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Alabama pastors promote 'basics of Christian life' through Keswick Conventions

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Talking religion AND politics



123rf.com

How do Christians express their views in social settings without igniting a firestorm?

By Martha Simmons
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

We've heard the admonishment all our lives: It's not polite to talk about politics or religion in social or business settings.

That advice seems to be most liberally applied to matters of faith, as a recent Pew Research Center survey reveals that most Americans rarely, if ever, discuss religion with anybody but family.

Avoiding certain topics

"Judging by the results of our recently released survey on religion in everyday life, religion does indeed seem to be a subject many people avoid," the survey stated. "About half of U.S. adults tell us they seldom (33 percent) or never

(16 percent) talk about religion with people outside their family. And roughly 4 in 10 say they seldom (26 percent) or never (13 percent) discuss religion even with members of their immediate family."

The survey goes on to show that "two-thirds of highly religious Americans — defined as those who say they pray daily and attend religious services weekly — report that they talk about religion with their immediate families at least once a week, and 43 percent say they talk about religion with people outside their families each week."

Evangelical Protestants and members of historically black Protestant churches are most likely to have religious conversations outside the family, the survey indicated, but even those conversations were likely to be among fellow evangelicals and others with shared beliefs — in

essence, preaching to the choir.

"Despite the common assumption that evangelicals are eager to persuade others to adopt their religious beliefs," the Pew survey noted, "that's not what most say they do."

Can't keep quiet

So how does this deeply ingrained reticence square with biblical mandates to "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15) and "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19)?

It doesn't, according to Miguel Echevarria, assistant professor of Christian ministries in the School of Christian Ministries at the University of Mobile.

"You can't be afraid of sharing the gospel," Echevarria said. "If you keep your faith to yourself, you're actually being disobedient to that command."

Christians too often try to isolate their lives of faith — including church, prayer, Bible study — from the everyday world, Echevarria said.

"We try and keep it too compartmentalized," he said. "At the University of Mobile, we try to teach that you incorporate your faith into everyday life. That Christian worldview should permeate everything we do."

While students at his faith-based university are encouraged to speak out about matters of faith and religion, Echevarria said, they are being restricted from doing so in other, secular settings. "In the North Carolina State University student union you can no longer talk about Jesus without a permit," Echevarria said.

Grace Christian Life, a religious student organization, filed suit (See 'Christians,' page 7)

Coming next week...

Faith and Family
Dealing with a miscarriage



COMMENT

Remembering Jesus' Ascension

Christian pilgrims visiting Jerusalem sometimes visit the Chapel of the Ascension near the village of Bethany on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. The chapel itself is unremarkable, reflecting centuries of struggle over the site. The first Christian church was built there in the 300s A.D. but that structure was destroyed by the Persians in 614 A.D.

Over the years the church was rebuilt by Christians and destroyed by Muslims a number of times. The last time only a small 12 foot by 12 foot structure was left standing. The site is owned by Muslims and has been for more than 800 years. Yet Christians continue to venerate the site as the place from which Jesus was taken up into heaven and gather there to sing, pray and read the Bible.

Some restrictions on Christian worship remain to this day.

Right foot resemblance

The primary attraction is an indentation in table-top rock resembling a right foot. Tradition says Jesus ascended into heaven from that rock leaving His footprint molded there.

Chapel of the Ascension is not a “must-see” for most Christian pilgrims. Of more interest are Bethlehem, Calvary and the empty tomb. The popularity of the Chapel of the Ascension (or lack of it) illustrates how little attention is paid to Jesus’ ascension in Baptist life and much of the evangelical world.

We know Jesus ascended into heaven 40 days after the resurrection but few evangelical churches pay much attention to Ascension Thursday or Ascension Sunday on the church calendar. Yet the ascension is called one of the five major milestones in Jesus’ ministry — baptism, transfiguration, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.

Sitting at the right hand of God

The Bible is clear that Jesus now sits at the right hand of the Father. Listen to the teachings of Hebrews: “After He had provided purification for



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven” (1:3); “We do have such a High Priest who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven” (8:1); “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (12:2).

Hebrews is not alone teaching that Jesus is at God’s right hand. The Apostle Peter wrote, “It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand — with angels, authorities and powers in submission to Him” (1 Pet. 3:22).

Jesus’ exaltation

New Testament writers often cited Psalm 110 as a theological foundation for Jesus’ ascension being consistent with Jewish faith. Peter, in his sermon at Pentecost, referenced this Psalm when he pointed out that David died and was buried (Acts 2:29) but that Jesus was raised to life and now is exalted at the right hand of God (v. 32). The Apostle Paul references the Psalm in 1 Corinthians 15:27 when he declares Christ must reign until He “has put all things under His feet.”

Exaltation to the right hand of God would not have been possible without the ascension.

John’s writing illustrates the ways Jesus prepared the disciples for the ascension. In John 14:2, Jesus said He was “going away” to prepare a place for the disciples, that because Jesus was “going away” the disciples would do greater works than He had done (v. 12) and that His “going away” was linked to the coming of the Holy Spirit (16:7).

‘Taken up’

Finally in John 16:28, Jesus plainly said He was going back to the Father.

In Luke 24:51 and Acts 1:9 the ascension itself is described. Luke uses the same verb in both

references when he writes Jesus was “taken up.” Like the resurrection, it was the power of the Father that reached down and “lifted up” the One in whom God was well pleased.

Many biblical scholars see the resurrection and the exaltation of Christ as two parts of the same event. As Hebrews 10:12 teaches, “But when this Priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God.”

The One who is “a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek” (Psalm 110:4) is the same One invested with royal powers and sits at the right hand of God (v. 1). Again the ascension is the indispensable link between resurrection and exaltation.

In human form

While not a primary teaching related to the ascension, it is worth noting that Jesus ascended in recognizable human form. The disciples had seen Him, talked with Him, touched Him and eaten with Him. What all this means for us is unclear. However, 1 Timothy 2:5 teaches the

“One mediator between God and men” is “the man Christ Jesus.”

Flesh may decay but there is something more lasting to humanity for Jesus maintained human resemblance. One theologian observed that Jesus ascended “with a perfected humanity of the type which we will have after our resurrection.” First John 3:2 says, “We know that when He appears we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.”

Directly related to the ascension is the promise of Jesus’ return. When Jesus told the

disciples He was “going away” to prepare a place for them, He promised He would return “so you also may be where I am.” Each of the Gospels and all the letters of the New Testament are ripe with the expectation of Jesus’ return.

Unexpected return

Today many argue about the timing of Jesus’ coming and other related topics. What is unmistakable is that at a time of the Father’s choosing, He will bring His kingdom to fruition. Jesus will be revealed in a sudden and unexpected manner. He will come to “judge the living and the dead” as declared in the Apostles’ Creed.

The ascension of our Lord is not a theological sidebar like Jerusalem’s Chapel of the Ascension has become for tourists. The ascension is an essential part of our Lord’s ministry and worthy of note by individual Christians and evangelical churches alike. ✠

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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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Spiritual formation

Alabama pastors promote 'basics of Christian life' through Keswick Conventions

By Grace Thornton

Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Don Graham said he knew he needed help, but he wasn't sure what kind of help he needed. "I was at a critical point in my life returning from the foreign missions field where we had to resign for medical reasons," said Graham, an Alabama evangelist.

He was down and he didn't know how to get back up.

And in the midst of that, someone suggested that he go to a Keswick Convention in North Carolina.

He'd never heard of Keswick. But he was willing to try pretty much anything.

"At that point in time I didn't know Keswick and I didn't know Stephen Olford, who was preaching at the conference," Graham said. "But my family and I went, and while Stephen Olford was preaching God turned me every way but loose."

And through the Keswick message, Graham said his life "was transformed completely."

Keswick may be a small town in England's Lake District but big things started there, said Roger Willmore, longtime Keswick speaker and recently named director of missions for Calhoun Baptist Association.

A minister in the Lake District, Thomas D. Harford-Battersby, went to fellow minister Robert Wilson and told him he was struggling, Willmore explained.

The two decided to hold a revival-type convention in Keswick that would serve as an encouragement and reminder of key points of the faith. They thought it would be a one-time thing.

"But 600 people showed up, and there was such an outpouring of blessing that they said, 'We must do this again,'" Willmore said.

And now, 141 years later, it's a concept that's spread around the world, impacting lives from Japan to Alabama.

It's because of Keswick's focus, Willmore said — its ultimate purpose is the total dedication of life to God.

To be a Keswick Convention, a meeting has to follow a particular format, Willmore explained. The speakers tackle a particular topic each day:

► On Monday, the issue of indwelling and unconfessed sin and how that mars a person's relationship with God.

► On Tuesday, the assurance of cleansing from that sin through belief in and reliance on Christ.

► On Wednesday, the reality that forgiveness and cleansing must be followed by absolute surrender to Jesus.

► On Thursday, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit living in the believer.

► On Friday, the power that the Holy Spirit gives Christians to live their daily lives in the world.



Photo by Maggie Walsh

Longtime Keswick speaker Roger Willmore recalls past Keswick Conventions, such as when Billy Graham spoke at the 1975 event (as captured in the framed photograph).

"The convention used the systematic expositional preaching of the Scriptures, and each speaker would drive home the relevance of whatever passage he was preaching," Willmore said. "The relevance to everyday life was so real and practical."

Keswick in Alabama

Its practicality made it all the way to Alabama, touching lives at convention meetings and in living rooms as groups gathered around tape players.

"It became the source of spiritual formation for me," Willmore said.

When he was a high school senior in Arab, Willmore was invited to a Bible study in a couple's home, and it was there he became acquainted with the Keswick concept.

Every second Monday night of the month, a group would gather around an old reel-to-reel tape recorder at their house and listen to sermons from Keswick Conventions.

"We sat with Bibles and open notebooks and each sermon would take about an hour. We would listen to one, take a break, then listen to another.

Then we would discuss how to apply the truths we had learned," Willmore said. "It had the deepest influence on my spiritual development — more than anything else I could point to."

At that point, from the mid-1960s to 1990, a Keswick Convention happened every March in Birmingham that drew people from all over the state.

