Athens, as Carwile's church had led partnerships with other churches in the past.

As it turned out, Shanghai Baptist had a



Photo by Cliff Rybick

Tee Jackson (center in suit), pastor of the newly named Shanghai FBC, Athens, greets members of the church after the service formalizing a partnership between FBC Athens and the former Shanghai Baptist.

place in Carwile's heart dating back to his childhood.

"It didn't take long for me to answer 'yes' because of my love for Shanghai Baptist and her people," Carwile said. "I was saved and baptized at [that church] when I was a little boy."

'Prayerful consideration'

The churches decided to enter into a three-year partnership with careful thought from both parties on what that relationship would look like.

"Partnership requires prayerful consideration of the declining church," Carwile

said. "We realized we did not need to 'take over' the campus from a physical standpoint but instead wanted to develop a memorandum of understanding of what we would do from a spiritual perspective, including providing a pastor, helping develop a dream for the church's future and asking [First, Athens,] members to prayerfully consider relocating their spiritual gifting, tithes and offerings and experience to Shanghai Baptist."

First, Athens, also will help Shanghai Baptist with its upcoming VBS and community outreach events.

As for the members of Shanghai Bap-

tist, Ward said he's been impressed with their outlook and willingness to be open to change.

"Their attitudes have been so positive," Ward said. "'Church resetting' is the phrase I've been using for what is happening. You have to have an all-in attitude in order for it to work and they do."

Shanghai Baptist has already undergone some changes since the partnership was formalized Jan. 31, including changing their name from Shanghai Baptist to Shanghai First Baptist Church. They've welcomed a new pastor, Tee Jackson, who also serves as the chairman of deacons at First, Athens.

'Covenant'

Carwile said, "We combined that Sunday evening service into a worship, ordination and covenant service with the two congregations worshipping together for the first of hopefully many times."

"I preached an ordination service for their new pastor along with encouragement for the willingness of Shanghai Baptist to reach out for partnership in the gospel. We concluded the service with everyone in the sanctuary moving to the altar where we prayed over the 'new' Shanghai First Baptist Church pastor and family."

Messer said she and her friends at the church are confident that this partnership has been blessed by God and is happening in God's timing.

"We don't know what exactly the Lord is going to do or how He's going to do it, but we expect it because the Lord had to be in it for it to take place the way it has," she said. "We knew that the church would grow in God's time not ours." ☩

Ministry Tips



MISSION STATEMENTS AND ANNUAL THEMES

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

For quite some time now churches and even individuals have been made aware of the need for personal mission statements. We have been taught that such statements should be prayerfully and carefully developed. Then the statements can be declared and embraced and adopted as the overall

umbrella for the life plans and pursuits of a church or individual.

Another helpful tool for planning and implementing ministry that can assist us in staying fresh within our prescribed mission is the use of annual themes. Churches and individuals can benefit by prayerfully and thoughtfully adopting a rallying theme each year.

Such themes can become expressions of current focus for a year of life and

ministry. The annual theme presents a brief title that serves as a motivational encouragement basically for a 12-month period.

Illustrations of such themes include: "Pursue Christ Diligently in 2016," "Redeem Every Moment in 2016," "Expect, Encourage and Excite," "Review and Renew Every Aspect of Life in 2016," "Forgetting What Was, Focusing on What Will Be." Creative prayerful thinking

can lead each church and each individual in finding the right theme for them.

Investing time in the process of discovering and developing an annual theme will be well rewarded. With the theme in place, we can focus attention more effectively. When we are focused and intentional we become much more fruitful and faithful to our calling. ☩

HEROIN in Alabama

Combatting a growing problem

123rf.com

Rapid rise of overdose deaths in Alabama mirrors national statistics

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

In the lead up to February's New Hampshire presidential primaries, candidates Ted Cruz and Carly Fiorina shared their stories of family members who struggled with heroin addiction and died of overdose.

The discussion brought to light stories of ruined lives, broken families and overdose deaths that are multiplying at alarming rates throughout the U.S. For many Americans who still think of heroin as an urban inner city drug, the discussion might have come as a surprise. However, Alabama law enforcement and drug addiction specialists confirm that the increasing use of heroin in the state is a major concern.

At a 2015 conference at Shades Crest Baptist Church, Bluff Park, Hoover police Capt. Gregg Rector called heroin "an epidemic," not just in the Birmingham area but also in the state and nation. A study released by Auburn Montgomery Outreach in 2015 noted that since the year 2000, the Interstate 20/59 corridor has become a primary route for drug trafficking and Birmingham's central location along the route has made it a hub for dealers seeking to get their drugs into larger cities.

Increased availability

The results of this increased availability of heroin have been alarming. Researchers found that in 2012, the number of heroin-related deaths in Jefferson County doubled and doubled again in 2014 to 137. Though that number may seem small in comparison to the overall population, the rapid rise in overdose deaths mirrors national statistics. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the rate of heroin-related overdose deaths in the U.S. nearly quadrupled between 2002 and 2014. In 2014 overdoses from heroin, prescription drugs and opioid pain medications surpassed car accidents as the leading cause of injury-related death in America, according to the CDC — the highest level of the 21st century. That year, there were 10,574 heroin-related overdose deaths and 18,893 deaths related to prescription pain relievers.

As the upward trends in heroin use and overdose continue, experts point to one leading cause — a dramatic increase in the number of prescriptions written for opiate painkillers during the past 15 years.

These powerful pain medications are familiar by their brand names — Vicodin, Lortab, OxyContin and Percocet — as well as by their generic names — hydrocodone, oxycodone and morphine. Throughout the nation health care providers wrote 259 million prescriptions for painkillers in 2012,

enough for every American adult to have a bottle of pills. Alabama tops the list of states for opioid prescriptions. According to 2012 CDC data, Alabama doctors wrote 143 prescriptions for every 100 people in the state.

For some, the pills are necessary to relieve the chronic pain of injury or to control pain after medical procedures. For others, the temporary relief becomes an addiction that leads to more doctor visits, more prescriptions and more desperation. When the prescriptions are no longer available or become too expensive, prescription drug abusers turn to heroin, which is cheaper and more easily available. A study by the National Center for Health Statistics

found that 4 in 5 new heroin users started out misusing prescription painkillers, making them 40 times more likely to become addicted to heroin, according to the CDC.

Because of the need for such drugs in medical care, the problem of opiate drug abuse is a challenging problem to address, according to J. Sándor Cheka III, executive director of the Addiction Prevention Coalition in Birmingham.

Many people have legitimate chronic pain and need medication for treatment, Cheka said. The problem begins when an individual becomes dependent on the

medication for more than pain.

"Opiates are depressants, so they provide an escape. It's much like alcohol but for some folks much more addictive," he said.

Often the drugs prescribed for pain provide an escape from other parts of life that are unpleasant as well, which feeds the addiction, Cheka said.

Take the story of a promising high school athlete who is headed for a college career when an injury strikes.

Not only does the young person have the physical pain of the injury, he has the emotional pain of losing the life he envisioned. Pain medicine relieves the physical pain and allows an escape from the emotional pain. However, once the injury is healed the emotional pain doesn't go away. If the prescription is unavailable, the person will turn to whatever will provide that escape.

Turning to the street increases the risks of overdose, in part because of the purity of today's heroin, Cheka said. Many heroin dealers are former cocaine

dealers and are using the same methods to prepare heroin. Cheka said it's not unusual to have purity levels of heroin as high as 98 percent, a deadly dose even for a drug addict.

"Something that high, you're not going to survive. Even if you have a tolerance level, you can't withstand 98 percent pure," he said.

Another disturbing trend across the country is the rise of heroin laced with fentanyl, a prescription opiate used generally for people in hospice. Fentanyl generally is kept under careful controls and given only in extreme circumstances, Cheka said.

Signs of HEROIN USE

Paraphernalia

- ▶ Burnt spoons
- ▶ Tiny baggies
- ▶ Tan or whitish powdery residue
- ▶ Dark, sticky residue
- ▶ Small glass pipes
- ▶ Syringes
- ▶ Rubber tubing

Appearance

- ▶ Tiny pupils
- ▶ Sleepy eyes
- ▶ Tendency to nod off
- ▶ Slow breathing
- ▶ Flushed skin
- ▶ Runny nose

Actions

- ▶ Vomiting
- ▶ Scratching
- ▶ Slurred speech
- ▶ Complaints of constipation
- ▶ Complaints of nausea
- ▶ Neglect of grooming
- ▶ Failure to eat
- ▶ Covering arms with long sleeves

Source: <http://www.narconon.org/drug-abuse/signs-symptoms-heroin-use.html>

Fentanyl's potency means that even a small amount can cause an overdose, making it incredibly dangerous on the streets.

Alabama law enforcement officials are working in conjunction with federal officials to combat the spread of heroin in the state, according to Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange. The state is part of a U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency task force focused on shutting down drug distribution networks in Alabama.

Legislation, education is key

In September 2015, Strange's office dedicated the annual statewide law enforcement summit to drug abuse education and prevention.

"Nearly 700 state law enforcement officers ... attended the conference to learn the latest drug abuse trends and how to fight this growing threat to our communities," Strange said. "Officers received briefings on heroin and other illegal drugs and learned how state and federal agents are dealing with the drug epidemic."

Strange also said he supports the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, national legislation that would increase funding for drug prevention, treatment and recovery programs. The legislation includes plans to combat prescription drug addiction and improve medical provider education about managing chronic pain. Another part of the bill is expanded access to naloxone, a medication that counteracts overdoses of heroin and other opioids.

Naloxone, which is sold under several brand names including Narcan and Evzio, is used by first responders and hospitals to reverse overdoses of heroin or other opioids, but many in the addiction and prevention community argue that the life-saving medication should be more easily available to addicts and their family members, since administering naloxone can prevent death by overdose.

On Feb. 9, Walgreens announced its stores would begin selling naloxone over the counter in 39 states, including Alabama. Such steps geared toward prevention are important, Strange said.

"Drug abuse, including heroin, represents a serious problem and law enforcement cannot address it alone. That is why I continue to support efforts to increase community awareness and involvement in preventing and treating drug addiction." ♦

Alabama Baptists assist Escambia, Houston counties; food, financial donations needed

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

Severe storms in south Alabama during the past two weeks required mobilization of Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (DR) efforts in Escambia and Houston counties.

Most recently during the night of Feb. 23, three tornadoes touched down in Houston County causing damage to multiple structures, according to the National Weather Service.

Damage assessments were ongoing at press time, coordinated by Columbia Baptist Association church development director Ken Farley, who provides leadership for associational DR efforts.

One of the association's chainsaw teams was out quickly to help Ray Jones, pastor of Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Dothan, who had a tree fall on his home. Teams had to wait until the power company gave the go ahead to enter one neighborhood where approximately 14 homes had sustained damage.

