



INSIDE



Unique platform, opportunity for ministry appears in Pokémon Go game

◆ Page 4



Theology 101: Last Things — Judgment of Believers

◆ Page 7

Heroes of the Faith: Thomas Helwys, founder of Baptist denomination, stood for religious liberty

◆ Page 9

Explosive growth

Footprints of Lottie Moon evident in growth of believers in China

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

Believers in China “don’t play church.” At least that’s what a team of seven from Mountain Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham, witnessed on their recent trip to Pingdu, in China’s Shandong Province.

Pastor Doug Dortch, who made his first trip to China with the team, said he was “astounded at the health of the Church (in China).”

“While I knew Christianity has been on the rise in China since the government allowed the churches to reopen in the 80s, I wasn’t aware at how explosive the growth has been,” Dortch said. “The Church in China is exploding and most of the growth is coming from people under 40 years of age.”

The Birmingham team traveled May 31 through June 11 to help celebrate a groundbreaking for a new church building that will house a branch congregation of Meng En Church in Pingdu. The groundbreaking also coincided with the 10-year

anniversary celebration for another church building that was dedicated in 2006 with the help of Mountain Brook Baptist.

The Alabama church and the China church formed a partnership back in 1997 after Mountain Brook Baptist member Catherine B. Allen visited the Asian country as part of her research for her book, “The

New Lottie Moon Story.” The book chronicles the story of Southern Baptist missionary Lottie Moon as she laid the foundation for much of the church growth in China, including Meng En Church.

In 1885, Moon traveled to Pingdu, four days beyond where any other English-speaking person had traveled, to start a new ministry. Petite, 4-foot-3-inch Moon rented three rooms

in a primitive Chinese house, Allen explained, and lived like a Chinese person among the people who were receptive to the gospel.

It was from Pingdu that Virginia-born Moon suggested the idea of what would later become the Woman’s Missionary Union. And the first offering, which would later be

“The Church in China is exploding and most of the growth is coming from people under 40 years of age.”

**Pastor Doug Dortch
Mountain Brook Baptist
Church, Birmingham**



Photo courtesy of Catherine B. Allen

Doug Dortch (left), pastor of Mountain Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham, preaches at a church in Pingdu, China, while Ron Winstead (right), a former International Mission Board missionary, translates for him.

named the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO), was collected in 1888, after Moon’s suggestion that an offering be collected to help send more workers to China.

‘Most responsive’

By 1892 the first church in the Pingdu region was established and the LMCO enabled three women missionaries to join Moon in her work. By the mid-1930s, Allen explained, about 36 churches were established in the area.

“Many considered Pingdu to be

the most responsive Baptist missions field of the 20th century,” Allen said, noting how one of Moon’s early disciples, Li Shou-ting, was remembered for baptizing 10,000 people.

But the enormous growth didn’t last forever.

“The Church suffered years of repression, beginning with warring bandits, then Japanese invaders and then war between communists and nationalists,” she said.

In the 1970s all of the churches in China were closed and property was

(See ‘Shining,’ page 6)

Coming next week...

Faith and Family
Healing from
shame and guilt

COMMENT

How Baptists Expand Their Ministries

Hattie Barnes is not a name known by many Baptists today. In 1909 she and her husband served Pratt City Baptist Church. Her efforts to reach the people living in Pratt City and nearby Ensley provide one of the clearest examples of how Baptists worked together to expand ministries in the name of Jesus Christ.

A century ago Italians and other Europeans flocked to Birmingham to work in the high-risk, low-paying jobs of Birmingham's iron and steel industry. Most families were poor. They lived in crowded housing and lacked utilities. Hattie Barnes reached out to the young girls living around her by inviting them into her home where she taught them to sew and crochet and taught Bible stories.

From that beginning grew what came to be known as the Good Will Center of Birmingham, ultimately a ministry of the Home Mission Board (HMB, now North American Mission Board) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). The journey from Mrs. Barnes' living room to an institutional ministry demonstrates how Southern Baptists traditionally worked together to expand their ministries.

Community response

Italian immigrants to Birmingham settled primarily in Pratt City and Ensley and became the focus of the early ministry. So responsive was the community that almost immediately Mrs. Barnes contacted Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) leaders in nearby churches for help. Soon the work with the Italians was a project of women across the Birmingham area.

The ladies taught cooking, sewing, crocheting, basic health, American customs and English. They sponsored mothers' clubs, girls' clubs and boys' clubs. They taught the Bible, held prayer meetings and visited in homes.

Women across the South were engaged in similar efforts at the encouragement of national WMU which urged members to combine social service ministries with "seeking souls and soul saving." By 1914, Southern Baptists called these efforts



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Good Will Centers and by 1918 there were 32 of them across the South. Each was in a metropolitan area serving the poor and disadvantaged.

In 1911, Birmingham WMU groups cooperated to fund a full-time staff member, a graduate of the WMU Training School in Louisville, Kentucky, and the ministry grew even more. Financial needs soon outstripped what the ladies could provide and they turned to the Alabama Baptist State Convention for assistance. That meant the women had to exchange some control of the ministry for financial support.

Thanks to new resources, the 1917 report indicates the Good Will Center held Birmingham's first daily Vacation Bible School. The center was regularly ministering to more than 300 children and about 200 families. Programs expanded to reach men as well.

The Birmingham Baptist Association became involved in 1922 and helped hire an Italian Baptist church planter to begin a congregation for the "thousands of Italians participating in the Good Will Center activities," the records say.

Good Will Center guidelines were clear. In no sense were the centers a substitute for the Church. Nor were they rivals of the churches but rather feeders for them.

Denominational strategy

Later HMB began contributing to the Birmingham Good Will Center and the church planter was considered a home missionary. Eventually in Birmingham and across the South the Good Will Centers became part of the denominational strategy for inner-city ministries directed by HMB.

Although the Birmingham Good Will Center closed a long time ago, it remains a clear example of Baptists working together to expand ministries that help people and share the gospel. Barnes reached out to other women through WMU. Later the state convention became involved, then the local association. Finally an SBC missions agency took the leadership.

The ministry changed structures many times. It went from a pastor's wife in charge to participants making decisions to a board composed of WMU leaders to associational involvement to becoming an HMB ministry.

Each time control took a back seat to cooperation. The goal was always expanding the ministry in the name of Jesus Christ.

Some might resist a ministry becoming institutionalized like Barnes' efforts to reach Italians living around her. Some might argue that churches should do the ministries, not denominations. Again Southern Baptists of the last century were more concerned about results than methods. They would not violate Scriptural principles but found that cooperation with others was not only taught in Scripture but it was more effective than working alone.

Perhaps Baptists of the last century cited the example of the apostle Paul in collecting the offering for Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:1-4). God gave Paul a vision for helping believers in need. Paul promoted the idea and enlisted help from all who would participate. He even became the agent for the ministry taking the offering personally to the "saints in Jerusalem."

Starting with one

The story is like Barnes' story. God gives one person the inspiration and that person reached out to cooperate with others to bring the ministry to fruition. Methodology and control took a back seat to serving others and sharing Christ in both cases.

Another important detail is that the needs of the community were entry points for ministry and witness. Whether it was cooking or carpentry, Baptists used Christian social ministries to open the door for "seeking souls and soul saving." Critics who belittle helping ministries have a hard time explaining away this part of our history.

It also is important to recognize that a century ago Baptists were concerned for the cities. Practically every major metropolitan area where Southern Baptists lived had a Good Will Center. It was the denomination's way of embracing ministering to the poor, the immigrant and the ethnic.

Today America is filled with people who need the Lord. Cities remain prime areas for ministry and evangelism. Starting by addressing felt needs is still an important way of establishing bridges for sharing the gospel.

Perhaps we can learn from Barnes and others involved with the Birmingham Good Will Center that when people and churches and associations and state conventions and national missions boards work together, we can make a difference.

Cooperation is still the best way for Baptists to expand their ministries.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Information was taken from an article by Melody Maxwell titled "We are Happy to Co-Operate": The Institutionalization and Control of Birmingham's Baptist Good Will Center, 1909-1928." †

Connect with us
 >>>> **ONLINE** <<<<

 thealabamabaptist.org

 facebook.com/thealabamabaptist

 twitter.com/alabamabaptist

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

(ISSN 0738-7741;
USPS 011-080)

© The Alabama Baptist, Inc. is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 1-800-803-5201. Fax: 205-879-6026. **Website:** www.thealabamabaptist.org. **Email:** news@thealabamabaptist.org or circulation@thealabamabaptist.org. Periodicals postage paid at Birmingham, Ala., and at additional mailing offices.

PRINT SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Church Budget — \$13.75
Individual — \$22.25

DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Church Budget — \$8.50
Individual — \$14.95

DR. BOBBY S. TERRY
EDITOR

Jennifer Davis Rash
Executive Editor

Neisha Roberts
Editorial Production Coordinator

Maggie Walsh
News Writer

Lauren C. Grim
Designer

Wanda Bergeron
Local Editions

Linda Harrison
Financial Administrator

Bill Gilmore
Advertising Director

Debbie Campbell
Director of Circulation
and Public Relations

NEWS SERVICES
Baptist Press (BP), Baptist News
Global (BNG), Religion News
Service (RNS), Forum 18 (F18),
Morning Star News (MS).

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
The Alabama Baptist
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209

ADDRESS CHANGE
Send old and new addresses,
and name of church to:
Circulation Department
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209
Allow two weeks.

To the best of our knowledge,
all of the ads in *The Alabama Baptist* represent legitimate
companies and offerings.
However, one should always
exercise normal business
caution in responding to ads.

Full member of
Alabama Press Association

Accredited member of
Evangelical Council for
Financial Accountability



'Nation's Top Regional
Christian Newspaper'

1999, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009,
2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014
as judged by Associated
Church Press, Evangelical
Press Association or Religion
Communicators Council

Reaching the unchurched

Survey seeks to find why majority of Americans see no meaning in church

The "seekers" have left the church — if they ever came.

LifeWay Research has taken a close look at what might draw them in, zeroing in on people who say they have not attended a religious service in the past six months except for special events or holidays.

Worship? Not particularly interested, 2 in 3 people told the evangelical research firm in a survey released June 28.

Talk about God? Not so much, said 3 in 4 of the 2,000 "unchurched" people in the survey — including 57 percent who identified as Christians.

"Are a lot of Americans on a conscious journey to learn who Jesus Christ is? I don't think so," said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research, based in Nashville.

The survey was conducted May 23–June 1. The margin of error is plus or minus 2.7 percentage points.

The findings suggest most folks could be lured to church through events where faith is not explicit: community causes, entertainment and sports.

Even that old "seeker" standby — the search for meaning — doesn't cut it for many who a decade ago might have read Rick Warren's mega-selling handbook, "The Purpose Driven Life."

Although 57 percent of those surveyed said finding "their deeper purpose" is "a major priority," 31 percent disagreed at least somewhat and 12 percent were unsure.

That finding can be read two ways. Either folks are feeling secure in their salvation, even without church, or "most unchurched people don't particularly care," McConnell said in an interview.

Fully 70 percent of people who do not attend religious services agreed that "there is an ultimate purpose and plan for every person's life."

