

INSIDE



Kairos ministry shows love, shares Christ with incarcerated women

◆ Page 3



Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference 2016 to address struggles

◆ Page 7



Shiloh Judgment Seat marks 25 years of changing lives, hearts for Christ

◆ Page 9

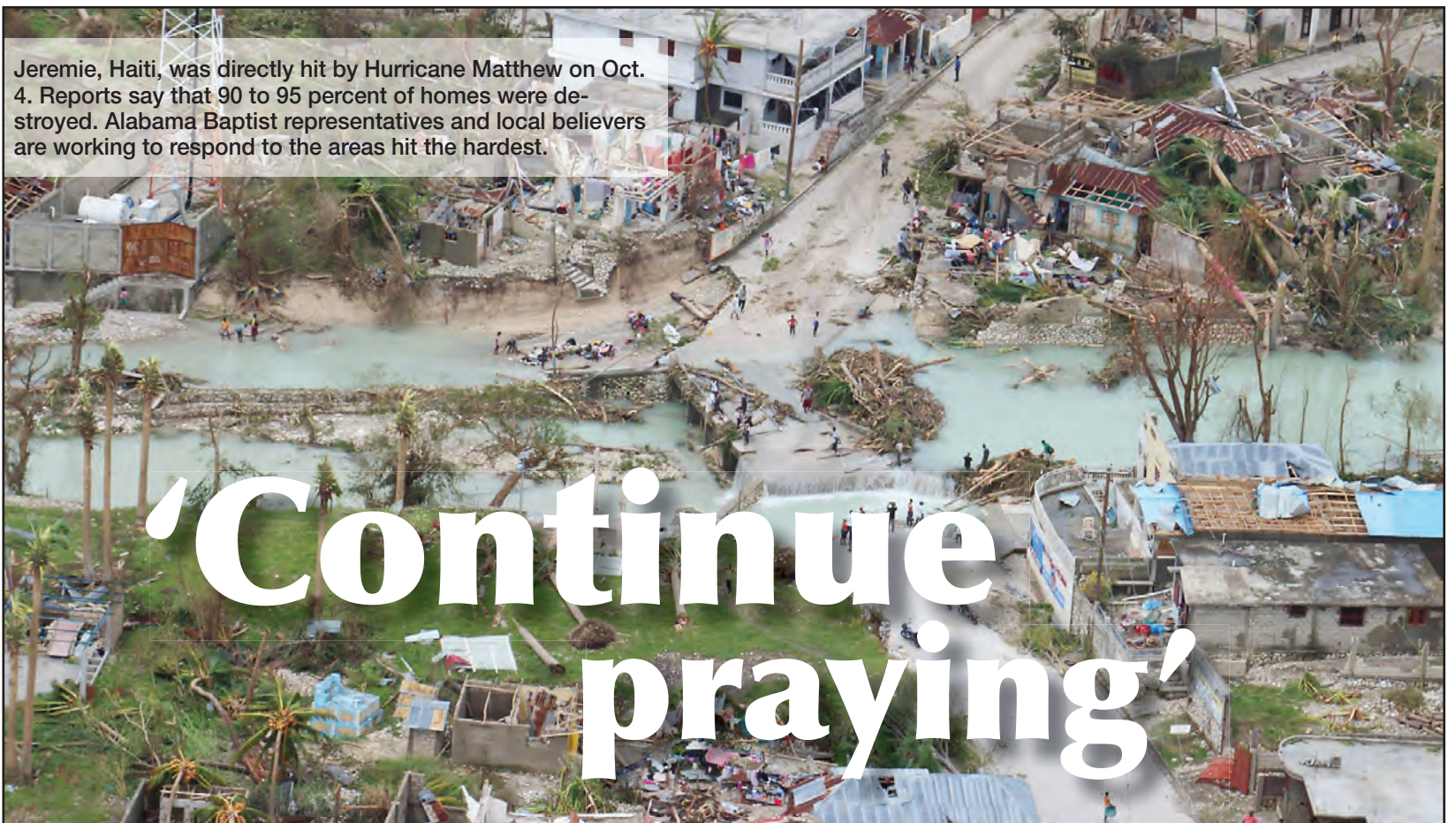


Photo by Tim Schandorff/courtesy of Children's Hope/MAF

'Continue praying'

Assessments, life-saving relief efforts continue after Hurricane Matthew

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

By 7 a.m. that morning Jared McCrory had heard from officials at Children's Hope in Jacmel, Haiti, accounting for the safety of each of the 40-plus children in their care. The report came five hours after the Category 4 Hurricane Matthew had pummeled the country Oct. 4.

McCrory, executive director of the First Baptist Church, Montgomery, orphan ministry in Haiti and member of the Montgomery Baptist Association church, said the hurricane bypassed Jacmel so it caused little damage at the Children's Hope campus, which houses the children's home, medical/dental clinic and missions team housing.

However, the areas of Jeremie and

Anse du Clerc took a direct hit where 99 percent of homes in the area were reported as missing roofs or being severely damaged.

Immediately after the storm had passed Children's Hope staff members were able to distribute 40 bags of food to families in the greatest need around the Jacmel campus, McCrory said, and within the first few days about 250 families were assisted in some way.

Families most in need

Now the ministry — which focuses on foster care, adoption and orphan care in the No. 20 poorest country in the world — faces the task of reaching families most in need. That will require reports from ministry partners and the assessment team of five that landed in Anse du Clerc on Oct. 13.

"Through our local partners (staff, pastors and others) we'll be assessing the families ... and seeking to assist them through provision of food and supplies until they are able to recover from their losses," said McCrory, noting the assessment team included two nurses. The team also took more than 500 pounds of food with them as well as medicine and other supplies.

And, according to McCrory, the ministry "feels compelled to focus on Anse du Clerc because we're not sure if anyone has focused on them yet." The assessment team also will work in conjunction with Haitian partners and Pathfinder Mission, another ministry in Haiti, to determine if there is a need for skilled volunteers from the United States.

"From there we will develop a strategy for ensuring the communities have access to adequate food, water, shelter and provisions. We'll look to help repair and rebuild the houses (in Anse du Clerc) and help replant crops," McCrory said.

Teams also will focus on replanting crops in Jacmel, where residents "depend on them for their living."

"Please continue praying for the people of southwest Haiti and pray for us as we seek to respond with compassion, wisdom and effectiveness," McCrory said.

"It's our privilege to stand with and serve with our Haitian brothers and sisters in this time of great need."

A cholera outbreak also is a concern in Haiti as the "deadly bacteria can be found in contaminated water," according to MAP International, a Christian organization providing life-saving medicines to people in poverty.

MAP sent a shipping container full of essential medicines and medical supplies to Haiti to help prevent the bacteria from spreading. The Interagency Emergency Health Kit that the (See 'Disaster,' page 8)



Photo courtesy of Children's Hope

A Children's Hope child helps distribute bags of food to those in need in Jacmel, Haiti.

COMMENT

Throwing Stones at One Another?

According to an article in *The Christian Post*, Southern Baptists may be on the front end of throwing stones at one another because of the decline in baptisms.

That baptisms are down has been widely reported. For the last year of record, Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) churches reported 295,212 baptisms, a drop of 19 percent in five years and a decline in eight of the last 10 years.

According to the article some are pointing a finger of blame at the growing influence of Calvinism in SBC life. *Christian Post* said it tried to get comments from “strict Calvinists within the SBC such as Albert Mohler Jr. (president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary), Russell Moore (president of the SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission), Mark Dever (pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington) and David Platt (president of the International Mission Board)” but they were “either traveling or otherwise unable to respond by press time.”

‘A silly myth’

The news service wanted to ask, “Are critics correct who say 5-point Calvinist theology produces a ‘frozen chosen’ mindset and that stricter Calvinist views yield less outreach and altar calls? Or is that, as others assert, a silly myth?”

Recent SBC presidential contender J.D. Greear did respond, however. He answered, “In my experience, it’s too simplistic to blame one group of people for our collective failure to evangelize.” Greear, pastor of Summit Church, Durham, North Carolina, added, “Jesus gave every one of us the Great Commission and if we’re not carrying it out, that’s just plain unfaithful.”

Sharing one’s faith

Greear is exactly right. One reliable survey of 2,500 people who regularly attended evangelical churches found that 57 percent did not share how to become a Christian with anyone during a six-month period. Only 29 percent shared how to become a Christian more than twice.

Obviously the problem of not sharing Christ



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

is with all of us, not just some of us. Trying to place blame on others rather than accepting our own responsibility for the decline in baptisms is misguided.

Still there is no denying that life is changing in Baptist Zion. Not only has the Baptist identity dropped from many church names, a growing number of churches have abandoned public invitations for people to make first-time commitments to Jesus Christ.

In part the decline in invitations reflects a new evangelism strategy. Fewer nonbelievers attended worship services, the reasoning goes, so why give invitations. Most decisions for Christ are made outside the walls of the church building. Those decisions can be reported to the congregation.

Over-emotional invitations

Another part of the explanation is reaction to what some judge to be manipulative and over-emotional invitations. If a preacher can talk someone into accepting Christ then someone else can talk that person into rejecting Christ, some say.

The Church needs to rely more on the Holy Spirit drawing people to Jesus, they argue, and not on psychological pressure and manipulation.

Still another factor may be the theological position of Calvinism that God’s grace is irresistible so everyone that God calls must come to Him with or without human agency. The belief that invitations are not essential to evangelism may be playing a part in the decline of public invitations.

Who is lost?

Perhaps more important questions about evangelism (or the lack of it) are about who is lost and who can be saved.

Most Baptists agree with what Calvinism calls “total depravity,” meaning that all are lost.

In the Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M) 2000 that belief is expressed in these words: “Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward

sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation” (Article III).

