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Transitioning into adulthood



123rf.com

Creating 'connecting point' for young adults living at home key to outreach

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Young adults today are more likely to postpone marriage and move back in with their parents, but Alabama Baptist ministry leaders say relationships not categories are the key to engaging this generation.

An analysis released in May by the Pew Research Center found that for the first time in decades, young adults ages 18 to 34, or millennials as they are often called, are more likely to live with their parents than with a spouse or significant other. The study notes a variety of factors at play, including marrying later, stagnant wages and weak job opportunities.

'Connecting point'

Though young adults may share similar demographic traits, strict categories can push them away from church, said Eileen Mitchell, an associate in the office of Sunday School and discipleship at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) who works with single adults ministry.

"The local church needs to offer

a connecting point for the young adult. Many do not necessarily see themselves as 'single' adults even if they aren't married. Some have stepped away from church during college. Most want to find a place within the church without calling attention to themselves," Mitchell said.

Singles ministry in the past seemed to attract individuals looking for a spouse, said Randy Byars, who teaches a Sunday School class for graduate students and recent college graduates at First Baptist Church, Opelika, in Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association. That is not the case today.

"Our people seem to be more focused on trying to get established, getting their own career on track. There's a sense that there is no hurry to get married," Byars said.

Chris Harding, family pastor and director of LIFE Groups at Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, in Mo-

bile Baptist Association, also sees adults in this age group taking more time to make college and career decisions. While finances are a driving factor, Harding sees security as

"[Young adults] seem to be more focused on trying to get established, getting their own career on track."

**Randy Byars
FBC Opelika**

equally important to these young people. "For most young adults, home is a safe place to land until they figure out their next move," Harding said.

Cottage Hill Baptist recently relaunched a class for early career professionals in response to the number of people they saw in that stage of life.

"From a church perspective, we try to minister where we see needs and provide a schedule that works. Our LIFE Groups are where connection happens, and we saw that these individuals needed a transition group as they become more independent," Harding said.

Transitioning into adulthood while living at home can be challenging for young adults, espe-

cially when they have grown up in a church. For example when young adults continue to live at home to attend college or to work, churches, just like parents, can have trouble seeing these young adults as "grown-ups." Mitchell advises that high school graduates in the church, regardless of their college or career path, be treated like prospects.

Giving courtesy

"Do not ask parents to pass on information to their son or daughter that is living at home. Give that young adult the courtesy of direct contact. And don't expect them to attend your church because they grew up there. They may want to visit other churches and be seen as a unique adult instead of a child," Mitchell said.

Dayspring Baptist Church, Mobile, in Mobile Baptist Association, also recently launched a ministry directed at young singles and college students in response to the needs in their congregation. The ministry includes small groups organized by interests and life experiences so members can engage in conversations that are more relevant

(See 'Reaching,' page 20)



CYBER
hospitality

A look at live streaming church services

COMING NEXT WEEK

COMMENT

Lottery Not the Answer

When Gov. Robert Bentley announced his support for a state-run lottery in Alabama he sounded as if he had found some magical cure for all the ills of the state. He promised a state-run lottery would be a “permanent solution” to the state’s financial problems.

Bentley said taxes would never have to be raised if a lottery were approved because the state-sponsored gambling scheme would “provide funding we can count on for year after year.”

Like other advocates of this get-rich-quick scheme, Bentley’s words are as hollow and misleading as those of all the gambling crowd with which he has now aligned himself.

Look at the experience of Missouri, a state with a lottery for the past 30 years. Originally lottery proceeds went to the state’s General Fund but in 1992 voters specified that all lottery proceeds go to education.

Despite the earmarked funds Missouri State Senator Joe Keaveny, D-St. Louis, said in an interview with the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, “We still haven’t funded the educational formula as described by statute” for K-12 schools.

Another state’s experience

Missouri has about 19 percent more population than Alabama. Its per capita income is about 8 percent higher than Alabama’s. Missouri’s per household income is more than 10 percent higher than Alabama. Yet that state with 30 year’s experience with a state-run lottery earmarked for public education cannot even meet minimum statutory requirements to fund one of the state’s most basic and important services.

That is why Missouri leaders are considering asking state voters to kill the state lottery.

Immediate past speaker of the Missouri House John Diehl, R-Town and Country, said in an interview with the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* “that



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

the lottery is an unstable and inefficient source of funding for public education.” He called publicity for the lottery “horribly misleading” and questioned whether government should be promoting gambling.

“You’re telling people to go pay money in to help fund children’s education and the reality is only about 25 cents of the dollar actually makes it back into education,” Diehl said. “We keep trying to squeeze more money out of the lottery — which often comes from the pockets of those with the lowest incomes — instead of being honest with Missourians that the cost of public education is high, we must address it directly and stop using ‘get rich quick’ gimmicks to make us feel better about it,” Diehl said.

“Lottery,” he added, “at the end of the day is government-run gambling and it’s been inefficient.”

That is why the former speaker of the House in Missouri favors asking the people of his state to scrap the state-run lottery in the Show Me State.

Is there any reason to think Alabama’s experience will be any different? None.

To begin with, Bentley continues the practice of lottery supporters to over promise. In May 2015 state Sen. Del Marsh released a study contending a state-run lottery in Alabama would generate more than \$330 million. The flaws in the study were quickly pointed out and those numbers are not talked about any longer.

Bentley reduced the promised income from a state-run lottery by more than \$100 million — down to \$225 million — but that is still unrealistic when compared to the experience of states like Missouri. To net \$225 million, \$900 million would have to be gambled away because only about 25 percent of the income coming from lotteries goes to state causes. About 75 percent of the money goes to prizes, administration and advertis-

ing. For Alabama to reach the promised amount, every one of Alabama’s 4,858,979 residents would have to gamble away more than \$185 annually.

For the current year, the Missouri Lottery Commission has appropriated \$278 million to the educational budget for state distribution. That amounts to about \$182 from every one of Missouri’s 6,083,672 residents because it takes about \$1.1 billion to end up with the \$278 million.

Missouri’s per capita income is \$26,006 compared to Alabama’s \$23,936 or 8 percent lower. If Alabamians gambled away the same percentage of their income as Missouri, we would waste about \$421 per capita resulting in a state income of \$204 million.

It is unlikely receipts would be that high since 19.2 percent of Alabamians live below the poverty level while the Missouri poverty percentage is 15.6.

Some Alabama legislators have already questioned Bentley’s proposal. House of Representatives Minority Leader Craig Ford, D-Gadsden, called the lottery “a one-shot deal,” adding “a lottery for the General Fund will become, as it has in other states, a victim to legislative shell games. It will become nothing more than a slush fund for legislators.”

That is what happened in Missouri. When voters demanded lottery revenue be earmarked for public educa-

tion, the legislator responded by shifting other state money away from the education budget. That is why the state continues to fall short of funding K-12 education at the level called for by statute.

It does not matter where income might be designated, it becomes a shell game in the end.

Bentley called his lottery proposal “a permanent solution.” That has not proven true anywhere else and it will not be true in Alabama. He said lottery would provide “funding you can count on year after year.” Again that has not been true anywhere else and it will not be true in Alabama.

Appealing to emotions

Bentley said taxes would never have to be raised. That is untrue and is an attempt to appeal to the basic emotions of voters. As Diehl said, it is time to be honest with voters about the cost of public education and basic governmental services.

The latest state-sponsored lottery proposal is just another shell game designed to distract the people of Alabama from the serious status of the state’s financial condition. Alabama deserves better than that from Bentley and from our elected state legislative leaders. ✠

Gov. Robert Bentley’s proposed constitutional amendment to authorize an Alabama lottery was released Aug. 5.

To read the proposed amendment, visit www.thealabamabaptist.org.



‘Honest argument’ needed on lottery

Alabama Policy Institute (API) recently released a video, “Voodoo Budgeting,” showing Gov. Robert Bentley calling for a special session to push through lottery legislation where he assures the people of Alabama that a lottery would be a “permanent solution” for the state’s budget shortfalls.

API, a nonprofit research and educational institute, said in an Aug. 3 email that Bentley’s claims about the lottery being something Alabamians can “count on year after year” is “simply not true, as evidenced by the experiences of other states with lotteries.”

API will continue to “do our part to keep Alabama’s politicians honest,” the email said. “The people of Alabama deserve nothing less.”

Visit <http://bit.ly/2akVSso> to view the video. (TAB)



"If ye continue in My word, then ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
John 8:31-32

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Troubled teens turn to Christ

Couple finds common ground with youth at Pulaski Pike church

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

It was a girls Bible study group known for its fistfights and even occasional arrests.

And nobody was more surprised than Amber Siler when she realized she really wanted to be the group's new teacher.

"On one of my first visits to the church, I was walking past the high school girls' classroom, and there was so much yelling going on in there," she said. "They were being so disrespectful and argumentative with the teacher. (The leader) was doing her best. And they didn't want to listen or participate."

Usually in a situation like this she would have to fight the urge to go in and execute a little motherly discipline, she said.

"But in that moment I felt such compassion for them, which was so not characteristic of me, if I'm honest. I just wanted to be a part of that group," Siler said. "I wanted to impact their lives."

Her fiancé at the time, David Siler, associate pastor of Pulaski Pike campus of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, told her she was a little bit crazy.

But David Siler knew how she felt — he had been drawn into work at the Pulaski Pike campus in much the same way she was. He'd been on staff at the main campus of Whitesburg Baptist when he got involved with serving at the Pulaski Pike campus.

He was a bus helper. And riding the bus — which brought 150–200 children and youth to the church every week — he got to know the surrounding low-income community that made up the vast majority of the congregation.

And before he knew it he'd moved over to serve as associate pastor of the church. At the same time, David Siler also had started getting to know his now wife and God was starting to draw their stories together.

Both of the Silers had battled cancer when they were young — Amber Siler twice as a teen and David Siler once as a child.

"We had both had to mature at young ages because of what we were going through," she said.

And while their experiences were different from the high school students that Amber Siler found staring her defiantly in the face that first week she decided to teach, they had that in common. She knew what it meant to grow up quickly.

"All of them have similar stories — someone in their family is dead, someone got shot, someone is in prison. They all fought back because they said I ... didn't understand.

"One night there was a girl who got in a big fight with me. She said I didn't understand and I didn't care about her," she said. "I tried to explain to her that I cared about them and wanted to listen and help — that's why I spend my time with them."

The girl's outer wall never cracked.

But a little while later Amber Siler gave the



Photo courtesy of the Silers

David Siler (fourth from right) serves as associate pastor of Whitesburg Baptist Church's Pulaski Pike campus in Huntsville. He and his wife, Amber, teach youth Bible studies there.

group a pencil and a piece of paper to take a quick survey. When they handed in their answers, the girl handed her a note and said, "Don't open this until later."

'Tiny victories'

When Amber Siler opened it, she saw that the girl had written her a huge apology.

"It's a rocky, rocky road. It's a very hard atmosphere," she said. "But we see tiny victories."

And they see a group of high school students learning what it means to really follow Jesus.

David Siler said, "It's their choice whether or not they want to follow, but they are seeing it modeled."

A little while after Amber Siler started teaching the high school girls, her husband took over as teacher for the boys.

The struggles are hard. But some of the students are choosing to grow in their faith and do something with their life, he said.

One of the boys for example came to youth

camp a while back with a defiant attitude, saying he could do whatever he wanted because his grandparents didn't care what he did, David Siler said. "But over the course of the week, that changed to more of a feeling of despair — more of a 'this isn't so awesome ... nobody cares about me.'"

It was a sad realization for the boy, but it opened him up to the message of the gospel, David Siler said.

He's now given his life to Christ, joined the high school wrestling team and gotten some college scholarships.

