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# Keeping balance

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## How do Alabama Baptist pastors balance pleasing God and their congregation?

By Martha Simmons  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

It's a tightrope that many a Baptist minister has found himself tiptoeing across: How to please his congregation without falling into the "people pleaser" trap. How can a pastor keep his balance?

"Ah, the age-old question," said Kevin Blackwell, executive director of Samford University's Ministry Training Institute in Birmingham and assistant to the president for church relations. "Every pastor deals with this on a weekly basis. The apostle Paul dealt with it. He says to the Galatians, 'For do I now persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I wouldn't be a bondservant of Christ' (Gal. 1:10). There is an undeniable tension particularly for pastors who enter a new field of service."

Blackwell laid out a typical scenario for how that tension works.

"A new pastor arrives at a church. The pulpit committee has said all the right things and he feels genuinely optimistic toward an effective future and great growth opportunities for the church. He has good ideas and spends the first few months observing the issues in the church that need to be dealt with and the growth hindrances that need to be changed.

"After a time he suggests to key church leaders and deacons that certain longstanding (ineffective) programs and traditions need to be changed in order to maximize the church's outreach ef-

forts and relevance to the culture in which it serves. That may include changes to worship style, staff, by-laws, budget, facilities, educational structures, etc.

**"Priority is God first, people next."**

**Pastor Jimmy Jackson  
Whitesburg Baptist  
Church, Huntsville**

"Inevitably the pastor receives a mixed bag of responses which leads him to a crisis of decision. Does he make the changes that he knows are most needed or does he capitulate to the loudest voices and best tithers who seem to have issues with his suggestions?"

Jimmy Jackson, pastor of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, said the line between pleasing congregations and being a people pleaser may be difficult to see but

"determining to please the Lord by teaching and preaching the truth should keep us on track."

"Priority is God first, people next," Jackson asserted.

Scriptural passages underscore that motto.

### For God's glory

Blackwell said, "Paul gives us continual encouragement on doing things for the Lord's glory and not man. 'And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,' Colossians 3:17. Though Paul is speaking specifically in Colossians 3:22-23 about the relationship slaves have with masters, the biblical principle applies to all circumstances. 'Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye-service, as (See 'People pleasing,' page 7)

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# COMMENT

## The Candidates' Charitable Giving

If today's presidential candidates were living in olden times they would all have trouble with the law's demand for charitable giving.

According to Henry Lansdell in his book "The Tithe in Scripture," "before the Bible was written, and apart therefrom, it was an almost universal practice among civilized nations for people to pay tithes to their gods."

What is not known is when, where and why the practice of tithing started. We know only that it was the practice of most places.

In Jewish life, the first reference to the tithe is found in Genesis 14:18. Abram meets Melchizedek who is a priest of "The Most High God" and gives the priest 10 percent of the bounty just won in battle (v. 20). From there the practice of tithing grew until Jews paid about one quarter of their annual income in three different tithes.

It is generally accepted that the first tithe was "the Lord's tithe" described in Leviticus 27:30-33. This tithe was given to the Levites who shared it with the priests (Num. 18:25-29). This tithe supported those who worked in the tabernacle.

A second annual tithe related to the festivals (Deut. 14:22-26). The third tithe was a charity tithe to care for "the aliens, the fatherless and the widows." This tithe was given every three years and stored to meet needs which might arise (Deut. 14:28-29).

### Today's presidential candidates

Against the Old Testament law, today's presidential candidates would be found wanting.

An April 17 Religion News Service article by Charles Camosy, associate professor of theology and social ethics at Fordham University in Bronx, New York, pointed out that John Kasich gives the most to charitable causes on the Republican side.

But his giving is less than 2 percent. Ted Cruz gives less than 1 percent.

Of Donald Trump, Camosy wrote, he gives



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

"only a tiny percentage relying on outside donations given in his name."

On the Democratic side the writer points out that when President Barack Obama was a presidential candidate in 2008, he was roundly criticized for giving less than 2 percent to charity.

Today Hillary Clinton reports the highest percentage but much of it, adds Camosy, is to her own foundation.

Bernie Sanders' charitable giving is reported at 4 percent.

If these candidates lived in ancient Egypt, Babylon or Israel they would all have trouble with the law's demand related to an annual tithe to help others.

But Christians no longer live under the law, one might argue. Today we live under grace. So what did Jesus say about giving?

As a starting point we might remember our Lord's words in Matthew 5:20 when He said, "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."

A Pharisee could not take the vow of purity without first pledging to pay all his tithes (the whole 25 percent or so of his income). If that were the starting point of the Pharisee, what might Christ expect from those who call Him Lord?

In Matthew 23:23, Jesus condemns the Pharisees for concentrating so much on tithing that they leave the "weightier matters of the law" undone. Jesus did not condemn tithing.

In fact, He said, "These you ought to have done." What Jesus condemned was the neglect of judgment, mercy and faith.

Jesus recognized paying a tithe as God's laws for the Jews and seems to imply that His followers will at least begin with a tithe and go beyond it with mercy and faith.

Specific Scriptural teachings make that point. In Luke 3:11, Jesus says if one has two coats,

one of the coats should be shared with a person who has none.

The same verse makes the same point about sharing food.

Matthew 5:42 records Jesus' teaching to give to the one who asks of you and not to turn away one who wants to borrow from you.

In Luke 14:13-14, Jesus illustrated the role of faith and mercy through the analogy of a banquet. He urged believers to invite "the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind." Such guests may not enhance one's reputation on earth but it will be remembered in heaven, He said.

Also, Jesus said when you minister to "one of the least of these" you minister unto Me (Matt. 25:40).

"Freely you have received," Jesus said in Matthew 10:8. Therefore, Christians should "freely give."

### What is your motive?

The apostle Paul urged the church at Ephesus to "remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:35).

The emphasis is never on perfunctory giving.

The concern is for the motive that results in giving. That is why the apostle John asks how the love of God can be in anyone who has material wealth and "sees his brother in need but has no pity upon him" (1 John 3:17).

Against these teachings of our Lord, the tendency might be to say the presidential candidates would have trouble with this test as well.

But what about us? According to the Center for Charitable Statistics, Americans gave on average 2.9 percent of their taxable

income to charitable causes of all types for the last year of record. As small as that number is, it is an increase compared to recent years.

### Faithful use of all

How can we talk about the charitable giving of any public figure when those who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ fail to meet the letter of the Jewish law, let alone surpass the righteousness of the Pharisees and teachers of the law?

The goal of Christian stewardship is the faithful use of all one has for the glory of God. We cannot learn to use all that we have for the glory of God until we first master the faithful stewardship of the first 10 percent through tithing.

Remember that according to what Jesus taught, tithing is not the goal line outlined by law. Tithing is the starting line marked by mercy and faith. †

**"According to what  
Jesus taught, tithing  
is not the goal line  
outlined by law.  
Tithing is the starting  
line marked by  
mercy and faith."**

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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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# Importance of financial security at church



## County sheriff urges churches to develop plan for securing offerings

By Gary Hardin  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Church offerings are becoming a frequent target for thieves. In recent years a safe containing church offerings was stolen from a Mobile church. Two armed men robbed offerings from a Montgomery church. Thieves broke into a Shelby County church and stole church offerings.

"Would-be thieves find easy pickings in most churches and it starts with the offering plate," said Matthew Hirschy, vice president of finance and treasurer at Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company.

Church financial fraud (including embezzlement and offering theft) is increasing at an annual rate of nearly 6 percent, according to the Center for the Study of Global Christianity.

If this statistic seems alarming, according to GuideStone Financial Resources and Brotherhood Mutual, about 80 percent of all cases of church fraud and offering theft go unreported and, therefore, are not included in the 6 percent.

Coosa County Sheriff Terry Wilson encourages churches to develop a plan for securing church offerings.

"It starts with a plan and then exercising that plan. I encourage churches to give attention to offering security because of the times we live in. This reality should be apparent," Wilson said.

Rockford Baptist Church in Central Baptist Association recognized that it needed a plan for church offering security. Pastor Jeff Fuller led Rockford Baptist to elect an accounting committee that made sure the church has multiple offering counters who rotate their responsibilities.

### Overnight deposit

"Our counters count the offering in a room with a closed and locked door," Fuller said. "The offerings are immediately placed in the overnight deposit box at our bank. The next day the church's financial secretary reconciles and verifies the deposit."

When a church incurs financial losses because of theft, church leaders need to identify the holes that allowed the problem

to develop in the first place, according to Brock Bell, senior manager of risk control at Brotherhood Mutual.

"The first step in reducing the risk of this happening at your church is to put safety measures in place that can prevent financial crimes from ever being committed," Bell said.

GuideStone and Brotherhood Mutual advise churches to enlist money counters who are not related by family and who do not work at the same place during the week. Also avoid selecting someone experiencing a financial crisis, they said. The responsibility of counting offerings might expose such a person to temptation.

Jim Swedenburg, director of the office of Cooperative Program and stewardship development at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, agreed with their advice. Swedenburg also added, "While collecting and counting money, never leave cash in the hands of one person until the cash is dropped into the bank overnight deposit box."