The apostle Paul expressed this teaching more succinctly when he wrote, “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

Most Baptists also agree that “There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord” (BF&M, Article IV). The teaching is expanded in Article II B with the statement that Jesus “in His substitutionary death on the cross ... made provision for the redemption of men from sin.”

‘Redemption of the whole man’

If Baptists believe all are lost and that Jesus provides the only way of salvation, then who can be saved?

Again, BF&M 2000 states: “Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour” (Article IV). Later in the same article one reads, “Justification is God’s gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ.”

In 1925 when the first BF&M was adopted, the position of Baptists was clear. The original BF&M had a section titled “The Freeness of Salvation,” which read, “The blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel. It is the duty of all to accept them by penitent and obedient faith. Nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner except his own voluntary refusal to accept Jesus Christ as Teacher, Savior and Lord.”

‘Limited atonement’

A century ago Southern Baptists believed and preached “whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:13). That is what I grew up believing and what I still preach.

Strict Calvinists believe in what is often described as “limited atonement.” Jesus died only for the elect, the teaching holds, and only the elect can be saved.

The difference between “whosoever will” theology and “limited atonement” theology is obvious. In the past that difference has created tensions between believers.

That is why it is important to hear Greear’s second sentence, “Jesus gave every one of us the Great Commission and if we’re not carrying it out, that’s just plain unfaithful.”

If we believe in sharing the good news of Jesus with everyone to the ends of the earth then we can encourage one another, celebrate one another’s victories and not deteriorate into throwing stones of accusations and guilt at one another. ✠

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TAB

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

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Photo courtesy of Charlene Ferniz

Charlene Ferniz (second from left), serves with Kairos Prison Ministry of Alabama. Ferniz served a prison sentence in 2010. She became a believer after women from First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, shared about God's forgiveness.

God's forgiveness

Kairos ministry shows love, shares gospel with incarcerated women

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When you're in prison, often the first thing you feel is that you'll never be forgiven.

And the last thing you feel is that anyone could ever really love you.

That's why Charlene Ferniz says she loves going there with a microphone and a big love to share — because God redeemed her from the exact same place and showed her that those two things weren't true.

"In 2010, I was arrested for a crime I did commit," she said, and while she was in the county jail awaiting trial, she began to read her Bible. When she was transferred to Julia Tutwiler Prison for Women in Wetumpka, she met some women from First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, who became her lifeline when she was released from prison. They met her immediate needs, and they plugged her into church.

Making connections

And now Ferniz tries to connect others with Christ in the same way those women did for her. She serves on a team with Kairos Prison Ministry of Alabama that goes twice a year into the Federal Correctional Institution for women in Aliceville for a weekend-long event.

And while she's there she speaks to the incarcerated women about God's forgiveness and about how He set her free.

"It's all to show them that God loves them and that there are people out there who care about them," she said. "When you're at your lowest, that's where you can begin to go up. And God is the only way, period. A lot of my talk is my story and about how I fell in love with Jesus."

Kairos weekends are held regularly in 13 facilities all around the state. During the most recent Kairos weekend in Aliceville — held in late August — 30 women from the ministry met with 42 inmates chosen by prison staff for days of talks, prayers and fellowship.

Pat Lee, team leader for the event, said the volunteers participate in the ministry because "Jesus tells us to love those who are in prison."

During the weekend the women hear messages from volunteers and testimonies from people like Ferniz and are divided up into family groups for meals.

Lee said part of the idea of Kairos is to break down the walls and get everyone on a level playing field so volunteers can invest in the lives of the women there. But it's also to help

the inmates bond with each other so they can keep living out their faith together after the weekend is over.

"It's structured and the method works," she said. It's a tremendous ministry and Lee said she's glad she gets to be a part of it.

"When I moved to Pickens County, this prison was basically in my backyard and I wanted to get involved in reaching out," she said. "This ministry reaches women and teaches them that God is the God of grace. Many have never had someone who loved them unconditionally."

And God can come in and change their lives, Lee said.

Ferniz agreed.

"My life since I left that life behind and came alive in Christ has been

very, very positive — much better than I ever thought possible," she said. "It changed everything for me and I know that it can change everything for others too. I want to pass it on."

Volunteer opportunities

Kairos has volunteer opportunities for its weekend events around the state. It also has a ministry called Kairos Outside, which reaches out to female family members of incarcerated men, and Kairos Torch, which reaches out to juvenile offenders.

Kairos, founded in the 1970s, serves prisons in 35 states and nine other countries and conducts 600 weekend events every year worldwide.

For more information about Kairos and how to get involved, visit www.kairos-al.org or call First, Tuscaloosa, at 205-345-7554. ☛



Photo by Barbara Smith

Charlene Ferniz works as a secretary at First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa.

Alabama Baptist GIVING

Year to date through September 30, 2016

SEPTEMBER

CP Challenge Budget Goal \$3,333,333.33
CP Challenge Budget Gifts \$3,147,457.00
Under Goal for Month \$185,876.33

YEAR TO DATE

CP Challenge Budget Goal \$30,000,000.00
CP Challenge Budget Gifts \$29,438,506.00
Under Goal for Year \$561,494.00

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



Evangelical leaders urge Obama to reject religious liberty report

Southern Baptist Russell Moore and a number of other religious leaders are calling for President Barack Obama and Congress to reject a report that could severely limit religious freedom if followed by the government in the future.

The report, released in early September by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (USCCR), claims that religious organizations use their right to religious liberty as a veil for discrimination.

"The phrases 'religious liberty' and 'religious freedom' will stand for nothing except hypocrisy so long as they remain code words for discrimination, intolerance, racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia, Christian supremacy or any form of intolerance," Martin Castro, USCCR chairman, wrote in the report titled "Peaceful Coexistence: Reconciling Non-Discrimination Principles with Civil Liberties."

Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, and other signers asked Obama, Senate President Pro Tempore Orrin Hatch and House Speaker Paul Ryan to "renounce publicly the claim that 'religious freedom' and 'religious liberty' are 'code words' or a 'pretext' for various forms of discrimination."

The letter signers — who include evangelical Christian, Catholic, African Methodist Episcopal, Jewish, Muslim, Mormon and Hare Krishna leaders — said they understand "people of good faith can disagree about the relationship between religious liberty and antidiscrimination laws." Yet, they said, "[W]e are one in demanding that no American citizen or institution be labeled by their government as bigoted because of their religious views and dismissed from the political life of our nation for holding those views. And yet that is precisely what the Civil Rights Commission report does."

Legal advances by LGBT

The legal and legislative advances of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) and same-sex "marriage" movements have prompted debate for at least the last decade on how the conflict between religious liberty and what has become known as sexual liberty should be resolved. USCCR is now on record favoring sexual liberty.

Moore said the report shows how "deeply entrenched our federal government is in a 'culture war' mentality against religious dissidents."

"This hostile attitude toward tens of millions of law-abiding Americans is tragic, and my prayer is that it would quickly give way to a recognition that soul freedom is worth defending for all," Moore said. (TAB, BP)

A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

Biblical Character Series

Isaiah: Cultivating a Hopeful Imagination — Isaiah 30:18–33

U usually when we think of the prophets of the Old Testament we think of them as "outsiders" or troublemakers who were against the kings. And that is usually true. Isaiah of Jerusalem, on the other hand, was the ultimate insider. His name means "the salvation of Yahweh."

He had a long ministry during the reigns of Uzziah (or Azariah), Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Isa. 1:1). He lived until the 14th year of Hezekiah and may have outlived him. Thus Isaiah may have prophesied for 64 years.

It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. Economically the stock market was up and people were prospering. The kingdom was expanding and the military was at its height.

Growing gap

But there also were cracks in the dam. In the greatest prosperity they had known, there was still so much poverty. The gap between "haves" and "have nots" kept growing. The wealthy were greedy and there were double standards in justice. Religion flourished but largely reinforced the status quo. Many pagan practices within Israel's religion remained. It was a time of great turmoil. From the inside, Isaiah's life and ministry came in a chaotic time.

Isaiah 38 took place about a year before the Assyrians invaded Judah and surrounded Jerusalem to besiege it. God would mysteriously deliver the city. But that still lay ahead. In Chapter 38, as the clouds of war gathered, Isaiah counseled the nation and the king to trust in God alone.

Some put their faith in politics as the solution to all the nation's woes. Isaiah scoffed at that idea. He knew that prosperity, political peace and anything less than God's righteousness was only a temporary fix. The problem, he said, was not political. It was spiritual and religious.

'National temper'

In "The Book of Isaiah, In Two Volumes," George Adam Smith wrote: "To Isaiah a nation's politics are not arbitrary; they are not dependent on the will of kings or the management of parties. They are the natural outcome of the na-

By Gary A. Furr

Gary A. Furr is pastor of Vestavia Hills Baptist Church. He holds a doctorate in theology from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and is a published author. He and his wife, Vickie, have three daughters.



tion's character. What the people are, that will their politics be. If you wish to reform the politics, you must first regenerate the people; and it is no use to inveigh against a senseless policy ... unless you go farther and expose the national temper which has made it possible."

Something better

We live in a time of great division in which we are tempted on the one hand to descend into pessimism about current events or, on the other, to substitute politics for faith. If we are frustrated with a broken political system, we ought to ask, "If our system is 'we the people,' then what is it in us that does not ask for something better?"

Hope comes by trusting God

Isaiah says, in the midst of this gloominess, that the answer is: "Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you; therefore He will rise up to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him" (18:30). Wait on God. Don't get anxious. Keep on trusting.

That sounds a lot like resignation, doesn't it? It isn't really resignation at all. It's perspective. God is a God of justice, Isaiah said. Don't forget that. There is a law in the universe and a judge. No matter how it looks, there is a larger wisdom that you can trust in.