On Feb. 26 three chainsaw teams from Columbia Association were at work cutting and clearing downed trees, which had fallen on houses and other structures and littered yards in the area, Farley said.

"These were not big tornadoes but they hit close together so we have a good bit of damage in a fairly small area," Farley said.

Farley said the affected area was not large enough to call in teams from other associations, though Columbia Baptists are utilizing a skid steer on loan from Alabama Baptist DR to move heavy debris around. He anticipates that local crews will continue to work in the area for the next week or two to clear trees and other debris.

Farley said the DR teams, churches and residents of Dothan and Houston County appreciate the prayer support of Alabama Baptists.

Leaders of Escambia Baptist Association also covet the prayers of Alabama Baptists as

they continue helping a nearby community with storm recovery.

On Feb. 15 a tornado hit near the Alabama-Florida state line in Escambia County. At least 10 homes in the Flomaton area were damaged, but the nearby town of

Century, Florida, was devastated, according to sources from Escambia Association.

At least 50 homes were damaged, many of them older and uninsured. Though the town is in Florida, the state line is meaningless to the close-knit communities, said Anna King, ministry assistant for the association who works with DR efforts.

"Many of those affected in Century are members of churches in our association," King said. "Our plan is to channel assistance through our churches so the churches can connect with their people who need help the most."

King said food and donations will continue to be needed, since

many of those most affected lack adequate financial resources. She said that no federal assistance is expected because though many were affected, the damage would not meet the federal threshold for funds.

Donations will be used to help people repair their homes and meet other essential needs in the weeks to come, King said. The disaster also has motivated the association to get better organized to be prepared for major events in the future, she said.

"If something hits on a bigger scale, we want to know we can meet the needs of our people quickly, even before anybody else gets in here," she said.

Farley added that situations like these are good reminders of the need for each association to have trained volunteers ready to mobilize in the aftermath of a disaster.

"No matter where you're located you need team members, especially younger people, trained and ready," he said. "Disaster relief is something you train and prepare for and hope you never need. But sooner than later you're going to need it so you need to be ready."

To assist Escambia Association with their efforts, contact King at 251-296-4640. To donate to Alabama Baptist DR efforts or to find out about training opportunities, visit sldr.org.

"Disaster relief is something you train and prepare for and hope you never need. But sooner than later you're going to need it so you need to be ready."

Ken Farley
church development director
Columbia Association

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Church ANNIVERSARIES

Cullman's Concord BC marks 125 years

The ringing of a newly installed bell began the 125th anniversary celebration of Concord Baptist Church, Cullman, on Jan. 31.

Placed in memory of lifetime member Howard "Bud" Haynes, the bell was rung by 7-year-old Jason Smith and was the start of the church's 11 a.m. service. The longest serving member, Juanita Haynes, accepted on behalf of the church a framed certificate from Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative Tom Allen. The Jamie Fallin family, who are former members, sang special music. Special music also was performed by Concord Baptist youth Vanessa Smith and Katie Landreth, who played the guitar and violin respectively. Nathan McCarthy, investment officer for The Baptist Foundation of Alabama, was the guest speaker.



Each participant received a 12-page program created by church secretary Teresa Smith and historical pictures and an old communion table with its original offering plates were displayed.

The celebration concluded with a catered lunch. Jack Holbrook is pastor. (TAB)

FBC Shelby celebrates 125th anniversary

In a two-part service that honored former members and pastors, First Baptist Church, Shelby, marked its 125th anniversary Jan. 9–10.

On the evening of Jan. 9, a special service was held to honor former pastors in an "informal and relaxed" time of sharing and reconnecting, said Betty Mitchell, anniversary committee member.

During the 10 a.m. service the following morning, historical presentations were made by Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative Mavis Gates and Shelby Baptist Association Director of Missions Hugh Richardson. Church secretary Pat Stricklin read the minutes from the church's first business meeting and Diana Smith read a history of the church, which she also wrote.

Those who had been members of First, Shelby, for more than 50 years were honored, as was longtime pianist Lanice Brasher. Eighty-year-old Brasher has been the church's pianist for more than 60 years and continues to play the piano for Sunday morning services.

Richardson also served as the guest speaker for the celebration and The Kendricks provided special music. A potluck lunch concluded the celebration. Joel Miller is pastor. (TAB)

Trust in government

Alabama split on confidence in Legislature

Gallup recently conducted a 50-state poll asking residents whether they do or do not have confidence in their state's "government in general." According to the results, 48 percent of Alabamians surveyed are confident in the state's government and 51 percent are not confident.

Alabama ranked 40th out of 50 states in confidence levels, only beating out Illinois (25 percent), Rhode Island (33 percent), Connecticut (39 percent), New Jersey (41 percent), Louisiana (44 percent), Kansas (45 percent), Pennsylvania (46 percent) and New York (46 percent). Alabama tied with Maine at 48 percent.

Corruption and challenging economic times are likely contributors to a state's ranking among the least confident in their government, according to Gallup.

The poll was conducted March through December 2015.

Results from a 2013 poll asking respondents about what level of "trust and confidence" they have in their state's government showed a negative relationship between state population size and trust in government. The residents in less populous states tended to have greater confidence in their state government than those

More gambling bills filed

Gambling legislation continues to surface in the state Legislature. The most recent bills, SB114 and HB56, would clarify the legal status of fantasy sports games and "establish the Fantasy Contests Act to regulate the operation of fantasy or simulated contests in the state."

The companion bills, which were introduced Feb. 16, follow controversy sur-

rounding daily fantasy sports websites like DraftKings and FanDuel concerning the legality of the games, especially in states like Alabama where gambling is illegal.

To read the full story on a federal suit filed by two Birmingham men in an attempt to determine whether such sites constitute gambling, visit thealabamabaptist.org. (Maggie Walsh)

living in more populous states.

In terms of region, Western states tend to express the highest confidence in their state governments, while Wyoming, Utah and Montana are among the states with the most confidence in government the Midwest's average score is held down by Illinois' low level of trust. The East has the lowest average confidence score, as it is home to five of the states where residents have the lowest confidence.

Economic health

Why does this matter?

Gallup says given the strong relationship between residents' confidence in their government

and their perception of the state's economic health, some states with less confidence could see that turn around if the economic conditions improve. And on the other side, states that have a higher trust in their government may become less trusting and less confident if their economy took a nosedive.

In some states where a long history of corruption lingers, like Illinois and Louisiana, there may be cultural or institutional hurdles to overcome, Gallup reported, and it may take more than an improving economy to engender confidence in those states' elected officials. (Neisha Roberts, Gallup)



Photo courtesy of Dauphin Way Baptist Church

Dauphin Way Baptist breaks ground for new gymnasium

Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, breaks ground Jan. 31 for a new multipurpose gym. The new 13,500-square-foot gym will include a basketball court, volleyball court, walking track, multipurpose room, kitchen, restrooms and showers. The building is scheduled for completion in Fall 2016. Pictured here are (l to r): Blake Newsom, senior pastor; Tom Todd, gym committee member; Doug Reynolds, church administrator; Charlie Hawk, committee member; James Mobley, committee member; Mike Smith, committee member; Kamal Constantine, committee member; Kipp Bedford, committee member; and Phil Meadows, committee member.

HERE I AM SEND ME.
ISAIAH 6:8

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR
North American Missions

March 6–13, 2016

Alabama's goal: \$6.1 million / national goal: \$70 million

North American Mission Board

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

CALHOUN

► **Trull Hill** is the new interim pastor of **First Church, McClellan**, in Anniston. He previously served as interim pastor at Meadowbrook Church, Oxford. He also has served at Munford Church; Heflin Church; Oak Grove Church, Glencoe; Talladega Creek Church, Talladega; Bemiston Church, Talladega; Sycamore Church; Hepzibah Church, Talladega; Jones Church; Safford Church; First Church, Cottonwood; and First Church, Slocomb. He holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham. Hill and his wife, Margaret, have four children and nine grandchildren.

COFFEE

► **New Hope Church, Brundidge**, will hold a chili cook-off and cake auction March 5, 5 p.m. There will be fun, food and fellowship to support the Forgotten Children Ministries and the Ryan Stewart family. For more information call Judy Atkinson at 334-475-6098. Lanny Shepard is pastor.

GENEVA

► **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will host its 39er's C.L.U.B. luncheon March 8,

11 a.m. David Williams, pastor of First Church, Slocomb, will be the guest speaker. For more information and reservations call 334-684-9617. Mike Shirah is pastor.

LIMESTONE

► **Clements Church, Athens**, will hold spring training March 5, 8 a.m.–12:15 p.m. Doors will open at 7 a.m. Spring training is an annual event for leaders, pastors, ministers of education and anyone who loves Sunday School groups. Register online at www.clements baptist.org/spring-training/. Tim Anderson is pastor.

MOBILE

► **Blake Newsom** is the new pastor of **Dauphin Way Church, Mobile**. He previously served as interim pastor of Dauphin Way Church. He also served at New Orleans Seminary, where he earned a doctoral degree and two master's degrees. He also holds a master's degree and a bachelor's degree from Delta State University in Cleveland, Mississippi. Newsom



NEWSOM

and his wife, Brooke, have two children and are expecting a third. ► **First Church, Irvington**, will hold Ole South Day on March 19, 9 a.m.–2 p.m. This is a family fun day spent discovering and celebrating their southern heritage. There will be period music, cooking, basket making, a blacksmith, arts and crafts and more. Ron Griffin is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Wade Rials** is leaving the pastorate of **Thorington Road Church, Montgomery**, to become pastor of East Brent Church, Pensacola, Florida. He previously served at Laton Hill Church, Chatom, and at churches in New Mexico and Georgia. Rials holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Mobile and a master's degree from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Christy, have two children.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **First Church, Salem**, will host Christian comedian Billy Bob Bohannon on March 13, 11 a.m. Jay Webster is pastor.

WEST CULLMAN

► **Kevin Wilburn** has resigned as pastor of **First Church, Cullman**, to become vice president of development for the University of Mobile (see page 20). †

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Gary Linville



LINVILLE

Shoal Creek Baptist Church, Decatur, Morgan Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSE: Galatians 2:20

FAVORITE HYMN: "Jesus Paid It All"

HOBBY: Gardening

FAMILY STATUS: Husband for 12 years to wife, Heather; son, Jackson

Gary Linville, 33, of Decatur, not only is pastor of Shoal Creek Baptist Church, Decatur, and a member of Morgan Baptist Association's coordinating council, but also is chaplain for Morgan County Sheriff's Department and Decatur Morgan Hospital. Linville has been in ministry 15 years. He received his bachelor's degree from Blue Mountain College in Mississippi and is currently working on a master's degree.