Swedenburg believes no cell phones or handheld devices should be in the counting area. "These devices should be laid face down on a separate table or counter." He also recommends that each check given be endorsed immediately by money counters using a rubber stamp, "For Deposit Only," and include the name of the bank, the name of the church and the account number.

### Watch for red flags

Hirschy said churches should "watch for three red flags and put checks and balances in place." The first red flag is that only one person is responsible for all church monies. Second money is counted by only one person. Third there is inadequate supervision of those who count and handle church money.

Arthur Williams, a member of First Baptist Church, Jasper, and an insurance agent with Byars-Wright Inc., said, "Crime coverage should be part of a church's insurance policy. Crime coverage can cover both employee and church volunteer dishonesty."

SBOM's office of LeaderCare and church health offers seminars on church security as resources to church leaders and members. For more information, visit [www.alsbom.org](http://www.alsbom.org).

## 10 essentials for security of church offerings

1. Develop financial security policies and procedures for your church.
2. Give written copies of these policies and procedures to each person who has access to church funds.
3. Perform annual background checks on all persons who have access to church funds.
4. Have more than one person present when church offerings are counted and rotate counting teams.
5. Always count church offerings behind closed and locked doors.
6. Stamp checks "For Deposit Only."
7. Designate a teller to record the money received. Ask another to review and initial the record.
8. Deposit offerings immediately.
9. Never allow counters or other persons to take church money to their homes.
10. Provide insurance coverage that protects the church from financial fraud and theft.

(Sources: GuideStone Financial Resources and Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company)

# Upcoming ELECTION



## Southern Baptists have 3 distinct pastors as options for SBC president

By Neisha Roberts  
The Alabama Baptist

**S**outhern Baptists will have at least three distinct options for president of the convention when they meet June 14–15 in St. Louis, Missouri.

At press time, the 2016 nominees are (listed in order of their announcement about being nominated): J.D. Greear, pastor of The Summit Church, Durham, North Carolina; former Alabama Baptist pastor Steve Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, Tennessee; and David Crosby, pastor of First Baptist Church, New Orleans.

Greear, 42, who will be nominated by Florida pastor Jimmy Scroggins, has served as pastor of The Summit Church for 14 years, and is married to Veronica. If elected he would be the second youngest SBC president in history.

Under his leadership, The Summit Church has grown from 350 members to just under 10,000.

Leading the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) as president was not on Greear's "radar at all and definitely not on my five-year plan," he told *The Alabama Baptist*.

"But then several older leaders in the SBC whom I love and respect told me they believed the Holy Spirit wanted me to let my name be put in the nomination this season," Greear said.

"We believe that it's time for a new generation to join up with 'older' generations to take responsibility for the entities and mission boards of the SBC. There are still 6,000 unreached people groups in the world and ... church planting in the United States is not keeping up with population growth. ... We can't be OK with these things. This has to break our hearts and we have to do something," Greear said.

"The SBC intentionally has a 'wide tent,' but sometimes we let our rather minor differences obscure the glorious gospel and urgent mission that unites us. The Baptist Faith & Message 2000 (BF&M 2000) is our doctrinal rallying point. I believe the BF&M 2000 is an ideal confession of faith, narrow enough to keep us unified on the essentials and broad enough to encompass all gospel-loving, scripturally faithful Baptists. For the sake of the mission, that kind

of unity is absolutely crucial. Every time we fight about a non-essential, evangelism loses and the enemy wins."

Gaines, who will be nominated by former SBC president Johnny Hunt, has served as pastor of churches for 33 years, including Gardendale First Baptist Church. He followed Adrian Rogers as pastor of Bellevue Baptist, which has a membership of close to 30,000.



GAINES

He's served on the SBC Committee on Nominations and as chairman of the SBC Resolutions Committee, among other roles.

Gaines told *The Alabama Baptist* that he and his wife, Donna, had been praying

about the idea of serving as SBC president after several SBC leaders had approached him about the role.

"The climactic point of sensing that call came while I was preparing a sermon from 1 Kings 1 titled, 'Self-Appointed or Spirit-Appointed Leadership.' After God gave me a clear go-ahead, Johnny Hunt ... felt led of the Lord to nominate me."

When looking at the SBC's future, Gaines said, "We need spiritual leadership. God's people must rediscover the power of desperate, fervent prayer. ... America needs God to move miraculously in our midst. Only God can save our nation's problems. ... If we verbally share the gospel of Jesus with lost people, many will be saved. We must also champion the truths that all people are created in God's image, God loves everyone and Jesus died for everyone. ... Each of these emphases must start in us.

"We must also be a loving, biblical, prophetic voice to our culture that has lost its way."

### Working together

Crosby, who will be nominated by former SBC president Fred Luter Jr., has served for 20 years as a pastor of an "average Southern Baptist church," he said, noting that he understands how an "average" church operates.

He said he never imagined himself in the role of SBC president but began praying about the position after he spoke with several friends in the SBC who encouraged the idea. He and his wife, Janet, prayed extensively about the role, he said.

"I believe our convention exists primarily to do work together for the gospel," Crosby said. "Cooperation is our distinctive. But I feel like cooperation is taking

a beating these days. ... Cooperation requires sacrifice and the setting aside of ego and a determination to care for one another and release control of our resources into the hands of brothers and sisters that we trust and entrust to do our cooperative work. ... We can get a lot of things done working on our own but working together is a better plan."

Crosby said he has worked to proclaim the gospel in his city and "if surviving difficult situations is a benefit for the president of the SBC, then I'm most likely the guy who has seen the most difficulties," reflecting on overcoming the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

When it comes to Alabama churches, Greear said they "typify, in many ways, the core-competency work of evangelism and discipleship that the SBC should be most proud of."

### Alabama Baptists 'inspiring'

He also recognized the "great work of the Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief group ... and the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries — both funded by Cooperative Program dollars. The convention there is 'getting its hands dirty' with the work of the ministry, planting churches in the state, mobilizing for missions, resourcing churches and helping out in times of crisis. It's inspiring."

Gaines recalled his 14 years as pastor of Gardendale First Baptist and noted his involvement in sharing the gospel across the state.

"Many pastors and lay people in Alabama know me. I would be grateful to have the privilege of serving Alabama Baptists as president of the SBC and I want us to experience a spiritual awakening and emphasize soul winning and financial stewardship."



CROSBY

Crosby recognized how Alabama Baptists have historically been "very supportive of cooperative work and given sacrificially so we could do missions at the high level we've been doing it."

"I would suggest they look at the candidates and see which one reflects that value. ... I'm a pastor who has been deeply involved in all the different levels of Southern Baptist work together."

For more information on the voting process, visit [www.sbc.net/aboutus/legal/bylaws.asp](http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/legal/bylaws.asp).

## Concerns raised over endorsements of 2016 nominees

**A** YouTube video promoting J.D. Greear for president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has raised concern. The question is the participation of three SBC entity presidents who appear to be endorsing Greear's election. The "It's Tricky" video is a parody of the late 80s rap song with the same name by Run-DMC.

The concern emerged when Greear — pastor of The Summit Church, Durham, North Carolina — began circulating a promotional video March 14 as a campaign ad for SBC president.

The use of social media for individuals who have agreed to be nominated for SBC president is a relatively new move by nominees, as is straight-up endorsements by entity heads on social media.

Greear will be nominated by Jimmy Scroggins, pastor of First Baptist Church, West Palm Beach, Florida, at the 2016 SBC annual meeting to be held in St. Louis, Missouri, on June 14–15.

Also being nominated are Steve Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, Tennessee, and David Crosby, pastor of First Baptist Church, New Orleans. Gaines will be nominated by Johnny Hunt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Georgia. Crosby will be nominated by Fred Luter Jr., pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans. (See full story on nominees, this page.)

While a number of Southern Baptist personalities appear in Greear's video, it is David Platt, president of the International Mission Board; Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC); and Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, who are of concern.

### Unaware of its purpose

Platt denies he knowingly endorsed Greear for SBC president, stating he was not aware Greear's request for a video clip was for the purpose of creating a campaign ad.

Platt responded to an IMB trustee via email March 23, explaining, "while I was overseas in the Middle East, J.D. asked me to shoot a 2-second video saying, 'It's tricky,'" a phrase repeated throughout the video.

But Platt said Greear did not divulge how the clip would be used.

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YouTube video screenshot

The SBC presidency promotional rap video for J.D. Greear, pastor of The Summit Church, Durham, North Carolina, titled 'J.D. Greear for SBC President Rap,' was produced by Ashley Unzicker. She previously produced 'Baptist History Rap.'

"I had no idea what it was for," Platt clarified, although he said he knew beforehand Greear had been nominated.

Platt said it was only when he came back into the United States that he heard about Greear's use of his image and words for the electioneering piece.

### No endorsement

"Please be assured (and please assure anyone who asks you about it) that I am not personally (and we are certainly not organizationally) endorsing anyone for SBC president," Platt wrote, noting he would "be thrilled" to serve alongside any "faithful Southern Baptist pastor who might be nominated to serve in this important role."

Platt also noted apparent disappointment with how Greear's use of him in a campaign video had created an unnecessary distraction, saying, "It's definitely frustrating to come back to issues like this after a couple of weeks overseas, seeing massive needs among unreached refugees who are suffering and dying, and spending concentrated time with our front-line leaders around the world discussing how we can take the gospel to them."