While world events and elections occupy the Internet and television, do our small faithful acts of teaching the next generation and keeping the gospel story alive matter?

To embrace God is to let God's voice into our hearts, to listen to God's Word

with more than nominal interest. God doesn't need our tithes and offerings but we do. We desperately need to learn how to be sacrificial. We need to learn what it means to bury ourselves in our cause and die so God can raise us up again.

What God can do

We need to learn how to give our time in more than dribs and drabs so God's power can be unleashed in us. We need to learn more about this Christian life than a few glib practical helps to let us go back to our same old lives, unchanged.

Isaiah had a radical vision of who God is and what God can do. The foundation of what we are looking for as a nation has less to do with what we think our leaders or even our neighbors need to do as it does with what you and I need to do — to give ourselves wholly to this wisdom of the wise One. Even in the worst of times, "You shall have a song as in the night when a holy festival is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one sets out to the sound of the flute to go to the mountain of the Lord" (Isa. 30:29).

The real work is teaching the kids, mending the broken, leading others to Christ and ministering to those who are hurting.

The biggest battle isn't in Washington or what's wrong with our culture or world. It's the battle I have fought with the one person I can do the most about — me.

It begins with each of us

It is the same truth that moved Jesus to say in Luke 17:21, "Do not pay attention when someone says, 'The kingdom is here or it is there,' for the kingdom is within you." It begins with each of us — our time, our energies, our money, our priorities, our stubborn wills and hearts.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and its righteousness," Jesus said, "and all these other things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

If you believe in God's sovereign purposes, you will plant and it will grow. You will find blessing and a song in the night. ☛



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

Faith leaders speak out

Baptist, evangelical leaders offer varying views on how to deal with Trump

While faith leaders speaking out about the recently released tape of Donald Trump denouncing the comments he made about women and his actions related to women, many continue to stand with him as the Republican presidential nominee.

"The crude comments made by Donald J. Trump more than 11 years ago cannot be defended. But the godless progressive agenda of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton likewise cannot be defended," Evangelist Franklin Graham wrote on his Facebook page Oct. 8.

"I am not endorsing any candidates in this election ... both candidates are flawed. The only hope for the United States is God.

"But as Christians we can't back down from our responsibility to remain engaged in the politics of our nation," he wrote. "The most important issue of this election is the Supreme Court. That impacts everything. There's no question, Trump and Clinton scandals might be news for the moment, but who they appoint to the Supreme Court will remake the fabric of our society for our children and our grandchildren for generations to come."

And according to the Dallas News, Robert Jeffress, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, defended Trump on Fox Business' Lou Dobbs Tonight on Oct. 10.

"Donald Trump's comments were lewd ... but they were not enough to make me vote for Hillary Clinton," Jeffress said.

He pointed to Trump's Oct. 9 debate

performance as "the quality that all leaders have to have: resiliency," according to the Dallas News.

But even with the "resilient" attribute, Trump's support has taken a hit since the Oct. 7 release of the tape, especially among female voters and most religious groups, according to a poll released Oct. 11.

According to Dan Cox, research director at the Public Religion Research Institute, which conducted a poll with The Atlantic Survey, "Among religious groups, white evangelical Protestants are the only ones who are standing firm right now."

Beth Moore: 'Wake up'

Popular Bible study leader Beth Moore offered different reactions, releasing her concerns on Twitter.

"Wake up, Sleepers, to what women have dealt with all along in environments of gross entitlements & power," she wrote. "I'm one among many women sexually abused, misused ... talked naughty to. Like we liked it. We didn't. We're tired of it.

"Try to absorb how acceptable the disesteem and objectifying of women has been when some Christian leaders don't think it's that big a deal," Moore wrote.

Also sharing concerns on Twitter is Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

"What a disgrace. What a scandal to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to the integrity of our witness," Russell Moore wrote about the number of evangelicals who don't seem concerned about Trump's behavior.

"The damage done to the gospel this year by so-called evangelicals will take longer to recover from than the '80s TV evangelist scandals," he wrote.

Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, called the upcoming election a "disaster" and said evangelicals risk destroying their moral credibility if they vote for Trump, according to The Christian Post.

"When it comes to Donald Trump, evangelicals are going to have to ask the huge question, 'Is it worth destroying our moral credibility to support someone who is beneath the baseline level of human decency for anyone who should deserve our vote?'" Mohler said in an appearance on CNN, according to the Post.

Even evangelical magazine *WORLD* has called Trump unfit to serve.

In a post Oct. 11, editor-in-chief Marvin Olasky and the other editors detailed how they came to the conclusion that Trump should step aside.

"Eighteen years ago, a *WORLD* cover pictured President Bill Clinton next to the headline, 'Time to Resign.' Clinton had ... used his power for adulterous purposes and then lied about it," the *WORLD* report explained.



TRUMP

"This month a videotape showed Donald Trump making lewd remarks about groping women's genitals. ... (It) gave us new information about how Trump views power as a means to gratify himself. It raised further questions about how Trump would act if elected to the most powerful office in the world.

"Although *WORLD* over its 30 years

has been more critical of Democrats than Republicans, particularly because of the abortion issue, we are not partisan," Olasky and the editors wrote.

"The standards we applied to Bill Clinton in 1998 are relevant to Donald Trump in 2016."

Another group denouncing Trump consists of evangelical leaders across the nation through an online petition. More than 20,600 people had signed the petition at press time.

Known as "A Declaration by American Evangelicals Concerning Donald Trump," the petition reads in part:

"Donald Trump's campaign is the most recent and extreme version of a history of racialized politics that has been pursued and about which white evangelicals, in particular, have been silent.

"For this reason, we cannot ignore this bigotry, set it aside, just focus on other issues, or forget the things Mr. Trump has consistently said and done. No matter what other issues we also care about, we have to make it publicly clear that Mr. Trump's racial and religious bigotry and treatment of women is morally unacceptable to us as evangelical Christians, as we attempt to model Jesus' command to 'love your neighbors as yourself.'"

At Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, a group of several hundred students have formed the group Liberty United Against Trump and are expressing disappointment in university president Jerry Falwell Jr., who was one of the first evangelical leaders to endorse Trump for president.

Falwell has continued to be a staunch defender of Trump throughout the campaign, stating Oct. 13 that his endorsement is "only fulfilling my obligation as a citizen to 'render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's' by expressing my personal opinion about who I believe is best suited to lead our nation in a time of crisis." (TAB, RNS)

EDITOR'S NOTE — At press time pressure was mounting for Clinton to denounce a campaign official for her emails that allegedly mock Catholics and evangelicals. TAB will report on this situation as it develops.

Americans support free speech, even if offensive

With statements on social media and in the public arena, the United States presidential candidates have demonstrated they have an overflowing stockpile of piercing comments, derogatory expressions and offensive speech from which to choose.

But according to a recent Pew Research Center survey, Americans don't seem to mind so much — or at least they are less inclined to outlaw such speech.

Free expression, as enshrined in the Bill of Rights, is something Americans tend to support more than the 37 other nations in Pew's 2015 survey.

Americans were among the most supportive of free speech, freedom of the press and the right to use the Internet without government censorship, according to Pew.

When it comes to offensive speech, Americans are much more tolerant than people in other nations.

Seventy-seven percent of Americans surveyed support the right of others to make statements that are offensive to their own religious beliefs, Pew reported. And 67 percent think people should be allowed to make public statements that are offensive to minority groups.

Sexually explicit speech

The U.S. was 1 of only 3 nations that has at least 50 percent who say sexually explicit speech is a right.

Seventy-one percent of those surveyed agreed that "people can say what they want," compared to 69 percent in Latin America, 65 percent in Europe, 50 percent in Asia/Pacific and 46 percent in Africa.

When it comes to politics the survey found there are few differences across party lines in regards to free speech.

Generationally, though, is where Pew found some differences.

Forty percent of millennials think the government should be able to prevent people

from making statements that are offensive to minority groups, according to Pew, where only 27 percent of Generation X and 24 percent of baby boomers agree.

But these percentages are strictly looking at whether offensive language should be legal or outlawed.

When it comes to being "offended," Pew found in a recent survey that 59 percent of those surveyed agreed that "too many people are easily offended these days over the language that others use."

There is a significant divide among party lines when looking at this statistic. Republicans (78 percent) say people are too easily offended these days, whereas 37 percent of Democrats agree. Also among registered voters, 83 percent of Donald Trump supporters believe too many people are easily offended, Pew reported, where only 39 percent of Hillary Clinton supporters agree. (TAB)



ALABAMA'S Associations

BESSEMER

► **Raimund Heights Church, Bessemer**, will hold a special music service Oct. 23, 5 p.m. Earl Norris, Rick Roper, David Langford, Lowell Atcheson and Rachel Rowell will perform special music. There will be music from church hymns to jazz. Tommy Chesser is pastor.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Missionary Church, Holly Pond**, will host the Dixie Echoes from Pensacola, Florida, in concert Nov. 5, 6 p.m. A love offering will be collected. For more information call 256-796-5986 or 256-590-4468. Randy Burtram is pastor.

DEKALB

► **Ruhamma Church, Fort Payne**, will hold revival services Nov. 6–9. Phil Glisson, of Memphis, Tennessee, will speak. Chris Murdock is pastor.

ETOWAH

► **Ivalee Church, Attalla**, will hold a special service Nov. 6, 10:30 a.m., to honor Anna Wayne Saffels. Saffels retired June 6 after more than 66 years as church pianist. She also is a charter member. A lunch will follow the service. Ronnie Holmes is pastor.

GENEVA

► **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will hold the 39er's CLUB on Nov. 8, 11 a.m.–noon. Pastor Steve Wegmann will speak. If you have previously been involved in the 39er's CLUB, contact your table hostess by Nov. 1. If you would like to attend but have never been before, call the church office at 334-684-9617 by Nov. 1.

