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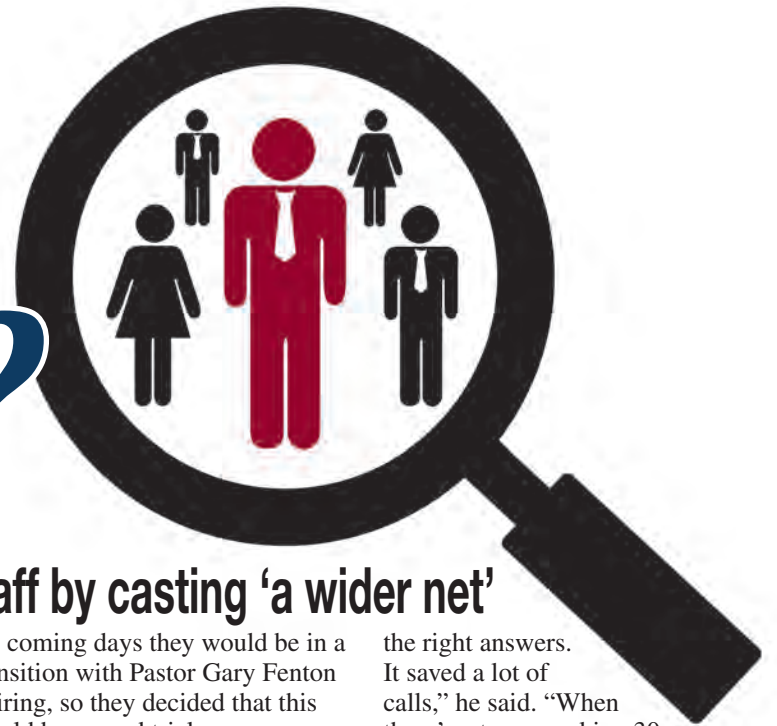
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Searching FOR A minister?



Professional firms help churches find new staff by casting 'a wider net'

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

For as long as church search committees have been around, the process of finding a new pastor or minister has started with a little word of mouth, a stack of resumé's, a lot of prayer and a good bit of research.

William Vanderbloemen has been around for more than a few of those searches. But his vantage point, he said, is pretty different.

He gets to be a caring outsider looking in.

And he prefers to think of his role like he's a surgeon — like the local church is an important body, and he's been entrusted with helping it find a vital organ.

Finding a match

"We approach a search like we're being entrusted with a heart transplant," said Vanderbloemen, president and CEO of The Vanderbloemen Search Group based in Houston, Texas. "When a church comes to us, it's as if they are saying, 'We want you to go outside our body and find an outsider to come in and run a major internal system.'"

Through hours of carefully interviewing candidates and churches, his firm learns about the personalities, beliefs, culture and needs of both and provides search commit-

tees with access to candidates they feel match what they are looking for.

"When you're looking for a new staff member, there are job boards you can look at. It's not hard to get resumé's," he said.

But if a church would like a little extra help finding candidates that would be a good match for its congregation, search firms like his can offer personalized help with networking.

And his group takes that very seriously, he said.

"Even if you find a healthy heart, you can put that healthy heart into a healthy body and if they don't match, everybody dies," Vanderbloemen said. "Finding a good match is so vital."

Jack Fiscus said his church understands the value of a good match.

Recently Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham — where he serves as executive pastor — was searching for an orchestra director. After research, they interviewed a finalist and realized he wasn't a good fit for their church culture, Fiscus said.

"At that point those who were searching felt like they had exhausted their channels through word of mouth," he said. "So we said, 'What if we go beyond our ability and explore using a firm?'"

Church leadership knew that in

the coming days they would be in a transition with Pastor Gary Fenton retiring, so they decided that this would be a good trial run.

"We'd be able to see if it was a good or bad process for us," Fiscus said.

So they tried it. And for them, it was good.

After Dawson Memorial Baptist's leadership reached out to Vander-

"The firm managed the process in a way that I could not have done effectively while still leading well in other areas."

John Woods
music and worship pastor
Dawson Memorial Baptist
Church, Birmingham

bloemen's firm, representatives of the group came and met with Fiscus and others and learned about the church and what they were looking for in a candidate.

"Then they went, started processing and about eight weeks in they started sending us some resumé's to see if they were on the right track," he said.

Some were "yes," some were "no," and after

they went back and forth a few times, the group sent them five candidates they felt might be a good fit. The search committee then narrowed it to two for in-person interviews.

And both were a good fit, Fiscus said.

Saving churches time

"The firm had already grilled these guys and asked the hard questions and weeded out some they wouldn't fit our church, so by the time we asked the questions, we got

the right answers.

It saved a lot of calls," he said. "When there's a team working 30 to 40 hours a week networking, our search committee just can't keep up with that. We can't get past our small network."

And today in churches, it's expensive to hire the wrong person, he said. "It's much better to get the fit right from the start."

'A huge success'

John Woods, Dawson Memorial's music and worship pastor, said having Vanderbloemen help with the process "cast a wider net" and helped focus needs and expectations, but it also freed him up to continue ministry at full strength.

"The firm managed the process in a way that I could not have done effectively while still leading well in other areas," he said. "For us, it was a huge success."

Vanderbloemen said the idea behind the firm came when his church experience converged with a corporate job.

"I started the company after 15 years in pastoral ministry and then a short stint in human resources in the corporate world," he said. "I realized churches were taking way too long to hire, and for so many those hires weren't going well. We wanted to find a way to help churches do it well, save money and have hires that match and last longer."

David Lyons, founder of Minister Search, ended up in the industry in a similar fashion, except in the reverse — he had grown up Southern Baptist, but his primary work experience

(See 'Churches,' page 10)

COMMENT

Changing the Trends in Baptism

Baptisms are important to Baptists. In fact one researcher said baptisms are so important to Baptists that we named our denomination after them.

But the recent trends in baptisms are not good. As reported in the June 16 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*, baptisms are down for both Alabama Baptists and Southern Baptists in general.

In the last five years baptisms by Alabama Baptist churches have fallen 16 percent, from a high of 19,318 to the recently reported total of 16,342. For the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) the story is worse. There the drop is 19 percent in five years; from a high of 362,892 in 2011 to 295,212 in 2015.

Ten years ago cooperating Alabama Baptist churches baptized 23,439. That is 30.28 percent more than were baptized in 2015, so the 10-year trend is taking a steep dive.

The 10-year number for SBC is almost the same as the five-year number because 2011 was the second highest number of baptisms in the 10-year period. However, that trend line also is downward, showing a decline in baptisms for 8 of the last 10 years.

Before we wring our hands in despair, let's remember there are 295,212 more new believers in SBC churches (including Alabama) as a result of the work of God's Holy Spirit through Baptists. That is something for which to give thanks.

And while weekly attendance declined by 1.7 percent, still about 5.6 million people gathered each week in SBC churches to worship and glorify God. That number (about 37 percent of total membership) may not be what we want but it is a powerfully large group of involved believers.

Commissioned followers

But there is no escaping the cold hard fact that the trend lines in baptisms are downward. That is troubling to Southern Baptists. More importantly, it is troubling to God for "God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

Jesus commissioned His followers (including



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Baptists) to share with all people everywhere that "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

A starting place to reverse the downward trends in baptisms may be to ask ourselves if we really believe the gospel. Do we believe people who do not know Jesus Christ are doomed to an eternity separated from God? Do we believe "the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life" (Rom. 6:23)?

Do we believe in the sufficiency of the gospel to reconcile man to God and to change the eternal destiny of anyone who calls on the name of the Lord?

Most Baptists I know are committed to these biblical truths. After all, they have staked their eternal destiny on their faith in God through Jesus Christ.

If we believe these truths then we should be sharing them. That is the implication of the Great Commission. The grammatical structure of Matthew 28:19-20 is not a command to "go." Rather it says, "As you are going make disciples ... baptizing them ... teaching them." The command is to make disciples, teach and baptize "as you are going."

We are often told the number of people groups who have never heard the gospel. Our hearts go out to them as we pray and give so that the good news of Jesus might be shared with them. But Southern Baptist churches in Al-

abama and across America are not dealing with unreached people groups primarily.

Our missions field includes family members who have never made a profession of faith, co-workers who don't have time for God and neighbors caught up in everything but the Church. These are people whose paths we cross regularly "as we are going." They are just as lost as those living in distant lands and these are the ones with whom we should be sharing the gospel.

Unfortunately most of us do not know our neighbors. Some of us do not even know the names of people living a few houses from us. Often our knowledge of co-workers is superficial. We may know their names but seldom do we know their dreams or their hurts. And in unbelieving families, the follower of Christ is often made to feel uncomfortable so he/she withdraws.

Perhaps that is why many Christians have trouble naming 10 people who they know are spiritually lost. The usual pattern is that the longer one is in the church, the more one lives with church people and the fewer lost friends one has.

Cultivating relationships

What would happen if Christians learned the names of their neighbors and began to cultivate relationships? Studies show that 9 out of 10 people visit a church because they were invited by a friend. Could neighbors become friends? Is it possible to intentionally cultivate a relationship with at least one neighbor and then be that friend who invites them to church?

Is it possible to take time to get to know co-workers and over time develop a relationship that allows you to share what Jesus means to you?

Is it possible to be involved with unbelieving family members so they know you love them even though they are not followers of Jesus Christ? If so, might that lead to a time to talk honestly about the importance of your faith in Jesus and your desire for them to know the Lord?

Baptists learned a long time ago that relationships are the key to evangelism. People may be outwardly polite but inwardly most people do not listen to someone unless there is a connection through some kind of relationship.

Perhaps part of the reason for the downward trends in baptism is Baptist Christians and others have increasingly withdrawn from the world into cloistered communities called the Church. Perhaps it is time we share the gospel with our families, our co-workers, our neighbors and our recreational buddies who are not in the Church.

