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## TAB AR



New University of Mobile President Tim Smith speaks with faculty, staff and students at a campus-wide announcement April 11.

Photo by Dan Anderson

# 'Christ-centered servant'

## University of Mobile board of trustees elects Smith as school's 4th president

**T**imothy L. Smith, provost of Anderson University in South Carolina, has been elected the fourth president of the University of Mobile (UMobile), effective May 16.

The UMobile board of trustees elected Smith in a special called meeting the morning of April 11 on the Mobile campus of the 54-year-old Alabama Baptist school.

Smith, who holds two doctorates, two master's degrees and is licensed by the South Carolina Board of Nursing and the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, has extensive experience in Christian higher education and the field of health care education, according to UMobile officials.

Smith, 52, said he is coming to

UMobile to listen, collaborate, partner and build.

"The University of Mobile has a great foundation with many building blocks already above the foundation," he said. "I believe there are huge opportunities to serve the community and partner with so many organizations. My methodology in leading as president will be a very collaborative approach."

Smith said he will focus on building upon the heritage of faith at UMobile, while working toward even stronger academics with continued growth in the spiritual formation of students.

"When I looked at the University of Mobile, what I saw very quickly and what I heard very quickly is that it is an institution that is rock-solid in its faith on God's Word, in that we depend on Him and we are led by Him as we continue moving forward," he said. "My experience in academia is that there are a lot of changes you can make in an institu-

tion, but if an institution has wandered from its faith, it is very hard to bring the institution back to that.

"The University of Mobile has such a strength in the intentionality of its faith-based approach to Christian higher education. That's the No. 1 thing that attracted me," Smith said.

The Smiths are members of Taylors First Baptist Church in South Carolina where he serves as guest teacher in the Life Group while focusing on the development of care groups throughout the church. Previously he has taught young married classes at church and led annual missions trips to the Dominican Republic.

Smith succeeds Mark Foley, who announced in October 2015 that he would step down after 18 years as president.

The board of trustees launched a nationwide search for the next president in January.

UMobile board of trustees chair Fred Wilson, former partner in P.J.

Lumber Co. in Mobile, introduced the president-elect at a press conference April 11 at the Harrigan Center on the UMobile campus. Joining in the introduction were Terry Harbin, chair of the presidential search committee, and Foley.

Wilson said, "Dr. Tim Smith will be a president for every constituency of the university. He is a tireless worker and a great visionary with a broad range of experience."

### Previous roles

Prior to serving as provost of Anderson University, Smith was dean of the School of Nursing at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee, where he oversaw a 79 percent expansion in enrollment and founded the Center for Excellence in Healthcare Practice that included a nurse residency program for five hospitals.

Harbin said the search committee recommended Smith for three primary reasons.

"He is unbelievably well-qualified through his academic preparation. Secondly he has practical (See 'Smith,' page 11)



SMITH

# COMMENT

## A Materialistic Church?

How different are the values of most evangelical churches in the United States from the values held by Fortune 500 companies? According to the author of “The Next Evangelicalism” published by InterVarsity Press, there is not much difference. Both are sold out to materialism, he argues.

Soong-Chan Rah holds an endowed chair of church growth and evangelism at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago. He is a former church planter and sought-after speaker and conference leader. “The Next Evangelicalism” may not be widely known in Southern Baptist circles but it is extremely popular in other parts of the evangelical community.

Rah chides evangelical churches for evaluating themselves on the basis of ABC — attendance, buildings and cash. A more common reference among Baptists is BBB. That does not stand for the Better Business Bureau. BBB is an acronym for budgets, bodies and baptisms. The two acronyms are not exactly the same but they make the same point. They both emphasize signs of material success.

### Judging churches

Pastors frequently ask one another, “How many did you have last Sunday?” Denominational officers inquire about how many baptisms will be reported. Community members sometimes equate the appearance of a church’s buildings with congregational vitality. But outsiders are not the only ones who judge churches by the values reflected by ABC or BBB.

Let attendance slip and see how long it is before church members start whispering about what is wrong with our church. If the decline in bodies and budget continue, whispers often become louder until someone is chosen to take the blame. That someone is usually the pastor.

So pervasive are the materialistic values in the typical evangelical church, Rah argues, that the whole approach to church is impacted. “American Christians approach finding the right church the way they approach buying cereal at the local supermarket,” he writes.



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Evangelical Christians in the United States select a church based on personal taste and wants. They evaluate the children’s program, the music program, the recreation program and every other part of the church.

Church shopping, he writes, is a uniquely American phenomenon where the church is reduced to another product and commodity to be evaluated and purchased. Missing in this relationship is a commitment to a particular Christian community or a desire to serve a particular neighborhood.

Once a part of a local church, members expect to be courted and accommodated in the same ways they were before making their membership choices. That means a pastor and staff work hard to make members comfortable so pews will be filled with bodies and budgets remain strong.

How is this different from Fortune 500 companies that cater to the whims of customers with the bottom line of continued use of their products in order to boost budgets and profits?

### Measuring success

How different would churches be if success were measured by the story of the sheep and goats recorded in Matthew 25? How differently would members choose church membership if the same level of commitment to one another was expected as expressed in the church of Acts 2?

How surprised the goats of Matthew 25:31

must have been to hear their fate. Doubtless they had accomplished many good things. They may have even anticipated rewards for all they had done.

One is reminded of Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew 7:21. There Jesus describes people who have cast out demons, prophesied and performed miracles — all in the name of Jesus. Yet our Lord said they would be cast away because they did not do the will of the Father.

How astonished the goats must have been to learn they were condemned not because of what they had done but because of what they had not done. They had not cared for the poor and the lesson of the story of Matthew 25 is the measure of success is what is done to the “least of these.”

### Importance of community

The church of Acts 2 shows no concern for individual member preferences. Just the opposite. Individual preferences were subjugated to the needs of others. Members of the church in Acts 2:42 shared personal resources to care for the needs of fellow members. It was done voluntarily without outside pressure but that attests all the more to the importance of community to each member of the early church.

Rah pulls no punches in talking about the majority of evangelical churches in America. He concludes the churches have “confused the American dream with the will of God.” We have substituted materialism for mercy.

Condemnation falls on members who treat church membership as a commodity to be purchased, on local church bodies which evaluate themselves by the standards of BBB rather than on demonstrating the love and mercy of God through Christian service and on denominations who fawn over pastors and other church leaders who demonstrate success by worldly (materialistic) values of ABC and BBB.

American evangelicals have the best buildings and the best materials. We have the best musicians and top-notch professional speakers. American evangelicals, including Alabama Baptists, have polished worship experiences no matter the style of worship a church may use.

Is it possible that all of these are nothing more than external superficialities? Is it possible that concentration of these “things” has caused us to be empty on the inside? Is it possible that much of American evangelical Christendom has lost its internal depth of loving God with heart, soul, mind and strength and loving neighbor as one’s self?

Is it possible that we have become a materialistic church reflecting the values of the marketplace more than the values of the New Testament?

What do you think? †

## LETTERS

### TO THE EDITOR

#### CAN CHRISTIANS UNITE?

In answer to the question in the March 24 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*, “Can Christians with different views unite?” — yes.

At least we can unite in pursuing common goals that stem from one of the lowest common denominators of the Christian faith: that God created man and human life is precious in His sight.

The March 20 “Jericho March” marked the end of this Spring’s 40 Days for Life Campaign. The attendance in Birmingham was disappointing, only 36 (out of a metro population of around a million). But it was united in a great spirit or should I say ‘Spirit.’ My wife and I were, as usual, the only Baptists present. There were four or five assorted other Protestants, a small

group from St. Symeon Orthodox Church who treated us to a beautiful canticle, and the remainder were Catholics.  
The question that comes to our mind is, “Where are the Baptists?”  
Bill Kitchens  
Birmingham, Alabama †



# 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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# 'Spiritual transformation & renewal'

## Regardless of visitors' age, Shocco is 'adventure of a lifetime'

By Carrie Brown McWhorter  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**L**ike thousands of kids throughout Alabama, Julie James always looked forward to summer because that meant camp at Shocco.

"I went every year from 5th grade into college," said James, who now lives in Mississippi. "I have a thousand Shocco stories, but one of the best would be that I met my college roommate there. We met in 8th grade and got to see each other every summer at camp. Then we lived together at Auburn."

James credits her experiences at Shocco with many spiritual milestones — meeting mentors, being called to ministry and growing in her faith. She remembers a lot of fun as well. That combination of spiritual, emotional and physical refreshment is what Shocco strives for with every guest, said Shocco director Buster Taylor.

"At Shocco, people can hear God speak better because they are away from their normal distractions," Taylor said. "They are also surrounded by friends who are here for the same reason and leaders who are here to speak into their lives and help build them up."

Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center, or Shocco as it is usually called, is an important part of Alabama Baptist life primarily because of its mission "to provide a distinctly Christian environment for spiritual transformation and renewal," said Taylor, who has served at Shocco since 1989.

### Nourishing souls

Hundreds of decisions for Christ are made in the summer months alone, Taylor said. Thousands come to camps, retreats and workshops with one common goal — to nourish their souls and refresh their spirits.

"Shocco is so peaceful and serene," said



Photo courtesy of Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center

Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center's mission is 'to provide a distinctly Christian environment for spiritual transformation and renewal.' Groups of all ages visit the retreat center each year to get away from life's normal distractions.

Reba Gay, a member of Harmony Grove Baptist Church, Fruithurst, in Cleburne Baptist Association. "There is a spot driving into Shocco where it seems like all my burdens and problems are left behind. You can feel the Spirit of God, the closeness of Christian fellowship."