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

A: My grandparents were a godly example in my life. My grandfather, a music minister, and my grandmother, a faithful short-term missionary and youth leader, exemplified the love of Christ to me and helped lead me to a relationship with Christ.

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

A: I surrendered to the ministry when I was 14. Dr. P.J. Scott really took a lot of time to mentor me and invest in my life. The same was true for Dr. Ed Newton. Both of these men encouraged me, walked with me and helped prepare me for ministry.

Q: What does your ministry demand?

A: I think first ... just loving God and loving God's people. I see pastoring as really requiring me to be a diligent student of the Bible, to be able to proclaim God's Word and to be able to stand on God's Word in

relationships with people.

Q: What do you get from your ministry?

A: I think there's no higher calling than to be able to serve the King of kings and Lord of lords. To be able to help someone make life choices to follow Christ is the most rewarding thing in the world. There is no way even to begin to describe the rewards of serving Jesus. There is nothing like serving Jesus and sharing His Light in a world that needs Him.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: My wife is cut out of a special breed. She has always stood with me. Our ministry is together. We are a team. ... She is a ministry partner and is just as involved as I am.

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

A: I know God has called me into ministry. I know that, until I draw my last breath, I am going to serve Him.

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

A: Shoal Creek Baptist is truly striving to be a disciple-making church. I feel like (it) has helped encourage me to be the disciple Jesus wants me to be.

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

A: Jesus is everything. I would have no life without Him. Every day my walk with Christ is sweeter than the day before. It was a radical change from a life of sin and no hope to a life fulfilled in Christ. †

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

Religious education group holds workshop



New officers

Photo by Debbie Campbell

New officers for 2016 were elected during the Alabama Baptist Religious Education Association's workshop at Lindsay Lane Baptist Church, Athens, on Jan. 28–29. Pictured here are (l to r): Mark Messick, of Redemption Church, Saraland, president; Don Dixon, of First Baptist Church, Pelham, first vice president; Jane Barrett, of Mount Hebron West Baptist Church, Elmore, second vice president; Chuck Ashley, of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, treasurer; Jay Gordon, of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, communications.

Alabama Baptist Convention **State Board of Missions**



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EASY ARITHMETIC

During the early years of my elementary education, I was rather good at numbers or arithmetic. When the so called "new math" came along, I didn't do as well.

I want to propose some easy arithmetic for us to remember as Alabama Baptists. The Evangelism/Discipleship Team at the State Board of Missions is leading in an effort called Sharing Across Alabama.

A part of this effort is called the **3151 Challenge**, which originated among Oklahoma Baptists. They saw fruit from the emphasis, and we pray we will as well.

3 The 3 represents a call to pray for three people who are lost. They are among the masses of people who have not come to know Christ and need to be saved. Doing this will keep lost people in our hearts, in our minds

and in our prayers. Consider who would be on your list.

1 The 1 represents the need to learn at least one Gospel presentation. This is not meant to be a canned response but something that can become a part of who you are as a follower of Christ. Being able to articulate your testimony is a basic way of presenting the Gospel. There are other presentations for sure, and our Office of Evangelism will be glad to share what is in the toolbox for you. Contact us for more information.



By Rick Lance
State Missionary

5 The 5 represents the opportunity to invite five friends to church. Some people have never received a one-on-one personal

invitation to come to church. This may sound old-fashioned, but relational touches like personal invitations to church are needed now more than ever.

We live in an increasingly disconnected society in terms of personal relationships. Inviting people to church is a warmhearted way of reaching others.

1 The last 1 offers a reminder of our need to share the Gospel with at least one person. Growing out of the prayer for lost people in your life, the learning of at least one presentation of the Gospel message and the invitation of five friends to church brings us to the point of sharing the Good News with one person.

This is challenging for sure, and to some it is intimidating, but it is our call as Christians. We cannot ignore our need to be personal witnesses.

In his last words to Timothy, Paul, the apostle, challenged him

to do the work of an evangelist. He did not say answer the call to full-time evangelism but rather, in the everyday routine of life, do the work of sharing the Good News. That urgent challenge to Timothy is ours today.

Many years ago, Southern Baptists had an evangelistic effort called "Each One Reach One." I remember calling upon my people to do just that, and we were blessed by the God-given fruits of this focus.



Remember, this is easy arithmetic. Pray for 3 lost people. Learn 1 Gospel presentation. Invite 5 friends to church. Share the Gospel with 1 person. Each one can reach one!



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WHY I BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM



My father, Cole Skelton, was an Alabama Baptist pastor, and he taught me from the time I was very young about the importance of tithing. Because I grew up tithing, continuing to tithe was not a problem as an adult.

In addition, my father also taught me that a church should also tithe its undesignated offering through the Cooperative Program in order to fulfill Christ's Great Commission. I was fortunate enough to learn those lessons as a child from my father, but when God called me to ministry, I studied God's Word to see if what my father taught me was correct.

As I studied God's Word, I was even more convinced that each church should give at least a tithe of its undesignated offerings back to God through the Cooperative Program in order to join with our fellow Alabama Baptists in making disciples at home and around the world.

In the years that my wife, Anita, and I served as missionaries in South Korea with the International Mission Board, we experienced firsthand the strategic

importance of churches giving faithfully through the Cooperative Program.

Some of my independent missionary friends liked to say that they were "faith missionaries" and that we were not because of the Cooperative Program. However, I responded that we were just as much faith missionaries as they were because unless Southern Baptists were faithful to give through the Cooperative Program, we would also not be able to continue serving the Lord in South Korea.

Since returning to Alabama to serve as pastor here, I have continued to see how important the Cooperative Program is to the growth of God's kingdom. No church, no matter how large, can fulfill the Great Commission alone.

We must join hands with fellow believers to make disciples of all nations. The Cooperative Program is the best avenue I know for all Southern Baptists to work together to be witnesses "in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).



SKELTON

The Cooperative Program enables Alabama Baptists to respond immediately in the wake of natural disasters and share the good news of God's love with those who are hurting, whether that be in Alabama or around the world.

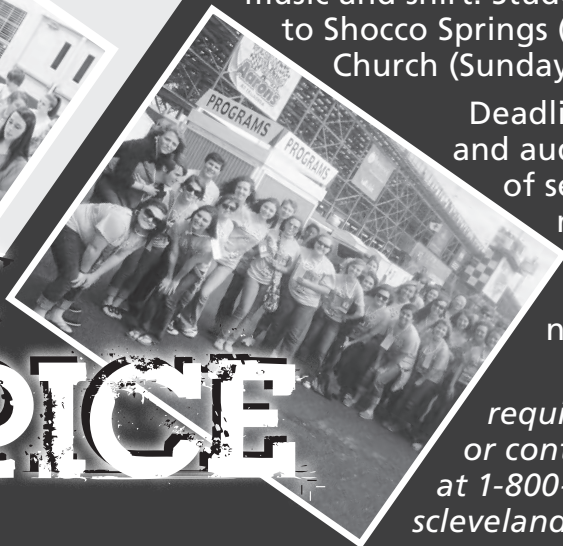
The Cooperative Program allows my church to receive the best training in evangelism

and missions through our Alabama Baptist state missionaries. I believe that faithful giving through the Cooperative Program was one of the factors that produced significant church growth in the 20th century, and I believe that a recommitment to the principles of missional giving through the Cooperative Program will be essential for Alabama Baptists to continue reaching people for Christ in the 21st century as well.

*Pastor **Clarke Skelton** of Valley Grande Baptist Church, Selma, serves as a trustee for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.*

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONEPROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANYMINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

APRIL 22 - 24



ONE VOICE

OneVoice is a group of auditioned singers and instrumentalists in grades 7-12 who actively participate in local church youth music ministry. This year's tour will include a concert at Liberty Park Baptist Church in Vestavia Hills. Lodging will be at Shocco Springs. Cost of the tour is \$225 per person and includes lodging, meals, local transportation, music and shirt. Students must provide their own transportation to Shocco Springs (Friday) and home from Liberty Park Baptist Church (Sunday).

Deadline for returning the application information and audition CD is March 11. You will be notified of selection by March 21. Those who were members of the Alabama Baptist Children's Honor Choir, NewSong or OneVoice are automatically selected. No audition CD is necessary, but an application is still required.

For more information and audition requirements, go online to alsbom.org/onevoice or contact Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 279, or (334) 613-2279, scleveland@alsbom.org.

FOCUS on One Mission

FARON GOLDEN AND HIS WIFE, NANCY, HAVE BEEN IN MINISTRY TOGETHER FOR SOME 25 YEARS.

LET ME TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO INTRODUCE YOU TO ...

After more than seven great years in the last pastorate, when he resigned in September 2014,



Faron sensed God leading him to "go out with joy, and be led forth in peace." (See Isaiah 55:12.)

Just more than a year later, Faron accepted God's call to his new role as a church planter in the Walnut Hill area just south of Dadeville. Faron and Nancy are now serving with Lake Pointe Baptist Church, located on Alabama Highway 50 near its intersection with Alabama Highway 49 in Walnut Hill.

They are very excited and thankful to see how the Lord is at work in Lake Pointe church.

Lake Pointe Baptist Church now has 51 resident members. Since the beginning of 2016, the church had 109 present for a high-attendance Sunday and 10 baptisms. With morning worship services regularly having between 40 and 50 present, Lake Pointe is thankful for the way God is moving and for the guests who join the worship regularly.

Faron has been a pastor of several churches in Alabama and served in ministry with churches in the Carolinas and in Georgia. Nancy is the firstborn daughter of the late Alfred Ikner, an Alabama Baptist pastor for more than 55 years.

Having sensed God's call to missions several years earlier, both Faron and Nancy are humbled and thankful that God has now given them the assignment to serve "on mission" as church planters. They are committed to exalting Christ and sharing His love through their ministry with Lake Pointe.

God has been blessing their commitment, and it is evident through events at Lake Pointe. The church, still in its first four years of existence, contributed more than \$5,200 to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions in December.

When the chairman of deacons announced on the last Sunday of the year that Lake Pointe was going to purchase a new, permanent sign and offered congregants the opportunity to contribute toward that goal (separate from regular tithes and offerings), the members gave enough to fully fund the purchase!

Lake Pointe's strategy for the next three to five years as they move forward in Christ is "Come! Let Us Build!" and includes four lines of operation: faith, leaders, ministries and facilities.

Faron plans to lead the church in "building faith" — both in the sense of growing people's faith in Christ as well as in the sense of the

F.A.I.T.H approach to evangelism (in which many of the church members are already trained). With God's help, Faron hopes to challenge the church to build leaders.