"As we go" we can share, we can witness, we can teach, we can make disciples. "As we go" we can change the downward trends in baptism. ✠

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

WOMEN IN MINISTRY

I would like to voice my opinion about the lesser responsibilities of our women in Southern Baptist churches. Women in the Church are not being utilized to our full potential because of the belief that women cannot "speak or teach" men. This is a myth. Note that Jesus used women through-

out His ministry on earth to go and spread the gospel. I do, however, realize that women cannot preach, because biblical teaching clearly states that a minister should be the husband of one wife. But God has called me to teach. And because men have decided for us that we can't do this, even though we teach Sunday School

and sing and run Vacation Bible

School, why is it that we cannot hold a position of youth director or speak one Sunday morning? What is the hang up? And

(See 'Letters,' page 9)



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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In need of more 'blue & yellow hats'

Disaster Relief volunteers assist West Virginians after flooding

Blue and yellow hard hats can be seen along eight West Virginia counties' roads and streets — hats worn by Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBD) volunteers. Engaged in recovery assessment, the SBD response teams are making their way through communities that were under water just days prior, answering calls for help from numerous West Virginians left without power, vehicles and even homes.

On June 23 torrential rains hit West Virginia, causing flooding that claimed at least 24 lives and more than 100 homes. More than 30,000 homes and businesses lost power.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) described the flooding as a "historic" tragedy and applauded the continued efforts of relief response teams such as the American Red Cross and various SBD units, as reported by the Associated Press.

West Virginia Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin announced that FEMA will expand federal funding to eight counties: Fayette, Clay, Roane, Summers, Monroe, Greenbrier, Kanawha and Nicholas.

Though the opportunity to receive federal funds can help rebuild the demolished communities, the clean-up and recovery process has already begun, with funding a priority for SBD volunteers as they serve survivors.

Danny Rumble, West Virginia Baptist Convention DR ministry director, said, "We're going to need blue and yellow hats into the foreseeable future."

Several SBD units were mobilized immediately on June 25 after state and federal officials identified West Virginia's disaster areas. Search and rescue teams also were deployed and continued their work June 30. As of June 29, SBD response teams were ready to conduct recovery assessment of homes and businesses across the affected counties.

As of press time, Alabama teams had not been activated to respond through the SBD



NAMB photo by Van Payne

Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers prepare and pack food for transport to aid stations located around West Virginia as part of the clean-up and recovery efforts in the wake of flooding that hit West Virginia after torrential rains.

network, according to Mel Johnson, outgoing DR strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

"Alabama remains at the ready to respond if assessments determine additional resources and personnel are needed to support the states currently tasked with ministry efforts for communities impacted," he said.

Bill Johnson, who is managing relief efforts in Greenbrier County on behalf of the North American

Mission Board, reported that more than 40 work orders already were submitted for repairs.

Bill Johnson estimates more than 100 work orders will be submitted by July 9. His estimates are based on 400 residence work orders

already sent to command centers currently manned by 75 SBD volunteers from West Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Ohio and the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia.

Bill Johnson and Rumble both agreed that donations would help sustain the long-term clean-up and recovery process that looms ahead for West Virginia.

Need for feeding

"The area of greatest need for residents in Greenbrier County is feeding," said Bill Johnson, who currently oversees the feeding of displaced West Virginians in Greenbrier County. The SBD teams supply two meals a day to each person who comes for help. "They have nowhere else to go."

SBD teams will continue to provide feeding, recovery, medical and mud-out units in the affected West Virginia counties for at least three to four weeks, Bill Johnson said. (BP, TAB)

To learn more about how to help, contact the State Board of Missions at 1-800-264-1225 or go to www.donations.namb.net/dr-donations.

Highland BC missions trip becomes 'serving each other in love' as floodwaters rise

What started out as a missions trip to Richwood, West Virginia, quickly became a lesson in handling disaster situations and leaning on God and fellow believers in the process.

Fifty teens and chaperones from Highland Baptist Church, Florence, traveled to Cherry River Baptist Church to help with construction projects (installing two shower units and an office space), Vacation Bible School and the repair of two homes in the community June 18-25. The team worked

well together despite hard and long hours and staying in tight quarters inside the church.

Five days into the trip, however, things began to change — and fast, according to Ryan Tyler, associate pastor for youth at Highland Baptist.

The area received inches of rain and by June 22 water began to flood into the church building. The "water became almost like rapids," Tyler said. As everyone tried to quickly pack up the vehicles, the water rose so rapidly that they had

to leave several belongings and tools behind. As they began to leave the parking lot they immediately faced closed roads. Realizing they had to get to higher ground, the chaperones drove the vehicles to a primitive campground to stay the night.

With the help of John Burke, a deacon at a local church, the team was introduced to Trinity Baptist Church the next day, a church in a dry area that was willing to host the team. Lloyd, a deacon, grilled hotdogs and made sure the team

members were as comfortable as they could be on the sanctuary floor. The team was able to return to Cherry River Baptist on June 24 to clean up a few items before departing for home.

Tyler shared that he had been "asking God to give us the opportunity to serve each other in love this week," and that opportunity was given to them in the unexpected flood situation.

God worked in "every step and stage" of the week, Tyler said. (TAB)

Creating 'beauty' out of 'ugliness'



Former minister now 'prisoner to pain' finds purpose, success while 'lost' in art

Almost by accident, Kerry Smith has become a popular artist — a sculptor, painter and woodcarver. But he hasn't done it alone. His constant companion — and a most unwelcome one — is chronic pain.

Have you ever had a "friend" you wish you could get rid of — the kind that nags, imposes and distracts you from the important things? That's the relationship Smith has had throughout his 15-year career with chronic pain in his lower back, hips, legs, neck, wrists and almost anywhere else it chooses to show up.

The minister-turned-artist would much rather be left alone to carve the exquisite, life-like wooden ducks that once brought him pleasure and profit. But he doesn't have a choice. So instead the Memphis, Tennessee, artist incorporates his unrelenting pain into his art to carve something redemptive out of his disability.

"My art gives me a place to go even when I'm in pain to put myself in another world — I see it as a sanctuary," said Smith,

54, a former Baptist church planter, pastor and campus minister.

Creative expression is both an escape from his pain and an inescapable part of it, Smith said. Pain doesn't so much inspire his work as indwell each piece.

On his website he explains how particular works reflect or express his struggle with pain. Several of his favorite works grew out of crises in that battle. And other times the residue of his pain lies beneath the surface, in the delicate details of duck's feathers or the minute, repetitious strokes of his knife.

Like many chronic pain sufferers, Smith knows he won't be cured. Fifteen years of countless medical treatments have not made his pain even bearable. He wakes up every morning at war with his own body. He has accepted that he will never have another pain-free day. And he'll likely never be able to make a living again doing what he

loves — sculpting and woodcarving.

But Smith isn't looking for sympathy, suggestions or preferential treatment. It would be enough if people believed him when he says he's in excruciating pain. It would be even better if they understood. But unless someone has been in chronic pain for years, understanding is difficult to impossible.

Making peace with pain

Warning: This is not another story about a Christian "overcoming adversity." That's a theme we like to read about — people who conquer limitations to find success, a cure or at least a positive future. But that's not Smith's story.

His story is about what happens when the cure doesn't come, the miracle you pray for never happens and recovery becomes a discarded illusion. It's about living with grace within the disability, about making your peace with pain.

Smith taps into his pain to draw

something different out of his disability.

"I long to create beauty out of the ugliness I have been given, I really do," he said. In a sense, the beauty he creates is the "beauty," or completeness, his body lacks. "I'd give my right [arm] to be able to exist in my most beautiful form."

Smith's torso is a moonscape, pocked with scars from 11 spine surgeries. It started innocently enough in December 2001. While lifting the family Christmas tree onto the top of the minivan, he felt his back "give out." It turned out the 40-year-old had ruptured a lumbar disc. He had his first spinal surgery, which worked but only for awhile.

Back surgery is seldom a true "fix" and never a cure. In most cases, it's an accommodation. If the cause is degenerative, as in Smith's case, one back surgery often leads to three or four, and each one can leave behind scar tissue and nerve damage that over time become their own source of pain.

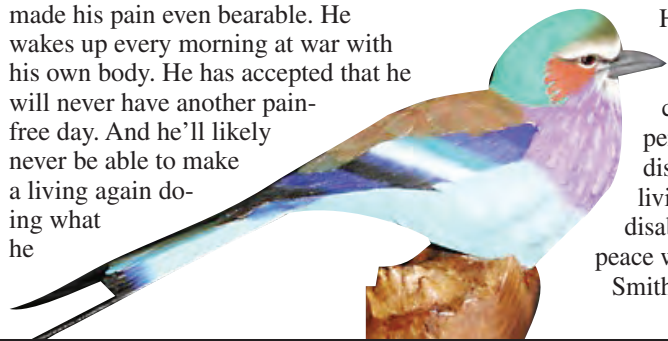
Underneath the skin of his lower back, titanium screws and rods hold together the parts of his lumbar spine that no longer move. Another scar under his chin denotes his cervical fusion, which limits his neck movement and some of his pain. A scar on his side marks where a spinal-cord neurostimulator was implanted — and later removed because it didn't work.

Lifelong love of art

Smith learned to push through the pain and continued to work. But in 2003 he lost his full-time position as a denominational church planter, he says because of his back injury.

So he reinvented himself, reviving a lifelong love of art. A friend turned him on to woodcarving and he found he had a real gift for carving and painting intricate, realistic wooden ducks out of tupelo wood or basswood.

He sold some ducks, got orders for more,



Former minister Kerry Smith has become a popular sculptor, painter and woodcarver despite his chronic pain. He measures success not by completing a work but 'just [by] being lost in it.' He has completed about 75 carvings in his career — mostly birds like the one pictured above the photo to the left.