"But then eventually the larger churches in town began to invite these speakers to their churches for their own conferences, and the big conferences became not as unique — the speakers were popping up at places like McElwain Baptist, Briarwood Presbyterian and Shades Mountain Baptist," Willmore said.

And its impact also had begun to shape the

ministries of people like Willmore and Graham, people who carried it into Alabama Baptist churches whether they realized it was Keswick or not.

Graham said, "My whole ministry was shaped by Keswick. It's not a British tradition — it's the heart and soul of the New Testament. It's the revival message."

And Graham and Willmore agree that Alabama needs it.

The target, Willmore said, is to bring Christians to spiritual maturity and living in the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Passing it down

He said that as he looks around Alabama sometimes, he gets concerned — concerned that many Christians will live and die having never really entered into the fullness of the life God has to offer.

"The Christian life isn't just imitating Christ, it is Christ, Christ lived out in the believer," he said. "That's the Keswick message, and that's the message that modern-day Christians need to hear and heed, the message that will help with our frustration, our worry, our stress and our burnout."

Keswick has a rich history, Willmore said. He's been to several historic anniversary conventions in the town of Keswick and heard speakers such as Billy Graham bring powerful messages.

But it has a message for the present still, he said, and he believes this so strongly he'll be attending a meeting in England in August to help strategize how to best pass the Keswick model to the next generation.

Don Graham said he's passionate about passing it on too.

"I'm constantly talking to young pastors and sharing this with them," he said. "Call it Keswick, call it whatever you like, it's the basics of the Christian life, and we've got to get back to it." ☛

When: June 14–15
Where: St. Louis, Missouri
For details: sbcannualmeeting.net



en.wikipedia.org

'Awaken America'

St. Louis to host upcoming 2016 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting June 14–15

When Southern Baptists depart St. Louis, Missouri, after their annual meeting in June, Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) president Ronnie Floyd says he will be praying they do so with a “deep burden for our nation, a new commitment to racial unity and an extraordinary commitment to evangelize America.”

With the theme of this year’s June 14–15 gathering being “Awaken America: Reach the World — Agree, Unite, Pray,” Floyd continues to point to passionate prayer as a critical tool for a “nationwide and global spiritual awakening.”

“I pray that our SBC messengers en-

counter the living God through moments of worship, preaching, challenge and prayer,” Floyd said.

For the second year, Floyd will lead a Tuesday evening session devoted to prayer. “A National Call to Prayer for Spiritual Leadership” will feature a diverse group of Southern Baptist leaders and pastors with special musical guests Keith and Kristyn Getty. Floyd also has invited African-American pastor Jerry Young, who is president of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., to participate in the evening session. Young also will be among the speakers at a special session, “A National Conversation on Racial Unity in America,” that will take place that morning.

New president

As Floyd wraps up his second and final term as SBC president in June, messengers will elect a new leader. At least three candidates are expected to be nominated for SBC president: North Carolina pastor J.D. Greear, Tennessee pastor Steve Gaines and Louisiana pastor David Crosby.

At press time, only one candidate had been announced to be nominated for first vice president: Doug Munton, pastor of First Baptist Church, O’Fallon, Illinois.

During this year’s Crossover evangelism outreach leading up to the annual meeting, an estimated 3,500 volunteers are expected June 11.

Churches taking teams to St. Louis can download a distance partner form at www.crossoverstlouis.com, or contact Tom Firasek, St. Louis Metro Baptist Association’s ministry and partnership coordinator, at 214-225-1948 or tfirasek@stlbaptist.org.

Messengers gathering in St. Louis will consider a variety of recommendations dur-

ing the annual meeting. Among them:

- ▶ a recommendation amending SBC Bylaw 26 regarding questions to SBC entity leaders from the floor during the annual meeting. The recommendation is intended to provide consistency in the time allotted for messengers to ask questions. The Executive Committee will present the recommendation to messengers during the SBC’s meeting.

- ▶ a one-time transfer of funds from the North American Mission Board (NAMB) to the International Mission Board (IMB) to assist IMB personnel leaving the board during its “organizational reset.”

- ▶ a new name for Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, scheduled to move to its new location of Ontario, California, in June. If messengers give approval to the name change, the new name will be Gateway Seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention. To take effect, the bylaw amendment, which was approved during the 2015 annual meeting in Columbus, Ohio, must be approved again by messengers in St. Louis.

- ▶ There also may be a resolution introduced to endorse a ban on the public display of the Confederate flag. The resolution was submitted in April by Dwight McKissic, pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church, Arlington, Texas.

‘Sending Celebration’

- ▶ The SBC annual meeting will feature a joint “Sending Celebration” as IMB and NAMB celebrate overseas missionaries and North American church planters, along with their sending churches, as they answer God’s call to plant churches and make disciples in the U.S. and around the world.

The Sending Celebration will be June 15, at America’s Center.

- ▶ NAMB will officially launch Send Relief during the Send Luncheon held at noon June 13 at The Dome at America’s Center.

The free luncheon is available to everyone, but tickets are required. To obtain a free ticket for the event, visit www.namb.net/sendluncheon. SBC participants also can learn how their churches can become more involved in church planting.

- ▶ Anita Renfroe, a popular Christian comedian and communicator, will be the keynote speaker of two of three events for ministers’ wives at the annual meeting. The trio of women’s events, based on the theme, “Be Encouraged,” will include a Pastors Wives Conference, a Ministers’ Wives Luncheon and a Women’s Expo. The Pastors’ Wives Conference will be June 13, 9–11:30 a.m.

Renfroe will lead during the annual luncheon, which will take place June 14, from noon to 1:30 p.m., also in the Marriott St. Louis Grand-Majestic Ballroom.

- ▶ GuideStone Financial Resources will once again offer its Wellness Center during the Pastors’ Conference and SBC, June 13–15.

Register online at sbcannualmeeting.net under the Messengers/Guests tab.

Messengers planning to propose resolutions must submit them no later than 15 days prior to the annual meeting. Detailed guidelines on submitting resolutions are available at sbcannualmeeting.net under the Messengers/Guests tab. Resolutions may be submitted online but must be followed up by a letter of credentials from the submitter’s church. (BP, TAB)



FLOYD

Going to the annual meeting?

Stay up-to-date on activities with the app available for iPhone, Android and Blackberry users. It can be downloaded by typing in ‘SBC Annual Meetings’ in the device’s app store. This year’s preferred Twitter hashtag will be #sbc16.



Follow **Jesus'** example

WMU Missions Celebration, annual meeting to focus on theme 'By All Means'

Sharing Christ by all means is the focus of this year's Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) Missions Celebration and Annual Meeting on June 12–13.

The meeting's theme — By All Means — also is WMU's emphasis for 2016–2018. The impetus for this theme is found in 1 Corinthians 9:22b–23: "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."

Wanda S. Lee, executive director of national WMU, noted, "With the words of Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, we are called to become servants to all; put the needs of others first; and under the leadership of God, do whatever it takes to bring them to faith.

"This new emphasis in WMU challenges us to follow Jesus' example ... to step into the world around us, cultivate relationships and create opportunities to demonstrate the love of Christ," Lee said.

"Then, by all means, let's share Christ with those waiting to hear."

Speakers will include Jeff Iorg, president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, scheduled to move to its new campus in Ontario, California, in June; Sebastian and Erin Vazquez, international church planters; Goldie Francis, an International Mission Board (IMB) worker; Travis Kerns, a missionary serving with the North American Mission Board in Salt Lake City; and Katie Orr, author and pastor's wife. Iorg's book, "Unscripted: Sharing the Gospel as Life Happens," will be the emphasis book for WMU in 2016–2017.

There will be five general sessions: Sunday (June 12) at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.; and Monday (June 13) at 9 a.m., 1 p.m. and 5 p.m. In addition, 22 different one-hour conferences will be offered on Monday during breakout sessions from 11–12 p.m. and 2:30–4:45 p.m. Topics range from understanding postmodernism and how to develop disciples in a postmodern culture, to missional leadership, to creative ways to engage others in learning about and doing missions, among others.

Additional elements on Sunday include:

▶ A reception in honor of Lee as she retires later this year following 20 years of service through national WMU — 16 years as executive director and four years as president.

▶ A meet-and-greet time with missionaries featured during the Missions Celebration, as well as some international missionaries who took the Voluntary Retirement Incentive offered by IMB.

Guided tour

▶ A special guided tour of the Missions Celebration for members of Girls in Action, Royal Ambassadors and Children in Action. Heather Keller, national WMU children's ministry consultant, will lead the children in earning a badge as they participate in the opening general session, meet missionaries, experience interactive exhibits and debrief with Keller about what they learned as she challenges them to find ways to be on mission every day.

The WMU Missions Celebration and Annual Meeting will be in the Ferrara Theatre at America's Center, the same convention center where the Southern Baptist Convention meeting will be held June 14–15. (BP)

For more information, visit wmu.com/missouri.

Pastors Conference to focus on evangelism through speakers, breakouts

Southern Baptist Pastors Conference president John Meador didn't choose the "Live This!" theme of this year's sessions in St. Louis.

He said it was burned on his heart several years ago as God convinced him through study of 2 Timothy 4:5–6 that he had not been leading his church in evangelism and that he — along with fellow pastors — needed to heed Scripture's call to "do the work of an evangelist."

Naturally when he was elected Pastors Conference president, that passage became the theme Scripture for the June 12–13 gathering. It reads in full: "But as for you,

be serious about everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time for My departure is close."

Meador, pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas, said he hopes ministers leave this year's conference with a drive to equip their congregations and with powerful results to follow.

The Pastors Conference will feature preaching, worship and prayer to undergird the ministry of pastors and their wives. The sessions at America's Center will be held prior to the Southern Baptist Convention's June 14–15 annual meeting there.

Speakers for the June 12 session will include Noah Oldham, pastor of August Gate Church, St. Louis, and James MacDonald, pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel, Rolling Meadows, Illinois.