John Crocker, evangelism and missions pastor for Whitesburg Baptist, said the Silers are an example in the way they are consistently sharing the gospel and pouring their lives into discipling the youth at the Pulaski Pike campus.

"David and Amber are passionate servants of Jesus Christ," he said.

For more information, visit www.whitesburgbaptist.org/pulaskipikecampus. ☞

'Right thing in wrong way'

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

The story swirled around social media and online news outlets the first week of August, capturing attention well beyond its rural southwest Alabama city limits near the Mississippi line.

Mount Sterling Baptist Church, Butler, and its recently terminated 26-year-old pastor, Jonathan Greer, ended their relationship harshly July 31 — for all the world to see, literally.

Most church conflicts in Baptist life are handled privately because of the local church autonomy polity followed by Baptists, but with social media and the new era of citizen journalism, Mount Sterling Baptist's congregation won't get that luxury.

The Alabama Baptist has confirmed there was conflict between the pastor and at least one of the church leaders prior to the 31-0 vote to terminate him.

The 162-year-old church reports a membership of 132 with an average Sunday attendance of 40. Greer had been pastor for 18 months when he and church leadership allegedly disagreed over Greer's invitation of area black children to the church's Vacation Bible School (VBS).

And while many immediately drew a line and forced a standoff between Greer and Mount Sterling, the situation could have ended differently if the main players had slowed down, removed emotions and talked through the disagreement calmly, said several Alabama Baptist leaders.

(See 'Choctaw County,' page 7)

Ongoing partnerships

Students, youth groups partner for greater good of group, outreach opportunities

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Youth groups, like churches, vary when it comes to size, age and involvement. And while many individual church youth groups are able to accomplish an impressive amount on their own, many associations have realized the magnitude of impact that partnerships between youth groups can bring.

Such partnerships can make it possible for youth groups to take on endeavors they wouldn't be able to do on their own, to diversify and to take advantage of the good ideas youth ministers have across the association.

And in Alabama, associations each have their own approach to youth group partnership.

Upcoming project planning

Tuscaloosa Baptist Association (TBA) for example has quarterly meetings (hosting a lunch and dinner, to accommodate schedules since many of the youth ministers in the association are bivocational) where they discuss upcoming events. They use this time to bring each other up to speed on the status of their youth groups and share ideas for future projects and outreach.

"Our network intentionally includes the guys and gals who aren't the full-time youth ministers," said Travis Seagle, who serves as TBA student ministry director. "They can put together a larger, well-funded event when they partner with other churches."

Over the past year, TBA churches have partnered on a back-to-school event with

12 churches (and about 250 students) participating, as well as a beach camp involving about 10 churches in Panama City, Florida.

"We've gotten together in the months leading up to it and planned the scene and speakers," said Seagle, minister of students/education at Coaling Baptist Church. "Everyone has input and ownership and feels like it's their event because it is. If you have a student ministry of four to five you're welcome, or if you have 40-50 youth in your church, that's fine too. You're not made to feel less important or like you have less input."

Mark McLendon, minister of youth at Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery, in Montgomery Baptist Association, said churches in his association have several on-going partnership engagements.

"We have a girls' basketball league that has been going for several years and each team gets to bring a short devotional [to give at halftime] when they are the 'home' team," McLendon explained. "We also partner with several churches to do an area-wide Disciple Now weekend. The partnership is with one large worship time with all the churches, and we share the same T-shirts so that everyone feels connected to the same event."

The churches then separate after the initial worship time so there's some variation from church to church, but with definite unification between the groups. This partnership also has been going on for several years.

Similar to the youth ministers in TBA, Montgomery Association's youth leaders gather once a month to connect, discuss trends in ministry, share prayer concerns



Photo courtesy of Birmingham Baptist Association

Youth from Birmingham Baptist Association churches work on painting a house together through a Metro Changers project.

and talk about new ways to partner with one another.

"We have talked about a parents conference and a fall service day where we all go into the community and serve, so there are plenty of opportunities for us to grow and do more together," McLendon said.

In Birmingham Baptist Association (BBA) the connection between student ministry leaders has been cited as a key component to keeping partnerships going strong.

Tyler Core, student minister at First Baptist Church, Trussville, said, "Student ministry demands a lot from you emotionally, physically and spiritually. Being able to meet with other student ministry leaders and discuss relevant issues, trends, challenges, philosophies and strategies is a great benefit. It provides a bigger sense of purpose within the context of God's kingdom."

BBA church youth groups partner together in school ministries where students gather before school to fellowship, worship and pray together. That ministry started at a recent Student Life Missions Camp at Samford University in Birmingham. BBA youth

groups also partner through Metro Changers to paint homes and minister to the families in downtown Birmingham, and host the statewide Youth Evangelism Conference (see 'YEC challenges students to speak boldly, honestly about their relationship with Christ' in the Aug. 4 issue). At the evangelism conference this year, nearly 800 students participated from around the state, and there were more than 40 salvations.

'Neutral turf'

And Core said he and other youth leaders are always looking for new ways to partner with one another.

"Over the next several years I would like to see more partnerships formed through acts of service," he said. "Many student leaders are intimidated to partner with other groups out of fear of losing their students to the other youth group. Therefore partnering together on missions work, and on neutral turf, can serve as a great way for students to work together to change their community for Christ." ✠



Photo courtesy of Tuscaloosa Baptist Association

Youth from churches in Tuscaloosa Baptist Association participate in the Ultimate Lock-In, just one of many outreach events that brings youth groups from across the association together.

"[P]artnering together on missions work, and on neutral turf, can serve as a great way for students to work together to change their community for Christ."

Tyler Core
student minister, FBC Trussville



Meeting with search committees is one way state missionary Mike Jackson assists churches in the process of calling their next pastor or minister.

Church staffing



Photo by Doug Rogers

Alabama Baptist churches have access to variety of tools when looking for new staff

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Calling a pastor or other minister is a big deal — Kingdom business with effects for eternity. And Mike Jackson said one of his favorite things to do in his job is put a search committee's mind at ease in the process.

"We can come in and share and remind them that God already knows the person He's chosen for them," he said. "And we can remind them that if they will do all they can to seek Him and draw as close to Him as they can in the process, they will have the affirmation that they've called the right person."

That's the most important part — but it's

only the beginning of what state Baptist leadership can do to assist in the search process, said Jackson, director of the office of LeaderCare and church health for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

SBOM offers a variety of tools for a pastor or minister search:

A resource kit

All a church has to do is get in touch with Jackson's office, and the office will send out a packet of information and resources to get started with the search process.

There's no charge for the packet or for the personal instruction offered along with it, Jackson said.

"We can train search committees to be

equipped to do what they need to do, and we can do this at no cost, thanks to funds given through the Cooperative Program," Jackson said.

Training

They start with helping committees understand the priority of prayer. Then they help them select some leaders for the search team.

"And we provide training in how to secure resumés," Jackson said. "We seek to help them determine what their church's desires are as far as what they're looking for in a pastor or staff member."

One of the ways they can gather candidate information is through ALBaptistStaffing.org, SBOM's online database for resumés and job postings.

Jackson and his associates can take a church's criteria on age, experience level and education level and use that database to provide them with a pool of candidates that match what they're looking for.

Dale Huff, recently retired director of the office of LeaderCare, is one of the consultants who helps facilitate this process, going to the office weekly to sort through and classify resumés in the system.

Resumé resource

"The church can profile what they sense they need and we can gather resumés based on that profile," Huff said. "A church has access essentially to all the help they need from state Baptist leaders."

It's an Internet database that's "resource rich," said Rick Lance, SBOM executive director. "Under Mike's leadership, we'll continue to seek ways to improve and augment this site," he said. "Connecting others through resumé sharing with potential ministry opportunities is a privilege and a responsibility. The State Board of Missions honors the autonomy of local churches and the priesthood of the believer as resources and information are shared with congregations and prospective ministers as they seek God's will together."

After the search committee narrows down

its candidates, Jackson's office equips the committee with resources to do background checks, personality tests and interviews.

"We have the ability to do some personality instruments and emotional surveys to help a search committee determine if the pastor would be a good fit for them," Jackson said.

Follow through and follow up

Jackson's office also is prepared to help a church walk through the process of extending a call and transitioning to new leadership, he said.

"We're available to help at any point in the process and at no cost to the church, but we don't do anything without the church's invitation," he said.

Jackson's office has walked with quite a few churches through the process over the years —

Huff alone trained more than 800 search committees in his 25 years at SBOM — and they know how to give a church the tips it needs the most, Jackson said.

"Often a search committee is made up of people who have never been on a committee like that before, and sometimes committees get so swamped and inundated with names that they don't know how to process it," Jackson said. "It's helpful to have someone give you tips to know what you're looking for and help you work through that."

Local help

And Huff said for many churches in Alabama, their best help could come from their Baptist association's director of missions.

"Half of our churches are bivocational, and an important need for them is to call someone within a reasonable drive time from their church," Huff said. "The best help with finding that person often comes through their director of missions, because he knows people in the area."

Directors of missions are frequently the ones to conduct the SBOM's search committee training too, Huff said.

"It's a very personal, functional and effective process." ☞

How SBOM helps during pastor search process

By Mike Jackson
SBOM director of the office of leadership, church health

1. We offer our prayer support. If the contact is made via phone, I generally ask to pray with them before the call is completed.
2. We offer to train/equip their search committee. This is provided at no cost to the church because of faithful giving of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.
3. During said training we help them with areas of organization, surveying the congregation, gathering resumés, reference and background process, interviewing and calling of a pastor. We also help them understand the vital role of prayer, to seek God while they are seeking a pastor. This is encouraged for the committee and church family.
4. We provide them with forms and resources that will assist their process. A current copy of the Laymen's Salary Study is given to the group.
5. We make them aware of our website for posting staff positions, ALBaptistStaffing.org. This is a free service to our Alabama Baptist churches.

6. At the appropriate time in their process we provide resumés to match the profile they submit.

7. Once they have narrowed their search to their best candidates, our office can facilitate with various instruments such as DISC and Emotional Intelligence. These personality inventories would help the search committee determine whether the candidate(s) are a good "fit" for the congregation.

8. Though we do not recommend directly any one prospective candidate, we do strongly encourage the search committee to use "due diligence" in checking references. Sometimes state missionaries are listed as references. Thus when contacted the missionary responds.

9. For ministers looking to be placed, we seek to provide a service for them via our resumé system by allowing their information to be included as we fill the requests from our churches.

10. Of course we also provide help for terminated ministers with prayer support, counseling, emergency funds and resumé sharing. ☞

Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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

AUTAUGA

► **Michael Gillyard** is the new director of youth and church ministries for **Autaugaville Church**. He also serves as assistant to Pastor Garner Clark. He is currently enrolled in Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois. He and his wife, Tanya, have four children.



GILLYARD

BETHLEHEM

► **Fountain Church, Monroeville**, will celebrate homecoming Aug. 21, 10:30 a.m. Heartstrings will perform special music. Josh Turberville will speak. Lunch will follow. Mike Leys is pastor.

BIBB

► **Mount Carmel Church, West Blocton**, will hold its annual women's retreat Sept. 10, 8 a.m. Lunch will follow. Registration will begin at 7:30 a.m. Sylvia Speilman and Melody Winslett will speak. There will be special music. For more information call Donna Ellis at 205-938-1374. Tim Jennings is pastor.

COOSA RIVER

► **First Church, Southside Church, Ridgeview Church, Central Church and Mount Olive Church, all of Talladega**, and other churches in the state will participate in the fourth annual Afternoon of Praise on Aug. 21, 2:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. at the Talladega Ritz Theatre benefitting The Red Door Kitchen and The Samaritan House. Richard Kingsmore will direct the special music. For tickets and more information visit www.facebook.com/afternoonofpraise or call the Ritz Theatre at 256-315-0000. Bobby Freeman is pastor of Southside; Tommy Strickland is pastor of Ridgeview; Marc Curlee is pastor of Central; and Cal McIntire is pastor of Mount Olive. ► **Blue Eye Church, Lincoln**, will celebrate homecoming Aug. 21, 11 a.m. The Unity Quartet of Huntsville will perform special music during the morning service and at 1 p.m. following a covered dish lunch. Jacky Morgan is pastor.

