

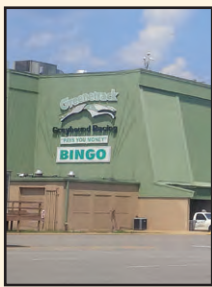


INSIDE



There is still work to do, leaders at race relations conference say

◆ Page 3



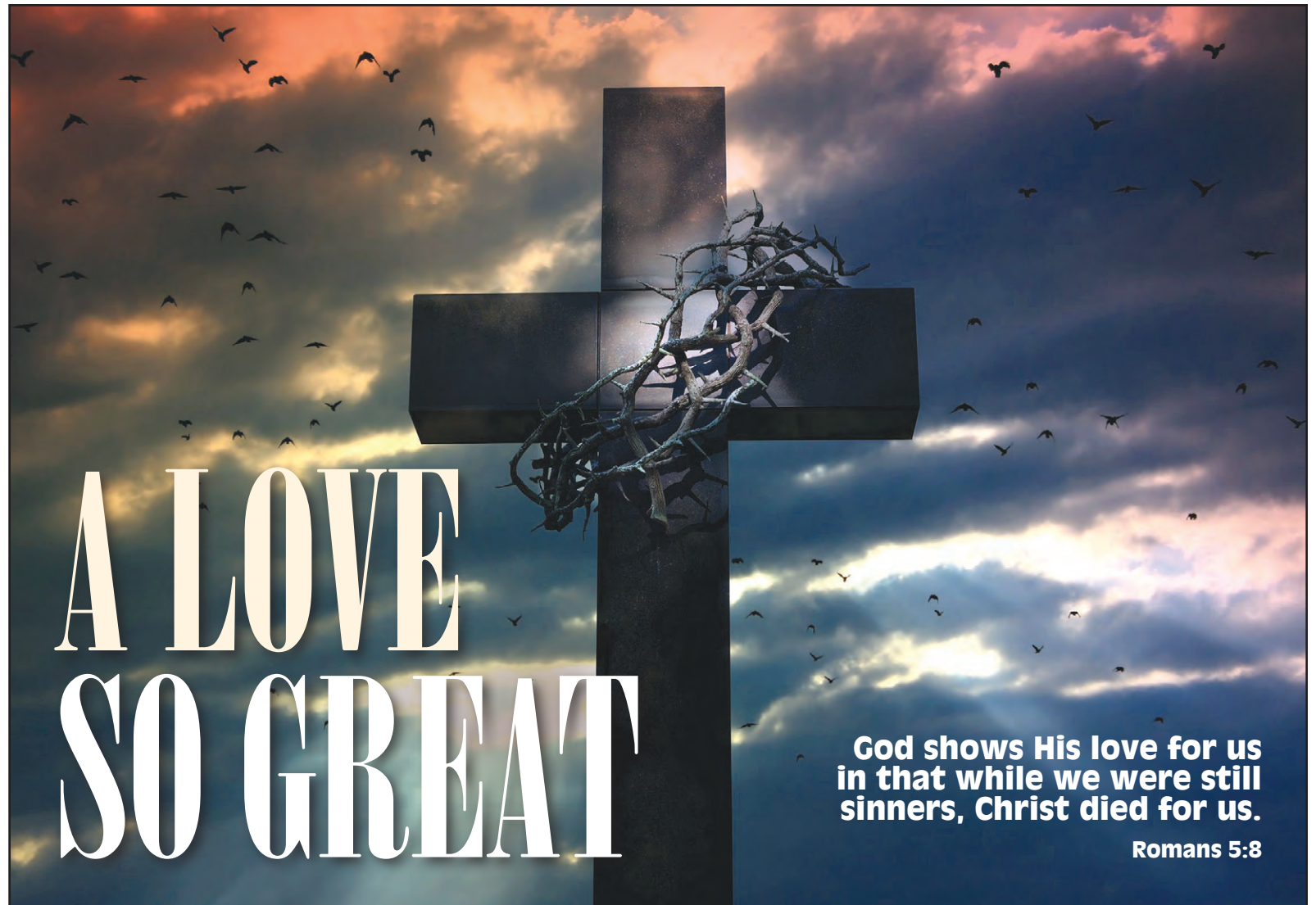
AUM's lottery, gambling report dubbed 'unreliable' by North Alabama prof

◆ Page 4



TBFA helps Baptists make lasting impact through estate planning

◆ Page 5



A LOVE SO GREAT

God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

123rf.com

Easter season provides refreshing message of hope, Lance says

By Michael J. Brooks
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

It was Good Friday (April 9) in 1945 that the famous German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer thought he would finally be freed from the Nazi prison camp where he had been held since 1943.

But that day ended up meaning only a change of prison venue.

The soldier who escorted him to the new prison pointed to the gallows in front of them and said, "Bonhoeffer, this is the end."

But Bonhoeffer never wavered and rejected the soldier's threat with his reply: "No, this is the beginning." "He had the assurance of God's

presence with him and he spoke a word we need to proclaim this Easter," Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, recently shared with pastors in Shelby Baptist Association. "Death isn't the end but only the beginning for those God has sent."

Describing the post-resurrection passage in John 20:19-23, Lance said, "The Easter season is refreshing. It shouts to us about hope and this is a word we desperately need today."

The disciples were huddled together, afraid and uncertain after the crucifixion, Lance said. But Jesus appeared to them and spoke words of assurance.



LANCE

"The first word He spoke to them was 'peace,'" Lance said. "This speaks of the promise of His presence that brings assurance in times of trouble."

Recounting a pastoral visit to a family whose child had been in a serious accident and who was fighting for her life, Lance said he prayed God would

give him a word of comfort for the family. But the father, a Christian layman, assured Lance the family was strong.

"We're at peace with this," he said. "We're trusting the Lord."

Lance said he was struck by the simple response, "We're at peace with this."

"I used to talk about being out of my comfort zone but now I often say, 'I have peace with this,'" he said.

Lance also noted that John 20:21 is John's version of the Great Commission.

"The Father sent Jesus and now (See 'We're sent,' page 6)

Coming next week...

Faith and Family

Helping students
with college/vocational **decisions**



COMMENT

Not a Mediocre Message

How will we ever win a lost world with mediocre faith like that?" That is a question a former International Mission Board (IMB) leader frequently asked himself after speaking in Southern Baptist churches across the nation. As he boarded airplanes for flights back to Richmond, Virginia, after speaking about the needs of a lost world, this IMB leader said he often lamented the vitality of the faith evidenced in the congregations he visited.

Could it be that in many Baptist churches the good news has become old hat, something taken for granted? Could it be that many have lost appreciation for what God has done through Jesus Christ? Is it possible we have forgotten what it was like to be "dead in trespasses and sin" and cannot appreciate being "alive in Christ"?

Has Easter become a holiday when social pressures drive people to church or is Easter a time when the reality of life overcoming death breaks out in joy unspeakable?

Death's victory

After all, Golgotha — the place of the skull — was a testimony to death's victories. But when Jesus died on Calvary's cross, He destroyed death on its own territory. He transformed a place of doom into a place where victory is celebrated — His victory and victory for all who believe on the name of the one and only Son of God.

You know the story. God fashioned humanity for a special trusting relationship — a shared experience of fellowship described in the Bible as set in the Garden of Eden. That special trusting relationship is why every person still has an inner-yearning for God.

But Adam wanted to "be like God" and refused to trust Him. Adam's disobedience was sin and sin became a barrier between God and mankind. No matter how hard one struggles, sin makes it impossible to get back to Eden.

Despite this sinful disobedience, "God so loved the world." His love was sacrificial,



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

self-giving, suffering love. The Greek word describing this kind of love is "agape," implying love for the good of the other. What humanity could not do for itself, God did.

It was not man's searching that caused God to give "His one and only Son," it was God's love. God had loved through covenants, through prophets, through kings, through supernatural watchcare, yet His love was not returned.

Still God offered His ultimate self-revelation through His Son, Jesus, described by the apostle John as "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

People could see "His glory, the glory of the one and only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth," John says, but they did not believe. Sin that separated them from God blinded them to God's initiative.

In a frenzy of evil Jesus was nailed to a cross, crucified as a criminal. None of humanity's rebellion surprised God. Centuries earlier the prophet Isaiah had written of the promised Messiah that "He was numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12).

Every Jewish man would do his utmost to avoid death on a cross for the Jewish law teaches that one who dies on a tree is cursed. That Jesus never tried to save Himself was later called a "stumbling block" for the Jews.

Listen to the priests and rabbis mock Jesus with taunts of "He saved others but He can't save Himself." What a mistake to judge only on the present. From the beginning of His ministry Jesus said He came to "give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).