MARSHALL

► **Trading Post Cowboy Church, Woodville**, will hold Old West Day on Oct. 29, 10 a.m.–4 p.m. There will be games, pony rides, wagon rides, music and food by the Chuck Wagon Team. There also will be a Dutch Oven cooking contest. Phillip Gilliland is pastor.

PINE BARREN

► **William Coen** is the new associate pastor to families and students for **Camden Church**. He previously served as pastoral ministry intern at Baptist Center Church, Clayton, North Carolina. He is pursuing a bachelor's degree from The College at South-eastern in Wake Forest, North Carolina. He and his wife, Christian, have two children. Chris Wells is pastor.



COEN

RANDOLPH

► **David Little** is the new pastor of

First Church, Wedowee. He previously served as student pastor of Enon Church, Morris. He also served at First Church, Boaz, and Sardis Springs Church, Athens. He holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master's degree from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Paula, have three children.

RUSSELL

► **Crawford Road Church, Phenix City**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 23, 10:30 a.m. EST. Glen McCall, Georgia Baptist Convention men's ministry specialist, will speak. The Seekers quartet will perform special music. Marvin Minton is pastor. ► **Ladonia Church, Phenix City**, will hold its annual fall festival Oct. 30, 4–6 p.m. EST. There will be a trunk or treat, live music, food, games, face painting, cake walk and inflatables. Greg Hyche is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Oak Mountain Church, Pelham**, will hold a special service Oct. 30, 10:30 a.m. The service will be a tribute to Pastor James Blair. The Reunion Singers from LaFayette will perform special music. Lunch will follow the service. ► **Kenneth Bruce** is the new pastor of **Westwood Church, Alabaster**. He previously served as pastor of disciple making and student pastor at Westwood. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Kentucky in Lexington, and a master's degree and doctorate from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He and his wife, Kristy, have five children.



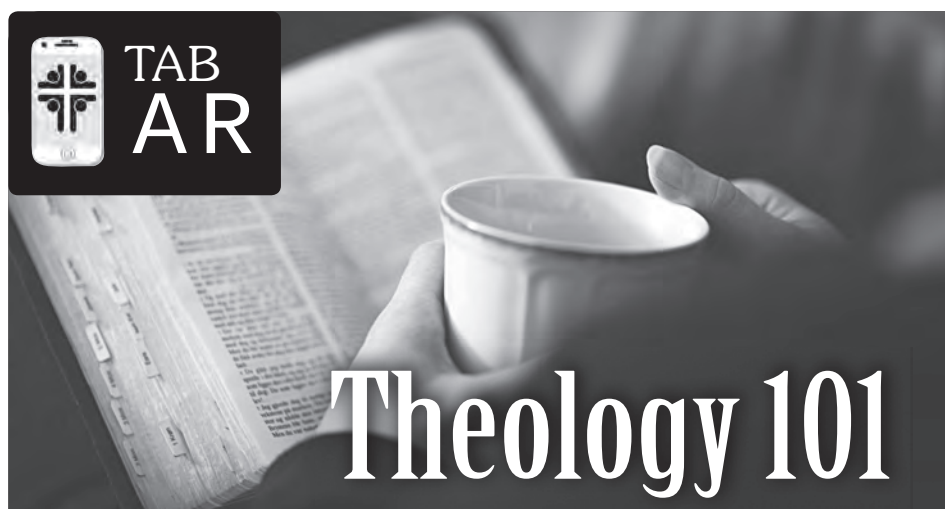
BRUCE

SULPHUR SPRINGS

► **Bethel Church, Dora**, will hold its annual harvest festival and trunk or treat Oct. 31, 6–8 p.m. There will be hayrides, food, games, prizes, puppets, candy and fellowship. Please do not wear scary costumes. For more information and directions visit bbcdora.com or call 205-648-2917. John Foles is pastor.

WALKER

► **Walker Association** churches will host the second annual community fall festival Oct. 30, beginning at 3 p.m. in the Jasper town square. Northside Church, Jasper; First Church, Jasper; Glory Fellowship Church, Jasper; Eastside Church, Jasper; Westside Church, Jasper; and seven other Jasper churches are hosting the event. There will be food and inflatables. Kurt Anderson will speak at 6 p.m. and a praise and worship time will follow. For more information call Northside at 205-384-3214. ☛

TAB
AR

Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The Person of Christ

Good and Godly

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

Theology at its best is theology that is practical as well as biblical. A prime reason for thinking about the personal qualities of Christ is that we make them a pattern for our own practices. The admonition of 1 John 2:6 remains relevant to every generation of believers when it says, "He who says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which He walked." The same can be said for the exhortation of 1 Peter 2:21, "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps." This week we take note of the example that Christ set for us by being a Person who was good and godly.

Good because He is God

In asserting that Christ was good, we must not be turned aside by His response to the rich ruler who addressed Him as "Good Teacher" (Matt. 19:16). Christ's response was a question, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God" (Matt. 19:17). His question was not meant to deny His own goodness, but to probe the young ruler's understanding of Christ as God come in the flesh. Did the ruler have any inkling that looking upon Christ as good meant looking upon Him as God incarnate? With the testimony of the completed Scriptures, we are able to affirm that Christ indeed is good because He is God.

Reflections of the heart

Goodness lies at the very heart of God, both the Father and the Son. Because He was good, Christ went about doing good. Such was Peter's witness about Christ to Cornelius when he pointed out "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).

Since words and deeds are the reflections of our hearts, so it was with Christ. Going about doing good flowed from the kind of Person He was in His heart. He was good, so He went about

doing good. We might cast this idea with a truism that maintains, "Good is as good does."

What is good? Supremely, good is what is most like God. It is as many of us learned as children to say table grace with the opening words, "God is great; God is good."

No good apart from God

We are good when we are Godlike or godly. We can and must confess with the Psalmist who addressed God by saying, "You are my Lord. My goodness is nothing apart from You" (Ps. 16:2).

Christ was godliness in a human body with a human nature. No other has walked our planet with the kind of goodness that Christ demonstrated. His divine nature showed through His humanity as godliness at its highest and purest.

Source of all that is good

We might say with accuracy that God is both the definition of what is good and the source of all that is good. In so saying, we might add that God's goodness is closely akin to His love, mercy, grace, patience and holiness. As for human goodness, we might say that it is what God approves of in human thoughts, emotions, actions, reactions, words and deeds.

The take-away truth from thinking about Christ's example of goodness and godliness might be the challenge of Galatians 6:10, "As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of faith." ☛

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.



'Alone, overwhelmed, isolated, inadequate'

Pastors Conference 2016 to address struggles

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In recent days, the Church has seen high-profile pastors have to step down because of burnout.

That kind of news "makes the struggle more evident," said Teman Knight, president of the 2016 Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference. "But it doesn't matter the church size — all pastors struggle with that, and with loneliness too. There are so many high expectations."

That's why this year's Pastors Conference — set for Nov. 14 at Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery — is aimed at encouraging pastors with the truth that they aren't in the fight alone.

"We want pastors to walk away reminded that they have a band of brothers who are standing with them," Knight said.

Focusing on the theme "Together," based on Ecclesiastes

4:9–10, the conference will feature speakers who have come alongside Knight in his own faith journey either as a Paul, a Barnabas or a Timothy.

Pouring into

"We all have people who have poured into us, people who have encouraged us and people whom we have poured into," he said. "The men who are going to preach at the conference are men who have filled those places in my life."

Those men are:

► Bob Pitman, longtime Alabama Baptist evangelist.
► Chuck Kelley, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS).
► Sammy Gilbreath, director of the office

of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

► Waylon Bailey, pastor of First Baptist Church, Covington, Louisiana.

► Mike Satterfield, teaching pastor at Fielder Church, Arlington, Texas.

► Rob Jackson, pastor of Cen-

tral Baptist Church, Decatur.

► Kevin Wilburn, vice president for development for the University of Mobile.

For instance, Bailey is a Paul figure in Knight's life.

"He was one of my primary pastors in seminary and he invested a lot in my life," Knight said.

Pitman, he said, is a Barnabas. And Wilburn is a Timothy.

Knight, pastor of Heritage Baptist, said he's learned over his 32 years as a pastor that "sometimes you feel alone, overwhelmed, isolated and inadequate." Because of that, men need support from each other.

"You know the theological truths that you are not alone and that God is with you, but frustration and discouragement rob you of the joy of this truth," he said.

Pauls and Timothys

Pastors need Pauls, Barnabases and Timothys, he said. "We can accomplish more when we work together. We've got to be there for each other, to pick each other up when we're down."

Also during the morning session, the worship team of Heritage Baptist will lead music and the

Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery Nov. 14



PITMAN



KELLEY



GILBREATH



SATTERFIELD



WILBURN



JACKSON



BAILEY

2016 OFFICERS:

President: Teman Knight	President-elect: Rob Jackson
Vice President: Daven Watkins	Treasurer: Bobby Freeman

church's creative arts team will provide dramatic theme interpretations.

In the afternoon the student praise band from NOBTS will lead worship.

And in the evening Heritage Baptist's choir and orchestra will combine with a choir from Hutchinson Missionary Baptist Church, Montgomery, to provide music.✠

Second nominee announced for convention 2nd VP

A second nominee for second vice president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention has been announced since the Oct. 13 article in *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) went to press. Craig Carlisle, pastor of Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Rainbow City, near Gadsden, will be nominated by Steve Loggins, director of missions for North Jefferson Baptist Association.

"As a lifelong Alabama Baptist, it would be a humbling honor to serve our convention in this capacity," Carlisle said.

At press time, there was only one other nominee announced for second vice president — Buddy Champion, pastor of First Baptist Church, Trussville.