Kerry Smith carves and paints intricate, realistic wooden ducks out of tupelo wood or basswood like the one pictured to the left.

even was commissioned for some large sculptures. He discovered he was good enough to make a second career. With his earnings he helped pay for Karen, his wife of 32 years, to return to school and become a campus minister, which replaced some of his lost income.

In all Smith has had 21 spinal procedures — 15 surgeries, multiple nerve blocks and other spine treatments. Some have worked, others haven't. He declined to have five other recommended surgeries.

His new vocation flourished, bringing in awards and money. Smith has completed about 75 carvings in his career — mostly birds — including song birds, water birds, shore birds, birds of prey and more than a dozen kinds of ducks. Each duck takes about five months to complete — less time for a songbird, more for a bird of prey.

Exhaustive study

He begins with an exhaustive study of the anatomy and coloring of his birds. He then "roughs out" the bird with saw, chisel and knife, sands it to a perfect 600-grit smoothness, and "burns" the details of the feathers with a pyrographic pen. To create each color — typically 60 per duck — he applies a coat of oil paint, then wipes it off and repeats the process three times to slowly "stain" the colors into the wood.

He has received as much as \$9,500 for one canvasback duck. But his most profitable carving was of a red-tailed hawk that earned him \$25,000.

Kerry Smith's story might be one of "overcoming" if it had been written before 2008.

But when the economy tanked that year, people didn't have money to commission artwork. Some orders were canceled and new ones quit coming in. But even as the economy sank, Smith's pain spiked. His back and neck pain got worse and, after years of meticulous carving, he developed carpal tunnel syndrome, requiring surgery on both wrists.

By 2014 he was on permanent disability. Much of the evidence of Smith's battle with pain is unseen — the sporadic nerve pain running through his hip and leg, the loss of circulation in his feet, restless leg syndrome, and mental exhaustion and depression.

A permanent fog shrouds his thinking. It's a classic Catch 22 — chronic pain can cause difficulty concentrating and loss of short-term memory, but so can long-term use of opioids to control that pain.

At one of his lowest times, as Smith went in for his second carpal tunnel surgery in

2012, he was overwhelmed with a sense of loss. After a loss of income, loss of purpose and loss of favorite activities, "I couldn't see where I was going. I was just plain lost."

Crying and filled with dread, he had a panic attack in the pre-op area. But the surgery was successful, and in recovery afterward he had a deeply spiritual experience.

"I was talking to Karen and suddenly I left. It was not out-of-body. I was talking to Karen the whole time, but I was gone. I stood in a field of multicolored grass and I had an immense feeling of loneliness and fear. All of a sudden God came to me, took my hand and started walking with me. Immediately I came back and told Karen, 'I've just seen God.'

"Later I tried to paint God, but it didn't work. Karen said, 'Why don't you paint what you saw?' So I did — a field of colors as vivid as I have ever seen."

The result is one of his favorite works, a painting called "Found!"

"This painting for me is an anchor," he wrote recently, after another unsuccessful procedure on his cervical spine. "It holds me fast in my times of question and doubt. It reminds me of my experience with God and to know that, in the midst of whatever it is that happens to any of us, God promises to walk with us and to never leave us."

At other times, Smith feels "lost" but in a good way.

The meticulous nature of woodcarving allows him to lose himself in his work. "I will spend time focusing on how feathers lay, how you find the color beneath them, how to get a bird to turn a certain way [to reveal a certain feature]."

In this sense, his art becomes a spiritual discipline that helps him cope with pain. "It allows me to go into a different place." It's not healing, but it is "transformational," he said. "It makes you somebody that you weren't before."

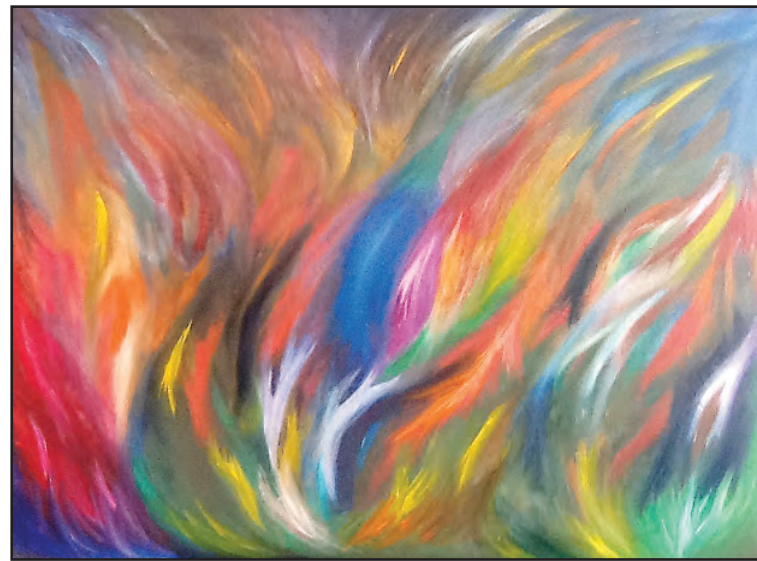
Sculpting and painting, like the meditation he practices every morning, focuses his mind on something other than the pain that wracks his body. Being "transported" — living above the pain, if only for a while — can be as effective as the Oxycontin narcotic pills he takes three times a day.

'Being lost in it'

At this point in his career, Smith measures success not by completing a work but "just [by] being lost in it." For that reason, he would carve, paint and sculpt even if he weren't good at it.

Woodcarving is essentially a craft that can be learned by mastering certain techniques, Smith said. "But to take that craft and transform it to an art form is a spiritual experience that melds the mind with the hand."

Early in his career he was primarily a



BNG photo

One of Kerry Smith's favorite works is the painting 'Found!' pictured here. It is a field of vivid colors resulting from an experience when God came to him, took his hand and started walking with him during a time of loneliness and fear.

craftsman, but "as the marks of life have left their imprint on my soul, it is the Spirit that moves my art to new places."

His inspiration comes from the love of his family, the outdoors, hunting, birds in flight and simply "living life" — the big events that mark turning points or the messy, mundane stuff that fills each day.

As his pain has increased, it has become harder to disconnect from it and get lost in the work, he admitted. "I can't get into that zone like I used to."

These days his work ritual begins with the hardest part — getting out of bed.

"With pain often shooting down each leg with every step, I struggle to stand after waking each day, often grabbing the doorframe for balance," he wrote recently on a web forum for chronic pain patients. "Each breath and every heartbeat shoots a signal to my brain that I am not at my best because I am broken."

Working through pain

When Smith feels well enough to work after his coffee and meditation, he makes his way to a small studio behind their house in northeast Memphis. Here sits a well-lit workbench surrounded by the tools of his trade — bird books, knives and bits, paints and brushes, a couple of hefty power tools and numerous wooden ducks in various stages of production.

But equally important is what he wears to be able to work — a back brace, an immobilizing collar for his neck and wraps on both wrists.

Smith likens chronic pain patients to prisoners. "They are bound by a body that no longer works as it once did and they are prisoners inside of that jail cell."

Pain is bad enough, but when it becomes unrelenting and inescapable — when there is no cure and no relief — the feelings of desperation often cause depression, anxiety and hopelessness, doctors say.

A terminal illness is arguably worse, but at least the patient knows there is an end to the pain. It's not surprising that chronic pain patients are up to twice as likely to commit suicide, according to several studies.

With his body at its worst, Smith himself came to that point in 2015. Overwhelmed with thoughts of all he had lost and missed, he lay despondent on his bed one afternoon when Karen found him.

For more than a decade, Karen also had lived with pain as the "invasive" companion in their relationship, he recalled, "and

loneliness [had] crept in to become an unwelcome friend to both of us." But Smith added, "She has learned to read me now after all of these years and she was spot on."

"Are you suicidal?" she asked.

With Karen's help, he was able to turn his mind to what he had left, what he still offered and who still valued him. "The pieces of Kerry Smith were worth more to my people and to my world, and maybe to my God, than none of Kerry Smith," he wrote later.

Smith knows his artwork has the power to transform not only himself but others, especially those in pain. One of his favorite works is not a duck but a bronze statue and fountain called "Embracing the Journey," commissioned for the Baptist Hospice House and Center for Good Grief. "I know that piece of art has had an impact on people," he said.

The life-sized statue depicts Kemmons Wilson, a benefactor of the hospice, welcoming his great-granddaughter into his arms. The message for those facing the pain of death, Smith said: "At life's end, God sits us on His lap and says 'Welcome.'"

For people in chronic pain, Smith's advice is to find your way to express yourself, who you are and what you feel.

He saw the power of expression in a stroke patient named Warner Smylie. Although immobilized on the left side of his body, Smylie insisted, "I would give anything if I could learn to carve."

Teaching others

"I taught him three times a week," Smith recalled. "I would hold a piece of wood for him and he would carve." Smylie's dexterity with a carving knife was less than steady. "It would scare the crap out of me. But he would just bawl his eyes out while we were carving, just to be able to do that."

With a lot of help from Smith, Smylie carved three rudimentary birds that he gave to his three sons for Christmas. "They loved it," Smith said. For Smylie, the experience "didn't make his body better, but it did change his life."

Those who suffer have much to teach others, said Smith, returning to a favorite theme. He compares those in chronic pain to the "broken clay pots" described in the biblical books of Jeremiah and Romans.

"Inside of that broken vessel is something worth redeeming. We who are broken have something important to say about who God is, [something] that we couldn't say about God if we weren't broken." (BNG)



BNG photo

Kerry Smith created the sculpture 'Embracing the Journey.'

Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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

AUTAUGA

► **Mel Johnson** is the new director of missions for Autauga Association, beginning Sept. 1. He comes from the State Board of Missions (SBOM) where he has served as disaster relief strategist for seven years. He previously served as



JOHNSON

pastor of First Church, Geraldine, and Ivalee Church, Attalla. **Mark Wakefield** of SBOM will take over Johnson's Disaster Relief duties. ► **First Church, Pine Level, in Prattville**, will hold VBS on July 25-28, 5:30-8:30 nightly. For more information call the church at 334-361-8926. Mike Vineyard is pastor. ► **Big Springs Church, Prattville**, will hold VBS on July 20-23, 6-8:30 nightly. For more information call the church at 334-365-1172. Will Dismukes is pastor. ► **Billingsley Church** will hold VBS on July 20-23, 6-8:30 nightly. For more information call the church at 205-755-5353. Tom Taylor is pastor.

BESSEMER

► **Raimund Heights Church, Bessemer**, will celebrate home-

coming July 17, 10:30 a.m. Former pastor Arzelle Hyche will speak and former worship pastor Howard Beckner will lead special music. A covered dish lunch will follow. Tommy Chesser is pastor.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Missionary Church, Holly Pond**, will hold revival services July 17-22. Sunday's service will be at 6 p.m. and will feature "The Steeles" from Cullman. Monday-Friday services will be at 10:30 a.m. and 7 nightly. Randy Hale will speak. A lunch will follow the morning services and a prayer band will play at 10:15 a.m. and 6:45 p.m. before each service. Randy Burtram is pastor.

CAHABA

► **Pisgah Church, Selma**, will celebrate homecoming July 17. Sunday School is at 9 a.m. and the service will follow at 10 a.m. Cahaba Association Director of Missions Bill Wallace will speak. Lunch will be served after the service. Pisgah Church also will hold revival services July 18-20, 7 nightly. Michael Brooks will speak. Harold Arnold is pastor.

COLUMBIA

► **Malvern Church** will hold revival services July 17-20. Sunday services will be at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. A covered dish lunch will follow the Sunday morning

service. Monday-Wednesday services will be at 7 nightly. Hosea Parker is pastor.

CENTRAL

► **Jeff Hardy** is the new pastor of **Kellyton Church**. He previously served as pastor of Sardis Church, Rockford. He holds a degree from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Shelia, have three children.



HARDY

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

► **Mount Vernon Church, Collinsville**, will hold VBS on July 18-22, 6 nightly. Terry Burke is pastor. ► **Mount Zion Church, Collinsville**, will hold revival services July 17-20, 6:30 nightly. Tim Holland will speak. Mount Zion Church also will host the fifth Sunday breakfast meeting of the Lookout Mountain Association men's ministries July 31, 7 a.m. All men and youth are invited. Howard Holland is pastor.

SHELBY

► **First Church, Montevallo**, will celebrate its 160th anniversary Aug. 7, 10 a.m. Bob Terry, editor of *The Alabama Baptist*, will speak. Lunch will be served at noon. For more information and to RSVP call 205-665-2566. Terry Sutton is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **McEntyre Church, Ashville**, will hold a Fifth Sunday Singing on July 31, 2 p.m. The Singing Ambassadors will perform special music. Bobby Winningham is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Skyland Boulevard Church, Tuscaloosa**, will hold a retirement reception for Pastor Jimmy Garner on Aug. 7, 2-5 p.m. in the family life center. This also will be Garner's last Sunday preaching as pastor. The services will be at 9:15 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Salem Macon Church, Notasulga**, will celebrate homecoming and the 176th anniversary July 17, 10 a.m. Former pastor Marc Pargo will speak. Sweet Assurance from Montgomery will perform special music. A fellowship meal will follow the service. Mike Stephens is pastor. †

Enterprise church back on track with mobile chapel



Photo courtesy of John Granger

In 2013, The Church on Boll Weevil Circle, Enterprise, was about to close its doors because it only had two members. Coffee Baptist Association Director of Missions John Granger was asked to help lead and grow the church. Granger, who still serves as interim pastor, said the church now averages 45 people each Sunday. The church now meets in two mobile chapel units, provided by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. And on June 5 more than 100 people gathered to dedicate the new units.

Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

SBC chaplains celebrate 75-year anniversary

ALPHARETTA, Ga. — In the months leading up to the United States' involvement in World War II, the Home Mission Board (now the North American Mission Board — NAMB) established a chaplaincy committee to endorse the work of military chaplains and verify their efforts as sanctioned by the association where they served. That was 75 years ago July 1941.

Doug Carver, NAMB's executive director of chaplaincy, called military chaplaincy "a frontline ministry that is vital to the extension of the local church and the advancement of the gospel."

Carver stressed the importance of endorsed military chaplaincy, recounting that 75 years ago, when America was on the verge of war, messengers at the 1941 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Birmingham, "firmly agreed there was no greater soul-winning opportunity facing Southern Baptists than the thousands of young men pouring into the military training camps around the country."

The messengers recognized the need for trained chaplains to aid the spiritual war within the physical one. This call to action — for Southern Baptist chaplains to officially be sanctioned within their association — was led by Alfred

Carpenter, the first military chaplain commissioned by the Home Mission Board. Carpenter believed that "every chaplain was a missionary in uniform," Carver said.

The initiative was successful, as ordained Southern Baptist chaplains recorded 299,342 professions of faith from 1941 to 1945. Today more than 3,400 SBC chaplains currently serve. (BP)

Year-to-date CP giving 2.88% above last year's

NASHVILLE — Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) national and international missions and ministries received by the SBC Executive Committee (EC) are 5.22 percent above the year-to-date SBC Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget projection and are 2.88 percent above contributions received during the same time frame in 2015, according to a news release from EC President and CEO Frank S. Page.

As of June 30, gifts received through the first nine months of the convention's fiscal year (October-September) totaled \$147,177,886.89. This total is \$7,302,886.89 above the \$139,875,000.00 year-to-date budgeted projection and is \$4,126,639.41 more than the \$143,051,247.48 received through the end of June 2015.

Designated giving for the same year-to-date period is 6.59 percent above the \$176,306,998.94 received at this point in 2015. June's CP allocation receipts totaled \$15,220,985.96. Designated gifts received in June amounted to \$17,407,841.29. (BP)

Site where Jesus was entombed being restored

JERUSALEM — Experts have begun restoring the holy site where Jesus is believed to have been entombed after His crucifixion, according to the Associated Press.

The work by nine Greek experts marks the first time in about 200 years that the site, also called the "Edicule" and located at Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre, has been restored.

The restoration will cost an estimated \$3 million and take eight to 12 months to complete. The holy site will remain open throughout the restoration for visitors, the Christian Post reported.

The project was finally put in motion after Israel's Antiquities Authority declared the building unsafe in 2015. The declaration brought together the Roman Catholic, Armenian and Greek Orthodox churches, all of whom have ownership and responsibility for different parts of the church. The three churches then put aside their differences for restoration efforts. (TAB)





Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Last Things

Final Judgment

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

The Second Coming of Christ is closely associated in the New Testament not only with the resurrection of the dead but also with the judgment of the world. This week we take note of the end time event of final judgment.

The understanding that God will judge the world is rooted in the Old Testament. For example Psalm 9:7–8a affirms, “But the Lord shall endure forever; He has prepared His throne for judgment. He shall judge the world in righteousness.” Likewise in the New Testament, in a sweeping declaration and without distinguishing between believers and nonbelievers, Hebrews 9:27 plainly states: “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.”

Judgment is a divine appointment awaiting every person. Jesus linked His future return to both the resurrection of the dead and final judgment. He declared: “[A]ll who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come forth — those who have done good to the resurrection of life and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28b–29). In His analogy of sheep and goats being separated by a shepherd, Jesus spoke in Matthew 25 about a coming time when judgment will occur, calling it a time when “all nations will be gathered before Him and He will separate them one from another” (v. 32).

Loss of importance

Often discussions about future judgment focus on the timing or placement of judgment, or even how many different judgments will be on God’s agenda. This is not the intent of this installment of Theology 101. When eternity has overtaken time, issues of timing and sequence lose their importance. Eternity by its very nature will not have clocks and calendars creating concerns about what happens when. Rather than attempting to discover from various biblical passages just where God’s judgment will fit into His plan for the future, our concern is better focused

on the reality and nature of future judgment.

Several questions immediately arise. Is there to be a final judgment passed on nations as a whole? Did Jesus refer to all nations only to emphasize that final judgment will be universal? That not even a chosen nation will be exempt, but the judgment will be on every individual in every nation with no one omitted? Will final judgment be a general judgment that involves believers and nonbelievers standing before God at the same time?

Divine agenda

In response to such questions, we might focus on the fact of future judgment as part of the divine agenda, rather than trying to figure out the timing or sequence of the various items on God’s judgment agenda. However, Jesus did not make the kind of distinctions our questions might raise.

We recall that He did tell the disciples that He had much more to disclose but they were not able to receive it at the time. So He alerted them that the coming of the Holy Spirit would result in giving them further divine revelation (John 16:12–15). Thus when we read on in the Bible we come across passages that speak with further definition and distinctions about final judgment. For example a distinction seems to be made in other biblical passages between judgment for believers and nonbelievers. In light of this further amplification on final judgment, our focus next week will be on the judgment of Christians and the following week on the judgment of nonbelievers. †

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.



Changing culture

Americans say US not a Christian country anymore, according to recent survey

The United States is not a Christian country anymore.

That’s according to 59 percent of white evangelical Protestants recently surveyed by the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) in partnership with the Brookings Institution. And that number has jumped 11 points in just four years, from 48 percent in 2012.

Evangelicals’ growing conviction that the U.S. is losing its Christian identity and that the country now is headed in the wrong direction comes as politicians debate immigration and cultural change during the 2016 election season.

Wrong track

In the new PRRI/Brookings immigration survey tackling those issues, Americans expressed concerns about foreign influences on the American way of life. They mostly agreed that the U.S. is on the wrong track, but differed as to how to get on the right one. The survey, released June 23, polled more than 2,600 adults between April 4 and May 2.

“When we step back and look at the big picture, we do see heightened anxieties among Americans,” PRRI CEO Robert P. Jones said in a Washington press conference announcing the survey’s findings.