The morning and afternoon sessions June 13 will feature messages from David Platt, president of the International Mission Board; Byron McWilliams, pastor of First Baptist Church, Odessa, Texas; Jack Graham, pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church, Plano, Texas; and Ed Stetzer, executive director of LifeWay Research.

Differing from previous years, the afternoon session will dismiss early so

participants can disperse to five breakout sessions geared toward pastors of different size churches. Each breakout will feature a Q-and-A period with a keynote speaker and other leaders on how to mobilize church members to share the gospel with their communities.

The evening speakers June 13 will include Jimmy Scroggins, pastor of Family Church, West Palm Beach, Florida, and Greg Laurie, pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship, Riverside, California.

Worship will be led by the Passion worship band; Andy Johnson, worship pastor at First, Euless; and Tim Whedbee, worship pastor at Moberly Baptist Church, Longview, Texas.

The Pastors Conference offering will go to a church in St. Louis to be announced.

This year's leadership team hopes pastors from the Millennial generation will join their older counterparts at the conference.

The conference is free and requires no registration. You also can access information about the conference on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Child care for children up to 12 will be offered during all sessions. Children ages 4–12 may register for a conference provided by Children's Conferences International at www.childrensconferences.com. (BP)

For more information, visit sbcpc.net.

Alabamians to lead at SBC annual meeting

Alabama Baptists will be among those serving during the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, June 14–15.

Appointments to SBC's Committee on Committees have been announced by SBC President Ronnie Floyd, pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas.

The Committee on Committees has 68 members, two from each of the 34 states and regions qualified for representation on boards of SBC entities.

The Committee on Committees will assemble in St. Louis just prior to the SBC's sessions to nominate members of the Committee on Nominations who, in turn, nominate trustees for the boards of SBC entities.

Floyd named Willy Rice, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Clearwater, Florida, to serve as chairman of this year's Committee on Committees.

▶ Ed Litton, pastor of Redemption Church, Saraland, will serve as vice chairman.

▶ Also serving on the committee is Jeff Gardner, First Baptist Church, Trussville.

Floyd announced the appointments March 14 in accordance with SBC Bylaw 19, which calls for providing notice to Southern Baptists of the appointees no later than 45 days in advance of each year's annual meeting.

Being nominated

Alabama Baptists also are among those being nominated to serve on the SBC Executive Committee, the four denominational boards — International Mission Board (IMB), North American Mission Board, LifeWay Christian Resources and GuideStone Financial Resources — the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, the six seminaries and the Committee on Order of Business.

Nominees will serve if elected by the messengers to the annual meeting. Those nominated from Alabama are:

▶ James W. "Jim" Averett, Birmingham, nominated with term to expire 2018 on the Executive Committee.

▶ Kenneth J. Burnham, Oxford; and Richard L. Richie, Somerville; nominated for second terms as IMB trustees.

▶ Clayton K. Speed, pastor, First Baptist Church, Hartselle, replacing Charles C. "Craig" Carlisle, Rainbow City, nominated with term to expire in 2020 for LifeWay Christian Resources.

▶ Edwin J. Hayes, Cullman, nominated for a second term as a Southern Baptist Theological Seminary trustee. (BP)

Also during 2016 SBC

Samford University Alumni & Friends Meeting

Wednesday, June 15, 1:30 p.m. in America's Center

For more information, contact Kevin Blackwell at 205-726-4055 or kdblackw@samford.edu.

Award-winning

For the 20th consecutive year, *The Alabama Baptist* has been named among the top regional Christian newspapers in the nation. Below is a list of awards won by *The Alabama Baptist* and other state Baptist entities based on work published in 2015.

The Alabama Baptist

▶ **Overall newspaper** — newspaper award of merit (EPA); best in class/print: regional newspaper — award of merit (ACP)

▶ **“Which Hurt the Most?”** by Bob Terry — award of merit, theological: biblical interpretation: all media (ACP)

▶ **“What Would Your Church Say to Caitlyn?”** by TAB staff — award of excellence, reporting and writing: theme issue, section or series: newspaper/newsletter (ACP)

▶ **“Invisible Scars”** by Grace Thornton — first place less than 750 words single article, feature writing (BCA)

▶ **“Following Death of A Spouse”** by Carrie Brown McWhorter — first place series or package feature writing division (BCA); award of excellence, reporting and writing: personally useful article: all media (ACP)

▶ **“51st Annual BCA Wilmer C. Fields Awards”** by Doug Rogers and Jennifer Davis Rash — first place scripts, feature writing (BCA)

▶ **“State Budget Reform”** by Carrie Brown McWhorter and Neisha Roberts — third place series or package, news writing (BCA)

▶ **“Rashional Thoughts”** by Jennifer Davis Rash — third place series blog, feature writing (BCA)

▶ **“Baptismal Waters”** by Neisha Roberts — fourth place single photo, candid (EPA)

▶ **“Alabama Needs 1 Definition of Illegal Gambling”** by Bob Terry — fifth place editorial (EPA)

▶ **“Faith and Family”** by TAB staff — fifth place department (EPA)

▶ **“Gambling Numbers Don’t Add Up”** by Jennifer Davis Rash — honorable mention, reporting and writing: news story (ACP)

▶ **“Baptists & Baptism”** by TAB staff — award of merit, reporting and writing: interview: all media (ACP)

Samford University

▶ **“2014–2015 Annual Report”** by Philip Poole and Janica York Carter — award of excellence (RCC); second place annual report design (BCA)

▶ **#ShaunaStrong** — third place other, audio-visual communications (BCA)

▶ **“A Christmas Melody”** — third place editorial feature, audio, audio-visual communications (BCA)

University of Mobile

▶ **Project Serve 2016** — first place public relations for special events less than \$25,000 budget (BCA)

▶ **“Belief In Influence”** by Trey Taulbee — second place promotion more than 3 minutes, audio-visual communications (BCA)

▶ **“The Torch”** — third place campaign or event, social media (BCA)

▶ **“All Steinway, All Together”** — total fund raising gold award (31st Educational Advertising Awards)

▶ **“The Torch” digital content site** — social media gold award (31st Educational Advertising Awards)

▶ **“University of Mobile: Belief in Influence”** by Trey Taulbee — special video bronze award (31st Educational Advertising Awards)

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

▶ **“Lessons Learned: ‘Woodlawn’ movie extra shares first-hand experience from being on film’s set”** by Doug Rogers — first place more than 1,500 words single article, feature writing (BCA)

▶ **“New York City Church Planters”** by Brian Harris — first place series blog, feature writing (BCA)

▶ **YECAL.org** by Brian Harris, Bethany Rogers — third place adapted template website, event or promotion site (BCA)

▶ **“Where Adventure Begins”** by Jesse Conte — third place direct mail design (BCA)

▶ **“The Gift of Literacy”** by Jesse Conte — third place specialty item design (BCA)

Tuscaloosa Baptist Association

▶ **“Pockets of Darkness: South Tuscaloosa Multi-housing”** by Bethany Rogers — second place, single digital ad, promotion and advertising (BCA); third place editorial feature more than three minutes, audio-visual communications division (BCA)

▶ **“Green Village”** by Bethany Rogers — third place, single domestic feature photograph (BCA)

Neisha Roberts — re-elected vice president of membership (BCA)
Jennifer Davis Rash — serving second year of two-year term, vice president (ACP)

ALABAMA

UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Huntsville Pastor Madison to retire in December

In his years of pastoral work, Ron Madison said he’s learned “pastors must lead relationally, not positionally.”

Madison, who has served as pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville, since 2004, will retire at the end of 2016.

He first sensed God’s call on his life as a young teenager, he told *The Alabama Baptist*, and later began leading worship at a rural church. During his freshman year of college he realized his call to pastoral ministry.

He earned a bachelor’s degree from Henderson State University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, before earning his master’s degree and doctorate from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Madison has served in several roles at various churches including pastor of First Baptist Church, Decatur, and later First Baptist Church, Opelika. He also served as minister of music and youth at churches in Arkansas. He was pastor of a church in Mississippi and in New Jersey before serving as president of the Baptist Convention of New York in 1978. He also was pastor of a church in Texas prior to moving to Alabama in 1983 and served as director of the office of associational and cooperative missions at the State Board of Missions (SBOM) for more than four years prior to serving at Mount Zion Baptist.

Madison also served as chair of the board of directors for the Center for Counseling of Union Baptist Association in Houston, Texas; Samford University Study Committee chairman; and SBOM executive director search committee chairman. He currently is serving his second term as a trustee on the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Madison said he hopes a “lasting legacy ... will be seen in the missions support and involvement” of Mount Zion Baptist, noting that it has been listed in the top 40 of all SBC churches in gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for several years.

He and his wife, Charlotte, have three children and four grandchildren. (Neisha Roberts)



MADISON

Longtime Centre pastor Pollard retires after 30 years

The children he saw born in the church are now being married in the church, according to Ricky Pollard, who served as pastor of Pine Grove Baptist Church, Centre, for 30 years and seven months before retiring April 24.

“You get to see a lot when you stay around as long as I have,” Pollard said. “God’s taught me how to love people. I try to love people through the good times and the rough times.”

Prior to serving at Pine Grove Baptist, Pollard began serving as pastor of Asberry Baptist Church, Jacksonville, at age 22 and served there for 11 years.

He studied at Jacksonville State University and Luther Rice College and Seminary in Lithonia, Georgia, and later earned his doctor of ministry degree from Covington Theological Seminary in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia.

When asked about something he’s learned throughout his 41 years as a pastor, Pollard said, “I’ve learned the importance of maintaining my personal walk with the Lord. Having a daily quiet time with the Lord is very important. Not just preparing for sermons but preparing my own heart to live the Christian life.”

And the secret to staying at one church for more than three decades? Pollard said, “God is very faithful. Wherever He sends you, He’ll supply whatever you need to do the work.”

He and his wife, Joan, have one daughter.

Pollard said he plans to take the summer off but will be prepared to do supply preaching in the fall. “I never want to quit preaching and I love the gospel ministry.” (Neisha Roberts)



POLLARD



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Knowing God

God Who Judges

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

As we near the end of our theme about knowing God as He has made Himself known, Theology 101 this week reminds us that God — who is consummate love and full of mercy and grace, along with being compassionate and longsuffering — also has revealed Himself as God who judges.