FRANKLIN

► **First Church, Russellville**, will celebrate homecoming Aug. 14, 10:30 a.m. Lunch will follow. Jeff Norris of Perimeter Church, John's Creek, Georgia, will

speak. Patrick Martin is pastor.

GENEVA

► **Steve Skidmore**, minister of music for **First Church, Geneva**, also has been elected the new associate pastor. He previously served as music minister for Cloverdale Church, Dothan. He holds a bachelor's degree from Florida Baptist College (now the Baptist College of Florida) in Graceville. He and his wife, Lori-Anne, have two children and one grandchild. Edwin Scott is pastor.

MUSCLE SHOALS

► **Faith Midway Church, Moulton**, will host Joseph Habedank in concert Sept. 11, 6 p.m. A love offering will be collected. For more information call the church at 256-974-9351. Jeff Griffis is pastor.

RUSSELL

► **The Russell Association Baptist Center** is collecting school supplies for families in need. The center will collect items throughout the year. Items needed include pencils, blue/black ink pens, blunt end scissors, glue and glue sticks, erasers, notebook paper, notebooks, folders, Kleenex, paper towels, colored pencils, markers and copy paper. For more information call the center at 334-298-3581. Tommy Poole is interim director of missions.

SHELBY

► **Wilsonville Church** will host a Walk Against Traffick 5K on Sept. 10, 8 a.m. to benefit Make Way Partners and The Hard Places Community. For more information and to register call Tina Wiles at 205-937-1603. Steve Thomas is pastor.

WALKER

► **Bill Ellis** is the new pastor of **Providence Church, Oakman**. He previously served as pastor of Stave Creek Church, Jackson. He also served at Garden City Church. He holds a bachelor's degree from Southeastern Bible College in Birmingham and is pursuing a master's degree from Andersonville Seminary in Camilla, Georgia. He and his wife, Angela, have one child. ☩



ELLIS

ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Grimes Chapel Baptist's Moore celebrates 3 milestones

He turned 90 on Aug. 9, but that was just one major milestone for Charles C. Moore this August — he also celebrated 70 years in ministry and 10 years as pastor of Grimes Chapel Baptist Church, Sylacauga.

Moore said he felt called to the preaching ministry shortly after his term with the Air Force ended in the 1940s. He began attending the University of Alabama and was a member of First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa.

After feeling God's call to the ministry, Moore was ordained at Klein Baptist Church, Harpersville, and transferred to Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham to earn his associate's degree. Later he earned his bachelor's degree from Boyce College in Louisville, Kentucky, and a master's degree and doctorate from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

During his decades of ministry, Moore served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodbridge, Virginia, for 15 years where he baptized 966 people. He also served as pastor of a church in Maryland and, after retiring in 1991, he served in interim pastoral roles at Bon Air Baptist Church, Sylacauga, and another church in Coosa River Baptist Association before becoming full-time pastor of Grimes Chapel Baptist.

When asked about something he's learned in his life of ministry, Moore said he has learned "more and more of God's Word." "You don't ever get to the end of learning the Bible," he said. "God keeps on giving it to you and you always learn something new."

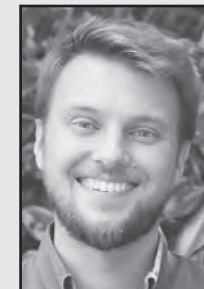
He and his wife, Anna Lois, have two children, three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. (Neisha Roberts)



MOORE

Seanor joins national WMU as ministry consultant

Zachariah Seanor joined the staff of national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) on July 18 as a ministry consultant with responsibilities for the growth and development of missions education for boys through Royal Ambassadors (RA), WMU's missions program for boys in grades 1-6, and Challengers, for boys in grades 7-12.



SEANOR

"We are delighted to welcome Zachariah to our staff," said Carol Causey, director of WMU's Missions Resource Center. "His personal knowledge from being raised in RAs along with his training in education and missions make him uniquely equipped for this position. We look forward with great anticipation to his contributions."

For the past year Seanor served as chaplain and interim dean of student life at Live Oak Classical School for grades 7-12 in Waco, Texas. From 2013 to 2015 he served as associate director of student recruitment for Truett Seminary at Baylor University in Waco and minister of students at Taylor's Valley Baptist Church, Temple, Texas, from 2012 to 2013.

Seanor earned a master of divinity degree from Truett Seminary with a focus on missions and world Christianity. He also holds a bachelor's degree in secondary education from Samford University in Birmingham.

He and his wife, Haley, recently relocated from Texas to Alabama and plan to make their home in the Birmingham area. (WMU)

REFLECTIONS



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Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Last Things

Heaven

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

The Bible speaks of heaven with at least three different points of reference. Heaven can refer to the atmosphere just above the earth's surface, as in Acts 14:17 when it speaks of God giving us rain from heaven or in Psalm 104:12 that refers to the birds of the heavens. Heaven can speak of the firmament or outer space where the sun, moon and stars are located, as in 2 Kings 23:5 that speaks of idolatrous priests who burned incense to Baal "to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations and to all the host of heaven." However, our focus this week is on the ultimate meaning of heaven as the Bible's way of speaking about the eternal abode of God.

Dwelling place

Jesus Himself began the model prayer by instructing us to say, "Our Father which art in heaven" (Luke 11:2). As God's dwelling place, we understand the Bible to promise that heaven also will be the eternal abode of the people of God in the presence of God and with the whole company of the redeemed. The phrase "the heaven of heavens" is one way the Bible refers to heaven as God's dwelling place, used by Solomon in his dedicatory prayer for the newly built temple, "Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You" (2 Chron. 6:18).

The Bible presents heaven as the counterpart of hell, which is the eternal abode of the condemned. By contrast, heaven is the eternal abode of the redeemed, who in resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and dwell forever with the Lord.

Since our human perspective is of the earth, the Bible uses earthly images and references to depict what is otherworldly, where God's will is done perpetually, perfectly and without exception. For example to describe the beauty and perfection of heaven, the Bible uses earthly images of streets paved with gold, light that is not dependent on a rising sun, music that is sung by an

angelic choir or structures composed of the most precious of earthly materials and jewels. The impression that we take away from such descriptions is that heaven will be not only beautiful and perfect, but also desirable, different and permanent.

'My Father's house'

Most famously, Jesus spoke of heaven using earthly terms. He called it "My Father's house" (John 14:2). We recall that He elaborated by saying the Father's house has many rooms. Many of us are familiar with the King James Version rendering that reads "many mansions." The term "mansions" conjures up for us the picture of a large, stately dwelling such as only the extremely rich might afford. The word Jesus used did not create such a mental image with the disciples. Jesus' word was a common, down-to-earth one that meant simply "many rooms" or "many dwelling places."

The idea we take from His description is that heaven, as the Father's house, will amply accommodate all who choose to accept God's invitation into His family. Jesus assured the disciples, and us, that the Father's house would be totally prepared for all those prepared to enter it. In short, spaciousness and preparedness combine to further describe heaven.

Our best thoughts about heaven might be expressed by importing the words of 1 Corinthians 2:9: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." ☩

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.



Texas' Wisdom-Martin elected national WMU executive director

Sandra Wisdom-Martin, executive director of Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) of Texas, was unanimously elected executive director/treasurer of national WMU by the WMU executive board during a special called meeting July 29-30 in Birmingham.

Wisdom-Martin succeeds Wanda Lee, who has served as executive director of the 128-year-old missions organization for the past 16 years. Wisdom-Martin, who will begin her new role Oct. 15, was presented to the board by a search committee appointed in February following Lee's announcement of her intentions to retire.

Prior to leading WMU of Texas since 2010, Wisdom-Martin served as women's missions and ministries director for the Illinois Baptist State Association from 2001 to 2010 and as Cooperative Program missionary with the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, 1991-2001.

'Where God leads'

"My commitment has always been to walk where God leads," Wisdom-Martin reflected, "yet this has been a difficult process because I am in a very good place. I love the assignment God has given us (in

Texas). This certainly caught my family by surprise and was not a part of our plan, but we believe God is sovereign and all the details of our lives are in His hands. I trust Him completely for the future."

More than 25 years experience

She said what excites her most about this opportunity is to put total trust in the Father, serve Him with reckless abandon and see where the adventure leads.

In addition to more than 25 years of experience in state WMU and church and community ministry, including children's missions education camps, Wisdom-Martin served with more than 50 missions groups in nine different countries, served as national coordinator for Mississippi River Ministry and



WISDOM-MARTIN

writes extensively for WMU publications and others. In WMU she served as an associational Girls in Action (GA) director, associational Acteens director, Campus Baptist Young Women president, Mission Friends leader, GA leader and Acteens co-leader.

Wisdom-Martin holds a bachelor's degree from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois, and a master's degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. She and her husband, Frank, have one daughter. (WMU)

Choctaw County church, pastor conflict provides lesson for others

(continued from page 3)

"This young pastor took a courageous stand in his sermon on racism, but some of the members took offense at his tone and demeanor as he preached," said Terry Long, director of missions (DOM) for Choctaw Baptist Association. Others described it as "doing the right thing in the wrong way."

Mount Sterling is a longtime member of Choctaw Association and as a DOM, Long works to build relationships with all the pastors and to be a resource for them.

Both sides made mistakes but "nothing the pastor did was worthy of dismissal," Long said. "In fact, he stood valiantly for the truth."

It basically boils down to one or possibly a few church leaders who took issue with the pastor over several concerns (not visiting church members enough, not working with the deacons and allegedly going against a request not to invite black children to VBS).

But when Greer chose to preach about racism and the need for everyone to repent during his July 24 sermon, he came across as overly harsh and angry, Long said, noting Greer is a young pastor at his first church.

Before taking some private time away with his family, Greer told Baptist Press he apologized publically and privately for broadly classifying the congregation as racist in his sermon.

"I didn't realize that there were more people in the church ... that were OK with people [of all races] coming," Greer said.

"And in my sermon, I didn't account for that. I kind of lumped everyone together."

Whether Greer can reconcile with individual church members remains to be seen. And how Choctaw County will weather a media-influenced stereotype that racism is prevalent in the area will be part of Long's challenge going forward as he attempts to prove the blanket assumption wrong.

"This recent situation is atypical of our county and its churches," Long said. "At our annual meeting in October 2015 the churches in this association voted unanimously to accept its first African-American church, Christian Fellowship, into the association."

During the past couple of decades numerous local Baptist associations have increasingly received predominantly African-American congregations into membership, according to Alabama Baptist state leader Rick Lance.

The overwhelming majority of Alabama Baptist and Southern Baptist churches receive people of all races, he said. "They recognize that the gospel of Jesus Christ is for 'whoever will may come.'"

"Although we do not know the details of [the Mount Sterling] situation, we are praying for all involved, including the former pastor and the church family," Lance said.

"We affirm the ministry of the Choctaw Baptist Association and pray for their leaders as they seek healing and reconciliation." (Debbie Campbell contributed)

BACK TO CAMPUS

BACK OF CAMPUS



SBOM, BCM help students get ready for college

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The time between high school graduation and Christmas is challenging and fun — and potentially dangerous, Mike Nuss said.

Rising college freshmen “will set patterns, establish relationships, try out new freedoms and find out just how firm their foundation of faith really is — or isn’t,” said Nuss, director of the office of collegiate and student ministries for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

The beginning is critical, said Jerrod Brown, Baptist campus minister for the University of South Alabama in Mobile. “Freshmen are making life decisions and faith decisions that will affect a lifetime during the first few weeks of the semester.”

