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Missionary Kenny Vines (left) co-leads a Bible study with an aspiring church leader in a village along the Zambezi River. Vines and his wife, Lesley, are seeing doors open for the gospel in Zambian villages by focusing on direct outreach, community projects and spiritual multiplication.

Photo by Adam Covington

Missionaries in Zambia have 'systematic plan' to reach all with gospel

Elephants, antelope, hippos, crocodiles, buffalo and the occasional lion are among missionary Kenny Vines' travel mates as he moves about his ministry in the African nation of Zambia.

On multiple occasions while on his way to a village for Bible study, he has been cut off by a herd of elephants and had to travel another path. At other times during days of extended ministry, lions calling, hyenas laughing, elephants trumpeting and hippos bellowing were the soundtrack to his nights as he lay in his tent.

Vines and his wife, Lesley, have ministered along the Zambezi River in southern Africa since 2009. As with all missionary-evangelists, all of their efforts for community involvement anticipate open doors

to provide everyone on their missions field the opportunity to both hear and respond to the message of Christ. They also have a "systematic plan" to do so through direct outreach and spiritual multiplication.

Deployed to Zambia roughly seven years ago, the Vineses eagerly prayed that God would open doors to spread His Word. Not long after they arrived, their prayer was answered for what would become the first of many times.

Language learning

While still in the language learning phase of their deployment, Vines traveled to Luangwa, the village in which they would ultimately be stationed, to explore the location and oversee the preparation of their home. When returning to language school, Vines stopped to pick up

two people who were flagging his vehicle for a ride. As it turned out, these two people were the wife of and aide to the chief of that area.

"Later when we moved to Luangwa, we went to see the chief and introduce ourselves to him," Vines recounted. "That divine appointment with his wife and aide helped to pave the road to a great relationship with the chief. In our area, you need the chief's blessing for all that you do, and because of how the Lord worked in the beginning, our ministry has been able to move

and function in this area with no hindrance."

One of the Vineses' primary avenues for ministry is community

projects such as digging water wells, assisting in building projects and performing any other tasks that a village might not be able to do alone. Such undertakings allow the Vineses to "get [their] feet in the door" and hopefully begin Bible studies in villages with no church or missionary work. "[Doing these projects] allows us to show the love of Christ through (See 'Reaching,' page 11)

LMCO

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Alabama's goal: \$12 million

Coming next week...

Learning
to **Live Simply**

Faith and Family



COMMENT

A Lesson from the First Century Church

The first century was a dark time. In the Roman world slavery was everywhere. Abuse was common. Violence reigned as government maintained itself by the sharp edge of a sword.

The privileged few lived lavishly while most people eked out an existence characterized by poverty and hunger. Economically society rewarded the rich and cursed the rest.

Personal passions were indulged and sexual promiscuity was accepted. Pornography was rampant and prostitution widespread. One writer noted, "It was not unusual for Roman citizens to have multiple sexual partners, homosexual encounters and engagement with temple prostitutes." That same scholar wrote, "It was not unusual for people to share their spouses with each other."

Children were abused, incest widely practiced and babies left on hillsides to die from exposure.

This was the world into which Christ sent His followers to make disciples from all nations.

The description sounds eerily similar to society today. Almost 1 in 6 people in Alabama lives in poverty and almost 1 in 5 suffers from food insecurity. Hardworking people struggle to stay even with little thought of getting ahead.

Pornography, abuse, homosexuality and other scandals are commonplace. And babies die by the thousands through legal abortions.

Faith in Jesus Christ

How did the early Church turn this culture upside down in a matter of 300 years?

By living differently.

The ability to live differently came from faith in Jesus Christ, to be sure, but the presence of Jesus in the lives of believers caused them to live differently than the pagan world which surrounded them.

Early in His ministry Jesus taught that His followers should "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be sons of your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:44-45).

Near the middle of His ministry Jesus gave His disciples a new commandment: "Love one another. As I have loved you, you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

My disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35).

Days before His crucifixion Jesus emphasized the importance of caring for the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the poorly clothed, the sick and the prisoner (Matt. 15:30-31).

Following Jesus' teachings

New Testament Christians understood that faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior included making Him the orientation of one's life. That meant following His teachings and living by a different ethic than that of the Roman world.

That is why the apostle Paul urged Christians in Rome to "bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse" and then added, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink" (Rom. 12:14, 20).

The apostle James emphasized the difference between pagan culture and the lifestyle of Christian believers when he added, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:27).

Helping those in need

It is not surprising that early Church fathers defended the legitimacy of Christianity by pointing out how Christians were generous and shared their resources with all those in need. For example Tertullian wrote, "One in mind and soul, we do not hesitate to share our earthly good with one another. All things are common among us."

Even their sexual ethic was different. The Epistle to Diognetus, a second century document, reports, "Christians share their meals but not their sexual partners." In the second century Apology of Aristides, Aristides defends the legitimacy of the Christian faith to Emperor Hadrian by pointing out that Christians "do not commit adultery nor fornication" and "their men keep themselves from every unlawful union."

It was living according to the teachings of Jesus that demonstrated to all who saw them that Christians were different from others. Faith in Jesus Christ transformed the way they lived before God and the way they lived with others. The self-centeredness of the Roman culture gave way to Jesus' command to "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30-31).

The early Church did not busy itself trying to get pagans to live like Christians. Instead the Church emphasized the presence of God in one's life that drives Christians to live according to Jesus' teachings. The Church would not be distracted from its primary duty of loving God and loving others.

Similar lifestyles

Today's problem is far different. A 2013 Barna study documented that the lifestyles of Christian believers and nonbelievers were almost identical in areas such as sexual habits, generosity, concern for others and attitude toward money and possessions.

Instead of valuing lifestyle, today's Christians are judged by participation — primarily in worship services. If one goes to church at least once a month or so, one is judged to be an active Christian. But being a Christian is about more than spending an hour in a worship service on Sunday morning.

Living differently

Being a Christian is about loving God through faith in Jesus Christ and living like a Christian according to the teachings of Jesus.

How sad that the challenge of this day seems to be getting Christians to live like Christians.

The purpose of worship is not to produce an emotional high that leaves one unchanged in the way life is lived in the days that follow. The purpose of worship is to produce an encounter with God that empowers the believer to live differently from the world in the following days.