"May God give us grace together across the SBC to keep our focus on that which matters most, here in the U.S. and around the world."

Akin said he did not think "being an entity head" should prohibit or prevent anyone "from expressing their support of a candidate or several candidates."

"I told J.D. ... I thought he would do an excellent job," Akin explained to *The Alabama Baptist*, noting that at the time of his endorsement no other candidates had been declared. Greear was announced as a candidate March 2, Gaines on March 9 and Crosby on March 24.

"Steve Gaines is also a close friend and has been so for many years," Akin said. "I do not know David Crosby well, but I was grateful for his willingness to nominate Fred Luter Jr. as the president of the SBC (in 2011). I have no doubt that each of

these men would serve our convention of churches well."

Akin said his top priority is that the SBC president be "passionately committed to theological integrity, as embodied in the Baptist Faith & Message 2000, North American church planting and international missions."

Attempts to reach Moore for his response to appearing in the video were unsuccessful. An ERLC representative responded to the *Baptist and Reflector* newspaper in Tennessee that Moore was "unavailable."

SBC Executive Committee (EC), generally seen as an honest broker for promoting and protecting the interests of SBC churches, will not weigh in on the issue.

EC President Frank S. Page told the *Louisiana Baptist Message* via email, "Southern Baptist history is illuminating. At various times entity heads served as SBC president. At other times they nominated SBC presidents or commented on SBC presidential nominees."

He added that it was a free speech issue, something the EC had "never attempted to regulate" to his knowledge. "I don't anticipate that changing anytime soon."

### Social media

Page also said social media is changing the medium but not the "practice of Southern Baptists speaking their minds in an active exchange of ideas."

"This all seems healthy," he said. "Can it be distracting? That would seem to depend on the spirit in which it is done."

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — This story was a joint project by the Association of State Baptist Publications. Contributing to the report were Will Hall, editor of the Louisiana Baptist Message; Lonnie Wilkey, editor of the Baptist and Reflector in Tennessee; and Neisha Roberts, editorial production coordinator for The Alabama Baptist (TAB). The story was compiled by Jennifer Davis Rash, executive editor of TAB. ✚

**Social media is changing the medium but not the "practice of Southern Baptists speaking their minds."**

**Frank S. Page president, SBC Executive Committee**

## RELIGION

# in America

Compiled from Wire Services



### Appeals court restores Utah's polygamy law

SALT LAKE CITY — The polygamist family featured in the reality television show "Sister Wives" lost its bid to overturn parts of Utah's anti-bigamy law under a federal appeals court ruling issued April 11.

The case, filed after the show's popularity prompted a criminal investigation into whether star Kody Brown was illegally married to four women, drew international attention and raised questions about whether the state could bar consenting adults from living together.

Polygamy is illegal in all 50 states. But Utah's law is unique in that a person can be found guilty not just for having two legal marriage licenses, but also for cohabiting with another adult in a marriage-like relationship when already legally married to someone else.

In 2013, U.S. District Judge Clark Waddoups struck down part of the state's law, saying it criminalizes intimate relationships among consenting adults. But the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 10th Circuit overturned that ruling April 11. The court said because the Browns had not actually been charged under the law — and the state said it would not prosecute multiple marriage cases unless there were allegations of fraud or criminal activity — the case was moot. (RNS)

### UMC groups petition to cut ties with pro-choice group

WASHINGTON — Some United Methodist Church (UMC) groups are petitioning for the end of the relationship between the Church and pro-choice group Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC).

The UMC annual conferences in Alabama-West Florida, Western Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Mississippi and Indiana are among those that have petitioned the Mainline Protestant denomination to end its ties with RCRC.

John Lomperis, UMC action director at the Institute on Religion & Democracy and an elected delegate for the 2016 UMC General Conference, is calling for the denomination to sever its ties with the abortion advocacy group that previously said it is opposed to any restrictions on abortion, including during the third trimester. (TAB)

### Faith leaders ask candidates to give poor 'living wage'

WASHINGTON — On the anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., dozens of faith leaders

called for U.S. presidential candidates to include a "living wage" for low-income workers in their political agendas.

The move comes days after state officials of New York and California acted to increase their minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

"Interfaith Call for Moral Action on the Economy" was publicly released April 4 and is focused especially on low-wage federal contract workers who cook for senators, clean the offices of generals and sell souvenirs to tourists at the Smithsonian's 19 museums and the National Zoo.

In Alabama, minimum wage was raised to \$10.10 an hour in Birmingham in February but was quickly taken away after a bill passed that bars cities and counties from raising minimum wage or requiring employers to provide leave or other benefits to their employees. The federal minimum wage, \$7.25 an hour, will continue to be the norm in Alabama until other legislation passes to change it. (RNS, TAB)

### Conservative nun Mother Angelica dies at 92

HANCEVILLE, Ala. — Mother Mary Angelica of the Annunciation, the conservative nun who started the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Hanceville, died March 27. She was 92.

Although she was only able to communicate with a squeeze of her hand for many years after a debilitating stroke, she retained devoted admirers nationwide who followed the Catholic cable channel, Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN), that she started in 1981.

Mother Angelica also founded a monastery in Irondale in 1962, starting the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament in the 1990s. (RNS)

### Kentucky removes county clerks' names from marriage licenses

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Kentucky's governor recently signed into law a bill that removes county clerks' names from the state marriage license forms at the center of a controversy involving an official jailed in 2015 for refusing to issue licenses to gay couples.

Senate Bill 216, signed by Gov. Matt Bevin, also created a single form where applicants can choose between being called bride, groom or spouse.

"We now have a single form that accommodates all concerns. Everyone benefits from this common sense legislation," Bevin said. "(Our county clerks) are now able to fully follow the law without being forced to compromise their religious liberty." (RNS)

# Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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## BESSEMER

► **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will host Steve Rayborn & Friends and Songs of Faith in concert May 6. Doors open at 6 p.m. for food and fellowship and the concert will begin at 7 p.m. A love offering will be taken. Scott Bush is pastor.

## BIRMINGHAM

► **Gary Fenton**, pastor of **Dawson Memorial Church, Birmingham**, for 25 years, has announced his upcoming retirement set for Aug. 28. A Missouri native, Fenton has served in full-time senior pastor positions for 44 years.



FENTON

During his time at Dawson, he has led the church to give more than \$10 million to Southern Baptist causes. He and his wife, Alta Faye, have three daughters and five grandchildren.

## BETHEL

► **Providence Church, Gal-**

**lion**, will hold revival services May 15–18. Services will be May 15, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. and May 16–18, 7 p.m. Michael Mason will speak and Donnie Cobb will lead music. David Stidham is pastor.

## COVINGTON

► **Red Oak Church, Florala**, will celebrate homecoming and its 115th anniversary May 1. The service will be at 10 a.m. and there will be no Sunday School. Former pastor Steve Moore will speak and Randall Bradley will lead special music. Lunch will follow the service. Mark Perry is pastor.

## EAST LIBERTY

► **County Line Church, Camp Hill**, will celebrate its 181st homecoming May 2, 10:45 a.m. Former pastor Bill Lunceford will speak and the County Line Singers will provide special music. Lunch will follow the service.

## FAYETTE

► **Macedonia Church, Fayette**, will host Season of Renewal in May. Don Graham will speak May 1, 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. and May 2, 7 p.m. Todd Burr will speak May 9, 7 p.m. Scott

McCullar will speak May 16, 7 p.m. Shawn Doss will speak May 23, 7 p.m. A fellowship meal will be served at 6 p.m. before each service. There will be special music each night. Scott Peters is pastor.

## SHELBY

► Pastor James Blair and Doug Foster baptized seven new Christians on April 17 at **Oak Mountain Church, Pelham**. The church rejoiced and celebrated with a potluck lunch after the service.

## ST. CLAIR

► **Cedar Grove Church, Leeds**, will host Terry Padgett (as Elvis) and Jay Freeman (as Buddy Holly) in concert May 15, 6 p.m. Doors will open at 5 p.m. and a silent auction will end at 5:45 p.m. All proceeds will benefit the scholarship fund for campers attending CentriKid at Shocco Springs. To purchase tickets, call the church office at 205-699-8446. Billy Abrams is pastor. ☞



# Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

## FBC Dallas pastor backs Trump's abortion statement

DALLAS — According to Robert Jeffress, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, those who criticize presidential candidate Donald Trump for saying women should be punished for having abortions are being “hypocritical.”

Trump, who's received stark criticism for his statements during an MSNBC town hall in March, recently suggested that if abortion becomes illegal he thinks women should receive some form of punishment.

Jeffress defended Trump in a tweet saying those who are critical of Trump's comments must not “believe abortion is murder.”

However, Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, believes pro-lifers need to make clear that “protecting unborn babies is not about punishing women but punishing an industry and a culture that dehumanizes human beings,” according to The Christian Post.

Moore said most women who get an abortion are not “ideological foot soldiers in the culture war” and one of the biggest misconceptions about pro-life is that pro-lifers are “pro-baby and anti-women.”