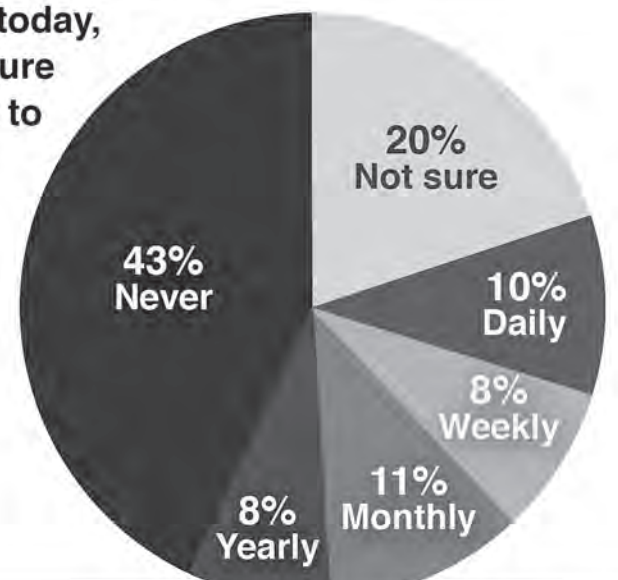
But whose plan is the unanswered question.

LifeWay deliberately didn't mention God in asking about "plan" and "purpose," McConnell explained, because it wanted to assess whether people had "a framework of wanting to make better, or the best, choices for life."

If they already view life in terms of plans and goals, it's easier to talk about the Christian faith. Evangelizing is like marketing a product

Among Unchurched Americans How often do you wonder:

"If I were to die today, do I know for sure that I would go to heaven?"



LifeWay
Biblical Solutions for Life

LifeWayResearch.com

— you need a value that matters to the customer, McConnell said.

The survey suggested that while evangelical churchgoers say heaven is the main benefit of their Christian faith, "that value proposition is not a product the unchurched are looking to buy," McConnell said.

Question about heaven

The survey found that 43 percent said they never wonder if they'll go to heaven when they die and 20 percent can't recall the last time they thought about it.

The results were not entirely bleak, however: Nearly 62 percent would come for a meeting at church on neighborhood safety.

Offering a venue to "express compassion" can be a top draw for churches, Rick Richardson, professor of evangelism and leadership at Wheaton College in Illinois, said in a press release. He is a research fellow for the Billy Graham Center for Evangelism, which sponsored the survey.

Other ways people could be inspired to visit were for events such as concerts (51 percent), sports or exercise programs (46 percent) or a neighborhood get-together (45 percent).

Most (51 percent) said a personal invitation from a friend or family member could draw them to church. And many are willing to at least listen to the benefits of being a Christian. Only 11 percent said they'd change the subject if religion came up in conversation.

But only about 1 in 5 would accept if that invitation came from a church member knocking at their door, a TV commercial, postcard or Facebook ad.

McConnell said bringing people into church is "a different kind of conversation. It's like cajoling them to take a blind date with someone you want to spend your life and your eternity with. We need to say take it one day at a time: 'Let's introduce you to Jesus and see what you think.'" (RNS)

Churches offer hope, healing among nation's 'racial crisis'

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

I wept as my sweet Christian sister, who happens to be black, prayed for God to search her heart and find the wickedness within her, that she might confess it to Him.

She knelt in the pulpit along with my pastor Sunday, July 10. She is one of my spiritual heroes and has served as a mentor for

many. Listening to her claim 2 Chronicles 7:14 ("if My people pray") as a directive for herself instead of praying for something specific to happen to someone else moved many in our congregation.

Prayers from the heart

Her prayers, along with those of my pastor, came three days after five Dallas police officers were strategically murdered.

The police officers were white; the man targeting them was black — in the name of retaliation for two black men shot and killed by police officers (one white, one unidentified ethnicity) earlier in the week in other states. Racial tensions have risen to a boiling point and the Church must find its place in the healing.

The prayers at my church were not unusual that day. ☩

Tell us about your experience. Email news@thealabamabaptist.org with information about what you saw and heard in your church July 10, or how your church plans to help bring healing.

'Cultural phenomenon'



Unique platform, opportunity for ministry appears in Pokémon Go game

If your church is suddenly overtaken by Millennials with their eyes stuck on their phones, you can thank Pokémon. And several Alabama Baptist churches and at least one association have experienced this latest fad.

Yes, Pokémon. The Nintendo-owned franchise, which produced colorful cards and later video games, is back — this time luring young adults out of their apartments and into museums, parks and places of worship.

How? Technology, of course. Pokémon's newest iteration is a free augmented reality app that brings its now-adult fans' fantasies to life.

The app uses players' phone GPS to locate where they are, then makes Pokémon appear on the phone screen in real-life locations so players can "catch" all 151 virtual creatures.

Viral sensation

The app has become a viral sensation among teens and young adults, overtaking Tinder and Twitter in daily users. Online research company SurveyMonkey reported July 13 that Pokémon Go is now the biggest mobile game in U.S. history. Millennials are walking around with their phones, finding "PokéStops" and "Gyms" at local places of interest: libraries, parks, art galleries, subway stations, zoos and more.

But, as some gamers are discovering, virtual Pokémon also can be found at several churches too.

The game's PokéStops and Gyms, where players can gather in the real world to capture and battle their virtual Pokémon, are based on user-submitted locations.

As a Millennial who grew up trading Pokémon cards with his friends, Tyler Armstrong is excited about the "cultural phenomenon."

"I remember the first Pokémon game I ever played — I was four years old," said Armstrong, who is now minister to students at Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Rainbow City. "I showed it to my students (at church) and they absolutely loved it."

Armstrong and other Twelfth Street Baptist staff members are currently brainstorming how to best minister within the gaming

State missionary sees new game as open door

By Brian Harris
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Ughh — another social media phenomenon. That was my first thought. My wife even made fun of me since I'm a 38-year-old adult with two kids, but here I was downloading the new craze, Pokémon Go, to my phone. My reasoning: I need, as the digital marketing strategist, to know what it's all about.

During lunch the next day when I finally opened the app, a small character appeared in my map nearby. I clicked on it to see the augmented reality view which brought the character to life via my phone screen. There it was, a Weedle right by the meat at Moe's. I flicked my Pokeball at it and captured it.

Big deal, right? How could this be used to connect with people? I read up about the PokéStops and Gyms where you gain points and are often associated with local landmarks ... a lot of them churches. These require that you physically go there unlike most games.

Going to church

This didn't go unnoticed as my Twitter feed began to fill up with people saying that Pokémon wants them to go to church apparently. The game was actually getting people to the building.

Churches began to notice the new visitors and some even went as far as to give out food, water and open their doors.

Another option was to set lures to attract the virtual creatures to PokéStops ... which also at-

tract people. Churches were then able to greet them and invite them to attend a weekend gathering. One church reported 17 first-time visitors to their campus after setting a lure. One person in conversation said, "I thought you had to be a member to be allowed to attend church."

So yeah, it's weird, it's new — but people are using it. They're walking around and quite possibly they are at your church for the first time. Sounds like an opportunity to me.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Brian Harris is the web, social media and email strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

culture, especially since their church is a PokéStop. Armstrong has already been able to have conversations with three teenagers between the ages of 12 and 15 who biked to the church to catch a Pokémon.

"I let them charge their phones in my car and got to talk to them for about an hour," he said. "[Our] conversation led back to church and what they thought about Jesus. We had a really good gospel conversation through something completely worldly that I used to our advantage as a believer."

It's also bringing his youth group closer together.

'Unique opportunity'

"When you have a seventh grader connecting with a 10th grader over a game, that's huge."

Wendell Dutton, director of missions for Cherokee Baptist Association, had a different response initially to discovering that the associational office was a PokéStop.

"At first I kind of viewed it as it's kind of a nuisance or security issue" but Dutton has since shift-

ed perspectives after talking to the teenagers and young adults who have come by the office.

"It's a unique opportunity, I think ... to reach out and minister to these people. ... We've used it as an opportunity to start some conversations about how it's good to be looking for Pokémon, but

make sure you're looking for Jesus too.

"It's unique how the Lord opens doors to us if we're just sensitive," he said. "I think

our churches in this generation and in this time, we have to be really open and sensitive and I think the Lord is using this (game) as an avenue."

Daniel Woodcock, pastor of The Cornerstone Church, Gadsden, echoed Armstrong and Dutton. His church's downtown location has made it a hub for gamers because of its three PokéStops. Just four days after learning about the game, Woodcock and his staff had already hosted gift certificate giveaways, passed out movie tickets and distributed refreshments to the mass of gamers flocking to the church.

And once they're "literally

leaning against our building," Woodcock said, he gets a chance to make connections.

"The majority of people I've talked to are young singles and they're just blown away that a church is embracing what they're doing. ... People said, 'I didn't know a church would do something like this and be accepting.'

"I love how the apostle Paul said we're to be all things to all people. Society is heavily involved in games and social media. I personally don't play [Pokémon Go] but I care about these people."

And that care is driving The Cornerstone Church to maximize on the game's potential for spreading the gospel.

"You've got to be creative with sharing the gospel," Woodcock said. "[The game] is more just an opportunity to be like Jesus and love on [gamers]. ... You can't beat this."

Church attendance — or at least skulking around church parking lots — isn't the only unintended result of the game.

Some players have warned about racism and suspicion that people of color may face while exploring their neighborhoods for Pokémon, while others have found the game to help with weight loss. There are reports of armed robbers using the game to lure victims, and a 19-year-old Wyoming resident said she found a dead body while looking for Pokémon.

Unfortunately for churches trying to draw in youth, it doesn't look like there's a way to register a location as a PokéStop or Gym yet. But turning your church into a "charging station" for players might do the trick.

Here to stay?

Whether it's a hyped-up game that will be gone in a month or here to stay, as Armstrong believes, there's no denying that for now it's bringing gamers to church doors.

Armstrong said, "It's definitely an interesting phenomenon and it's something that the Church needs to capitalize on." (Maggie Walsh, RNS)

For tips on how your church can minister through Pokémon Go, visit thewardrobedoor.com.

Alabama Baptist GIVING



Year to Date through June 30, 2016

JUNE

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$3,333,333.33
CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....	\$3,480,964.00
Over Goal for Month.....	\$147,630.67

YEAR TO DATE

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$20,000,000.00
CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....	\$20,086,029.00
Over Goal for Year.....	\$86,029.00

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



21CWI photo

These Nigerians displaced by Boko Haram violence participated in interviews with the 21 Century Wilberforce Initiative in researching its report, 'Nigeria: Fractured and Forgotten.'

Humanitarian crisis

Report describes Boko Haram violence in Nigeria as 'gravest' in world

Boko Haram violence has created a multifaceted humanitarian crisis in Nigeria that the 21st Century Wilberforce Initiative (21CWI) and former Congressman Frank R. Wolf describe as the "gravest" in the world.

The assessment is based on the 21CWI June report "Nigeria: Fractured and Forgotten" taken from onsite research conducted in 10 states in northern and middle Nigeria in 2016.

Malnutrition, the lack of educational opportunities for nearly a million children, and what the 21CWI described as perhaps the second-largest number of internally displaced persons in the world characterize the region, 21CWI wrote in its report.

'Ravaged by malnutrition'

"What is unfolding in northern and central Nigeria is one of the gravest current humanitarian crises in the world with millions affected, thousands killed, insecurity rampant, children ravaged by malnutrition, one of the world's highest populations of IDPs (internally displaced persons), schools closed, houses of worship destroyed and entire communities burned to the ground in scorched-earth attacks," the report's 40-page executive summary notes. "Moreover, the threat posed by Fulani militants in the Middle Belt is escalating into one of the most significant security concerns in West Africa."