"We have far too many people in our churches today who are comfortable coming to church on Sunday morning, hearing a good sermon and then going home, often without being challenged and without being changed," he said. "What we hope to do at Lake Pointe is challenge followers of Christ to grow in their walk with Christ and to become leaders of other followers of Christ."

The core membership of Lake Pointe has been committed to missions and ministries from the start. Faron and Nancy hope to lead the church in "building ministries" as the third line of operation in the Come Let Us Build strategy.

"When we talk about building ministries," Faron explained, "we aren't just talking about Lake Pointe ministry per se. We are talking about ministries in the Kingdom of God. For example, we may be able to partner with other church planters or missionaries or other ministries and help grow their impact in God's service."

This year, Faron and Nancy are looking to God to lead Lake Pointe in constructing permanent facilities on the 15-acre campus God



By Lamar Duke
State Missionary

has graciously provided. They have already had offers from churches they have previously served to send teams to help with the construction effort, so the Goldenes and Lake Pointe are eagerly seeking

God's leadership for the "building facilities" phase of Lake Pointe's strategy!

For more information about church planting among Alabama Baptists, please contact State Missionary Lamar Duke, lead church planting strategist, at **1-800-264-1225, ext. 332, or (334) 613-3332, lduke@alsbom.org.**

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9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Register online at alsbom.org/springring

Cost of lunch to be determined by host.

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland, **1.800.264.1225, ext. 279, or (334) 613.2279, scleveland@alsbom.org.**

FOCUS on One Mission



Sharing Christ in Crisis



SAVE THE DATES

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April 8-9, 2016, State Disaster Relief Training Shocco Springs



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Disaster Relief training is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

ALABAMA DISCIPLESHIP
TOUR

Have you and your church missed the mark of making faithful and mature followers of Jesus Christ? Then don't miss the **"Returning to Disciple-Making 2016 Alabama Discipleship Tour"** with Claude King.

Claude serves as discipleship specialist at LifeWay Christian Resources. He is co-author of *Experiencing God* with Henry Blackaby and *The Mind of Christ* with T.W. Hunt. He is the author of *The Call to Follow Christ* and *Come to the Lord's Table*.

This tour is to aid pastors, church staff and key leaders to examine strategies for effective discipling.

The events are 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. **The cost is \$8 per person**, except where noted otherwise, and includes lunch. REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.

TOUR LOCATIONS AND DATES

Birmingham Baptist Association Office, 750 Montclair Rd., Birmingham • Tuesday, March 22 • Registration Deadline: March 18 • Contact Katie Schock, katies@bbaonline.org, [205] 599-3245

Brooks Memorial Baptist Church, 904 McRae St., Atmore [Escambia Association] • Thursday, March 23 • Registration Deadline: March 18 • Contact Anna King: annaking@bellsouth.net, [251] 296-4640

Mobile Baptist Association Office, 616 Azalea Rd., Mobile • Thursday, March 24 • Registration Deadline: March 18 • Contact Kelly Jones: kjones@mobilebaptists.org, [251] 661-7111

Morgan Baptist Association Office, 1410 State St. N.W., Hartselle • Thursday, August 4 • Registration Deadline: July 28 • Contact Joan Jenkins: jjenkins.mba@gmail.com, [256] 206-1260



Senior Adult Evangelism Conference

Free admission, no registration



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For more information, please contact
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SPRING SENIOR ADULT RETREAT



MONDAY THROUGH WEDNESDAY,
 APRIL 11-13 ☪ Shocco Springs

DEFINITIONS OF "RETREAT"

1. An act of withdrawing. No, that doesn't sound like senior adults!
2. A quiet or secluded place in which one can rest and relax. That sounds like Shocco Springs!
3. A period of group withdrawal for prayer, meditation and study. That sounds more like the Spring Senior Adult Retreat when we add fun and fellowship to the definition!

You won't need a dictionary. Just bring your Bible and a friend, or find a new friend or several at the retreat when you travel to Shocco Springs in April. It all begins with lunch on Monday and ends with lunch on Wednesday.

Info on Cost/Registration: shocco.org or
 1-800-280-1105

For more information, go online to
alsbom.org/senioradultretreat or contact State
 Missionary Eileen Mitchell, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221,
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children's choir summit

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Friday and Saturday, July 8 - 9, Shocco Springs

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Create an ideal opportunity for children to experience worship.

- Network with outstanding clinicians from across the U.S.
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Cost: \$125 by May 2 per person (based on 3-4 persons per room, \$20 deposit per person due upon registration)

For more information, go online to www.alsbom.org/children-summit or contact State Missionary Karen Gosselin at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 318, or (334) 613-2318, kgosselin@alsbom.org; or Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland at ext. 279, or (334) 613-2279 or scleveland@alsbom.org.



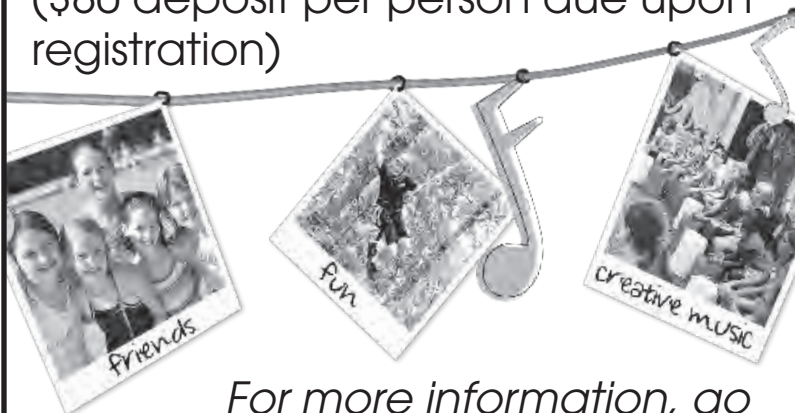
Monday - Friday,
July 11-15 &
Shocco & Springs

At **Mix Music Camp** we work to identify and help train worship leaders for the next generation.

Other activities will include:

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- Hiking Trails
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- Volleyball
- Pedal Boats
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- Fishing
- Ropes Course
- Paintball
- Pedal Cars
- Swimming

COST: \$300 by May 2 per person (\$80 deposit per person due upon registration)



For more information, go online to mixmusiccamp.org or contact Ministry Assistant Cindy Parrish at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 230, or (334) 613-2230, cparrish@alsbom.org.



Senior Adult Singin'

10 a.m.-Noon
COST: \$10 per person
(includes lunch)

Tuesday, March 15, Hillcrest Baptist Church, Enterprise

Thursday, March 17, Eden Westside Baptist Church, Pell City

Tuesday, September 13, West End Baptist Church, Clanton

Thursday, September 15, First Baptist Church, Russellville

Join Frank Jones as he leads senior adults from churches all over Alabama in four different locations to sing hymns to the Lord. You may have been singing the hymns since you were a child, but each time you sing them, your praise to God is new again!

For more information, go online to alsbom.org/senioradultsingin or contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, emitchell@alsbom.org.

Psalm 96:1-2 (NIV) says to "Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day."

FOCUS on One Mission

2016 for girls, boys and teen girls

Missions Adventure Camp at WorldSong

Missions Adventure Camp for Girls

(girls completing grades 2-6)

June 20-24

June 27-July 1

July 18-22

Early bird rate: \$210 per person

After May 1: \$230 per person

Missions Adventure Camp for Teen Girls

(girls completing grades 7-12)

June 20-24

July 18-22

Early bird rate: \$210 per person

After May 1: \$230 per person

Extreme MAC for Teen Girls

(girls completing grades 7-12)

June 13-15

Early bird rate: \$110 per person

After May 1: \$130 per person

Mini Camp for Girls

(girls completing grades 2-6)

June 13-15

Early bird rate: \$110 per person

After May 1: \$130 per person

CITs (Cabin leader In Training)

(girls completing grades 9-12)

June 27-July 1

Early bird rate: \$210 per person

After May 1: \$230 per person

Missions Adventure Camp for Children

(coeds completing grades 2-6)

July 11-15

Early bird rates: \$210 per person

After May 1: \$230 per person

Mom & Me

(girls completing grades 2-6)

June 16-18

Early bird rate: \$110 per person

After May 1: \$130 per person

Mom & Me Little

(girls completing grades K-3 and their moms)

June 24-25

July 15-16

Early bird rate: \$65 per person

After May 1: \$75 per person

Online: worldsongretreat.com

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

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



Mom & Me Spring Fling
for girls in grades K-3 and their moms

Friday and Saturday, April 1-2, 2016

WorldSong Missions Place, Cook Springs

COST: \$70 per person (includes t-shirt)

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: March 25

Join us for an action-packed overnight camp that will:

- ✦ be filled with fun and adventure.
- ✦ foster your desire to live on mission.
- ✦ provide meaningful one-on-one time for you and your daughter.

For more information, go online to worldsongretreat.com or contact Crystal Akers at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 223, or (334) 613-2223, cakers@alsbom.org.

CHURCH REVITALIZATION BOOK REVIEW

BY DOUG ROGERS, **Director, Communications & Technology Services**

Unwelcome: 50 Ways Churches Drive Away First-Time Visitors
by Jonathan Malm

Why should we make it harder for people than it needs to be?

That's the premise, based on Acts 15:19, of "Unwelcome: 50 Ways Churches Drive Away First-Time Visitors," by Jonathan Malm, a simple, easy-to-read collection of ideas and suggestions to help you determine how effectively you're connecting with those who visit your church.

Malm, a communications specialist, worship leader and pastor's kid, provides a multi-faceted and thought-provoking approach to evaluating your church's property and Sunday activities to help determine if you're unintentionally driving visitors away.



The book is divided into five sections: First Impressions, Worship, Programming, Communication and The Big Picture. Each chapter is only two or three pages long, making it easy to pick up the book as you have time and glean an idea or two that you can immediately apply.

From typical topics like signage, parking lots and greeters, to things you might not have thought of, like overlooked odors, insider lingo and outdated information, "Unwelcome" will provide much food both for thought and action, regardless of your church's size or location.



By Doug Rogers
State Missionary

Malm ends with the suggestion of recruiting a "secret shopper" of sorts – someone you ask to visit your church on a Sunday to evaluate the experience objectively and help you discover problems you might be overlooking. Who knows? You might just learn a few ways you can eliminate the "un" from "unwelcome."

State Missionary Doug Rogers may be contacted at **1-800-264-1225, ext. 319**, or **(334) 613-2319**, drogers@alsbom.org.



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

The Gathering of Single Adults

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, APRIL 22-23
First Baptist Church, Enterprise

Singles, join us for a time of laughter, community and hearing from God. The doors will open on Friday evening at 6:30, and the fun will begin at 7:00. Saturday morning, come for coffee and muffins at 8:30. The session will begin and 9 a.m. and end with lunch.