Elections will take place during the Nov. 15–16 annual meeting. (TAB)

Each year at the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting, various groups across Alabama Baptist life meet to connect and conduct business.

Meeting alongside this year's convention, which will be held at Eastmont

Baptist Church, Montgomery, on Nov. 15–16, are:

► **Alabama Church Planter Network** — The Alabama Church Planter Network will host a dinner Nov. 13 at 6 p.m. at Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery. Special guest speaker will be Jeff Christopherson, vice president of the Send Network of the North American Mission Board. Following dinner, separate sessions will be held for church planters and their wives. Registration will open at 4:30 p.m. and child care will be provided. To register, visit plantalabama.org.

► **Volunteers in Missions** — The Volunteers in Missions will host a light "pick-up lunch" at Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery, on Nov. 15 in Room 129 at noon. The Volunteer of the Year

will be announced during the state convention annual meeting. For more information, contact the State Board of Missions at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 238.

► **Alabama African-American Pastors** — The Alabama African-American Pastors dinner will be held Nov. 14 at Southlawn Baptist Church, Montgomery, at 5 p.m. Special guest speaker will be Terrence Jones, pastor of Strong Tower at Washington Park, Montgomery. To register, visit alsbom.org/convention.

► **Alabama Network of Christian Community Ministers (ANCCM)** — ANCCM will meet Nov. 14 at the Forest Park Ministry Annex at 1551 East Ann Street in Montgomery.

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the program begins at 9. Guest speaker will be Donna McCullough, director of Forest Park Ministry Center in Montgomery, who will share about "Client Choice: The Whys and Hows." Lunch is included. Annual dues also are to be paid by the start of the meeting. For more information, contact Kristy Kennedy at kkennedy@alsbom.org or 334-613-2311.

► **Director of Missions** — The Director of Missions meeting will be held Nov. 14 at McGehee Road Baptist Church, Montgomery. Registration and fellowship will begin at 10:30 a.m., followed by a business meeting at 11. Steve Bass, vice president for conven-

tion relations (west) for the North American Mission Board, will be the guest speaker during lunch. Deadline to register is Nov. 7. To register, visit bit.ly/2e9cplO. Send payment for the meeting to Barry Cosper, c/o Bessemer Baptist Association, 1630 Powder Plant Road SW, Bessemer, AL 35022. For more information, contact Otis Corbitt at ocorbitt@covingtonbaptist.org or 334-222-3009.

► **Pastors Conference** (see story, this page).

To request messenger cards for the state convention annual meeting, go to cards.alsbom.org. For more information, contact Sandy Harmann at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 266, or sharmann@alsbom.org. (TAB)

Disaster relief efforts now taking place in Cuba, Haiti, US east coast, Louisiana

(continued from page 1)
organization sent can treat common diseases for up to 10,000 people for 90 days.

But Haiti wasn't the only place severely impacted by Hurricane Matthew. Baptist Global Response (BGR), the International Mission Board's relief arm, has focused its efforts on Cuba, which lacks trained personnel and non-governmental organizations.

In Cuba's Baracoa and Maisí, municipalities, 90 to 95 percent of homes were reported as damaged. In the week following the storm, ministry partners delivered two trucks with 12 tons of food to the affected areas through BGR's initial \$100,000 response.

Jeff Palmer, BGR executive director, told *The Alabama Baptist* that the organization's assessment team was working in Cuba on Oct. 13 and its report "will move us into many more projects in Cuba" beyond the essentials already being addressed.

"Please pray for the survivors and those that lost loved ones and homes. ... Pray for good connections with local churches and good understanding ... of what's going on so we can get the most effective and essential aid to the most needy."

Willingness to respond

He also expressed thanks to Alabama Baptists for their willingness to respond in Haiti, where BGR is "following the lead of state conventions already working there."

Meanwhile in the U.S., Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers worked in St. Augustine, Florida, to help in the aftermath of Matthew.

Feeding efforts were winding down around press time and the Alabama feeding unit stopped operations Oct. 12, according to Mark Wakefield, disaster relief and chaplaincy ministries strategist for the Alabama Baptist State

Board of Missions (SBOM). Another round of cleanup/recovery teams, this time from Cleburne Baptist Association, deployed Oct. 13. Another team of five chaplains were deployed Oct. 16.

As far as relief in other East Coast states, Wakefield said other state conventions are working to meet needs there and Alabama will be ready to assist if called on.

Disaster relief teams from Arkansas, Missouri, Virginia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas are all serving in various locations along the East Coast where areas were still flooded at press time.

And this is all while volunteers are still working in Louisiana after it saw record-shattering rainfall and flooding in August.

Alabama Baptist college students also have stepped up to volunteer. A Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) team from the University of North Alabama in Florence served in a cleanup effort in Louisiana during fall break, ac-

cording to Chris Mills, an associate in SBOM's office of collegiate and student ministries.

"There is still a lot of cleanup to do and helping folks put their lives back in order," said Mills,

noting that BCM campus ministers were looking at potential opportunities for relief trips on Christmas break and spring break 2017.

The variety of relief efforts Alabama Baptists are involved in is only made

possible through the generosity of Alabama Baptists, according to Rick Lance, SBOM executive director.

"The Cooperative Program (CP) provides entirely all financial support for the ministry infrastructure of Alabama Baptists," Lance wrote in a blog post at sbdr.org. Any contributions made through the site are "used entirely to help people impacted by [the current disaster relief efforts]. We do not save any monies contributed here for future disasters," he wrote Oct. 8. "It is Alabama Baptists' faithfulness through CP giving that allows this 100 percent commitment." ☛



Photo by Mark Wakefield

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers serve at the feeding unit set up in St. Augustine, Florida.

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To give to Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief, visit sbdr.org.

To give to BGR relief efforts, visit donations.gobgr.org.

To give to Children's Hope disaster relief fund, visit www.childrens-hope.com/give/disasterrelief.



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Shiloh Judgment Seat marks 25 years of changing lives, hearts for Christ

In 1991 at the age of 16, Michael Walters was struggling. Did God want him to go into the ministry?

In the midst of trying to figure out what God had for him, Walters went with some friends to a Judgment House at Shiloh Church, Somerville. As he participated in the walk-through gospel presentation concerning the truth of people's choices versus the earthly and eternal consequences, he thought, "Man, it would be awesome to be involved with something like that," Walters said.

Changing lives

Now, 25 years later, Walters is the associate pastor at Shiloh and has been one of the directors of Judgment House, now called The Judgment Seat, for the past nine years.

"God's got a funny sense of humor," he said. "As a 16-year-old it was a joy to come experience [the event] and see the way it changed lives and it touched my life as well. ... Now it has been my joy to lead this production."

In the past 24 years of its production, nearly 45,000 people have experienced The Judgment Seat — which was recently revamped to be a multistage production for which the participant remains seated — and more than 2,100 have made professions of faith.

"The thing that impacts me more than anything is when I am walk-

ing around the community and ... people will stop me and say [The Judgment Seat] changed their life. That's the cool thing," Walters said.

And while it's an outreach ministry, it also has been a unifying force within the church.

"It really brings the church together because it takes a vast majority of the church to make it work," Walters said, noting that about 165 volunteers are helping with the production this year.

In its 25th year, The Judgment Seat will be Oct. 24–27 and have two shows at 6:15 and 8:15 nightly.

This year's production will address how God expects His followers to be real, not perfect.



Photo courtesy of Shiloh Church, Somerville
Michael Walters gives the altar call at the conclusion of The Judgment Seat, an annual event of Shiloh Church, Somerville.

After all, "we're all broken individuals," Walters said.

Registration is not required but it is recommended for large groups.

For more information, visit www.thejudgmentseat.net. (Maggie Walsh)

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As churches reach out to surrounding culture, age has become 'passé,' according to demographer

For years Christian communities have been intensely focused on serving baby boomers, millennials and other groups demarcated by age.

But that focus alone is no longer going to cut it for churches genuinely interested in being relevant to the culture — or cultures — around them, says an expert on social and religious demographics.

"If we stop with just birth and generations, we only have some very generalized and even stereotypical understandings of what people are looking for when they are looking for God," said Thomas Bandy, an author and demographer who focuses on the relationships between faith and lifestyle segments — or subgroups in society.

Demographic research

Bandy made his comments during a FaithSoaring Churches Learning Community conference call in early October.

Bandy has recently delved into demographic research as it impacts the Church. The kind of research he uses has matured thanks to the digital age and was pioneered by the corporate, medical and non-profit sectors in search of hyper-detailed information about their customers, he told listeners during the call.

Bandy said his term for such information is "granular," which describes the detail available to churches and researchers through search engines such as Mission-Insite.com, with which he works.

It's why broad concepts, such as millennial, are outmoded, he said.

"Corporate and nonprofit and health care planners are not using these old age-based demographics anymore," he said.

While the variety of information about social groups has grown much more complicated in recent years, it is available to church leaders and congregations.

Digital comparisons can be made between the groups around and inside a congregation, he said.

Those who take that challenge will learn about the behaviors and attitudes unique to different lifestyle segments, Bandy said. Demographers to date have identified 71 such groups, compared to 40 that were known a decade ago.

71 lifestyle segments

Each one has preferences in retail choices and in churches and religion. Their quests for meaning and for God also differ from segment to segment.

Those faith expressions are "driven by different kinds of existential anxieties and each comes with a different set of expectations," Bandy said.

It's those anxieties and expectations that churches must discern in order to shape the kind of programs and ministries they need to meet them, he said.

In a Christian context, each of those segments has a unique understanding of Christ. Some want Christ to rescue them, others to heal them or transformation them, Bandy said.

To become or remain relevant, churches must become aware of these layers of yearning and hope permeating the culture, he said.