Statistics cited include nearly 14.8 million persons impacted in northeastern Nigeria, as many as 5-7 million internally displaced persons and 2,000 women and children abducted by Boko Haram.

Wolf, 21CWI distinguished senior fellow, and 21CWI President Randall Everett have appealed to President Barack Obama to appoint a special envoy to the region.

"Given that this is the world's most neglected humanitarian crisis and one of the most significant security threats in West Africa, we believe what is needed is a special envoy for Nigeria and the Lake Chad region," the June 23 letter reads, signed by Wolf and Everett.

"It is our firm belief that the United States and other Western nations have a vested interest in confronting one of the worst humanitarian crises of our day," the two appealed to Obama.

"The appointment of a special envoy would send a strong signal and further strengthen American leadership," they wrote. "We urge you and your administration to act quickly and appoint a special envoy for Nigeria and the Lake Chad region."

The letter cites June statistics from Doctors Without Borders, which reported an average of six children dying daily from malnutrition at a camp of 24,000 internally displaced victims in Bama, Borno, in May. On some days as many as 30 people die from hunger and illness, 21CWI said, quoting the medical aid group.

Strict Sharia law

The camp in Bama housed 15,000 children and 8,000 adults, with many of the 800 children Doctors Without Borders screened suffering from malnutrition and 500 children already dead. In the past year,

1,233 graves had been filled near the camp.

Boko Haram, which has killed more than 15,000 in the past five years in its quest to establish strict Sharia law in Nigeria, has displaced more Muslims than Christians, the 21CWI said in its report.

Added persecutions

"More Muslims have been displaced than any other faith group due to the actions of Boko Haram," 21CWI said. "Between 2000 and 2014, more than 13,000 [Christian] churches were abandoned, closed or destroyed in northern and central Nigeria."

Christians face added persecutions, according to 21CWI, including employment discrimination, pricing discrimination in local markets, marginalization in market participation, confiscation of Christian property, eviction from homes and discrimination from Muslims.

While Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari has asserted a "technical defeat" of Boko Haram, the extremists are still a threat to the region, 21CWI wrote.

"Boko Haram and its culture of violence continues [sic], despite recent pronouncements to the contrary, throughout northeastern Nigeria. The acts of barbarity and the depths of suffering many have experienced are immense," the report said. "Unfortunately, in many respects both the Nigerian government and the international community are failing to rise to meet this challenge."



21CWI photo

This Nigerian mother fled Boko Haram violence and has found shelter in a Nigerian refugee camp.

Fulani herdsmen, traditionally pastoralist nomads, are now using sophisticated weapons and employing a scorched-earth policy to displace or kill farmers and graze their lands, the report said, noting the use of supply helicopters, machine guns mounted on vehicles and AK47s.

The 21CWI report is based on a study the organization's executive team conducted in early 2016, that included interviews with nearly 600 representatives of impacted communities and families, grassroots tribal and religious leaders, missionaries, nongovernmental organization leaders, activists, leaders from the Chibok Government Secondary School, national Christian denominational leaders, lawmakers and ambassadors. Published data and statistics on northeastern and middle Nigeria also were used in drafting the report.

Protections and reforms

Headquartered in Falls Church, Virginia, 21CWI describes itself as a Christian human rights organization calling for religious freedom and working to mobilize and equip "partners to promote global protections and reforms through advocacy, capacity building and technology."

Wolf authored the International Religious Freedom Act and legislation to create a U.S. State Department special envoy to advocate for religious minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia. He is the founder and co-chair of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission.

The report recommends action from the U.S. and Nigerian governments; the United Nations; and denominations, churches, Christians and individuals worldwide.

The full report is available at standwithnigeria.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Nigeria-Report-Exec-Summary-1.pdf. (BP)

Shining example

Much growth among Christians in China can be attributed to missional ministry approach, pastor says

(continued from page 1)

confiscated, Allen said, but the Church survived “and even thrived out of sight.”

Today fourth-generation believers, like Pastor Wang Xia who serves Meng En Church, are continuing Moon’s legacy. Meng En Church was established in 1894 and is recognized as the second organized church from Moon’s ministry.

Wang Xia and two assistant ministers now lead the church that includes about 6,000 members among 20 congregations within a 30-mile radius, according to Allen.

Wang Xia used to travel the countryside by bicycle to share the gospel, but through Mountain Brook Baptist’s support, she bought a motorbike.

She then turned that into a motorvan that can accommodate three extra evangelists to go on preaching missions with her. She baptizes about 300 people a year, Allen said. Wang Xia was ordained in 1994 and has baptized more than 3,000 people since that time.

Allen made her seventh trip to China as she traveled with the Mountain Brook Baptist team. The trip was about two churches on opposite sides of the globe relating over a period of 20 years, she said.

The trip itself also included visiting several churches along the way to Pingdu, since the area is not easily accessible.

“We traveled through several cities in the province ... to encourage believers,” Allen said. They traveled to Yantai, Penglai, Longkou and Qingdao, where “people crowd into church buildings for worship; more than half of the pastoral workers are females; laypersons do most of the work since seminaries cannot produce graduates as fast as believers are multiplying; and new believers are baptized by the hundreds.”

China vs. America

“It was very thrilling to see how China has developed so beautifully and improved the economy ... (and) to see the phenomenal church growth that is going on,” Allen said.

Dortch said he noticed a difference between the Church in China and the Church in America while on the trip.

“In America, Christianity has become a religion of convenience, a way of becoming more socially accepted, while in China, they don’t play church. They don’t belong to communities of faith because ... such

membership might help them advance in business or social circles. They belong because of the truth of the gospel and the hope that it provides. They believe because of the purpose it affords them and the joy that it holds for them.”

Dortch also noted the missional attitude he witnessed in the Church in China — believers want to bless their communities with the gospel and make life better for society.

Evangelistic ‘hook’

The churches also don’t rely on their location to “attract” those who might be interested in their ministries, Dortch wrote in a blog post about the trip.

“Not every congregation in China is blessed with a fine facility. ... Churches have learned to offer ministries that speak to felt needs in their communities and how each ministry ought to have an evangelistic ‘hook’ that might bring unchurched souls into the fold. And it’s working. Much of the growth among Christians in China can be attributed to this missional ministry approach,” he wrote.

The Church in China also exemplifies unity among believers, Dortch noted. After the government allowed churches to reopen, one stipulation placed on churches was that they be self-perpetuating — in other words, “no outside influences would be permitted to have oversight over Chinese churches ... meaning no denominations exist in China ... out of fear

that Western religious bodies might exercise undue authority over Chinese congregations.”

“The (churches) don’t see other churches as enemies. Instead they know the powers and principalities that are the true threat to their existence, and they work with one another to bring God’s kingdom purposes to bear against them.”

The shining example the Church in China displays is something Mountain Brook Baptist wants to follow.

“How much better would our worship and ministry be if we could keep our spiritual energies focused outward ... show more genuine exuberance in our efforts ... and emphasize what we have in common with other Christians,” Dortch wrote. “My prayer is that our answers to these important questions will result in a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit’s movement in our midst so that when people come our way they too will sense, as we did in China, that the Lord is in this place and among His people.” ☩



Photo courtesy of Catherine B. Allen

Members of a church in Pingdu, China, celebrate the church’s anniversary with folkloric dance and praise music.

ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Longtime East McFarland pastor Reeves to retire

Doug Reeves, pastor of East McFarland Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, for all of its 29 years of ministry, will retire July 31.

Reeves also served as pastor of Friendship Baptist Church, Cullman; Katherwood Baptist Church, Birmingham; First Baptist Church, Austinville, in Decatur; and Gilgal Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa. He also was moderator and on almost every committee within Tuscaloosa Baptist Association, including the pastoral conflict committee on which he currently serves.



REEVES

Reeves recalled the beginning of East McFarland Baptist’s ministry, back when members had to meet in several different locations before a new building was constructed in 1987 that could accommodate everyone.

“For one year the church met each Sunday and Wednesday night at Hayes Funeral Home,” he said. “The chapel was used for worship and adult Sunday School classes. The children and youth met in members’ homes. Then on July 25, 1988, we moved into our multipurpose building that our members built.”

As Reeves looked back on his years with the church, he said, “The ministry as a whole has been wonderful,” adding how much the church helps young ministers attend seminary and pay for travel and expenses during missions trips.

Reeves began his ministry in his late teens and celebrated 50 years of ministry in 2014. He holds a bachelor’s degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master’s degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Judy, have two children, two grandchildren and one great-grandchild. (Hannah Muñoz)

Reeves began his ministry in his late teens and celebrated 50 years of ministry in 2014. He holds a bachelor’s degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master’s degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Judy, have two children, two grandchildren and one great-grandchild. (Hannah Muñoz)

Klein Baptist’s Stone celebrates 50 years in ministry

Marking 50 years in pastoral ministry July 31, Joe Stone, pastor of Klein Baptist Church, Harpersville, said he “ran from God’s call” for 10 years before surrendering.

A native of Wilsonville, Stone surrendered to God’s call to become a pastor at age 31 after hearing a sermon at a revival about the punishment that would come on a person who knows the will of God but doesn’t do it.



STONE

“I was wrestling with it,” Stone said. “But God spoke to me and I surrendered to His call. I went and woke up my wife and told her and she said, ‘You better get at it. You’re over 30.’”

Stone had met his wife, Terry, when he was just a teenager and she was 11 years old. She played the piano at their church. The two were married once Terry Stone turned 17 and Joe Stone was 21. She said she’d always felt called to be a pastor’s wife.

Joe Stone earned a bachelor’s degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

He’s served as pastor of Klein Baptist for nearly six years. Prior to that he served as pastor of Florence Baptist Church in Shelby County; Valdosta Baptist Church, Tuscumbia; Antioch Baptist Church, Columbiana; and Red Bluff Baptist Church, Folsom, Louisiana. He also served as assistant pastor of Sylavon Mission, a ministry of First Baptist Church, Sylacauga.

He and his wife have two children, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. (Neisha Roberts)

Want to see your news in *The Alabama Baptist*?

Email your information to news@thealabamabaptist.org or call 1-800-803-5201. Church announcements should arrive three weeks prior to the event.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Last Things

Judgment of Believers

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

A vital aspect of future judgment is the assignment of rewards. Baptists generally subscribe to the biblical teaching that “the righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and dwell forever in heaven with the Lord” (Baptist Faith and Message).

While salvation, and the eternal life it bestows, is a gift of God’s saving grace in Christ, rewards are earned by faithfulness in living for and serving the Savior. Rewards can be lost but salvation itself is secure to believers in Jesus.

Acts of service, demonstrations of genuine love, manifestations of Christ-like qualities and other commendable and commanded expectations of God’s children do not form the basis for salvation and entrance into heaven. These things are, however, part of the outward evidence of the genuineness of a person’s faith and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

A commonly cited passage that speaks of the reward aspect of final judgment is 2 Corinthians 5:10. Speaking as one Christian to a congregation of Christians in Corinth, the apostle Paul wrote collectively of his readers and himself, saying: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

Distinction between good and bad

The distinction between the “good and bad” as it relates to Christians receiving rewards is clarified in 1 Corinthians 3:13–15, which speaks specifically about a loss of rewards: “Each one’s work will become clear; for the day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work ... endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

The basis for the testing of a Christian’s works is not the quantity of the works but the quality. Rewards depend on faithfulness in light of ability and opportunity, as well as the enduring quality of those works.