COST: Both days, \$20 per person
Friday only, \$10 per person
Saturday only, \$15 per person

For more information, go online to alsbom.org/gosingleadults or please contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, emitchell@alsbom.org.

★ **2016 REGIONAL AND STATE BIBLE DRILLS** ★

REQUIRED ONLINE REGISTRATION:
alsbom.org/bibledrillandspeakerstournament

2016 Regional Bible Drills

- **NORTH:** East Highland Baptist Church, Hartselle, April 14. Sign in begins at 3:30 p.m., drills begin at 4 p.m.
- **SOUTH EAST:** Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Dothan, April 14. Sign in begins at 3:30 p.m., drills begin at 4 p.m.
- **NORTH CENTRAL:** CrossPoint Church, Trussville, April 17. Sign in begins at 1:30 p.m., drills begin at 2 p.m.
- **SOUTH CENTRAL:** Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery, April 17. Sign in begins at 1:30 p.m., drills begin at 2 p.m.
- **SOUTH WEST:** College Park Baptist Church, Mobile, April 18. Sign in begins at 3:30 p.m., drills begin at 4 p.m.
- **WEST CENTRAL:** First Baptist Church, Livingston, April 18. Sign in begins at 3:30 p.m., drills begin at 4 p.m.
- **NORTH EAST:** Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Alexandria, April 19. Sign in begins at 3:30 p.m., drills begin at 4 p.m.

2016 State Bible Drill and Speakers Tournament
First Baptist Church, Montgomery, April 23.
Registration begins at 12:30 p.m., drills begin at 1 p.m.

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Julie Smith at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 255, or (334) 613-2255, jsmith@alsbom.org.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Knowing God

God Is Sovereign

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

Theology 101 has spent two months looking at various aspects of God's essential nature as He has revealed Himself through Holy Scripture. By nature God — who is Spirit — is eternal, personal and triune. He is omnipotent (all-powerful), omnipresent (everywhere present at the same time), omniscient (all-knowing) and immutable (unchanging). When we attempt to account for all these truths about God's being, we might use a single, descriptive term: "sovereign."

Early Christians were right on target when they addressed God in prayer as "Sovereign Lord" (Acts 4:24). In a similar manner, 1 Timothy 6:15 speaks of God as "the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion." Revelation 6:10 records heavenly witnesses addressing God as "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true."

God is supreme

By sovereign, Christians mean God is supreme, having no rival or equal. Through the prophet Isaiah, God spoke, saying, "For I am God and there is no other" (Isa. 45:22). He is absolute ruler with ultimate authority over all that is distinct from His own being as Father, Son and Spirit. God is sovereign over all He has created. His is the right of governance and control. Acts 17:24 references Him as "God who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshipped with men's hands as though He needed anything since He gives to all life, breath and all things." In His sovereignty God does not answer to any other being concerning His actions and decrees. To the contrary, Ephesians 1:11 declares God works "all things after the counsel of His own will."

Since God is sovereign, no external compulsion or force motivated Him to

create all things. He chose to do it. Similarly, no outside influence prompted God to provide redemption. Sovereign love moved Him to provide the way for humans to escape condemnation and spiritual death.

The sovereignty of God informs our worship. He alone is worthy of adoration and worship. God instructed Israel, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deut. 6:4). God is not merely the supreme God among lesser gods. No lesser gods exist. As Sovereign of the universe God does not share His glory with any other, having decreed, "My glory I will not give to another" (Isa. 48:11).

God's sovereignty informs our ethics and morality. He alone has revealed moral distinctions. By His sovereignty God has decreed some actions to be immoral and sinful while others are acceptable and commendable. Sovereignty, nor society, sets the standards for acceptable human behavior. Majority opinion of human communities does not determine what is right or wrong. God does.

Being absolutely sovereign, it is God's prerogative to choose to recognize and honor freedom of choice to those made in His image. His is the authority to refrain from dictating or predetermining human actions. Furthermore, it is God's sovereign right to place all of the created order under laws of nature which He establishes.

In His sovereignty God possesses the authority to determine that some things He wishes to happen can only come to be in response to human persistence in believing prayer. Thus God has the right to say, "You have not because you ask not." †

Jerry Batson is a retired Alabama Baptist pastor who also has served as associate dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and professor of several schools of religion during his career.



Death penalty reignited

Pope, Moore disagree on morality of death penalty

By **Maggie Walsh**
The Alabama Baptist

Pope Francis is calling for Christians worldwide to fight to end the death penalty, citing Exodus 20:13: "Thou shalt not kill."

"All Christians and people of goodwill are called today to work not only for the abolition of the death penalty, but also to improve the conditions of life in prison in the respect of human dignity of people deprived of freedom," he said in a Feb. 21 speech marking the Year of Mercy, according to Catholic News Service.

Pope Francis also said life imprisonment is "a hidden death penalty" and believes governments should find alternate routes of rehabilitation.

Russell Moore, however, expressed concern about the Pope's comments in his blog post, "Is the Pope Right About the Death Penalty?" While he agrees with Pope Francis' opinion on the value of human life, Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said the Bible does not support the Pope's argument.

Distinction between covenants

"The new covenant applies a command of capital punishment in the old covenant to church excommunication in the new (1 Cor. 5:13; Deut. 13:5)," Moore wrote. "Even so, the point here is that the Mosaic Law itself draws a distinction between murder and lawful execution by the state."

Moore pointed out that there are sometimes issues with the application of and racial and economic disparities in capital punishment.

"Christians can debate whether a state should declare a moratorium on capital punishment while reforming unjust sentencing practices. Christians can debate whether the death penalty is effective as a deterrent or whether the death penalty is meaningful at all in a world in which legal systems delay for years the application of the penalty," he said.

'Prudential debates'

"These are prudential debates about how best to order our political systems, not debates about whether every act of state killing is murder and thus immoral and unjust," he said.

But the Pope's comments apply the commandment against murder to all capital punishment, Moore said. "On that I believe he is wrong."

Moore concluded by noting that Christians may disagree, with valid arguments, about the death penalty.

"But as we do so, we must not lose the distinction the Bible makes between the innocent and the guilty. The gospel shows us forgiveness for the guilty through the sin-absorbing atonement of Christ, not through the state's refusal to carry out temporal justice." †

Seventh Street Baptist rededicates its bell



Photo courtesy of Seventh Street Baptist Church

Seventh Street Baptist Church, Cullman, recently rededicated its original historic bell with a special Sunday morning church service. The service was held on the church grounds near the bell and included an opening prayer, devotion, historical reflections and an acknowledgment of the church's historical committee, builders and brick mason. A ceremonial ringing of the bell and hymn singing concluded the service. The historical committee members are (l to r): Martha Al-Dijaili, Pat Heald, Shirley Holmes, Suzanne Tidwell and James Tidwell. Eric Martin is pastor.

'Unreached & unsought'

Multihousing ministries needed in state

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

More than half (57 percent) of the people in the United States live in multihousing communities — apartments or mobile home parks. That's why Tuscaloosa Baptist Association and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) have teamed up to equip Christians in Alabama to reach the lost through multihousing ministries.

The opportunities are endless, according to Eric Boykin, Tuscaloosa Association's missional strategist.

"We want to raise the awareness of opportunities to do multihousing ministry and provide partnership information on how we (the Church) can do this together," Boykin said.

SBOM's office of associational missions and church planting and Tuscaloosa Association will offer multiple luncheons this spring so pastors, key leaders or "anyone who wants to do missions work in their community" can learn about multihousing opportunities. The luncheons also will provide opportunities to network with the 13 multihousing strategists who are planted across the state helping Christian communities reach out and share the gospel.

No registration is required for the following luncheons:

- ▶ March 15 — Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association office (10:30 a.m.)
- ▶ March 21 — Etowah Baptist Association office (11:30 a.m.)
- ▶ March 28 — Columbia Baptist Association office (10:30 a.m.)
- ▶ March 31 — Birmingham

Baptist Association office (11:30 a.m.)

▶ April 4 — Integrity Baptist Church, Hueytown (11 a.m.)

▶ April 5 — Montgomery Baptist Association office (10:30 a.m.)

▶ April 19 — Highland Park Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals (Noon)

▶ April 25 — Government Street Baptist Church, Mobile (11:30 a.m.)

▶ April 26 — First Baptist Church, Summerdale (11 a.m.)

▶ May 2 — Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville (10:30 a.m.)

A multihousing learning lab is another opportunity to "learn a little and do a lot," Boykin said. During a two-day lab, participants in groups of 10-15 will be trained on some basic multihousing ministry techniques and then assist in organizing block parties, meeting with apartment complex managers, learning to identify different types of communities and speak-

ing with housing authorities.

"Apartment managers want the Church [in the community] to help," Boykin said. Multihousing ministry is not only a way to reach the lost, it is something that the authorities in the area request because they know how much good it does for the community.

Learning labs

The following learning labs require registration and are sponsored by SBOM and Tuscaloosa Association:

- ▶ April 8-9 — Biloxi, Mississippi
- ▶ May 4-5 — Tuscaloosa
- ▶ June 8-9 — Tuscaloosa
- ▶ Sept. 21-22 — Tuscaloosa

To register, email Boykin at eric@tuscaloosacba.com.

"I hope these events will give [Alabama Baptists] some ideas that will strengthen their strategy to disciple the most unreached and unsought in our country."

For more information, visit tuscaloosacba.com/multi-housing.

Reverse Mortgage News

By Jimmy Dixon

Max Youngblood is a retired pastor who faithfully served the Lord for 50 years. Several years ago I assisted him and his wife, Carolyn, in

was a tremendous blessing to us financially. For anyone considering a reverse, I recommend it along with recommending you contact Jimmy Dixon. He is an honest Christian gentleman."



Max and Carolyn

getting a reverse mortgage. Since that time I have shared their testimonies such as, "Living with a Reverse Mortgage" with *The Alabama Baptist* readers.

Last week Bro. Max sent me the following email to use in this article:

"November 27, 2015, was my and my beautiful wife's 57th anniversary. The next day she went home to be with the Lord after 20 days in CICU. In September 2015 we left our home and moved in with our daughter when we could no longer care for each other. Having now come full circle I can say the reverse mortgage

I sincerely appreciate Max's words and it was my blessing to get to know Carolyn. Because of God's grace I look forward to seeing her again. To Bro. Max, she'll look more beautiful than ever before!

Like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy Dixon covers our great state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. For a free reverse mortgage brochure or proposal, call him direct at 205-567-4800 or email jdixon@mcgogwinking.com.