For those who do get abortions, “the abortion clinic appears to be an escape route from a life of unbearable shame, secrecy and hardship,” Moore said. “But these women are being lied to and their consciences are under assault under the accusations of the Deceiver both leading up to and following an abortion. No one is more pro-choice than Satan during the drive to the abortion clinic and nobody is more pro-life than Satan during the drive home.” (TAB)

## British Baptists wrestle with same-sex ‘marriage’

DIDCOT, England — British Baptist leaders recently asked churches not to allow their buildings to be used for same-sex “marriage” ceremonies in order to avoid division in the Church.

Baptist Union of Great Britain approved a statement mid-March recognizing both “areas of genuine and deep disagreement” and “the potential for some diversity in pastor and missional practice” among member churches in regards to homosexuality.

The council said, “In the light of this, recognizing the costs involved and after careful and prayerful reflection and listening, we humbly urge churches who are considering conducting same-sex ‘marriages’ to refrain from doing so out of mutual respect. At the same time, we also humbly urge all churches to remain committed to our union out of mutual respect; trusting that the One who unites us is stronger than what divides us.”

A 2015 law, which legalized same-sex “marriage,” also ensured no clergy could be compelled to solemnize a gay ceremony and includes an “opt in” provision for religious groups to voluntarily register their place of worship as open to same-sex couples desiring a church wedding, according to Baptist News Global. (TAB)

## SBC Women's Ministry Advisory Council named

ATLANTA — A diverse group of 18 women is studying the perspectives and strategies women in Southern Baptist churches bring to the God-given task of fulfilling the Great Commission.

They comprise the Women's Ministry Advisory Council appointed by Frank S. Page, president of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

Council member Chris Adams, senior lead women's ministry specialist with LifeWay Christian Resources, said, “Many women in Southern Baptist churches do not feel valued as leaders though they want to make a Kingdom difference. ... Thank you (Executive Committee) for affirming the value of women and encouraging the use of our spiritual gifts in ministry.”

Rhonda Kelley, an adjunct professor of women's ministry at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary where her husband, Chuck Kelley, is president, chairs the council. Women from 14 states comprise the council. (BP)

## Alabama Baptist students commissioned for summer missions



Photo courtesy of Chris Mills

Forty-one Alabama Baptist students were commissioned April 16 for summer missions trips to places across the world. The commissioning service took place at Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, and marked the 69th year that Alabama Baptists have formally sent students on missions trips through Baptist Campus Ministries. Chris Mills, state missionary in the office of collegiate and student ministries of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said, ‘Pray with us for students seeking to obey God's call this summer from Jerusalem to the uttermost and all the places in between.’



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Knowing God

# God Is Kind And Good

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

Many of us first learned one of God's chief attributes when we were taught to say grace at mealtime by prefacing gratitude for the food with a confession about God. We learned to begin by saying, "God is great; God is good." Almost instinctively, we think of God's greatness in terms of majesty and power. In His greatness, God exercises ultimate authority. He sets the standards for right and wrong. In His greatness, God is perfect and holy. Yet God combines in perfect harmony ultimate greatness and admirable goodness. That God is both great and good are characteristics of God that we do well to remember for a lifetime.

### 'Great is His goodness'

To grow up believing God is good is something that is absent in manmade religions, which often start from the premise that God is angry and must be appeased at every opportunity. The idea of an angry god pushes people into a fearful approach to life that seeks ways to defuse the imagined divine anger. God, however, has revealed Himself to be good and kind. While very capable of anger and judgment, God seeks to show us that His preference is for us to know Him as kind and good. Such was the realization of the Psalmist who was moved to exclaim, "Oh, how abundant is Your goodness, which You have stored up for those who fear You" (Ps. 31:19). In a similar way the prophet Zechariah exclaimed, "How great is His goodness and how great His beauty" (Zech. 9:17).

### A way of forgiveness

Beloved and often quoted, Psalm 100 ends with the declaration, "The Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations" (Ps. 100:5). Our childhood table blessing captured this truth, "The Lord is good." When we think of God as good, we think of such qualities as benevolence, mercy, generosity, pa-

tiency, gentleness and longsuffering. When David was extolling God for deliverance from his enemies, he went so far as to say of God, "Your gentleness made me great" (Ps. 18:35).

Such characteristics as gentleness, goodness and kindness lead us away from thinking of God as a divine watchdog in the skies who is lurking over us to catch us in wrongdoing and rain down punishment on our heads. Our good God is not a tyrant who delights in wielding a club by which to beat the disobedient into submission or to frighten them into being good. God does not harbor unrelenting anger at imperfect people. While God takes human sin seriously, His basic goodness led Him to provide the way of forgiveness and restoration for wayward people. Romans 2:4 asks the question, "Do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?"

### 'Be ye kind one to another'

Like many of you who are reading these lines, I was singularly blessed to have had godly parents who made churchgoing an important part of childhood years. To this was added the special blessing of Sunday School teachers who regularly emphasized the memorization of Bible verses. One such memory verse has remained with me all through the years: "Be ye kind one to another" (Eph. 4:32). Simple, everyday kindness is indeed a God-like virtue. ✝

*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.*



# 'People pleasing is exhausting ... there is never an end to it'

(continued from page 1)

men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men."

Jackson said pastoral ministry classes teach pastors how to deliver God's Word with "a heart of love" but suggested that it can be difficult to speak hard truths.

"Skirting the truth for fear of hurting someone's feelings or from fear of criticism would be like going to a medical doctor who won't tell you how sick you are because he does not want to hurt you," Jackson said. "Common sense would tell us that the truth may hurt but it may also save a person from greater pain."

Blackwell said new ministers probably don't receive enough training on the issue. "Every seminary student receives some type of training in relation to leading congregations through change and relational effectiveness but sometimes balancing the two can be a daunting task," he said.

### 'Larger-than-life plans'

"Many young pastors come out of seminary with larger-than-life plans to set the world on fire for Christ and enter a field of service to which most of their ideas are shot down," Blackwell said.

"They grow frustrated and tired of conflict and they settle into a 'preaching and visiting' mindset, simply performing maintenance ministry rather than missional ministry.

"People pleasing is an exhausting endeavor because there is never an end to it.

You will never get to a place where you say, 'I have successfully pleased everyone with my awesome decision-making,'" Blackwell said.

"People pleasing is a ministry killer and most churches go into deep decline when it is led by membership preferences rather than a missions focus," he said.

"The churches that are able to turn things around most effectively have pastors who hear the voice of the Holy Spirit much louder than influential members and don't mind short-term tension for long-term gains for Christ."

Determination to serve God does not, however, mean that congregants' views and feelings should be disregarded.

Jackson said, "A pastor who is arrogant and legalistic might preach with little

regard for the people. But if he loves the people he will preach the truth in love and keep the Lord first in his preparation and preaching."

Blackwell added, "If a pastor cares nothing of pleasing anyone he becomes a dictatorial leader who will eventually lose respect from his members.

"Wise pastors seek the counsel often of those godly saints in the congregation," he said, noting Proverbs 11:14, "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety."

"A wise pastor seeks the heart of spiritually discerning people in his church before making major decisions," Blackwell said. "That isn't being a people pleaser. That is being a God pleaser." ✝

**But "wise pastors seek counsel of godly saints."**

**Kevin Blackwell  
Ministry Training  
Institute, Samford  
University**

## Church uses Turkey Rodeo to minister to hunters



Photo courtesy of Roger White

Participants in the second annual Turkey Rodeo on April 9 at Friendship Baptist Church, Springville, fellowship after the turkey hunt and weigh-in. A gospel presentation was given by state missionary Billy Harris, part-time associate in the office of evangelism at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. This year's event saw five men come back from the hunt with turkeys. Pastor Roger White said the event is a way the St. Clair Baptist Association church tries to reach out to men during turkey season.

**National Playground Safety Week is April 25–29.**

# Playground safety at church important for children’s physical, spiritual health

By Maggie Walsh  
The Alabama Baptist

Every year more than 200,000 kids go to hospital emergency rooms with playground-related injuries, according to the National Program for Playground Safety (NPPS). Of those, 67 percent involved falls or equipment failure.

And as playgrounds are a vital aspect of any children’s ministry, churches need to be especially vigilant about maintaining safety on its playgrounds because it affects not only the physical health of a child, but also their spiritual health.

Chris Giles, youth minister for First Baptist Church, Leroy, said the Washington Baptist Association church encourages its adult supervisors to not just sit back and watch the children play but to play with the children.

## Open doors

“We do encourage our leaders to do that, but it has grown to something that people just naturally do. ... You definitely see that bond between the kids and adults that they gained from actually getting involved.”

Forming those intentional relationships opens the door to sharing spiritual truths with and setting godly examples for the children, Giles said.

Leasha Megehee agreed, adding that providing a safe playground environment also can open the door to reaching young families for Christ.

“It’s very important to provide a safe environment whether on a playground or in a classroom because that’s what’s going to make families come back,” said Megehee, children’s minister for First Baptist Church, Scottsboro, in Tennessee River Baptist Association. “[Parents] need to know that their kids are going to be safe and they need to know that they’ll be taken care of.”

Both churches follow the two-person rule:

always have at least two adult supervisors when children are playing.