A practical consideration about final judgment for believers is that we are not to engage in judging one another. After citing Isaiah 45:23 (“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”), Romans 14:12–13a concludes, “So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore.”

Being faithful

Our major concern is not to try to identify the nature of future rewards themselves. While our curiosity might like to know or even speculate what might be involved, the fact is that passages about eternal rewards for faithful Christian living and serving do not identify those rewards.

The serious truth for all Christians is that present actions have eternal consequences. We are living unto eternity each day of our Christian lives. In light of one day facing the Lord, the righteous Judge, we do well to do as 2 Corinthians 5:9 admonishes: “We make it our aim ... to be well pleasing to Him.”

Jesus used the parable of the talents to underscore the value of being faithful to our heavenly Master according to our varied abilities and opportunities. He said that a faithful believer will hear these special words: “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21, 23). †

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.



Across ALABAMA'S Associations

COLUMBIA

▶ **Mount Enon Church, Dothan**, recently celebrated its 128th anniversary. Former pastor Don Moore spoke and former District Attorney Tom Sorrells led the church in worship and gave a special presentation. The choir and several church members performed special music. The two-hour worship service was followed by lunch. Jerry Hood is pastor.

CONECUH

▶ **Bower Memorial Church, Evergreen**, will hold a July Jubilee with five sessions July 30–31. On July 30, Edward Robinson, pastor of Oak Grove Church, Repton, will lead session one at 10:30 a.m.–noon; Nicholas Gandy, pastor of London Church, Castleberry, will lead session two at 1:30–3 p.m.; and James Brown, pastor of Castleberry Church will lead session three at 6:30–8 p.m. for youth night. On July 31, Grady Milstead, retired International Mission Board missionary to Argentina, will lead sessions four and five at 11 a.m.–noon and 6:30–7:30 p.m. Frank Jones will lead special music for all five sessions. Jim Griffin is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

▶ **Hayneville Church** will celebrate its 170th anniversary July 31. Sunday School will be at 8:45 a.m. and the worship service will be at 10 a.m. Lunch will follow the service. Buddy McGohon will speak. For more information call the church at 334-548-2620. Andy Hepburn is pastor.

SELMA

▶ **Shady Grove Church, Selma**, will celebrate homecoming July 24. Deliverance will provide special music at 10 a.m. and worship will begin at 11 a.m. Chris Bain will speak. A covered dish lunch will follow. Terry Johnson is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

▶ **Corinth Church, Elrod**, will hold revival services July 24–27. Sunday’s service will be at 6 p.m. and Monday–Wednesday services will be at 6:30 nightly. Larry Draper from Sound the Trumpet ministries in Rome, Georgia, will speak. Gene Dockery is pastor.

WINSTON

▶ **New Prospect Church, Haleyville**, will hold revival services July 24–27. Evangelist Junior Hill will speak at Sunday’s 11 a.m. service and Zac Reno will speak at 5 p.m. Monday–Wednesday services will be at 7 nightly. Fred Luter will speak Monday, Joel Carwile will speak Tuesday and Sammy Taylor will speak Wednesday. Bob Smith will perform special music at each service. For more information call the church office at 205-486-9695. Ron Horton is pastor. †

Correction

In the June 16 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*, the “Across Alabama’s Associations” column listed the incorrect pastor for Ladonia Baptist Church, Phenix City. Greg Hyché is pastor.

FBC Leroy Women on Missions honors missionaries



Photo courtesy of First Baptist Church, Leroy

The Women on Missions (WOM) at First Baptist Church, Leroy, hosted an appreciation luncheon for missionaries Lyle (second from right) and Claren Dease (right) on May 3. The Deases served seven years with the North American Mission Board in Pennsylvania and 23 years with the International Mission Board in Uruguay. Pastor James Watkins (left) and WOM facilitator Margaret Williams (second from left) presented them with a large thank you card signed by members of First, Leroy’s WOM.

Proposed Calif. bill marks big threat to Christian schools

The religious liberty of California's faith-based colleges hangs in the balance in the state Legislature.

The State Assembly is considering a bill that Christian and other religious universities and colleges say would eliminate their religious freedom and that of their students. Senate Bill 1146 affects any "post-secondary educational institution that receives, or benefits from, state financial assistance or enrolls students who receive state student financial aid" and would limit a religious exemption in nondiscrimination law to seminaries and other schools that train students for any religious vocation.

'Biggest threat'

The proposal marks "the biggest threat to Christian higher education in the history of the United States of America," said Al Mohler, president of the Council of Seminary Presidents.

Opponents of the measure contend its effect would be to bar Christian and other religious schools from requiring:

- ▶ A profession of faith by their students and faculty.
- ▶ Standards of sexual conduct.
- ▶ Policies on restrooms and locker rooms based on biology instead of gender identity.
- ▶ Integration of faith in curriculum.
- ▶ Chapel attendance.

The legislation would not explicitly prohibit such policies but leave institutions exposed to lawsuits for alleged discrimination.

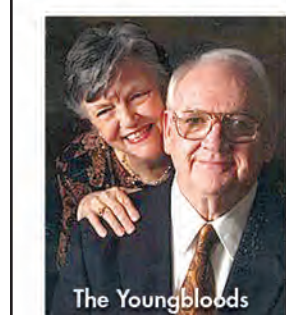
Jeff Iorg, president of Gateway Seminary in Ontario, California, confirmed that the seminary would fall under the bill's exemptions.

More broadly, religious freedom and Christian educational leaders are calling for the legislation to be amended or defeated.

Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, said the California Legislature is "poised to make it virtually impossible for a Christian college or university to be a genuinely Christian college or university in the nation's most populous state."

Ronald Ellis, president of California Baptist University in Riverside, said the bill in its current form "is overreaching and could create serious challenges for faith-based colleges and universities to fulfill their missions that contribute many positive benefits to students and society."

Sen. Ricardo Lara, the bill's Democratic sponsor, has said he is seeking to protect gay and transgender students from discrimination at private schools. The Senate approved the bill in a 26-13 vote May 26. The legislation needs to clear committees in the Assembly before receiving a vote in the full chamber, which could take place in August. (BP)



Retired Pastor Max Youngblood recommends

REVERSE MORTGAGE

Specialist Jimmy Dixon

Like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our great state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives.

He represents McGowin-King Mortgage, which is an Alabama-owned and operated company.

CONTACT JIMMY TODAY

for a FREE REVERSE MORTGAGE PROPOSAL OR BROCHURE



NMLS #207518

PHONE: 205-567-4800
EMAIL: jdixon@mcgowinking.com



Billy Herbert Hardman

Former Central Association DOM dies

Billy Herbert Hardman, former director of missions (DOM) for Central Baptist Association, died Jan. 24. He was 86.



HARDMAN

A native of Goodwater, Hardman was licensed to preach at Goodwater Baptist Church in 1959. He was later ordained at a church in Birmingham in 1963. He earned his undergraduate degree from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham.

Hardman served as pastor of New Salem Baptist Church, Clanton; Shady Grove Baptist Church, Selma; Bethel Baptist Church, Flomaton; and First Baptist Church, Ozona, Florida. He served as DOM for Central Association for more than 22 years (1976-1998).

Hardman was preceded in death by his wife of 65 years, Joan, and son, Larry. He is survived by two children, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. (TAB)



TAB

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

Making a Difference



JULY 31 READ THE ALABAMA BAPTIST DAY

ORDER YOUR FREE PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS TODAY

Call 1-800-803-5201
www.thealabamabaptist.info/resources



(augmented reality)

Follow these instructions

- 1** Download the Aurasma app from your app store.
- 2** Choose the "ALBaptist" profile under channel and tap "Follow." You will only have to do this one time. (Any ALBaptist options will allow you to follow *The Alabama Baptist*.)
- 3** Tap the [] icon at the bottom of the screen.
- 4** You will see pulsating dots, which indicate the app is searching for a target. Once it finds a target the dots will turn to a bull's-eye. The bull's-eye will remain until the augmented reality image loads.
- 5** Hold your device over a page or image in *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) marked as augmented reality and watch the paper come to life.
- 6** If the image is slow to load at any point, then it may be your data speed or Wi-Fi strength. Change locations and try again.
- 7** Each week when TAB arrives, open the app and hold your device over the augmented reality articles.

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

By Joanne Sloan

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



Thomas Helwys, founder of Baptist denomination, stood for religious liberty

Thomas Helwys (1575–1616), an English dissenter, founded the Baptist denomination. He was a courageous advocate of religious liberty at a time when it was dangerous to hold the view. This year is the 400th anniversary of his death.

The son of Edmund and Margaret Helwys, he was raised at Broxtowe Hall, a Nottinghamshire estate in England.

After studying law Thomas Helwys married Joan Ashmore in 1595 at St. Martin's Church, Bilborough, England. Over the next 12 years they had seven children. Their home at Broxtowe Hall became a haven for Puritans, one of the many groups of dissenters within the Church of England.

After meeting John Smyth, the couple became members of Smyth's separatist

congregation that met secretly at Gainsborough Old Hall in Lincolnshire. Another congregation met at Scrooby Manor. In 1607 the High Court of Ecclesiastical Commission clamped down on the Gainsborough and Scrooby dissenters.

Thomas Helwys, Smyth and 40 others from the two congregations fled to Amsterdam for their safety. Joan Helwys and family stayed in England. Thomas Helwys thought they would be safe but his wife was arrested and imprisoned for a few months.

In the Dutch Republic a distinctive Baptist faith first emerged among the dissenters. Smyth became convinced that baptism should be for Christian believers only and not for infants. Thomas Helwys and the other believers agreed. They baptized each other although some historians say Smyth baptized himself and the others. They were the first

English Anabaptists. Prior to that, dissenters in Zurich, Switzerland, who believed in believers' baptism had baptized each other in 1525. The name Anabaptist, meaning "re-baptizer," was first given to them.

Disagreement over beliefs

When Smyth embraced Mennonite doctrines Thomas Helwys didn't follow him because he disagreed with Mennonite beliefs such as not taking oaths.

Assuming leadership of the Anabaptists, Thomas Helwys and a dozen others formulated the earliest Baptist confessions of faith. In 1611 this confession became "A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam in Holland."

In 1611, Thomas Helwys led his followers back to England. He set up the first General Baptist church in Spitalfields in east Lon-

don. By 1650 at least 47 General Baptist churches were located in London.

The General Baptists believed Jesus died for all people, not for just the elect as Calvinists believed, and in baptism of adult believers, religious liberty and other doctrines still associated with Baptists.

In 1612, Thomas Helwys wrote the influential book "A Short Declaration on the Mystery of Iniquity." Writing an appeal to King James I he argued for religious liberty for all people. James I ordered Thomas Helwys to Newgate Prison. After four years, he died there in 1616 at 40 years old.

Baptists in America have a direct link to Thomas Helwys, who influenced John Murton (1585–1626), and through him Roger Williams (1603–1683), who started the first Baptist church in Rhode Island. ✠



"Our church decided to purchase a sign from Reliable Signs, and we have been very pleased. They were very patient and not pushy at all. They actually did all they could to get us every rebate and discount possible. The sign is a major tool for us in our community and I tell people all the time 'it's a staff member who never stops spreading the Gospel for our Lord.'"