For new campers, that peace may take a little while to settle in — a fact that is often evident on the faces of campers on check-in days.

As campers wait for their room assignments and nametags, they display a variety of emotions. Some are eager to say goodbye to their parents so they can join the games

already in progress. Others are quiet, anxious about spending a few days away from home.

As bags are moved from car to cabin and last minute hugs are shared, Shocco staff members see the excitement in the eyes of the students as well as their adult chaperones. It's the beginning of "an adventure of a lifetime," both physically and spiritually, said Wendy Westerhouse, sales and public relations associate at Shocco.

"We offer quality facilities, multiple recreation options and a staff eager to serve for one reason — so that God's voice can be heard during the camp experience," Westerhouse said. "We hear stories regularly about the spiritual impact that occurs on the Shocco campus."

### CP funding

Shocco is an entity of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, who provides funding to Shocco through the Cooperative Program. However, the influence of Shocco goes beyond Alabama Baptists.

Nonprofit and Christian groups of many denominations come to Shocco each year. With a few exceptions, programming at Shocco is coordinated by the group serving the facility, allowing Shocco to focus on providing the best possible host services, Taylor said.

"We recognize that every group leader has  
(See 'Christian,' page 9)



Photo courtesy of Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center

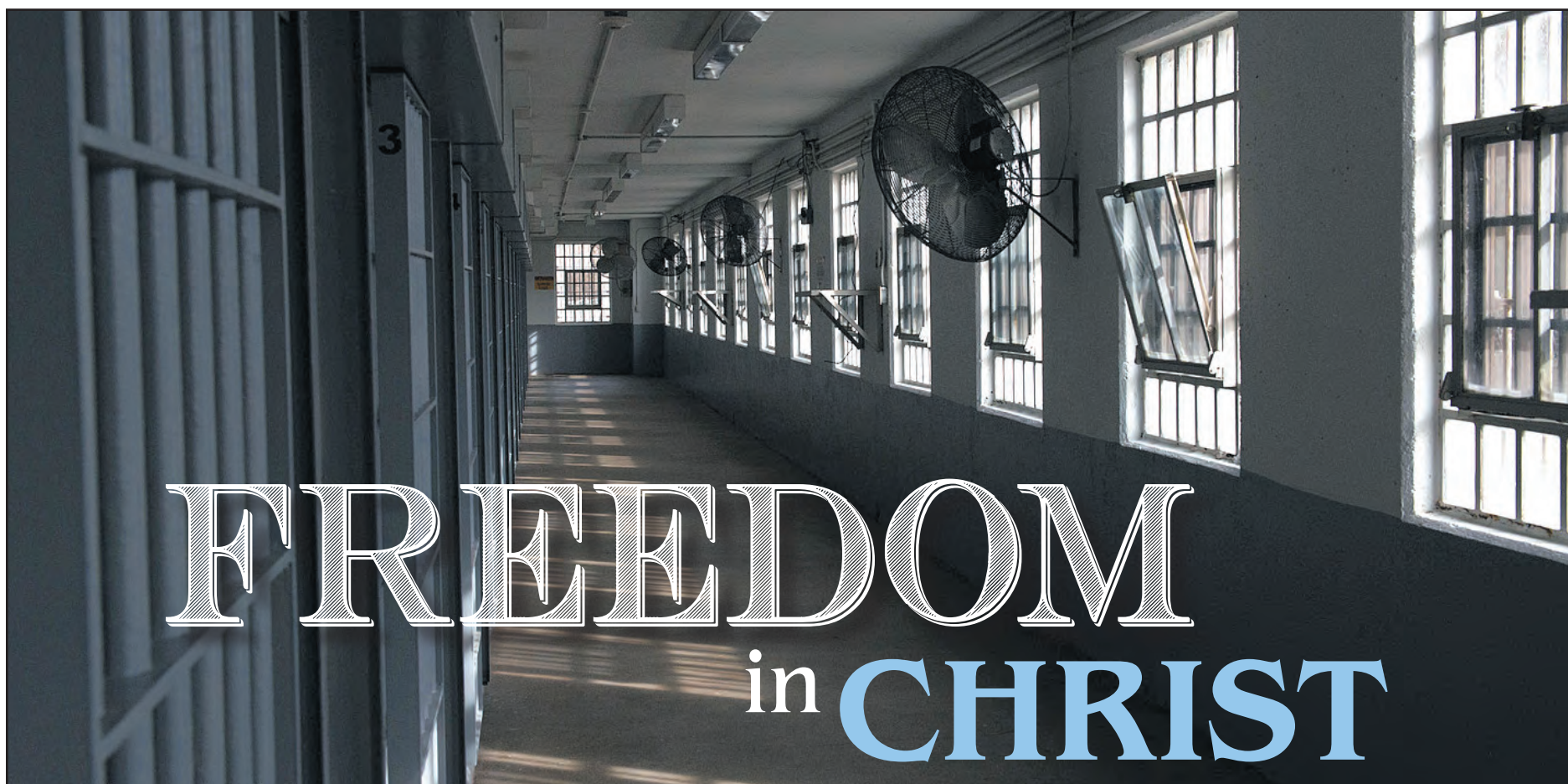


Photo by John Walton

## Alabama prison ministries help inmates with personal, spiritual growth

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

**W**hen an inmate enters Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women in Wetumpka, she loses her old life. But in Alicia Smallwood's eyes, she also gains an opportunity for a new life in Christ regardless of past or present circumstances.

"She (the inmate) can't see her kids, can't help the person who is taking care of them. She thinks she has lost everything," said Smallwood, a chaplain. "I tell her that God has cleared her mind of drugs, of men, of stealing. In here it's just her and God, and it's up to her whether she takes advantage of that."

In prisons throughout Alabama, chaplains and ministry volunteers share the same message of hope and freedom in Jesus Christ that pastors preach from the pulpit every Sunday. In the setting of a prison, the message of forgiveness of sins is a powerful one, Smallwood said. Not every inmate wants to hear it, but that doesn't stop Smallwood and other Christian chaplains from trying.

### A forgiving God

"Each woman here (at Tutwiler) has made mistakes. Some of them have made terrible mistakes. But God is a forgiving God and what I say to them is that God has placed you in timeout. He has taken you away from everything and everybody, and it's time to look inward and concentrate on you. And that's what a lot of them do," Smallwood said.

Almost 46,000 inmates were in Alabama prisons and local jails in 2014, according to the most recent statistics provided by the U.S. Department of Justice. Another 61,400 individuals were on probation or parole at the end of 2014. With 1,220 pris-

oners for every 100,000 legal residents age 18 or older, Alabama ranks third behind Louisiana and Oklahoma, respectively, on the list of states with the highest rate of incarceration based on population. The national average is 800 prisoners per 100,000 residents. The total U.S. prison population is 2.2 million, with another 4.7 million on probation or parole.

Those are big numbers but each person represented in the number is a human being made in the image of God who must be respected as such, said Harold Dean Trulear, national director of Healing Communities, an organization that seeks to provide tools for prison ministry and prison re-entry programs. The Bible is clear on how followers of Christ are to treat the prisoner, which is why the Church has to be involved in prison ministry, he said.

"We're trying to say to the Church, 'The prisoner is as valuable as the sick person.' If we want to distance ourselves from the prison population, we have to distance ourselves from the Bible," Trulear said, noting Jacob's son, Joseph, the prophets Jeremiah and Daniel, John the Baptist, the apostles Peter and Paul, as well as those who escaped prosecution for criminal acts, including King David, as prisoners in the Bible. Jesus was a prisoner when He died for the sins of humanity, Trulear said.

Alabama Department of Corrections pastoral programs supervisor Tom Woodfin said there are many ways prison ministry is conducted throughout the state prison system. Traditional ministries that include worship and music services, small group

Bible studies and revivals are common, according to Woodfin.

Increasingly prison ministries also are including programs to help inmates develop life skills that will help them cope with life in, and perhaps eventually out of, prison. Programs that provide training in parenting and job skills benefit prisoners in significant ways in both the short and long term, Woodfin said, contributing to the "spiritual, emotional, educational and personal development of the inmates."

In addition to meeting some of their basic human needs, ministry programs also can give inmates a sense of self-confidence and hope for the future that they might not have had before. That kind of personal growth benefits not only the inmate but also his or her family and society as a whole because the result is "potentially a more rehabilitated inmate, financial savings and an offender that is less likely to re-offend," Woodfin said.

Ministry programs also affect the overall atmosphere of the prison environment, he said.

"Faith is a calming influence in a potentially violent environment," he said. "Ministry programs fill an inmate's time with profitable pursuits."

For chaplains like Smallwood, those pursuits change from day to day. She might have Bible trivia game time one day and a hygiene class the next. She regularly shows Christian films and holds programs around major holidays like Christmas, Mother's Day and Easter.

"I do anything I can to get them into the

chapel," Smallwood said. "It often isn't a traditional service, but before and after the program I'm going to pray and I'm going to steer the conversation to God and religion."

Of the 970 inmates at the prison, Smallwood estimates that at least 60 percent attend some type of religious service at the chapel on a regular basis. As she plans programs her goal is to address the root of the problems that got many of the women into jail in the first place so that if they get out of prison, their chances of post-incarceration success are greater.

However, the impact of prison ministry also is felt inside prison walls.

### Success stories

"Speaking only for Tutwiler, some not so nice things go on in here, but some good things go on in here as well," Smallwood said. "The programs I offer here in chaplaincy are all self-help or self-awareness, and I'm a firm believer that if we do not keep preaching Jesus, if we fail to expose these women to the gospel, it will be much worse than it is now."

Smallwood encounters many who criticize prison ministry as wasted effort but said she can counter those critics with many success stories.