In Gethsemane when Peter tried to protect Jesus from the arresting mob, Jesus told Peter He could call 12 legions of angels if He desired. But Jesus did not. He would not. Had Jesus chosen to save Himself the tradition of

Adam would have continued and there would be no salvation.

Jesus would not save Himself because through His death the righteousness of God would be vindicated and the price of sin paid. Jesus would become a curse for us (Gal. 3:13) that all who believe on Him might be freed from the curse of sin and death.

What the Jewish leaders called weakness in reality was the Power of God unto salvation. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Perhaps the priests and rabbis should have said "He saved others. Surely He can save Himself." That is what happened. Jesus did not save Himself from physical death. To do so would have failed to fulfill the Father's purpose. Jesus died on Calvary's cross but three days later the power of God raised Him to new life just as Jesus had promised (John 2:19).

The power of God would not let the pangs of death defeat His one and only Son and God promises that death will not defeat those who believe in Jesus. Jesus paid the price for sin that believers might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21).

Jesus said, "Whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24). The way of Adam inevitably leads to death but

"the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

Joy and celebration

What a wonderful message. Those who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord have passed from death to life. "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17). That is cause for joy and celebration. Though once lost, believers have now been found. Though once dead, believers now live in the power of God.

Is that a mediocre message? No. It is the message of salvation.

And that is the message the Church takes to the world. God commissioned the Church, the body of Christ, to continue His divine initiative in Jesus Christ. Our faith in Jesus may be personal but it is not selfish. As believers in Jesus Christ we join Christians through the centuries to say to all, "believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." †

***"As believers in
Jesus Christ we join
Christians through
the centuries to say
to all, 'believe on the
name of the Lord
Jesus Christ and you
shall be saved.'"***

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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

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'Equal dignity before God'

Panelists offer pathway to dialogue, harmony at racial reconciliation conference

By Jack Brymer

Public relations assistant, Samford University

Birmingham is a far cry from the past," Mayor William A. Bell told participants in a national conference on racial reconciliation March 3-4. "Come and see how hope can make a difference."

But even with the progress made since the historic Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, bombing in 1963, there is more work to do, according to Bell, Bishop Robert J. Baker of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham and Dean Timothy George of Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham. The three leaders hosted the conference, "Black and White in America: How Deep the Divide," held at Beeson. The conference also included a prayer service at Beeson and a reception at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.

"In the wake of recent racial turmoil in our country and having experienced much anguish over racial issues in our city of Birmingham we want to offer a possible pathway to dialogue and harmony for the future," the hosts said. "A reflection/conversation on race relations in the United States among its African-American and white citizens is our humble effort to foster light and hope where darkness and despair may prevail."

Bell called Birmingham ground zero in civil rights and described what it was like growing up in a segregated society.

"That's the way it was," he said, noting that the majority, both black and white, remained silent during the time.

However, the bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist, where four young girls were killed, was heard around the world and events such as the bus boycott in Montgomery brought people together allowing changes to be made, Bell said. "We turned it around," he said, suggesting that the young people today "do not know what we went through to get here."

Also speaking during the conference was Carolyn Maull McKinstry, who was 14 years old and part of the Sixteenth Street Baptist congregation when the bombing happened. The young victims were her friends.

McKinstry, author of "While the World Watched," told of her experiences as a victim of racism, including watching her grandmother die in the basement of a hospital because blacks were not treated there.

'A great divide'

"Racism has created a great divide among us and for the most part is unchanged," she warned. "If it is not confronted, it will destroy us."

A member of the board of overseers at Samford, McKinstry is an international lecturer on reconciliation and shares how her experience growing up in Birmingham led her to deal with reconciliation.



Photo by Caroline Summers

Samford University professor S. Jonathan Bass (left) moderated a panel discussion at 'Black and White in America: How Deep the Divide,' with guest speakers (l to r): Judge Helen Shores Lee; Mayor William A. Bell; police chief A.C. Roper; former mayor of Charleston, South Carolina, Joseph P. Riley Jr.; and Attorney General Luther Strange.

Two Birmingham-area pastors, Michael Moore and James Lowe, added that repentance must happen before reconciliation can take place. They maintained that both the offended and the offender must repent if true reconciliation is to take place.

Joseph P. Riley Jr., former long-time mayor of Charleston, South Carolina, shared with conference participants how building relationships in advance of tragedy is the key to a successful relationship between races.

Building relationships

"Like a thief in the night, disaster catches you where you are," he said, suggesting that was the reason the city was spared violence the night nine people were shot "holding their Bibles in church," referencing a June 17, 2015, shooting.

He told of several initiatives the city has taken to build relationships in government and the city, including the International African-American Museum in historic DeReef Park in Charleston, "a place which allows for healing and to better understand who we are."

Birmingham Police Chief A.C. Roper participated in a panel discussion on civic leadership moderated by S. Jonathan Bass, Samford professor and university Historian.

Roper suggested there is an over-reliance on police officers because of the failure of other community services. "Trust is hard to build up but easy to destroy," he said. "You've got to work together."

Birmingham Judge Helen Shores Lee also was on the panel and stressed the importance of being "physically" involved.

A veteran of the civil rights struggle, she

told of her home being bombed and how that didn't stop her from being involved in her community.

"Always give back to your community," she said, claiming institutional racism is still rampant, especially in courtrooms. "You've got to know history and get involved in your community," she said.

Also speaking to conference participants was Edward K. Braxton, Catholic bishop of Belleville, Illinois, who addressed the Black Lives Movement and the emphasis on the term "minority."

"Scripture teaches that in Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, slave nor free, male nor female, neither north nor south, east nor west," he said. "All are redeemed sinners transformed by Christ ... with equal dignity before God."

Christ redeemed all

"Before God, there is no racial divide because the life, teachings, wondrous signs, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ and His Pentecost gift of the Holy Spirit has redeemed all," Braxton said, suggesting that the Church and media eliminate the term "minority" from their vocabulary.

Pray, learn, think and then act, he added. A second panel included religious leaders from Christian, Jewish and Islamic faiths and dealt with healing and harmony as reconcilers and was moderated by Fisher Humphreys, professor emeritus at Beeson.

Other speakers at the conference included Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange; Wayne Flynt, a professor emeritus at Auburn University; and Anthony Obinna, Catholic archbishop of Owerri, Nigeria. †

'Incomparable to Alabama'

AUM report on gambling dubbed 'unreliable, specious' by UNA professor

By Martha Simmons
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When Auburn University at Montgomery (AUM) released a report in April 2015 predicting a big win for state coffers if new forms of gambling are legalized in Alabama, pro-gambling interests were elated. Now, however, an economics professor at the University of North Alabama in Florence is giving the report an "F."

In a review for the Alabama Policy Institute published March 10, Keith D. Malone slammed AUM's "Assessment of Lottery and Gaming Programs Across the United States," citing it as "unsophisticated," "unreliable," "specious" and demonstrating a lack of rigor and diligence, among other criticisms.

"The findings of the AUM report are scientifically unsound and incapable of intelligently informing policymakers or the public as to the implications of legalizing gambling or adopting a lottery in the state of Alabama," Malone wrote in his "A Review of the AUM Report on the Legalization of Gambling in Alabama."

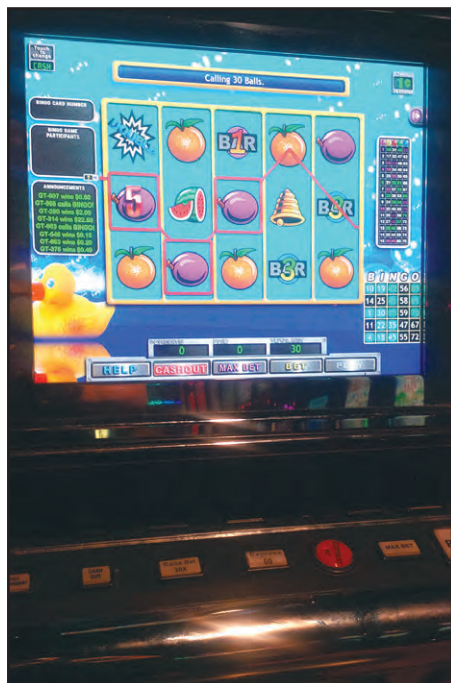


Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

If passed, SB340 (Sen. Bobby Singleton) and HB419 (Rep. A.J. McCampbell) would legalize electronic gambling in Greene County.

The AUM report was commissioned by Alabama Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh and prepared by the university's Institute for Accountability and Government Efficiency (IAGE). Marsh released the report in 2015 while the state Legislature was considering a number of gambling proposals, including a bill to help fund Medicaid with a state lottery.