Divine judgment is a logical and companion truth with God's perfect holiness. Being absolutely just, God reacts against all violations of His holiness. He has manifested His holiness by establishing laws that are just and righteous, as well as establishing just rewards when His laws are obeyed and penalties when they are violated. We might say that His rewards are the positive expressions of His love, while punishments are just expressions of His wrath. Whatever falls short of God's own perfections passes under His scrutiny and faces His judgment. His perfections both set the standard for judgment and demand it.

Psalm 19:9 puts it this way: "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." God desires His people to live with the awareness that He is the ultimate Judge who inhabits eternity.

Mirroring God's judgment

The idea of a judge was introduced early in Israel's experience as God's covenant people. Human judges taken from among the people were given the assignment to discern fairly or impartially when confronted with conflicting claims. In this sense, they were to mirror God's own uprightness as supreme Judge. These judges were to reject any attempt at bribery and to resist the influence of popular opinion. God's instructions stipulated that they should judge the people justly, saying, "You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous" (Deut. 16:19).

Being human, some Old Testament judges were nobler than others. However, human judges at their very best

and exercising their highest impartiality and fairness were but a pale reflection of God's justice as the ultimate and perfect Judge. That God allowed for human judges was, and is, a reminder that He is the final Judge who judges righteously (1 Pet. 2:23).

Intentions behind actions

While human judges of necessity work from outward actions and, at best, can only deduce motivations of the heart, God knows the heart of every person. Being aware of the thoughts and intents of our hearts, God's judgments take into account the intentions that lie behind outward actions. Like His penetrating and powerful Word, God is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:12-13).

Knowing that we will give an account of ourselves to Him at the last day can become a powerful incentive for seeking to please Him here and now. Jesus put it simply, "Each one shall give an account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken" (Matt. 12:36). The good news is that true Christians have no need to fear the last judgment. Our sins and their consequences were borne by Jesus in His saving death on the cross. While not fearing the final judgment as related to our eternal destiny, we should seek to live godly lives and devoted service in light of God's judgment as to eternal rewards at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). †

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.



Christians must not shy away from expressing their faith, Echevarria says

(continued from page 1)

against the university April 26 in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina, claiming the university's "Student Speech Policy" violates their rights to free speech.

Lawyers for the group assert that the policy has been selectively applied in a way that inhibits religious student groups' speech more than that of other student groups.

Echevarria blames a current culture that tolerates all manner of nontraditional views at the same time it punishes the expression of traditional Christian values.

"While we are becoming more open to alternative lifestyles we are becoming less open to people openly talking about religion, less tolerant to the gospel," he said. "There should be room to disagree."

As an example, Echevarria points out that new workplace rules set in place to protect the rights of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) employees are now restricting the free-speech rights of Christians.

How do Christians express their views without igniting a firestorm?

That, too, is becoming more difficult in today's combative, "my way or the highway" culture, when even presidential politics have devolved into schoolyard taunts and name-calling.

Whether the argument is between students debating the morality of gay "marriage" or high-ranking faith leaders challenging their peers to speak out against a presidential candidate, it pays to be polite.

Besides, Echevarria said, that's what the gospel calls for in 1 Peter 3:15: "Always be prepared to give an answer to every-

Half of U.S. adults seldom or never discuss religion with non-family

Percentage who say they discuss religion with people outside their family:

Seldom

33%

Several times a year

18%

At least once a week

18%

Never

16%

Once or twice a month

15%

Note: Don't know/refused responses (<1%) not shown. Source: 2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study supplemental survey

one who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."

Respectful discourse involves some discretion, Echevarria suggested. "You want to pick your opportunities and pray that God opens doors." Still, even if conflict is unavoidable, Christians must not shy away from expressing their faith. †

FBC Trussville pianist to compete nationally



'Honored, humbled'

Photo courtesy of Jon McClaran

First Baptist Church, Trussville, pianist Kevin Grigsby has been selected to play at the Cliburn International Amateur Piano Competition in Fort Worth, Texas, on June 19-25. The competition invites 72 of the world's best classically trained amateur solo pianists from around the world to compete before a panel of judges. A former Alabama Symphony Orchestra pianist, Grigsby began playing the piano in churches when he was 12. He said he is 'honored and humbled' to be selected. Buddy Champion is pastor of First, Trussville.

A Christian nation?

Moore says confusion happens when people give US 'providential place in history that Bible never assigns it'

The Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) top official for public policy and religious liberty concerns says, theologically speaking, America is not a Christian nation.

In a Gospel Coalition video posted May 4, Russell Moore of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) said if applied sociologically to mean that most people in the country profess to be Christians, the United States "was and is a Christian nation."

"That's not what most people mean, though, when they say Christian nation," Moore said. "What they mean is the idea that



MOORE

God was in covenant with the United States of America in order to bless the United States of America as a special people, as a new Israel, as a group of

people covenanted under Christianity. And the answer to that is clearly 'no.'

Moore said a lot of confusion over the nation's religious identity comes "when people assign to the United States of America a providential place in history that the Bible never assigns it."

It shows up, he said, when people apply Old Testament passages directly to the U.S., the most common being 2 Chronicles 7:14: "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, repent of their sins and pray and seek My face, then I will hear from heaven and I will forgive their sins, and I will heal their land."

Prayer for the nation

"One can hear this persistently on days of prayer for the nation, but God did not promise that to a political body," Moore said. "He did not promise that to anyone apart from the mediation of Jesus Christ."

In early May, President Barack Obama signed a proclamation designating May 5 the 2016 National Day of Prayer. Anne Graham Lotz, named May 5 as chairman of the National Day of Prayer Task Force, appealed for individuals to

pray for the nation with passion and fervency in a new book, "The Daniel Prayer: Prayer that Moves Heaven and Changes Nations."

"Nothing will turn our nation around except heartfelt, desperate prayer. Prayer where the prayers rend their hearts, return to the cross and repent of personal and national sin," Lotz wrote.

Many conservative Christians embrace the writings of David Barton, a historian who claims the U.S. was founded as an explicitly Christian nation and dismisses the constitutional separation of Church and state as a "myth."

Moore said rather than being conservative, the Christian nation doctrine "is really a form of theological liberalism."

"It assumes that a person or a nation can be a Christian apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, apart from new birth," Moore said.

Though their styles and tone often contrast, on this topic Moore's thinking is pretty much in line with that of his predecessor Richard Land. Land, who is now president of Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina, wrote in 2006 it is

"both inaccurate historically and inappropriate theologically" to say America is a Christian nation.

"Theologically a 'Christian nation,' at least for

evangelical Christians, implies a nation where the vast majority of people are 'converted' individuals who profess Christ as their personal Savior, a situation which has never been true in the United States."

Moore said it is more accurate to say Christians "live in a nation among many people who profess to be Christians — some of whom are and some of whom aren't — and we must be the people who give a faithful gospel witness in those days." (BNG)

**What do you think?
Share your response to
Russell Moore's opinion
with us. Email news@
thealabamabaptist.org.**

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:

11 AM-3 PM
 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

www.wayfm.com/global/northalabama/be-a-part-of-the-way-fm-pbj-drive/

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Joel Max Jackson

Retired pastor, Coffee Assoc. DOM dies

Joel Max Jackson, former Coffee Baptist Association director of missions (DOM) and retired pastor, died April 29. He was 79.



JACKSON

A graduate of Baptist Bible Institute (now The Baptist College of Florida) in Graceville, Jackson served in the U.S. Navy from 1954 to 1965.

He served as pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church, Enterprise; Grantswood (formerly New Hope) Baptist Church, Birmingham; and Springfield Baptist Church, Jakin, Georgia. In addition to serving as DOM for Coffee Association, Jackson also served as moderator for St. Clair Baptist Association.

In retirement he served as interim pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Odenville; First Baptist Church, Rainbow City; and Riddles Bend Baptist Church, Rainbow City.

He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Helen; four children; six grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren. (TAB)

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Like us

Investing in people's lives

Alabama dad shares faith through hiking, passes hobby to son

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Confucius Raisin. “I think that was his name,” Lowell Van Ness said with a laugh. “It was something like that.”

That’s just one of the characters he met on the Appalachian Trail when he did the 2,160-mile thru-hike from Georgia to Maine back in 2014.

“I met the former civil affairs officer from Afghanistan. I also ran into a convicted felon from the lower 9th ward of New Orleans,” he said. “You meet all sorts of odd and interesting folks.”

He met guys going through mid-life crises. He met a lot of people from all over the world.

“There were a lot from Germany and also Australia,” Van Ness said.

And he spent many an evening with them around the campfire — in five months on the trail, he only spent four or five nights alone.

“It’s a cliché — they say the journey is the destination, but it’s kind of true,” he said. “It’s just you and the trail and all these utterly fascinating people who just randomly show up.”

Investing in others

For some of those nights, his father, Thomas Van Ness, was with him too. It’s a hobby the two have shared since Lowell was in Boy Scouts. They’ve hiked parts of the Appalachian Trail both separately and together.



Photo courtesy of Lowell Van Ness

Father-son duo, Thomas (right) and Lowell Van Ness, have shared the hobby of hiking since Lowell was in Boy Scouts. They’ve hiked parts of the Appalachian Trail both separately and together and have shared Jesus along the way.

Thomas Van Ness said it’s a great way to invest in the lives of people along the trail.

“I attend Hunter Street Baptist Church (in Hoover), and I take my lessons from Bible study fellowship with me,” Thomas Van Ness said. “I’ll be reading and answering questions from my lesson, and it never fails that somebody says, ‘Whatcha doing?’ I get to tell them that I’m a Christian and I’m studying my lesson. I tell them about how Jesus died for our sins and that if they don’t know Him, they really need to.”

Sometimes people call him a Jesus freak. Sometimes people just say “cool.” Other times they really engage with him in a conversation and think about it.

“And right now I’m studying Revelation, so I’m getting

to share with them about how one day God is going to take the whole heavens and earth that we’re hiking through and renew it,” Thomas Van Ness said.