"I know several men and women who got into trouble, served time in prison and who are now very successful and very productive. I've heard a lot of them say it's because they asked God into their lives," Smallwood said.

Smallwood doesn't shy away from the hardest cases either.

"I like to see God transform a woman that hated Him. I like to see how He changes her over the course of weeks, months and years and then watch as she speaks to other women who come in here. That's God in action." ✠

*"We're trying to say to the Church, 'The prisoner is as valuable as the sick person.'"*

**Harold Dean Trulear**  
national director  
Healing Communities

## MINISTRY NEEDS of Alabama prisons and inmates

- ▶ Prayer
- ▶ Donation of materials, including paperback books (acceptable genres include contemporary fiction that is not romance or true crime, poetry, non-fiction and basic course texts such as math, economics and social science)
- ▶ Donation of hygiene and other similar items for inmates
- ▶ Donation of greeting cards for special occasions
- ▶ Academic education (adult literacy or GED)
- ▶ Volunteers to develop or facilitate existing correspondence Bible schools
- ▶ Ministry to families of the incarcerated
- ▶ One-on-one mentors (while in prison and upon release)
- ▶ Networks of assistants/assistance for those released
- ▶ Acceptance in churches after release

Sources: Tom Woodfin and The Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project

# NEW START

## Birmingham ministry helps recently released inmates re-enter society

By Grace Thornton  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**I**magine what it's like to go decades having someone else make all your decisions for you from the moment you wake up until the moment you go to bed.

Then imagine — overnight — having to start making 2,000 decisions a day.

That's the reality of inmates released from Alabama's prisons every year and it's not an easy thing to process, said Jack Hausen, director of Shepherd's Fold, a ministry that helps recently released men and women re-enter society after incarceration.

"We have to change their thinking to 'how do we handle these freedoms we now have?' It's a reorientation process," said Hausen, a member of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham. "The mentality is 'do the crime, pay the time,' but we (as a society) don't do anything to rehab these people."

That's why Shepherd's Fold was started — to keep these men and women from becoming part of the high percentage of former inmates who end up back behind bars.

The ministry was started by Mary Kay Beard, a former bank robber who came to faith in Christ while incarcerated at Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women in Wetumpka.

Thirty years later, Shepherd's Fold has five houses in Birmingham's West End area around Princeton Hospital. Beard also started the Prison Fellowship program, Angel Tree.

### High success rate

The ministry's six-month transitional program has a high success rate — less than 1 percent of men and women who complete the program go back to prison, Hausen said.

It's an uphill climb, he said. Most of the people who come to Shepherd's Fold have been incarcerated for quite a while, and they show up at the ministry with very little preparation for the real world.

The ministry has a very important role to play in reducing recidivism, Hausen said, especially as prisoners are being released in larger numbers to reduce overcrowding.

"We want to make sure their fresh start is a new start," he said.

Program participants are frequently there as part of their parole plan, so they are expected to cooperate with rules, but



Photo courtesy of Shepherd's Fold  
Shepherd's Fold residents work on a Habitat for Humanity project in Birmingham's Arlington-West End community.

Shepherd's Fold works hard to prepare them to thrive in their new freedom.

"We work to get them a license and Social Security card if they need it, as well as food stamps, clothing and a job," he said. "All of our participants have jobs and pay us a small weekly fee. It builds their self-esteem and it prepares them to live in the community. We want to do everything we can to get them back on their feet as productive citizens."

Recently released convicts also have to learn to function as a community within their home, planning food buying together, abiding by curfews and getting along with each other, Hausen said. "They have to learn to make good decisions. They work the plan and they plan their work."

And hopefully at the end of six months, Shepherd's Fold has been an environment that has prepared them for success, he said. "Our goal is to change their institutional thinking and their hearts for Christ."

### Local church involvement

Their spiritual development is a critical part of re-entry, Hausen said, which is one reason the ministry works hard to involve local churches like Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, in the process as

well as offering programs like Celebrate Recovery each week.

And churches are able to help in practical ways too, financially supporting the ministry as well as providing needed items like hygiene bags for the people in the program, he said.

"We want to take care of them like Jesus commands us — He is clear about how we are supposed to help people who are in prison," Hausen said. "Also we want them to hear the gospel and have it hopefully change hearts and minds for Christ and then hopefully become productive members of churches."✝

**National  
Re-entry Week  
is April 24–30.**

**For more  
information about  
Shepherd's Fold,  
visit [sfallabama.org](http://sfallabama.org).**

**Shepherd's Fold  
will host an Open House  
event April 30, 8 a.m.–  
4 p.m. to celebrate  
the opening of its  
new Guiding Light  
Community for Women.  
Visitors are invited to  
tour the new facility and  
have the opportunity to  
meet with the residents.**



## Across ALABAMA'S Associations

To submit news items, email [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org) or call 205-870-4720, ext. 112, at least three weeks prior to the event.

### BALDWIN

► **Bethel Church, Roberts-dale**, will celebrate its 75th anniversary May 1. Services will begin at 10 a.m. with lunch and a time of testimonies and worship to follow. David Hedden, former member and son of founding member Ford Hedden, will speak. Former member Tommy Brill will sing and former pastor Raymond Bishop will lead special music. Other former members and pastors also will participate. Harvey Earls is pastor.

### BIRMINGHAM

► **McElwain Church, Birmingham**, and **McElwain Christian Academy** will hold a massive yard sale April 30, 8 a.m.–2 p.m. across the street from the church and school. All proceeds will benefit the school. Jon Glass is pastor.

### CONECUH

► **Bower Memorial Church, Evergreen**, will host *The Kempters* in concert May 15, 6:30 p.m. For more information, call the church office at 251-578-1024. Jim Griffin is pastor.

### FRANKLIN

► **First Church, Russellville**,

will host a Priscilla Shirer Live simulcast April 23, 9 a.m. To register, call the church office at 256-332-2065. Patrick Martin is pastor.

### HALE

► **Moundville Church** will celebrate its 116th homecoming anniversary April 24. The service begins at 10:45 a.m. followed by a potluck dinner at the church. Chuck Kelley, president of New Orleans Seminary, will speak. Jason Duckett is pastor.

### LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

► **Bennie Berry** is the new pastor of **Friendship Church, Gaylesville**. He previously served as pastor of Greenwood Church, Attalla. He also served at First Church, Leeds; Belmor Church, Belle Mina; Unity Church, Henagar; Portersville Church, Collinsville; and Gravel Hill Church, Fort Payne. Berry and his wife, Ann, have two children, two grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. ► **Lookout Mountain Association** will hold its annual evangelism rally May 8, 6:30 p.m. at **Mount Calvary Church, Mentone**. Shanathon Bell will speak. The association

choir will provide special music. Jack Green is pastor of Mount Calvary and Lloyd Borden is director of missions.

### MUD CREEK

► **Sparks Gap Church, Bessemer**, will host *The Scrap Iron Quartet* in concert April 24, 1:30 p.m. Johnny Thacker is pastor.

### SHELBY

► **Dogwood Grove Church, Montevallo**, exceeded its Annie Armstrong Easter Offering goal of \$9,700 for 2016. The congregation of about 350 resident members gave \$12,243.54. Pastor Todd Burr and his wife, Kari, Woman's Missionary Union director of the church, led Dogwood Grove in this sacrificial missions giving. ► **Fourmile Church, Wilsonville**, will celebrate homecoming April 30, 10 a.m. Michael Goode will speak. A covered dish meal will follow the service. Roger Chambers is pastor.

### TALLAPOOSA

► **Daviston Church** will celebrate homecoming April 24. Forgiven Heart will perform special music at 10 a.m. and Pastor Shane Dye will speak at 11 a.m. Lunch will follow. ☛

## Samford Athletics faces NCAA violations

Samford University athletics is facing a \$5,000 fine and three-year probation for violations involving academic certification. Thirty-three student athletes participating in men's tennis, baseball, football, softball, men's track, men's cross country, soccer and men's basketball, were the subject of the NCAA Level II violations that occurred fall 2010 through spring 2014.

"We have accepted the penalties the NCAA has given our athletics department," said Samford Director of Athletics Martin Newton. "We have taken steps to make sure this does not happen again."

Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland said, "Through the investigation and our own internal review, it is clear that none of the staff members had any fraudulent intent, nor were they seeking to create a competitive advantage for any of our teams." (Hannah Muñoz)

## Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

### Mary Jo Brown



**BROWN**

*Bethel Baptist Church, Jackson's Gap Tallapoosa Baptist Association*

**FAVORITE VERSE:** Psalm 23

**FAVORITE HYMN:** "Life's Railway to Heaven"

**HOBBIES:** Working in yard, staying busy, sewing, cross-stitching

**FAMILY STATUS:** Widow for five years after 60 years of marriage to husband, J.R.; daughter, Jackie Wilbourn (husband, Terry); two grandchildren; five great-grandchildren

At 82, Mary Jo Brown, of Jackson's Gap, is the oldest active member of her church. And active she is. She mails cards to people, sends flowers from the church during times of illness or bereavement, calls homebound individuals, visits and does errands for others and sews hats for those suffering medical hair loss. "I really don't call things like that a job," she said. "Really that's what you're supposed to do." She serves on the cemetery committee and in the past was the church clerk and a children's Sunday School teacher. She retired as a supervisor in a sewing plant.

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

A: It was my mother and daddy. My mother and daddy always went with us to church; they didn't send us. We only had church once a month in the very beginning. Everybody walked to church. I was just always brought up in church. ... I learned at an early age what the Lord would do for you. ... I was baptized in Lake Martin at the same time my granddaddy was.