That truth helped the early Church change a pagan world and it can help Christians today turn this culture upside down for Jesus.

That is a lesson worth learning from the first century Church. ✠

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

NOTE FROM SBC LEADER AND READER OF TAB

I read *The Alabama Baptist* because it comprehensively reports Southern Baptist news.

I read it because every issue informs me of persecuted Christians.

I read it because of Joanne Sloan's authentic biographical sketches of Christian heroes and heroines in Heroes of the Faith.

I read it because of Bob Terry's fair, well-researched and timely editorials.

Furthermore, he has been and is my friend.

I am indeed grateful.
James Leo Garrett Jr.
Nacogdoches, Texas ✠



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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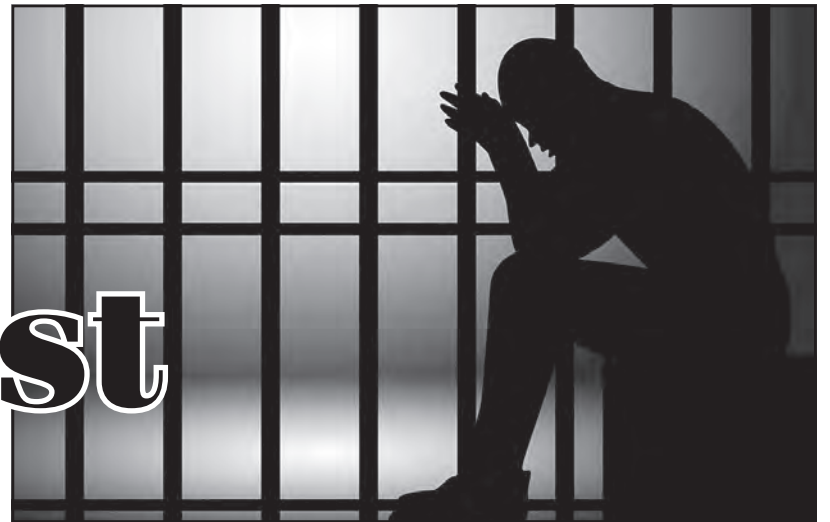
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Samford's Ministry Training Institute offers certificates to inmates

By Grace Thornton

Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The chains may not have fallen off that night, but the scales sure did, Glen Sandifer said.

Sandifer, pastor of Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Gordo, was teaching a Bible class at the Federal Correctional Institution in Aliceville when one woman in particular kept asking questions.

She stayed after class and he felt led to keep talking to her.

"Usually the women have a mandatory meeting at 3 p.m., just after the class. And a lot of times, they call them in for that meeting early. But that day the meeting was late and I feel like God must've postponed it," he said. "Because during that conversation, something registered with her. She just broke out in tears. The scales fell off."

And her heart saw truth, he said. She started following Christ soon after that and she was recently baptized.

It's for women like her that Sandifer teaches classes at the prison through Samford University's Ministry Training Institute (MTI), which offers ministerial certificates to inmates through the classes it offers behind bars.

Kevin Blackwell, MTI executive director, said, "What we do with MTI, we also extend into prisons in the state." MTI also offers

classes online and in locations around the state for ministers and laymen preparing for ministry. "We see what we do in the prisons as pure ministry. It's an opportunity to engage folks with the gospel. They're incarcerated but through Christ they find freedom."

Through the help of volunteer teachers like Sandifer, MTI is in five of Alabama's prisons — the women's prison in Aliceville, Staton and Draper correctional facilities in Elmore, St. Clair Correctional Facility in Springville and

Hamilton Aged & Infirmed.

"The guys who teach these classes are mostly local pastors who have a heart for that type of ministry," Blackwell said.

The class sizes run on average 30 to 40 students, he said, and the courses offered are subjects like Old and New Testament, spiritual disciplines,

Christian counseling and the letters of Paul.

"A lot of [the students] sign up just to get out of their normal daily routine. But we have students in these institutions who are pretty serious Bible students," Blackwell said. "Some of them have come to Christ since they have been in these prisons and have a hunger for discipleship. These classes give them an opportunity to deepen their walk with the Lord."

In Aliceville, Sandifer has seen this happen in the lives of a number of women — specifically several who have come to faith in Christ during the classes.

**For more information,
visit www.samford.edu/programs/ministry-training-institute.**

"We've been going in there about three years now," said Sandifer, who noted that the ministry partnership with MTI has been right in line with what Gary Farley, director of missions for Pickens Baptist Association, envisioned for the local prison.

"When the prison was first being built, he (Farley) had a vision for training the ladies to be missionaries wherever they go next, whether that be to another facility or home or a brand new place," Sandifer said. "Somewhere along the way, we got hooked up with MTI."

And the fruit of that partnership is already visible, he said.

Sending out missionaries

A couple of years after one woman was released, she sent a letter to Sandifer to thank him — and then she told him what she was doing now.

"She took the certificates that she got from Samford to a little church in Oregon and said, 'This is what I studied while I was in prison,'" Sandifer said. "And they asked her to teach Sunday School for them. That vision that Dr. Farley had about sending out missionaries is already happening."

It's been a great way to strengthen Samford's partnership with local churches and associations, Blackwell said — and it's been a great way to make an eternal impact together.

"We see it as front line evangelism to those who need it the most," Blackwell said, "and we're seeing God do a great work." ¶

Ministry Tips

FOLLOWING UP WITH PROSPECTS



By Chip Warren

Minister of education, FBC Albertville

In a previous Ministry Tip, we took a look at how to find prospects. Some prospects come to church gradually, but for special events like Vacation Bible School (VBS) or other large outreach events like fall festivals, large numbers are found in a short time. Here are a few tips on following up on prospects.

1. Have a follow-up plan well before the event. Be sure you have a process that is clear so everyone knows what his or her role is.

2. Use existing structures and organizations for follow-up. There is no need to keep reinventing the wheel. For most churches Sunday School is the best organization to assign prospects for follow-up.

3. Put the follow-up plan into action immediately. For example if VBS ends

at noon on a Friday, the children and their families need to be followed-up before Sunday. The longer one waits to follow-up the less likely it is they will be reached. Time is crucial in follow-up.