"Life is a good deal more complicated than we think, and Christ is more mysterious than we think," Bandy said.

Leadership also becomes more complicated as traditional clergy models may be outmoded.

Ministries based on age also are challenged, Bandy said. For example youth ministry is becoming outdated because multiple segments exist among young people.

"We used to talk diversity in congregations by age," he said. "Age is passé in the church." (BNG)



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TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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CHURCH POSITIONS

BIVOCATIONAL/FULL-TIME PASTOR

Providence Baptist Church, Rockford, Alabama, is searching for a pastor. Please send resumé to John Harris at 8973 US-Hwy 231, Rockford, AL 35136 or email to laurah2465@charter.net.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Bayside Baptist Church in Lillian, AL, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 533, Lillian, AL 36549 or tbobharris@gmail.com.

PART-TIME PASTOR

Hill Spring Baptist Church, 335 Eliza Jordan Rd., Mobile, AL. Seeking part-time pastor, will give consideration to full-time pastor. Church website: hillspringbaptist.org. Send resumé to bbwal-dropjr@yahoo.com.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC

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

STUDENT MINISTER

Union Hill Baptist, Oneonta, is seeking a full-time student minister (grades 1-12) for a

growing fellowship with two Sunday morning services. Experience should include leadership in evangelism, missions, small group ministry and discipleship for children and youth. Please submit resumé to: 2919 Co. Hwy. 39, Oneonta, Alabama 35121. 205-274-9232. bbarnett@otelco.net.

MINISTER OF STUDENTS

Mount Vernon Baptist Church is currently seeking a full-time minister of students. Please send resumé to: Mount Vernon Baptist Church, Attention: David Martin 2650 Pine Street, Albertville, AL 35950.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF YOUTH

Fairview Baptist Church is receiving applications for a part-time minister of youth. Resumé and inquiries may be sent to: 600 River Road, Valley, AL 36854 or to fairviewbaptistch@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH PASTOR

East McFarland Baptist Church is in search of a bivocational youth pastor. Interested parties please send resumé to 6007 McFarland Blvd. E., Tuscaloosa, AL 35405. No phone calls please.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR

Oak Bowery Baptist Church in Calhoun County, AL, is seeking

a children's ministry director. Resumé may be mailed to: Oak Bowery Baptist Church, Attn: Personnel Committee 3300 AL Highway 144, Ohatchee, AL 36271 or oakbowerybaptist@att.net.

YOUTH/CHILDREN'S MINISTER

Southside Baptist Church, Princeton, KY, is accepting resumé for a full-time youth/children's minister. Bachelor's degree, seminary training and experience is preferred. Email: youth-searchteam@southsidebaptist.com or mail: Southside Baptist Attn: Youth Search, P.O. Box 684, Princeton, KY 42445.

CHILD CARE POSITIONS

North Shelby Baptist Church is looking for two paid child care positions for Sunday nights, Wednesday nights and special events. Please contact Julie Donovan at Julie@northshelbybaptist.org for more information.

NURSERY WORKERS

East McFarland Baptist Church is in search of hourly paid nursery workers for Sunday worship services and special events. Interested parties please send resumé to ATTN: Nursery Worker, EMBC, 6007 McFarland Blvd. E., Tuscaloosa, AL 35405, or email to embcoffice@comcast.net. No phone calls please.

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MISCELLANEOUS

JUDGMENT DAY 2016

Evangelistic drama. Cottage Hill Baptist, Pleasant Grove, AL 35127. Oct. 26-27 — 6-9 p.m. Oct. 28 — no presentation. Oct. 29 — 6-10 p.m. Oct 30-31 — 6-9 p.m. Reservations: 205-744-8521.

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

By Joanne Sloan

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



2016 marks 200th anniversary of birth of 'Jesus Loves Me' composer

William Batchelder Bradbury (1816–1868) composed the tunes of two of the most famous hymns of all time: “Jesus Loves Me” and “Just as I Am.”

This month is the 200th anniversary of his birth.

He was born Oct. 6, 1816, in York, Maine, where his father led a church choir. His family moved to Boston where at the age of 15 he joined Charles Street Baptist Church.

He met Lowell Mason, the first important music educator in American public schools and attended Mason's Boston Academy of Music and sang in Mason's Bowdoin Street Church Choir.

Organist, music director

Bradbury worked as the organist and music director for First Baptist Church, Brooklyn, and later at Baptist Tabernacle of New York City. In 1841 at the Tabernacle he started a singing class for young people. Soon these classes

became very popular around the city, resulting in annual “Juvenile Musical Festivals.” These events brought together 1,000 children who sang as a choir. During this time he introduced the teaching of singing into New York City public schools.

Continued training

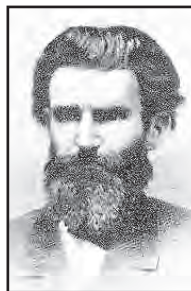
Always trying to improve himself as a musician and educator, in 1847 he traveled to Europe to study piano, singing, harmony and composition under great German masters.

Bradbury compiled 59 books of children's songs and hymns and his own tunes from 1841 to 1867. His three music collections — The Jubilee, Golden Chain of Sabbath School Melodies and Fresh Laurels for the Sabbath School — sold more than 3 million copies.

Music historians have noted that his melodies have an easy, natural flow, and his harmonies are simple and natural.

The evangelistic team of Dwight L. Moody and Ira Sankey used Bradbury's songs and made them popular around the world.

In 1835 poet and hymn writer Charlotte Elliott wrote the words to “Just as I Am.” Bradbury composed the music in 1849. Evangelist Billy Graham used the hymn for his altar call in his crusades. It is known all over the world and has been published in many languages.



BRADBURY

One-line chorus

In 1862, Bradbury read the novel “Say and Seal,” written by Susan Warner, and was moved by a children's poem in the book written by the author's sister, Anna Warner. He added a melody to Anna Warner's lyrics. He also added a one-line chorus, just four simple words to be repeated over and over — “Yes, Jesus loves me.” The song “Jesus Loves Me” became one of the most beloved songs

of all time and has been published in numerous languages. Music historians estimate that only “Happy Birthday to You” rivals “Jesus Loves Me” in the number of times they have been sung.

‘He Leadeth Me’

Other songs that Bradbury put to music can be found in Baptist and other denominational hymnals. Some of them are “He Leadeth Me,” “Sweet Hour of Prayer,” “The Solid Rock,” “Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us” and “My Hope is Built on Nothing Less.”

Bradbury suffered from tuberculosis the last two years of his life. He died Jan. 7, 1868, in Bloomfield, New Jersey. His last words to a friend were, “My soul seems to have gained the victory. I am so happy now. I rest wholly upon Christ. May God give me the grace to die.” He was buried in Bloomfield Cemetery. His wife and five children survived him. ☛

IMB missionaries in Ukraine lay groundwork for medical team

By Brian Harris
Special to The Alabama Baptist

If you've ever been fishing you've most likely baited a hook and dipped it into the water in the chance that a fish might bite. Professional fishermen can look at weather conditions and areas around the water to identify what's the best bait and location to catch fish.

In the same way, missionaries prepare the groundwork by serving on the field all year long. In the case of Ross and Kasey Lewis, who serve as International Mission Board missionaries to Dnipro, Ukraine, their normal week includes discipling locals and participating in church planting efforts.

When teams from churches go to assist, the groundwork has already been laid and the locations have already been identified where they can make the most impact.

A team of eight Vaughn Forest Baptist Church, Montgomery, mem-

bers, along with a four-person team from The Vine Church, Perry, Georgia, traveled to Ukraine on Sept. 22–29 to hold medical clinics in Dnipro and four surrounding villages.

Blood pressure, vision

The medical clinics provided blood pressure and vision checks along with the opportunity to meet with a doctor. Every person was greeted by locals from a church plant in the area and the gospel was shared. Approximately 525 people were seen and 56 people prayed with volunteers to receive Christ.

Local church members where the clinics were held will follow up with the new believers and work to plug them in to discipleship groups through the local churches.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Harris is the web, social media and email marketing strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and a member of Vaughn Forest Baptist. ☛



Photos by Brian Harris

From top left, clockwise: Ukrainian boys hold Bibles they were given near Dnipro, Ukraine. A doctor from Dnipro looks over X-rays at a medical clinic. Eric Butterfield (center), on the Vaughn Forest Baptist team, shares the gospel with a villager through translator Alona Janus (left). Translator Irina Klyus (left) speaks with a villager (right) at a clinic.

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Ala. Baptist schools named among best in US

All three Alabama Baptist institutions of higher education were named among "America's Best Christian Colleges" for 2017 by Institutional Research & Evaluation, Inc. (IR&E).

The University of Mobile, Samford University in Birmingham and Judson College in Marion each received the distinction. The Alabama Baptist institutions are 3 of only 100 colleges and universities nationwide to earn the designation.

Requirements

IR&E selected "America's Best Christian Colleges" from a pool of 458 Christian institutions of higher education.

The recognition is determined from results of the 26th Annual National College Survey con-

ducted by IR&E between April 1 and July 31.

Survey results showed that for freshmen entering Christian colleges and universities in Fall 2015, the average high school grade point average (GPA) was 3.37, the average SAT score was 1081 and the average ACT score was 22.

To be considered for the list, an institution must be an accredited four-year school that offers bachelor's degrees and full residential facilities and dining services. It must have had an entering freshman class in Fall 2015 with a high

school GPA or SAT/ACT score at or above the national average for all freshmen entering Christian institutions of higher education.

The school also must be affiliated with a recognized Christian denomination or be an interdenominational institution that incorporates Christian principles into its curriculum or environment.

IR&E is an independent research and consulting organization in Rome, Georgia, that specializes in the recruiting and retention of students for institutions of higher education. (TAB)



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Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me ... will never die."
 - John 11:25-26

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I can always be contacted at (334) 394-2025 or by email at rbledsoe@tbfa.org.