While a strong majority of white evangelical Protestants agree that the U.S. has lost its Christian identity, Americans overall are split on the question — 41 percent say it was Christian and remains so, and 42 percent say it was in the past but is no longer. Relatively few (15 percent) say America never has been a Christian nation.

Cultural dominance

The white evangelical Protestant community feels its cultural dominance in America has been lost, said Henry Olsen, senior fellow at the Ethics & Public Policy Center, who participated in the press conference.

“Over the last four years a growing number are seeing that it’s lost irretrievably,” he said. “That has massive implications for our politics going down the road.”

Americans also are split on whether American culture and the country’s way of life have mostly changed for the better (49 percent) or worse (50 percent) since the 1950s.

Changed for the worse

And, the PRRI/Brookings report said, “no group of Americans is more nostalgic about the 1950s than white evangelical Protestants,” with 70 percent saying the country has changed for the worse. Americans also split politically on the question: 68 percent of Republicans agree things have gotten worse, while nearly the same share of Democrats (66 percent) say times are better.

But Americans agree the country is moving in the wrong direction — a belief that crosses the political divide and has inched up from 65 percent in 2011 to 72 percent.

And most (57 percent) believe they should fight for their values, even if they are at odds with the law and changing culture.

Other key findings:
▶ Nearly 6 in 10 Americans (57 percent) say the values of Islam are at odds with American values and its way of life. Of all major religious groups, white evangelical Protestants (74 percent) expressed the most skepticism.

▶ A majority (55 percent) of Americans believe the American way of life needs to be protected against foreign influence. Of all major religious

groups, white Christians — including white evangelical Protestants (76 percent), white Catholics (68 percent) and white mainline Protestants (63 percent) — are most likely to say their way of life needs protection.

▶ Americans are split on whether discrimination against Christians has become as big a problem in America today as discrimination against other groups. Many Christians — including 77 percent of white evangelical Protestants, 54 percent of white mainline Protestants, 53 percent of white Catholics and black Protestants and 50 percent of Hispanic Catholics — feel anti-Christian discrimination is a problem. About 8 in 10 Americans who are religiously unaffiliated (78 percent) and members of other religions (77 percent) disagree. (RNS)

Seventy percent of Americans say the country has changed for the worse. Fifty-five percent of Americans believe the American way of life needs to be protected against foreign influence.

State Youth Evangelism Conference to help youth speak truth in love

Speak in truth. Speak in love. Speak to everyone. Students who participate in the 2016 Youth Evangelism Conference (YEC) on July 22–23 will be encouraged to do all three, focusing in on Ephesians 4:15: “But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head — Christ.”

Scooter Kellum, youth ministry strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) who organized YEC 2016, said the theme “Speak” is derived from the concept that “evangeliz-

ing can often be thought of as ‘harsh’ in our culture.”

“I wanted the focus of YEC to be on ... speaking the truth, that is the most important, and knowing the truth, but then to speak it in love,” Kellum said.

FBC Trussville

Preparing for 600–800 students at First Baptist Church, Trussville, Kellum’s team has created a schedule with speakers and breakout sessions that will connect with a wide variety of 7th to 12th graders.

Speakers include Clayton

King, founder of Crossroads Missions/Clayton King Ministries and author of “True Love Project”; Walt Barnes, assistant Baptist student union director at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College in Jefferson Davis, Mississippi; and Chad Poe, teaching pastor at Ridgedale Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Something new at YEC 2016, Kellum said, is a concert by hip-

hop artist Flame. The Museum will lead in worship and Acton Bowen, speaker and best-selling author who also regularly contributes to Fox News’ faith and religion column, will be the breakout leader.

Breakout sessions will be for boys, girls and adults and will include messages from King and his wife, Sharie, on what the biblical definition of love is and, for the youth pastors, a session on

preparing a sermon and “drawing the net” after sharing the gospel, Kellum said.

Unique dynamic

“YEC has a dynamic where youth pastors can bring lost students to an event where the gospel will be clearly presented. At the same time the weekend equips and challenges (Christian) teens to go out and evangelize their friends and witness in their local communities,” Kellum said. “YEC also helps prepare youth pastors to do the work God has called them to do.” (Neisha Roberts)

For more information or to register, visit yecal.org.



Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ... Honor one another above yourselves.”
Romans 10:9–10

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LETTERS



(continued from page 2)
 let me end with this question: Where would a lot of our country's men be if not for praying mothers, grandmothers and women that taught us when we were little? God bless. And I pray this seed that I have planted will grow a beautiful flower. Amen.

Nona Berry
 Anniston, Ala.

'PRODIGAL CHURCH'

From the time we can first remember, we recall the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32. A wealthy property owner had two sons. While the elder son obediently stayed with his father, the younger son insisted on getting his share of the inheritance before his dad's death. After receiving the disbursement, the younger son wasted it all soon becoming destitute — even eating with swine. Soon he was forced to

return home hoping his dad would at least let him work as a servant. Being a loving father, the dad reached out to the wayward son with open arms, welcoming him back into the fold. The loyal older son rebelled refusing to participate reminding the father of his faithful loyalty. The definition of prodigal is, "wrongfully extravagant."

This is a simple yet powerful parable that remains timeless, reaches across the ages to individuals to be applied in daily life. Does this parable not apply to the Christian Church as well? Have we not become the prodigal Church? Do we not somewhat carelessly spend through God's resources having a tendency to expend the treasury dry while we have it and then are forced to go back to the flock with hand out requesting yet more funds? Not only does God expect frugal and wise management of His resources, but

also equally good judgment of our talents and abilities as well.

It is foregone that much of what God expects from us is to be good stewards of His funds. Are we? Look around. We see palatial campuses costing in the millions resting quietly on a hill that are actually used on the average of about six hours per week. This, while the needy, homeless, abused mothers and children, elderly, veterans and the mentally challenged remain unattended.

The next time you are reading Luke 15:11-32 remember this applies to each of us individually and to the Church as well.

Go to church somewhere this Sunday.

James W. Anderson
 Talladega, Ala. ✠

Video highlights 2016 SBC annual meeting

A video released July 6 by immediate past Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Ronnie Floyd condenses 17 hours of proceedings from the June 14-15 SBC annual meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, into a highlight reel.

"This video may be just a personal blessing to you or something you may want to share with your church or through social networking," Floyd, pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas,

wrote in a blog post announcing the video.

The video recaps the annual meeting's emphases on unity, the work of SBC entities and prayer for spiritual awakening in America. Among the highlights:

- ▶ A two-minute recap of Floyd's presidential address.
- ▶ North Carolina pastor J.D. Greear's withdrawal from the presidential election prior to the third ballot and Tennessee pastor Steve Gaines' election by acclamation.
- ▶ Excerpts from the Tuesday-night Call to Prayer.
- ▶ The convention's adoption

of a resolution "on sensitivity and unity regarding the Confederate battle flag."

- ▶ Two panel discussions, one on racial unity and another on pastors and politics.



- ▶ Reports to the 7,300 registered messengers from all SBC entity presidents, SBC

Executive Committee President and Woman's Missionary Union executive director/treasurer.

- ▶ The convention sermon by Ted Traylor, pastor of Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola, Florida.

To view the video, visit <https://vimeo.com/172459390>. (BP)

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Churches should pick a firm to fit personality, need

(continued from page 1)
 rience was as an IT head hunter. "I served in many lay roles with my church, and at my 'day job' I knew a lot about what corporate America did to find the right fit," Lyons said. "I started learning and hearing about what happened in the church world and there seemed to be a pretty significant disparity, a lot of dissatisfaction and turnover."

He said in his eyes, the firm guides the church much like a realtor would guide a house search. "We have a very intensive discovery process to learn about who your church is and who the candidates are," he said. "And then we get to be the expert eyes and ears, helping with what to look for and helping to weed out the ones that don't fit."

If a church is interested in hir-

ing a firm, they should ask the hard questions about the services provided, Lyons said.

"Ask things like how many churches have they successfully led through searches? What is their retention rate? How long does it normally take them to fill positions? And how much of the process do they walk through with you?"

Picking a firm

Also ask about pricing, Lyons said, pointing churches to a longer list of questions available at <http://ministersearch.com/churches/pastor-search-firm-essentials>.

Vanderbloemen said it's important for a church to pick the firm that matches it.

"Be careful and pick a firm that's going to fit you and your personality and need," he said. ☛

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.

CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

Family Baptist Church, Trinity, Alabama, is seeking a senior pastor. A Spirit-filled man of integrity with a passion for family and the community. Send resumé to: pastorsearch@familybaptist.org.

BIVOCATIONAL/FULL-TIME PASTOR

Macedonia Baptist Church, Maplesville, Alabama, is seeking God's will for a pastor. Please send resumé to: Hershel E. Smith, 7965 Franklin Street, Thorsby, AL 35171 or MacedoniaBaptistMaplesvilleAL@gmail.com.

MINISTER OF MUSIC & EDUCATION

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

MINISTER OF MUSIC & DISCIPLESHIP

Tannehill Valley Baptist, McCalla, Alabama, is receiving applicants for a full-time minister of music & discipleship. Applicant must be able to lead a full music ministry that includes choir, band and praise team in a blended worship setting. For information on the discipleship position or to submit resumé, please email: jon@tannehillvalley.org.

MINISTER OF MUSIC

Parkview Baptist Church of Lake City, Florida, is searching for a full-time minister of music with choir experience. Submit questions and resumé to: parkviewbc@bellsouth.net.

WORSHIP PASTOR

Bethel Baptist Church in Moody, Alabama, seeks a full-time worship pastor. More information is available at www.bethelnet.com. Resumé and inquiries may be sent to: JBurnham@bethelnet.com.