MARSH

Asked by *The Alabama Baptist* for Marsh's response to Malone's review, spokesman William Califf referred questions to Cathy Crabtree at AUM, who authored the report along with Suman Majumdar and Jeff Blancett.

Crabtree did not return a call seeking comment but AUM spokeswoman Marla Vickers said, "Although an issue can be examined using various different levels of analytical techniques, both Dr. Malone and the IAGE found that a lottery would be of monetary benefit to the state. While we certainly respect the opinion of Dr. Malone, we stand by our work."

Marsh spokesman Califf added, "With respect to the legislation, as you may know, Sen. Marsh has decided not to pursue any type of gaming legislation this session."

But in the midst of budget debates in the 2015 legislative session Marsh and other gambling proponents hailed the AUM report as proof that gambling would salvage the state's economy by pumping in \$400 million in new revenue, creating 11,000 new jobs, and having annual economic impact of \$1.2 billion.

That's nonsense, according to Malone, who contends the numbers resulted from "unsophisticated analysis that render it scientifically unsound."

Review of the AUM report

Malone said his review of the AUM report is not intended to rewrite or correct it but to point out its "defects," chief among them its brevity and lack of depth: The entire document is 15 pages long with only 12 pages of substantive information and Alabama-specific information occupying only three pages. By contrast a similar project conducted for the Florida Legislature in 2013 weighed in at more than 700 pages.

Noting that Alabama is 1 of only 6 states without a lottery, the AUM report reviewed the percentage breakdown for lottery prizes, administrative costs and



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Greentrack Inc., a casino-style gambling complex in Eutaw that includes electronic bingo and dog racing, has remained open even though electronic bingo gambling is illegal in Alabama. Legislators are currently attempting to legalize it in the area.

tax revenue from lotteries in five adjacent and nearby southern states — Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana and Tennessee — as well as the U.S. average for all states with lotteries. Malone's review criticizes the AUM report for failing to examine its own data revealing annual increases in administrative costs of up to 175 percent in those five southern lotteries in just two years, while revenues and prize payouts typically fell.

Numbers didn't add up

The AUM report was broadly circulated "and repeated uncritically in the media," Malone said.

The Alabama Baptist, however, refuted the report's conclusions shortly after it was released, asserting that its numbers simply didn't add up. The AUM report projected \$331.7 million in annual revenue for a state-run lottery in Alabama, but *The Alabama Baptist* figured the number would be more like \$272 million.

Malone projects the state would realize even less — \$133.7 million to \$249.1 million, depending on which state Alabama is compared. Studies show that interest and participation in gambling vary widely from one state or region to another, Malone noted.

To arrive at projections for casino-style gambling in Alabama's four slot machine-style bingo casinos, the AUM report based its findings on 11 states, with Mississippi being the only southern state included, even though Florida and Louisiana both allow casino gambling in land-based or riverboat casinos. "It is self-evident that Nevada — home of Las Vegas and hundreds of casinos that col-

lectively bring in nearly \$1 billion per month — is incomparable to Alabama," Malone wrote.

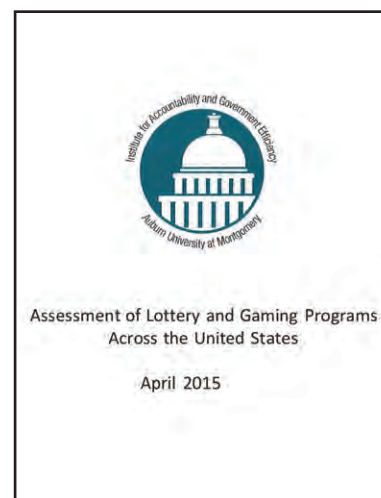
He added that AUM cited a single study as its source for figuring potential annual revenue, but that the report's authors "have not responded to requests to explain the provenance of this study, which is proprietary and not publicly available." As a result, Malone said, "All predictions in the AUM report with regard to casinos in Alabama are suspect or unsound."

Yet another problem with the AUM report, Malone said, is that the projected numbers are for gross tax collections, not net tax collections. "This is important because gross tax collections do not reflect the 'cannibalization' of existing tax revenue as Alabama residents redirect spending from current uses to gambling — from grocery stores to gambling halls, so to speak — an effect also known as 'spending displacement,'" Malone said.

Moreover, the AUM study fails to address the social implications of gambling, which "can turn net changes in tax revenue from positive to negative."

Bottom line, Malone indicated, the AUM report isn't worth the 15 pages it's written on.

"Public policy based on unsound premises is inevitably bad public policy — and can have extremely harmful consequences," Malone wrote. "Making sound, reliable policy decisions requires comprehensively and rigorously considering the implications of those policy decisions. To that end, the AUM report is of essentially no value to Alabama policymakers." ❖



Pictured here: Auburn University at Montgomery's front page of the report released in April 2015.



KINGDOM IMPACT

TBFA helps Alabama Baptists make lasting impact through estate planning

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Baptists are among the most generous believers in Baptist life, but in many cases, that generosity ceases when a giver dies. The message of The Baptist Foundation of Alabama (TBFA) is that a Kingdom-focused estate plan is a final act of stewardship that has lasting impact.

Barry Bledsoe, TBFA president, uses a penny jar analogy to illustrate the possibilities. The average American's net worth is 10 percent cash (the small jar) and 90 percent non-cash (the big jar), tied up in assets like real estate, financial investments and insurance, Bledsoe said. Only 4 percent of gifts to the Church come from those big-jar assets, which are often liquidated and distributed after an individual's death as inheritance gifts. The Church rarely receives a portion of that inheritance.

"There are many strong believers who are good stewards for the Kingdom who have never thought about that," Bledsoe said. "As a body of believers, the majority of us have ignored the big jar. But if you conclude that the Bible says God owns everything, that doesn't include just the small jar — it includes everything. We're either giving our resources to Kingdom work or we're passing them on to the next generation to steward them."

Helping Alabama Baptists consider the potential impact of the big jar is the mission of TBFA. Through the foundation's Legacy Ministry, Bledsoe and his staff are working to equip pastors and churches to help church members make an estate plan through the lens of biblical stewardship.

"Pastors are the gatekeepers," Bledsoe said. "We would love for every single pastor in Alabama to take advantage of the es-

tate planning service we offer free to each of them. We want them to see the value of this personally and for those who want to honor the Lord through their estate plan, to see the value of this as an act of stewardship."

In turn, Bledsoe hopes pastors who have a good experience with the process will encourage their church members to learn more too. Once people learn about the possibilities for legacy giving, many volunteer to learn more, he said.



BLEDSOE

That's what happened with James and Jerilyn Smith, of Dadeville. James Smith serves as director of missions for Tallapoosa Baptist Association and his wife is the associational ministry assistant. Their ministry history also includes time spent overseas with the International Mission Board (IMB).

The couple made a will prior to leaving for the missions field and then updated the document a few years later using a home computer software program. Jerilyn Smith said she was never certain that the will they did on their own would be recognized as legal, so when she and her husband heard about TBFA's Legacy Ministry, the opportunity made sense.

'Peace of mind'

"It gave us peace of mind to have our wills done professionally and to get advice on how to best take care of our assets and our children the way we wanted to," she said. "We really appreciated that they were able to show us ways that the ministries we wanted to remember could get the most benefit from our gift without paying unnecessary taxes, which also preserved more for our kids and benefitted them as well."

Jerilyn Smith said she also appreciated that Philanthrocorp, the estate planning organization that assists TBFA clients with

planning services, did not try to direct them toward any specific ministries or amounts. Instead the estate specialist from Philanthrocorp guided them through the process by asking and answering questions and allowing them time to think about each decision along the way.

Bryon Swanson, an estate specialist with Philanthrocorp, said the mission of his organization is to get at the heart of what the family wants to accomplish in an estate plan and then provide them the resources to get their documents in order.

'Expertise of the tools'

"We have the expertise of the tools and rules of estate planning, so we help our clients formulate what best sets their children up for success and, if they choose, meet their baseline desire to do something for ministry," Swanson said.

Philanthrocorp estate specialists bring ideas to the table and help clients gain an understanding of what is possible, Swanson said. There is no deadline, so clients have time to think about each step of the process.

"Typically we have a few conversations scheduled at the pace of the client's family. We make it simple by having conversations and chopping it up into pieces that are easy to accomplish. Then everything we discuss gets followed up in writing," Swanson said. "What it boils down to is removing the anxiety out of the process and making what many people consider to be a complex process simple."

The Legacy Ministry has become a focus of TBFA because the management of legacy gifts is the other major role the foundation plays in Alabama Baptist life,

Bledsoe said. Directed legacy gifts from Alabama Baptists fund a variety of Baptist entities, churches and cemeteries. Gifts also fund the foundation's elder care ministry, which assists approximately 80 seniors in the state, as well as several annual scholarships.