More than 40 percent of playground injuries at schools are related to inadequate supervision, according Church Mutual Insurance Company.

Megehee also advises new children’s ministers and volunteers to talk to someone who has served or is currently serving in children’s ministry to learn what procedures or practices work best for them.

“Just talk to someone who’s been there,” she said. “Learning from someone who has that experience is important.”

Simple steps that every church should take, according to NPPS, include:

- ▶ Having separate areas for ages 2–5 and 5–12.
- ▶ Regularly checking playground equipment for stability, protruding nails or bolts and missing parts.
- ▶ Having 12 inches of loose fill material such as sand, pea gravel or shredded tires under and around playground equipment.
- ▶ Removing tripping hazards such as stumps or roots.
- ▶ Fencing in the playground.

NPPS also recommends capping the height of playground equipment at 6 feet for pre-school-age children and 8 feet for school-age children. Playground design should always be age-appropriate in terms of sizing and proportions to reduce the risk of accident or injury, according to kidshealth.org.

And when accidents do happen? Learn from the scrapes and boo-boos, Megehee encouraged. “The small accidents help remind us to stay watchful and aware.”

For additional safety information, visit NPPS at [www.uni.edu/playground](http://www.uni.edu/playground) or the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).

**“[Parents] need to know that their kids are going to be safe and they need to know that they’ll be taken care of.”**

**Leasha Megehee  
children’s minister  
FBC Scottsboro**



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**the BAPTIST FOUNDATION OF ALABAMA**



# in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders, friends

## Wallace W. Russell

### Former Alabama Baptist pastor dies at 84

Wallace W. Russell, a longtime pastor of Alabama Baptist churches, died April 11. He was 84.

Russell graduated from the Baptist Bible Institute (now the Baptist College of Florida) in Graceville in 1970.



RUSSELL

Russell began as interim pastor of Pleasant Valley Church, Attalla, after being ordained to the ministry by Steele Baptist Church. His 42 years of ministry included serving as pastor of Pleasant Plains Baptist Church, Clayton; Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Ozark; and Carrollton Baptist Church. Russell also served for 25 years as pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, Dothan, before retiring April 29, 2007.

He is preceded in death by his son, Ed Russell, and is survived by his wife of 65 years, Loretta; three daughters; four grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. (Hannah Muñoz)

## Ralph Esco

### Chilton County retired pastor dies at 84

Ralph Esco, former pastor of several Alabama Baptist churches, died April 16. He was 84.

He served as pastor of New Salem Baptist Church, Clanton; Union Grove Baptist Church, Jemison; and Mount Carmel No. 2 Baptist Church, Maplesville. Esco also served as minister to the Hispanic community of West End Baptist Church, Clanton, after his retirement in 2011.

Esco earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Alabama and his doctorate from the College of Divine Metaphysics in Indianapolis, Indiana.

He was a member of West End Baptist at the time of his death. He is preceded in death by his wife, Barbara, and grandson, Douglas, and is survived by three children, 10 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. (Hannah Muñoz)



ESCO

# Longtime concerns over 'fast cash now' lenders bolstered with new research

Faith and community leaders have long fought to regulate the so-called payday loan lenders that are continually expanding across the nation.

New research on the issue is giving their opposition a boost, especially as Alabama legislators are within the final days of potentially passing regulations during the 2016 legislative session.

Faith for Just Lending (FJL), a diverse coalition of faith groups, released a report April 13 titled "The Collateral Consequences of Payday Loan Debt." The report shares the experiences of churches and borrowers in dealing with payday and car-title loans.

It reported that ministers and

faith-based social service providers overwhelmingly describe payday loans as harmful instead of helpful.

FJL also drew attention to the April 13 release of a LifeWay Research survey which polled 1,000 Christians on their attitudes toward payday lending issues.

### 'It's a sin'

"Self-identified Christians in 30 states — from Alabama to Wyoming — say it's a sin to lend money to someone who can't afford to pay it back," LifeWay said in presenting its survey.

A typical two-week payday loan charges the equivalent of a 400 percent annual percent-

age rate, according to the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau (CFPB), a federal government agency tasked with consumer protection in the financial sector.

The Alabama legislation — Senate Bill 91, sponsored by Sen. Arthur Orr, R-Decatur — would limit the amount of interest that could be charged and would extend the time to pay off loans from 30 days to six months.

The bill — which does not cover title loans — has passed the Senate and is pending in the state House of Representatives.

At the federal level, White House officials also are pushing for regulations on the industry.

On April 14 three of President Barack Obama's top aides met with religious leaders from across the country, including Southern Baptists, who described "heart-wrenching stories" of congregants whose lives had been ravaged by payday loans.

"What emerged was a common, powerful theme: that we have a moral obligation as a country to do something to stop payday lenders from preying on consumers by trapping them in an endless cycle of debt," the trio wrote in an online post.

Obama's advisers said CFPB began working in 2015 on rules to reduce such abuses, but "even as there is widespread agreement across a diverse array of faith communities that something needs to be done to address payday lending abuses, too often these reasonable efforts face stiff resistance from the special interests supported by the payday loan industry."

### Resolutions oppose

Alabama Baptists and Southern Baptists both addressed the issue in 2014 at their respective annual meetings by passing resolutions denouncing payday lending and calling for government officials to regulate the industry. They also called for churches to provide training in financial stewardship.

FJL was launched in 2015 by the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. It is an effort to increase awareness of predatory lending and to motivate individuals, lenders, churches and the government to help bring an end to the practice.

About 20,000 payday and car-title loan stores exist in the United States, according to the coalition. Payday lenders also operate online. (TAB with contributions from RNS, BNG, BP and LifeWay)

## Alabama Baptist GIVING



Year to Date through March 31, 2016

### MARCH

CP Challenge Budget Goal .....	\$3,333,333.33
CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....	\$3,398,607.00
Over Goal for Month.....	\$65,273.67

### YEAR TO DATE

CP Challenge Budget Goal .....	\$10,000,000.00
CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....	\$10,430,785.00
Over Goal for Year.....	\$430,785.00

The monthly and year-to-date totals include CP base, CP state causes and SBC causes.



It's hard to say what exactly faith and service look like, but this spring, it's going to look a lot like peanut butter and jelly!

We've partnered with the Food Bank of North Alabama along with Kroger to put together the WAY-FM PB&J Drive. What we're doing is collecting plastic jars of peanut butter and jelly to donate to the Food Bank of North Alabama to provide sandwiches and other foods for children in need. PB&J is our focus, but other non-perishable food items can be donated. We'll be outside of Kroger each Thursday for a month collecting supplies.

Stop by any of these locations on the following dates to drop off goods:

<b>11 AM-3 PM</b>
April 28: Huntsville — 7090 University Drive
May 5: Decatur — 1101 Beltline Road
May 12: Hartselle — 241 Hwy 31 S
May 19: Huntsville — 6070 Moores Mill Road



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# Historical HIGHLIGHTS

FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



## 50 Years Ago April 1966

The board of directors of *The Alabama Baptist* announced the appointment of Hudson Baggett as editor April 21. The state publication had a circulation of 138,000 and had been without an editor since the death of Leon Macon in November 1965. "I am honored at the confidence placed in me by the board of directors. By the help of God I will



**BAGGETT**

seek to justify this confidence as I serve the Baptists of Alabama in this important position," Baggett said upon accepting the position. Baggett served as professor of religion at Samford University prior to becoming editor of the paper.

## 100 Years Ago April 1916

The State Baptist Young People's Union (BYPU) Convention was held in Birmingham. *The Alabama Baptist* heralded the convention as the greatest in recent years in every way since the advent of the writer. At least 70 unions from all over Alabama were represented at the meeting. The April gathering was a "young people's" convention. Praise was given for the

loyalty and training of the young Christians that focused close attention on business and fidelity in the meetings. The convention was guided under the direction of the Birmingham District BYPU president, J.C. Borum. The climax of the event was when P.W. James from Selma spoke on "Motive for Service — Love."

## 150 Years Ago April 1866

After the war, the subject of schools for African-American children was a growing topic among many Alabamians. The idea was something the editor believed was a "solemn duty." However, he also realized that during this time funds were low and pre-

cluded them from doing as much as they would like. It was reported that most of the schools that were opened for African-American children during this time were in cities and towns. "Now this work must not stop here." The belief from the paper was that this cause should be carried into rural areas and action was to be taken to build schools for the children of the freedmen. Southern Baptists had been sending missionaries to Africa for years. The article in the Alabama Department stated that Southern Christians did not want to see the efforts of God that had converted nearly half a million African-Americans while they were in bondage to cease now that they had been freed. ✠

## TAB\* CLASSIFIEDS

For information about placing a classified ad, contact the advertising department of \*The Alabama Baptist at 205-870-4720, ext. 102, or [ads@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:ads@thealabamabaptist.org). Copy deadline is two weeks before publication.

### CHURCH POSITIONS

#### 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 resúmes for a full-time pastor. Send resúmes to: [edgilgrovebaptistchurch@hotmail.com](mailto:edgilgrovebaptistchurch@hotmail.com), or mail to: 100 Edgil Grove Rd., Jasper, AL 35503.