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ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Nelson retires after 41 years in ministry

When Buddy Nelson asked his college sweetheart, Becky, to marry him, she said “yes” to being a banker’s wife. But by the time they got married, she said “I do” to being a pastor’s wife.



NELSON

And after 41 years in the ministry, Buddy Nelson retired as pastor of First Baptist Church, McClellan, in Anniston, on Jan. 31.

While he was earning his bachelor’s degree at Samford University in Birmingham, Nelson realized God was calling him into the ministry but resisted the pull because he and his future wife were both pastors’ kids.

“I knew what that glass house looked like,” he said with a laugh, but he soon accepted God’s call and earned a master of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

In addition to First, McClellan, Nelson served as youth minister for First Baptist Church, Birmingham, and as pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Leitchfield, Kentucky; First Baptist Church, Oxford; and Riverchase Baptist Church, Hoover.

Serving at First, McClellan, for more than 11 years, Nelson said of his time there, “It’s been one of the most rewarding ministries that I’ve been involved in. ... It’s been a wonderful experience to just walk with this group and see it become a very healthy church.”

The couple remains members of First, McClellan, and are remaining open to whatever “new adventure” God has in store. They have two children and three grandchildren. (Maggie Walsh)

Baptists, Methodists gather in Germany to discuss baptism, Christian initiation

For the third round of conversations between Baptists and Methodists, members from both Baptist World Alliance (BWA), including Alabama’s Timothy George, and World Methodist Council (WMC) met Feb. 3–10 at Elstal Theological Seminary near Berlin, Germany, to dialogue about “faith working through love.”

‘Making Disciples’

The meeting focused on “Making Disciples: Baptism and Christian Initiation” and included historical, theological, liturgical and ecumenical perspectives on baptism and the process of Christian initiation (baptism, confirmation, eucharist). Both groups gave reports on baptismal practices in Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, the Americas and the Caribbean.

BWA and WMC participants also gathered for worship at Schoneberg Baptist Church, Berlin, where they saw 11 baptisms take place.

During the week the group traveled to Wittenberg to visit The Luther House reformation museum and Castle Church, where Martin Luther posted his 95 theses.

George, dean of Beeson Divinity School of Samford University in Birmingham, was among the BWA delegation that participated in the conversations in Germany.



Photo courtesy of Beeson Divinity School

Members of Baptist World Alliance and World Methodist Council gather for a meeting in Berlin, Germany. Pictured are (front row, l to r): Fausto Vasconcelos, Hnuni Zauva, Curtis Freeman, Tim Macquiban, Deji Ayegboyin, (Second row, l to r): Steve Holmes, Timothy George, dean of Beeson Divinity School; Christine Gooden Benguche, Valérie Duval-Poujol, (Third row, l to r): Malcolm Tan, Ulrike Schuler, Paul Chilcote, (Top): Lauren Matthew.

A meeting with Methodist Superintendent Gabriel Straka also was on the itinerary for the group, as well as lunch with Rosemarie Wenner, bishop of the United Methodist Church in Germany; Michael Noss, president of the German Baptist Union; Christoph Stiba, general secretary of the German Baptist Union; and Michael Kisskalt, rector of El-

stal School of Theology.

Also during the meeting Elstal School of Theology professor Uwe Swarat presented a paper on Baptist doctrine as reflected in worldwide theological conversations.

The next session of conversations will take place in Kingston, Jamaica, and will focus on the call to discipleship. (TAB, BWA)

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In a medical emergency, call 911 or go directly to your local ER

CAMPUS News



UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► University of Mobile Announces New Vice President for Development:

The University of Mobile (UMobile) announced the appointment of Kevin Wilburn as the new vice president for development.



WILBURN

Wilburn serves as a member of the university's board of trustees and board of regents and comes to UMobile from the pastorate of

First Baptist Church, Cullman. He previously served as pastor of Southside Baptist Church, Opp, and First Baptist Church, Scottsboro.

Wilburn currently is in the doctoral program at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri.

He and his wife, Amanda, have one child.

► **University of Mobile Gallery to Feature Exhibit by Artist Scott Michael Raynor:** An art exhibit titled "Conflicted Fascinations and Entanglements — Recent Paintings by Scott Michael Raynor" will be on display at the Marilyn Foley Art Gallery on the University of Mobile campus from March 1–April 8. It will be open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Raynor will discuss his work during Art Talk on March 24 at 1 p.m. with a reception following.

Raynor is chair of the art department and associate professor of art at High Point University in North Carolina.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► Samford University Debaters Win Indiana Tournament:

The Samford University debate team of Carly Davis, of Windermere, Florida, and Wesley Staples, of Killen, won the novice division of the Hoosier Invitational Debate Tournament on Jan. 30–Feb. 1. Davis was named top speaker. Staples was named second speaker.

Other Samford teams in every

division scored winning records. The varsity team of Natalie Benne, of Brentwood, Tennessee, and Marley Davis, of Mount Olive, defeated teams from the University of Florida in Gainesville, the University of Iowa in Iowa City, Michigan State University in East Lansing and the

University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls. The junior varsity team of Hope Reamer, of Mountain Brook, and Ashley Herring, of Chattanooga, Tennessee, defeated teams from Lakeland College in Plymouth, Wisconsin, and the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. †

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Deerfoot Baptist Church, Trussville, Alabama, is seeking a full-time pastor. Resumes are being accepted. Email: dkovachich@deerfootbaptist.org. Fax: 205-661-6073.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

New Elkahatchee Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resume to: Pastor Search Committee, 3380 Elkahatchee Rd., Alexander City, AL 35010.

WORSHIP MINISTER

New Beginnings Community Church in Graysville is currently searching for a worship minister. This position is a part-time position. All interested parties, please email your resume to: secretary@nbccbaptist.com.

MUSIC/WORSHIP LEADER

Oak Bowery Baptist Church in Calhoun County, Alabama, is seeking a part-time music/worship leader. Resumes may be mailed to: Oak Bowery Baptist Church, ATTN: Personnel Committee, 3300 AL Highway 144, Ohatchee, AL 36271, or oakbowerybaptist@att.net.

PART-TIME WORSHIP PASTOR

East Side Baptist Church in Cullman, Alabama, is accepting resumes for a part-time worship pastor. Please submit resumes by

March 6 to: esbcsearchteam@gmail.com.

MINISTER OF MUSIC & SENIOR ADULTS

FBC Bay Minette is seeking a full-time minister of music and senior adults. Please send resumes to: Dr. Larry Beauchamp, P.O. Box 1628, Bay Minette, AL 36507, or revbeau46@gmail.com.

YOUTH MINISTER/ASSOCIATE PASTOR

Purpose Baptist Church, a fundamental, conservative congregation in Opelika, Alabama, is seeking a youth minister/associate pastor. We will consider bivocational as well as full-time applicants. Apply online at tgrantham@purposechurch.net.

MINISTER OF STUDENTS

First Baptist Church of Columbus, Mississippi, is seeking a minister of students. Experience preferred and seminary degree desirable. Salary range: \$50,000 to \$55,000. Please email resumes to: jlautz@cablone.net or mail to: First Baptist Church, ATTN: Minister of Students Search, P.O. Box 829, Columbus, MS 39703. Please submit resumes by March 29.

YOUTH PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Alexander City, Alabama, is announcing the opening of a full-time staff position for minister to students. We are praying for

the Lord to call His chosen man for our youth, grades 7 through 12. The search committee is at work receiving resumes at: P.O. Box 400, Alexander City, AL 35011. 256-234-6351. spsc@fbc-ac.org.

YOUTH & CHILDREN'S MINISTER

Brent Baptist Church is currently taking resumes for a youth and children's minister. Please send resumes to: P.O. Box 246, Brent, AL 35034, or email to: brentbc@bellsouth.net.

MINISTER OF CHILDREN

Mount Zion Baptist Church (www.mzbc.net) located in Huntsville, Alabama, is seeking a full-time minister of children to develop, promote and implement a comprehensive process of religious education for children. We are an Acts 1:8 church driven by the vision to reach people for Christ. We have a combined attendance of over 1,000 in both blended and contemporary services. The ideal candidate will have a bachelor's degree and a demonstrated passion, vision and calling to children's ministries. Please send resumes to: Mount Zion Baptist Church, ATTN: Search Chair, 228 Mount Zion Rd., Huntsville, AL 35806, or mzbcsearchchair@gmail.com.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

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DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

Sulphur Springs Baptist Association, 23 churches, accepting resumes for bivocational director of missions. Send to: DOM Search Committee, 4501 Great-house Road, Dora, AL 35062 or email to: SSBAoffice@gmail.com by March 10.

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- 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.

'Blessing — and — privilege'

Freeman named Miss UMobile

Miranda Freeman, a music education major from Lucedale, Mississippi, won the title of Miss University of Mobile 2016 at the 51st annual pageant Feb. 6.

Freeman will represent the University of Mobile (UMobile) for the upcoming year at various events including Christmas Spectacular. She will compete for the title of Miss Alabama in June at Samford University in Birmingham.

Freeman also won the People's Choice award during the pageant, which was held at Saraland High School Performing Arts Center. The UMobile senior performed a classical violin piece, Vivaldi's

"Winter," for the talent portion of the competition.

Freeman, who is preparing to be an educator, will work as an ambassador for her personal platform, "Touch Tomorrow, Today." Her goal as Miss UMobile is to touch tomorrow today by investing in the lives of children and young adults, helping them believe in themselves and discover the unique gifts and talents they can offer the world.

Investing in lives

"Being around children and students is something I always enjoyed," Freeman said. She said research shows that investing in the lives of children has great benefits.



Photo courtesy of the University of Mobile

"The children who receive volunteer involvement on a regular basis have higher IQs and they are generally more successful in life," she said.

Freeman has volunteered more than 900 hours in the last five years and is working on creating a partnership between UMobile and the University of South Alabama Children's and Women's Hospital in Mobile.

An author of children's books, her latest book is titled "Pie in the Sky." Proceeds from the book go to Penelope House, a shelter for victims of domestic violence and their children.

"It is a blessing and a privilege to represent the school I love so

much," she said. "I want to be someone who embodies what this university stands for."

First runner-up was Haley Ikner, a senior communication major from Excel. Ikner also won the swimsuit portion of the competition.

Second runner up was Whitney Myers, a junior from Mobile majoring in business administration, marketing and worship leadership.

Chelsea Seitz, a senior from Mobile majoring in music education, won the talent portion.

Miss Congeniality was Samantha Daniels, a freshman from Mobile majoring in art and psychology. (UMobile)

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For March 6

Explore the Bible By Robert Olsen, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

ENTRUSTED Acts 1:1-11

The Remembered Promise (1-5)

The book of Acts is the first written history of the Church. Luke, a doctor and one of Paul's companions, followed up his gospel narrative with this historical account of the beginning of the Church. It shows the unfolding of God's activity through His Church, expanding His kingdom to the ends of the earth.