Transitioning students

And experts in transitioning students to college suggest that many Christian students will disconnect very early in their first semester of college.

“This lets us know that we the Church are missing opportunities to transition

some of our students into lives as obedient and fruitful disciples,” Brown said.

And that, he said, just isn’t a good situation.

Chris Mills agreed.

“Everyone’s heard stories of the students who have gone to college and made mistakes,” he said. “But we have also seen those students who have gone to college and really owned their faith and are making disciples on a college campus.”

That’s what Mills, student missions strategist for SBOM, said they’d like to see more of.

And that’s why Brown decided to be

proactive in getting students ready for college and equipping churches to do the same thing.

Helpful resources

He recently helped develop a booklet called “A College Student’s Guide to Growing in College,” which provides students with five core ideas, related devotional Bible studies and practical next steps.

“The booklet also contains a Scripture reading and memorization plan that takes students through nine weeks of daily readings and focuses them on key verses to

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BACK TO CAMPUS

memorize,” Brown said. “This plan is designed to help students understand the gospel of Christ so that they can have a strong foundation as disciples and be able to defend their faith.”

‘Never too early’

It all started when Brown and former colleague Emily Hamilton (now serving with Etowah Baptist Association) “realized it was never too early” to begin to connect with students preparing to leave home.

“We discovered that we don’t need to wait until a student’s high school graduation to begin thinking about transitioning them to college — we need to begin much earlier than that,” Brown said. “I like to say that the successful transitioning of college students doesn’t begin at age 18. Successful transitioning begins at 8 and 12 and 16.”

That’s where churches come in, he said.

“We wanted to develop a booklet that we could begin to put into the hands of seniors during their final year of high school so that they could begin to walk toward this tremendous transition time with their church leaders and mentors,” Brown said.

They also wanted to make

sure that transitioning students had something tangible to work through during that time.

The booklet “focuses on getting each student to be sure of their foundation in Christ; understanding the need for continuing growth as a disciple and in their relationship with God; and connecting with other believers as soon as they get to campus through local churches and Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM),” Brown said.

It’s a role BCM is happy to play, Nuss said.

“Baptist Campus Ministries and church collegiate ministries are ready to help students survive and thrive in college

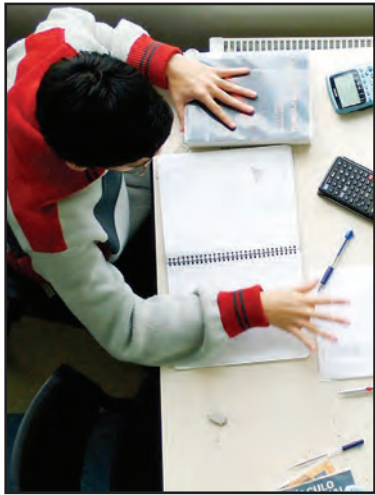
and beyond by connecting them to strong, Bible-based discipleship principles, mentoring relationships and personal accountability,” he said. “That influence can have a life-changing impact on today’s college freshman.”

Mills agreed.

“That’s why BCM exists — to reach and disciple students and encourage them to disciple others,” he said.

It requires intentionality, Brown said. Churches have to start early and commit to making sure students are ready when they graduate from high school.

(See ‘Churches,’ page 16)



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“Everyone’s heard stories of the students who have gone to college and made mistakes. But we have also seen those students who have gone to college and really owned their faith.”

Chris Mills
student missions strategist, SBOM

BACK TO CAMPUS



JUDSON COLLEGE

Judson College continues to empower students to be ‘doers’ of the Word

As Adoniram Judson, Samuel Newell, Samuel Nott, Gordon Hall and Luther Rice were prayed over at their missionary ordination service Feb. 6, 1812, 17-year-old Ann Hasseltine Judson knelt in the aisle near her new husband. While those present appreciated the bravery and obedience of the men being prayed over, it was the courage and faith of this young woman that mesmerized them.

After growing up with every convenience and spending her early teen years moving from one society party to the next, Ann Hasseltine Judson discovered that her ultimate fulfillment could only come through a life devoted to Christ. She applied her mind to the study of Scripture and her heart to the consistent prayer that God would use her life. What followed was the radical call to self-sacrifice and service that brought her to

the aisle of the small church in Salem, Massachusetts, on the day after her wedding.

After marrying, she would spend the rest of her life in Burma, translating Scripture, befriending and ministering to women and teaching girls while also supporting the work of her husband. Her life is an example of what it means to be a “doer of the Word, not a hearer only” (James 1:22).

Call of God

A few years later, Baptists in Marion felt the call of God to provide young women with educational opportunities that would empower them to contribute to their families, churches and communities in new ways. It was only fitting that these “doers” chose to name their new institution after Ann Hasseltine Judson.

As the 2016–2017 academic year begins, Judson College in Marion remains committed to the work of empowering young



Photo by Aimee Speel

Judson student Bethany Kinard spent her summer working with Street Reach, an organization that ministers to children and families in inner city Memphis, Tennessee.



Photo by Jessca Weller

Judson students and staff members ministered to college students in Beijing, China, with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions’ Christmas in China program.



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During the ordination of the first American Protestant missionaries held Feb. 6, 1812, Ann Hasseltine Judson kneels in the aisle near her husband, Adoniram.

women to live out their callings to be “doers of the Word.”

In the past year, that calling has led them to meet the physical needs of their neighbors in Perry County; mentor girls as camp staff members at WorldSong Missions Place; lead summer camps for inner city children in Memphis, Tennessee; minister to trafficked women in Louisville, Kentucky; serve alongside church planters in Montana and Florida; build relationships with internationals in New York City; and share the gospel in China.

Judson continues to receive national recognition for its commitment to working for service with more than 80 percent of students voluntarily participating in community service or missions.

Judson has appeared on the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll eight times and remains 1 of 4 colleges and universities in the state — and the only private institution in the state — to hold the prestigious Community Engagement Classification from the Carnegie Foundation on the Advancement of Teaching.

Students in each of Judson’s 22 academic programs will have opportunities to participate in student-led Bible studies, faculty- and staff-led mentoring groups and weekly campus-wide chapel services again this year.

Their learning in the classroom will be applied, strengthened and reinforced with participation in hands-on community service projects, creating what experts in higher education often refer to as “deep learning” in a way that changes the lives of the school’s neighbors and students.

A legacy

This commitment to combine knowledge, faith and service is one that has been a hallmark of Judson’s approach to education since its founding. It also is part of the legacy of Judson’s namesake, Ann Hasseltine Judson. As new Judson students are encouraged to discover their shared story in the new academic year, many will be surprised to learn that it began 204 years ago in a church in Massachusetts with a young woman about their age who shared their desire to be “a doer of the Word.” (Judson)



Photo by Mary Amelia Taylor

Jewett Hall was named for Milo Parker Jewett, a founder of the college who insisted that it would be a place ‘of Christ.’

BACK TO CAMPUS

Samford, Beeson to offer theological, divinity degrees with social work

The department of social work at Samford University and Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham are partnering to create two joint-degree programs for students wanting to share the gospel while working in a practical occupation.

The master of divinity (MDiv) and master of arts in theological studies (MATS) will be paired with a master of social work (MSW) and will feature concentrations in either clinical social work or global community development.

The unique combination of mercy ministry with theological/pastoral ministry will be a benefit to the Church in preparing Christian leaders in mercy ministries that have been devoid of theology, said Kristen Padilla, marketing and communications coordinator for Beeson.

Grant Taylor, Beeson associate dean, said, "Students who complete [the MDiv/MSW] will be able to preach the Bible with theological depth and wisdom while giving very practical aid to individuals and families in need."

The idea for the joint programs grew out of Samford's mission

and the lack of similar programs in Alabama and the Southeast region, said Ken Stoltzfus, chair of the department of social work.

"The MATS/MSW degree is focused on students who would benefit from a strong understanding of theology, but who have not discerned a call to be ordained," Stoltzfus said. "The MATS/MSW would be a good choice for students who want to work in a faith-based setting in a nonclergy role."

Job opportunities for students involved in the clinical social work concentration include pastoral counseling, hospice, adoption and foster care, addiction and recovery and prison ministries. The global community development concentration will open doors into urban ministries; domestic and international missions; and faith-based nongovernmental organizations where they will address issues such as human trafficking, poverty and access to medical services.

For more information, visit www.samford.edu/publichealth/master-of-social-work-divinity-joint-degree. (Hannah Muñoz, Samford)

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BACK TO CAMPUS

Top 25

Alabama Baptist schools ranked among best in South

Two Alabama Baptist higher education institutions were ranked among the 25 Best Christian Colleges and Universities in the South selected by ChristianUniversitiesOnline.org, an online research and rankings guide to Christian colleges and universities. The University of Mobile ranked No. 12 and Judson College in Marion ranked No. 19.

The 2017 rankings are “highlighting schools that are the best of the best when it comes to overall quality, affordability, and student satisfaction,” according to the announcement on the organization’s website.

“In compiling this list of the

best Christian colleges and universities by region, we hope to offer both parents and students a valuable resource which will help them in determining the best school which will meet their individual needs and goals,” the guide stated.

The organization reviewed faculty-to-student ratio, percent of full-time beginning undergraduates receiving grant or scholarship aid, selectivity, overall retention rate and overall graduation rate. The research and ranking site compared schools that are members of or eligible to be members of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities. (UM, TAB)



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UNIVERSITY of MOBILE

Higher Education for a Higher Purpose

University of Mobile begins 55th year with new president, rebranding

The University of Mobile (UM) starts its 55th year with a new president, a new look and a renewed commitment to honor God as a Christ-centered, academically rigorous educational institution that equips students for their future professions.

Tim Smith, UM's fourth president, will welcome more than 1,500 students to campus for move-in day Aug. 19 and the start of fall semester Aug. 22.

The most noticeable change on campus is a university-wide rebranding with a new tagline, "Higher Education for a Higher Purpose," that reflects a university focused on academic preparation and spiritual transformation.

Other significant changes include an expanded chapel program and redesigned master of business administration (MBA) program.

In a return to tradition, UM will bring graduation ceremonies back to campus next spring as the university also celebrates the 50th anniversary of the first graduating

class of 1967. The graduating class of 2017 will receive their diplomas in front of historic William K. Weaver Hall.

Plans are being developed for a large outdoor globe and water feature in front of Weaver Hall to mark the institution's Alabama Baptist foundation as a Great Commission university. Once in place, the globe will be the central part of a university tradition symbolizing each student's preparation at UM to fulfill the Great Commission.

Intent during college

New students will touch the globe as they pass it on their way to new student convocation, signifying their intent during college to prepare academically and spiritually for their futures. They will touch the globe again during the graduation ceremony on campus, this time signifying they are going out into the world to fulfill the Great Commission.

Highlights for 2016–2017 at UM include:

► **Rebranding:** The new UM seal is the official symbol of the university and is the

From the president

Greetings. It is indeed an honor to greet you as the fourth president of the University of Mobile (UM). It is an exciting time in which to build upon the strong heritage of the university, reflect upon the blessings of God and pray for divine direction in the days ahead.

I am delighted my wife, Penney, and I have joined the tremendously gifted faculty and staff to partner in accomplishing one primary responsibility. Our responsibility is to provide a Christ-centered university that renews the minds of students through cognitive and spiritual development within one's discipline while preparing students to fulfill the Great Commission as called upon by God following graduation.

This is a "head to heart" transformation during the educational process that God has graciously entrusted to us as

leaders and providers of Christian higher education.

Fulfilling this calling will take much work as new campus enhancements will be undertaken, new academic programs will emerge and new partnerships will be developed throughout the community and region. It is my hope that you will join us in this renewed mission through continued prayers, visiting campus, recommending students to enroll in the university and being a partner in the initiatives that will be unveiled in the days ahead.