The foundation awards more than \$800,000 in scholarships each year primarily, though not exclusively, to students studying at Baptist schools, Bledsoe said. He noted one scholarship that is for engineering students at Auburn University and others that are for nurses attending any college. Another major scholarship program helps people who want to be "world changers for Christ" by getting a law degree or master's degree in business. Regardless of the purpose of the gift, TBFA is committed to managing the assets in a way that honors both the giver and the Lord.

"Through the years, Alabama Baptists have passed on and have left gifts dedicated for the purposes that were near and dear to them," Bledsoe said. "We are passionate about serving them well as we administer their gifts and take care of their trust in a God-honoring way." ✝



"What it boils down to is removing the anxiety out of the process and making what many people consider to be a complex process simple."

Bryon Swanson
estate specialist, Philanthrocorp

Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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

BESSEMER

► **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will host 33 A.D. and Crimsoned Stain in concert April 1. Doors will open at 6 p.m. for food and fellowship and music will start at 7. Door prizes will be offered. Donations are accepted for food and a love offering will be taken. Scott Bush is pastor.

BETHEL

► **Nanafalia Church** will celebrate homecoming April 10, 10:30 a.m. Tom Rogers, pastor of Mount Zion Church, Trenton, South Carolina, will speak. A lunch will follow in the fellowship hall. Craig Gavin is pastor.

CLARKE

► **Thomasville Church** will take a group to the Mitchell Center in Mobile to participate in "Living Proof Live" with Beth Moore and Travis Cottrell on Aug. 26-27. The deadline to register for the trip is March 31. To register call the church at 334-636-4409. Ty Parten is pastor. ► **Ulcunush Church, Coffeenville**, has started planning for its 200th anniversary celebration in October 2017. The church is seeking history, information and memorabilia. If you have anything that may be of interest — paper artifacts, photos, videos or just a special story about the church — contact

Melodye Hooper at 251-589-2236 or hooperm2@yahoo.com. Any items submitted will be guarded and promptly returned. Jesse Griffith is pastor.

COFFEE

► **Cool Springs Church, Enterprise**, will host Danny Funderburk in concert April 2, 6 p.m. A love offering will be received. For more information call Pastor Bryan Simoneaux at 334-447-9114. ► **First Church, Enterprise**, will hold a Ladies Power Lunch on March 31, 12-1 p.m. Kristy Mazariegos will speak on "Growing Up as a Missionary Child." For more information and to register call the church office at 334-393-5683. Reservations are due by March 29. Ben Bowden is pastor.

COLUMBIA

► **Bethel Church, Dothan**, will celebrate its 125th anniversary April 17, 10:15 a.m. Craig Conner will speak. Tim Hall will lead special music. A covered dish lunch will immediately follow the service. For more information call 334-792-5908 or visit www.bbdothan.org. Ricky Plummer is pastor.

ELMORE

► **Pleasant Hill Church, Eclectic**, will celebrate home-

coming April 10. Sunday School will be at 9:30 a.m. and the service will begin at 10:30 a.m. The Joymasters from Canton, Georgia, will provide special music. A lunch will follow the service. Everyone is invited to attend. Vaughan Gardner is pastor.

GENEVA

► **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will host its 39er's C.L.U.B. luncheon April 12, 11 a.m. Dicky McAllister, Geneva Association director of missions, will be the guest speaker. Register by April 5. For more information and reservations call 334-684-9617.

LIMESTONE

► **Clements Church, Athens**, will hold revival services April 3-6. Services begin on Sunday at 9:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. and Monday-Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. Bob Pitman, founder of Bob Pitman Ministries in Muscle Shoals, will be the guest speaker. Tim Anderson is pastor.

MORGAN

► **Fellowship Church, Decatur**, will host a Ladies Conference on April 16, from 10 a.m. to noon. Lunch will be provided. Susan Layton will speak. Martin Poe is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Duncanville Church** will hold revival services April 3-6. Sunday services will be held at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday-Wednesday services will be 6:30 nightly. Bo Shedd will be guest speaker. Ray Hallman is pastor. †

'We're sent to do the Father's work'

(continued from page 1)

He sent His disciples into the world," Lance said. "The old adage is true that we're saved to serve. We're sent to do the Father's work. (Sending) is a principle we're going to talk much about this year in our convention ministries. It strengthens us in our work to know we've been sent."

And with believers along the journey is the Holy Spirit, Lance added.

"The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament seemed to be given for temporary challenges but in the New Testament, He's promised to be permanently with the people of God," he said. "The presence of Christ through His Holy Spirit is the source of our power." †

Someone You Should Know

By Pastor Harvey Earls, Bethel Baptist Church, Robertsdale

Ford Hedden



HEDDEN

*Bethel Baptist Church, Robertsdale
Baldwin Baptist Association*

FAVORITE VERSE: John 3:16

FAVORITE HYMN: "Beulah Land"

HOBBIES: Hunting and fishing (used to)

FAMILY STATUS: Married to Jane since 1954, five children, 14 grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren

Ford Hedden, 94, joined Bethel Baptist Church, Robertsdale, the first service in which letters were accepted, all the way back in 1941. That means he has seen and served with every single pastor of Bethel Baptist, which celebrates 75 years in April. That's 21 pastors total, including the interims. Despite serving so long and with so many pastors, Bro. Ford and his family are a wonderful and supportive family of Bethel. I'm blessed to serve with them and I particularly enjoy his kindness and his sense of humor. We could use more folks like Bro. Ford.

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

A: Bro. Broyles (Bethel's first and founding pastor) had a lot to do with that. We used to go to Robertsdale where he was the junior Royal Ambassadors leader and he influenced me a lot.

Q: When and how were you led into serving in ministry?

A: My family was always going to church. We moved to the area in 1939. There wasn't yet a church but one was in the process. I first taught a junior boys class and since then I've done everything except for being the treasurer and being the secretary.

Q: What does the ministry demand?

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.

A: Serving in ministry required a lot of studying, a lot of time and a lot of commitment. And I had to behave myself.

Q: What do you get from serving God?

A: It has completed my life. Without working for God in the church, there wouldn't be much left. Serving God in our church had a lot to do with my marriage and family life as well, as they were all in the church with me.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: It'd be easier to say, "How we supported them." They were always there to support each other in many ways.

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

A: I may not be able to do much from now on but I'm able to pray and I'm able to tithe, two things I've done before I even started going to church.

Q: What difference has serving at Bethel made in my life?

A: Ever since Bethel has been there, I've been going. There was nowhere to go before Bethel. From starting in those early brush arbor services, all the way until today, the church has helped reach many but not all of our community. Bethel has made a lot of difference and continues to do so. †

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Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Knowing God

God Is Merciful and Gracious

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

God's attributes or characteristics are numerous. Who can fully describe God who is infinite? Of His multifaceted attributes, Theology 101 draws our attention this week to His mercy and grace. Last week we took note of how God introduced Himself to Moses with the reminder that said, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious" (Ex. 34:6). That God is both merciful and gracious also finds expression in the New Testament. The doxology that begins 2 Corinthians addresses God as "the Father of mercies" (2 Cor. 1:3). The closing verses of 1 Peter term God "the God of all grace" (1 Pet. 5:10). There is plurality to God's mercy ("mercies") and comprehensiveness to His grace ("all grace").

When we think about divine love, as well as divine mercy and grace, we often struggle to distinguish any one of these three from the other two. It is almost like we can use these terms interchangeably to express truth about God. One way to make a distinction is to see love as basic to God's nature but which manifests itself in mercy and grace. In this way we might say that God's mercy and grace are manifestations of His love in action. A familiar hymn speaks of His love that "drew salvation's plan" before reminding us of His grace "that brought it down to man."

But what can we say to distinguish between mercy and grace? A formal distinction between mercy and grace is difficult to discern. It seems the Bible often uses these terms interchangeably. Multiple passages in both testaments refer to these two divine attributes as almost synonymous. Even so, at the risk of being too restrictive and indulging in over-simplification, we might draw a distinction by thinking of mercy as God's love withholding from us the bad that we deserve. Similarly we might think of His grace as love bestowing upon us

the good that we do not deserve.

Looking at God's mercy in this manner would be to say that mercy is the shielding dimension of His love. This suggests that a kind of hiddenness attaches to mercy. Since mercy prevents the bad and disastrous happening to us we cannot fully know what might have been except for God's preventive love — the accident that could have been but wasn't, the disease that could have struck but didn't, the loss that might have occurred but didn't, the sadness that might have befallen but was spared and uncounted other ills that God's mercy has kept at bay. Furthermore we might say that mercy is the tempering dimension of God's love. Even when misfortunes befall us we can usually say, "But for divine mercy, it could have been worse."