— Bro. Justin Salter
Smithville Baptist Church



www.reliablesigns.com
1.800.729.6844 • 205.664.0955

Brantley's Mount Zion youth group ministers in New Orleans homeless shelters, food bank

They went to be a blessing to the residents of New Orleans, but they wound up being blessed by those they were serving, said Shelley Davis, youth director for Mount Zion Baptist Church, Brantley.

The Mount Zion Baptist youth group participated in its 11th missions trip June 8–12, this time serving in New Orleans.

While there, the group of about 60 people served in two homeless shelters and at Ozanam Inn

and New Orleans Missions. They prepared and served food; made sack lunches; hosted a block party and backyard Bible club; and distributed encouraging notes, hygiene bags and Bibles.

In one morning the group passed out nearly 200 hygiene bags, more than 200 Bibles and more than 200 sack lunches.

As the group distributed sack lunches they prayed with the men and women they encountered.

They also bagged and boxed

thousands of breakfasts and lunches at Second Harvest Food Bank of Greater New Orleans and Acadiana.

"It was so humbling," Davis said of the experience. "The people we encountered lost all of their possessions (during Hurricane Katrina in 2005) yet most still choose to praise the Lord anyway. They realized it is not the possessions they so desperately need; it is Jesus Christ." (Maggie Walsh)



The youth group of Mount Zion Baptist Church, Brantley, participates in its 11th missions trip June 8–12, this time to New Orleans to serve at homeless shelters and minister to those in the community.

Photo courtesy of Shelley Davis

McDonald's moves to protect families from Internet porn

Nonprofit Enough Is Enough (EIE) recently won a victory of Internet pornography and child pornography when McDonald's "responded rapidly and positively" to the organization's "National Porn Free Wi-Fi Campaign" launched in 2014.

United States McDonald's recently implemented a filtered Wi-Fi policy for its corporate-owned restaurants (approximately 14,000 nationwide) and made the service available to its franchisees.

"Parents can have peace of mind that, when they or their children go to McDonald's, they will have a safer and more friendly Wi-Fi experience, filtered from pornography, from child porn and from potential sexual exploitation and predation," EIE President Donna

Rice Hughes said on the organization's website, enough.org.

McDonald's joins Subway, Panera Bread and Chick-fil-A as chains that block customers from using free Wi-Fi to view porn.

EIE's campaign includes ending free Wi-Fi access to porn in public places like airplanes, malls, stadiums and hotel lobbies.

"Internet safety is now the fourth top-ranked health issue for U.S. children with ... research confirming Internet pornography as a public health crisis. There are many studies on the deleterious effects of Internet pornography on the developing brains of children and teens and the fueling role of porn on child sexual exploitation. Parents need to know which family restaurants are safe from online threats," Hughes said. (TAB)

Macular Degeneration?



Consider a
Low Vision Evaluation

• Diabetic Retinopathy • Glaucoma
• Stargardt's Disease • Stroke

Call Today!
George Eischens, O.D.

(844) 825-2020

www.LowVisionAlabama.com



Find us on
Facebook

The Alabama Baptist
newspaper.

Want to know GOD?

By Pastor Mike Griffin
Grant's Creek Baptist Church, Fosters

There is no greater blessing for a child than to grow up in a solid Christian home and in a loving, Bible-believing, gospel-preaching church. And there is nothing more glorious than a precious, tenderhearted child humbly and simply trusting Christ and becoming a child of God. The vast majority of Christians are saved from ages 4 to 14. And yet, many who make professions of faith in this group come to realize later that their conversion was not real. How can we know for sure that Christ is ours and we are heaven bound?

The first truth that anyone must know is that they are presently condemned to eternal death. God says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), and, "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). We must agree with God — we've rebelled against Him and His holy laws and we deserve eternal death. But then we gladly agree with the Bible's good news. God the Father and God the Son both loved us so much that the Father sent the Son to pay the penalty of death and hell that we deserved. We believe that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). And we make it personal. "I believe that Jesus died for me." Believing this glorious truth, then we turn from our sins (repent) and commit our lives to Jesus through faith to save us from eternal punishment and to be the ruler of our lives until the day we die.

The cry of our sinful, longing heart is: "Jesus, have mercy and be my Savior, right now, tomorrow and forever. I will follow You until I die." This is what Paul meant when he told the Philippian jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31). Trembling soul, cry out today. Jesus will never turn you away (John 6:37). ✠

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 MacedoniaBaptist-MaplesvilleAL@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.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC

Westwood Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama, is eagerly seeking a part-time minister of music. Contact Pastor Steve Potts (phone: 205-514-5077, email: steve.potts@wbclive.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 Cross-

ing Rd., Jasper, AL 35503.

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.

BIVOCATIONAL FINANCIAL SECRETARY

FBC Moody is taking resumé for the position of bivocational financial secretary. Please send resumé to: Max Bryant, 902 Church Street, Moody, AL 35004. Resumé will not be accepted after Aug. 19.

BUSINESS

STEEPLES, ETC.

No job too big or too small. Call for free on-site consultation. Toll-free 1-888-699-9679 or Alabama local 205-699-9679. Ask for Terry Barnes, owner. Visit gallery at www.SteeplesEtc.com.

TIME TO REPLACE THAT OLD CHURCH SIGN?

Reliable Sign Services, a Christian-operated, full-service sign company for two decades, is ready to assist you as you expand your church sign ministry. From electronic message boards to tra-

ditional signs, Reliable will fabricate and install statewide or ship anywhere. www.reliablesigns.com. 1-800-729-6844, 205-664-0955.

CHURCH CONSTRUCTION SERVICE

Lewis Webb Builders, Inc., active in church construction service for over 30 years. Remodel, rehab, repair. Call 334-285-9302.

GREAT PRICES

Stair-lifts, walk-in tubs, lift-chairs and lightweight take-apart scooters. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658.

TRAVEL/VACATION

LOG CABIN

Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to www.paradisevista.net to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE CONDOS

Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, Alabama. Rent direct from family owners. Lowest prices on the beach for over 25 years. Call 205-752-1231, 205-556-0368, 251-752-2366 or www.gulf-shorescondos.com.

FOR SALE

BABY GRAND PIANO

Four-foot Howard by Baldwin. Ivory keys, solid mahogany cabinet, excellent condition. \$2,500. Contact Matt Wilson, 205-913-3739, email: JMattWilsonEsq@att.net.

A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

Matthew 27:56, 61; Luke 8:2-3; John 20:11-18

The Transformation of Mary Magdalene

Within the pages of the four Gospels, Mary Magdalene is the most frequently mentioned woman other than Mary the mother of Jesus. Mary Magdalene's presence is mentioned at Jesus' crucifixion, burial and resurrection. Only the Gospel of Luke provides us with a glimpse of Mary's life prior to encountering Christ and the manner in which Jesus transformed her. A study of the Scriptures detailing this woman proves her prominence among Jesus' followers and offers a rather surprising biography of one who most first century Palestinian writers would have dismissed.

Though our current culture proudly celebrates gender equality, there are still situations in which men or women are marginalized upon the basis of discrimination. However, in the context of first century Palestine, women were grossly discriminated against by a male dominated culture. At best women were regarded as second-class citizens. The religious teachings of Judaism at that time did little to alleviate this attitude. Rabbinical rulings from that era reveal that women were not considered as equals to their male counterparts and were therefore not highly valued in the eyes of God.

However, as with every other realm of teaching on theology and life, Jesus radically upended people's understanding. Without upsetting the patriarchal culture in which they lived, Jesus' attitude and actions toward women assured their value and place in the kingdom of God. In fact it has been rightly stated that Jesus and the faith which He authored has done more for the equality of genders and all peoples than any other leader, movement or book in history. We certainly read of a primary example of this in the Bible's portrayal of Mary Magdalene. Her story with Jesus provides us with timeless truths regarding our intrinsic value to God and the eternal impact that Jesus makes upon every person who believes in Him.

No life is unsalvageable.

Luke provides important background information regarding Mary's life prior to encountering Jesus. The Gospels always tag her with the name "Magdalene" which denotes her as being from the town of Magdala. We discover from Luke 8:2 that Mary Magdalene had been possessed by seven demons. Jesus had cast these de-

By Jason Duckett

Jason Duckett, pastor of Moundville Baptist Church, received his education from the University of Alabama and New Orleans Seminary. He serves as director of Sunday School Ministry and vice moderator for Hale Baptist Association. He and his wife, Genée, have two children.



mons out of her so that she was completely healed. Luke offers little commentary on this miraculous event in Mary's life so we can only presume the mess of her life upon encountering Christ. She could have been physically tormented with some type of severe illness. Undoubtedly, the possession of seven demons would negatively impact every relationship in her life and probably ostracize her from family, friends and any hope for redemption.

What types of moral compromises did Mary make in order to invite such a total possession of evil? Whatever the particulars, Mary was certainly one of those individuals we have all come across who we believe to be beyond any hope. She was undoubtedly shunned by the religious elite. Was anyone praying for Mary's life to be saved? Did anyone actually believe that she could be redeemed? Amazingly we discover that Jesus was not intimidated by her reputation or overwhelmed by her sin. In Jesus' estimation, Mary was not only capable of being saved but also worth the effort. She stands as a shining reminder to us all that no one is beyond the reach of Christ.

No gift is unusable.

In Luke 8:3 the reader is informed of another encouraging fact about Mary's life. In this passage Luke is describing the ministry of Jesus, detailing various miracles and lessons that He taught the people. Mary is listed among other women who were disciples of Jesus. While the apostles (all of whom were men) hold a prominent place in the Gospels, Luke tells us that several women also were a part of Jesus' "ministry team." In fact these women were charged with the important task of funding Jesus' ministry. It was not

uncommon for men or women to provide resources for the teaching ministry of a rabbi in that culture. However, it would be considered scandalous for women to be considered disciples and given equal access to Jesus' teaching ministry.

These female disciples provided resources for the traveling needs of the entire group. While Jesus could miraculously feed the multitudes by blessing a few pieces of fish and bread, this was not the normal process for meeting the needs of His closest followers. Instead, He used the monetary offerings of second-class citizens. Sharing the hope of Jesus' salvation was made possible by the faithful giving of a few. Not much has changed in 2,000 years.

No witness is immaterial.

In John 20:11-18 the apostle records an incredible encounter between Jesus and Mary following His crucifixion. Mary and some other women had gone to the tomb in order to complete the normal burial customs for the body of Jesus. Upon their shocking discovery that His body was not in the tomb, Mary rushed to inform the disciples of the news. Undoubtedly bewildered by the discovery, Mary returned to the tomb in order to process the events. It is on this second visit that Mary becomes the first disciple to encounter the risen Lord.

In the powerfully reassuring dialogue, Jesus commissions Mary to declare to the other disciples that He is risen. The graciousness of this appointment is magnified when we consider that a female's testimony in that culture would be considered questionable. However, Jesus was no respecter of cultural bias when mercifully employing the use of faithful followers. In order to effectively use any person for His glory, Jesus looks for availability rather than ability.