BIVOCATIONAL SONG LEADER

East Huntsville Baptist Church is searching for a bivocational song leader. Send resumé to: Personnel Committee, 808 Maysville Rd., Huntsville, AL 35801.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC

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

YOUTH DIRECTOR

Preferably married couple. Experience working with young people. Desire to see young people grow in the Lord. Please send resumé to: Philadelphia Baptist Church, ATTN: Youth Search Committee, 1200 Burrows Crossing Rd., Jasper, AL 35503.

MINISTER TO CHILDREN

FBC Opelika, Alabama, is seeking a full-time minister to children (grades 1-6). Experience as a children's minister required. Recommendations and resumé may be sent to: FirstBaptist@fbcopelika.com.

MINISTER TO CHILDREN

First Baptist Church of Dothan. Working with children grades 1-6 and their families. Send resumé to: Mike Golson at mike@fbcdothan.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

Randolph Baptist Association is accepting resumé through July 30 for director of missions. Send to: DOM Committee, 1689 County Road 64, Woodland, AL 36280.

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in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders

Fred G. Lackey

Longtime Alabama Baptist leader dies at 81

Fred G. Lackey, an active Alabama Baptist leader for more than 60 years, died July 2. He was 81.

Lackey earned a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham; a master's degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky; and a doctorate from Luther Rice College and Seminary in Lithonia, Georgia.

A past president and vice president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, Lackey also served as president of the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference, trustee of the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, chairman of the state convention's executive committee and a member of the administrative committee of the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission.

He served as a pastor for nearly three decades at Calvary Baptist Church, Prattville; First Baptist Church, Athens; and Westside Baptist Church, Jasper.

At the time of his death he was serving as executive and associate pastor of Clements Baptist Church, Athens, and as assistant to the president at the University of Mobile. He also served in other roles at the university for a total of 30 years.

Lackey is survived by his wife of more than 60 years, Sue; three children; nine grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. (Hannah Muñoz)

Harvey C. Brown

Former Alabama Baptist pastor dies at 94

Harvey C. Brown, longtime pastor of two Alabama Baptist churches, died June 26. He was 94.

Brown served as pastor of Second Baptist Church, Fort Payne, and Moore Avenue Baptist Church (now Hillcrest Baptist Church), Anniston, for a total of 25 years before retiring. Brown was later named pastor emeritus of Second Baptist and served there from 2001 to 2011. He also served as pastor for several churches in Georgia.

He earned his bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees from International Seminary in Plymouth, Florida.

Brown served in the United States Army from 1941 to 1945 during World War II.

He is preceded in death by his wife, Annie. He is survived by four children, five grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, three great-

great-grandchildren, three step-grandchildren and seven step-great-grandchildren.

He was a member of Northside Baptist Church, Fort Payne, at the time of his death. (Hannah Muñoz)

Jay Brown

Former Crestway Baptist pastor dies at 93

Jay Brown, the first pastor of Woodlawn Highlands Baptist Church (now Crestway Baptist Church), Birmingham, died May 26. He was 93.

He also served at churches in Montgomery, Tennessee, Michigan and Kentucky. He served as director of evangelism for the Kentucky Baptist Convention until his retirement in 1988.

He earned his degrees from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

Brown is survived by his wife of 75 years, Cecile; two children; 10 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren; and four great-great-grandchildren. (Hannah Muñoz)

Jay Hiram Webster

FBC Salem pastor dies at age 61

Jay Hiram Webster, pastor of First Baptist Church, Salem, died July 3. He was 61.

Webster joined the United States Army at the age of 18 and served during the Vietnam War.

He earned an industrial electricity degree from ITT Technical Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and was active in ministry events sponsored by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, including LeaderLab, a leadership training for pastors and church staff.

Webster began serving as pastor of First, Salem, in 2013.

He is survived by his wife of 40 years, Debra, one child and three grandchildren. (Hannah Muñoz)

Myron West

Alabama native, missionary to Uganda dies

Myron West, a member of Sixth Street Baptist Church, Alexander City, and who served alongside his family in Uganda with Four Corners Ministries, died June 21. He was 45.

West earned a bachelor's degree from Faulkner University in Montgomery and worked for 19 years in the mortgage industry before moving to Uganda for full-time ministry in 2013.

While serving in Uganda, West helped build a medical clinic, missionary housing, a church and started a child development program and school.

West is survived by his wife, Holly, and two children. (TAB)



LACKEY

Americans say euthanasia 'morally acceptable'

Americans are more supportive of patient requested euthanasia (69 percent) than they were in the 1950s, when most of Americans thought the practice should be illegal.

According to a recent Gallup poll, 69 percent of those surveyed in the United States say physicians should be allowed to end patients' lives by painless means and 51 percent say they would consider ending their own lives if they personally had a disease that could not be cured and they were living in severe pain, The Christian Post reported.

The poll also asked the 1,025 adults if they thought doctor-assisted suicide is morally wrong or morally acceptable — 53 percent said it is morally acceptable. That's down from 59 percent who said euthanasia was morally acceptable in 2005.

'Solidly' in favor

"In the last 25 years Americans have solidly been in favor of doctors having the ability to end patients' lives," the poll said.

California, Oregon, Washington, Vermont, Montana and New Mexico all allow physician-assisted suicide.

"California, often a bellwether for change throughout the U.S., may persuade other states to consider passing legislation permitting physicians to allow terminally ill people to end their lives," Gallup said. "While Americans appear to be solidly comfortable with the practice, the nation is more divided on the moral acceptability of doctor-assisted suicide."

End-of-life decisions

Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, and other Christian leaders are supportive of the Death with Dignity movement, which campaigns, lobbies and advocates for Death with Dignity legislation in the 44 states that lack them.

The nonprofit organization also seeks to expand the freedom of all qualified terminally ill Americans to make their own end-of-life decisions, including how they die, according to the organization's website.

Christians must stand as passionately on behalf of the terminally ill as they have for the unborn, according to Christian leaders supportive of Death with Dignity. (TAB)

State continues to battle against transgender restroom order

In the continued battle against President Barack Obama's administrative transgender restroom order, Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange joined 12 other states in filing a preliminary injunction July 5 to block the order.

The order would require schools to allow students to access restrooms based on their gender "identity" instead of their sex. If a school did not abide by the order they would lose federal funding.

'Need clarity'

"With schools nearing the beginning of a new year, time is short and school administrators need clarity about the impact of this controversial new order on their school systems," Strange wrote in a press release. "Alabama and other states are asking the federal court to grant a preliminary injunction of the transgender restroom edict until the court has reached a decision on its legality."

The injunction is being filed against the U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Justice Department, U.S. Department of Labor

and the U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission, according to a press release. An affidavit from the Alabama Department of Education detailing the federal funds at stake also was listed in the filing.

Alabama joined Arizona, Texas, Georgia, Kentucky, Maine, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Utah, Wisconsin and West Virginia in the filing.

In related news, two Iowa churches have recently opposed how the state Civil Right's Commission has interpreted a law that could force churches to open restrooms to the opposite gender and ultimately inhibit the church's ability to teach biblical truth about gender.

'Churches ... protected'

Alliance Defending Freedom legal counsel Christina Holcomb, who filed a lawsuit on behalf of one of the churches in Des Moines, said, "Churches have always been protected from government intrusion, and they still are. They have a firmly established freedom to ... set internal policies that reflect their biblical teachings about marriage and human sexuality." (TAB, BP)

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ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Former pastor, Randolph DOM Scott retires

After serving in Vietnam while in the Army, Clayton Scott felt called to minister to God's people. He resigned from the Army after 10 years and went to seminary in order to become a chaplain in the Navy, a position he'd hold for more than 27 years.

Scott then served as a pastor and later director of missions (DOM) for Randolph Baptist Association beginning in 2010. He retired from his role as DOM on June 30.

Scott earned a bachelor's degree from Jacksonville State University, a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and a master's degree from Golden Gate University in San Francisco.

Prior to becoming a Navy chaplain, Scott served for two years as pastor of a church in Georgia. More than two decades later, after retiring from the Navy, Scott served as pastor of East Vernon Baptist Church, LaGrange, Georgia, and later pastor of Rocky Branch Baptist Church, Woodland, where he and his wife, Johnnie, are currently members.

During his time serving as DOM, Scott also helped lead the association's two Christian Service Centers located in Wedowee and Roanoke. The two centers assist families in Randolph and Clay counties along with Heard County in Georgia. But more than providing financial and food assistance, Scott said, every "customer" is presented with the gospel.

Scott said he plans to stay near home in retirement to care for his wife and spend time with their two children and five grandchildren. (Neisha Roberts)



SCOTT



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 17

Explore the Bible By Miguel Echevarria, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

ANOINTED 1 Samuel 16:4-13

Samuel's Assignment (4-5)

Following Saul's rejection, God directs Samuel to find a king among the house of Jesse. Samuel obeys the Lord and goes to Bethlehem. Finding Jesse, he consecrates him "and his sons and invited them" to offer a sacrifice to God.

Would the next king of Israel be the strongest of Jesse's sons? Would he be the tallest? Would he be the most handsome?

While these qualities are often valued in the sight of men, God looks deeper; He looks into the inner being. He peers beyond superficialities and worldly standards to find a king who will be a man after His heart.

God's Criteria (6-10)

At first, Samuel does not have God's criteria in mind. When he glanced upon Eliab, Samuel thought that he was surely the Lord's anointed.

But the Lord quickly corrected him, saying: "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him" (v. 7). Then He explains to Samuel: "For the Lord sees not as man sees: Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (v. 7). In other words, the man that Samuel will anoint will be one who wholeheartedly follows the Lord — physical appearance has nothing to do with it.

Samuel proceeds to examine all of Jesse's sons and concludes that none of those present have been selected by God.

David's Selection (11-13)

Yet there remains one son — the youngest, David, who was away tending the sheep. Samuel tells Jesse to summon him. When he arrives, God directs Samuel to anoint David.