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Northside Baptist Church, Opelika, Alabama, is searching for bivocational pastor. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, 3001 LaFayette Parkway, Opelika, AL 36801.

#### 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@nbccbaptist.com](mailto:secretary@nbccbaptist.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. Resúmes to: Trent Dillard at [tldillard@southernco.com](mailto:tldillard@southernco.com).

#### YOUTH DIRECTOR

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

#### PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER

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

#### TWO POSITIONS

Ridgecrest Baptist in Ozark is accepting resúmes for either full-time or bivocational positions for minister of youth and/or minister of children or children's director, either combined or separate. Email resumé to: [pastor@ridgecrestbaptistozark.org](mailto:pastor@ridgecrestbaptistozark.org) no later than May 15.

### OTHER POSITIONS

#### DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

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

#### DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

Montgomery Baptist Association, Montgomery, Alabama, is accepting resúmes 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).

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- 3 Tap the [ ] icon at the bottom of the screen.
- 4 You will see pulsating dots, which indicate the app is searching for a target. Once it finds a target the dots will turn to a bull's-eye. The bull's-eye will remain until the augmented reality image loads.
- 5 Hold your device over a page or image in *The Alabama Baptist (TAB)* marked as augmented reality and watch the paper come to life.
- 6 If the image is slow to load at any point, then it may be your data speed or Wi-Fi strength. Change locations and try again.
- 7 Each week when *TAB* arrives, open the app and hold your device over the augmented reality articles.

## On April 27, 2011, disaster hit home in Alabama.

A record-breaking 62 tornadoes swept across the state, cutting a path through 42 of Alabama's 67 counties. That was on the heels of another outbreak of 45 tornadoes two weeks earlier.

As a result of the two storm systems, at least 250 Alabamians died, and more than 23,000 homes, along with 47 Alabama Baptist churches, were destroyed or severely damaged.

But perhaps the real story is what happened in the days, weeks, months and years following those dark days.

Thousands of Alabama Baptists volunteered their time and resources to help our state recover and rebuild. You cleaned up yards, served meals, washed clothes, cared for children, donated money and goods, and really just wrapped your arms around the state.

Churches became shelters and rescue stations, and chaplains walked door-to-door, caring for the hurting.

State Board of Missions Executive Director Rick Lance wrote at the one-year anniversary, "I have never ever been more proud to be an Alabama Baptist than during this most challenging time in our beloved state."

Because you allowed God's light to shine brightly during a time of extreme darkness, shattered lives were mended, families began putting the pieces back together, and churches whose buildings were once destroyed not only survived, but now thrive.

Thank you for being the hands and feet of Jesus, not only during that fateful month five years ago, but every day. And thanks also for your faithful gifts through the Cooperative Program, which make life-changing ministry possible in Alabama, across the U.S. and around the world.



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*Your gifts to this year's Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering will help support future disaster relief efforts. Find out more at [Myers-Mallory.org](http://Myers-Mallory.org).*

Watch video of Tim Haney, pastor of First Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, reflecting on the impact of the April 2011 tornadoes.



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# NAMB readies 2 mobile clinics for Send Relief compassion ministry

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) has purchased two mobile clinics — one for dental services, the other for general medical needs — that will be used as part of its new Send Relief compassion ministry. Both units will be used during Send Relief ministry events in the St. Louis area in the days leading up to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting.

The clinics will be fitted with state-of-the-art equipment and can be utilized as part of outreach and service events for under-served communities. The units will be part of NAMB's ongoing Send Relief ministry and also will be available to churches, associations, state conventions and other Southern Baptist entities that want to use them as part of their own ministry events.

David Melber, NAMB's vice president for Send Relief, said, "We recognize that not everyone will be a church planter or a pastor. We have medical professionals and dental professionals in our churches. This will be an outlet not only for them as an outreach activity but, in a more



BP photo

expanded view, these will give churches an opening to do other outreach projects in the community."

The two units will be parked outside of the America's Center, the location of the SBC annual meeting in St. Louis on June 14-15.

### X-ray, operatory room

The units will provide everything medical professionals need to do basic health care and dental care in a mobile setting.

The dental clinic will include an X-ray machine and two dental operator rooms. The medical clinic will include two exam rooms, a bathroom, a waiting room and an intake area.

Melber said the clinics can be used to build bridges into a community or build credibility for the group planning the outreach.

For more information about Send Relief, visit [www.namb.net/sendrelief](http://www.namb.net/sendrelief), or to reserve the mobile clinics, email Judy Cape at [jcape@namb.net](mailto:jcape@namb.net). (BP)

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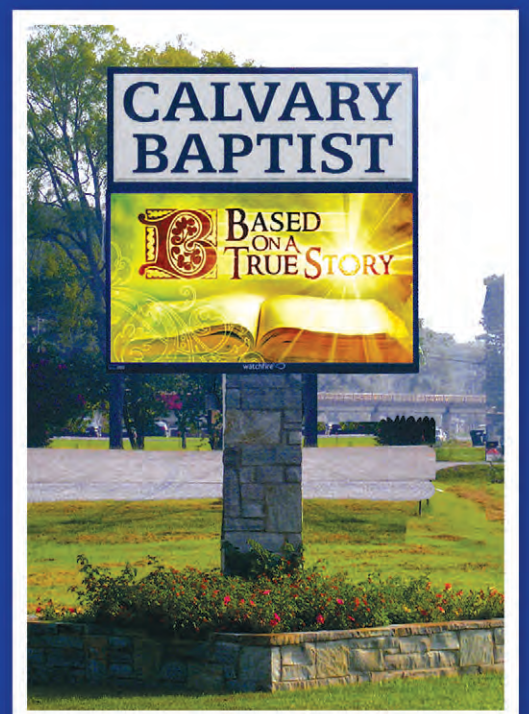
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**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 1

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

### OBEDIENT

Acts 8:26-31, 35, 38-39

#### Compelled to Seek (26-29)

There are two important aspects to this passage. First, Philip was susceptible to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit told Philip what to do — in this case it was to go to the chariot. There are times in a Christian's life where you feel a calling to do something. It may be a feeling of a need to pray for or talk to someone. When we feel this, it is the Holy Spirit prompting us to do these things. From listening to the Spirit, we must be obedient to do what He calls us to do, for by this obedience God works through us to accomplish His purpose.

This leads to the second important aspect of this passage: Philip presented the gospel. Faithful obedience to God results in a presentation of the gospel. This is the only means by which humans are made right with God. True love of neighbor means meeting their needs, and their greatest need is to experience the abundant life that Christ brings.

If Philip had never listened to the Holy Spirit, he would not have approached this Ethiopian and explained to him the gospel. Christian tradition teaches that this man went back to Ethiopia where he preached this same gospel message. Philip's obedience may have resulted in many others coming to know Christ through this Ethiopian.

#### Prepared to Share (30-31, 35)

Philip understood the Old Testament and used this knowledge to present the gospel and show how Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. Many Christians believe the Old Testament to be irrelevant and that only the New Testament is important.

However, understanding the Old Testa-

ment is crucial in understanding the New Testament. The Old Testament provides the underpinnings for what Jesus is fulfilling. The Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus so to understand the nature of the New Testament and its context, knowledge of the Old Testament is essential.

When reading the Old Testament we should be looking for ways in which Christ is foreshadowed. In this instance the Ethiopian only had a copy of Isaiah. In reading this, he wondered who it was about. We can point to many passages in the Old Testament and show how they prefigure Christ.

#### Focused on Salvation (38-39)

Once the Ethiopian believed the gospel message, he asked to be baptized. Baptism is an important part of the Christian message. It demonstrates obedience to the Great Commission in Matthew 28 and shows that we identify with Christ. Romans 6:4 says: "Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too may walk in a new way of life."

Some argue that baptism is necessary for salvation. However, the majority of verses that deal with salvation leave out baptism. This suggests that when we see baptism used in a passage with salvation the baptism is the next logical step in the Christian life. Verses like John 3:16, Acts 16:31 and Romans 10:9-13 do not even mention baptism. Furthermore the thief on the cross next to Jesus was told he would see Jesus that day in paradise, and he never had a chance to be baptized.

What do we make of this? We understand that baptism is an important testimony as it shows that we are committed to following Christ but not necessary for salvation. †

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

### REDEEMED FROM A CRITICAL SPIRIT Numbers 12:1-11, 13-15

#### A critical spirit can arise when we compare ourselves to others. (1-3)

Numbers 11 recounts a complaint by the children of Israel followed by a complaint by the Israelites and Moses. Now a personal complaint is lodged against Moses by members of his inner circle: Miriam and Aaron. Not only are these two fellow leaders under Moses, but also they are Moses' sister and brother.

The Cushite wife of whom Miriam complains is probably Zipporah, a Midianite with links to Cushan. Habakkuk 3:7 and other passages suggest that Cushan is a synonym for Midian, which is located in the northwest Arabian Peninsula. Verse 2 reveals that the concern about Moses having a Cushite wife is a smokescreen for the real issue. Miriam and Aaron are envious of the special status held by Moses in his leadership of the people and, more significantly, Moses' primary role in speaking to them on God's behalf. Miriam is the instigator, as her name stands first and the verb "began to talk" is feminine. Miriam is a prophetess and Aaron is the high priest. Here, then, is an alliance of priest and prophet challenging Moses' prophetic position as sole revelatory mediator between God and Israel.