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

A: It wasn't at one particular time. It was in my bringing-up. My daddy was a deacon up at Bethel. It was part of growing up that we

went to church and served the Lord.

**Q: What does your ministry work demand?**

A: It takes time. I don't have anything more important than doing something for the Lord.

**Q: What do you get from your ministry work?**

A: It makes me happy, if I can make somebody else feel a little bit better. I get to tell them what the Lord has done for me. I'm just happy to do anything that would help somebody else.

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

A: I just hope the Good Lord gives me the strength and the health to keep going to church. I think I am one of the most blessed people in the world.

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

A: I hope it makes me a lot stronger. I hope I'm stronger in the Lord every day. I hope I'm able to influence somebody else with the life I've lived and influence somebody to turn to the Lord.

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

A: He's made all the difference in the world. If it hadn't been for the Lord, I shudder to think where I would be today. I'm just thankful I know the Lord and He knows me. And I wish I could get that message over to everybody. ☛

## Contraceptive mandate fight may have found resolution

The U.S. Supreme Court and religious nonprofits seem to have agreed on a way to deal with the contraceptive mandate under the Affordable Care Act.

A brief was filed April 12 in the case of the Little Sisters of the Poor (*Zubik v. Burwell*), noting the government will find ways to distribute contraceptives without involvement of religious nonprofits and their health plans, according to the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. The nonprofits who buy traditional insurance plans also agreed the government could hire the same insurance company to provide the drugs.

"The religious objection has always been only to those methods of distribution that forced the nonprofits and their plans to participate," said Mark Rienzi, senior counsel at the Becket Fund, which represents the Little Sisters group.

More than 50 groups origi-

nally filed "friend of the court" briefs as a way to show support to the nuns group. Among the groups was Southern Baptists' Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC).

### ERLC's response

ERLC's vice president for public policy and research Barrett Duke said, "I hope the proposed solution solves the impasse. The immediate issue here is that government does not violate religious conscience and it isn't for the government to decide what violates conscience or not.

"If the affected groups say the alternative works for them, that is a positive step but it must be up to them to say so," he said. "If indeed the solution works for these groups, I hope the administration can take 'yes' for an answer and finally leave these ministries alone to serve God and their communities." (TAB)

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](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org).



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Knowing God

# God Is Compassionate and Caring

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

Throughout our series about knowing God, the premise has been that we can only know God in the way that He has chosen to make Himself known. We have noted that of all the ways God has used to reveal Himself, the chief and most complete way was by sending His Son. Our simple conclusion could well be: If we want to know God we must listen to Jesus.

Jesus said that no one has seen the Father except “He who is from God; He has seen the Father” (John 6:46). We might alter our simple conclusion slightly to say: If we want to know God we must look upon Jesus. Jesus said, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). Hebrews 1:3 says of Jesus, “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature.” Concerning God’s compassion, what do we hear when we listen to Jesus? What do we see when we look upon Jesus?

If we listen to Jesus, we hear Him tell of an earthly father who mirrored the compassion of the Heavenly Father. He told this in the familiar parable about a prodigal son. At the climactic moment of the prodigal’s return to his father, Jesus’ description of that earthly father in relation to his returning son was, “When he was still a great way off his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him” (Luke 15:20). Jesus used the human illustration to point us to the divine reality that God is a compassionate Father. Psalm 103:13 emphasizes this comparison, saying, “As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear Him.”

## Reflecting God

If we look upon Jesus, we see Him reflecting what God is like when it comes to compassion. Frequently the Bible speaks of Jesus being moved with compassion such as when He

looked upon the multitudes. “When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36). God’s compassion exemplified in Jesus also was for suffering and sorrowing individuals. Luke 7:13 tells of Jesus’ reaction to a widow whose only son had died, saying, “When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’” In Jesus we see most clearly God’s compassion and caring, whether for misguided crowds or sorrow-filled individuals. Indeed when we have seen the compassion of Jesus, we have seen the compassion of the Father.

## Two parts to compassion

Compassion is a word of two parts. The first part means simply “with” while the second part means “to feel.” Therefore compassion is the capacity to “feel with” the sufferings, weaknesses or misfortunes of others. We might think of compassion as pity motivated by loving concern or as the capacity to care for others with deep and genuine feeling. The prophet Zechariah encouraged God’s people in a difficult time with the assurance, “The Lord of hosts cares for His flock, the house of Judah” (Zech. 10:3). First Peter 5:7 instructs the people of God with the admonition, “Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.” God wants us to know Him as One who is compassionate and caring. †

*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.*



# Gardendale FBC takes intentional, innovative approach to evangelism

By Anna Keller  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The recent Easter services at Gardendale First Baptist Church had a different format than typical Easter services, and it was certainly a departure from Gardendale FBC’s traditional approach.

“I wanted to show a video during our Easter services this year but I thought, ‘I can’t do that. It’s Easter weekend and I need to be preaching about the resurrection,’” said Kevin Hamm, who is celebrating his 10th anniversary as Gardendale FBC’s pastor. “But I still felt God prompting me to show it on Easter weekend.”

The video was produced by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association — “Value of a Soul.” Hamm said he’d come across it a few months earlier and had been extremely moved by the half-hour video which tracks three people from different walks of life and shares their journey to come to know Christ. Hamm knew he wanted to share it with his congregation at some point.

“It was so well done and there’s something for everybody to relate to,” he said. “I saw it as something a little different that could be good to show on a high attendance weekend like Easter.”

Hamm said when he shared his idea to show a video during each of the church’s three Easter services with his staff, they were hesitant. That is until they watched the video for themselves.

“Once the staff went and watched it, they agreed with my idea and saw God all over the video,” Hamm said.

And so he proceeded with sharing the video during the three services — one Saturday evening and two on Sunday morning — followed up by an altar call. And the response was huge.

“The people were excited,” Hamm said. “Lots of times on a high attendance day, no one moves from the pew. But there was a group of 30 to 40 people standing at the altar, which is just powerful. Not only does it change the lives of the people who commit their lives to Christ, of course, but your church folks who come every week get to see the power of the gospel shown there too.”

As a result of the Easter video showings, Gardendale FBC baptized 50 new believers in April.

Hamm said he, fellow staff members and church members are consistently looking for unique ways to evangelize their community. They encourage members to be “Fast Food Friends,” paying for the meal of the person behind them in line at a drive-thru and leaving them a card telling them about Christ or about Gardendale FBC.

Hamm also has implemented what he calls “spontaneous baptism services” once every few months. He preaches “the

simple ABCs of the gospel” and invites people to be baptized right there on the spot.

“My first round with that I was very apprehensive,” he said. “I wondered, ‘Will people want to do this? Their family isn’t there.’ But the first time we did it we had over 100 people who were baptized.”

Sheila Keedy, the church’s director of women’s ministries, said another example of this out-of-the-box evangelism has taken place among the women at church.

Keedy was diagnosed with breast cancer in early 2015

and, after surgery to help treat it, was left trying to deal with the surgical drains hanging from her body. It was difficult to find clothing to accommodate them.

“Someone gave me a small apron and it helped not only physically but mentally as well,” Keedy said. “After talking with other women who had breast cancer, most had not had anything to help with the drains either.”

## ‘Sew That’

That’s when the idea of getting women from Gardendale FBC to form a group — called “Sew That” — with the purpose of sewing aprons to donate to the hospital so other women going through surgery to treat breast cancer could benefit from them too.

Hamm said churches sharing evangelism and ministry ideas with each other is a good way to work together. And Christian magazines and newspapers often have good ideas that would work well in any Alabama church, he added. †

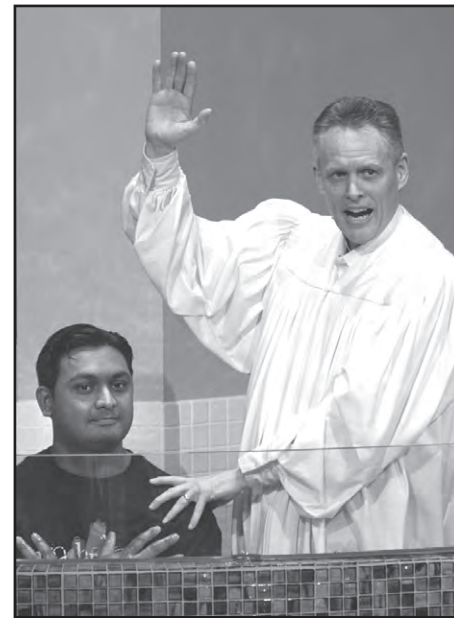


Photo courtesy of Gardendale FBC

Pastor Kevin Hamm of Gardendale FBC participates in the church’s baptism service April 10.

**For more information about “Value of a Soul,” visit [myhopewithbillygraham.org/program/value-of-a-soul/](http://myhopewithbillygraham.org/program/value-of-a-soul/).**

# International church planting ministry begins with Montgomery couple

By Grace Thornton  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

To reach a village, you have to be part of the village.

At least that's what Jeff McFarland says.

That's why he moved his family from east Montgomery to west Montgomery, right smack in the middle of the inner city.

And that's why he started Church at the Barrel, Church at the Dumpster and Church in the Shade.

"We just started looking for where people were hanging out and we joined them," he said. "We had read some books — that's about it. We didn't have a lot of knowledge, just a lot of desire. And we made a lot of mistakes."

But they loved people. "And we prayed God would show up," McFarland said. The next thing they knew, he and his wife were having church around a fire barrel with 10 drunk guys.

## Starting out

"We started ministering to them and it's been going on for seven years now," he said.

It all started years ago when he took a two-week trip to India to train pastors.