4. Be diligent and never give up. If a phone or address is incorrect for a prospect, don't toss it. Be tenacious until you find them. It may determine where they spend eternity. (chipwarren@bellsouth.net) ¶

Practical tips

Preparing your family's hearts for celebrating Christ's birth

By Denise George
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Thanksgiving is over and Christmas is coming. Almost overnight, Christian families are overwhelmed with advertisements for the latest and greatest toys and gadgets, stuck in traffic jams between honking cars with frustrated drivers, made to wait in long department store checkout lines, bombarded with costumed department store-hired Santa Clauses shouting "Happy Holidays" and swept up into a whirlwind of senseless holiday happenings that have little or nothing to do with the Christian celebration of Christmas — the coming of Christ.

How, in the midst of loud, frantic and meaningless activity, can Christian parents wisely use this season to teach their children about Christ and biblical truths?

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. Schedule an interruption-free quiet time each day when family members can sit down together, read Scripture, pray and participate in special Christmas activities and projects.

During these times, read the Christmas story in Matthew 1:18–25 and Luke 2:1–14. Talk with your children about the biblical meaning of Christmas — the remembrance and celebration of the coming of Christ into the world. Explain to them why Christians celebrate December days in anticipation of His Advent (arrival).

2. Make a family Advent wreath: Place four purple (or blue) candles in a Styrofoam wreath with one white candle in the middle.

During your family devotional times, light one candle each week during the month of Advent. On Christmas morning light the white candle which represents Christ. Discuss and read Bible verses that show the meaning/symbolism of each Advent candle: hope, peace, joy, love.

Advent Scripture suggestions:

Hope: Jeremiah 29:11; 2 Corinthians 4:16–18; 1 Peter 1:3; Romans 8:24–25. **Peace:** John 16:33; Matthew 5:9; Matthew 11:28–30; John 14:27; John 20:19. **Joy:** Psalm 5:11–12; Psalm 47:1; Philippians 1:3–5; Romans 15:13.

Love: 1 Corinthians 13:4–8; John 3:16; Romans 5:8; Romans 8:37–39; 1 John 3:1; Ephesians 4:2; 1 John 4:7.

3. Display a nativity scene in your family room.

In the weeks before Christmas allow children to place figures representing Mary, Joseph, shepherds, wise men and animals in the nativity. On Christmas morning let the youngest member of the family set the baby Jesus figure in the manger. As each figure is added explain its role and significance.

4. Buy some inexpensive supplies and encourage children to make biblically inspired decorations to hang on the Christmas tree.

As a family talk about the meaning of each before adding it to the tree.

Ideas for decorations:

The cross — a symbol of Christ's crucifixion: Matthew 16:24; John 19:17; John 19:19.

Angels — God's messengers: Luke 1:30–31; Luke 2:15–16; Luke 2:10–11.

Stars — God's creation/a sign: Matthew 2:10; Matthew 2:1–12.

Candy cane — representing a shepherd's hook: Luke 2:15–20.

5. Encourage your children to make creative Christmas cards throughout the season using construction paper, crayons, markers, etc.

Send the individually designed cards to family members, friends, neighbors, church staff and members, Sunday School teachers and classmates, military service members away from home and their families and others.

Through family devotional times, purposeful activities, carefully selected meaningful events, Scripture study, edifying reading material and creative prayer, families can prepare their hearts for Christmas and teach their children about biblical hope, peace, joy and love as they anticipate the coming of the Christmas child.

Look for more practical tips to prepare your family's hearts for celebrating Christ's birth in next week's issue.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Denise George (www.denisegeorge.org) is the author of 30 books and is married to Timothy George, founding dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham. ✝

Chrismon Tree

A Chrismon, first developed by Frances Kipps Spencer in 1957, is a Christmas ornament based on a Christian symbol.

All Chrismons are symbols from the Bible and from other signs that early Christians used to identify one another.

Many churches today celebrate the Advent season by decorating a Chrismon Tree to tell the story of the life of Christ — with the goal of focusing believers' hearts on God's great gift to the world during the Christmas season — Jesus Christ.

The second set of ornaments are featured below and more will be showcased in the Dec. 8 and 15 issues.



Cross crosslet: Suggests the spread of the gospel to the four corners of the earth.



Dogwood: Represents the passion of Christ in His death on the cross.



Cross in the circle: Represents eternity.



Dove with olive branch: Represents peace and new life.



Crown: Represents Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords.



Fish: Symbolizes Jesus Christ as Son of God and Savior.



Crown of thorns: Represents humiliation and suffering imposed on Jesus.



Fleur de lis: Represents the Trinity — Father, Son and Holy Spirit.



Dove descending: Symbolizes the Holy Spirit at the Lord's baptism.



Grapes: Represents wine and the Lord's Supper.

(Compiled by TAB)

Delivering love through Christmas backpacks



Mississippi River Ministry

Photo courtesy of Judson Baptist Association

Michael (left) and Aimee Starling (right), who attend Adoniram Baptist Church, Shorterville, help deliver 81 backpacks filled and collected by churches in Judson Baptist Association. Associational churches participated in the outreach as part of a 5,000-backpack goal for the state, collected through associations and Alabama Woman's Missionary Union. Backpacks will be distributed through the Mississippi River Ministry, a North American Mission Board project.

The truth behind SANTA CLAUS



Stories of real St. Nicholas figures show generosity, sense of justice

Adam English admits he is a bit of an oddity as both a Baptist and a big fan of the saints.

But he's also unapologetic about it.

"I was surprised, as a Baptist, that the word 'saint' is mentioned over 60 times in the New Testament alone," said English, chair of the department of religion and philosophy at Campbell University in Buis Creek, North Carolina.

English has gained the reputation as a global authority on St. Nicholas of Myra since the 2012 publication of his book, "The Saint Who Would Be Santa Claus."

The years of research, writing and speaking that have gone into that fourth century saint and bishop also have given English a deeper appreciation for the role of saints in the formation of Christianity.

And not only has he been surprised by how the modern concept of Santa Claus developed, but also how open many Baptists and other Protestants are in modeling their lives after those of St. Nicholas and other saints.

"It's almost as if we have, in 2015, come to the end of some of that Reformation prejudice against the saints," he said.

English shared how he developed an interest in the historical

person behind Santa Claus and how it has impacted his faith.

Q: What's a Baptist doing writing about saints?