Together we will build a stronger UM and community that will allow more graduates to fulfill the Great Commission and bring honor and glory to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Blessings,
Timothy L. Smith, Ph.D., Ph.D.
President, University of Mobile ☩



TIMOTHY & PENNEY SMITH

BACK TO CAMPUS



Photo courtesy of the University of Mobile

fourth design since its beginnings as a logo for the fundraising campaign that Alabama Baptists held in 1960 to create the university. The meaning of each element and a history of the seal can be found at umobile.edu/seal. A new logo includes a torch and flame over a globe that symbolizes the university's Great Commission focus.

► **Chapel:** Chapel has been expanded from monthly to weekly and undergraduates are required to attend at least 10 chapel services each semester. Fall semester speakers include authors and seminary professors Tony Merida and Jarvis Williams, area pastors and UM faculty and staff. For the chapel schedule, visit umobile.edu/chapel.

► **Master of Business Administration:** The revised MBA program uses a "concierge model" with reduced credit-hour requirements, a flexible pace and convenient format offered online or on campus. For more information, visit umobile.edu/mba.

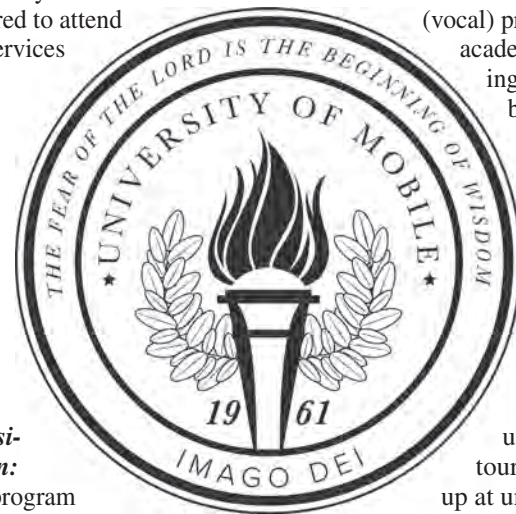
► **Master of Arts in Biblical/Theological Studies:** This non-thesis, 36-credit-hour graduate level program is for adults who have a calling or desire to serve God through vocational or voluntary ministry. Adult students can pursue their undergraduate bachelor of science online degree in marketplace ministry, then pursue graduate

studies through the new master's program. Traditional intercultural studies and theological studies majors continue to have opportunities for experiential learning through student ministry teams, ministry and intercultural internships and international missions teams.

► **New academic programs:** A musical theatre concentration is available in the Bachelor of Music in performance (vocal) program. Additional academic programs are being developed and will be announced soon.

► **Visit Day schedule:** Visit Days for prospective students are Sept. 16, Oct. 10 and Nov. 18 in 2016 and Feb. 3 and March 3 in 2017. To attend a Visit Day or schedule a personal campus tour or group tour, sign up at umobile.edu/visit or call 251-442-2222.

► **19th annual UM Classic Golf Tournament and Christmas Spectacular:** The annual golf tournament and popular Christmas Spectacular are being held the same week, making it more convenient for individuals or groups beyond the Mobile area to participate in both events. The golf tournament will be Nov. 18 at Magnolia Grove golf course on the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail in Mobile. Christmas Spectacular will be Nov. 17–20 at Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile. (UM)



Plans are being developed for a large, outdoor globe and water feature in front of Weaver Hall to mark the institution's Alabama Baptist foundation as a Great Commission university.

BACK TO CAMPUS



SAMFORD

UNIVERSITY

Samford University celebrates 175th anniversary of its 'timeless mission'

The nine young men who enrolled in the newly chartered Howard College 175 years ago would be amazed at the more than 5,300 students that are expected to make up Samford University's 2016–2017 student body.

As the school celebrates a landmark anniversary this year, it is poised to welcome a record total enrollment that will include an expected freshman class of 900, also a record. About one-third of those new students hail from Alabama.

It will be a special time as students and employees continue the mission that Alabama Baptists had in mind when they chartered the school in 1841 and welcomed the first class in early 1842 in Marion. The school moved to Birmingham in 1887 and to its present location in 1957.

"The next academic year will find us engaged in new and meaningful ways to fulfill Samford's timeless mission," said Samford President Andrew Westmoreland. "As we give thanks for the many sacrifices that have been made over the past 175 years, we also acknowledge our responsibility for strengthening and creating academic programs and for preserving and enhancing the physical campus.

"We remain grateful to Alabama Baptists and a host of other friends for their consistent extraordinary support, without which

Samford would not have been founded, nor could it have survived," Westmoreland said.

Activities are planned throughout the academic year to celebrate the anniversary. A website, www.samford.edu/175, includes historic information and photos, videos, a calendar and ways for the Samford community and others to share personal stories. It will be updated regularly.

Many new and returning students this fall will have much to share from their summer studies, research, internships and missions experiences. An impressive number shared their special skills and Christian faith with people in all six of the world's habited continents, while others

served in cities across the United States and in rural areas of Alabama.

For historic information, photos, videos, a calendar and ways for the Samford community and others to share personal stories, visit www.samford.edu/175.

New programs

The new school year will introduce new programs in several academic areas. Of particular interest is the continuing roll out of programs and move to new quarters for the College of Health Sciences, which since its inception in 2013 has introduced more than 20 new majors and degree programs. This fall will see the addition of six more: bachelor's and master's degrees in health care administration and respiratory care; a master's degree in health informatics and analytics; and a master's degree in nutrition. Plus the Department of Social Work and Beeson Divinity School will offer two new



Photo courtesy of Samford University

joint degrees: a master of social work degree paired with a master of divinity degree or a master of arts degree in theological studies (see story, page 11).

Finishing touches are being put on facilities that are designed to help prepare students for an increasingly interprofessional health care environment.

College of Health Sciences vice provost Nena F. Sanders said, "Students and faculty will learn and serve across disciplines, building relationships and sharing knowledge that will make them uniquely suited to immediately contribute to health care teams upon graduation."

Over the last eight months, the former Southern Progress properties have been transformed into state-of-the-art education and clinical facilities.

Two buildings, spanning 223,000 square feet of space, will house the schools of health professions, nursing, pharmacy and public health. It is anticipated that an average of 1,200 students from more than 30 programs will use the facilities daily.

Within the space, an impressive 22,000-square-foot simulation center will offer discipline-specific and interdisciplinary learning opportunities at a variety of levels from lab-based learning to complex high-fidelity human patient simulators.

The new facilities also include almost 30 clinical and research labs, a chapel, renovated class/seminar rooms, demonstration and teaching kitchens, student commons areas and employee offices.

"You won't find a facility like this anywhere else in the country," Sanders said. "Our students and faculty will have at their

fingertips the most cutting-edge technology and instructional and simulation resources available."

A dedication program will be held Sept. 9 at 1 p.m. followed by an open house.

More good news

Other academic units also will introduce new offerings this fall.

The Orlean Bullard Beeson School of Education will offer a new master of science in education degree in instructional design and technology as well as a more condensed undergraduate major in secondary education. The latter will allow students to graduate with two degrees (double majoring in their content area and secondary education) in four years.

Cumberland School of Law will launch a new minor in paralegal studies for undergraduate students.

Brock School of Business will offer a new upper-level entrepreneurship course that will focus on how established organizations innovate, reinvent themselves and create successful corporate ventures.

The university will welcome 38 new faculty members this fall including two new deans: Keith Elder, School of Public Health, and Timothy D. Hall, Howard College of Arts and Sciences.

During the summer months Samford staff and contractors added 68 new parking spaces near the school's west gate and completed interior enhancements in several buildings.

Fall semester classes begin Aug. 29 for undergraduates. Most graduate and professional classes will begin Aug. 15. (Samford)

Samford events of interest this fall

► **Aug. 30, 10 a.m.** — Opening Convocation and Founders Day, Wright Center

► **Sept. 30–Oct. 2** — Family Weekend

► **Oct. 2, 2 p.m.** — School of the Arts hosts Hymn Sing, Reid Chapel

► **Oct. 4, 7 p.m.** — Howard College of Arts and Sciences and the Frances Marlin Mann Center for Ethics and Leadership present the J. Roderick

Davis Lecture by Equal Justice Initiative founder Bryan Stevenson, Wright Center

► **Nov. 8, 11 a.m.** — Beeson Divinity School presents Faith and Work conference with Tim Keller, Wright Center

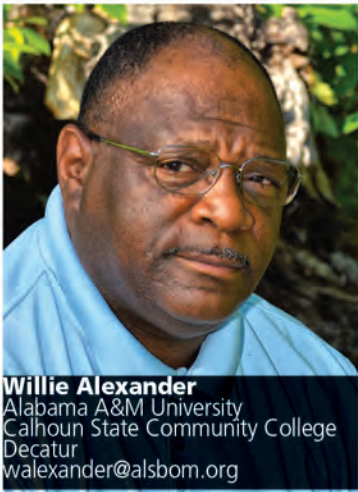
► **Nov. 11–13** — Homecoming Weekend with special 175th anniversary convocation, ball and more

► **Dec. 17** — Fall Commencement

For more Samford events, visit www.samford.edu/events. Senior Preview Days will be held Oct. 1 and 15 and Nov. 19.

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Southern Union State Community College
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Lee Dymond
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Churches can help with high school to college transition

(continued from page 9)
 And Brown's staff is using "A College Student's Guide to Growing in College" on campus to connect with incoming freshmen during summer orientations.

"This signals to the students the need to get ready for the transition and lets them know that the BCM and local churches exist to help them grow as a disciple while in college," he said.

They are seeing that intentionality changes lives.

"We are seeing this approach make great impact," he said. "We are already seeing some churches use these materials or others like it to move their seniors toward college. They are seeing students who head off to college ready

and committed to live as fruitful disciples while in college."

And they are seeing freshmen come to college with the mindset that it will be an opportunity to not only earn a degree but also


grow in spiritual maturity, Brown said.

"They aren't simply looking at the disciple life as a hobby, but as the life that is meant for every Christian," he said. "We are seeing freshmen coming into college ready to live as disciples and ready to make an impact as disciple makers

as they share their faith in Christ on campus. They aren't walking away from the active disciple life but are going deeper in their commitment and fruitfulness as a disciple." ✝




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It encourages you to take following Christ seriously.

It encourages you to find a church as soon as you arrive on campus, connect with BCM and stay part of a body of believers.

And it addresses six core ideas that will help you be firm in your faith when you get to college:

1. Discover what's so important about Jesus.

2. Have a firsthand faith. (Make your faith your own.)

3. Have a relationship, not a religion.

4. Grow in college and go invest in others.

5. Connect with other Christians.

6. Make an action plan for growth and take the next steps.

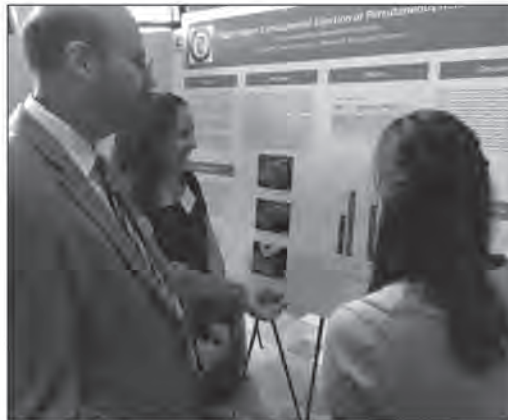


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Pathways Professional Counseling to host 'Soul of Shame' conference

Registration is open for Pathways Conference 2016, "The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves," presented by Pathways Professional Counseling, a ministry of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH), with special support from the Department of Social Work at Samford University in Birmingham and *The Alabama Baptist*.