J. Rodney Bledsoe, J.D.
 Chief Development Officer



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 23

Explore the Bible

By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

WHEN RIDICULED

1 Peter 4:12–19

Expect Ridicule (12–14)

As we follow Jesus and stand firm for the gospel in a Genesis 3 world, we can expect to suffer. Trials are the norm for Christians, not the exception. Peter wrote that we should not be surprised when we encounter various trials. Tests are not strange when we are involved in the pursuit of an educational degree. Neither are tests strange when pursuing a curriculum of Christlikeness.

We must learn how to react when we encounter fiery trials. Trials enable us to enter a closer fellowship with Christ. We will have a deeper fellowship with Christ on earth and a richer reward from Him in heaven. Peter instructs believers to rejoice as we share in the sufferings of Christ. This is exactly what he and John did when they were beaten and threatened by the Sanhedrin in Acts 5. “Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name” (Acts 5:41). To be insulted for the name of Christ is to be blessed by God, because in such times the Spirit of Glory, the Holy Spirit, rests upon believers in an especially powerful way.

Represent Jesus Well (15–16)

As we go through times of testing as we follow Jesus, we need to remember truths about suffering. Trials provide us an opportunity to draw upon maximum power. You are never closer, never more a recipient of God’s strength than when trials come upon you. This is especially true when you are insulted for the name of Christ. Believers who suffer are blessed because they are now enjoying God’s favor, tasting the wonder of the glory to come and experiencing the promised Holy Spirit.

Sometimes some of our suffering is deserved and shameful. Jesus’ followers are

not perfect and are still prone to sin; therefore, Peter exhorted believers to walk in godly pathways. The first two terms in verse 15 are blatant examples of falling short of God’s standards. Murder and stealing are not only sins but also crimes in society. These sins were listed so believers will distinguish between genuine Christians’ suffering and suffering that is a consequence of misbehavior. Neither should believers suffer as an evildoer or meddler into the affairs of others. Believers should refrain from acting tactlessly and without social graces. Jesus’ followers should represent Jesus well at all times and in every circumstance.

Suffering for Christ should not cause us to feel shame. Instead of shame, we should feel honored when we suffer for Christ. It is a privilege to bear wounds for Him who was “wounded for our transgressions” and “crushed for our iniquities.”

Focus on the Creator (17–19)

In the Old Testament the “household of God” referred to the temple, but now God’s people are His temple. Judgment beginning with God’s house alludes to Ezekiel 9:1–6 and Malachi 3:1–4, where the Lord purifies His people. Judgment here is not punitive, but to purify and mature the people of God.

There is no comparison between what believers suffer now and what the unrighteous will suffer later. If the righteous have “fiery trials,” imagine the “flaming fire” the unrighteous will face when Jesus returns in judgment. Peter quoted Proverbs 11:31 to reinforce his point. “Scarcely saved” does not mean the righteous just barely receive salvation. “Scarcely” means the righteous are saved in the midst of suffering.

Verse 19 is an excellent summary of 1 Peter. Jesus’ followers suffer according to the will of God, who is sovereign and loving. Believers can trust God and entrust themselves completely to Him, just as Jesus did when He suffered. ☞

Bible Studies for Life

By Jeffrey Leonard, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Religion, Samford University

UNSTOPPABLE MESSAGE

Acts 2:22–24, 32–33, 36–38

The first few chapters of the book of Acts are marked by a veritable whirlwind of change. Perhaps not since the exodus itself had God’s people experienced so much transformation in such a brief span of time.

In the Gospels, Jesus forbids His disciples to go to Samaritan villages (Matt. 10), and the disciples are stunned when, on one occasion, they find Jesus talking with a Samaritan woman (John 4). Yet when we arrive at Acts 9 the disciples follow a new command and begin their own outreach to the Samaritan villages.

In the Gospels, Jesus directs His disciples not to reach out to the Gentiles (Matt. 10), and He warns His followers not to pursue their brand of religiosity (Matt. 5–7). He even instructs His followers to treat those who refuse to confess open sin as “Gentiles,” that is, as those who are outside of the people of God. And yet in Acts 10, Peter leads the Church in embracing the Gentiles, and the Jewish believers rejoice at their inclusion (Acts 15:3).

And speaking of Peter, how many times is he the model of misstep and misunderstanding in the Gospels? And yet when we arrive at the book of Acts he is the clear leader, the bold witness to the resurrection of Jesus who leads the Church confidently through every difficulty.

From the moment the Spirit descends on the disciples at Pentecost, the timid and wayward followers of Jesus are permanently transformed. From here, they venture far beyond their original confines. They speak with a new boldness. And they display a unity and fidelity they had never evinced when they were with Jesus Himself.

Jesus died and rose again to bring salvation. (22–24)

While Pentecost is best known among

Christians as the day when the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus’ followers, the term itself is just a Greek rendering of the Jewish festival “Shavuot,” meaning “weeks.” As the festival that celebrated the barley harvest, Shavuot was held each year seven weeks (thus the name) after Passover. Along with Passover and “Sukkot,” or “Feast of Tabernacles,” Shavuot was an annual festival in which Jewish men were expected to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

As the Jewish people became increasingly scattered during the Diaspora, this command could not be followed as it once was. Still, a sizeable number of people from the far-flung reaches of the Roman Empire could be expected to show up in Jerusalem each year. It is this crowd that Peter and the other disciples reach out to as they speak in the languages of Pentecost.

Jesus is exalted as Lord. (32–33, 36)

When the early Christians reach out, it is with the message of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Peter takes the lead as he preaches to the crowd, reminding them of the crime it was to kill the innocent man, Jesus, and urging them to submit themselves to this one person who could save them. Peter implores the crowd to see in the resurrection the Father’s stamp of approval on the mission, message and death of His Son.

The message of Christ calls for a response. (37–38)

The effect of Jesus’ message was immediately evident. As their hearts were cut to the quick by his message, many of Peter’s fellow countrymen responded, “What should we do?”

Peter’s response was both elegant and simple: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (v. 38). These words lit a fire that continues to burn to this very day among God’s people. ☞

Christian Crossword

By Helen Walter Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

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Across

1. Older son of Rachel.
6. Lo, my ___ arose.
(Gen. 37:7)
10. A place for sacrifices.
11. The sun and the moon
and eleven ___ made
obedience to me.
(Gen. 37:9)
12. Twelve months.
13. Joseph’s position in
Egypt. (Gen. 39:4)
15. (Jacob) poured ___
upon the top of it.
(Gen. 28:18)
16. Virginia. (abbr.)
17. Greek letter.
19. Number on baseball
team.
20. Figure ____.
22. The truth shall make
you _____. (John 8:32)
23. Pharaoh took off his
_____ from his hand.
(Gen. 41:42)
25. The ____ of gladness.
(Ps. 45:7)
27. Fear and ____ shall fall

upon them. (Ex. 15:16)
29. Height. (abbr.)
31. Colorado. (abbr.)
32. There ____ none
greater. (Gen. 39:9)
33. Consumed.
34. Road surface material.
36. Joseph dreamed ____
_____. (Gen. 37:5;
2 words)
38. ____ me in thy truth.
(Ps. 25:5)
39. ____t_ a certain man
found him.
(Gen. 37:15)
41. Israel ____ Joseph
more than all his
children. (Gen. 37:3)
43. Trouble.
46. How ... can I ... ____
against God?
(Gen. 39:9)
47. For example. (abbr.)
48. Method of dyeing
cloth.
50. Passage.
52. ____ Testament.
53. Delete.

Down

54. Metropolitan. (abbr.)
1. Noisy bird.
2. Spread for bread.
3. Soiled.
4. Opposite of “later.”
5. Pronoun. (abbr.)
6. Make ____ paths for
your feet. (Heb. 12:13)
7. Possesses.
8. Before.
9. Free from germs.
11. There came up out of
the river ____ kine.
(Gen. 41:18)
13. Run.
14. Rhode Island. (abbr.)
18. Continent.
21. ____, every one that
thirsteth. (Isa. 55:1)
24. Perfect model.
26. Nay, my ____, but to
buy food. (Gen. 42:10)
28. Seven ____ came up in
one stalk. (Gen. 41:22)
30. Biblical unit of money.
35. Rosy.

36. And he ____ no more.
(Deut. 5:22)
37. Receiver of the Ten
Commandments.
40. I will fasten him as a
____. (Isa. 22:23)
42. I am the ____, ye are
the branches.
(John 15:5)
44. Once daily. (abbr.)
45. Each.
47. Keep me as the apple
of the _____. (Ps. 17:8)
48. Toward.
49. Whence come ____?
(Gen. 42:7)
51. Room. (abbr.)

TOP 10

downloaded songs from iTunes

CHRISTIAN & GOSPEL



- 1. Chain Breaker**
By Zach Williams
(Chain Breaker)



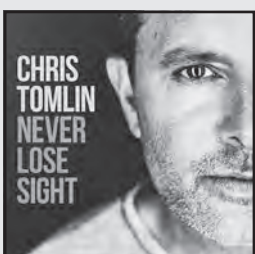
- 2. Eye of the Storm (feat. GabeReal)**
By Ryan Stevenson
(Fresh Start)



- 4. Trust in You**
By Lauren Daigle
(How Can It Be)



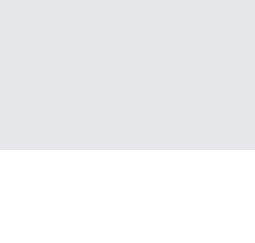
- 5. Good Good Father**
By Chris Tomlin
(Never Lose Sight)



- 7. What a Beautiful Name**
By Hillsong Worship
(Let There Be Light)



- 9. Dear Younger Me**
By Mercy Me
(Welcome to the New)



- 10. The Lion and the Lamb**
By Big Daddy Weave
(Beautiful Offerings)

Source: iTunes at press time



Love Displayed consists of (l to r) Dylan Huffman, drums; Amy Huffman, vocals; Zak Huffman, vocals; Levi Westfall, guitar; and Jeremiah Watkins, bass (not pictured).