A: There are a couple of things relevant to the Baptist context. One is that I am finding that Baptist churches and pastors are more and more interested in connecting with their own tradition and their own history, especially in churches where parents want to celebrate the holidays and feeling that Santa is so commercial and overdone. We want to reconnect with our own Christian heritage and more and more you're finding Baptist churches that are interested in connecting with St. Nicholas.

Q: What made this topic so interesting to you?

A: The more I started to read the theology of the Church, the more I realized it is connected with the lives of the saints, the Christian exemplars, the ones who brought this faith to life. ... There is a tendency among Baptists who want to take theology seriously to argue these intellectual ideas of theology and Trinity and atonement and so on. But the more I looked at it the more I realized the Church has never argued these things abstractly. ... So you think of St. Augustine or St. Aquinas: They're preaching and talking as much

about the saints and the people who have modeled the faith as they are about the ideas of the faith. To me that was a real and necessary thing to do as a theology.

Q: How and when did this Santa interest begin?

A: My wife asked me the same question: 'Wait a minute, when did we get into Santa?'

I lead study abroad trips to Italy with the students. I learned that St. Nicholas was buried in Italy and more importantly there was an archive library attached to the basilica that held his remains. Then I discovered ... that in terms of English-speaking scholars, no one had really looked into this. So I went over there and looked at some of the documents and I felt like there was a real story to be told from these primary sources. ... That was about five years ago.

Q: What did you find through that research?

A: The real discovery in looking at the primary documents reveals there really are two St. Nicholas figures. There's the one we associated with, St. Nicholas of Myra, and there was St. Nicholas of Sion (in modern-day Turkey), who lives more than 100 years later. He was named after St. Nicholas [of Myra]. ... In the 10th century these two stories got merged together and that merging stuck down to our own times. ... Together the two stories make for a more exciting story.

Q: Who was St. Nicholas of Myra — and where is Myra?

A: On the southeast coast of what is today Turkey. In Acts, Paul makes a stop in Myra. ... I really would say two characteristics stand out about him: his generosity, for sure, and also his sense of justice. ... He was known to give away his wealth in creative and anonymous nighttime gifts. And there are a number of other stories about his sense of justice. He defends three innocent men in town who are about to be executed and secures their release, then tracks down the judge who took bribes to have these men executed and scolds him severely.

Q: What about the life of St. Nicholas is a model for Christians today?

A: Generosity and justice. I think those are the two things we can pick up on. I don't want to take away from family traditions of gift giving or the Santa Claus traditions for young kids. ... But I would add to the tradition. December 6 is St. Nicholas' Day, so here is an opportunity early in the Advent season for families to do something Nicholas-like. And doing something Nicholas-like is doing something Christlike.

Q: What sorts of actions earned St. Nicholas that reputation?

A: The most famous story is about him delivering three anonymous nighttime gifts to families that had fallen into destitution. ... He comes by in the middle of the night and drops bags of gold through their windows.

Q: Do you know where the red suit and sleigh and all the rest of it originated?

A: It's an absolutely American creation and it comes really through the early 1800s ... from various promoters looking for traditions that feel nostalgic. They pick up on this character from Europe where there has always been a St. Nicholas involved in the season. But then the 'Night before Christmas' transforms this character into this magical gift-giver and very much about the family and domesticating him for the family. Then you have the artists who start to render this image and these Coca-Cola commercials in the 1930s that really fixed the image of Santa Claus for us.

Q: How has all of this changed your experience of this season?

A: For me it has added a depth. ... I've become more enamored with all the parts of Christmas, including the lawn ornaments that go with it. Christmas is the only time of year when the sacred and the silly come together. ... And it's a time when we can be with family and work for justice and generosity — and all this can go together. (BNG)



123rf.com

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.

BIRMINGHAM

► The music ministries of **First Church, Birmingham**, and **Raleigh Avenue Church, Homewood**, will present Handel's Messiah on Dec. 11, 5 p.m. at First, Birmingham. A church-wide fellowship will follow. For more information call 205-870-3888. Jim Cooley is pastor of First, Birmingham. Nic Seaborn is pastor of Raleigh Avenue Church. ► **Shades Mountain Church, Vestavia Hills**, will hold "Christmas by Candlelight: Thy Perfect Light" on Dec. 4, 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. A short film will be featured along with music performed by the choirs, bands and orchestra. The film is a modern-day retelling of the three wise men. Danny Wood is pastor.

COFFEE

► **First Church, Kinston**, and **Bethel Church, Opp**, will host "Jesus Means Christmas," a combined children's choir presentation, Dec. 4, 6 p.m. at First, Kinston. First, Kinston also will host the 2nd annual community Christmas choir "This is Christmas" on Dec. 18, 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. Bethel Church, Enterprise; Beulah Church, Opp; and Brooklyn Church, Opp, also will participate in the event. Ben Posey is pastor of First, Kinston. Louie Reynolds is interim pastor of Bethel Church. Larry Wise is pastor of Beulah Church. Rob-

ert Davis is pastor of Brooklyn Church.

ETOWAH

► **Immanuel Church, Hokes Bluff**, will present "All About That Baby," a fun Christmas musical by the children's choir Dec. 18, 6 p.m. Anthony Copeland is pastor.

GENEVA

► **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will host the 39er's CLUB on Dec. 13, 11 a.m. The Maple Avenue Church Quartet will perform special music. If you have previously been involved in the 39er's CLUB, contact your table hostess by Dec. 6. If you would like to attend but have never been before, call the church office at 334-684-9617. Steve Wegmann is pastor.

MORGAN

► **First Church, Hartselle**, honored Beth Brown in a retirement reception Nov. 11. She served as church secretary of First, Hartselle, for almost 20 years. Clayton Speed is pastor.

NORTH JEFFERSON

► **First Church, Mount Olive**, will hold a senior adult Christmas banquet Dec. 9, 6 p.m. Guy Anderson will be the special guest. There will be dinner and entertainment. For more information and to register call Corey Stringer at 256-631-4401. Jon

Ferguson is pastor. ► **Theophilus Knowles** is the new pastor of **First Church, Brookside**. He holds degrees from Arizona State University in Tempe and The Nation of Judah University. He and his wife, Tara, have four children. ► **Donnell Brown** is the new pastor of **New Beginnings Community Church, Graysville**. He previously served as director of missions for Morgan Association. He holds a bachelor's degree from Athens State University and a master's degree from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Sandra, have two children and one grandchild.