It is important to recognize that from the outset, Luke affirms the actual physical resurrection of Christ. This is no fantasy or mass hallucination of the risen Christ. Many non-Christians today treat the resurrection as a myth or metaphor, but for Christians this is the hinge upon which our faith rests. In fact Paul says as much in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19. A denial of the physical resurrection of Christ is the greatest mistake a person can make because it is a denial of the power and promises of God.

While Jesus spent time with the disciples He emphasized that they were to wait for the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit we can do nothing because the Spirit brings life (John 6:63).

It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that the Church advanced in the Book of Acts and it is still through the power of the Spirit that the Church advances today. We need to be careful to be attuned to the Holy Spirit and act upon His leading, not ours.

Throughout the Bible the Holy Spirit leads Christians into areas that do not

seem logical, but if we are attuned to the leading of the Holy Spirit, we will trust God and not our circumstances. "We live by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7).

The Resurrection Proclaimed (6-8)

The disciples wanted to know if Jesus was going to set up His kingdom on earth at this time. Instead of answering the question, Jesus points them to their main purpose — to be His witnesses.

Just like the disciples we often are concerned about issues to which we want an answer: When will Christ return? Why does God allow injustice? Just like Jesus' response to the disciples the Bible points us to the main issues we should be concerned with, the chief of which is being witnesses for Him.

When Jesus lays out the areas where the disciples will be witnesses, it is a foreshadowing of the Book of Luke — it begins in Jerusalem, moves to Judea and Samaria and then leads to Paul's journeys throughout the Roman Empire.

Of course this sets the pattern for Christians today. We need to be witnesses wherever we are. It is important to note that each Christian is to be a missionary. This is not something that is reserved for those who travel to the remote jungles of Africa or some far flung place.

The Return Portrayed (9-11)

Following Jesus' last instructions, He ascended into heaven. It is reassuring to know He also will return in the same way (see 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

What great encouragement is this for us today? When we face trials and opposition, when we face sickness and death, when we face heartbreak and frustration, we can take heart that there will be a day when Christ will return and we will be caught up with Him to go to a place where there will be no more death, pain or grief (Rev. 21:4). †

Bible Studies for Life By Jim Barnette, Ph.D. Samford University and Brookwood Baptist Church, Mountain Brook

OUR NEED FOR CONTENTMENT John 6:26-27, 35-40

The feeding of the 5,000 is the only miracle of Jesus recorded by all four Gospels. This event was a marvelous sign for our hungry world. Jesus intended the physical bread to point them to higher spiritual sustenance. His generation missed that significance. We should not make the same mistake. Only Jesus can satisfy life's ultimate, spiritual hunger.

People seek satisfaction in things that don't last. (26-27)

A crowd was searching for Jesus almost greedily to satisfy their curiosity and their bellies. When they find Him, they address Him as "Rabbi" (v. 25). But their question "When did you get here?" is almost a whiny "Why did you leave us?" At the moment, food for their bellies is more important than anything He can teach them. Jesus introduces His statement with the solemn "truly, truly," which signals a declaration of divine authority. He brushes their question aside and unmasks their true motive. They sought Him out not because the gift of feeding has been a sign through which they have glimpsed the glory of God, but because they ate and "were filled." Here Jesus uses a very earthy term, literally meaning they were "satisfied with food as animals with fodder." Jesus contrasts the crowd's preoccupation with food that perishes with food that endures for eternal life. "Endures" translates one of John's favorite words for the relationship of the believer with Christ and His Father. Christ is the source of imperishable food that lasts into the next life. "Perish" is a word John uses on two other occasions to contrast with "eternal life," including John 3:16.

In Jesus we find complete satisfaction now and forever. (35)

Jesus proclaims His bold self-revelation:

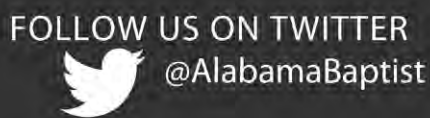
"I am the Bread of Life." Verse 35 is the first of the grand "I am" declarations in John, of which there are seven: Bread of Life (6:35); Light of the World (8:12; 9:5); Door of the Sheep (10:7, 9); Good Shepherd (10:11, 14); Resurrection and the Life (11:25); the Way, the Truth and the Life (14:6); and True Vine (15:1, 5). Jesus draws on these common images to break through the limitations of language to speak of the One whose glory is nearly inexplicable. Jesus' use of "hunger" and "thirst" is to suggest that the deepest, most elemental needs of humanity find their fulfillment in Christ.

Jesus' revelation of His identity also is His invitation. He beckons anyone who hears to come and believe in Him, not to satisfy a physical appetite nor assume that we can earn this bread. We can only come as beggars, hungry and needy. If we accept the "true bread," which only the I Am can offer, we can have unending wholeness.

People who put their trust in Jesus experience true contentment. (36-40)

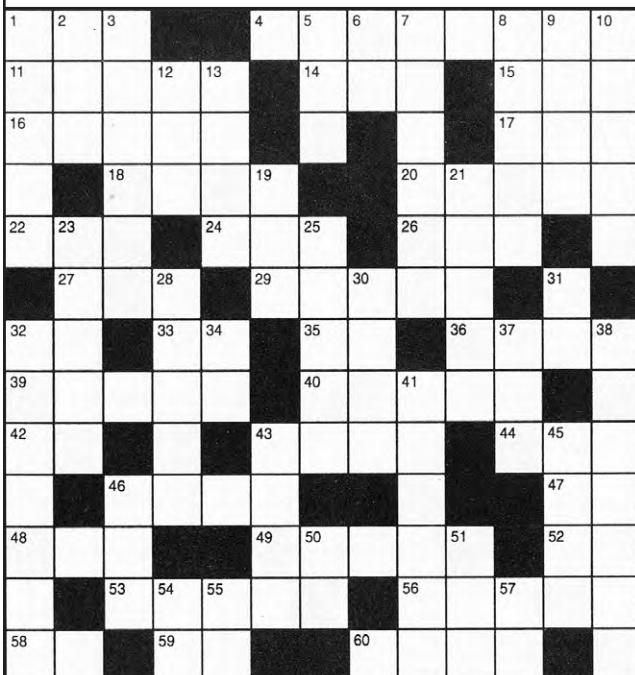
The linking of "seeing" and "believing" is at the heart of John's understanding of faith. To see rightly is to believe. Verse 36, then, is a negative judgment on the crowd. Their demand for a sign demonstrates that they see without truly seeing and, therefore, do not believe. Verse 40 concludes the passage by affirming the "eternal life" that the believer celebrates in the present as well as its consummation at "the last day."

This passage represents the delicate balance between our faith response and God's initiative in "giving." The key to maintaining the balance is expressed in Verse 38: Jesus has come down from heaven to make eternal life visible and accessible to us. Faith is impossible without God initiating the first move toward us, but we retain responsibility for the decision to make in response to God's initiative. †



Christian Crossword

By Janice A. Buhl Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



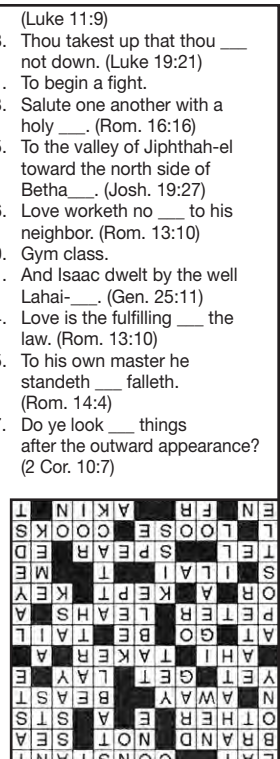
Across

- Thy master's son shall ___ bread. (2 Sam. 9:10)
- Be ___ to do my commandments. (1 Chron. 28:7)
- Is not this a ___ plucked out of the fire? (Zech. 3:2)
- Be ye ___ as your fathers. (Zech. 1:4)
- Stretch out thine hand over the ___. (Ex. 14:26)
- Let us go and serve ___ gods. (Deut. 13:6)
- Streets. (abbr.)
- And Jacob stole ___ unawares. (Gen. 31:20)
- The first ___ was like a lion. (Rev. 4:7)
- ___ gleanings shall be left in it. (Isa. 17:6)
- ___ you into your tents again. (Deut. 5:30)
- I will ___ mine hand upon my mouth. (Job 40:4)
- ___ the son of Abdiel. (1 Chron. 5:15)
- As with the ___ of usury. (Isa. 24:2)
- He shall eat ___ my table. (2 Sam. 9:11)
- ___, inquire of Baal-zebub. (2 Kings 1:2)
- His offering shall ___ of fine flour. (Lev. 2:1)
- He moveth his ___ like a

- cedar. (Job 40:17)
- And ___ went out and wept bitterly. (Luke 22:62)
- Zilpah ___ maid bore Jacob a son. (Gen. 30:10)
- Have ye a father, ___ a brother? (Gen. 44:19)
- I have ___ the ways of the Lord. (2 Sam. 22:22)
- They took a ___ and opened their tomb. (Judg. 3:25)
- ___ the Ahoite. (1 Chron. 11:29)
- I turned to see the voice that spake with ___. (Rev. 1:12)
- Then I came to them of captivity at ___-abib. (Ezek. 3:15)
- The Egyptian had a ___ in his hand. (2 Sam. 23:21)
- The children of Gad called the altar ___. (Josh. 22:34)
- ___ him and let him go. (John 11:44)
- To be ___ and to be bakers. (1 Sam. 8:13)
- The inhabitants of ___-dor and her towns. (Josh. 17:11)
- French. (abbr.)
- Related.
- Hearken unto me every ___ of you. (Mark 7:14)
- There had been ___ rain in the land. (1 Kings 17:7)
- The world also shall be ___. (1 Chron. 16:30)
- If we ___ to commune with thee. (Job 4:2)
- The wicked fall into their own ___. (Ps. 141:10)
- He shall never ___ of death. (John 8:52)
- Behold, all things are become ___. (2 Cor. 5:17)
- Gather them in their ___. (Hab. 1:15)
- Mine hour is not ___ come. (John 2:4)
- The merchants of the ___ shall weep. (Rev. 18:11)
- Out of the ___ came forth meat. (Judg. 14:14)
- He asked for a writing ___. (Luke 1:63)
- A son of Shemaiah. (1 Chron. 3:22)
- They shall ___ the way of the Lord. (Gen. 18:19)
- Joshua burnt ___. (Josh. 8:28)
- I am appointed a preacher and an ___. (2 Tim. 1:11)
- Two ___ three witnesses. (Heb. 10:28)
- ___ and it shall be given you.