We are undeserving

When we think about God's grace as His love bestowing good things we do not deserve, we should remember that we are not blessed because of our goodness but because of His grace. Who deserves to have sins forgiven, membership in God's family, giftedness for His service or life's basic necessities provided to us? Who deserves to enjoy the fellowship of the family of God in time and in eternity or to have prayers answered or a home in heaven when we die? We are what we are and have what we have because of the grace of God. The reminder in 1 Corinthians 4:7 is worthy of pondering, "What do you have that you did not receive?" †

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.



Alabama Baptist DR teams deploy to assist Louisiana in 'epic flooding'

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (DR) is no stranger to catastrophe and volunteers know the importance of having ample support when a flood, tornado, hurricane, earthquake or fire strikes. Alabama volunteers were called on by Southern Baptist DR Logistics to assist in the Monroe area of northeast Louisiana after nearly 5,000 homes had been damaged by floodwaters and President Barack Obama declared it a "major disaster" March 13.

Alabama DR cleanup and recovery teams worked alongside teams from Louisiana, Oklahoma, Missouri, Georgia and South Carolina.

DR assessments

At press time, floodwaters were receding and DR assessments were being made to connect volunteers with the needs.

Mel Johnson, DR strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said, "I have communicated with other state disaster relief directors and with Louisiana leadership to coordinate what may well prove to be a lengthy response effort for what has been labeled as epic flooding across the state."



Photo courtesy of Mel Johnson

More than 5,000 homes were damaged by floodwaters in Louisiana in mid-March. Alabama DR teams have been deployed to assist residents.

The Chilton Baptist Association DR team deployed early March 16 to assist in hands-on training and provide direction "for a community overwhelmed," Johnson said.

One shower and one laundry unit deployed March 17 and will remain in operation for the foreseeable future to support teams and residents.

Additional teams, from Baldwin, Cleburne and St. Clair Baptist associations, were systematically dispatched March 18. Eight additional teams will then be dispatched as part of a rotational schedule for continued response.

"Please take a moment and pray as Alabama responds to assist our neighbors in an effort to bring help, healing and hope for families in crisis," Johnson said. (TAB)

Kathy Litton shares at Minister's Wives Luncheon



Love your husband

Photo by Debbie Campbell

Kathy Litton, wife of Pastor Ed Litton of Redemption Church, Mobile, shared during the Minister's Wives Luncheon at the State Evangelism Conference in Montgomery in late February. The luncheon was sponsored by Alabama Woman's Missionary Union. She told participants, "The biggest footprint we leave in our marriage is to love our husbands." Litton, who serves as national consultant for Ministry to Pastors' Wives of the North American Mission Board, said wives can love and encourage their husbands by giving him courage; helping quiet his fears about himself; speaking in love even in conflict; giving him a place to be vulnerable; loving him despite his performance; and drawing him into emotional, physical and spiritual intimacy. About 92 ladies participated in the event.



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Can Christians with different views unite?

Coptic Orthodox Bishop Angaelos recently reached out to the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), saying what the two groups have in common “far, far exceeds” their differences.

Angaelos met with NAE board members in Washington to explain the recent “genocide” in the Middle East, including the 2015 beheading of 21 Copts by Islamic state extremists in Libya.

“They were not killed for any other reason but they were Christians,” Angaelos said of the martyrs March 10, calling attention to religious persecution of people of many faiths in order to build bridges between evangelicals and the Coptic Orthodox faith.

The Coptic Orthodox Church is the largest Christian denomination in the Middle East, with some 13 million adherents in Egypt. Angaelos told the NAE board that the Coptic Church’s roots include the creation of the Nicene Creed, still recited across Christian denominations today.

In order to further bond the two groups, Angaelos co-founded the Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative after attending a 2010 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization. He is planning the fourth international meeting in Ethiopia to foster understanding and reconciliation between evangelicals and the Orthodox.

‘One body of Christ’

“I want to challenge you as sisters and brothers today to look at the body of Christ as the body of Christ,” he told NAE board members. “The body does not have an East and a West. It’s one body, one body of Christ.”

“There is a view ... by some evangelicals that Orthodoxy is old and antiquated and needless and by some Orthodox that evangelicalism is too new and hollow and without foundation. So it’s a matter of bringing people together and saying, ‘Well, we do things differently but we need to respect that difference.’”

NAE President Leith Anderson was among the leaders who welcomed Angaelos to the board meeting.

“Bishop Angaelos powerfully presents the cause of our fellow Christians,” he said. “We thank God for the amazing faith of Christians in the Middle East who face martyrdom and other persecutions and remain faithful. They bless and challenge us.”

(RNS, TAB)

in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders, friends

Corry M. Hutchens

Former Alabama Bivocational Minister of Year dies

Corry M. Hutchens, former Alabama Bivocational Minister of the Year, died March 12. He was 90.

A graduate of Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham and the University of Alabama, Hutchens served Alabama public schools as a teacher, counselor and later Alabama State Department of Education official. He also served as a bivocational pastor at many churches including Corona Baptist Church, Oakman; Steep Creek Baptist Church, Hope Hull; Letohatchee Baptist Church; and Mount Moriah Baptist Church, Tuscumbia. Samford named him Alabama Bivocational Minister of the Year in 1989.



HUTCHENS

He is survived by his wife, Virginia; four children; nine grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. (TAB)

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

First Baptist Church, Cherokee, Alabama, is accepting resumés for a full-time pastor. Send resumés to the church office. Email to: secretary@firstbaptistcherokee.org. 256-359-4325.

MINISTER OF MUSIC & EDUCATION

Union Hill Baptist, Oneonta, is seeking a full-time worship leader for a growing fellowship with two blended Sunday morning services. Educational experience should include small group ministry and discipleship for all ages. Please submit resumés to: 2919 Co. Hwy. 39, Oneonta, AL 35121. 205-274-9232. bbarnett@otelco.net.

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 resumé to: secretary@nbcbbaptist.com.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC

Turnerville Baptist Church, Mobile County. Contact Bro. Jason Meaux at jmeaux@turnerville-baptist.org.

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 resumés to: jlautz@cablone.net or mail to: First Baptist Church, ATTN: Minister of Students Search, P.O. Box 829, Columbus, MS 39703. Please submit resumés 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 resumés at: P.O. Box 400, Alexander City, AL 35011. 256-234-6351. spsc@fbc-ac.org.

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 resumés to: Mount Zion Baptist Church, ATTN: Search Chair, 228 Mount Zion Rd., Huntsville, AL 35806, or mzbcsearchchair@gmail.com.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The Calhoun Baptist Association requests resumés for the position of director of missions. Please send your resumé to: ATTN: DOM Search Committee, CBA, 1130 Woodstock Ave., Anniston, AL 36207.

WEEKDAY EDUCATION PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Valley View Baptist Church is seeking a full-time weekday education program director. Submit resumé/questions to: jennifer.freind@valleyviewbaptist.com. The deadline for resumés is April 6.

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Want to know GOD?

By Jenni Ingram
Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

I am but one woman who has given my heart and life to Christ. I put aside my excuses, my rebellion and my holier-than-thou attitude and surrendered to Jesus Christ. I came to Him so sinful, living a dirty life given to excessive drinking, promiscuity, lying, foolish decisions — you name it and I felt guilty of it. I believed the lies the enemy put in my head like I had to clean up my life before Jesus would want me. I believed I had plenty of time. I believed I had no gifts that Jesus would want.

Oh boy, was I wrong. I wore a cloak of my sin and guilt that was so heavy I felt like I was suffocating. Then one night God took charge. God spoke to me through a Bible study and He told me that I would never be “good” or “clean” enough but that Jesus would justify me. The next time I went to church the message was about us running out of time. Finally I was talking to my husband and my neighbor one night and I was convinced that once I gave Jesus my life, He would use me and give me the gifts I needed. We talked for hours and I was told how Jesus would take the sinful and make a new creation in Christ. That He would cast my sins as far as the east was from the west and He would remember them no more.

The night I surrendered to Jesus I literally cried my broken heart out to Jesus while sitting at my computer desk. I went to my knees and let Jesus into my broken heart bawling with great, gulping sobs. I begged God to forgive me.

I realized the cloak of sin that was so heavy was gone. I felt refreshed, new and expectant. It's not easy living as a child of God but I am so much happier and more secure than I ever was before my salvation. Don't you want to know Him? To know that your salvation is secured and that your eternity will be in heaven with the Father? To know His perfect peace, His love and His salvation? I pray you do. †

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JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson College's 'Blessed Light' Campaign Continues to Raise Funds:** "Blessed Light — The Campaign for Judson College" has raised more than \$9.4 million in gifts and pledges to date toward a campaign base goal of \$13,050,000, according to Terry Morgan, vice president for institutional advancement at Judson College in Marion. Goals for the campaign include improving facilities, strengthening endowments and academic programs, providing operational support and reducing capital debt.