PINE BARREN

► **Bible Fellowship Church, Camden**, will hold a benefit singing for Tyler Halbrook on Dec. 3. The church also will hold a live nativity Dec. 18, 6 p.m. Tommy Primm is pastor. ► **Vredenburg Church** will hold a Christmas fellowship following the 11 a.m. worship service Dec. 11. Thomas Anderson is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Siluria Church, Alabaster**, will host Tim and Charlotte Cearley to speak Dec. 4, 11 a.m. Tim Cearley is the director of programs for community ministries at First Church, Montgomery. He and his wife previously served as International Mission Board missionaries to Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana, Senegal and South Africa. For more information visit siluriabaptist.com or call 205-663-7904. Michael J. Brooks is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **Sulphur Springs Church, Trussville**, packed 1,106 shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child, surpassing their goal of 1,000 and the 2015 total of 910 shoeboxes. David Jones is pastor. ► **First Church, Ashville**, will host Christian comedian Billy Bob Bohannon on Dec. 15, 11:30 a.m. Lunch will follow the program. Jay Stewart is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Taylorville Church, Tuscaloosa**, will present the Star of Bethlehem Live Nativity on Dec. 17-18, 6-8 p.m. There will be nine drive-thru scenes, live animals, a message of hope narrative CD and refreshments. Vans and buses are welcome. For more information call 205-758-0868. Curtis Kelley is pastor. ☛



Morris' Liberty Baptist celebrates 125 years

Willard Davis, who has served as pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Morris, for 36 years, celebrated a "fantastic" 125th anniversary with his church Sept. 25, he said.

There were several special guests during the Sunday morning service including Johnie Sentell, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative, who presented the North Jefferson Baptist Association church with a plaque; Steve Loggins, North Jefferson Association director of missions, who shared the morning message; and Steven Myers, former member, who shared how the church influenced his life as he became a missionary and children's minister.



Photo by Johnie Sentell

Daphne Mulvehill, the oldest living member, was recognized during the service and the church choir provided special music.

Photo albums and the original minutes of the church also were displayed for participants to view.

Lafitte marks centennial with packed house

Lafitte Baptist Church, Saraland, recently celebrated its 100th anniversary with a packed house.

The celebrations began Sept. 23 at 6:30 p.m. with music by The Kendricks and chalk art by Darrell Jennings. September 24 festivities included a 6:30 p.m. concert with music by former staff and members along with the adult choir.

Former pastor Grant Barber shared a message during the 10:30 a.m. service Sept. 25 and J. Clement Casey, Ted Mashburn, Chip Travis, Jonathan Hill and Tammy Anderson shared memories of the church from years past. Special music was performed by Clyde Risen and Cason Martin led the congregational singing.

Jim Swedenburg, director of the office of Cooperative Program and stewardship development for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, presented the Mobile Baptist Association church with a certificate to commemorate its anniversary, as well as a certificate on behalf of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

Anniversary service prompts membership jump

For Solitude Baptist Church, Albertville, its 125th anniversary Sept. 25 was a celebration of the church's rich missions history.

Church members who formerly served on the missions field shared stories of their time in China and Montana, places where the Marshall Baptist Association church still ministers today.

At the Sunday morning service, the church praise team provided special music and a photo slideshow was shown. Memorabilia from the church's past was displayed in the fellowship hall. Marshall Association Director of Missions Randall Stoner presented the church with a plaque on behalf of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

Since the celebration day highlighting the mission of the church, 17 people have joined. Pastor Joey Cannady said he anticipates more will join in the coming weeks.

Pinckard Baptist commemorates 125 years

Don Snell, a former missionary in the Caribbean, was born when Pinckard Baptist Church in Dale Baptist Association was just 50 years old. Since he was a boy, the church has felt like his family — a feeling that hasn't changed in 75 years, Snell said during Pinckard Baptist's 125th anniversary service Oct. 9.

During the service, Pastor Chris Woodall brought the message and Ellen Dewberry, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative, presented a plaque. A quilt that was made for the church's centennial was displayed for participants.

Compiled by the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and TAB

REFLECTIONS





Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Angelology

The Study of Angels

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

December is special for several reasons. For one it marks the end of the year. Most importantly for Christians, it brings our annual celebration of Christ's birth. During the month of celebration, hopefully we will read again the Christmas story in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Many of us will view a Christmas play or attend a Christmas musical. When we read the story of Christ's birth we will read about the appearance of angels to Mary and Joseph, as well as to a group of shepherds. When we view a typical Christmas play, some in the play will portray angels, perchance children with costumes having wings and a halo. When we hear a Christmas musical we will hear lyrics that reference angels. When we join in singing a Christmas hymn, we will mention angels such as "Angels We Have Heard on High."

Narratives of Christ

So what are we to make of the prominence of angels in the narratives of Christ's coming? For that matter, what are we to understand about the prominence of angels in many biblical passages? For the next few weeks Theology 101 will look at various aspects of the doctrine of angels, or as it is formally termed, "Angelology."

Angels are referenced in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, as well as in Revelation, the last one. Altogether the activity of angels is recorded in at least half of the 66 books of the Bible. Someone, possessing an eye for details and a mind for statistics, has counted more than 190 references to angels or celestial beings in the Old Testament, as well as more than 90 such references in the New Testament.

God's dealings with His people

If we confess with the Psalmist (and hopefully we do), "The entirety of Your Word is truth" (Ps. 119:160), then surely we must give attention to the place of angels in God's dealings with His people. Since most all of us have probably never seen an angel or heard one

speaking to us, the subject of angels — their reality and ministries — can be easily ignored. Many of us will have to admit that we have not given much thought or time to angelology or the study of angels. Given the truthfulness and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture, our goal is to think biblically about angels.

Biblical promises

What are we to make of biblical promises about angels, such as Psalm 34:7: "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him and delivers them"? What are we to think about Zechariah's repeated reference to "the angel that talked with me" (Zech. 1:9, 14, 19; 2:3; 4:1, 5; 5:10)? Furthermore what about the presence of angels associated with Jesus' birth and wilderness temptations as well as His resurrection and ascension?

While we may be left with a host of unanswered questions about angels in the world today, it is still good for us to learn all we can concerning what the Bible tells us about their existence and activities. In so doing we want to walk a balanced path through our consideration of angels, neither discounting nor denying their reality nor drifting into what one Bible scholar terms "angelomania," that is, the error of going to seed over angels, such as worshipping or praying to them. Biblical faith surely confesses all that the Bible tells us about angels, but also is careful not to go beyond what it teaches.