He headed out on the trail again in late April, chipping away at his ninth section of the trail, a section in Virginia from Daleville to Waynesboro.

He’s been working on it for years, ever since his son was young and the elder Van Ness took his family to hike part of it in Maryland and then again when he and his son hiked 50 miles of it for his Boy Scout merit badge.

Change of plans

In the early ’90s, he and his wife, Jimmye, had planned to hike the whole thing at one time but plans quickly changed.

“We did one night of back-

packing at Oak Mountain and everything had gone well, so we were starting to do some planning when Jimmye got pregnant,” he said.

Resurrected dream

But after Lowell Van Ness got old enough to hike, Thomas Van Ness resurrected the dream.

“I think when Dad and I were doing backpacking trips together for Boy Scouts and I caught the backpacking bug, it kind of re-activated him,” Lowell Van Ness said. “He started buying all these DVDs about people hiking the Appalachian Trail.”

And he started chipping away at it in sections.

Thomas Van Ness said, “First was with my wife for our 30th anniversary.”

After that he did seven more sections, including the first part of the trail to help Lowell Van Ness kick off his thru-hike in 2014 after he graduated from college.

Thomas Van Ness said, “It doesn’t sound relaxing to carry a 30-pound pack over 2,000- and 3,000-foot climbs, but you’re not staring at a computer. It gives me a chance to get out of town and be in nature.”

And it’s a great time to enjoy creation, said Lowell Van Ness, also a member of Hunter Street Baptist.

“I enjoy being outside, I’ve enjoyed spending time with my dad and I’ve loved getting to interact with so many people,” he said. ☞



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Mississippi religious liberty law challenged in court

As part of Mississippi's new religious freedom law that was signed into law April 5, workers in county clerk offices are now allowed to recuse themselves from issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples based on their religious or moral convictions.

But some, like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), say the law's provisions could allow county clerk office workers to discriminate against gays.

ACLU filed a lawsuit May 9 on behalf of engaged same-sex couples planning to wed that chal-

lenged the law, saying the opt-out provision allows the state to maintain a "no same-sex couples allowed" list of government officials who will provide marriage licenses to every couple except those who are gay, according to Baptist News Global.

Jennifer Riley-Collins, executive director of ACLU of Mississippi, said, "The ACLU stands firmly against discrimination in all forms. All citizens deserve the right to be treated equally regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity."

Set to go into effect July 1, House Bill (HB) 1523 is said to violate the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, according to the lawsuit.

'Imposed disadvantage'

ACLU lawyers say the bill "imposes a disadvantage, a separate status and so a stigma upon all married same-sex couples in Mississippi."

The bill has found support from Southern Baptists.

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission supports the bill,

calling it "an exemplary model for public policy."

House Speaker Philip Gunn, a Southern Baptist layman, sponsored HB 1523.

However, some pastors in the area disagree and have urged Gov. Phil Bryant to veto the bill.

Pastor Stan Wilson, of Northside Baptist Church, Clinton, Mississippi, said, "Any law that threatens the livelihood of real people is bad public policy. More to the point, as a pastor, I believe it is a failure of Christian witness." (TAB, BNG)

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. Copy deadline is two weeks before publication.

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New Market Baptist Church, New Market, Alabama, is seeking God's will for a pastor. Please send resumés along with CD, DVD or website of recent sermon to: nmbcp15@gmail.com or mail to: New Market Baptist Church, P.O. Box 128, New Market, AL 35761.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

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

CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR

First Baptist Church, Enterprise, Alabama, is in search of a church administrator. All those interested in applying can email their resumé to: fbceapplicant@gmail.com. If you have any questions about the position, you may email those inquiries to the same address.

MUSIC MINISTER

Westwood Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama, is seeking a part-time music minister. Please send resumé to: steve.potts@wbclive.com.

MUSIC MINISTER

Northside Baptist Church in Calera, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational minister of music. Please send resumé to: nick@northsidecalera.org. For more information, call 205-410-6418.

MUSIC MINISTER

Carrollton Baptist Church, Carrollton, Alabama, is accepting resumés for a part-time minister of music. Two different morning services and Wednesday night rehearsal. Please reply to: Carrollton Baptist Church, Box 457, Carrollton, AL 35447, or

cbc01@centurytel.net.

WORSHIP MINISTER

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

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC

Haven Baptist Church in Madison, Alabama, is currently seeking a bivocational minister of music. The music minister must be a Christ follower willing to be a member of the Haven family. He is to lead our choir and congregation in worship. In our music, we aim to be multi-generational and seek to glorify God by singing Christ-centered songs. Please send inquiries or resumés to: Havenbap@knology.net.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC

Turnerville Baptist Church, Mobile County. Contact Bro. Jason Meaux at jmeaux@turnervillebaptist.org.

YOUTH MINISTER

Westwood Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama, is seeking a part-time youth pastor. Please send resumé to: steve.potts@wbclive.com.

YOUTH MINISTER

Chulafinnee Baptist Church is seeking a part-time youth minister. We are located on Hwy 431 South between Wedowee and Oxford in the Cleburne County/Heflin area. Send resumés to: Chulafinnee Baptist Church, 6961 Hwy 431, Heflin, AL 36264.

YOUTH/CHILDREN'S MINISTER

Southside Baptist Church, Princeton, Kentucky, is accepting resumés for a full-time youth/children's minister. Bachelor's

degree, seminary training and experience is preferred. Email: youthsearchteam@southsidebaptist.com or mail: Southside Baptist, ATTN: Youth Search, P.O. Box 684, Princeton, KY 42445.

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN MINISTRIES

Northwood Hills Baptist Church in Northport is receiving resumés for our part-time paid position. This person will be responsible for programming, enlisting volunteers and connecting with visiting families. Resumés accepted through June 1. Job description, additional information or to submit a resumé, please email Rusty Selman at: office@northwoodhillschurch.com or call the church office at 205-339-3196.

OTHER POSITIONS

ORGANIST

Meadow Brook Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, is currently seeking an organist. Responsibilities include playing for Sunday morning worship, assisting with Wednesday evening rehearsals, occasional Sunday evening services as well as playing for weddings and funerals. Please contact worship pastor, David Vaughan at dvaughan@meadowbrookbaptist.org.

TECH ASSISTANT

Westwood Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama, is seeking a part-time tech assistant. This position involves worship service media, website and other computer needs. Please contact steve.potts@wbclive.com.

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- 1 Download the Aurasma app from your app store.
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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.

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

May marks 300 years since birth of only 18th century female hymn writer

English Baptist Anne Steele (1716–1778) was the only woman hymn writer of the 18th century. She was the first woman whose hymns were used extensively in hymnbooks.

This month is the 300th anniversary of her birth.

The eldest daughter of William Steele, she was born May 1716 in Broughton, England. Her father, a timber merchant, was a lay preacher for 60 years at a Baptist church in Broughton. When she was three years old, her mother died.

Poetical compositions

Since her family was prosperous, she received her education at boarding schools. Her family regularly read literature in their home and she entertained friends with her poetical compositions.

When she was 14, she joined her father's church and was baptized.

As a teen she had chronic malaria, stomach pain and severe teeth pain. When she was 19, she was thrown from a horse, resulting in a severe hip injury. Although she had health problems all her life, she remained cheerful.

Steele received marriage proposals but decided to remain single. She lived with her father and stepmother who cared for her health needs.

Along with writing poetry, Steele wrote hymns for many years but was reluctant to have them published. When she did decide to publish she wrote under the pen name "Theodosia." On Nov. 29, 1757, her father wrote in his diary: "This day Nanny sent part of her composition to London to be printed. I entreat a gracious God, who enabled and stirred her up to such a work, to direct it

and bless it for the good of many."

In 1760 she published two volumes of "Poems on Subjects Chiefly Devotional," which contained 144 hymns, 34 Psalms and 50 poems set to verse. Her hymns were extremely popular, especially in Baptist hymnals. Two years after her death, her book had another edition.



In 1808, Trinity Church, an Episcopal church in Boston, published its own hymnal. Out of the 152 hymns in the volume, Steele had written 59. In the early 19th century, it was highly unusual that a Baptist writer would compose a third of the hymns in an Episcopal hymnal.

The complete work, "Hymns, Psalms and Poems" by Steele, was published in 1863.

Music historians have described her

hymns as beautiful, natural and pleasing in imagery, and full of genuine Christian feeling.

Her most popular hymn has been "Father, Whate'er of Earthly Bliss," a hymn that turns earthly loss into a spirit of thankfulness.

Hymn writing

Another enduring hymn, "Dear Refuge of My Weary Soul," was recorded in 1998 by Indelible Grace, a Christian group. Following is the first stanza:

"Dear refuge of my weary soul,
On Thee, when sorrows rise:
On Thee, when waves of trouble roll,
My fainting hope relies."

During the last nine years of her life, Steele was confined to her bed.

She died Nov. 11, 1778. Her last words were, "I know my Redeemer liveth." She is buried in Broughton Cemetery. †

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).



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Photo courtesy of Samford University's MTI

As part of your subscription to *The Alabama Baptist*, you will receive a complimentary lecture taught by Kevin Blackwell, executive director of the Ministry Training Institute at Samford University, for the next few weeks. Use your Aurasma app to watch the third lecture on Philippians by placing your mobile device over this photo. App instructions noted on page 10.

Across ALABAMA'S Associations

BALDWIN

► **Lawrence Phipps** is the new interim pastor of **First Church, Gulf Shores**. He previously served as interim pastor of Bethany Church, Andalusia. He also is the founding pastor of Vaughn Forest Church, Montgomery, and served as pastor for 20 years. Phipps is the founder and executive director of It's Life Ministry.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Hunter Street Church, Hoover**, will hold Vacation Bible School on June 6–10, 8:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. daily. The theme is LifeWay's "Submerged" and is for children who have completed grades 1–6. For more information contact Andy Wilbanks, minister to families, at 205-985-7295 or andyw@hsbc.org. Buddy Gray is pastor.