For more information on pricing, registration or speaker Curt Thompson, visit www.pathwaysprofessional.org or call 205-945-0037.

The conference will be held Sept. 30 at the offices of Pathways Professional Counseling located at 2681 Rocky Ridge Lane, Birmingham. Seating is limited, so pre-registration is recommended.

Noted psychiatrist and brain science researcher Curt Thompson will lead the conference. Thompson is the author of "Anatomy of

the Soul: Surprising Connections between Neuroscience and Spiritual Practices That Can Transform Your Life and Relationships" and "The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves." Throughout his career Thompson has examined the integration of psychiatry, its associated disciplines and Christian spirituality. He is a frequent speaker on the intersection of neurobiology and spirituality and has been

a presenter at the Christian Alliance for Orphans Summit and the American Association of Christian Counselors conference.

Onsite registration begins at 8 a.m. and the conference begins at 8:30. Participants also have the opportunity to receive six continuing education credits. (Carrie Brown McWhorter)

RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

Criminal charges dismissed against investigators in video

HOUSTON — All criminal charges have been dismissed against two investigators who posed as procurers of aborted baby body parts in undercover videos of interactions with Planned Parenthood executives.

The Harris County District Attorney's office in Houston dropped charges July 26 against Center for Medical Progress (CMP) founder David Daleiden and co-worker Sandra Merritt, who had sought to show in secretly recorded videos that Planned Parenthood illegally profits from the sale of aborted baby tissue.

Daleiden and Merritt had been charged with tampering with a governmental record by using false identifications to enter Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast, based in Houston, and faced up to 20 years in prison for the felony. But prosecutors dropped the charges in advance of the hearing when attorneys for Daleiden and Merritt had planned to submit a motion to dismiss the accusations.

Separate misdemeanor charges of attempting to purchase human organs were dismissed June 14. Daleiden and CMP continue to face federal racketeering lawsuits filed by the National Abortion Federation and Planned Parenthood under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act. (BP)

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

First Baptist Church, located in downtown Tallahassee, Florida, is seeking God's guidance for a full-time senior pastor. We are a Bible-focused congregation that desires a dynamic preacher/teacher who can preach the gospel of Jesus Christ; possesses a deep and personal prayer life; has a strong focus on evangelism; and can pastor a diverse congregation. Candidates should have a minimum of a master's of divinity and a doctorate is preferred. For more information on our church, please refer to www.fbctlh.org/pastorsearch. Interested candidates or referrals should submit a cover letter and resumé to: pastorsearch@fbctlh.org or to the Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 710, Tallahassee, FL 32302. Review of resúmes and cover letters will begin Sept. 2.

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.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Catoma Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama, is prayerfully

seeking a bivocational pastor. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, Catoma Baptist Church, 4300 Old Selma Rd., Montgomery, AL 36108.

MINISTER OF MUSIC

Southside Baptist Church, Princeton, Kentucky, is accepting resúmes for a full-time minister of music. Email: musicsearchteam@southsidebaptist.com or mail: Southside Baptist, ATTN: Music Search, P.O. Box 684, Princeton, KY 42445.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC

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

OTHER POSITIONS

CHURCH SECRETARY

FBC Moody is taking resúmes for the position of full-time church secretary. Please send resúmes to: Max Bryant, 902 Church St., Moody, AL 35004. Resúmes will not be accepted after Aug. 19.

BIVOCATIONAL FINANCIAL SECRETARY

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

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- 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.

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Mark R. Brown



BROWN

*Southside Baptist Church, Fayette
Fayette Baptist Association*

FAVORITE VERSE: Proverbs 16:3

FAVORITE HYMN: "Because He Lives"

HOBBIES: Jogging, coaching youth sports, following the University of Alabama athletics

FAMILY STATUS: Husband of 22 years to wife, Donna Skelton Brown; son, Will

God has given me a platform through my business and my community service to share Him with others," said Mark R. Brown, 45, of Fayette. Brown does this as chairman of deacons and Sunday School teacher at his church; as a lay speaker; State Farm agent; board member of The Arc of Fayette/Lamar/Marengo Counties, Inc.; and president of both Fayette Area Chamber of Commerce and Lions Club.

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

A: Without a doubt my parents, Rayburn and Sandra Brown, were the biggest spiritual influences on my life. Their teachings carried over to our home where prayer and Bible reading was an everyday occurrence. Also I would say that God has blessed me with wonderful Sunday School, Discipleship Training and Vacation Bible School teachers in addition to godly pastors that made sure I heard the Word on a regular basis.

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

A: The example of ministry work was given by my parents. As I got older, the opportunities to help with (Royal Ambassadors) came along and I enjoyed giving back in that area. Today, some 20-plus years later, I am blessed to still be serving at Southside Baptist and also filling in for area pastors as a lay speaker on a regular basis.

Q: What does your ministry work demand?

A: Ministry work does require a time commitment. However, it is what we are called to do as Christians so it is truly a labor of love. The most important thing required is that I must make sure I stay in God's Word and spend time praying and seeking His guidance.

Q: What do you get from your ministry work?

A: I can say without a doubt that the joy I get from serving Christ in these various positions far outweighs anything I have given up.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: My wife, Donna, is very supportive. She also is very involved in the different ministries of our church so many times the work is a family affair. Our son, Will, enjoys his role and also is tremendously supportive.

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

A: I pray God continues to give me the good health and ability to serve in whatever capacity He allows.

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

A: Serving Christ is my life's goal. Serving others is part of that goal. Anytime I am serving it will include reading the Word and praying, so ministry work will certainly keep my walk closer to Christ.

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

A: Jesus is what life is all about. He is my Savior. He is my Lord. Simply put, Christ is my purpose. †

Author of SBC 'mosque building program' confirms it as satire

By Martha Simmons
Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

On May 28 the administrator of a rather obscure website called "The End Times — Apocalyptic Christian Satire" posted a provocative article titled "Southern Baptist Convention Launches Mosque Building Program to Promote 'Religious Liberty' And 'Niceness.'"

The satirical article followed on the heels of a brief signed earlier that month by the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) and International Mission Board, along with 16 other Christian and non-Christian groups, in support of the right of the Islamic Society of Basking Ridge (New Jersey) to build a mosque.

Some publications have reported on the topic and quoted the original article from *The End Times*. Despite the original post and website being clearly marked as satire, it was subsequently posted and reposted throughout cyberspace as fact, alarming readers and prompting various Southern Baptist publications, including *The Alabama Baptist*, to refute it.

Still the controversy continues. So who is the provocateur who penned this parody?

Scott Alan Buss, who describes himself as "a husband, father, speaker, author, blogger and member of Christ the King Church in Middle Tennessee," runs both *The End Times* website, launched March 21, and a blog called *Fire Breathing Christian* established in 2009.

The Alabama Baptist reached out to Buss for the following Q-and-A interview to clarify the issue.

Q. First do you confirm that this article is indeed satire?

A: The *End Times* site is a satire site. All articles posted at *The End Times* are satirical in nature, and the site is very clearly labeled as satirical. While we may occasionally link to nonsatire pieces from other sites in articles posted by *The End Times*, every article written and published under *The End Times* banner is satirical.

Q. Does "satire" or "parody" mean that all or parts of the story are false?

A: One nonsatirical article linked at the end of posts made at *The End Times* is an article on the subject of satire itself as considered from a Christian perspective.

Satire is a genre of literature in which vices, follies, abuses and shortcomings are held up to ridicule, ideally with the intent of shaming individuals, corporations, government or society itself, into improvement.

Although satire is usually meant to be humorous, its greater purpose is often constructive social criticism, using wit to draw attention to both particular and wider issues in society.

A common feature of satire is strong irony or sarcasm, but parody, exaggeration, juxtaposition, comparison and analogy are all frequently used in satirical speech and writing. This "militant" irony or sarcasm often professes to approve of (or at least accept as natural) the very things the satirist wishes to attack.

Q. What do you hope to accomplish by writing about this topic in this manner?

A: One major objective of *The End Times* is to use satirical elements modeled in Scripture and throughout Church history in a manner that inspires critical, Christ-centered examination of the issues and events currently shaping our lives, families, culture and civilization.

We live in an age of profound biblical illiteracy and hatred for the Word of God, with perpetual immaturity (at best) having become the norm even for most professing Christians in America. ... We are hoping to inspire Christ-centered contemplation, conviction, repentance and restoration in accordance with the true gospel-fueled Great Commission.

The End Times hopes to use the God-given tool of satire to expose the inherent absurdity of all unbiblical worldviews, including the absurdly unbiblical positions of many evangelical leaders who have played such a critical role in leading the culture to ruin. We do not undertake this mission out of anger or self-righteousness, but out of love for the lost and dying culture in which we have been purposefully placed.

"The End Times site is a satire site. All articles posted ... are satirical in nature and the site is clearly labeled."

**Scott Alan Buss
administrator, The End
Times website**

Q. Are there other, similar satirical sites that you are aware of focusing on Christian themes?

A: The *Babylon Bee* website, launched earlier this year, has been and continues to be an inspiration for *The End Times*. While we approach many things very differently, *The Bee* and its success have been very encouraging to us.

Q. A lot of people have trouble distinguishing between satire and fact, especially on social media. How do you respond to credulous readers?

A: Our general approach is to point out that the site is clearly labeled as satire by referring readers to any number of clear identifiers, including our regularly promoted "Apocalyptic Christian Satire" tagline and the "About *The End Times*" link at the bottom of every page at the site. Usually this simple clarification is all that's needed. Anyone wondering and willing to spend 30 seconds investigating any article at *The End Times* should have no trouble discovering its satirical nature.

Q. I notice that you have written other satirical articles critical of Southern Baptists since your "mosques" story — what is your major problem with the denomination?

A: Having grown up in Southern Baptist churches and personally experienced (for most of my life) the shallow, lazy, unbiblical approach that is now sadly typical in the denomination with regard to the true, everything-touching gospel, I'm particularly grieved and feel a burden to do whatever I'm able to help shine some light and splash some cold water where needed in order to help wake people up.

Of course, any success along those lines will only come by God's grace, but He has clearly commanded and equipped His people to do that sort of thing, often making them the means by which He accomplishes just the sort of reformation that is so desperately needed now. †

Reaching young adults

Investing in next generation important for churches

(continued from page 1)
to their daily lives, said Lee Hanks, a leader in the department.

“What we’ve found is that these young adults are looking for people to pour into them, to mentor them and guide them,” Hanks said. “From a ministry perspective, we also believe that it’s important for them to have Bible study and discussion with people in the same life stage.”

Creating community among young adults is key to engaging them in ministry, Mitchell said. That might mean a Bible study is offered at a time other than Sunday morning and that it includes a meal or social element. The community also should be their own. In other words, parents should not be included.

“Most young adults do not want to attend the same Bible study or Sunday School class that their

parents attend,” Mitchell said.

That doesn’t mean that older adults have no place in singles ministry, however. Young adults respond well to engaging teachers who are strong in their walk with Christ, Mitchell said. Just as importantly, they need spiritual mentors who will live life with them, regardless of how messy it gets.

“Young adults want people who will listen to them instead of always talking, who will listen below the surface and not be afraid or scared when challenged,” Mitchell said.

Many young adults have not fully considered their beliefs, so they may be searching out spiritual direction and answers for the first time, Mitchell said. They need to share those questions in safe community, but ultimately they must come to faith individually.

The opportunity to invest in the

lives of young adults is one reason Hanks was drawn to singles ministry.

“One of the things I’m most excited about is that as a leader, you have an opportunity to be very transparent with them and share your own life experiences,” Hanks said. “My wife and I have experienced things in life, and we’ve made a lot of mistakes. Our experience helps us facilitate these groups, to show them what it means to be a disciple, to grow and learn to be more like Jesus.”