Given the prominence of angels in the Christmas story, December is a good month in which to think about these heavenly beings. #

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.



NAMB's Bass seeks to reconnect with DOMs at annual conference

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

In preparation for the Nov. 14 Alabama Baptist Conference of Directors of Missions (ABCDOM) meeting, Otis Corbitt — the group's president and director of missions (DOM) for Covington Baptist Association — facilitated an online survey to evaluate the current trends in associational missions in Alabama.

A troubling finding of that survey — which had a 59 percent, 42 of 71, response rate — was the breakdown in associations' relationships with both the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and the International Mission Board (IMB), leaders noted. According to the survey, 24 percent of DOMs reported receiving no communications from NAMB during the year while more than 50 percent reported the NAMB communications they did receive as inadequate in amount or not the right kind of communications.

DOMs' communications with IMB are even worse, with a third of DOMs never hearing from IMB while 60 percent are not happy with the amount of communication they have with IMB, the survey showed.

Because of these findings, ABCDOM leadership invited Steve Bass, vice president for convention relations (West) for NAMB, to the group's annual meeting at McGehee Road Baptist Church, Montgomery.

Bass shared how NAMB is trying to reconnect with associations throughout the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC):

- ▶ By serving as a resource for churches to "pick a spot" as a domestic missions field.
- ▶ By creating a team to provide training

for replanting and revitalizing churches.

- ▶ By encouraging churches to "start local" with their missions outreaches.
- ▶ By providing mobile dental and medical clinics as a resource.
- ▶ By hosting DOM Labs to help DOMs connect with one another and SBC leaders.
- ▶ By providing funding for the Associational Missions Emphasis materials produced for churches.

▶ By helping support the Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders.

▶ By forming and funding a group of DOM ambassadors as a way to learn from them and enhance NAMB-DOM relations.

Bass also spoke about "what is right with this younger generation of pastors and church planters."

First "they are theologically and biblically more astute than

ever before," he said. In the areas of evangelism, disciple making and church planting there has been a shift in strategy where young planters focus on forming relationships and making disciples in a new area before launching a church.

"The young church planters are saying, 'I need to live in the community for awhile,'" Bass said.

Second "they are paying the price to stay on the church plant field."

"If you don't connect [the planter's] wife with support, within two years they will be gone," Bass said, noting that NAMB provides a coaching team for planters which helps the wives find connections with others.

For more information on the ABCDOM survey, contact Covington Association at 334-222-3009. (Debbie Campbell contributed)



BASS

New DOM officers elected



Leading leaders

Photo by Debbie Campbell

The Alabama Baptist Conference of Directors of Missions met Nov. 14 at McGehee Road Baptist Church, Montgomery. New officers elected are (l to r): Randall Stoner (Marshall), president-elect; Barry Cosper (Bessemer), secretary-treasurer; and Eddy Garner (Colbert-Lauderdale), president.

Homecoming festivities

Samford celebrates homecoming, 175th anniversary

Samford University's 2016 homecoming weekend Nov. 11–12 had an especially festive flair with several nods to the school's 175th anniversary observance.

Opening events Nov. 11 included a festival procession and convocation that allowed the Samford community to celebrate the anniversary in fellowship and worship. The program highlighted the rich history of the school, which was founded by Alabama Baptists in 1841 in Marion.

"Is it possible to love a place?" Samford President Andrew Westmoreland asked during his remarks at the convocation.

"I lack the philosophical framework to answer the question with the rationality I would prefer," he said. "All that I know is that, when that place is Samford, I can only say 'yes.' I love this place. And thousands of people across the planet today, many with Samford degrees but many without, would say the same."

Throughout the weekend, throngs of alumni — and many others — displayed their fond affection for their alma mater and had a good time doing it.

Several thousand students, alumni and guests also attended an elegant Anniversary Ball in Samford's Hanna Center, which was transformed from an athletic arena for the occasion.

During a brief program, the 2016 alumni award recipients received commemorative medals from Westmoreland.

Alumni awards

Honorees were: William Baggett, Class of 1957, a longtime higher education administrator from Atlanta; Keith Herron, Class of 1987, a banking executive from Birmingham; Fred Kingren, Class of 1982, a Birmingham attorney; and Anne Glaze Stone, Class of 1967, an educator and community volunteer from Huntsville.

Katie Murnane, Class of 2007, an accountant in Edinburgh, Scotland, received the Outstanding Young Alumna award.

The inaugural Humanitarian of the Year awards went to: Carolyn Maull McKinstry, a 2008 master of divinity graduate from Birmingham who has dedicated her life's work to the ministry of reconciliation; and Stephen B. Moss, of Fort Lauderdale,

Florida, a 1968 law graduate who is founder of Mission United, which helps veterans with housing, legal assistance and health care.

Seniors Micah Green-Holloway, a management major from Birmingham, and Margaret Hehir, a nursing major from Atlanta, were named homecoming king and queen. They were chosen by vote of the student body.

Additional events

The Nov. 11 events also included department open houses, an alumni association meeting and a Golden Bulldog luncheon for graduates of classes of 1966 and earlier.

At the luncheon, retired U.S. Marine Col. Carl Cooper, of Vestavia Hills, a 1943 graduate, received the David Lockmiller Award as the male present from the earliest class. Mary Louise Hodges, of Homewood, also a 1943 graduate, received the Lockmiller award as the female present from the earliest class. Each received an engraved clock.

A highlight on the morning of Nov. 12 was the journalism and mass communication (JMC) department's Wall of Fame ceremony that honored 1963 JMC graduate and long-time Samford public relations director William A. Nunnelle, of Birmingham. He earned a master's degree in history at Samford in 1983.

The Bulldogs'

afternoon football game against the Mercer Bears ended with a Samford win, 24–19.

At the game, it was announced that the Samford classes celebrating reunions in 2016 had raised more than \$38,000 in scholarship funds as part of their reunion activities. Representatives from the classes of 1961, 1966, 1991 and 2006 presented a symbolic check to Westmoreland and W. Randy Pittman, vice president for advancement.