#### God rejects a critical spirit. (4-11)

In his humility, Moses probably would have let this challenge go unanswered. However, the Lord interjects Himself into the dispute suddenly and awesomely. The Lord contrasts Moses with other prophets. The Holy One speaks to the prophets in visions, dreams or riddles. However, Moses is entrusted with all God's house (i.e. not the tabernacle but the house of Israel). Moses speaks face to face with the Lord, and he "sees the

form of the Lord" as an outward manifestation, which is superior to a vision or theophany.

Calling Moses "My servant" places him in a limited category of persons in biblical history. The Lord refers to Abraham the founding patriarch as "My servant," and He imparts the title to Caleb, the fearless leader devoted to fulfilling God's call to inherit the Promised Land.

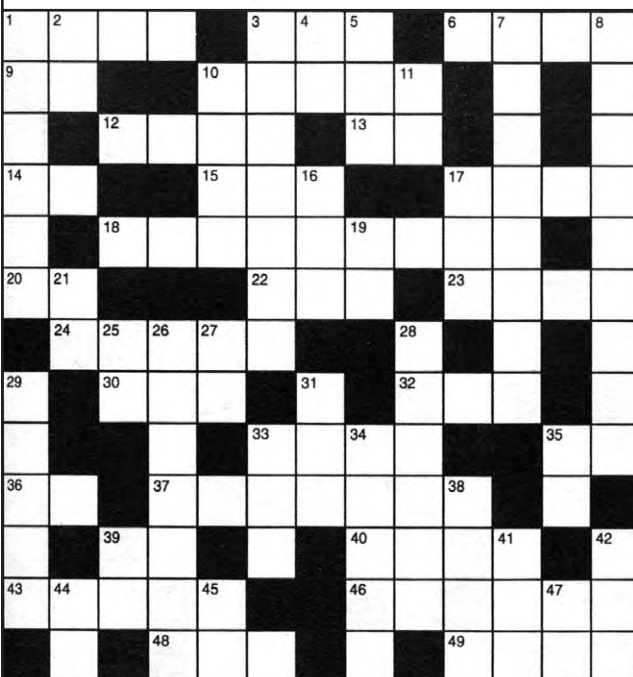
The nature of Miriam's skin disease is not certain. Most suggest that it was not leprosy but rather a condition that could turn into chronic leprosy. Whatever the actual disease, Miriam would become an outcast of society, forced to live outside the holy camp of Israel. Aaron pleads for his sister, apologizing to Moses and addressing him as "my lord." The Hebrew phrase at the beginning of verse 12 literally reads, "Please do not let her be like the dead." Aaron realizes that if Miriam continues in this state, she might die. In his humility, Moses, whose unique relationship to God she questioned, intercedes on her behalf as well.

#### God's discipline is intended for restoration. (13-15)

Seven days was the initial period of exclusion for one with an infectious skin disease and then the infected person would have to stay outside his or her tent for seven more days. By the Lord's mercy, Miriam survives the ordeal. Chronic leprosy would have resulted in her being banished from the community for life. Banishment from the camp for seven days is equal to that which she would have experienced if her father had spat in her face in contempt. Miriam's isolation delays the departure of the people from Hazereth. Thus the seriousness of the rebellion of one of Israel's leaders is magnified. The consequences of that leader's act has affected the whole community. †

## Christian Crossword

By Joan M. Jarzebinski Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



### Across

- Sister of Lazarus. (John 11:2)
- \_\_\_ seek ye first the kingdom of God. (Matt. 6:33)
- But \_\_\_ ye first the kingdom of God. (Matt. 6:33)
- I \_\_\_. (John 8:58)
- \_\_\_ said, except a man be born again. (John 3:3)
- Actual.
- I \_\_\_ to prepare a place for you. (John 14:2)
- In \_\_\_.
- Charged particle.
- Let both \_\_\_ together until the harvest. (Matt. 13:30)
- Through faith unto \_\_\_. (1 Pet. 1:5)
- Help for the alcoholic. (abbr.)
- \_\_\_ hath not seen, nor ear heard. (1 Cor. 2:9)
- Eat.
- He killed Goliath.

- Whatsoever is not of faith is \_\_\_. (Rom. 14:23)
- Precedes "one," "body" and "way."
- They have beaten me, and I \_\_\_ it not. (Prov. 23:35)
- \_\_\_ ye holy. (Lev. 20:7)
- Not down but \_\_\_.
- Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
- \_\_\_, now speakest thou plainly. (John 16:29)
- Joy.
- Let not your \_\_\_ be troubled. (John 14:1)
- "Highway to \_\_\_," Michael Landon's show.
- I love \_\_\_.
- Landlord's income.

### Down

- See 1 across.
- Morning.
- My \_\_\_ Son. (Matt. 3:17)
- We.
- \_\_\_ boat Annie.

- Time without end.
- The fear of the Lord is the beginning of \_\_\_. (Prov. 1:7)
- Prison.
- God \_\_\_ loved the world. (John 3:16)
- No.
- \_\_\_ is love. (1 John 4:8)
- He invented the light bulb. (initials)
- Classified \_\_\_.
- For we shall see Him \_\_\_ He is. (1 John 3:2)
- He will swallow up death in \_\_\_. (Isa. 25:8)
- Not out.
- "\_\_\_ Hymn of the Republic."
- I am the way, the \_\_\_ and the life. (John 14:6)
- \_\_\_ of lions. (Dan. 6:16)
- Parable of the \_\_\_ tree. (Matt. 24:32)
- I am the \_\_\_ of the world. (John 8:12)
- Not \_\_\_ might. (Zech. 4:6)
- 365 days.

- Do, re, mi, fa, so, \_\_\_. (Musical notes)
- Adam's mate.
- Go to the \_\_\_, thou sluggard. (Prov. 6:6)
- Former.
- \_\_\_ God be the glory.
- Printer's measure.



## Media Reviews

# Letting go of expectations



## TAB writer Thornton urges young adults to seek God in midst of trials

By Maggie Walsh  
The Alabama Baptist

**D**reams don't always work out. It's a truth that is universally accepted, painfully learned and usually made personal in your 20s.

Grace Thornton has experienced this firsthand, and in February 2012 she was compelled to write a blog post about the pain of unmet expectations.

"At the time when I wrote the blog, I had a lot of people around me struggling with what life was supposed to be if it didn't look the way they always dreamed it would," she said. "And a lot of them were struggling with who God was in their life because He hadn't brought along the kind of life they thought they were supposed to have. Their struggle really resonated with me because I had just been through it too."

### Blog post gone viral

In the post, titled "I Don't Wait Anymore" on [gracefortheroad.com](http://gracefortheroad.com), Thornton shared how knowing God wasn't the consolation prize — He was the goal, the ultimate prize.

It was a message that struck a chord with a generation, reaching more than 2 million views and shared more than 10,000 times on Facebook. One of those

shares reached an editor with Zondervan, a Christian publishing company, and a book offer with the same title was extended to Thornton in the summer of 2014.

"I was scared. ... Even though I want more than anything to be able to tell people what life can be like when Jesus is your life and how that can replace all the expectations for how your life should look in a way that I can't describe, I also didn't want to somehow become the poster child of the godly single woman."

Growing up in church, Thornton assumed her life would take on the normal trajectory — college, husband, career, kids. But her life changed course when she and the man she expected to marry broke up.

"All of it came crashing down at that point," she said. Although she was frustrated and angry, the breakup was a catalyst.

"Eventually it set me on a path where I had to either know God for who He really was or not at all." Middle ground, where she had been her whole life, was not an option.

"If I really wanted to have the life that He says He offers, it was one or the other."

So Thornton began to read the Bible



Photo by Neisha Roberts

with a discipline that was fueled by desire.

"At the beginning it was just me deciding that it was important enough to want it. ... I think that I felt the weight of who I knew God was supposed to be and I wanted to figure that out. If it could be the way that the Bible said it should be, I wanted to figure that out.

"As I began to change I began to lay down things [and] surrender things like, 'God even if I don't get married ... I want You more than that (dream).'

"As His Word began to shape my heart I could see the way I thought about my life changing and how He felt about my life changing."

After about a year of daily, concentrated Bible reading coupled with the intense desire to change, Thornton knew she was different. The change was gradual, but it was life-altering.

"Sometimes without meaning to, I think we see Jesus as a means to an end or a part of the life that we want instead of being our entire lives. I think we hear that said — that He should be our life — but when we actually do that it radically changes everything. And that life is worth investing our entire lives to have."

### More than worth it

Thornton's journey brought her to a relationship with God that was more tangible than she had thought possible. And though it was scary to lay her dreams at God's feet and allow Him to take them away or change them, it was more than worth it.

"Don't underestimate the power of who God is to completely change the way your life looks and feels in the midst

of that. I think the 20s are a place where a lot of people find themselves coming out of their younger years with a view of God that's really flat and confined and maybe pretty lifeless, honestly. And they're coming out of that with this really strong view of how life was supposed to be."