The overarching theme of Mary Magdalene's life was undivided loyalty to Jesus Christ. When Jesus found Mary, her life was hopelessly wrecked by sin. But when He forgave and saved her, she was profoundly transformed. Even in today's church culture this kind of devotion to Jesus is considered rare. However, the Gospels do not present Mary's Christianity as abnormal. Perhaps Mary's radical love for Jesus should cause us to consider our standard for "normal" Christianity. †

Adger's Dogwood Grove Baptist rebuilds after fire

By Hannah Muñoz
Intern, The Alabama Baptist

Members of Dogwood Grove Baptist Church, Adger, have been looking forward to worshipping in a new building after an accidental fire destroyed the Mud Creek Baptist Association church in November 2013. And Carpenters for Christ of Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery, is helping the congregation reach that goal.

Dogwood Grove Baptist Pastor Darrell Cook said the church is being built quickly while using money wisely and making sure that it is "extremely functional." The new structure will be on the same land as the previous one, which is very important, Cook added. "We are the only church in the community," he said, noting that outreach is a big part of the church's mission.

In use by fall

Construction began June 1, but there is not a set completion date. The new building is scheduled to be in use by the fall. It will include a central hall, worship center, fellowship area and several Sunday School rooms. Church members are looking forward to celebrating with a special service.

While the physical building was burned, the church body has "remained steady," Cook said. They have a "good sense of unity and are cooperative and energetic," he said, quoting Nehemiah 2:18b: "They replied, 'Let us arise and build.' So they began this good work."

Members are helping build as well as provide food for the other volunteers, which include not only Eastmont's Carpenters for Christ, but also members of several Mud Creek Association churches.

Mobile chapel

The church also has received help from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM). SBOM provided a mobile chapel during the years the church went without a building and Mel Johnson, outgoing disaster relief strategist for SBOM, has been "a wonderful coordinator between the church and the volunteers," Cook said.

Tucker Messamore, who joined the church staff as youth minister in 2015, has been especially helpful, even coming during the time of great need at the church, Cook added. Messamore is in his third year at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, where Cook is the pastor in residence.

"I believe that in our time of waiting and building we are making the next chapter of Dogwood Grove Baptist Church," Cook said. †

VOICE YOUR OPINION

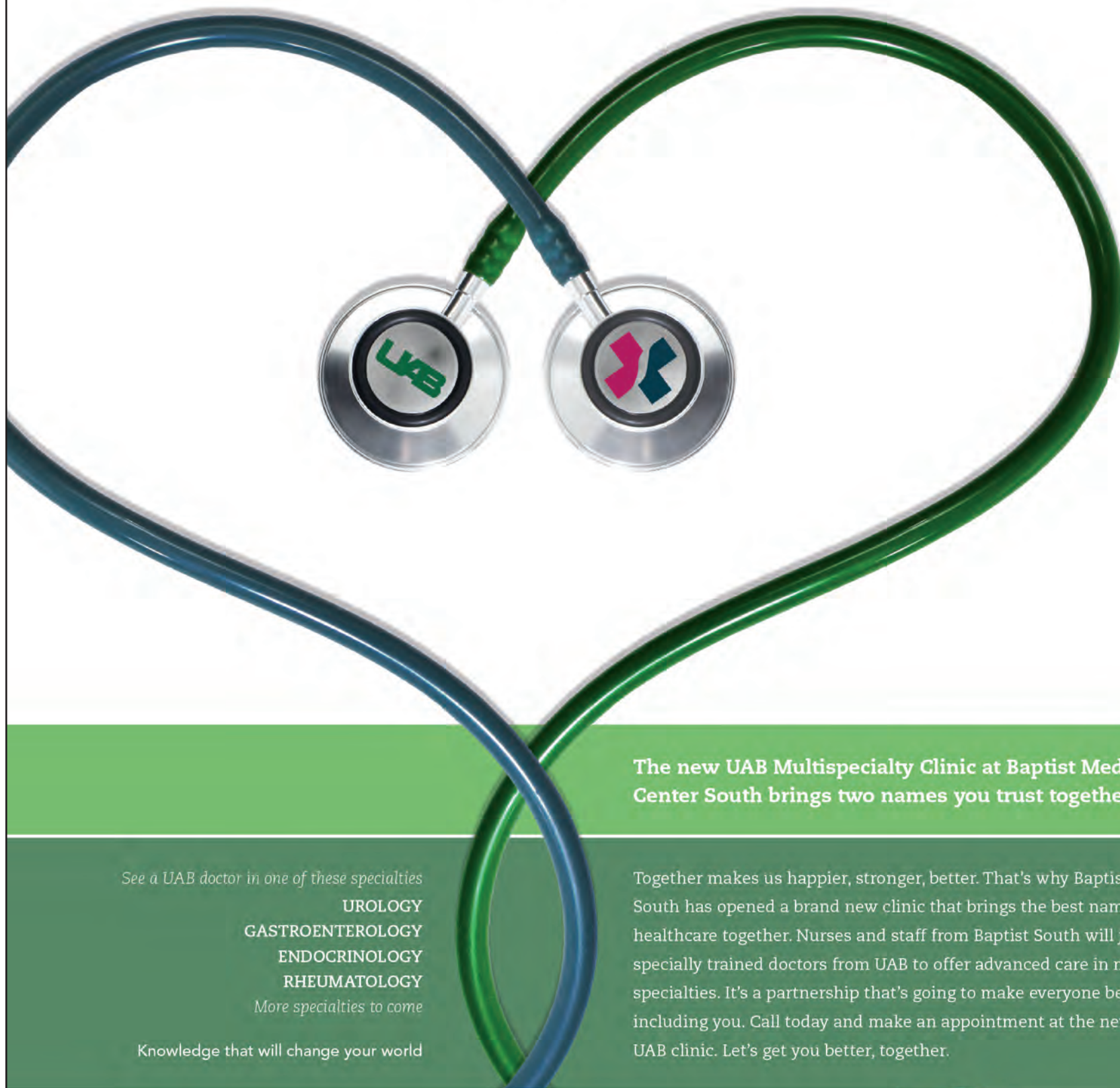
SPEAK UP on issues in the Baptist world by writing a letter to the editor of *The Alabama Baptist*.

- Include your name and address
- Focus on issues, not people
- Be as concise as possible

"And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?" 1 Cor. 14:8

Together makes us better.

And you, too.



The new UAB Multispecialty Clinic at Baptist Medical Center South brings two names you trust together.

See a UAB doctor in one of these specialties

- UROLOGY
- GASTROENTEROLOGY
- ENDOCRINOLOGY
- RHEUMATOLOGY

More specialties to come

Knowledge that will change your world

Together makes us happier, stronger, better. That's why Baptist South has opened a brand new clinic that brings the best names in healthcare together. Nurses and staff from Baptist South will join specially trained doctors from UAB to offer advanced care in many specialties. It's a partnership that's going to make everyone better, including you. Call today and make an appointment at the new UAB clinic. Let's get you better, together.

UAB MEDICINE
MULTISPECIALTY CLINIC
 BAPTIST MEDICAL CENTER SOUTH

334.613.7070
UABmedicine-Baptist.com

2119 East South Blvd, east of the
Emergency entrance at Baptist South



UNTAMED MOUNTAIN
HOME OF
TIGERS FOR TOMORROW
A Wild Animal Preserve and Environmental Center

Free admission for one child with paying adult

708 County Road 345
 Attalla, AL 35954
 (256)524-4150

TIGERSFORTOMORROW.ORG
 Call for seasonal hours

CAMPUS News

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

▶ **Samford University Nursing School Receives \$2 Million Grant:** Samford University's Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing has received more than \$2 million to help make graduate nursing education more affordable for currently practicing or teaching nurses who are committed to careers in nursing education.

Samford's \$2,017,901 Nurse Faculty Loan Program grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration is the largest in the U.S. and 1 of only 4 nationally that exceeds \$1 million. This is Samford's 14th year to receive funding for the program.

The 2016-17 grant is expected to help more than 140 students from 20 states in Samford's master's and doctoral nursing education programs.

▶ **Samford University Student Named 1 of 10 in US for Lilly Honor:** Samford University senior classics major and University Fellows honors student Sam Hahn, of Siloam Springs, Arkansas, is 1 of 10 students in the nation accepted to the ninth cohort of the Lilly Graduate Fellows Program. He is the second Samford classics and University Fellows alumnus selected for the honor.

The fellowship, part of the Lilly Fellows Program (LFP) in Humanities, supports three years of graduate education for exceptionally well-qualified

young graduates of LFP Network Schools who seek to become teacher-scholars at church-related colleges and universities in the United States. Hahn was a Rhodes Scholar finalist in 2016.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

▶ **University of Mobile Names New Vice President for Academic Affairs:** The University of Mobile has named Alabama native and former Samford University administrator Christopher McCaghren as vice president of academic affairs.



MCCAGHREN

Previously, McCaghren was dean of the College of Education at Anderson University in South Carolina. Prior to that, McCaghren was assistant to the president for external programs and division head for the division of professional and continuing studies at Samford.

McCaghren began his new position July 18. He and his wife, Lauren, have one daughter.

▶ **University of Mobile Brass and Percussion Group Records 2nd Album:** Ram-Corps, a 30-member high impact visual brass and percussion ensemble from the University of Mobile, recorded its second album, "The Movement," at Starstruck Studios in Nashville. The

album will be released in August.

The group performed more than 120 times during the 2015-2016 academic school year, giving concerts across Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Arkansas, South Carolina and North Carolina.

For more information, visit www.umobile.edu or email ram-corps@umobile.edu.

JUDSON COLLEGE

▶ **Judson College Student to Participate in Summer Archaeology Program in Israel:** Judson College junior Marianna Nichols is attending the Harvard University Summer Program in Ashkelon, Israel, this summer.

The six-week program offers the opportunity for participating students to work alongside volunteers and a professional archaeological staff to excavate Ashkelon, an important ancient seaport on the Mediterranean coast.

▶ **Congresswoman Delivers Commencement Address at Judson College:** Congresswoman Martha D. Roby was Judson College's commencement speaker at its June 25 ceremony in Marion. Roby is currently serving Alabama's Second Congressional District for a third term.

In 2011, Roby and Terri Sewell became the first two women to be elected to Congress from Alabama. Roby currently serves on the House Committee on Appropriations. She was awarded an honorary doctor of laws degree during the ceremony. ✠

THE RIVER
 101.5 • 97.5
 Safe for YOUR Family

YOUR HOME FOR 24/7 CHRISTIAN MUSIC
 in the Alabama River Region: Montgomery, Prattville, Wetumpka, Millbrook and Troy.

www.wrvfmtheriver.com

You do a lot of planning in your lifetime.
 Plan a first date. Plan a wedding. Plan meals. Plan careers. Plan a home purchase.
 Plan for children. Plan for children's education. Plan for retirement. Plan for grandchildren.

At The Baptist Foundation of Alabama, we often ask Alabama Baptists to consider planning what their legacy will be. After all, each of us is crafting a legacy daily. The way we live our lives and the choices that we make will impact our families, maybe even for generations to come. Create a legacy through estate planning that will honor your family and your faith.

I am interested in receiving a *FREE personalized Christian estate plan!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Any information given is private and confidential. *The estate planning service is free. However, drafting of estate documents such as a Last Will and Testament, will incur a reduced fee as charged by one of our network attorneys.

We can be reached at (334) 394-2000. Visit our website at www.tbfa.org.