Fans at the game also had their first opportunity to see the new Bulldog spirit mark that was launched as part of the anniversary celebration and homecoming weekend.

In the days leading up to homecoming weekend, students were challenged and inspired through a series of classroom lectures led by alumni distinguished in various fields. They also enjoyed a festive Bulldog bash with music, food and a 175th birthday cake. (Samford)



Photo courtesy of Samford University

Samford University seniors Micah Green-Holloway (left) and Margaret Hehir (right) were chosen by vote of the student body to be homecoming king and queen.

ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Glynwood Baptist's Hose to retire Dec. 31

By the time Bruce Hose retires Dec. 31 he will have served in ministry for 50 years.

Hose, pastor of Glynwood Baptist Church, Prattville, since 2008, earned a bachelor's degree from Athens College (now Athens State University) and a master's degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.



HOSE

His first church to serve out of seminary was York Terrace Baptist Church, Sheffield, where he served as minister of education. Hose also served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Union Springs, and executive pastor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, and later spent 14 years serving in the Sunday School office of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. While attending seminary Hose served churches in Kentucky.

Something Hose said the Lord has taught him throughout his years in ministry is that "people matter to God."

"If we're going to be obedient to the Lord then people have to matter to us as well," he said. "The focus of our entire ministry has to be on people — equipping them to do the work of the Church."

Hose said he plans to serve in ministry after retirement and is "waiting for God to reveal to us what He'd like for us to do."

He and his wife, Gini, have two children and three grandchildren and will move to Birmingham in early 2017. (Neisha Roberts)

Want to see your news in The Alabama Baptist?

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A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

Biblical Character Series

Anna — Waiting for Christmas

Like many families, we have a number of beloved traditions that fill the days leading up to Christmas at our house. We begin decorating on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. It's always a fun and frantic afternoon with plenty of reminiscing over keepsake ornaments, some perilous ladder work to hang a giant outdoor wreath made from a hula-hoop, and usually a screening of the holiday classic "Elf."

Our decorating always includes our advent calendar. The cloth wall hanging with its numbered pockets, four rows of six corresponding to the days that lead up to Christmas, has a prominent place in our kitchen. It's our first stop on December mornings. Since my children were able to walk, they've clamored from their beds each day to find a treat waiting for them. The gifts were originally pieces of candy or small toys. They've changed over the years but not much. My 21-year-old daughter still enjoys a reindeer-shaped PEZ dispenser as much as she ever did.

As the gifts are discovered in successive pockets, we mark our progress through the month. Each little moment of joy is precursor to the great joy of Christmas Day. Each morning is a little foretaste of the day when we'll celebrate the joy of our family, the blessings of life and, above and throughout it all, the grace of Jesus, the Word made flesh for our sake.

Joyous anticipation

Advent is a season of joyous anticipation celebrated during the four weeks that lead up to Christmas. It recalls the steadfast hope of God's people as they waited for deliverance from this fallen world and their own fallenness. It's celebrated in the stories of prophets in the Old Testament and plain folk in the New Testament who were looking for their promised Messiah, the long-expected Jesus. And it comes to poignant expression in the story of the widow Anna found in Luke 2.

Anna appears in only three verses of Scripture but we learn a great deal about her there. Her name is the Greek version of "Hannah," which means "grace." Luke tells us she became a widow after only seven years of marriage and that she had

By Scott Bush

Scott Bush serves as pastor of Southcrest Baptist Church, Bessemer, and is the command chaplain for Army Reserve Sustainment Command.

He has two children and recently became engaged to Becca Pryor.



spent the remainder of her 84 years in the temple at Jerusalem, worshipping through fasting and prayer. Some commentators believe Anna became so well known in the temple courts that she was granted residence in one of the apartments used by the priests, joining them in their continual worship of God.

She's identified as the daughter of Phanuel and as a member of the tribe of Asher, two important family connections. Asher had been located along the northwestern Mediterranean coast in the region of Galilee. Though the tribes of the Northern Kingdom disappeared into captivity in 722 BC, her connection to Asher shows that the traditions of faith and family were still strong for Anna and many like her. No doubt, Anna knew well the covenant of God with Abraham and cherished the promises made to her as an Israelite.

Anna is called a prophetess which, at the very least, means she knew and shared the Word of God. Certainly her meditation on the Scriptures, her fervent worship and her family legacy of faith set quite the stage for her meeting with the Messiah. I can imagine her there, caught up in worship when she hears the exultant Simeon and then the familiar accent of the Galilean couple (she may have even felt a warm, family connection to people from the region of Asher). Perhaps her mind runs to the prophesy of Isaiah 9 that in a latter time, God will make "glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations." At once she is working her way down the text and across the temple courtyard until the baby comes into view and she remembers the promise: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given."

Anna is not only a picture of Christmas joy but also of glad-hearted waiting, a strange idea today. In a world that prizes the "accelerated," the "high-speed" and the "instant," patience is no longer regarded as a virtue; it's hardly regarded at all. But waiting really is essential to both our happiness and our holiness. Isaiah says when we wait on the Lord our strength is renewed (Isa. 40:31). Paul tells us patience is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, proof we have been made alive in Christ (Gal. 5:22). James urges patience as well, reminding us God's work in our lives is like farming; if we watch and wait through the early and late rains, we will see precious fruit (James 5:7). When we wait expectantly, even gladly, we practice hope, a virtue Paul ranks alongside faith and love.

Hope in Christ

The English word "hope" has fallen on hard times. It's been demoted, in most cases, to a synonym for "wish." We say things like "I hope the weather holds" or "I hope I can pass my test" and the very expression rings with uncertainty. The biblical writers use the word differently. "Hope" is a subject first and then a verb. In Christ we have a hope that does not disappoint (Rom. 5:5), that is an anchor for the soul (Heb. 6:19). And "our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness."

Because we know what He did for us we can trust what He will do, even while we wait (Rom. 8:32). Hope is the settled confidence our all-powerful, all-wise, always-loving God always knows and does what's best for us. Hope grounded in truth is both powerful and delightful; it sustains and satisfies. Like Anna, we can wait with joy when we know the promises and the purposes and the character of God revealed in the Scriptures. And like Anna, our hope becomes contagious when we share it with those who are so desperate without it.