### The right perspective

Around the same time the big questions hit: "What is my purpose?" "What do I want out of life?" "Who do I want to be?" And if your view of God is

small, Thornton said, then these questions can seem like massive concepts with nebulous answers. But if you have the right perspective of God, it can change everything.

"Those restless places in our lives are the perfect place ... to completely surrender and let God totally re-teach us who He is and re-teach us to desire Him first,

and let our lives flow out of that place instead of just trying to get answers.

"I think maybe our whole lives God might have seemed simple — not in a good way," she said. "But the reality is He is so big and amazing that life with Him is so much bigger than we're able to wrap our minds around.

"[It's] so much better than we're able to imagine, and I think the simple concept of God's love for us is bigger than anything else.

"His heart is for us to know Him, making that the entire goal of our life and then trusting Him no matter what happens."

At the end of the day, Thornton said, a life with Him is better than anything else — even our wildest dreams and best-laid plans. †

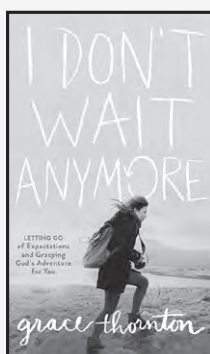
## Thornton's journey to author

As a storyteller and blogger, Grace Thornton has found her narrative taking her all over the world.

After growing up and graduating from college in Mississippi, she came to Birmingham to fill a need for a two-week-long temporary position at *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) while a staff member was on medical leave. Seven years later, she was still there, having served as an intern, web and advertising associate and then assistant editor.

She left TAB in 2010 to work with a Christian organization in England and the Middle East, but over the years she's continued to serve as a correspondent.

She loves a good story. She believes that God writes the best stories, even when our lives may not look anything like what we imagined.



She's passionate about knowing God through His Word and encouraging others to discover Him and let Him write the story of their lives too.

Her blog, [gracefortheroad.com](http://gracefortheroad.com), received more than 2 million visits after her post "I Don't Wait Anymore," on living fully as a single person, went viral in 2012. And her book by the same name — set for release May 10 — is available for preorder from Amazon and other retailers. (TAB)



Boko Haram recently released a video as proof that the remaining Chibok schoolgirls that were kidnapped in 2014 are alive and well. Of the 219 still missing, only 15 girls are shown in the video.

## Kidnapped girls still missing after 2 years but 'safe'

**E**sther Yakubu has not seen her daughter, Dorcas, since Boko Haram kidnapped the girl with 275 classmates from the Chibok boarding school in Nigeria two years ago, but Yakubu professes faith that the Lord is with her child.

"I know that the angel of the Lord Almighty is with you, and He will continue to be with you wherever you are," Yakubu told international PathFinders Justice Initiative for women. "Please be strong in the Lord and He will see you through. ... The Lord is your strength, and I have that hope in me that I will see you again."

With Yakubu's daughter among the 219 girls still missing two years after the April 15, 2014, kidnapping and raid in the mostly Christian town of Chibok, a Boko Haram video has surfaced that was reportedly given to Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari's administration as a "show of good faith" that the girls are alive.

"We are all well," one of the girls on the video says, in what CNN translators described in a news report as a "scripted plea" for Nigeria to cooperate with Boko Haram in securing the girls' release. The video only showed 15 of the missing girls but indicated the safety of "all" those missing.

### Missing daughter

Yakubu told Reuters that the girls in the video were indeed Chibok students, but her daughter did not appear to be among those shown.

In a previous video released a month after the kidnapping, Boko Haram showed about 50 girls quoting the Quran while in Muslim attire and had threatened to enslave them as Muslim brides. At least one of the girls may have been killed as a forced suicide bomber, the Jubilee Campaign for religious freedom said months after the kidnapping.

On the occasion of the anniversary, Buhari told parents and activists working for the girls' release that he believed they could still be freed. The government is working "diligently to ensure that the girls are returned home unharmed," Buhari was quoted in *This Day*, a Lagos, Nigeria, newspaper.

The girls likely have been dispersed among various Boko Haram cells that are negotiating separately for the girls' release, *This Day* reported April 15.

Months after Buhari claimed a "technical defeat" of Boko Haram, a regional multinational

military force of 8,700 fighters from Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger continues to report successes against the jihadists.

The military has rescued thousands of Boko Haram captives, including 1,275 rescued just days before the anniversary of the Chibok kidnapping; but none of the 219 girls had been recovered. In the attack along the Nigerian Cameroon border, troops killed 22 suspected Boko Haram fighters and arrested three suspected Boko Haram commanders, a Nigerian Army spokesman said April 12 on the army's website.

### Cleared hideouts

"The unprecedented clearance operation swept through over 10 suspected Boko Haram terrorists [sic] hideouts along the border," the statement reads.

Working to establish strict Sharia law across Nigeria, Boko Haram has been most active in northeastern Nigeria where many of the 20,000 deaths occurred that the terrorists are blamed for since 2009. Boko Haram originally targeted Christians but also has killed moderate Muslims.

Killings of Nigerian Christians increased 62 percent in the past year, according to the February report "Crushed But Not Defeated," from the Open Doors religious freedom ministry and the Christian Association of Nigeria. Northern Nigeria Christian communities suffered more than 4,028 murders and 198 church attacks in 2015 from Boko Haram, Muslim Fulani herdsmen and others, compared to 2,484 killings and 108 church attacks in 2014, the report said.

### Persistent violence

"This report shows the extent and impact of the persistent violence on the Church in northern Nigeria is much more serious than previously expected. Once Boko Haram is defeated, the problem will not be solved," a West African Open Doors representative, whose name was not released to protect his identity, said in a press release.

Open Doors marked the two-year anniversary of the kidnapping by launching an advocacy campaign asking U.S. President Barack Obama to take a strong stance against the ongoing persecution of Christians and other victims of violence in Nigeria. Open Doors also is urging Buhari to do everything possible to protect those facing terrorism there, the press release said. (BP)

## PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



### Muslim man threatens to kill his Christian wife

**KACHOMO, Uganda** — A Muslim in eastern Uganda who recently attacked his wife for becoming a Christian told a judge that Islam allows him to kill any apostate, sources said.

Having moved to another village with their four children following an attack in 2015, Ntende Hawa, 38, said she was visiting her estranged husband to discuss child support April 4. Her husband, Dapharah Mumpi, was living at the couple's home in Kachomo village in Budaka District.

Hawa reported the assault to police at the Kaderuna police station May 6, 2015, and Mumpi was summoned for questioning. Mumpi told the magistrate, "I cannot live with the kafir [infidel] in my house, unless she returns back to my religion. If not, I will not stop hunting for her life because our Holy Quran allows us to kill any apostate from Islam."

Upon hearing Mumpi's statement, the judge sent him to jail for 14 days. Islamic scholars say death for apostates from Islam is not explicitly stated in the Quran (as it is for "infidels"), but traditionally Islamic law has prescribed the death penalty for Muslims who commit apostasy. (MS)

### Kidnapped pastor dies in Nigeria; 2 others released

**KADUNA, Nigeria** — Two of three pastors kidnapped in north-central Nigeria on March 21 have been released while the third died after being left in the wild, sources said.

Iliya Anto, initially said to have been released by the kidnapers because of ill health, was found dead in the bush 10 days after the abduction, according to Jibrailu Wobiya, general secretary of the United Church of Christ in Nigeria (HEKAN). Details of his death remained unclear but he was reportedly said to have died after the kidnapers left him in the wild. Anto was a pastor and vice president of the HEKAN in Kaduna.

The other two pastors — Emmanuel Dzigau, president of the church, and Yakubu Dzarma, a retired church leader — were released March 30, Wobiya said.

Wobiya declined to say whether his church paid the \$500,000 the kidnapers had demanded for the release of the pastors. (MS)

### Hindu extremists chase, attack Indian pastor

**KARAOTE, India** — Pastor Ram Prakash, 52, was assaulted by Hindu extremists after crashing his motorcycle on his way home from visiting Christian families in Karaote village, Sultanpur in Uttar Pradesh state of India.

Late one morning in March, Prakash was riding his motorcycle home when he noticed men on motorcycles shouting obscenities as they followed him. The men chased Prakash and one of them hit the back of his motorcycle, severely injuring his leg. Yelling at him to stop telling people about Jesus, the radical Hindu got off their bikes and began to kick and beat him. Another eight men arrived who helped mock, push, slap and kick him.

Police took Prakash in for questioning and then to a local hospital. He sustained cuts on his head and hand, broken bones in his leg and abrasions over all his body, he said. (MS)

### ISIS claims responsibility for killing Christian convert

**KURIGRAM, Bangladesh** — The Islamic State (ISIS) terrorist organization has claimed responsibility for the fatal stabbing of a 68-year-old Christian convert in Bangladesh on March 22.

At least two unidentified extremists killed a convert named Hossain Ali in Kurigram after stopping him during his morning walk, according to The Christian Post. The assailants escaped after setting off a molotov cocktail.

According to SITE Intelligence Group, ISIS posted a message to Twitter on March 23 saying it killed Ali, who converted from Islam in 1999. The group threatened that the murder should serve as "a lesson to others" in its message.

Although ISIS claimed responsibility for the murder, Bangladesh police denied the group was involved in the matter. (TAB)