Can you imagine how stupefied his brothers and father must have felt? After all, David was the youngest, shortest and (in their minds) least qualified to be king. But as we have already seen, God values the inner man above physical attributes.

It is important to note, however, that God does not disdain external qualities, for David is described as being ruddy, having beautiful eyes and being handsome.

While certainly attractive, God peers into David's heart and sees that he is a man after His heart. That is what separates him from his brothers. That is what qualifies him to be king.

David would go on to be Israel's most esteemed king. At the height of David's reign, God makes a covenant with him: He promises to raise up a king over Israel from his very offspring (2 Sam. 7:10-16). This king would usher in a reign that would never end, one in which God's people would at last have rest.

The Gospels make evident that this king is Jesus Christ (Matt. 1; Luke 3). Paul expressly declares that Jesus was "descended from David according to the flesh" (Rom. 1:3). Jesus is God's true Anointed One. He is the Shepherd-King (like David) that gave His life for His sheep (John 10). All those who trust in Him will be gathered to dwell with Him in eternal pastures. Thus, our ultimate hope must be in Him.

So as you read about David, know that there is a greater Shepherd, a greater King who sits enthroned in the heavens. One day He will return to gather His sheep into His fold and give them rest (Rev. 21-22). I pray that today you would trust in Him, so that you might dwell under His rule forever. †

Bible Studies for Life By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh, Ph.D. Professor of Religion, Samford University

VIEW MONEY PROPERLY Proverbs 23:4-5; 30:5-9

The Bible is realistic about money. Money is a necessary part of life. We all have it. Some have more, some have less. But whether we have little or much, it is still our responsibility to assign money its place in our lives.

The power of money is the power that we grant to it. Money can do much, but it cannot bring to us what we really want and need.

In a society where making money appears to be the most important thing in people's lives, it is good to listen to the very realistic, yet practical teaching that we find in Scripture to help to get our priorities right and to enable us to manage our finances in a way that honors God.

Riches are fleeting. (23:4-5)

Focusing on money often leads to an absorption in, even an obsession with, material things. Money can often influence us to do things, or may prevent us from doing things, that we regret later.

There come times in our lives — many of us have had intimations of it — when the power of money fails to fulfill what it promises.

We discover, sometimes when it is too late, that the "love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim. 6:10).

Proverbs reminds us that riches are transient. One glance, and they appear to fly away like an eagle.

The opposite of trying to hoard money to ourselves is to become generous to others and not be misers, those who are stingy.

Wealth is both elusive and perishable. One Chinese proverb expresses it this way: "There are no pockets in a shroud."

Refuge is found in God. (30:5-6)

We all know the story where a young

man who had many possessions turned down the invitation to follow Jesus because he was not able or willing to make the decisive distinction between "heaven" and "earth," between what is penultimate and what is ultimate in our lives. It is the only story in the Christian Bible where someone turns down Jesus — and it was because of money (Mark 10:17-31; Matt. 19:16-30; Luke 18:18-30)

Proverbs directs our attention to something that is lasting and brings a sense of security into our lives: God's Word. God's revelation through Scripture proves true.

Although the Bible was written centuries ago, it has stood the test of time because through its pages we hear the voice of the eternal God speaking into our lives.

Some people may try to add to Scripture, giving the impression that modern wisdom surpasses the Word of God; but there is no need to seek an improvement over its message.

Our confidence in the present and for the future is to be found in the promises of Scripture to provide for all our needs. Even when we cannot trace the purposes of God in the difficult circumstances of life, we are called to trust Him.

Be content with what God provides. (30:7-9)

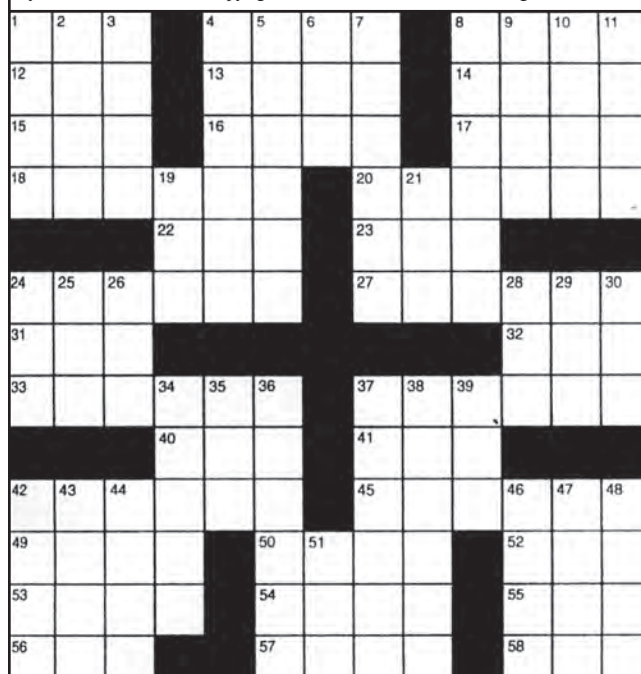
Paul reminds us that "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6). Both poverty and wealth bring their own temptations and neither is to be desired if they lead us away from trusting totally in God.

Riches can make us feel that we have made it on our own and poverty can lead us into actions which dishonor God. The secret is being content and putting our trust in God, believing that "my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). †

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Christian Crossword

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Across

- Dance step.
- David took an ____, and played with his hand. (1 Sam. 16:23)
- The reeds and __s shall wither. (Isa. 19:6)
- Indian tribe.
- Unusual person or thing.
- Recently deceased.
- The liberal soul shall be made __. (Prov. 11:25)
- Insect parts.
- The day cometh that shall burn as an __. (Mal. 4:1)
- The worlds were __ by the word of God. (Heb. 11:3)
- Yet the __ man is renewed day by day. (2 Cor. 4:16)
- Compass direction.
- For we shall __ him as he is. (1 John 3:2)
- To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be __. (1 Cor. 1:2)
- He which converteth the sinner from the __ of his way. (James 5:20; plural)
- Flawed merchandise. (abbr.)
- Residence. (abbr.)
- Thou art __, O Lord.

Down

- Knowledge __eth up. (1 Cor. 8:1)
- __oth and Dibon. (Num. 32:3)
- Bristles.
- Provide things __ in the sight of all men. (Rom. 12:17)
- Positively charged electrodes.
- Quit work at 65. (abbr.)
- I shall yet __ him for the help of his countenance. (Ps. 42:5)
- All the goodness thereof is as the __ of the field. (Isa. 40:6)
- Volcano output.
- The children of __ of Hezekiah. (Neh. 7:21)
- Masculine/feminine class. (abbr.)
- __ of high degree are a lie. (Ps. 62:9)
- The captain of his host was Abner, the son of __. (1 Sam. 14:50)
- Be ye angry and __ not. (Eph. 4:26)
- Blessed __ the merciful. (Matt. 5:7)
- __the Ithrite. (1 Chron. 11:40)
- Sphere.
- Kin. (abbr.)
- Compass direction.
- I will extend peace to her like a __. (Isa. 66:12)
- Before.

- To feel bitter.
- I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath __d me. (1 Tim. 1:12)
- Long prose narratives.
- Did eat.
- His ears are __ unto their cry. (Ps. 34:15)
- And the people shall be as the burnings of __. (Isa. 33:12)
- First letter of a name. (abbr.)
- Call his __ Jezreel. (Hos. 1:4)
- Let us be __ and rejoice. (Rev. 19:7)
- Protection.
- Persian tribe member.



WHAT ARE YOU READING?



Alabama Baptists share about what they are currently reading

Neisha Roberts

The Alabama Baptist

“The Meaning of Marriage” by Timothy Keller

In “The Meaning of Marriage,” author Timothy Keller begins by looking at how culture, and sin, has changed how we define marriage. God originally designed marriage as a symbol meant to represent Christ and His perfect and sacrificial love for His bride, the Church.

As the years went on marriage became something one does to benefit society (providing a safe and good place for children to be raised). It was a responsible financial choice and it was a place where a man became a man as he found ways to lead and care for his family.

Today, Keller writes, marriage is something a person does for him- or herself. A person now gets married to bring him- or herself joy — the polar opposite of what marriage was created to do (love and protect the other — as Christ does the Church).

Keller also addresses the idea that you never marry “the right person” because as soon as you marry, your spouse changes. The commitment of marriage automatically changes a person because, if a believer, he or she now strives to support the other, to bring joy to the other and sacrifice his or her own desires in the process.

I’m not finished with the book but so far I’ve taken away one big “wow” moment: In order to have a more Christlike marriage, you must first have a Christlike attitude. And how do you get that? By having a close personal relationship with the Creator Himself. From that close relationship a husband or wife can learn to love like Christ. It’s not easy, as the book affirms and any married person likely knows, but it’s worth striving toward.

Franklin Kirksey

Pastor, First Baptist Church, Spanish Fort

“Baptist Revival: Reaffirming Baptist Principles in Today’s Changing Church Scene” by Dan Nelson

Baptist Revival: Reaffirming Baptist Principles in Today’s Changing Church Scene” provides a generous portion of spiritual food for hungry souls who desire to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dan Nelson makes a gracious plea for biblical doctrine using his gift of teaching as he rightly divides the Word of truth. As you read these pages, you will grow stronger as a serious student of God’s Word, thus fulfilling a glorious purpose. I heartily recommend it. ☩

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



MEREDITH ANDREWS

Photo courtesy of Merge PR

Singer Andrews goes to ‘Deeper’ place with God

By Leann Callaway

Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

With the songs on her album “Deeper,” Dove Award-winning singer/songwriter Meredith Andrews wants to challenge listeners in their daily walk with the Lord.

“My prayer in all of these songs and in live concerts is that people would encounter the Lord like they never have before,” Andrews said. “Also that they would have a greater understanding of how much God loves them and how much He is pursuing them on a regular basis, regardless of what they have done or where they have been.