"It was evident God was changing us on that trip," said McFarland, who had served as a Baptist worship pastor in Montgomery for 10 years. "Two months later I resigned my position, and Trudy and I moved our family to Calcutta."

They spent six months in Calcutta with a missions organization, training 12 pastors from seven language groups how to study the Scriptures inductively.

"They then took that knowledge and trained 450 other church planters in the region," McFarland said.

And then it became clear God was leading them to broaden their reach even further — start their own organization.

And TREC International was born with a two-person staff — he and Trudy. That's when they moved to west Montgomery to be a part of that village. But they've still got their foot in the door of a lot of villages in South Asia where they've built strong relationships as people who have planted their lives in the region.

"TREC stands for teach, reach, equip and comfort," McFarland said. "Primarily we do a lot of church planting in South Asia but we also have a children's home there and a school."



Photo by Jeff McFarland

TREC International, founded by Jeff and Trudy McFarland, ministers both locally and internationally planting churches in Montgomery and also in South Asia (pictured above).

McFarland leads teams on a consistent basis to work in those places, but the pool of people wanting to travel into the hard places of South Asia is small, he said. "They're hard trips."

But Lawrence Phipps, formerly the McFarlands' pastor at Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery, has been on several trips like that with McFarland and said he's seen God move in miraculous ways.

Noting a particular trip where team members were singing hymns as they traveled through the mountain, Phipps said they felt protected when a group of rebels stopped their vehicle.

"The soldiers had boarded a bus in front of us," Phipps said. "One soldier stood beside our jeep. No one in that country smiled except believers. The soldier, with his AK-47, looked at us, smiled and waved us by."

The other soldiers scowled and pointed their guns at the group, but the soldier who had waved them through said something to the others that Phipps couldn't understand.

"I believe that when we get to heaven we will discover that the soldier who waved us through was an angel," he said. "Later that day we preached at a refugee camp with over 10,000 refugees. A revival broke out that ultimately closed the camp."

Phipps said he isn't surprised God has worked through the McFarlands in such a mighty way in South Asia — he's seen how their faith has impacted Montgomery.

"They came to Vaughn Forest ready to reach and eager to serve," he said. "[Jeff and Trudy] helped usher in one of the most exciting periods of church growth and missions' outreach that I had seen as a pastor."

**For more information about TREC International, visit [trecmud.com](http://trecmud.com).**

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# 'Christian hospitality'

## Shocco challenges all ages to see value in Great Commission

(continued from page 3)  
a unique vision for their event and we strive to help make that vision a reality," Taylor said.

Churches and ministries have many options when it comes to planning events at Shocco. From day trips to multiday stays, Shocco staff members work with leaders to develop a plan that includes the facilities and activities they want to use, said Lauren Adams, marketing coordinator at Shocco.

"Our facilities are great for general recreation, but groups

also can do team building and leadership training with guidance from our recreation staff," Adams said.

### Minister's getaway

Alabama Baptist groups get a discount for their events, as do Alabama Baptist ministers. Shocco provides a minister's getaway package that allows pastors to enjoy an affordable time of rest.

"Jesus went up into the mountains to pray and those are valuable times for church staff members and ministers," Taylor said.

"We provide a quiet, serene environment and Christian hospitality, which is what we love to do."

In order to provide excellent service, Shocco staff members regularly work to update and upgrade facilities on the property. Often those updates include painting and repairs, but major renovations are regularly scheduled as well to keep Shocco facilities in premium condition.

Currently, Shocco is in the middle of a four-year renovation project of Springview Hotel, the lodging facility adjacent to the Bagley Conference Center. By summer 25 rooms will be complete.

"This is not just paint and fixing up," Taylor said. "We're ripping out everything to the substructure and putting in all new drywall, carpet, bathroom fixtures and furniture. Even the locks will be brand new when we finish."

The renovation also includes energy-efficient lighting, hot water heaters and air conditioning. The updates are part of the ongoing mission at Shocco to be good stewards of the resources God has

provided. From well-maintained recreation fields to giant water slides in the lake to clean hotel rooms and delicious food, the Shocco experience is about challenging visitors of any age to see their value in the Great Commis-

sion, Taylor said.

"It is our prayer that God will continue to use this special place to encourage individuals and churches in their response to His command to make the gospel known to all people."✠

## Shocco by the numbers

- ▶ 1947 — the year Alabama Baptist State Convention purchased Shocco
- ▶ 5,000 guests served in 1948, the first year of Alabama Baptist camps
- ▶ \$3 — the cost of one night and three meals in 1948
- ▶ 4 campfire locations
- ▶ 20 lodging facilities at Shocco, including hotel rooms, cabins, tent and RV sites
- ▶ 150 feet — length of Wet Willie water slide added in 2015
- ▶ 17 major camps planned for summer 2016
- ▶ 230 summer employees (40 resident summer staffers who are high school and college students)
- ▶ 12 summer staffers going to Children's Hope Orphanage in Jacmel, Haiti, for missions in August
- ▶ 40 uniforms sewn by Campers on Mission to take to students at the orphanage
- ▶ 40,000 annual visitors
- ▶ 1,543 capacity
- ▶ 55 meeting rooms
- ▶ 800+ acres
- ▶ 352 lodging rooms



(Compiled by Carrie Brown McWhorter)

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[www.shocco.org/ALBaptist](http://www.shocco.org/ALBaptist)



# Alabama DR coordinating Louisiana flood cleanup

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (DR) assumed leadership of the DR command center in Monroe, Louisiana, on April 10 with 18-year DR veteran John Hayes at the helm.

The Alabama teams are relieving Oklahoma DR teams. Both state DR teams and others have been working for weeks to minister to the area after a "historic flood event" hit in mid-March.

Recovery, shower units, laundry units and chaplain personnel have been engaged in DR since March 16 and will continue to provide assistance "that will now be complimented by white hat leadership, administration and logistics," according to Mel Johnson, DR strategist for the

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

"There are still areas with structures under water," he said. "Please pray for volunteers that respond with ministry and a gospel witness for those in need."

Hayes is coordinating efforts from the incident command center at North Monroe Baptist Church.

Since the incident command center opened, teams had received 297 requests for work and completed 176 at press time.

Hayes said teams from Alabama, Florida and Oklahoma that are stationed at the church are receiving as much of a blessing working on the homes damaged in the flooding as the

homeowners themselves. "The main thing is we work with the people," Hayes said. "We also minister to them as we try to get them back into a life of normalcy.

"It's not about cleaning out

the houses, it's not about cutting the tree out or feeding them," he said. "It's to minister to the individuals. It's about making their life better and to tell them there is still hope at the end of the road." (TAB, Baptist Message)

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### CHURCH POSITIONS

#### PASTOR

Bethel Baptist Church, Fort Deposit, Alabama. We are seeking a full-time pastor. Resumes are being accepted. Email: [cnolan@fcbi.com](mailto:cnolan@fcbi.com) or [bethelbap.fd@camelliacom.com](mailto:bethelbap.fd@camelliacom.com) or by mail to: Bethel Baptist Church, c/o Clay Nolan, 1552 Bates Rd., Fort Deposit, AL 36032.

#### PASTOR

First Baptist Church, Crossville, Alabama, is searching for full-time pastor. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 69, Crossville, AL 35962.

#### PASTOR

Edgil Grove Baptist Church in Jasper, Alabama, is accepting resumes for a full-time pastor. Send resumes to: [edgilgrovebaptistchurch@hotmail.com](mailto:edgilgrovebaptistchurch@hotmail.com), or mail to: 100 Edgil Grove Rd., Jasper, AL 35503.

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Paint Rock Missionary Baptist Church, Paint Rock, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please submit resumé to: [resume@paintrockmbc.com](mailto:resume@paintrockmbc.com). See who we are at [www.paintrockmbc.com](http://www.paintrockmbc.com).

#### WORSHIP PASTOR

First Baptist Church of the Islands in Savannah, Georgia, is currently seeking a full-time worship pastor. We are located in a community with many young families and are surrounded by much opportunity for impact for the sake of the gospel. Our current morning worship attendance averages approximately 550 weekly in two morning services.

We utilize a unique mix of choir, praise team and praise band in our worship setting. The worship pastor will fit within a multi-staff team and an amazing number of volunteer leaders to help us fulfill our vision of leading others to know Christ, grow in Christ, show Christ through surrendered lives and to go with the gospel. The worship pastor must be able to effectively lead others into authentic worship and also disciple others. All applications will be prayerfully considered once we have received a cover letter, a resumé with references and a 2-3 minute video introduction of yourself as you briefly share your call to ministry, your passion for worship and your heart to impact others. A webcam or phone video is perfectly fine. Please email your cover letter, resumé and video link to: [searchteam@fbcislands.com](mailto:searchteam@fbcislands.com).

#### BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC

Turnerville Baptist Church, Mobile County. Contact Bro. Jason Meaux at [jmeaux@turnervillebaptist.org](mailto:jmeaux@turnervillebaptist.org).

#### ASSOCIATE PASTOR TO STUDENTS

First Baptist Church of Dothan is looking for an associate pastor to students. Description: working with students grade 7 through college graduation. Resumes to: Trent Dillard at [tldillard@southernco.com](mailto:tldillard@southernco.com).

#### 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](mailto:spsc@fbc-ac.org).

#### YOUTH DIRECTOR

FBC Union Grove is seeking a youth director. Send resumes to: FBC Union Grove, ATTN: Personnel Committee, P.O. Box 125, Union Grove, AL 35175.

#### YOUTH/CHILDREN'S MINISTER

Southside Baptist Church, Princeton, Kentucky, is accepting resumes for a full-time youth/children's minister. Bachelor's degree, seminary training and experience is preferred. Email: [youthsearchteam@southsidebaptist.com](mailto:youthsearchteam@southsidebaptist.com) or mail: Southside Baptist, ATTN: Youth Search, P.O. Box 684, Princeton, KY 42445.