CALHOUN

► **First Church, McClellan, in Anniston** will hold a women's event "Maturing in Character. Becoming like Jesus" on June 4, 8 a.m.–12:15 p.m. There will be three workshops focusing on Christian maturity and Christlikeness. Ashley Rinehart Ramage,

Linda Yost and Leslie Moore will speak. Kaylon Gilley will perform special music. For more information and to reserve your spot, call 256-847-0230. Trull Hill is pastor.

COVINGTON

► **West Highland Church, Andalusia**, will celebrate its 76th homecoming June 5. Services begin at 10:30 a.m. Eugene Meadows will speak. Linda Hartin will lead special music and Sue Reeves and Jane Graddy will perform. A fellowship meal will be served at noon. Larry Stewart is pastor.

TALLAPOOSA

► **Sandy Creek Church, Camp Hill**, will hold revival services May 23–25, 6:30 nightly. Jimmy Sprayberry will speak. There will be special music. Craig Guy is pastor.

WEST CULLMAN

► **Panama Church, Vinemont**, will celebrate its 71st anniversary in a memorial homecoming service June 5, 10:30 a.m. A covered dish lunch will follow the service. For more information call Freda Johnson at 256-734-2190. Greg Aldridge is pastor. †

NC governor defends restroom law

North Carolina's governor went to federal court May 9 to defend his state's new restroom privacy law against a threat from the Obama administration.

Gov. Pat McCrory's lawsuit asks a judge to declare the Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act, also known as H.B. 2, is not a violation of federal anti-discrimination protections. The act requires individuals in government buildings to use the restrooms of the sex on their birth certificates.

Possible loss of millions

The Department of Justice (DOJ) had written McCrory and two other state officials May 4 to assert H.B. 2 violated federal law.

It threatened a lawsuit — and seemingly the loss of millions of dollars in federal education aid — if North Carolina did not indicate by May 9 any kind of intention to change the restroom measure.

Leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention and state welcomed McCrory's action.

Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, called the North Carolina law "a common-sense

measure that protects individuals as well as conscience."

"Contrary to what the White House has said, the North Carolina bill is not discriminatory or hateful," Moore said.

"Bullying of state legislatures by the federal government is the government engaging in culture warring, and the rights of those who dissent from mainstream cultural opinion should be protected."

Tami Fitzgerald, executive director of the North Carolina Values Coalition, said, "It is not the role of the federal government to mandate radical and extreme bathroom policies to a state like North Carolina, forcing our citizens into giving men access to the bathrooms, showers and locker rooms of women and young girls."

Including transgender

A Southern Baptist, Fitzgerald said the lawsuit requests "a federal judge to determine whether the Obama administration can unilaterally change the meaning of the term 'sex' in our country's anti-discrimination laws to include transgender."

In its letter, the DOJ said the North Carolina measure violates

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act.

North Carolina "is engaging in a pattern or practice of discrimination against transgender state employees," the letter said. The law, which took effect March 23, "is facially discriminatory against transgender employees on the basis of sex," according to the letter.

Protections 'not limited'

An April decision by the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Virginia, prior to the DOJ's letters held federal law could be interpreted to include gender identity discrimination.

McCrory's lawsuit said the state "does not treat transgender employees differently from non-transgender employees."

The suit also said the governor has directed state agencies to provide a reasonable accommodation by means of single occupancy restrooms.

McCrory and his co-plaintiff, Secretary of Public Safety Frank Perry, "desire to accommodate the needs of state employees based on special circumstances, including but not limited to transgender employees," according to the lawsuit. (BP)

Emmanuel Baptist breaks ground



Photo courtesy of Emmanuel Baptist Church

Emmanuel Baptist Church, Phenix City, breaks ground on the property where a new facility will be built and completed by the end of 2016. The building will include a worship center, church offices and classrooms. Phase 2 of construction will include the addition of more classrooms and a fellowship hall. The congregation has been meeting in the North Phenix Baptist Church, Phenix City, building since December 2015 when they sold the old church property. Emmanuel Baptist Pastor Alan Griffith (center, red shirt), is pictured here with members of the construction crew and several church members as they broke ground March 12.



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Alabama Baptist GIVING



Year to date through April 30, 2016

APRIL

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$3,333,333.33
CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....	\$3,389,886.00
Over Goal for Month.....	\$56,552.67

YEAR TO DATE

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$13,333,333.33
CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....	\$13,819,886.00
Over Goal for Year.....	\$486,552.67

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

Commercial child exploitation on the rise globally, according to recent study

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

Although widely viewed as a developing world issue, child prostitution and trafficking of children for sexual purposes in travel and tourism are on the rise globally, according to a recent study.

Despite a 20-year effort to end Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism (SECTT), it “has increased drastically and its nature has changed dramatically,” the study said. “White, western, wealthy, middle-aged men are no longer the typical offender. Offenders can be foreign or local, young or old. ... Local, domestic and intra-regional travelers account for most, with many being ‘situational’ offenders, i.e. engaging in child exploitation because of an opportunity and because they feel they will get away with it.”

The study was sponsored by ECPAT (or End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography & Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes) International. ECPAT is a global network of organizations and individuals working to ensure that “children everywhere enjoy their fundamental rights, free and secure from all forms of commercial sexual exploitation.”

The study, released May 12, also found:

▶ “Offenders could be tourists, business travelers, migrant and

transient workers, expats or civil society volunteers.

▶ “Traveling child sex offenders are usually from the region or country where the offense takes place.

▶ “There are more than 3.5 million truck drivers and more than 50,000 hotel properties in the United States, two sectors particularly prone to child exploitation.”

▶ New outlets for exploitation are “created through the Internet and mobile technology, creating and reinforcing anonymity of offenders.”

▶ “Most child sex offenders did not plan the crime.

▶ “No child is immune and victims are not only poor. Some are more vulnerable than others, such as the marginalized including minorities, street children and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender).

▶ “There are alarmingly low conviction rates for the sexual exploitation of children, which means the majority of offenders evade justice.”

Chris Smith, R-New Jersey, who wrote the International Megan’s Law that was signed into law in February, said, “This is a global problem that requires a global solution. We must build a global coalition to share information and change laws, to make child protection a priority worldwide.”

In 1996, SECTT came to the forefront of global issues at the First World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm, Sweden, where 122 governments committed to forming “a global partnership” against SECTT and to “develop a national plan of action to tackle the issue in their respective countries,” according to ecpat.net.

Although concrete statistics on SECTT are difficult to obtain given the nature of the crimes, ECPAT has combed through data to cre-

ate a way to know where children are most vulnerable.

Countries in North, Central and South America have all experienced child sex

tourism in varying degrees, according to ECPAT, noting that SECTT is most notably an issue in Mexico and Colombia. Tourist areas see a high incidence of SECTT and tourist arrivals have quadrupled since 1980, the study found.

Kenya and Ghana are countries of concern in Africa and the Philippines and Mongolia in Asia have seen an increase in SECTT in recent years, with the majority of offenders in Asia being local men.

Russia, Estonia and Bulgaria mark countries in Europe that have seen an increase in SECTT.

Alabama Senator Richard Shelby (R), who introduced the Senate’s companion bill to International Megan’s Law, said, “The alarming findings of this study serve as a stark reminder that we must do more to eradicate heinous crimes against children across the globe. I will continue to work tirelessly with ... like-minded organizations to identify ways to strengthen ... coordination at home and abroad to achieve this goal. Our nation’s most vulnerable citizens deserve nothing less.”

In order to continue to combat the rise in SECTT, the study recommends: “Converting the United Nations World Tourism Organization’s Global Code of Ethics into an international convention with worldwide ratification” and creating a reporting system that provides an easy and safe way to report incidents. It also recommends “working with online service providers to remedy the growing sale of children for sex via the Internet.”

Tennessee Senator Bob Corker (R), said, “No country wants to be known as a destination for child victimization, and it is my hope that these findings inspire a global effort among leaders in the public and private sectors to eradicate this behavior once and for all.”

To view the full study, visit www.globalstudysectt.org.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 22

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

ACCEPTING Acts 10:9-15, 43-48

The Vision (9-15)

From Jesus' ministry it is easy to see that the gospel is for all people. Time and again in the Gospels, Jesus interacts with those whom the Jews saw as unworthy — Samaritans, Gentiles, lepers, tax collectors, etc.

However, Peter believed that in order for non-Jews to be followers of Christ, they needed to follow the Old Testament ceremonial laws.

Peter saw a vision of a sheet being lowered to earth and on this sheet were all types of unclean foods as prescribed by the Jewish Law. God told Peter to eat these unclean animals, much to Peter's surprise. He had been a devout Jew — he would not eat such food. But God said, "What God has made clean you must not call common" (v. 15).

As Peter pondered this vision, Cornelius' messengers arrived at the door. Cornelius, a Gentile, was a devout follower of God. He was told in a vision by an angel to find Peter, so he sent messengers to find him.

The Declaration (43)

Peter obeyed the Holy Spirit and went with the messengers to meet Cornelius, who was waiting to hear what God would say through this disciple. Peter began to preach from the Old Testament, showing that Christ is the fulfillment of these prophecies and that all who believe in Christ, no matter their ethnic or national background, will receive forgiveness of sins.

He was certain to include the key gospel message — that Christ was the Messiah — the anointed One who was prophesied about in the Old Testament. He lived a life in complete accord with the Old Testa-

ment Law, being fully obedient to God the Father. In spite of this, He was arrested, crucified, buried and rose again. This Christ will return and be the Judge of the living and the dead, and all who believe in Him will have forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

It is crucial to tell the whole gospel story, especially the resurrection of Christ. We do not worship a dead savior — after all, a dead man cannot save us since he couldn't save himself. But Jesus defeated death, which means death has no hold over Him. And if death has no hold over Christ, then Christ has power over death and He can grant us resurrection as well.

The Sign (44-46a)

When Peter preached the gospel to these Gentiles the Holy Spirit came upon them and they began to speak in foreign languages, just like what happened on the day of Pentecost.

This confirmed to all of the Jews there that the Gentiles could receive the Holy Spirit of God just as the Jews did at Pentecost. Therefore they could be accepted by God just as they were.