Desire responsibilities

Young adults also tend to be very active outside of church, but they desire responsibilities within the church, Mitchell said.

“Place them on committees and listen to their input,” she advises. “They just may bring a new idea to the table that will benefit the church. Will they always come through? No. But I know some older adults who don’t either.”

Young adults appreciate passion and time, and though singles ministry is a lot of work, it’s vital to the future, Hanks said.

“We should be doing this — investing in the next generation.”

“What we’ve found is that these young adults are looking for people to pour into them.”

**Lee Hanks
Dayspring Baptist
Church, Mobile**



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— Randy Lamon, Minister of Education/Administration
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Thomas 'Tom' Collier Former ABCH exec. dies

Thomas "Tom" Collier, retired executive director of the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH), died July 28. He was 88.

He began serving at ABCH in 1960 as the assistant superintendent and oversaw the addition of ABCH campuses in Decatur and Mobile and a group home in Tuscaloosa. He then served as general superintendent from 1975 to 1980 before becoming executive director in 1981. He retired in 1990 after almost three decades of service to ABCH. During his leadership, Collier also saw ABCH integrate its ministry.

He also taught at Clements High

School in Athens and served as principal of the former Wheeler Elementary School in Athens. He also was a mathematician at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville.



COLLIER

At the time of his death Collier was a member of First Baptist Church, Troy, where he was honored as a deacon emeritus in 2015.

He received a bachelor's and master's degree from Athens State University and an honorary doctorate from Mobile College (now the University of Mobile).

Collier was preceded in death by his first wife, Mildred, and his second wife, June. He is survived by three children, five grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren, two stepchildren, five step-grandchildren and two step-great-grandchildren.

"Dr. Collier provided visionary leadership coupled with a commitment to excellent stewardship and unquestionable integrity to this ministry," said Rod Marshall, president and CEO of ABCH. "His lasting impact will be felt for generations to come." (Hannah Muñoz)

Noxie Taylor Music minister dies at 90

Noxie Taylor, who served in music ministry for 70 years,

died July 27. He was 90.

Taylor, who served in the Navy during World War II, earned a bachelor's degree from Mississippi State University in Starkville, and a master's degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.



TAYLOR

A Mississippi native, Taylor served as minister of music at several churches throughout the Southeast including First Baptist Church, Talladega; First Baptist Church, Louisville, Mississippi;

Temple Baptist Church, Ruston, Louisiana; and a church in Atlanta.

After retiring from full-time ministry in 1989, Taylor served in interim positions, including at First Baptist Church, Oxford.

He also served as the volunteer coordinator for the construction of the adventure camp cabins at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega. He served for many years on Carpenters for Christ teams and traveled to work with the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention on multiple occasions.

He was a member of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, at the time of his death.

Taylor is survived by his wife, Louise; three children; five grandchildren; and 10 great-grandchildren. (Neisha Roberts)

Supreme Court order may be 'positive development' for state's stance on transgender bathrooms

It's a step in the right direction, according to Attorney General Luther Strange, who praised the U.S. Supreme Court's Aug. 3 decision to block a federal appeals court order to allow transgender bathroom access in a Virginia public high school.

The case involved Gavin

Grimm, a 17-year-old transgender male, who battled against the Gloucester County School Board's refusal to allow him to use the restroom that matches his gender identity (male), instead of his birth sex (female).

The U.S. Supreme Court's 5-3 decision means the school board's

decision stands for now and Grimm will not be allowed access to the boys' bathroom.

In a press release, Strange said the U.S. Supreme Court's stay on the case was a "positive development."

"This is ... an indication that the U.S. Supreme Court could eventually overturn the Obama administration's order mandating that America's public schools allow students access to restrooms and locker rooms of their gender identity rather than sex," Strange said.

The decision "certainly raises the possibility that the High Court will also rule in support of a separate legal challenge against the Obama administration filed by Alabama and 10 other states in May," he said.

Since the original brief was filed in May, two more states joined the case. The states now include: Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, West Virginia, Wisconsin, the Arizona Department of Education and Maine's Governor Paul LePage, who has joined in a personal capacity and not as a representative of the state. (Neisha Roberts)



STRANGE



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For August 14

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

PROTECTED

1 Samuel 25:14-17,32-38

Disaster Foreseen (14-17)

After Samuel dies, David and his men go to the wilderness of Paran. Needing food and water, David sends 10 of his men to a wealthy man named Nabal. The author describes Nabal as “harsh and badly behaved” (1 Sam. 25:3), who has a beautiful wife named Abigail. Though her role may seem inconsequential now, I will show how Abigail represents the bride whom Jesus claimed from an unworthy master.

Later in the story, David’s men at last arrive and ask Nabal for provisions. Nabal’s response reveals his unworthy character: “Shall I take my bread and my water and my meat that I have killed for my shearers and give it to men who come from a place with which I am unacquainted?” (1 Sam. 25:11). Incensed by this response, David and his men prepare for battle.

It is important to realize that in ancient Near Eastern cultures it was often considered dishonorable to refuse someone in need of hospitality or provisions. Such a gesture could lead to the offended party seeking to reclaim honor. David had indeed been dishonored, and he was now on a quest to regain what he had lost.

Abigail hears of her husband rebuffing David’s men and is asked to consider intervening, lest harm come upon the servants and house of Nabal.

David Relents (32-35)

Abigail goes to David to plead for mercy. In the process she affirms that the Lord will make a “sure house” for David (1 Sam. 25:28) and has appointed him “prince over Israel,” statements which affirm the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7. In short, Abigail trusts that David is God’s anointed. In response David relents and offers her his blessing. It is interesting to see how Abi-

gail’s petition for mercy and her profession lead to her being accepted in David’s sight.

God Intervenes (36-38)

After a night of festivities, Abigail reveals to Nabal the actions she had taken to avert David’s anger. Nabal’s “heart died within him and he became as stone. And about 10 days later the Lord struck Nabal and he died” (vv. 37-38). Following his death, David took Abigail to be his wife.

If this were a fairy tale, we may be inclined to say, “And they lived happily ever after.” And the story would be over. But it’s not. If the story ends with David taking Abigail to be his wife, what makes this a Christian reading of Scripture? What makes this any different from the way a rabbi would preach the text? Absolutely nothing.

We must see the Christocentric perspective in this story, that is, how it points to Christ. This is it: As took David took Abigail to be his wife after God had struck down Nabal, so too Jesus takes His Church to be His bride after He crushes Satan at the cross. Both Nabal and Satan were worthless and evil, so they were destroyed, releasing their brides to wed faithful husbands. In the case of the Church, she was released to dwell with Christ forever.

In his interpretation of the man “cleaving” to his wife in Genesis 2:24, Paul says: “This mystery is profound and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church” (Eph. 5:32). When we read Scripture like Paul, we see that every text points to Jesus (cf. Luke 24). The marriage between a man and a woman anticipates the greater David, Jesus Christ, claiming His bride, the Church, from a worthless serpent.

Like Abigail, our trust in Jesus Christ delivers us from the power of Satan and into the arms of Jesus (Heb. 2:14-15; Col. 1:13; Titus 2:14). David and Abigail’s marriage gives us a picture of Christ’s love for His bride. †

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

INVEST MONEY WISELY Ecclesiastes 11:1-6

The American prosperity gospel is very popular in our country. Put simply, the prosperity gospel is the belief that God grants health and wealth to those with the right kind of faith. Televangelists promote spiritual formulas to earn God’s miracle money. It may be the reason why your uncle has a copy of Dale Carnegie’s “How to Win Friends and Influence People.”

The prosperity gospel popularized a Christian explanation for why some people make it and some do not. They revolutionized prayer as an instrument for getting God always to say “yes.” It offers people a guarantee: Follow these rules, and God will reward you, heal you and restore you.

Ecclesiastes 11 offers other advice more practical, down to earth and obedient to Scripture.

Don’t put all your eggs in one basket. (1-2)

Many Americans believe that the adage found in these verses came from Benjamin Franklin, but it comes from Scripture. It advocates liberality motivated by the promise of a good return on generosity, not sevenfold, but hopefully with some benefit.

However, the first verse needs to be combined with the second which suggests that we need to be thoughtful about how to invest our money. Export of goods can be profitable and, almost speaking in the words of a modern day mutual fund, Scripture suggests that our investments should be diversified. These seven or eight opportunities are not specified, but we can assume that care and caution need to be taken when investments are made.

We should be careful, however, of interpreting these verses in suggesting that

if we give to God and the needs of others, then we won’t lack anything and that God will not only give us back what we have given, but provide us with more.

The truth of the matter is that if we give a tithe of our money — one-tenth of what we earn — then the only promise we have is that we are being obedient to the will of God and will have 90 percent of our income to live on.

Misfortune may arise but keep working. (3-4)

These verses reiterate a common theme of Scripture which reminds us that we do not know what the future holds. We may look to our weather forecasters for information about projected rainfall in our geographical area. We may watch the television during a tornado warning and try to predict when and where a tornado may hit the ground. Yet it is not prudent to watch the storms and do nothing to protect ourselves from them.

We are called to sow and reap in harmony with natural forces, but we cannot dictate that these forces will always work in our favor. Furthermore we cannot just wait and watch and do nothing. In economic terms we are to be prudent in our investments, but we are called to invest in order to gain an income for the present and the future.

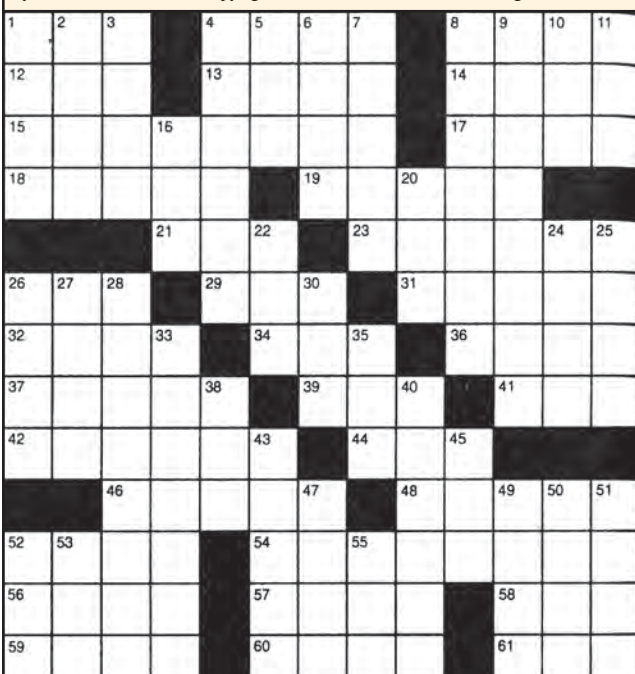
Life is uncertain, so leave it all in God’s hands. (5-6)

Whatever we do in terms of investments, we are called to be people who work for our living, to ensure that in the morning we sow seed and in the evening do not let our hands be idle.