### OTHER POSITIONS

#### DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

Montgomery Baptist Association, Montgomery, Alabama, is accepting resumes through May 1 for director of missions. Master of divinity degree from an accredited seminary. Fifteen years ministry experience preferred. Minimum two years as senior pastor preferred. Work experience in a multicultural community. See website for details: [www.mgmbaptists.org/home/dom](http://www.mgmbaptists.org/home/dom).

#### DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The Calhoun Baptist Association requests resumes for the position of director of missions. Please send your resumé to: ATTN: DOM Search Commit-

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## Famous Christians from previous centuries

# Heroes of the Faith

## 2016 marks 500th anniversary of author, historian Foxe's birth

**J**ohn Foxe (1516–1587) was an English historian who wrote “Actes and Monuments” (popularly known as “Foxe’s Book of Martyrs”), the famous work on the history of Christians killed for their faith.

“Book of Martyrs” starts with Stephen, the first martyr, and continues to the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. It is one of the most influential books in history and has gone through countless editions and printings to the present day.

This year is the 500th anniversary of Foxe’s birth.

He was born in Boston, Lincolnshire County, England, in 1516. An excellent student, he received his bachelor of arts degree in 1537 and his master’s degree in 1543 from Magdalen College, Oxford University. He served as a lecturer

of logic from 1539 to 1541. He became a fellow of Magdalen College in 1539 but was forced to resign six years later.

He became a tutor for a short time in the house of the Lucys of Charlecote near Stratford-on-Avon. He married Agnes Randall and had at least five children.

During the reign of Protestant King Edward VI (1547–1553), he moved to London and was the tutor to the grandchildren of the Duke of Norfolk. He was ordained a deacon of the Church of England.

When Catholic Queen Mary I came to the throne in 1553, Foxe and his family fled, eventually moving to Basel, Switzerland, where he supported himself as a printer. He made steady progress

with his book on martyrs as he received reports of religious persecutions in England. He issued a pamphlet addressed to the English nobility containing a plea for toleration.

He completed a Latin edition of his martyrology in 1559, the same year Protestant Queen Elizabeth I ascended to the throne. Foxe returned to England and to the service of one of his former pupils, now the Duke of Norfolk.

Foxe produced in 1563 an English version of his massive work of about 1,800 pages. This edition included accounts of many of the 300 martyrs during Queen Mary’s reign. A striking volume with extensive documentation and woodcut illustrations, it became

extremely popular with English Protestants.

However, Catholic writers attacked its accuracy. These criticisms prompted Foxe to labor seven more years, paying careful attention to the details and accuracy of the book. He based his accounts of the martyrs on authentic documents, reports of the trials and statements received directly from the friends of the martyrs.

In 1570 he produced a second corrected edition. Two more editions followed in his lifetime. “Book of Martyrs” was placed in numerous churches in England, often found chained, as the Bible was, to a lectern for the people’s use.

Foxe died April 18, 1587, in Cripplegate, London. †

By Joanne Sloan

Joanne Sloan, a member of First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, has been a published writer of articles and books for 30 years. She has a bachelor’s degree double majoring in history and English from East Texas State University (now Texas A&M–Commerce) and a master’s degree specializing in English from the University of Arkansas (1978).



FOX

## Smith to build upon transformations that marked Foley’s administration

(continued from page 1)

experience. He has done in other places what we need done at the University of Mobile. And thirdly he has demonstrated humility,” he said.

“A man who has accomplished what he has accomplished in life to come in and be a down-to-earth, Christ-centered servant is amazing.

“We saw in Dr. Smith an absolute commitment to academic excellence in faculty, staff and students. I think the bar will be raised significantly,” Harbin added.

Smith said he and his wife, Penney, are excited about the opportunity. She is a health care administrator consultant, serving as chief quality officer and helping hospitals with health care regulatory compliance. The couple has two children.

Foley said he and the board of trustees have been working toward the goal of having a new president in place with a planned strategy for a successful hand-off of leadership.

### ‘No better person’

“Marilyn and I are delighted to welcome Tim and Penney to the University of Mobile family,” he said. “We have invested 18 years of our lives into this special place, and I can think of no better person to lead the university to even greater things than Dr. Tim Smith.”

Smith holds a doctorate in leadership and a master of arts in theological studies, both from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky; a

## About the University of Mobile

The University of Mobile is a Christian university affiliated with the Alabama Baptist State Convention located on an 880-acre campus near Mobile.

More than 1,500 students are enrolled in more than 40 undergraduate and graduate programs in the university’s various colleges:

- ▶ College of Arts and Sciences,
- ▶ School of Business,
- ▶ School of Christian Ministries,
- ▶ School of Education,
- ▶ The Roger Breland School of

doctorate in nursing (anesthesia) from the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, Graduate College in Memphis; a master of science in nursing from the University of Tennessee Health Science Center, College of Nursing; a diploma in nurse anesthesia from the University of Tennessee Graduate School of Medicine; a bachelor of science in nursing from Memphis State University in Tennessee; and a diploma in nursing from Baptist Memorial Hospital School of Nursing in Memphis, Tennessee.

Smith has held a variety of academic positions, from assistant professor to provost. He was at the University of Ten-

Music, Adult and Professional Studies,

- ▶ School of Nursing
- ▶ School of Worship Leadership, and
- ▶ Graduate Programs.

The 10-member presidential search committee was assisted by the executive search firm JobfitMatters, a nationally recognized company specializing in higher education and the nonprofit sector. Committee members included alumni, pastors, faculty and staff and also represented the fields of higher education, business, real estate, banking and law. (UMobile)

nessee Health Science Center, College of Nursing, from 1997 to 2004 and at Union University from 2005 to 2014.

He joined Anderson University in 2014 as vice president of strategic initiatives and special associate to the provost, becoming provost in 2015. Since 2014 he has served as adjunct professor in the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry at Southern Seminary.

### Author, ‘visionary leader’

He is the author of numerous scholarly articles as well as book reviews and research abstracts.

Smith has a reputation as a visionary leader with business acumen and as a

developer of academic programs with an ability to enhance revenues while providing a strong educational process.

As dean and professor of the School of Nursing at Union University, he grew the program over nine years from approximately 400 pre-nursing and nursing students and 17 faculty/staff to 747 students and 55 faculty/staff, becoming the largest faith-based nursing school in the nation.

### Intentional integration

He was responsible for the day-to-day operations of Anderson University, which at 3,200 students is more than twice the size of UMobile. While there, he led the effort to establish the university as a leader in the health sciences and worked with administration and faculty to expand other educational programs to meet the needs of the region.

Smith will build upon significant transformations that marked Foley’s administration. Among those are an intentional integration of a Christian worldview into all aspects of academics, campus life and university operations.

During Foley’s tenure, the university invested \$44.8 million in capital projects, started online academic programs, built residence halls and doubled the residential capacity to 734, created the Center for Performing Arts and the humanities Honors Program, and developed an active Campus Life program with extensive opportunities for mentoring, leadership development, service, missions and more. (UMobile)

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# Franklin Graham's Decision America 2016 tour attracts thousands to Montgomery

Franklin Graham's Decision America 2016 tour landed on the state Capitol steps in Montgomery on April 14.

Leading the several thousand in attendance in a series of prayers, Graham focused on the country as well as its citizens as individuals.

He also urged all Christians to get involved in politics, noting the United States government "would be better" if all elected offices were filled by people who lived by Christian principles.

"We need more Daniels," he said, explaining that Daniel was a "godly politician who served under seven pagan kings."

Graham also emphasized the importance of voting.

Millions of evangelicals do not vote, he said, challenging those in attendance to always study the candidates. Learn what each one stands for and what he or she believes in, then vote for the one who will uphold Christian beliefs, he said.

Graham's message came from the book of Nehemiah.

Just as Nehemiah asked for a favor from the king in his day, "we need a favor from God,"



Photo by Phil Hicks

Franklin Graham speaks to the several thousand in attendance during the Decision America 2016 tour on the state Capitol steps in Montgomery on April 14.

Graham said. "Our country is in trouble in many ways. We are in moral trouble, economic trouble and spiritual trouble.

"Our only hope is in God," he said, noting that only God can make America great again, not a party or politician.

"Before our country can be healed, our individual hearts must be healed," Graham reminded the crowd. (Phil Hicks)



**Buddy, a medical service dog**

Photo by Phil Hicks

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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For April 24

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

### SELFLESS Acts 6:1-10

#### A Need Discovered (1-2)

The early Church is often idolized as a perfect congregation of Christians, but even at this stage of the Church there were problems. In Chapter 5, Ananias and Sapphira lied. In this chapter, the Hellenistic Jewish widows were being ignored. These widows spoke Greek, the international language of the time, but did not speak Hebrew. For some reason, they were not being provided for like the Hebrew widows. This was possibly because of a language difference and was probably not an intentional oversight, but it was a real problem and could have caused a rift in the Church.

In your church if you see someone who has needs but seems to be neglected, see how you can help. Showing compassion and care for people in our congregation is a clear demonstration of the impact God has had on our lives and provides the community around us with a witness to the power and love of God.

The disciples recognized they were called to preach the Word of God. In order to fulfill this calling others, like deacons, had to step up to help meet the needs of the church body. Each person in the church has a role to fill.