“I love getting to encourage people to run to a deeper place with the Lord. God welcomes us just as we are, and we don’t have to have everything all together to know the Lord. He wants us to come to Him just as we are, but He loves us too much to let us stay the way we are. He’s the One who transforms us and makes beauty out of ashes. I love to see people encounter the presence of God when I’m singing because that’s when the life transformation begins to happen.

“When I’m on stage and also when I’m hearing stories of God working in people’s lives, I have a front-row seat to what the Lord is doing — not just through my music, but through His Word and through His presence. I love getting to talk with people after events, getting to hear about what they have been walking through and being able to encourage them and pray over them.”

Known for the vulnerability and authenticity expressed in her song lyrics, Andrews desires to connect with audiences on a personal level by sharing her heart through music.

Refining season

“Through these songs I want to offer hope to people who are in difficult circumstances,” Andrews said. “When I wrote the songs for this record, all the songs came from a refining season for me when I was going through the fire. I had been going through such a difficult time, and I was feeling stressed and dealing with

heartache and hurt. I felt so overwhelmed most days, juggling being a wife and mom of three little ones and trying to tackle full-time ministry.

“I look back on this past season and there were so many days when I was like, ‘Lord, I don’t know how to make this all work. My marriage is in a hard place ... I just need to know that You are in this, and I believe that You are trying to teach me something. ... Lord, use these hard circumstances to refine me and teach me to rely on You like I’ve never had to before.’”

‘Who I am today’

“Despite all the struggles and trials, it became a beautiful time of relying on the Lord to carry me through. I feel like these experiences shaped me into who I am today. ... I know that there are so many people who are walking through what seems like hopeless circumstances.

“That’s why I really want to take the opportunity during concerts to speak life, offer hope and just to encourage people to hang in there. ... The Lord is able to work all this for your good, and He is wanting to take you to a deeper place with Him and the only way to do that is to walk through the trenches. It’s during this training period and refining season when the Lord is able to shape us, strengthen us and sustain us as we fully rely on Him and lean into His Word daily.”

Andrews leads worship at women’s ministry events, worship leader gatherings and conferences around the country. When she isn’t on the road, Andrews leads worship with the Vertical Church Band at Harvest Bible Chapel, Chicago, Illinois.

“The Lord has been teaching me so much as a result of this past season,” Andrews said. “A lot of times in my life I have a tendency to get a little impatient, getting a little ahead of God’s timing and wanting this dream fulfilled right now instead of sitting back and letting Him do whatever He wants to do, letting Him be Lord over my life, trusting that His timing is perfect and His ways are higher.

“Realizing that if I have Jesus, then at the end of the day regardless if the dream ever gets fulfilled or projects get finished, I still have everything that I will ever need because He is all that I need.” ☩

“Despite all the struggles and trials, it became a beautiful time of relying on the Lord to carry me through.”

**Meredith Andrews
singer/songwriter**



Photo by Ricky Gibson/IMB

Javier Carballea (center) and his wife, Yaima (right), give fellow missionary Johnny Maust (left) a weekly update on their evangelism and discipleship efforts in Montalvo, Ecuador.

Making disciples

Couple starts Bible study in Ecuadorian diner

The first Cuban Baptist international missionary couple under the Western Cuba Baptist Convention's Cubans to the Nations initiative has started an evangelical Bible study in an area where there had been none. The missions theme of the convention, "Christ's disciples making disciples," has taken root in South America.

About two years ago International Mission Board (IMB) missionary Johnny Maust began arranging for partnering missions teams from the United States to have lunch at Lupita Diner in Montalvo, Ecuador. He had befriended the owner, Hermida Cabeza, 70, a Christian, and showed a video at the restaurant depicting the Book of Matthew, but he wanted to establish a more consistent presence there.

When Cuban Baptists Javier Carballea and his wife, Yaima, came to serve with the Mausts, Lupita Diner welcomed them. U.S. missions teams from churches such as Central Baptist Church, Opelika, also provided names of contacts they had made in the town.

The Carballeas spent time at the restaurant to get to know the locals, such as Cabeza's daughter, Yadira Tello.

Yaima Carballea invited Tello to the couple's apartment to cook together and talk one on one. Tello, 30, became the first person the Cuban couple led to the Lord in Montalvo.

Tello and about a dozen other new believers attend a Bible study that the Carballeas started at the restaurant.

The Mausts serve among more than 600,000 Afro-Ecuadorians in a geographically large, unreached area of coastal Ecuador that is less than 1 percent evangelical Christian.

"There are other areas we want to reach but we need the resources and the workers," Maust said. "To the Cuban convention, I would like to say that we would like to see two or three couples here working together in a group, in a team, to reach the Afro-Ecuadorians."

Spanish-speaking church planters

There's a big need for Spanish-speaking church planters, Maust said, not only to share the gospel but also to stay long term to help people grow and reach spiritual maturity.

"What would Montalvo look like if we had a lot of

Javiers and Yaimas working here? It would transform this area," Maust said. "And I think it would also motivate the Ecuadorians. They would say, 'Hey, if these guys can do that, why can't we do that?'"

Javier Carballea said, "With a team, we can reach more people," explaining his dream of a Cuban Baptist church-planting team based in Ecuador. "Why do we need a team? Because I believe there is strength in unity. ... There are times when we are down and we need someone to encourage us, to push us and I think a team can do it."

'It depends on God'

"It depends on God primarily ... and on brothers that can give so that we can come and do this work," Javier Carballea said. "And we are counting on those brothers who can provide support so that we can [be here] and so that others can come."

As IMB missionaries, the Mausts are funded through the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.

But as Cuban Baptist missionaries, the Carballeas are relying on support from Cuban Baptists, as well as individual donations to the Cubans to the Nations strategic project promoted by IMB, to be able to serve in Ecuador.

The Carballeas were already traveling evangelists in Cuba, going out to rural areas, often by foot or bicycle, to share the gospel each week. The couple led a church-planting team for their home church, Iglesia Bautista San Juan y Martínez, in the province of Pinar del Rio, Cuba.

Javier Carballea named the Cuban church-planting group Punta de Lanza after the 2005 movie "End of the Spear." The movie chronicled the martyrdom of five U.S. missionaries, including Jim Elliot and Nate Saint, in an Ecuadorian jungle. Since the formation of Punta de Lanza a few years ago, the Carballeas helped start two churches and 19 Bible study groups.

"We want to work with that group so that they will help us reach others," said Javier Carballea, in keeping with the convention's missions theme.

To learn more about the work being done in Cuban Baptist churches, visit netcommunity.imb.org/ giving (search for "Cuba") or email CubaToTheNations@gmail.com. (BP)

To learn how to share the gospel with unreached people in the Americas, email ampconnecting@imb.org.

RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

PCA 'repents,' commits to racial reconciliation

LAWRENCEVILLE, Ga. — The nation's second largest Presbyterian denomination has passed legislation repenting for "past failures to love brothers and sisters from minority cultures" and committing its members to work toward racial reconciliation.

The "overture" (or legislation) was approved overwhelmingly June 23 at the national meeting of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) in Mobile. The issue had been deferred from the previous year's meeting, where there was a lengthy debate on similar legislation.

The vote by PCA came in the same month that Southern Baptists attending their annual meeting adopted a resolution repudiating the use of the Confederate flag.

"(T)he 44th General Assembly of [PCA] does recognize, confess, condemn and repent of corporate and historical sins, including those committed during the Civil Rights era, and continuing racial sins of ourselves and our fathers such as the segregation of worshippers by race; the exclusion of persons from Church membership on the basis of race," reads the PCA legislation.

PCA also acknowledged teaching that the Bible permits racial segregation and discourages interracial marriage and the denomination confessed to defense and participation in white supremacist organizations.

Richard Doster, editor of the PCA's *byFaith Magazine* and a spokesman for the General Assembly, said 43 of the 63 proposed pieces of legislation for the meeting related to race relations and confessions of sin about segregation. PCA, whose membership is about 80 percent white, has about 370,000 members. (RNS)

Federal judge blocks Indiana abortion law

INDIANAPOLIS — A federal judge June 30 blocked an Indiana law banning abortions in cases when a baby is diagnosed before birth with a genetic abnormality such as Down syndrome. The Indiana law, 1 of only 2 of its kind in the United States, was set to go into effect July 1.

In March, Indiana Gov. Mike Pence signed a statute also designed to outlaw sex-selection abortions and the buying and selling of fetal tissue. The law also would require that the bodies of aborted or miscarried babies be treated in a dignified manner rather than be disposed of in large containers with other "infectious waste."

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Indiana had challenged the law on behalf of Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky. The ACLU of Indiana did not return calls requesting a comment, but said in a statement that "the ACLU stands firmly against discrimination in all forms."

Pence's office released a statement saying he was disappointed by the ruling, but he "will continue to stand for the sanctity of human life at all stages."

In 1974 less than 50 American women aborted their Down syndrome babies, but by 2000 that number reached about 3,200. Studies published in 1999 and 2006 found that 90 to 92 percent of prenatally diagnosed cases of Down syndrome end in abortion. (BP)

Oregon rules person can choose 'third sex'

PORTLAND, Ore. — An Oregon judge ruled that a 52-year-old Army veteran can legally choose to be "nonbinary" or a "third sex," according to The Christian Post.

Jamie Shupe, who retired from the Army in 2000, began transitioning in 2013 from a biological male to identify as a female. Shupe said, "My gender identity has never been male but I feel like I have to own up to my male biology. Being nonbinary allows me to do that."

Shupe's attorney, Lake James Perriguet, filed Shupe's petition for a sex change in April with letter from the Oregon Health & Science University in Portland stating Shupe's gender should be classified as nonbinary. Multnomah County Circuit Judge Amy Holmes Hehn said Shupe had satisfied the requirements for a sex change and found "no cause why the requested General Judgment should not be granted." (TAB)