The campaign recently kicked off a second campaign, the Judson Area Campaign. The Judson Area Campaign challenge goal of \$200,000 has already been surpassed and a new goal of \$300,000 has been set.

Projects that have already been completed through "Blessed Light" gifts include the addition of lights in the Dunkin Athletic Park, the building of an education facility at the Piper Equine Center and the renovation of the freshman residence hall.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **University of Mobile Adds Competitive Cheer, Athletic Scholarship:** The University of Mobile (UMobile) announced the addition of coed competitive cheerleading for the 2016-17 sea-

son and the promotion of Kami Whiteis to head coach of the new varsity sport.

UMobile is currently recruiting male and female athletes with scholarships available to all participants, including mascots. Tryouts will be held April 29-30. For more information, visit www.umobilerams.com, call 251-442-2595 or email Whiteis at kwhiteis@umobile.edu.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Eddie Miller Named Advancement Officer for Samford's Brock School of Business:**

Samford University alumnus and Birmingham business executive Eddie Miller has been named advancement officer for Samford's Brock School of Business.

Before accepting the position Miller served on Samford's board of overseers, the Samford athletics foundation and the Brock School of Business advisory board. He has been an executive with Bodine, Inc., and Ladders Up, a nonprofit devoted to training 16-25 year olds to get higher paying jobs. Miller has been a member of the Rotary Club of Birmingham for 35 years and has served on the board of the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, Salvation Army, Cornerstone Schools of Alabama and the Children's Aid Society.



MILLER

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

ISIS murders officially labeled as genocide

The Islamic State's (ISIS) murderous campaign against Christians and other minorities in the Middle East has officially been labeled genocide. The U.S. State Department's declaration provides hope for help in the crisis, according to Southern Baptist and other religious leaders fighting to end the killings.

In his March 17 announcement, Secretary of State John Kerry said it is his judgment that ISIS, also known as Daesh, "is responsible for genocide against

groups in areas under its control, including Yazidis, Christians and Shia Muslims."

ISIS, he said, "is genocidal by self-proclamation, by ideology and by actions — in what it says, what it believes and what it does. Daesh also is responsible for crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing directed at these same groups and in some cases also against Sunni Muslims, Kurds and other minorities."

Kerry's report clears up con-

cern that the State Department might exclude Christians in the genocide label, as reported in the *The Alabama Baptist* on March 10.

'War crimes'

The U.S. House of Representatives also unanimously passed a resolution March 14 that condemned the campaign against Christians and other religious minorities in the Middle East as "crimes against humanity," "war crimes" and "genocide." The resolution called on all governments to do the same.

A 1948 United Nations treaty defines genocide as murder and other acts with the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group."

"Naming these crimes is important," Kerry said. "But what is essential is to stop them. That will require unity in this country and within the countries directly involved."

Religious liberty leaders said support for and protection of religious minorities threatened by or suffering at the hands of ISIS must continue. (BP, TAB)

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THE JIMMIE HALE MISSION

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For March 27

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

RESURRECTED! Luke 24:1-12

An Empty Tomb (1-3)

All four of the Gospels definitively portray Jesus as dead and buried. Luke is clear that these women had followed Joseph of Arimathea to the burial place on Friday, seeing where the tomb was.

While this might seem like unimportant information it is vital to the gospel story. If Jesus was not dead, then He could not have risen from the dead, which is the most important event in history. In fact, many people know this to be true and in an attempt to discredit the resurrection either assert that Jesus never truly died or that He never rose from the dead.

Some actually believe in what is called the "swoon theory," which states that Jesus never really died but just appeared to be dead — after being whipped, hanging on a cross, and getting stabbed in the side with a spear. The coolness of the tomb refreshed Him, after which He removed the large rock in front of the tomb and left.

Conversely there are some today who assert that Jesus really did die but the disciples just hallucinated and thought they all saw the risen Christ at the same time. If these views sound absurd, it is because they are. These excuses are harder to believe than the actual miracle of the resurrection.

Full Disclosure (4-8)

The angels had to clarify for the women that Jesus had been resurrected. Surely this must have been confusing after seeing Him executed and placed in the tomb.

The angels pointed out that Jesus Himself had told them of the resurrection before He was crucified, but the disciples

and Jesus' followers didn't understand.

However, Jesus' resurrection was prophesied long before Jesus Himself. Throughout the Old Testament the resurrection of Jesus was foretold, as Peter demonstrates in Acts 2:24-31.

Complete Amazement (9-12)

The women told the rest of the disciples what they had discovered and Peter went to the tomb to see for himself. It seems obvious from the accounts and from history itself that Jesus rose from the dead.

But why is this the linchpin of the Christian faith? Can someone deny the resurrection of Christ and still be a Christian? What is at stake?

Paul lays this out clearly in 1 Corinthians 15:13-19: "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is without foundation and so is your faith."

"In addition we are found to be false witnesses about God, because we have testified about God that He raised up Christ — whom He did not raise up if in fact the dead are not raised.

"For if the dead are not raised Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

"Therefore those who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone."

This is why it is vital we believe Christ has risen from the dead. If Christ has not been raised from the dead, then our sins have not been forgiven and the power of death has not been defeated.

This is why Easter is so important for Christians and why the resurrection of Christ needs to be preached to all people. †

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

OUR NEED FOR HOPE John 11:17-27

There is a sure hope for resurrection and life after death. (17-24)

Verse 17 provides confirmation of Jesus' supernatural knowledge of Lazarus' death. The elapsed four days underscore the finality of his death. Popular Jewish belief at the time of Jesus held that the soul hovered around the body in the grave for three days after death, hoping to re-enter the body. But after the third day when decay begins, the soul leaves the body for good.

That the process of decay has begun magnifies the marvelous quality of this miracle. There is no doubt that this sign is a genuine resurrection and not a resuscitation (as some might have judged the restorations of Jairus' daughter and the son of the widow of Nain.)

The note of proximity of Bethany to Jerusalem serves three purposes. First it points out how close Jesus now is to Jerusalem, the place where His life is in danger. Second it suggests that the "Jews" referred to in verse 19 have come from Jerusalem, and that a sizable crowd is present. Finally the short distance indicates that the startling news of Lazarus' resurrection could be quickly carried to the angry, threatened enemies of Jesus who would begin right away to plot how they might kill Him.

The Jewish belief in a general resurrection "at the last day" can be traced back in Scripture to Daniel 12:2. Pharisees held to this belief, although the Sadducees denied it. So Martha affirms her belief in one of the orthodox doctrines of her faith.

Jesus offers the hope of a new life now. (25-26a)

In the "I am" statement of verse 25,

Jesus identifies Himself as the Sole Hope of eternal life. The promise of resurrection and life is not lodged in some distant event but is available already in the person of God's Son. By announcing that He is both the Resurrection and the Life, Jesus affirms His sovereignty over the present and future lives of believers.

The focus of verse 25b is the effect believing in Jesus has on a believer's death; the focus of verse 26a is the effect that it has on a believer's life. Indeed "resurrection" and "life" are not synonymous. For Jesus to be the Resurrection means that physical death has no power over believers. Their future is determined by their faith not by death. For Jesus to be the Life means the believer's present also is determined by Jesus' empowering presence as we experience eternal life now.

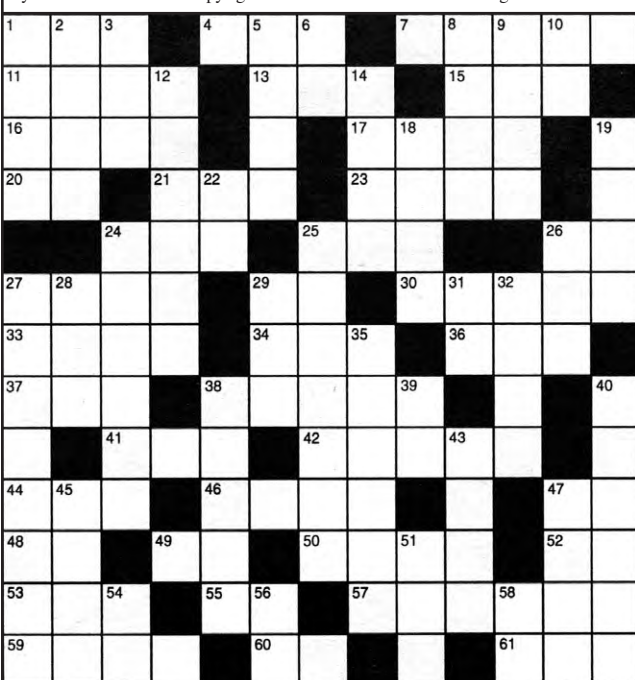
We receive the hope of a new life when we believe and trust in Jesus. (26b-27)

Some suggest that "shall never die" in verse 26 seems to contradict "though he die" in verse 25. It appears that a subtle change in the meaning of "die" occurs here. In verse 25 it seems to mean the experience of physical death, while in verse 26 it carries the sense of spiritual death which lies in the failure to believe. Believers experience the physical reality of death but have been saved from the spiritual death.