COMPLETE, CLIP AND MAIL TO:
 The Baptist Foundation of Alabama | P.O. Box 241227 | Montgomery, AL 36124



the BAPTIST FOUNDATION
 OF ALABAMA



SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 24

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

DELIVERED

1 Samuel 17:32-37, 42-50

Confidence in God (32-37)

As a Philistine, Goliath was an adversary of Israel. Towering over the Israelites, he struck fear into their hearts (v. 11). For 40 days he challenged any of the Israelites to fight him: "Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us" (vv. 8-9).

No one came forward. No one trusted in the God who gives victory over His enemies.

David was the lone exception. He was fed up. He must have thought: "Why are all these men quivering before Goliath?" In his own words: "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (v. 26). So David volunteers to fight the Philistine.

But how could a small shepherd boy defeat the intimidating Goliath? After all, Goliath was a skilled warrior whose size alone struck terror into men's hearts. When questioned about his credentials to fight Goliath, David points to when he killed a bear and a lion. David knows that the same God who gave him victory then would now grant him victory over Goliath.

False Confidence in Himself (42-44)

Goliath scorns David, seeing him as an unworthy opponent. Goliath thought he would easily handle David, promising to give his dead corpse to the birds and animals.

From a human perspective, it appears that Goliath is right to believe that he will crush David. He is bigger, stronger and more experienced than David. In other words, Goliath trusts in himself to achieve

victory. David thinks otherwise. David trusts that, regardless of his size or youth, God is the One who grants victory. If God should be so pleased, David will crush the giant, releasing the Israelites from the terror of death.

God's Victory (45-50)

At the battle David declares his confidence in God, proclaiming that God will give him victory. After this all will know the power of Israel's God. He is the only one who has the power to save; He is the only one who grants victory over enemies.

In the larger context of the Bible, David and Goliath point to a greater story, the story of the gospel. Let me explain: As Goliath seemed to have power over the Israelites, holding them in fear of death, so too did Satan. As David overcame the one who seemed invincible, so too did Jesus.

The author of Hebrews states that through death Jesus destroyed the one who had the power over death, the devil: "Freeing those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery" (Heb. 2:14-15). Jesus, the new David, defeated Satan and released His people from fearful captivity.

The story of David and Goliath is more than a story of victory over a giant and certainly more than an encouraging exhortation on how to overcome difficulties — it is a picture of the good news. On the cross Jesus defeated Satan, overcoming the enemy we could never defeat. Although we were weak, Christ — God in the flesh — defeated our greatest enemy (Rom. 5:6).

If you trust in what Jesus has done on your behalf, there is no longer a reason to fear death; there is no longer a reason to fear the enemy. Jesus has crushed Satan, the ancient serpent himself, delivering us from his grip (Gen. 3:15). This is indeed good news. †

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

MAKE AGREEMENTS CAUTIOUSLY Proverbs 22:7; 6:1-5

The average household in the United States is \$130,922 in debt — \$15,762 of it on credit cards. Obtaining mortgages, even after the collapse of the banks in 2008 is becoming easier, and credit card offers appear in our email boxes and "snail mail" on a weekly basis.

Statistics show that it costs almost a quarter of a million dollars to raise a child from birth to age 18, not including the cost of college. It is no wonder that we turn to credit of one form or another to survive.

Debt can enslave us. (22:7)

Yet as Scripture reminds us, "the rich rule over the poor and the borrower is the slave of the lender." This doesn't mean that we embrace poverty out of laziness or romanticism, but realistically realize that people who offer financial help to extend our credit are not working in our best interest. We become slaves to the lender. They begin to tell us how to live and they draw us into more and more debt along the way.

The tragedy is that those who earn less are more at risk. The low income household owes \$7,662 in credit card debt, or 38 percent of its annual income. The high income household has a card balance of \$21,296, or 14 percent of its income. When you are tempted to buy something that you cannot afford, ask yourself: "Is it worth being enslaved by debt over a certain number of years?"

Financial obligations beyond your ability to manage are unwise. (6:1-2)

Proverbs suggests that prudence is one of the chief characteristics of godly living. Being prudent doesn't mean that we aren't generous toward the needs of others, but we don't take risks and we don't gamble. The chapter seems to be speaking about

making commitments that we cannot possibly keep.

If we find that we have taken actions which lead us into any form of debt we cannot realistically repay, then Scripture urges us to take immediate steps to sort things out. "Go, hurry and plead with your neighbor. Give your eyes no sleep" (vv. 3-4).

Work to get out of a binding financial entanglement. (6:3-5)

One of the verbs that we find in this verse is speaking about humility and it is a vigorous word. It speaks about being willing to "make yourself small" and make every effort to take practical steps to rid yourself of debt.

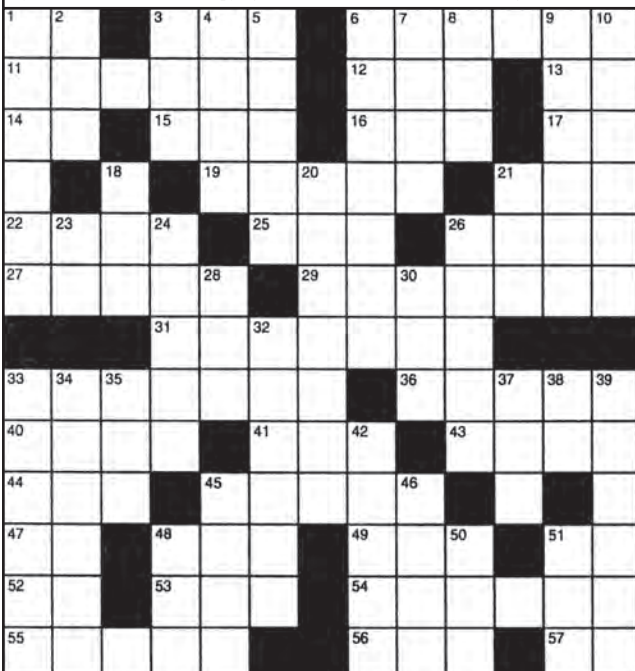
In Romans 8, Paul tells us to "owe no one anything, except the debt of love." This was excellent advice in Paul's day and it is still just as good today. Staying out of debt is hard if you are already in debt. It seems that the deeper you go the harder it is to dig out of it, so try to owe nothing with the realization that we all have to purchase homes and vehicles. The only thing Paul sees that we should owe anyone is our love, and by loving one another we are fulfilling the law.

If you start a project financially and cannot complete it, you've wasted a lot of resources, time and energy, possibly for nothing. We would all have happier lives and be freer of debt if we could learn to live with less. However, we live in freedom. We can choose to give it, save it, spend it or even spend more than we have. †



Christian Crossword

By Janet W. Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- Yes. (Spanish)
- Hit sharply.
- The promise made of none _____. (Rom. 4:14)
- I ____ thee by God, that thou torment me not. (Mark 5:7)
- Chinese pagoda.
- Howl, O Heshbon, for ____ is spoiled. (Jer. 49:3)
- French article.
- With. (German)
- 60 minutes. (pl.; abbr.)
- Sierra Leone. (abbr.)
- The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a _____. (Matt. 1:20)
- Ga. capital. (abbr.)
- Frog's kin.
- No room for them in the _____. (Luke 2:7)
- Heap.
- A woman that hath a familiar spirit at _____. (1 Sam. 28:7)
- Who made me a judge or a ____ over you? (Luke 12:14)
- In the ____ (pl.) of the book it is written of me. (Heb. 10:7)
- Dip thy morsel in the _____. (Ruth 2:14)
- The name of the Lord is a

- strong _____. (Prov. 18:10)
- ____, which was the son of Seth. (Luke 3:38)
- The 13th letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
- If ye shall ask any thing in my _____, I will do it. (John 14:14)
- Serving. (abbr.)
- So Hiram gave Solomon ____ trees. (1 Kings 5:10)
- Continent. (abbr.)
- Light brown.
- God, which hath not turned away my prayer, ____ his mercy from me. (Ps. 66:20)
- Symbol for gold.
- The children of Gad called the altar _____. (Josh. 22:34)
- How terrible ____ thou in thy works! (Ps. 66:3)
- Watching thereunto with all ____ supplication for all _____. (Eph. 6:18)
- So he that getteth riches ... shall ____ them. (Jer. 17:11)
- ____ (Kookie) Byrnes.
- Shoe width.

Down

- All the saints ____ you. (2 Cor. 13:13)
- Chemical suffix.
- Alcoholic drink.

- Dry.
- Lab culture dish.
- The month ____, which is the seventh month. (1 Kings 8:2)
- They ... went their ways, one to his ____, another to his merchandise. (Matt. 22:5)
- Foreign Agricultural Service. (abbr.)
- He ... entered into the ____, and told Paul. (Acts 23:16)
- Cain was a ____ of the ground. (Gen. 4:2)
- He feigned himself ____ in their hands. (1 Sam. 21:13)
- Who for the joy that was set before him ____ the cross. (Heb. 12:2)
- ____ and abet.
- Poti-pherah priest of _____. (Gen. 41:45)
- The fourth part of a cab of ____ dung. (2 Kings 6:25)
- Receipt of goods. (abbr.)
- Animal doctor.
- That ye shall weep and _____. (John 16:20)
- Giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker _____. (1 Pet. 3:7)
- Whom thou wouldest not let Israel ____.

- (2 Chron. 20:10)
- Egg drink.
- And my wrath shall ____ hot. (Ex. 22:24)
- Printer's measure.
- Because they ____ to do judgment. (Prov. 21:7)
- Minister's residence.
- Lord dost thou not ____? (Luke 10:40)
- Whither have ye made a ____ to day? (1 Sam. 27:10)
- The 23rd letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
- I will ____ evil beasts out of the land. (Lev. 26:6).
- Did eat.



'I was born this way' countered by Midwestern Seminary professor

Alan Branch has a friend whose brother explained his decision to embrace a homosexual lifestyle by stating, "I have a male body, but I have a female brain. That's why I'm attracted to men."

Branch, professor of Christian ethics at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (MBTS) in Kansas City, Missouri, classifies that pronouncement as a version of the increasingly common argument that homosexual acts are morally legitimate because homosexuality is "hard-wired into who [some people] are from birth."

The need to equip Christians for countering that spurious notion is why Branch wrote his latest book, "Born This Way? Homosexuality, Science and the Scriptures," basing the title on a Lady Gaga song.

The book, which has drawn an endorsement from MBTS President Jason Allen, seeks to help pastors and churches understand contemporary scientific research on homosexuality from a Christian worldview perspective while standing firm on the biblical teaching that homosexual behavior is a sin.

'Oversimplified'

"The prevalent claim 'I was born this way' is over-simplified and does not fit the evidence to date," Branch said.

"Biological and genetic factors have a contributing factor toward the development of a homosexual identity, but they are not completely determinative," he noted. "Homosexuality is not a trait like hair, skin or eye color. Establishing this basic fact will help in the articulation of a clear Christian ethical stance regarding the morality of homosexual behavior."

An important tool for countering the argument that homosexuality is innate and therefore morally acceptable is the concept of "brain plasticity," Branch writes, the notion that

brain structures and functions change in response to choices and activities.

Like pornography use has been demonstrated to alter a male's response to women, repeatedly acting on homosexual desires may ingrain such desires in a person's brain, developing new neural pathways and making them feel "natural," he argues.