The gospel of Christ was for all nations in fulfillment of the Old Testament, not just for Israel (see for example prophecies in Isa. 42:6; 49:6).

The Acceptance (46b-48)

Since the Gentiles with Cornelius had received the Holy Spirit, they did the next logical thing — they were baptized. It is evident in this passage that baptism did not give them the Holy Spirit, as they obviously had received it already.

Some Christians believe that you need to be baptized to receive the Holy Spirit; this passage clearly shows this is not the case. Reception of the Holy Spirit precedes baptism, and followers of Christ follow Him in baptism. †

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

REDEEMED FROM AN UNBELIEVING PAST Acts 26:9-20

Hatred for Jesus and His followers consumes some people. (9-11)

Paul's cruelty against believers exemplifies the incredulity of unrepentant Pharisees that Jesus is God's Messiah and Israel's Lord. Before his conversion, the idea of a resurrected Messiah seemed incredible to Paul. His is a skepticism that was different from that of the pagan intellectuals, many of whom simply disregard this resurrection claim. Paul viewed alleged "Messiahs" as a threat to his Jewish faith, and he considered it his religious duty to squelch this newest Messianic movement.

"I also cast my vote" is literally "I also cast a voting pebble." Judicial bodies routinely cast pebbles when deciding verdicts. To cast a condemning vote in this case meant to vote for the death penalty against believers. It is unlikely that Paul was a voting member of the Sanhedrin; rather, Paul's words confirm his sympathies for condemnation. Paul verifies his opposition to the faith through his supporting vote. Acts mentions only Stephen and James as martyrs. However, this text makes clear that there were others put to death. By supporting their executions, Paul demonstrates his devotion to the orthodoxy of official Judaism.

Jesus calls even those who oppose Him to become His disciples. (12-18)

On the road to Damascus, Paul saw "a light from heaven." Paul emphasizes the intensity of the brightness, and here he adds that his traveling companions witnessed it as well. The great light surrounded them until they had fallen to the ground.

The "goads" come from a Greek word referring to a stick with a sharpened point used like a cattle prod to goad an animal in the right direction. Paul was kicking against

the goads of God's guidance. His persecution of Jesus indicates his stubborn refusal to obey God's redemptive plan, which includes Paul himself. Because God's plan includes Paul himself, it is fruitless for him to persecute Jesus.

In verse 16, Jesus appoints Paul to be a servant and a witness to others about what he has seen of Christ's glory and "what I will show of you." Here Jesus is promising additional appearances to empower and direct Paul's ministry. Other epiphanies include the Lord's disclosure that Paul must bear witness in Rome (see Acts 23:11). Verse 18 contains three key infinitives to Paul's new commission: "to open," "to turn" and "to receive." God sends Paul to the nations in order to open them to the truth of the gospel, to turn them from their ignorance of the light of the gospel, with the result that they are to receive forgiveness and eternal life from God through Christ.

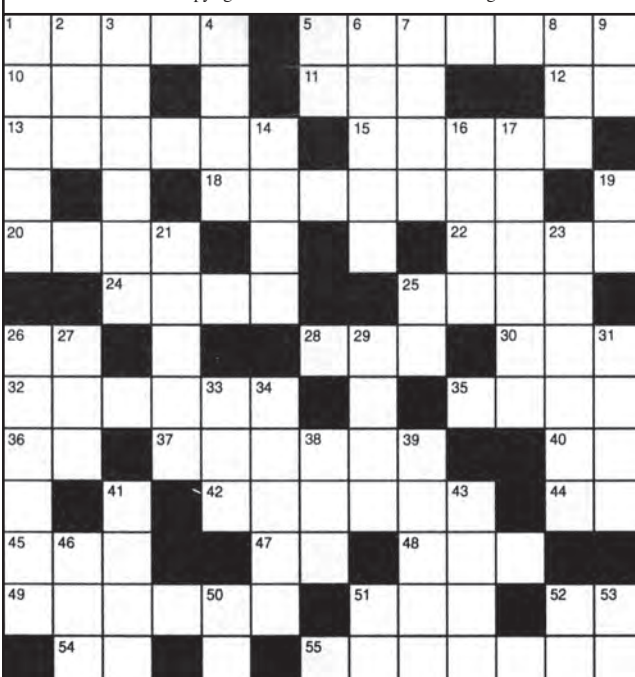
Surrender to the truth of Jesus leads to radical transformation. (19-20)

Paul surrenders to his new calling, vowing obedience to the Lord's visionary commission. Now he shares how he fulfilled this commission. The sphere of service includes Damascus, Jerusalem, the country of Judea and the vast Gentile lands. Paul repeats in different words his evangelistic word to the Jews and Gentiles in verse 20 that "they should repent and turn to God." However, Paul adds here the imperative that they "do deeds consistent with repentance." Clearly Paul believes salvation comes through faith in Jesus; good works are the outgrowth of an authentic, saving faith.

From the start of his ministry Paul nearly lost his life, first in Damascus (Acts 9:20-25) and then in Jerusalem (Acts 9:29-30). It's amazing that the man formerly so zealous for the death of Christ followers is now walking with them, risking his all daily for the sake of the gospel. †

Christian Crossword

N. Terri Grottko Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- God told him to marry an unfaithful wife.
- Law, ordinance. (Ex. 15:25)
- Period of time.
- Before Abraham was, _____. (John 8:58; 2 words)
- Judah's oldest son. (Gen. 38:3)
- Proverbs king. (Prov. 31:1)
- Nimrod's city. (Gen. 10:10)
- David's successor. (1 Chron. 29:23)
- Son of Boaz. (Ruth 4:21)
- For this _____ is mount Sinai in Arabia. (Gal. 4:25)
- Even of _____ my people is risen up. (Mic. 2:8)
- Next to him repaired _____ the son of Jeshua. (Neh. 3:19)
- Mom.
- Muppim, and Huppim, and _____. (Gen. 46:21)
- Fifth son of Jacob. (Gen. 30:6)
- The prophet to Hezekiah. (2 Kings 20:14)
- A servant of Saul. (2 Sam. 9:9)
- "A note to follow so."
- Hewers of wood and _____

of water. (Josh. 9:23)

- I _____ hath sent me. (Ex. 3:14)
- Then the Spirit came upon _____. (1 Chron. 12:18)
- If ye believe not that I am _____. (John 8:24)
- Samuel's mentor. (1 Sam. 3:1)
- King of Bashan. (Num. 21:33)
- And _____ called the light Day. (Gen. 1:5)
- And he built _____ in the wilderness. (2 Chron. 8:4)
- A musical Levite. (1 Chron. 15:18)
- An enlisted man.
- Postscript. (abbr.)
- He shewed himself alive after his _____. (Acts 1:3)

Down

- A greeting.
- Oregon. (abbr.)
- He anointed David king over Israel. (1 Sam. 16:13)
- Large monkeys. (1 Kings 10:22)
- Spanish "yes."
- _____ and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name. (Ps. 89:12)
- _____, and Shema, and Moladah. (Josh. 15:26)
- Telephone. (abbr.)
- _____ ... was wicked in the sight of the Lord. (Gen. 38:7)
- But to do justly, and to _____ mercy. (Mic. 6:8)
- David's great-grandfather. (Ruth 4:21, 22)
- The fishers shall stand upon it from _____. (Ezek. 47:10)
- Either/_____.
- He defeated Goliath. (1 Sam. 17:49)
- Went down unto _____. (Josh. 18:18)
- Education. (abbr.)
- Type of grain. (Ezek. 4:9)
- Solomon's great-grandson. (1 Chron. 3:10)
- Like two young _____ that are twins. (Song of Sol. 4:5)
- But by my _____ Jehovah was I not known. (Ex. 6:3)
- Son of Jether. (1 Chron. 7:38)
- And _____ communed with them. (Gen. 34:8)
- Shall be astonished, and

_____ his head. (Jer. 18:16)

- Violent outbursts of temper.
- Covers.
- Electrically charged particles.
- The lot is cast into the _____. (Prov. 16:33)
- _____/OFF.
- Bachelor of Arts.
- Shall the shadow _____ forward ten degrees. (2 Kings 20:9)
- Being warned of God _____ a dream. (Matt. 2:12)



TOP 10

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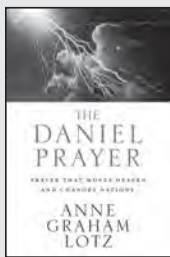
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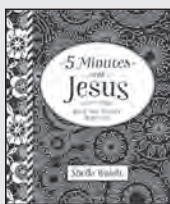
- 1. Creation**
By Grant R. Jeffrey
(The Crown)



- 2. Unashamed**
By Christine Caine
(Zondervan)



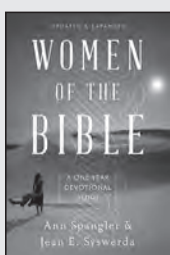
- 3. The Daniel Prayer**
By Anne Graham Lotz
(Zondervan)



- 4. 5 Minutes with Jesus**
By Shelia Walsh
(Thomas Nelson)



- 5. Fervent**
By Priscilla Shirer
(B&H)



- 6. Women of the Bible**
By Ann Spangler and
Jean E. Syswerda
(Zondervan)

- 7. Jesus Calling**
By Sarah Young
(Thomas Nelson)

- 8. Destinado al éxito**
By Dante Gebel
(Vida)

- 9. The Holy Word for Morning Revival**
By Witness Lee
(Living Stream)

- 10. Boundaries**
By Henry Cloud and
John Townsend
(Zondervan)

Source: iTunes at press time

MEDIA REVIEWS

Bringing 'history to life'

Birmingham's Denise George pens third book in 3 years

By Carolyn Tomlin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In her new book, "Orchestra of Exiles," Denise George (and co-author Josh Aronson) tells the amazing story of Polish Jewish violinist, Bronislaw Huberman, and how he saved 1,000 European Jewish musicians and their families from Hitler's horrors during the Holocaust. Released in April, it is her third book in three years published by New York's Penguin Random House Publishers.