Down

- Horns of ivory and ___. (Ezek. 27:15)
- Thou ___ a virtuous woman. (Ruth 3:11)
- They departed from ___.



TOP 8

best-selling books
at press time

FICTION

1. **The First Hostage**
By Joel C. Rosenberg (Tyndale)
2. **War Room**
By Chris Fabry (Tyndale)
3. **Eve**
By William Paul Young (Howard)
4. **An Amish Year**
By Beth Wiseman (Thomas Nelson)
5. **Thin Ice**
By Irene Hannon (Revell)
6. **The Shack (Paperback)**
By William Paul Young (Windblown)
7. **The Bridge**
By Karen Kingsbury (Howard)
8. **The Harbinger**
By Jonathan Cahn (Frontline)

NONFICTION

1. **Retire Inspired**
By Chris Hogan (Ramsey)
2. **Fervent**
By Priscilla Shirer (B&H)
3. **The 5 Love Languages**
By Gary Chapman (Moody)
4. **Jesus Calling (Hardback)**
By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
5. **The Battle Plan for Prayer**
By Stephen Kendrick (B&H)
6. **Fresh Start**
By Joel Osteen (FaithWords)
7. **The Power of I Am**
By Joel Osteen (FaithWords)
8. **Imagine Heaven**
By John Burke (Baker)

Source: Christian Book Expo

Tell your story

West urges audiences to let God mend 'broken pieces'

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Singer/songwriter Matthew West is on a mission to transform life stories into life-changing songs.

Over the past decade of touring and performing concerts, West has been greatly impacted by hearing personal testimonies of victories and struggles. With his love for storytelling, West was inspired to share some of these experiences on his album, "The Story of Your Life," in 2010.

After he asked people to send their stories, West was inundated with responses and never expected to receive more than 10,000 stories from 20 countries.

"I've always been sort of a storyteller at heart and writing songs that told the story of my life," West

said. "My focus shifted when I was getting ready to work on that album. I thought it might be interesting to see what would happen if I turned the microphone around and created songs based on other people's experiences. That was the initial plot behind it, but what wound up happening from that one little idea was an experience much bigger than I originally anticipated."

West took the time to read each story, and many of the experiences moved him to tears as people shared their greatest joys and most heart-wrenching moments.

"The mountaintop experiences and the joys that we have, those are all defining moments in our lives. But the stories that were most often shared were the weakest moments. People shared the greatest trials they've ever faced — the illness that they suffered, the loved one that they lost, the desire to have a child — and many people shared about abuse or addictions they were dealing with."

'Window into their world'

"This has changed me and challenged me to look at the world in a different way," he said. "These people were trusting me to be their messenger. I was up late into the night for several months just reading about people's lives and I felt like I had been given a window into their world."

"My desire is that people will realize that their life is telling a story, and by allowing God to work and mend the broken pieces, it can be a beautiful story that impacts the world around them."

Because of the overwhelming response West was

encouraged to continue sharing listeners' stories with the release of his album, "Into the Light," and his newest project, "Live Forever."

An award-winning artist, West has garnered an American Music Award, Billboard Music Award, multiple ASCAP Songwriter/Artist of the Year honors and Grammy nominations.

In addition to writing songs, West also has written several devotional books.

God's still working

"I want to encourage people to realize that God hasn't stopped working in their lives," West said. "I think a lot of times we get so defeated in our lives — thinking we've made too many mistakes or that our lives are too bruised and broken — that we can't

have any impact in the world. The truth is that no matter how many mistakes you've made or trials you've faced, it's the brokenness of our lives that God uses to give us something to say to the world. I hope it's an empowering message that people can cling to during difficult times, when they realize that God has something to say to us and through us."

"I try to share with people from personal experience that I'm living proof that we can do great things when we put our lives in God's hands. ... I've been sharing with audiences that life is too short to just go through the motions. It's so important to live every moment like we believe that life is

precious and short, because we're not guaranteed any moment beyond the moment we're in right now."

West's own life story includes difficult trials and challenges, including experiencing two months of silence and a nearly career-ending vocal surgery in 2007 because of a vascular polyp and hemorrhaged blood vessels on his vocal chord.

After a time of healing, West re-emerged in early 2008 with an appropriately titled album, "Something to Say."

"In many ways this trial gave a deeper understanding of God's love, grace and faithfulness," West said. "When you surrender everything to the Lord, He will show you what new life is like and what He can do with your mistakes and amplify His voice through you in a huge way."

"I want people to know that ... even in the silence, there is still great hope to be shared, a story to be told and something to say." ¶



Matthew West

Photo courtesy of Merge PR



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American partners often join the Bisseys in journeying to remote Indonesian islands. They hike, carrying all they need with them, deep into the jungle to villages where there are no hotels and certainly no resorts.



BP photo

Geographical challenges

Bissey family takes gospel to remote islands of Indonesia

Few signs point the way to the village where Carter Bissey is heading. Well into the three-hour drive across the Indonesian island, somewhere along a paved road that crumbled into a teeth-jarring pitted track, he pulls over and cranks down his window to ask a stranger for directions.

Cashew and banana trees, coconut palms and some rice fields line the way. Bissey navigates off of the understanding of the island's geography that he's gained in seven years of living here, directions he gleans from passersby and a heap of grace.

Finally driving into a loose collection of houses that make up the village he's been seeking, a cluster of parked motorbikes down a side road signals the end of the search and the beginning of the celebration.

Bissey, his wife and their three children are attending a wedding. They left their house early Sunday morning to make their way to the village where a friend will be wed in an all-day event. The Bisseys smile, talk, eat, greet, pose for pictures and smile some more — all day long. Then they say their goodbyes, load the children in the car and start the three-hour drive back across the island.

Thousands of villages

This is one of the challenges of trying to bring the gospel to one of the more remote Indonesian islands. It takes ample time and energy to simply get to places and participate in events that are important to those with whom the Bisseys have built relationships. And the Bisseys also are concerned with the people on the surrounding islands that are boat rides away. With 6,000 to 7,000 inhabited islands in Indonesia, there are tens of thousands of small villages that could slip under the radar.

In spite of the difficulties, the Bisseys are spurring efforts to bring the gospel to multiple people groups on scattered islands in their part of the world. They work with Indonesian partners as well as intrepid American church partners who make

the very long trip there to live rough for weeks at a time, just for a chance to hike into villages and share the gospel where it's never been spoken.

It's difficult, though, to share the gospel or nurture new believers in the islands.

Wide variety

"Transportation is a big barrier," Bissey explained. "You go out on an island, plant a seed and then you can't get back there for months." Additionally, it is challenging to relate to so many groups from sea gypsies who live in stilted houses over water to inland villagers who grow rice to coastal farmers who raise oysters for pearls and farm seaweed.

The majority of the islanders the Bisseys work with are Muslim. "We were talking to some guys here and asked if they were interested in hearing about other religions. 'Not really,' they said. 'There's really no other choice for us. Our ancestors were Muslims. The mosque is here. There are no other places to worship here.'"

American partners often join the Bisseys in journeying to even more remote islands beyond where the Bisseys live to share the gospel. They hike deep into the jungle to villages where there are no hotels and certainly no resorts.

Billy Donaldson, a volunteer from a Baptist church in Tennessee, said, "We would just walk in the villages and pray that someone would open their home to us but also their heart to God's Word, and we would stay in people's houses. ... We'd help prepare meals when they'd let us. We'd wash dishes. We would carry water to and from the well ... anything that we could do to build a relationship."

In about four weeks of hiking to roughly 80 villages, Donaldson said, "Nobody had [ever] heard the good news. Nobody had heard that Jesus can change their lives." (BP)

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons.

RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

Obama seeks to defund abstinence-only program

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama's proposal to eliminate funding for Ascend, formerly the National Abstinence Education Association, has the abstinence-only education program president and CEO, Valerie Huber, confused.

President Obama's proposed fiscal year 2017 budget defunds Ascend because it is not "evidence-based," but according to Huber, that's nonsense.

"The president's recommendation to Congress is really indefensible," Huber told *The Christian Post* on Feb. 22. "To say that there is not evidence that the sexual risk avoidance approach has research behind it is just not true. If you look at how the CDC and the public health community addresses risk behaviors, any risk behaviors — whether it's smoking or underage drinking or gang violence or a variety of other things — they always put an emphasis on giving the target audience, in this case youth, the information and the skills to avoid that behavior.

"The message is very clear. In order to achieve the best outcome you don't smoke or don't engage in underage drinking ... the only risk behavior that they depart from that public health message is in the area of teen sex."

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services noted in the budget that the Child and Family Services Improvement and Innovation Act signed into law in 2011 by Obama authorizes funding for abstinence education through the 2016 financial year, but not after that. (TAB)

Ala. pastor accepts medal for civil rights marchers

WASHINGTON — An African-American Alabama Baptist minister who took part in the historic civil rights marches in Selma has been awarded the Congressional Gold Medal on behalf of all the "foot soldiers" for voting rights.

Frederick D. Reese said at the U.S. Capitol ceremony Feb. 24 that God enabled the civil rights leaders to endure the beatings they faced as they worked for passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

"Had it not been for the Lord on our side, we would have perished by the way," said Reese, 86, who recently retired after more than 50 years as a pastor. He was leader of the Dallas County Voters League that invited Martin Luther King Jr. to Selma.

The Alabama delegation of Congress had called for civil rights workers to receive the medal, such as Reese and fellow foot soldier John Lewis, a U.S. Representative from Georgia.

Alabama Rep. Terri Sewell said in a statement, "[Reese's] acceptance of this Congressional Gold Medal is emblematic of everyone who marched, prayed and died in the pursuit of civil and voting rights in America." (RNS)

More plaintiffs accuse Gothard of sexual harassment

LA GRANGE, Illinois — Two more people, now totaling 18, are suing 81-year-old Bill Gothard, founder of the Institute in Basic Life Principles (IBLP), for sexual harassment.

The plaintiffs' lawyer, David Gibbs, compared Gothard's case to Billy Cosby's situation, referring to the sexual assault lawsuit against the comedian. "More and more victims keep coming forward telling the same story," Gibbs said.

The lawsuit filed Feb. 17 paints Gothard and other IBLP leaders as manipulative and alleges that Gothard raped one young woman. The suit also alleges that harsh physical punishment and emotional abuse came from IBLP leaders and that one young man was molested by a male IBLP counselor.

Gothard denies all accusations and, according to his attorney, is considering a countersuit against the plaintiffs.

No criminal charges have been filed against Gothard in part because the statute of limitations has run out on many of the allegations. Gothard resigned from IBLP in 2014 amid allegations of sexual abuse. (TAB, RNS)