Martha's reply to Jesus in verse 27 sounds like a formal creed. Her words are comparable to John 20:31, where the evangelist states the purpose of his writing. Martha's confession also carries similarities to Peter's confession of Jesus found in John 6:69. Little does she know at this point how her formal confession will be brought to life through the raising of her brother. †

Christian Crossword

By Arlene Walker Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- God shall ___ them off. (Ps. 94:23)
- If ___ man serve me. (John 12:26)
- ___ the Lord. (Ex. 12:31)
- Large monkeys.
- Slippery fish.
- Very Important Person. (abbr.)
- There is ___ beside me. (Isa. 45:6)
- That thine eyes may be ___. (2 Chron. 6:20)
- Printer's measures.
- Chew the ___. (Deut. 14:7)
- The ___ of perfectness. (Col. 3:14)
- While the ___ was a preparing. (1 Pet. 3:20)
- New, recent.
- Attorney General. (abbr.)
- A ___ to be born. (Eccles. 3:2)
- Bushel. (abbr.)
- In the seventh year of his ___. (Esther 2:16)
- Form of the word *root*.
- Short form of "umpire."
- An expert.

Down

- Ensign. (abbr.)
- A canopy of plant material.
- From beginning to ___.
- Northern sea duck.
- He was ___ at that saying. (Mark 10:22)
- Paddles used to row a boat.
- Actual weight. (abbr.)
- Pronoun meaning "we."
- Horsepower. (abbr.)
- The sower ___ the grain.
- New England state. (abbr.)
- From the man's ___ God made a woman. (Gen. 2:22)
- Seventh note of musical scale.
- Below.
- Go, return ___ to her mother's house. (Ruth 1:8)
- Square. (abbr.)
- Adam ___ Eve.
- the wood. (Gen. 22:9)
- Lord, thy pound hath gained ___ pounds. (Luke 19:16)
- My God shall supply all your ___. (Phil. 4:19)
- Go ___ into all the world. (Mark 16:15)
- Lord ___ of the sabbath. (Matt. 12:8)
- Outside layer of an orange.
- Vice president. (abbr.)
- His ___ is with the righteous. (Prov. 3:32)
- Lower part of the ear.
- The ___ always with you. (Matt. 26:11)
- Shew me a ___. (Judg. 6:17)
- United Kingdom. (abbr.)
- Entertained.
- Book of Israelites' wilderness wanderings.
- He is of ___. (John 9:21)
- Have ___ in heaven. (Mark 10:21)
- Suffix which means "act" or "condition of."
- Prickly seed case.
- Each. (abbr.)

- Puts frosting on cake.
- Full of deadly ___. (James 3:8)
- Take as one's own child.
- Rural delivery. (abbr.)
- Worthy of his ___. (1 Tim. 5:18)
- Direction of sunrise.
- Largest continent.
- Let all the people say, ___. (Ps. 106:48)
- Marry.
- Before Christ. (abbr.)
- Surely the Lord ___ in this place. (Gen. 28:16)
- Interjection expressing triumph.



BOOKS

WHAT ARE YOU
READING?

123rf.com

Alabama Baptists share about
what they are currently reading

CARRIE BROWN MCWHORTER

The Alabama Baptist

"Told You So" by Kristen Heitzmann

As a college English teacher, I often hear debates about literary fiction versus popular fiction. Unlike some of my colleagues, I generally lean toward the mainstream because I love to get caught up in a good story. That's one reason I enjoyed "Told You So," the latest novel by Christy Award-winning author Kristen Heitzmann.

This contemporary romance introduces readers to Grace, a Southern-born romance novelist whose books encourage courtship, marriage and happily-ever-afters, and Devin, a cynical playwright who values literary structure and scorns happy endings. In the opening line of "Told You So," Grace throws a glass of sweet tea into Devin's face but soon they are pressed into collaborating on a writing project. Their contrasting outlooks create both conflict and cooperation, in writing and in life.

Fans of Heitzmann's fiction know that she writes characters who are flawed, sometimes physically, often spiritually. "Told You So" is no exception. As one character puts it, "Sometimes it's too hard to resist [sin] and sometimes people don't want to." Grace, Devin and the supporting characters in their story make some poor choices and Heitzmann explores the consequences. However, "Told You So" reminds readers that God often uses our brokenness to bring us closer to Him.

JENNIFER DAVIS RASH

The Alabama Baptist and www.rashionalthoughts.com

"Her Way" by Rosalie Hall Hunt

I've never been interested in reading much more than a few paragraphs about how a particular organization or group got its start but Rosalie Hunt's new book "Her Way: The Remarkable Story of Hephzibah Jenkins Townsend" has stretched my interest in this area.

While only a third of the way through the book, I already feel a connection and admiration for the main character. Yes the book certainly achieves the goal of helping share the history of national Woman's Missionary Union because Townsend was founder of the first missionary society in the South but it does so much more. It reminds us that our true strength comes from the Lord and, despite the difficulties life brings, we can all make a difference for the Kingdom.

Hunt showcases a true storytelling ability that has me anxiously awaiting the events described in the next chapter. †

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

Media
reviews

By Martine Bates Sharp

Weathering the Norm:
Thoughts on Ephesians*Hubbard Smith. Bloomington, Ind.: Xlibris, 2014. 67 pp. (Hardback).*

This short book contains the author's thoughts on the book of Ephesians. The author is well schooled in biblical studies, having graduated from Southeastern Bible College in Birmingham with a bachelor's degree in Bible studies. It is obvious that a tremendous amount of research went into the book.

In "Weathering the Norm," Smith emphasizes the relationship between Ephesians and the book of Joshua, maintaining, "Just as the Hebrew warriors were victorious through obedience to the Lord's chosen leader, Joshua, so Ephesians explains how believers can be victorious through God's chosen leader, Joshua."

While the book contains helpful information I found it hard to follow. The organizational structure is obscure and the writing itself unclear at times. After reading a few passages repeatedly I am still confused about what the author was trying to say. I would love to see the book reorganized

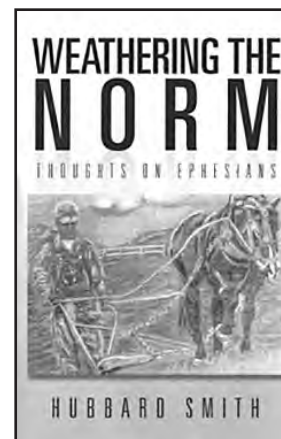
with subject headings within the chapters that correspond to the outline in the front of the book, then rewritten to clarify some of the concepts.

Sweet Morning Glory: 101
Inspirational Poems and
Writings*Patricia Simmons Taylor. Hueytown: Patricia Simmons Taylor, 2014. 144 pp. (Paperback).*

"Sweet Morning Glory" is a sweet little volume. The poems and other writings are divided into eight chapters dealing with issues like the power of love, prayer and peace, inspirational words and my favorite: "The Medicinal Value of Laughter."

Taylor displays humor and grace in the poetry and short essays, although I have to confess that I enjoyed the essays more than the poems, which tended to be a little too regular and predictable for my taste. The essays were snippets from the author's life, rich and interesting, sometimes inspiring.

And a surprise is included in every book — a packet of morning glory seeds. Oh I guess it's not a surprise anymore. Sorry. †



MOVIE REVIEW

By Martine Bates Sharp

90 Minutes
in Heaven*Emmett/Furla/Oasis Films*

There are probably few of us who haven't read — or at least heard of — the book, "90 Minutes in Heaven." Many have heard author Don Piper speak, either in person or on television. When I heard there was a movie, my initial reaction was a big yawn. It had been done to death and I couldn't muster up much interest.