#### A Solution Reached (3-7)

The disciples did not see food distribution as beneath them. They recognized their calling was not only to preach the Word, but also to serve. This is a crucial

distinction. We can see from the life of Jesus that leaders need to be servants and willing to serve. But the Holy Spirit gifts each Christian in the body of Christ in order for the Church to glorify God (see 1 Cor. 12:12 and following). It is important for Christians to recognize these gifts so the Church can run smoothly in fulfilling its calling. Often we are tempted to treat some jobs as more important than other jobs, but this is a fallacy. The person that cleans the church building is a vital member of the congregation, just as the deacons are. In what areas has God gifted you? Are you using these gifts for God's service?

#### A Servant Tested (8-10)

Stephen was a faithful witness for the Lord. Various Jews came and disputed with him but they could not compete with Stephen because he had wisdom and the Holy Spirit.

This shows us that it is important to know what the Bible says and to be controlled by the Spirit. Many Christians are guilty of 1 of 2 fallacies. The first is they know the contents of the Bible and believe that knowing about God is good enough. The second is they rely only on the Holy Spirit and do not know the contents of the Bible.

It is evident that Stephen knew the contents of the Bible and was filled with the Spirit which provides us with the insight and wisdom to understand the Scriptures. The Jews could not stand up to Stephen's wisdom and power (from the Holy Spirit) and so they resorted to distorting his message to get him in trouble.

The Bible presents many cases in which the preaching of the gospel leads to persecution. We saw this in Acts 5 when the disciples were arrested for preaching about Jesus. But God calls us to be steadfast in affirming the truth of the gospel even if it costs us our jobs, freedom and our lives. †

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

### REDEEMED FROM BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS Genesis 27:41; 33:1-11

#### Self-centeredness can destroy relationships. (41)

The sibling rivalry between Esau and Jacob started in the womb, and now Jacob had stolen the birthright and the blessing. Esau makes no bones about his feelings or plans. "Don't get mad, get even" is a popular maxim, but Esau practiced both: He carried a hateful grudge against Jacob and plotted to kill him. If Esau could not savor the blessing, neither would Jacob. Rebekah, gifted at scheming herself, was obliged to deliver her favorite son over to her brother, Laban. However, Rebekah had greatly underestimated the range of the mischief to which she had contributed. Jacob's stay away from home lasted not "a few days" (v. 44), but 20 years.

It is important to recall that Jacob does not escape unscathed from this incident. He is driven penniless from his home, experiences the 20-year exile and his mother dies before he has the opportunity to see her again.

#### Displaying humility can rebuild relationships. (1-4)

The meeting with Esau occurred immediately at the conclusion of Jacob's wrestling encounter with God. Jacob has just given the place its name and then he sees Esau coming in the distance. Esau is already on the way when Jacob sends his messengers to his brother. Jacob has time only to stagger his family in such a way that those less close to him — first Zilpah and Bilhah, then Leah — are the first to be met in an encounter that Jacob is unsure will be hostile or friendly. In the worst case scenario, at least Rachel would have time to escape while Esau was attacking those he encountered first.

There is an interesting matter hidden between the lines of this story. God had told Jacob and Esau's mother that Esau would bow to Jacob. Isaac said this as well when he blessed Jacob. Yet here we find Jacob bowing seven times to Esau. Ordinarily a single bow was sufficient to show great respect, even to a king. In this humble act, Jacob is hoping Esau will find it in his heart to be reconciled to his brother.

#### Be willing to forgive and move forward. (5-11)

Esau does not return a humble bow to his estranged brother. Even better, he runs to Jacob, falls on his neck, kisses him and weeps. Clearly a change had taken place in Esau's heart. What had been feared by Jacob as a hostile encounter becomes a full-fledged reunion. Jacob insists that Esau receive the gifts Jacob has brought. But now they are not gifts of appeasement but gifts of gratitude for Esau's forgiveness.

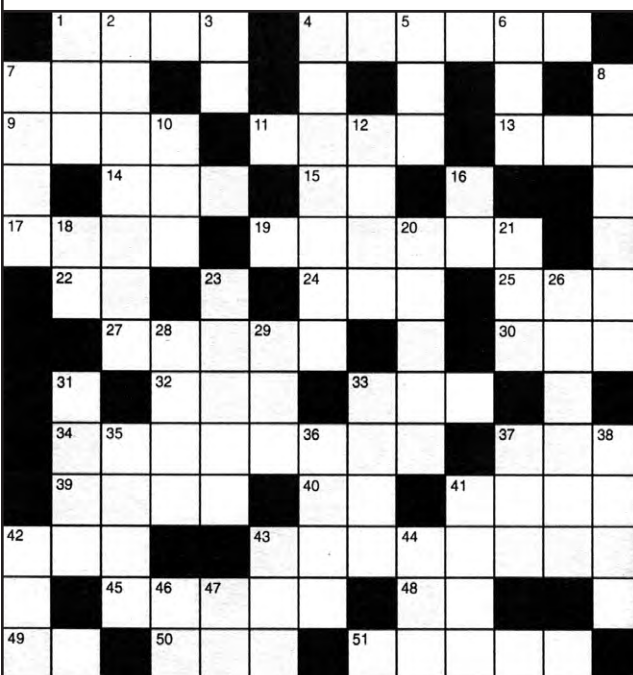
There is a marvelous correspondence in the brothers' reconciliation to Jacob's nighttime encounter with God. In both cases Jacob was facing what he perceived as a likely mortal threat, and he was anxious about the outcome. And in both cases he is amazed at the kindness he winds up receiving. This wonderful parallel becomes clearest in Jacob's heartfelt statement that seeing Esau's face was like seeing "the face of God" (v. 10).

All of their lives, Jacob and Esau had had the nitroglycerin of relationships, characterized by hatred, fear and betrayal. But somehow these two siblings who had fought in their mother's womb are suddenly hugging, weeping, making introductions all around and giving gifts. This glad reunion reminds us when we have the spiritual maturity to reconcile with our brothers and sisters, we are exhibiting the face of God — the face of forgiveness, acceptance and unconditional love. †



## Christian Crossword

By Gladys Johnson Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



### Across

1. Woman who gleaned Boaz's fields.
4. I will \_\_\_ them from death. (Hos. 13:14)
7. Informal word for sibling.
9. A dueling sword.
11. One tenth of a dollar.
13. Organ of hearing.
14. To allow or permit.
15. Informal word for "mother."
17. The Holy Ghost shall come upon \_\_\_. (Luke 1:35)
19. Moses' father-in-law. (Ex. 18:5)
22. In the same manner.
24. To note maiden name.
25. Any monkey.
27. To walk proudly.
30. A metal of low strength.
32. Used in rowing.
33. A nephew of Abram. (Gen. 12:5)

34. Mary \_\_\_ the feet of Jesus. (John 12:3)
37. A chum.
39. To cast off.
40. A printing measure.
41. Second letter of Greek alphabet.
42. A mineral spring.
43. To become ragged.
45. And \_\_\_ bare Abram a son. (Gen. 16:15)
48. Introducing an alternative.
49. A negative vote.
50. Small child.
51. A heavenly messenger.

### Down

1. To tear.
2. Not capable of any service.
3. A male.
4. And they parted his \_\_\_, and cast lots. (Luke 23:34)
5. Female deer.
6. The first mother.
7. And he \_\_\_ forth a raven. (Gen. 8:7)
8. Jesus had \_\_\_ from the grave.
10. Large shoe size.
12. A companion.
16. Emergency Room. (abbr.)
18. A sound of triumph.
20. When \_\_\_ the king had heard these things. (Matt. 2:3)
21. A cereal grain.
23. A quality of character.
26. And delivered him to Pontius \_\_\_ the governor. (Matt. 27:2)
28. An instrument to aid in manual work.
29. A water vessel.
31. Thy word is a \_\_\_ unto my feet. (Ps. 119:105)
33. Forty days of fasting prior to Easter.
35. Captain of a floating zoo.

36. Rip or rend.
37. For each.
38. To dip a liquid.
41. A thick mass of ice.
42. Thou art my beloved \_\_\_. (Mark 1:11)
43. To make an edging.
44. Large measure of weight.
46. Position.
47. And Jethro said to Moses, \_\_\_ in peace. (Ex. 4:18)



# TOP 10

*best-selling Christian books*

## FICTION

1. **The English Son**  
By Wanda E. Brunstetter (Barbour)
2. **Risen**  
By Angela Hunt (Bethany)
3. **Threads of Grace**  
By Kelly Long (Thomas Nelson)
4. **The Restoration**  
By Wanda E. Brunstetter (Barbour)
5. **The Cowboy's Bride Collection**  
By Susan Page Davis (Barbour)
6. **The Shack (Paperback)**  
By William Paul Young (Windblown)
7. **God's Not Dead**  
By Travis Thrasher (Tyndale)
8. **War Room**  
By Chris Fabry (Tyndale)
9. **Covered Bridge Charm**  
By Dianne Christner (Barbour)
10. **The Shack (Mass Market)**  
By William Paul Young (Windblown)

## NONFICTION

1. **Jesus Calling (Hardback)**  
By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
2. **The 5 Love Languages**  
By Gary Chapman (Moody)
3. **Fervent**  
By Priscilla Shirer (B&H)
4. **Living Forward**  
By Michael Hyatt and Daniel Harkavy (Baker)
5. **(Un)Qualified**  
By Steven Furtick (Multnomah)
6. **The Battle Plan for Prayer**  
By Stephen Kendrick (B&H)
7. **The Wait**  
By DeVon Franklin and Meagan Good (Howard)
8. **Overload**  
By Joyce Meyer (FaithWords)
9. **Jesus Calling (Deluxe Edition)**  
By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
10. **Imagine Heaven**  
By John Burke (Baker)

*Source: Christian Book Expo at press time*

# Touching lives



## 7Eighth Time Down aims to encourage audiences

By Leann Callaway  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**W**ith the songs on their album “God Is On The Move,” the Christian rock band 7Eighth Time Down hopes to encourage audiences to respond by taking action, walking in obedience and following Christ.