Surely only God could bring together a Jewish Academy Award-nominated filmmaker from New York City and a Southern Baptist Christian writer from Birmingham and produce an action-packed, page-turner nonfiction narrative that covers WWI, pre-WWII, the beginnings of the Holocaust, the founding of an orchestra and the State of Israel.

"Several years ago Aronson wrote, directed and produced an award-winning documentary on Bronislaw Huberman," George said. "His story includes how he personally founded the Israel Philharmonic, now a world-famous orchestra.

A love for the narrative

"My mother, Willene Wyse, saw Aronson interviewed on The 700 Club and told me about this incredible story. I immediately loved the narrative of this famous violinist who put his own successful musical career on hold to personally arrange and transport 1,000 Jews to Palestine (becoming Israel in 1948) away from Hitler's deadly clutches."

After hearing the story, George checked to see if a book had been written on Huberman. When she discovered the story had not yet appeared in book form, she telephoned Aronson, whom she had never met, and invited him to collaborate with her on the book. He agreed.

George then contacted her book agent of 15 years, Greg Johnson, president of WordServe Literary and FaithHappenings, introduced to her years before by the late author Calvin Miller. Johnson loved the idea and flew to New York City to personally meet with Aronson. He then contacted Penguin Random House and they immediately sent George and Aronson a publishing contract. After a year of research and writing, the book was released. Book launches have taken place and been scheduled for New York City, Los Angeles, San Diego, Chicago, Boston and other cities.

In 2015, George's book on WWII hero and Birmingham native Andrew Gerow Hodges also was released by Penguin Random House. She teamed up with Hodges' son, Gerry Hodges, a psychiatrist in Birmingham, and together they wrote his father's story in the book, "Behind Nazi Lines."

The late Andrew Gerow Hodges was an American Red Cross volunteer in 1944 France who courageously slipped behind Nazi lines and personally negotiated with German officers the successful release of 149 allied POWs. It was

the only time in military history that such a feat had been accomplished by one individual.

"Harland Hobart Grooms, a Samford University trustee, Birmingham attorney, former Marine and WWII expert had been a good friend of Hodges," George said. "He had notebooks of research and a deep knowledge of Hodges. I will be forever grateful to Grooms for guiding me throughout the writing of this book, as well as an upcoming WWII book, "The Lost Eleven," to be released by Penguin Random House in February 2017."

Writing about WWII gave George a powerful insight into the horrors American troops experienced in Europe.

"Our veterans are heroes," George said. "I never before realized the sacrifices they made in fighting for our country's freedoms. My dad, Robert C. Wyse, served in the Air Force during WWII, but he never ever talked about it."

"Nonfiction books written in story form bring history to life," she said. "When we teach historical events through great storytelling, young and old readers enjoy learning."

The book reviews readers write about her books are filled with words like "exciting," "suspenseful" and "page-turners."

"As a Christian, I decided long ago that all these books I wrote would be wholesome and free from any four-letter words," George said. "Only lazy, uncreative writers depend upon foul language to describe characters or make a point. Good writers don't need it."

George has kept this promise to her readers in her 30 books, all published by traditional publishers. She hopes today's youth will read and enjoy these stories, learn about these quiet heroes and realize and appreciate the debt we all owe them.

George and her husband, Timothy George, moved to Birmingham in 1988. He founded Beeson Divinity School on the campus of Samford University and has served as its dean for 29 years. They have two children and are longtime members of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills.

"We love Birmingham," Denise George said. "We plan to live here forever."

Other books

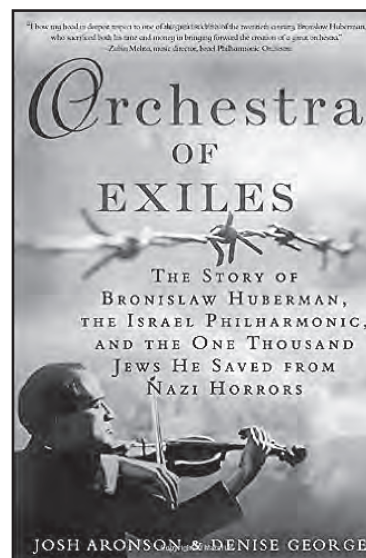
She also has written two books on Birmingham's civil rights history: "The Gentle Giant of Dynamite Hill" (with Judge Helen Shores Lee and Barbara Shores), and "While the World Watched" (with Carolyn McKinstry).

"In April, I turned 65 years old," she said with a laugh. "My agent, Greg Johnson, asked me if I planned to retire from book writing. 'Of course not.' I told him. 'I'm just getting started.'"

Denise George speaks often to universities, churches and other groups around the country on the topics of her books. You can contact her through her website, www.denise-george.org. #



GEORGE



Golden State Warriors point guard Stephen Curry (left) is the NBA's 2016 MVP for the second year in a row.

Faith is 'my driving force'



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Golden State Warriors' Curry carries biblical principles, FCA values with him

Late at night, as one day bleeds wearily into the next and physical stamina struggles to keep pace with emotional attachment, Dell and Sonya Curry spurn sleep, reach for the TV remote and invite the flickering images into their eyes.

And what they see astounds them.

Like millions of others watching Golden State Warriors games this season, they see their son — currently the greatest, most electrifying basketball player on earth — making history. They see a player whom almost everybody once thought was way too scrawny doing things previously unseen at the highest levels of the game.

They see Stephen Curry, this year's MVP, revolutionizing the NBA.

But watching their highlight-reel child lead a once-woebegone franchise to great heights can be exhausting. Dell Curry, a longtime NBA veteran, and Sonya Curry live in Charlotte, North Carolina, but both their sons play for West Coast NBA teams (25-year-old Seth Curry plays



Stephen Curry

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the Warriors (with the exception of the two games he missed recently because of an injury) in their pursuit of a second-straight NBA championship, the point guard is treating the league like his personal playground, making his MVP season of a year ago look comparatively pedestrian with outlandish shots and eye-popping statistics. His peerless 3-point prowess is shattering records and forcing panicked defenses to stretch like worn-out elastic to account for his ever-increasing range.

"I dreamed about being an NBA player and being successful," Stephen Curry said, "but I never thought I'd get this far or understand the situation going on right now. It's been a whirlwind."

From the beginning, though, Stephen Curry had faith. He believed God could do exceedingly more than anyone expected — even when he was an adolescent beanpole blipping faintly on the fringes of college basketball's recruiting radars.

Now there are endless autograph lines, soaring jersey and sneaker sales, a need for personal bodyguards, exclusive rounds of golf with President

Barack Obama, Twitter love coming in from NBA peers across the league and genuine discussions about whether he can become — dare we say it? — the greatest shooter of all time.

So how in the world did he get to the NBA when he once struggled to attract interest from any major NCAA Division I programs?

Perhaps we should start at the beginning.

Stephen Curry grew up mainly in Charlotte in their devoutly Christian and superbly athletic family. Basketball aside, Sonya Curry played volleyball at Virginia Tech

in Blacksburg, Virginia, while Stephen's younger sister, Sydel Curry, also plays collegiate volleyball.

Stephen Curry, who was 14 when his dad retired from the NBA, said growing up with an NBA father "harnessed my love for basketball. ... Every kid wants to do what his parents do. I always had a ball in my hand."

In high school, Stephen Curry led Charlotte Christian School to the state tournament three times, earned all-state honors twice and finished his career as the team's all-time leading scorer. Yet the Currys' phone lines remained virtually silent.

Major college programs were scared off by his diminutive stature — about 6 feet and 160 pounds at the time. So he landed 30 minutes from home at Davidson College in North Carolina, a small Division I school then playing in the Southern Conference.

Before his first practice as a freshman, he received a text from his mom. Stay faithful and work hard, she implored. She also included her favorite verse: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). To this day, Stephen Curry still writes that Scripture reference — and Philippians 4:13 — on his game shoes.

Household name

Within three years, he had become a national household name, a two-time consensus All-American, the NCAA's single-season 3-point record holder (162 in 2007–08), and the Wildcats' all-time leading scorer (2,635 points). Not bad for an overlooked recruit.

The "Baby-Faced Assassin" turned 28 in March, and while now 190 pounds he could still pass for a college freshman.

Of course none of this matters a bit. He's been taking preconceived notions about his age and size and destroying them his entire life. Stephen Curry entered the 2009 NBA Draft as one of the greatest shooters in NCAA history, but his pre-draft assessment included critiques like "extremely small for an NBA shooting guard" and "not a natural point guard an NBA team can rely on."

Ignoring the concerns, Golden State selected Stephen Curry seventh overall.

Within a few years, raucous Oracle Arena in Oakland was reinvigorated, and a once-proud Warriors franchise that had spiraled into irrelevance was winning again.

Last season, powered by Stephen Curry's MVP performance, the Warriors went 67–15 and rolled to their first NBA championship in 40 years.

When Stephen Curry entered the NBA, he had a strong biblical foundation and some idea, thanks to his father's advice, of how to stay spiritually faithful in a worldly environment.

'Something different'

Stephen Curry, who trusted in Christ at a church youth group meeting, said he wants to "grow even more" in sharing his faith with "teammates that may not know Jesus and how He can impact their life."

"I'm not a guy who's going to be trying to bash people over the head with the Bible," he said. "I want people to know when they see me play that something is different, that I play for something different, and whether I'm talking about it [or not], I just hope by the way I carry myself and by the way I play the game they can see there's something different about that guy. And they find out what it is and then they know. It's part of who I am."

Stephen Curry often says he's been given a gift. And when he does, he's quick to deflect attention to the Gift Giver.

"I've always been a believer that the Lord has put whatever talent in you, [and] whatever gift He has put in you, He wants you to get the most out of that. He wants you to succeed; He wants you to pursue and work and be passionate about it," Stephen Curry said. "It's not about getting any of the glory for yourself; it's all for His [glory]. That's where you have to keep perspective. Work at it and do all you can so you get the most out of yourself, but do it for His will."

He calls his faith "my driving force." It's both the anchor and rudder for his life as he navigates the remarkable but often perilous journey of being a rich, famous athlete.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This article first appeared in the May/June 2016 issue of FCA's magazine, The Revolution.