Photo courtesy of Bozeman Media

Remember the promises

Love Displayed's new single encourages peace in Christ

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Strong lyrics with an upbeat spin have put the music of Love Displayed on the worship playlist at many churches. The duo's recent release is just a peek into their next album, a project whose pop sound provides the backdrop for a solid Christ-centered message that contemporary Christian music fans will love.

Love Displayed's deluxe single, a double-feature download of "All Power," the highest selling song from their 2016 album "You're the Only One," and a new song, "Walk on Water," offers a preview of the upcoming album, "Eyes on You," set to release in May 2017.

Zak Huffman — who along with his wife, Amy, makes up the husband/wife team that provides vocals for Love Displayed — says the two songs complement each other but are very different. Zak Huffman describes "All Power" as worshipful, one reason the song is popular among church music leaders. "Walk on Water" combines a pop flair with lyrical depth.

The Huffmans wrote the song during a difficult time in their lives, and Zak Huffman says the bridge lyrics came to them during a time of praying and playing music in their basement: "Even in the crashing waves / Even when I'm so afraid / I will always hear You say / Don't look down, keep your eyes on Me."

"Everybody can relate to the song because it's about going through any type of storm or trial in life and keeping our eyes on Jesus," he said. "We built the song around that theme."

Fans have responded well to the new single.

A music video for "Walk on Water" released on YouTube got 40,000 views in the first two days and 130,000 views within five days, which was "very exciting," he said.

"We were very happy about that response."

"Eyes on You" will feature several other new songs written by the Huffmans, including the title track, "Eyes on You," another song that emphasizes Jesus as the anchor in the raging seas of life. The album will include some old favorites too, including an upbeat remake of "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" that Zak Huffman says stays true to the original but will be fun for churches to sing in worship.

The Huffmans also are excited about the opportunity to spread the word about Spirit of Adoption Ministries (SOAM), a missions-focused nonprofit they founded to focus on caring for the needs of the poorest of the poor around the world. Proceeds from their albums support SOAM partnerships with missionaries and ministries in the couple's hometown of Parkersburg, West Virginia, the mid-Ohio Valley and around the world.

In addition to their scheduled performances at church events, worship nights and conferences, Love Displayed is planning a tour in 2017 in conjunction with the release of "Eyes on You." The tour will offer several opportunities for the Huffmans to get together with their fans, who they consider family, and encourage them in their daily spiritual walk.

"We live in a world where there's a lot of bad news, but when people listen to our music, we want them to feel peace and remember the promises of the Lord," Zak Huffman said. "We want to remind them that everything is going to be okay." ☛



Solid faith

Baseball free agent Wise praises God through loss

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

As J.T. Wise accepted the Johnny Bench Award as the nation's best collegiate catcher in 2009, his hair was planted to his forehead, the bottom button of his suit was in the top button hole and he may have stuttered.

"I was just all messed up and nervous. I had no idea what was going on. I don't remember the speech," Wise said.

The award is presented by the Greater Wichita Area Sports Commission to NCAA Division I catchers.

But Wise is not the first member of his family to win a baseball award. His great uncle is Bobby Richardson, former New York Yankees second baseman who was the 1960 World Series MVP, an all-star eight times and winner of five Gold Glove Awards. He won three World Series championships (1958, 1961, 1962) and is the only World Series MVP from a losing team (1960).

"Yankees legend Bobby Richardson as a great uncle, it's cool to say it," said Wise, whose parents, Sonny Wise and Mary Sue Richardson Wise, filled him in on his great uncle's accomplishments.

Like his great uncle, J.T. Wise is an all-star. Playing for Chattanooga, he was named to the Southern League All-Star team in 2012.

He was a free agent in 2016 after playing for the Round Rock Express in 2015. The Express is the Triple-A affiliate of the Texas Rangers in the Pacific Coast League.

J.T. Wise, 30, has a family-grounded faith. He was baptized at First Baptist Church, Apopka, Florida.

Raised in Christian home

"My mom led me to the Lord. My mom is very religious and she is firm in that. That is how she and my dad brought me up. They raised me to do the right thing. I pray and thank God for everything. I was involved from the get-go."

His faith has remained solid in times of loss. In his senior year of high school, his best friend, Adam Stratton, died in a motor vehicle accident in May 2005.

In July 2013 his aunt, Doris Goodner, died following complications from surgery. "She was one of my closest ones," he said. His uncle, Olen Richardson, died a year and a half before.

"Family members left too early. Of course, there is

always a reason for it. You don't know why but there is. Things make you realize that you can't take what you have on this earth for granted because it can be gone. It can happen very quickly. You put your faith in Him, you believe in Him and trust Him. Sometimes it is hard to go through life scared."

Role models in life

J.T. Wise's favorite player has been Chipper Jones. "He grew up 45 minutes from me. He was the hometown guy. I love the Atlanta Braves," he said. From DeLand, Florida, Jones played 19 years for the Atlanta Braves as third baseman and left fielder.

"My parents, [Jones] and the Lord," are his role models, J.T. Wise said. "You always have to have Him."

Both his mother and his wife, Marisa Findlay, of Henderson, Nevada, whom he married in 2013, have told him that he has been blessed with common sense.

"I kind of pick up on things before something happens," he said. "You trust yourself and continue to do things that have helped you succeed. Never be scared to try something new if things aren't working."

"This game is tough. It's hard. You sacrifice a lot: family, friends. ... The experience is definitely worth it."

He keeps the first Bible given to him in his truck and his mother continues to send him Bible verses.

J.T. Wise finds new truths and answers

each day he reads the Bible. "Just like in baseball, you go out and have three bad games and it's like, 'What do I do?'" he said.

"You are trying to do the best you can and nothing is working out for you. Then the next week, you can't get out. Those are things that keep reminding you that He is there. He is not going to let you do bad. He is just humbling you," he said, noting he and Marisa Wise read the Bible together.

"Once we have a family, I want to incorporate that with them in their lives because I feel like that has a big impact on a young kid's life."

At this time in his life and career, J.T. Wise wants to help people around him and "try to stay positive when they are having tough times."

"I am an older guy on the team. I have most likely experienced it. I try to share my experience with them and let them know that this part of the game — take it with a grain of salt and keep going. I stay humble and try to do the right things. That is one of the main things, do the right thing and give Him the praise when you need to." 🙏



Photo by Andy Nieptupski/courtesy of the Round Rock Express

J.T. Wise now works as a free agent but played for the Round Rock Express in 2015.

RELIGION

in America

Compiled from Wire Services

Methodist Church splinter group organizes

CHICAGO — More than 1,800 Methodists recently banded together to launch a new group aimed at taking the United Methodist Church (UMC) in a theologically conservative direction. The Wesleyan Covenant Association (WCA), a newly formed evangelical group of clergy and laity, held its inaugural one-day conference in Chicago on Oct. 6, according to The Christian Post.

In recent years, the UMC has seen an increasingly passionate debate manifest over the denomination's position on homosexuality. Unlike other Mainline Protestant denominations, the UMC states that homosexuality is "incompatible with Christian teaching" and refuses to bless gay "marriages" or allow clergy to be in same-sex relationships.

While some regional bodies have called for open defiance of the UMC's rules, during the summer conservatives within the UMC announced the formation of WCA.

Keith Boyette, pastor of Wilderness Community Church, Spotsylvania, Virginia, and one of the organizers of WCA, told Christian Post in an earlier interview that the group's formation comes in response to the pro-LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) activism within the denomination.

"I became involved in the WCA because of concerns about continuing and escalating dysfunction in the United Methodist Church, with whole regions of the Church within the United States declaring their intent ... to no longer conform to portions of our doctrine and polity," Boyette said. (TAB)

Court strikes down Nevada voucher plan

CARSON CITY, Nevada — The Nevada Supreme Court struck down a voucher-style education program Sept. 29 that allowed parents to spend state money to send their children to a religious school if they chose.

The state's Education Savings Program — the most extensive school-choice plan in the country — allowed parents to receive grants from the state's public school funding for use at an eligible private school. But in the 4-2 ruling, the court declared the program unconstitutional.

But it did so for different reasons than those argued by the Baptist Joint Committee (BJC) for Religious Liberty, which said the use of taxpayer funds for any "sectarian purpose" was unconstitutional and that such a program made "religious institutions beholden to the State."

It was a threat to "the vibrant diversity of religious beliefs and the freedom of conscience that Nevadans currently enjoy," said Jennifer Hawks, BJC associate general counsel.

But the Nevada Supreme Court rejected that argument, saying that once the voucher money was in the hands of the parent, it was no longer "public funds."

Instead the court declared the voucher program unconstitutional because it failed to appropriate enough money to sufficiently fund the state's public schools before implementing the voucher plan. (TAB)

Students join religious freedom movement

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colorado — More than 300,000 students took their Bibles with them to school Oct. 6 for "Bring Your Bible to School Day," an observance intended as a show of evangelism and an expression of religious freedom.

The national event — in its third year — is sponsored by Focus on the Family and has seen "inspiring" growth in participation, according to Jim Daly, president of Focus.

He also said that religious freedom is a key component of the observance, calling it "a nationwide, religious freedom initiative for students from kindergarten to college," according to The Christian Post.

"On this day, they celebrate religious freedom and share God's hope by taking a simple action — bringing their Bibles to school and talking about it with friends before and after class," Daly said. (TAB)