The Kentucky-based band is made up of lead singer Mikey Howard, bass player Cliff Williams, guitarist Eric Van Zant and drummer Austin Miller.

“We’re a group of four friends with the same mission, heart and purpose to connect people to God through music,” Howard said.

Their group name derives from 2 Kings 5:14 when a prophet told King Naaman, who was suffering from leprosy, to bathe seven times in the Jordan River and he would be cured.

“We chose this name because it reminds us to stay humble, submit to God’s will and follow Him wherever He leads,” Howard said. “It’s amazing how God uses the songs to speak into people’s lives. I don’t know how anyone can be in ministry and not approach it with a huge sense of humility. We recognize that God could have chosen anyone to do this, but for some reason He chose us. Our group name constantly reminds us that these songs are all about Him and His glory.”

Wherever the group performs, their goal is to provide students and young adults a life-changing encounter with God.

### Experiencing God

“Ultimately as a band, we’ve had a revival spirit through our songs over the past few years,” Howard said. “Each one of the songs tells a unique story, and we want the listeners to encounter an experience with God.”

In an effort to encourage young people to reach out and make a difference in the lives of other people, band members help raise awareness for

missions organizations such as CURE International at their concerts. CURE International is a nonprofit organization that operates charitable hospitals and programs in 30 countries worldwide where patients experience hope and healing while hearing the gospel and receiving surgical treatments.

### ‘Power in His name’

While keeping a busy schedule touring around the country, their music and message has been well received. Their hit song, “Just Say Jesus,” spent 52 weeks on the National Christian Audience Chart following its release in 2013.

“One of the most powerful testimonies about this song came from the family of a young woman suffering from a debilitating disability,” Howard said. “As a result of this disability, she is confined to a wheelchair and can’t communicate well. When her muscles draw in really tight, she is in excruciating pain. In the midst of all this suffering, she has found faith in Christ.

“She was at a concert and her parents told us that this is her favorite song. Whenever she hears this song her muscles will relax and she can communicate without any pain. ... We wrote this song to serve as a reminder that when you don’t know what to say and words aren’t enough, just say the name of Jesus and remember there’s power in His name.”

More than having a passion for music, the group has a calling to touch lives.

“We love hearing testimonies about how people have connected with Christ through these songs, and we are so grateful for the opportunities to help bring about life change,” Howard said. “We love the process of writing new songs because it challenges us to dive deeper in God’s Word and draw closer to Him. During the songwriting process, you have to rely on the blessing of His anointing for the songs to get an effective response and remember that it’s all about His glory.” †

# Striving for God

## Bulls' pitcher prays for God's will in his life daily

By Bill Sorrell  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**M**ark Sappington did not get a big head when he was given his own bobblehead night — quite the opposite.

"I got crushed by the Visalia Rawhide. I just got smacked. It was super humbling. It's funny now but it wasn't at the time," said Sappington, who was a pitcher for the Montgomery Biscuits in 2015. He was assigned to the Durham Bulls in Durham, North Carolina, on April 5. Durham is the Tampa Bay Rays' Triple-A team in the international league.

With an upbeat attitude, Sappington brought a "happy, spiritual influence" to the Biscuits.

"I love life. I love people. I try to find the good in whatever is going on. I have got a lot of good people around me. I have learned that the way you treat your teammates and the attitude that you bring to the ball park every day, no matter how you are playing is something that I attribute to Christianity and to [my] relationship with the Lord," he said.

"This game is volatile at times. You have ups and downs. ... But that relationship you have with the Lord really reminds you we are not meant to live for things of this world but rather to glorify God in everything that we do.

"God doesn't call us to be of this world, to conform, but rather be transformed. That is how I keep a good countenance. It is something that I bring to the park every day. I bring Him to the mound with me every time I am there."

Growing up in a Christ-centered home in the Kansas City area, Sappington was challenged to have a personal relationship with Jesus from a young age. But in February 2015, Sappington re-committed his life to Christ. "My faith has always been huge in my life but I kicked it into higher gear and (that) set me more on fire for the Lord."

He began studying his Bible more, memorizing Scripture and changing his attitude toward women.

"I was not a womanizer by any means but I wasn't staying pure the way that God calls us. It came to a point, 'Am I honoring God? Am I honoring my own body? Am I honoring her?'" he said. "The girls that I am friends with now, I see as daughters of the Lord.

"You never know when God is going to change your life or who is going to be there. I am in awe every day what He does in my life and what He

does for different people. I try to see Jesus in everyone."

And Sappington's former teammates have seen his spiritual depth.

Former Montgomery first baseman and Durham Bull Cameron Seitzer said, "Obviously he puts the Lord first. You see him reading the Word daily. He is always there for anybody who needs him. ... He is probably one of the most positive guys I have ever played with."

Former Montgomery shortstop and Durham Bull Daniel Robertson said Sappington cares about teammates.

"He is a really whole-hearted guy. He cares about what you have to say. He has got a good head on his shoulders, great character — just a guy you like being around. He is awesome. He is real dedicated to the Lord. He pours his life out to Jesus, his Savior. He knows who he is playing baseball for and he is giving glory to the Lord.

"When I said I can talk to him about anything, I mainly mean about the Lord," Robertson said. "He is just so knowledgeable and approachable. In that aspect, he is a glossary. He knows a lot about God, the Bible and Jesus. That is someone you want to be around, which is really incredible."

Before being traded by the Los Angeles Angels to the Tampa Bay

Rays in November 2014, Sappington pitched for the Inland Empire 66ers, the Angels' High-A team in the California League.

He was the highest draft pick in the history of Rockhurst's baseball program. A native of Peculiar, Missouri, Sappington was an NCAA Division 2 All-American. In 2012 he had a 10-3 record with a 1.78 ERA and led the Great Lakes Valley Conference in strikeouts with 101 (10th in the NCAA).

Sappington said, "God calls us to get ready to play this game ... but the victory is His. I think that is a beautiful thing. It's going out there and giving your all no matter what the situation is and getting ready for whatever battle the Lord has for you.

"Make sure you are prepared for whatever He throws your way or for whatever opportunity He gives you, just trust in Him and give gratitude and credit to Him. It is truly all His. The world is so fleeting. Everything we get is from Him.

"I pray for His will in my life every day. I think He is calling me to trust Him, not to trust in myself. He has given me this in baseball to continue to chase Him and grow in Him every day." ✠



Photo courtesy of the Montgomery Biscuits  
**Mark Sappington**



*World of*  
**RELIGION**  
*Compiled from Wire Services*

### Court rules in favor of Iranian Christians

STRASBOURG, France — Iranian Christian converts must be granted the right to a fair evaluation of danger by European governments before they can be denied asylum and sent back to the Islamic Republic, the top human rights court in Europe ruled March 30, according to The Christian Post.

This ruling by the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of F.G. v. Sweden takes into account the amount of persecution Iranian Christians may receive in their home country. Iran, where apostasy from Islam is a criminal offense punishable by death, is ranked the ninth worst country in the world for Christian persecution.

The court also said Sweden would be in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights if it did not provide a fair assessment of danger. The case originated with the Swedish Migration Office rejecting an unnamed convert's request for asylum in 2010 without a fair assessment of the danger. The lower chamber of the court ruled in 2014 that Sweden was not in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights by denying the convert's request for asylum, as Iranian authorities had not known of his conversion at that time.

Paul Coleman, senior counsel and deputy director for Alliance Defending Freedom International, said, "Sadly, the anti-conversion laws in Iran pose a direct threat to those who have converted to Christianity and we must ensure that a convert's right to life is being upheld by all means." (TAB)

### Israel grappling with national identity, survey says

WASHINGTON — Israel is grappling with profound existential questions of its national identity, including how Jewish the Jewish state can be.

More than three-quarters (76 percent) of Israeli Jews believe their country can be both Jewish and democratic, a view rejected by majorities of Israeli Muslims and Christians, according to a comprehensive new survey released by the Washington-based Pew Research Center on March 8.

The report also highlights the precarious relationship between Jews and Arabs in Israel, with 48 percent of Jewish Israelis favoring the expulsion or transfer of Arabs from the nation. Arabs in Israel are overwhelmingly Muslim and represent 14 percent of the population. Christian Arabs represent 2 percent.

And while 21 percent of Israeli Jews say there is "a lot of discrimination against Muslims" in Israel, 79 percent of Israeli Arabs hold that view.

The report also found that while nearly all Israeli Jews say they're Jewish, half (49 percent) consider themselves secular, even as they engage in some Jewish religious practices. And 1 in 5 Jewish Israelis profess no belief in God. (RNS)

### Ancient symbol for Christ discovered in Gaza

GAZA, Palestine — An ancient Greek symbol for Christ was reportedly discovered at the ruins of a Byzantine church in Gaza dating back from around 1,500 years ago, The Christian Post reported.

"Our first thought is that the site is a cathedral or a church from the Byzantine period," said Jamal Abu Rida, general director of the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, which revealed the discovery April 4. "During that era, there was a great interest among the Byzantine rulers to build churches in the Gaza Strip."

Construction workers reported finding segments of marble pillars with Corinthian capitals along with a 90-centimeter foundation stone with a Greek symbol for Jesus Christ.

Abu Rida said the ministry cannot properly excavate the site because of a lack of resources, but its mission is to "preserve our Palestinian history before Islam and after Islam."

The construction workers had been preparing the ground for a shopping center, a project that may be put on hold if excavation efforts discover more ancient pieces. (TAB)