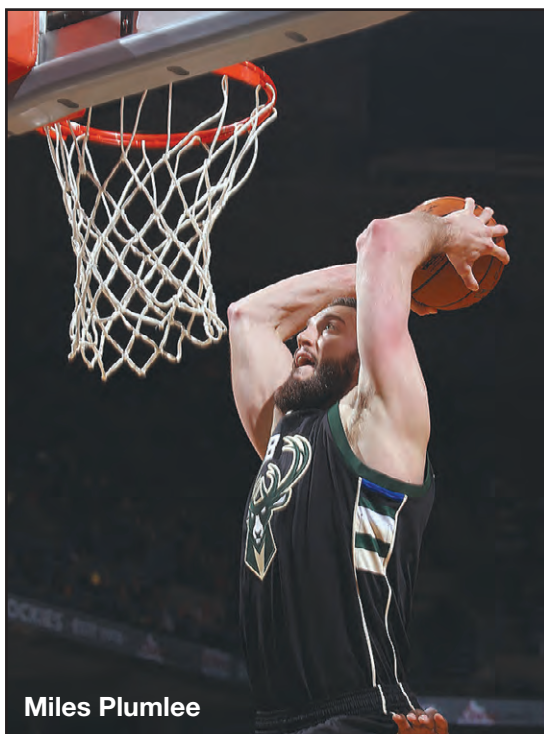
Isn't it nice when an experience exceeds your expectations?



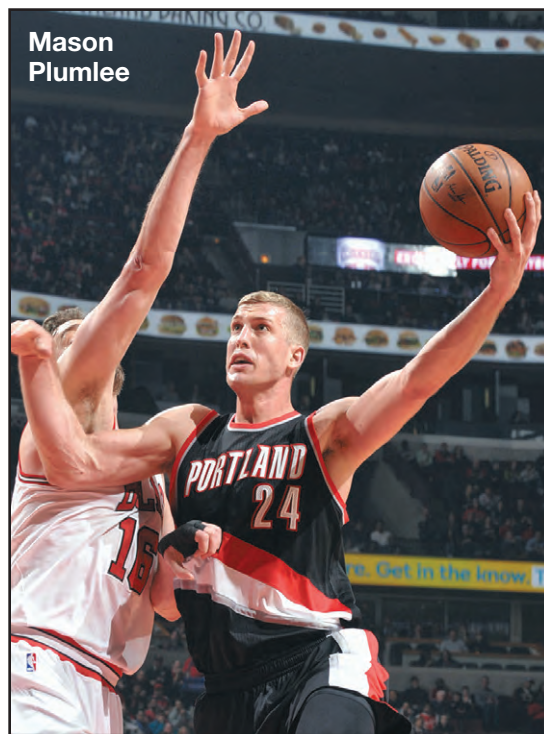
It would not go on my list of Top 10 movies and I wondered at times where the movie was going, but I did not find it a waste of time at all, as some other critics have. True there was little footage of the heavenly visit and I would have liked to see more, but the truths that were communicated through Piper's grueling recovery were profound.

This was not an action movie by any means but it was well written and well acted, and it kept my interest from beginning to end. †

**If you have a book you would like reviewed, mail a copy to:
P.O. Box 1504, Hartselle, AL 35640.**



Miles Plumlee



Mason Plumlee

Photos courtesy of Getty Images

Faith is 'my compass'

Plumlee brothers see parents as spiritual role models

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

As brothers Miles and Mason Plumlee grew toward 7-feet tall, they had to set the record straight: height does not automatically provide lift-off. They were taught to jump.

"Growing up, a lot of people think we just jump high by accident," Miles Plumlee said. "I know my Dad worked on it when he was little and taught us some stuff to work on when we were growing up. I think that is what paid off the most."

Miles Plumlee, who is 7 feet tall and weighs 249 pounds, is power forward and center for the Milwaukee Bucks. Mason Plumlee, who is 6 foot 11 inches and 235 pounds, is power forward and center for the Portland Trail Blazers.

"We were blessed with good genes. On top of that, both my parents were athletes. They had a lot of stuff to teach us," Miles Plumlee said.

Their father, Perky Plumlee, played basketball at Tennessee Tech and their mother, Leslie Plumlee, played at Purdue.

While Miles Plumlee, 27, and Mason Plumlee, 26, have never been on the same NBA team, they were college teammates at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina.

Fulfilled dreams

To be NBA players is "special," Miles Plumlee said. "It's something we both personally had dreams of. To have them both come true is amazing." Their first pro game against each other was Nov. 15, 2013.

Playing then for the Brooklyn Nets, Mason Plumlee scored seven points and had three rebounds in the Nets' 100-98 overtime victory over the Phoenix Suns, the team Miles Plumlee was on before being traded to Milwaukee. They did team together for the 2015 NBA Slam Dunk Contest during the All-Star game. Mason Plumlee, who finished third, got a helping hand from his brother setting up some dunks.

With many ups and downs during a season, Mason Plumlee called faith his compass. He applies his favorite verse, Isaiah 40:31, "Those who hope in

the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

Mason Plumlee said, "The game puts you in situations to where there is nowhere else to really look to. It might be on the end of the bench, you might have an injury, you might be going through a tough stretch of losses. ... Whatever it is, there is Scripture for everything and always application for it."

Mason Plumlee's faith journey began when he was young. "My parents brought us up in church, but then I would say on my own I started taking it more seriously my senior year at college."

Miles Plumlee said, "I think our parents did a good job raising us and teaching us. The thing that really got us through was learning how to work hard and to stay positive, knowing how to listen to other people like our coaches. I think that helped us. We both have had paths in life where we have continued to grow a lot on each level."

While it is difficult to attend church regularly on Sundays during the season, Mason Plumlee attends chapel services and hears gospel messages by NBA team chaplains.

The best advice Miles Plumlee has received is to stay positive during a long season.

Mason Plumlee said Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski did a good job getting him ready for the NBA. He wants his teammates to say he plays hard, plays to win and is for the team and not for himself.

Through the 2016 NBA All-Star break, Mason Plumlee was averaging 9.1 points, 7.6 rebounds. Miles Plumlee was averaging 3.0 points, 2.5 rebounds.

Mason Plumlee was a McDonald's All-American in 2009 and won three state championships at Christ School. He was 2009 Mr. Basketball in North Carolina and was named an Academic All-American in 2012-13 at Duke. Miles Plumlee was twice named all-state and won a state championship at Christ School.

Mason Plumlee was all-rookie NBA first team in 2014, second team All-America and first team All-ACC, both in 2013. ✦

RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services



LGBT sports, religious groups hit up NCAA

INDIANAPOLIS — More than 80 LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender) sports, religious and youth advocacy groups have signed a public letter calling on the NCAA to divest from schools requesting religious exemptions from Title IX regulations that would prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Led by Campus Pride, a nonprofit student organization, and Soulforce, a faith-based LGBT rights organization founded by former evangelical ghostwriter Mel White, the coalition rose in response to recent reports that dozens of Christian colleges — many owned by Southern Baptist state conventions — have requested a previously little-used religious-liberty waiver since the Education Department decided in 2014 to extend Title IX protection to transgender students.

"The NCAA cannot stand for this outright discrimination among its member institutions," said Shane Windmeyer, executive director of Campus Pride.

The March 9 letter says more than half of the 59 campuses documented with discriminatory waivers are participating members of NCAA. The letter asks NCAA to divest from all religious-based colleges and universities that have requested or received waivers, citing the organization's "longstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion of all people regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity." (BNG)

Graham's grandson fired from new church

WINTER SPRINGS, Florida — Tullian Tchividjian, who resigned as pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in 2015 after admitting to an affair, has been fired from his new position at Willow Creek Presbyterian Church, Winter Springs, Florida.

Tchividjian, grandson of evangelist Billy Graham, came forward to church elders March 14 with "some previously undisclosed failures in his life," said Willow Creek Pastor Kevin Labby.

More than half the board of Tchividjian's ministry, the LIBERATE Network, also resigned mid-March after they were made aware of those "failures."

"What we were trying to do was all predicated on trust and the elders felt as though that trust had been compromised," Labby said March 17. "The way he responded to the elders' decision was so good. He showed such contrition and humility."

Tchividjian said, "Nothing grieves me more than the fact that people are suffering because of my sins, both in my past as well as in the present. I want to be perfectly clear that I take full responsibility for this." (RNS)

Grand Canyon University fails to become nonprofit again

PHOENIX, Arizona — A Phoenix, Arizona, university founded by Southern Baptists but sold in 2004 to become the first for-profit Christian college in the United States has dropped its bid to change back to a nonprofit entity.

Grand Canyon University's board of trustees sold the school founded by what is now the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention after deciding that moving to for-profit status was the best path to shore up debt.

Grand Canyon Education, Inc., the for-profit company that now owns the university, said the arrangement worked well enough to regain financial footing, but the board of directors sought to return the school to its nonprofit roots in order to level the playing field in areas like tax status, raising money and participation in NCAA governance.

The Higher Learning Commission rejected the proposal March 4 saying it did not meet the agency's factors for such a change. Leaders of Grand Canyon Education, Inc., believe it was based on a misunderstanding of some details of the proposal but they would not contest it. (BNG)