God has called us to make full use of our talents to earn money, to invest wisely and to ultimately put our hope and trust in God. Our chances of harvesting are much better if we actually sow the seed and pull up the weeds. †

Christian Crossword

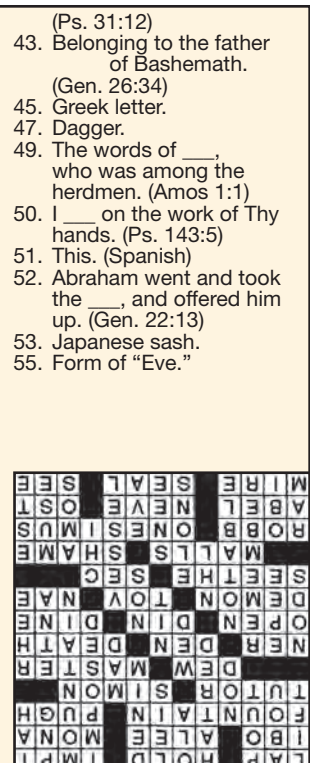
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Across

- Separate those who ___ the water ... like a dog. (Judg. 7:5)
- ___ fast that which is good. (1 Thess. 5:21)
- Kaffir warrior.
- People group living near Africa’s lower Niger.
- Away from the wind.
- Woman’s name.
- So can no ___ both yield salt water and fresh. (James 3:12)
- A family name.
- But is under ___s and governors. (Gal. 4:2)
- ___, I have somewhat to say unto thee. (Luke 7:40)
- In the morning the ___ lay round about the host. (Ex. 16:13)
- Then the ___ of the house shall be brought unto the judges. (Ex. 22:8)
- And ___ begat Kish. (1 Chron. 8:33)
- Cast into the ___ of lions. (Dan. 6:7)
- O ___, where is thy sting? (1 Cor. 15:55)
- Hereafter ye shall see heaven ___. (John 1:51)
- Noise.

- A certain Pharisee besought him to ___ with him. (Luke 11:37)
- The ___ threw him to the ground. (Luke 9:42)
- Mazel.
- No. (Scottish)
- Thou shalt not ___ a kid in his mother’s milk. (Ex. 23:19)
- Securities and Exchange Commission. (abbr.)
- Shopping meccas.
- They were counted worthy to suffer ___ for his name. (Acts 5:41)
- Virginia senator.
- I beseech thee for my son ___. (Phil. 10)
- By faith ___ offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice. (Heb. 11:4)
- Glacial snow field.
- Oven.
- Thy feet are sunk in the ___. (Jer. 38:22)
- ___ not the sayings of the prophecy of this book. (Rev. 22:10)
- We shall ___ him as he is. (1 John 3:2)
- hands which hang down. (Heb. 12:12)
- Father. (Arabic)
- Sulk.
- Hostility.
- Woman’s name.
- Hawaiian gifts of greeting.
- Jeans fabric.
- Carnal ordinances, ___ on them. (Heb. 9:10)
- Say unto this ___, Remove hence. (Matt. 17:20)
- Persona non grata. (abbr.)
- Biblical name ending.
- And Cain went ... and dwelt in the land of ___. (Gen. 4:16)
- I am not ___, most noble Festus. (Acts 26:25)
- Marry.
- Sicilian volcano.
- Korean president.
- Dozes.
- Fencing sword.
- ___ now thy Creator. (Eccles. 12:1)
- Insect.
- Having a reputation.
- Nitrous Oxide Systems. (abbr.)
- National Hockey League. (abbr.)
- I am like a broken ___.



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3. 365 Moments of Peace for a Woman's Heart

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6. La Iglesia Como Un Equipo

By Wayne Cordiero
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7. Church History

By Gloria Shahin &
Joanna Dailey
(Saint Mary's Press)

8. Christian Morality

By Brian Singer-Towns
(Saint Mary's Press)

Source: popvortex.com



TAB AR

Photo courtesy of Proper Management

Unspoken is composed of (l to r) Jon Lowry, Ariel Munoz, Chad Mattson, Don Eanes and Mike Gomez.

Christian band Unspoken 'in awe' of God's provision

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

A few years ago Chad Mattson had three words to describe his life — dark, deep and desperate.

"I grew up in church, but I got derailed along the way and got into using drugs and alcohol," he said.

It got worse and worse. And around the point where he felt like time was about to run out for him, Mattson got a card from some missionaries he knew in the Dominican Republic.

"Sort of like a Hail Mary, like one last big play in the game, I got in touch with them and said, 'My life is a wreck, but is there any way I could come hang out with you for two months?'"

They said yes.

And while he was there, things changed.

"For the first time in my life — even though I grew up in church — I started to hang out with God and pray and read the Bible and get to know who Jesus is," he said.

To know Jesus is to love Him, Mattson said. "And to love Him is to truly live."

That's the message he shares now as lead vocalist for the musical group Unspoken. It was something God began to work in him from the moment he started really getting to know Jesus.

"I met a guy in the Dominican Republic who played guitar and he moved back to Maine with me, bought my grandparents' blue Cadillac with 175,000 miles on it and we started making music."

'Living below the poverty line'

They picked up two more band members and started singing at open mic nights and concerts whenever they could.

"We were all literally living below the poverty line," Mattson said. "We were leaving our families every weekend to play music and working odd jobs when we were home to try to make ends meet."

Life was an immediate struggle, and "that was the first 10 years," Mattson said, noting that the band — now in its 13th year — has added a fifth member.

And they've seen some success from their first album, enough to be able to focus on their music without having to worry about the electricity being turned off, he said.

"We're all in awe of what God has done," he said, and that spirit of thankfulness is all over their second album, "Follow Through," which releases Aug. 26.

'Gratitude-driven'

"These new songs came out of a different place from the last record," Mattson said. "In the past there was so

much uncertainty and struggle in our lives that was reflected in our songwriting. Now we're writing songs that are really gratitude-driven. This new record is joyful and uplifting as opposed to being born out of the grind and the struggle. We're just grateful for where we are now, for where God has brought us on this journey."

"Higher," the first track on the new album, sets a great tone for the project, Mattson said. In that song, the band sings that "the lower I go, the more I'm gonna lift You higher."

"It's inevitable that we all have highs and lows. Every season is different," Mattson said. "Our circumstances and our feelings can't dictate the worthiness of God. This song is our way of worshipping in the midst of that."

Another track, "So Good to Me," was written in such a way as to step back and look at what God has done for the band over the years.

And "Life in the Death of Me" is Mattson's personal testimony.

"We wanted to go back to the basics of why we started and what the vision was 10 years ago," he said. "We wanted the album to remind us that we're followers of Christ, that we should be passionate and hold onto that first love and finish strong."

For more information, visit www.unspokenmusic.com. ☩





RNS photo

Photography and documentation of a 10th–9th century B.C. burial take place in the excavation of the Philistine cemetery by the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon.

‘Unlocking the secrets’

Archaeologists dig up Philistine artifacts at Gath site

The Gath archaeological site in southern Israel is littered with distinctive 2,800-year-old pottery shards poking out of the ground — a strong indication, archaeologists and biblical scholars say, that the Philistines, the mighty warriors and arch enemies of the Israelites, once lived here.

The excavation, now in its 21st year, is one of a handful of digs in southern Israel producing everything from vessels to bones belonging to the people best known for their famous warrior Goliath, who fought the young David in the book of 1 Samuel. The Philistines lived in what is now southern Israel from around 1200 B.C. until 604 B.C. when they were destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar.

In 2015 the team at Gath/Tel Zafit (also known as Tell es-Safi) discovered a massive city gate reminiscent of the one where David took shelter when he fled from King Saul.

On July 10 a team excavating in nearby Ashkelon announced they had found the first Philistine cemetery ever discovered.

Historical evidence

While archaeologists at both sites said such discoveries do not “prove” that biblical accounts are historical fact, “we have finally come face to face with the people themselves,” Daniel M. Master, professor of archaeology at Wheaton College in Illinois and co-director of the Ashkelon dig, said of the 3,000-year-old cemetery.

“With this discovery we are close to unlocking the secrets of the Philistines’ origins,” he added.

Ashkelon is 1 of the 5 Philistine cities mentioned in the Hebrew Bible and other ancient texts.

Bone samples from the site are undergoing DNA, radiocarbon and biological distance studies to help ascertain the Philistines’ origin.

Until now, Master said, “individual remains, believed to be Philistine, have been discovered, but never a cemetery.

“This one has well over 100 graves of men, women and children, some containing groups of people, some individual.”

On a stiflingly hot July day at Gath/Tel Zafit, the hometown of the biblical Goliath, dozens of mostly young volunteers erected a tent over what appears to be an ancient olive press.

Pottery shards, vessels

A hundred yards away another team was preparing to dig up a ceramic vessel whose round top was visible through the top soil.

The vessel might have held beer, a drink enjoyed by the Philistines, according to earlier findings.

Picking through a pile of newly excavated pottery shards, Aren Maeir, director of the Ackerman Family Bar-Ilan University Expedition to Gath, said it is possible to find Philistine ruins within an inch or two of the surface because no one has ever attempted to build atop some of the Philistine city’s ruins.

David Kotter, dean of theology at Colorado Christian University in Lakewood, said having his students dig up artifacts at a site mentioned in the Bible has strengthened their faith.

“There are things you can’t learn in the classroom. Being here makes the ancient texts come alive and gives students confidence in the historicity of the texts,” he said.

Diona Southcott, a student at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, agreed.

Southcott spoke of the excitement of standing in the same riverbed where, according to the Bible, David picked up the stones he hurled at Goliath. (RNS)

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Muslims kill 38-year-old pastor in Uganda

BUBULANGA, Uganda — Upset with a pastor for evangelizing and refusing to sell them land for a mosque, Muslims in eastern Uganda tied him up and killed him July 24, sources said.

Pastor Robert Bakulubanywa of Bubulanga Victory Church in Bubulanga village, Kibuku District, was on his way home from an evening fellowship when a band of Muslims killed him near his house, sources said. He was 38.

Bakulubanywa’s wife said area Muslims had threatened the pastor on several occasions.

“The Muslims had issued several warnings to him to stop converting the Muslims to Christ, especially the youth,” said his wife, whose name is withheld for security reasons. “For over a month the Muslims have been pressuring us to sell a piece of land to them for the construction of a mosque, but my husband refused.”

The pastor’s wife said she became troubled when her husband was delayed in arriving home July 24. After trying to call him without success she called a church elder who told her the pastor left for home at about 7:30 p.m. with another member of the church.

“I telephoned a neighbor who had accompanied the pastor, and he informed me that some five Muslims stopped them on the way and started questioning Robert on several issues, including taking their young boys to church,” she said. “The talk got tense, and one of them tightly got hold of him. The neighbor then took off for his life, leaving my husband struggling with the gang.”

Christians reported the killing to the local council chairman, Tyogo Muniru, a Muslim, who took no action. Later Kibuku police station received a report and at press time officers were searching for the killers.

In predominantly Muslim Bubulanga village, the killing has left area Christians confused, frustrated and fearing for their lives, sources said. (MS)

Businessman forced to flee family after conversion

BUDHAGALI, Uganda — A 53-year-old man in eastern Uganda sits alone in a small shanty after losing his family, house and business because he left Islam for Christianity.

Muslim relatives drove Kuluseni Iguru Tenywa, a former imam, from his ancestral home June 27 in Budhagali village, Jinja District. Led by his brother-in-law, 45-year-old Isa Nsaja, the relatives gathered outside Tenywa’s house.

“I heard people talking outside my house around 8 p.m., saying that they wanted to take away my life and, ‘We cannot watch the whole family turning to Christianity,’” Tenywa said.

He escaped through a back door.

“I had to flee that night, leaving my entire family behind,” said the father of four children, ages 10, 12, 14 and 17.

Prior to his conversion Tenywa said an evil spirit had been tormenting him for many years before he visited Elim Church in his village May 28.

“I was prayed for in the power of Isa [Jesus] and invited Him into my heart, which broke the strength of the evil spirit that was troubling me,” he said. “I remember my vision got blurred and I felt faint. The pastor authoritatively, using some commanding words in Isa’s name, finally delivered me.”

When the story of Tenywa’s conversion reached his family and other relatives, they became incensed and told him to go back to Islam because it was the religion of his clan, he said. Tenywa told them he could not deny what Jesus had done for him.

About 85 percent of the people in Uganda are Christian and 11 percent Muslim, with some eastern areas having large Muslim populations. The country’s constitution and other laws provide for religious freedom, including the right to propagate one’s faith and convert from one faith to another, but Christians in eastern Uganda are suffering continual attacks by nonstate figures. (MS)