Contributing factors

Biological and genetic factors contribute to same-sex attraction, Branch writes, but do not predetermine how a person will respond to such attraction.

Rather than intimidating Christians, scientific research should help them develop a compassionate, pastoral response to those with same-sex attraction, Branch writes, noting the difficulty in most cases of completely eradicating homosexual temptation.

"The majority of research clearly indicates an attempt to change sexual orientation is a daunting task and a rare occurrence," he writes.

Yet those realities do not trump Scripture's insistence, Branch argues, that "it is possible for homosexual behavior to be something in which a person once participated in the past, but no longer does so" by virtue of God's grace.

For some with same-sex attraction, following Christ will entail singleness and godly celibacy, he writes. For others it will entail heterosexual marriage and combatting occasional same-sex temptations while yet others will marry a person of the opposite gender and be freed altogether from same-sex temptations.

"Each of these options is consistent with Christian sexual ethics," he writes.

Through every aspect of Christians' response to homosexuality, Branch argues, "serious debate" must not be "short-circuited by the vacuous claim, 'I was born this way.'" (BP)



'Fatherless daughter'

Baptist writer finds deeper meaning in secular song

By Myriah Snyder
News writer, Western Recorder

The other morning on my commute, the song "Piece by Piece" by Kelly Clarkson played. It's a popular song that I hear on the radio multiple times a day.

The song begins by telling the story of a daughter whose father wouldn't love her, at least not when she had nothing to offer. She remembers her father walking away. She begged him to want her. He wouldn't. When she grew up and "made something" of herself, then he wanted to be in her life. But she realized his love had a price.

This was the umpteenth time I have heard it in the last few months, but this time it took me back to a couple months ago when I was driving to my apartment. I'd had a wearying extended weekend, and I was emotional. To add to my emotions, the van following me carried my stepmom, two half-siblings and my father. They had come into town for my little sister's archery tournament and wanted to see me. We were leaving my favorite pizza place and I was on my way to show them my apartment and, by extension, a snippet of my life.

On the short drive that evening, I prayed, "Please let 'Piece by Piece' come on." And it did. I don't believe in coincidence, so it made me more emotional. I soaked in the song and continued on with my evening, which turned out to be fabulous.

Like the song

This seems like a normal situation, having a nice dinner with my family and sharing conversation in my apartment. But the truth is, this is a new situation for me. Prior to a couple years ago, I could only remember one or two times I actually just "hung out" with my father's family. Things with him are in a better place now. But the song "Piece by Piece" hits home with me because I am like the girl that Clarkson describes in her song.

I am that fatherless daughter.

On another occasion I was with my sister, my cousin and my cousin's daughter. I played the song so they could hear it and my sister turned to my cousin and said, "This will be her song one day," referring to my cousin's daughter. So far, she is right. My 3-year-old cousin will grow up without a father, at least, her father. It's a sad truth, because I know the pain, anger and rejection she will feel each day of her life.

Honestly though, we are not isolated cases. This song gained popularity for multiple reasons.

Yes, Clarkson is an amazing vocalist. Yes, her tunes are catchy and her music in general is relatable. But I believe this song made the charts because today's culture is full of people like myself and my little cousin, fatherless daughters and sons. These are the ones who have known heartbreak from childhood because the first person to break their hearts was the one person who was supposed to protect it.

Thankfully, when Clarkson gets to the chorus, the story changes. It's now the story of her child's father and how he loves her. He is there for her. Piece by piece he mends Clarkson's broken heart and trust issues. He proves to be a loving father and a devoted husband. He restores her faith in what a father should be.

I can't speak for what Clarkson meant as she recorded this song, but I take away a much deeper meaning to an already intense song. I see an opening for a Heavenly Father to fill.

In my life as a fatherless daughter, I was blessed with an uncle who stepped in as a father figure and with a mom and sister and grandmother who

lavished unconditional love on me.

But the one who filled the void left within my heart by my father wasn't human. He was my Heavenly Father. The raw, overwhelming beauty of this Father is His perfect nature, wrapped in mercy and grace.

He calls me His child (1 John 3:1).

He loves me unconditionally (Rom. 5:8).

Before the world began, He chose me (Eph. 1:4). Based on His marvelous love only and nothing else, I don't have to earn His greatest gift to me, His grace (Eph. 2:8-9).

Even more, He sent his Holy Spirit to comfort and guide me (John 14:16; John 16:13).

But better yet, He's promised to never leave me or forsake me (Deut. 31:6).

These sure sound a lot better than either of the fathers that Clarkson mentioned in her song. Her husband is going to have multiple times that he lets his daughter and wife down, even if it's only in simple ways. Fathers are fallible, even the best ones.

So when I hear that song play, think of the hurt my father has unintentionally caused me and dream of the day I find the man I will marry who will become a daddy to

my children, I take heart.

This world and the people in it are flawed. I know this because I, too, am a sinner. But I also know that the love that saved my soul comes not from a mere man; it comes from the Heavenly Father, who loved me enough to send His Son as a ransom for me. (BP)



SNYDER

"The one who filled the void left within my heart by my father wasn't human. He was my Heavenly Father."



Photo courtesy of Judy McDonough

American missionary Kenneth Bae was leading a tour group in North Korea in 2012 when officials arrested him and sentenced him to 15 years of hard labor in a prison camp. He was released two years later as the longest-held American prisoner in North Korea.

God's faithfulness

Missionary tells story of North Korean imprisonment in new book

American missionary Kenneth Bae was leading a tour group in North Korea in 2012 when officials arrested him and sentenced him to 15 years of hard labor in a prison camp.

He had mistakenly packed an external hard drive with videos "exposing the reality in the North," and it was picked up at a security check, he said in an interview with Unification Media Group (UMG). His chief prosecutor told him he was "the most dangerous American criminal apprehended in the 60 years since the Korean War," according to the *New York Times*.

But Bae told UMG — a nonprofit group aimed at bridging the gap between North Korea and South Korea — that he knew the real reason for his imprisonment. The confiscated hard drive also carried photos of his missionary work in China and North Korea.

"They were able to determine that I was a missionary ... so I was accused of plotting to overthrow the government," he said.

North Korea is known to be the worst persecutor of Christians in the world.

But when Bae was released two years later as the longest-held American prisoner in North Korea, he left with the Bible he'd been allowed to have in prison.

Great comfort

And he still carries it today. That's the story he tells in his book "Not Forgotten" — the story of how his faith sustained him in prison.

For the first few days after the detention, Bae wasn't allowed to sleep and was made to stand in one part of the room all day or asked to kneel on the floor for several hours.

"But there was nothing that I would consider a brutal violation of human rights. I didn't go through anything like torture," he said.

It was still extremely difficult, he said. He was interrogated heavily during the first month. "I felt like an insect tangled in the spider web," Bae said. "Every time I moved it got messier, with no way out."

And even though he was given the Bible and allowed to privately read and pray, the labor camp life came with much abuse too.

"I worked from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at night, working on the field, carrying rock, shoveling coal," Bae said on CNN's "New Day."

He suffered from malnutrition and said he lost about 60 pounds. He was hospitalized for several

things during his imprisonment, including diabetes and an enlarged heart.

Verbal abuse was constant too, he told CNN, noting that one prosecutor told him repeatedly, "No one remembers you. You have been forgotten by people, your government. You're not going home anytime soon."

But his faith comforted him. He held out hope.

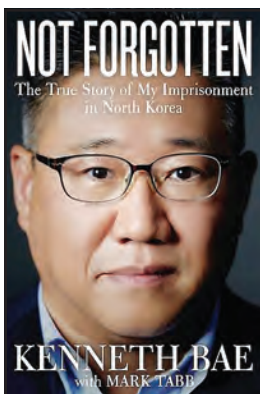
And he got about 450 letters from supporters during his time in prison. "That gave me a lot of strength and courage."

Two years after his imprisonment, Director of U.S. National Intelligence

James Clapper visited North Korea on a mission for the release of Bae and U.S. citizen Matthew Miller. He brought with him a letter from President Barack Obama, according to CNN. And shortly after, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ordered Bae's release.

"One thing I want people to take away from reading ['Not Forgotten'] is God's faithfulness," Bae said. "After I was released, I was reminded that God has not forgotten the people of North Korea."

Bae said he would like to support North Koreans who have fled to South Korea because of repression in their country. "So I'm working on ways to help them get through difficulties in life so they don't lose their courage." (BNG, TAB)



PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Putin increases restrictions on 'missionary activity'

MOSCOW, Russia — President Vladimir Putin has signed amendments imposing harsh restrictions on sharing beliefs. The restrictions include where and who may share and increased "extremism" punishments. Putin introduced the changes as alleged "anti-terrorism" moves. There are widespread Russian protests against the suddenly introduced changes.

Putin also has signed into law legislation on so-called "missionary activity," further restricting the public expression of freedom of religion and belief, both in the media and online. The amendment was signed July 6 and was made public July 7. It came into force July 20.

Lawyers working to protect the right to freedom of religion and belief are already preparing for an appeal to the Constitutional Court. At the same time, they are preparing advice to individuals and religious communities on how to abide by the terms of the law. One Protestant leader, though, has warned that some of the restrictions "a good Christian cannot fulfill."

Against international human rights obligations, the amendments to the Religion Law restrict those who can share beliefs to people with permission from members of state-registered religious groups and organizations. This excludes people within groups that have chosen to operate without state permission, such as certain Baptist congregations. The amendments also bar even informal sharing of beliefs, like responding to questions or comments, by individuals acting on their own behalf.

There are now heavy financial penalties of up to \$780 for individuals who violate the amendments. That amount represents about six weeks' average wages. Maximum fines for organizations would be up to 20 times as much. (F18)

Coptic Christian stabbed, beheaded by Muslims in Egypt

TANTA, Egypt — A Coptic pharmacist was stabbed to death and then beheaded by a group of Salafi Muslims in Egypt's Delta region July 4, the latest in a string of attacks against Copts during the Islamic month of Ramadan.

Family members found the body of Magdy Attia, 33, in an apartment building where a group of Salafi Muslims reside in Tanta, Gharbia Governorate, according to local media. The attackers had stabbed Attia nine times and decapitated him, leaving his remains in the room of the apartment where he was slain.

Family members said Attia went to the apartment building to deliver medicine and stood outside talking to a couple of men for about 30 minutes before going inside. Soon Attia began screaming repeatedly for help but no one came, according to local reports.

An hour later, family members heard something had happened at the apartment building, went there and found the body.

At press time, no one had been arrested in the crime.

Attia's cousin, David Naser, told Christian website The Voice of Free Christians that the family hopes police officers "won't make false claim, such as 'It was done preventing a theft or an honor crime.'" (MS)

Suicide bombers kill 5, wound 15 in Lebanese village

QAA, Lebanon — Four suicide bombers killed five people and wounded at least 15 others in the Christian village of Qaa, Lebanon, close to the Syrian border, The Christian Post reported.

The extremists were disguised as civilians and began the attack with a hand grenade during the early morning June 27. Four of those wounded were Lebanese soldiers.

Lebanese Shiite militant group Hezbollah, Al-Manar, claimed that the Islamic State extremist group was behind the attack, according to various news sources, but no group had claimed responsibility at press time.

Lebanon has been a haven for large numbers of refugees fleeing Syria because of the ongoing war in the country. According to *Newsweek*, there are concerns that the instability in Syria is spilling over into Lebanon. (TAB)