Anna's long wait was marked by worship and reflection that culminated in profound gratitude and compelling joy. However you mark the days until Christmas let the grace of God revealed in Christ stir up hope in you and, through you, in others. 🌿

Persecuted North Korean Christians pray for West

In North Korea, Christians are hunted down, imprisoned and murdered. And in the face of that kind of persecution, they're not praying for their own freedom — they're praying for their brothers and sisters in the West who are tempted by money and material wealth.

Eric Foley, head of the Seoul-based Voice of the Martyrs Korea, said Christians in North Korea have told him they're praying for that rather than a change in regime.

"They don't pray for freedom and money. They pray for more of Christ and to mirror more of Christ in their life," he said, according to The Christian Post.

He said Western Christians also shouldn't necessarily be praying for the freedom of North Korean Christians but rather for them to have courage and stand strong in their faith.

"Because they see that in many ways we lack happiness because money and freedom can't bring that," he added.

'Subversive ideology'

A report released earlier in September by watchdog groups detailed the persecution faced by North Korean Christians, noting that some have been crushed under steamrollers, hung on a cross over fire and faced a variety of other brutalities.

"Christianity really is considered a subversive ideology, because it gives a different way of thinking about the value and purpose of human life," Foley explained.

And often the punishment extends to entire families, according to the report.

"A policy of guilt by association applies, meaning that the relatives of Christians also are detained regardless of whether they share the Christian belief," the report explained. "Even North Koreans who have escaped to China, and who are or become Christians, are often repatriated and subsequently imprisoned in a political prison camp."

Suzanne Scholte, the chair of the North Korea Freedom Coalition and vice co-chair of the U.S. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, told the Post that the report is an "accurate representation of how Christians are especially persecuted," and also shared her personal experiences of speaking with defectors who have confirmed such stories.

Foley said Christians worldwide should stand with North Korean Christians, remembering them in prayer as brothers and sisters.

"There is one body in Christ. There's not a 'persecuted Church in North Korea' and a 'free Church in Australia' — there's one body," Foley said, "and we're commanded [by the Bible] to remember those who are in prison, as if we were in prison also." (TAB)

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

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Underground Church growing in Iran

Just as Matthew 16:18 proclaims the Church will be built and “the gates of Hades will not overcome it,” so it is in the Middle East.

Even in the face of intense persecution, the underground Church movement in Iran is growing. Hundreds are being baptized, according to Elam Ministries, like the more than 200 Iranians and Afghans who were baptized in a large service in mid-November.

The ministry to Iran also said there could be about 300,000 to 1 million Christians in the country today, up from 2,000 to 5,000 people about 20 years ago.

Crackdown on Christians

International Christian Concern’s regional manager for South Asia William Stark said the Church is indeed growing despite the government’s crackdown on Christians.

“In fact, the Ayatollah in Iran has repeatedly warned against a house

church movement, saying it ‘threatens the Islamic faith and deceives young Muslims.’ The government has even dubbed evangelical Christians in Iran as a threat to national security because they are perceived to be backed by ‘enemies’ abroad,” said Stark, according to The Christian Post.

“Still in the face of this persecution the Church is continuing to grow, which is something that should give people hope.”

Mark Howard of Elam Ministries said, “We see incredible opportunity reaching Persian-speaking refugees in Europe, planting churches in Iran — people are so open right now.

“Every day we have many coming to the Lord. If you give a starving person food and water they will want to share it. That’s what they find in Jesus. They are so hungry and thirsty for the truth. They

“They are so hungry and thirsty for the truth. They are experiencing it in a powerful way.”

**Mark Howard
Elam Ministries**

in their 20s and open to the gospel. The source also said there are no churches or other places of worship outside of Islam open in Iran because of the government’s fear of the rapid growth of Christianity.

New believers are giving thanks to God for freedom from despair.

“I never thought I would find freedom from my past, but Jesus has set me free,” one unnamed believer said. (TAB)

are experiencing it in a powerful way. When they do they want to share it with others.”

Stark believes the Church’s growth also can be attributed in part to believers’ disillusionment with Islam, pointing to the violence committed by radical Islamists, according to the Post.

A source with Open Doors USA said Iran also is the youngest populated country in the world today, with the majority of people

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Immanuel Baptist Church in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, is accepting resumés for a full-time pastor. The candidate selected will have 5 years senior pastor experience, seminary training, expository preaching style and be able to attract and appeal to all age groups. We currently have an elderly congregation and no other ministerial staff. We have underused, debt-free, excellent facilities and a good location. Candidates with the above qualifications can email resumés to: immanuel38464@bellsouth.net. Our website is my-immanuel.net. Please include current sermons on websites or send DVDs to the church office, Attn: search committee.

BIVOCATIONAL/FULL-TIME PASTOR

New Market Baptist Church is searching for a pastor. Please send resumé and a DVD of a recent sermon to: New Market Baptist Church, P.O. Box 128, New Market, AL 35761 or nmbcp15@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Pleasant Valley Baptist Church located in Jacksonville, Alabama,

is accepting resumés for a bivocational pastor. Please submit a resumé of experience to: pfndley63@gmail.com or to: Anthony Findley, 79 Summit Crest Drive, Jacksonville, AL 36265.

MINISTER OF MUSIC/YOUTH

Liberty Hill Baptist Church, Clanton, Alabama, is currently seeking a full-time minister of music and youth. Please submit resumés to search@libertyhillonline.org.

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Silver Run Baptist Church, Seale, Alabama. Submit resumés to Cheryl Boutwell at justshert@gmail.com.

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Full-time, benefits. Parkview Baptist Church, Decatur, AL. Send resumé to: jenny.russell@parkviewdecatur.org.

MUSIC MINISTRY ASSISTANT

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OTHER

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The Fayette County Baptist

Association is looking to hire its next director of missions to serve the people of Fayette County, Alabama. The FCBA is represented by 29 churches in northwest Alabama in a mostly rural setting. The person that we are searching for needs to feel a call to associational missions with preferably more than 10 years experience in ministry. Please send resumés to: DOM Search Committee, 18010 Highway 18 E, Berry, AL 35546.

CUSTODIAN/MAINTENANCE

Seventh Street Baptist (Cullman) is hiring to fill a part-time custodian/maintenance position. \$12/hr. Expectations are all janitorial duties along with basic maintenance skills. Please send resumés to: 708 7th St. SW, Cullman, AL 35055.

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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.

in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders, friends

Barbara Joiner

Beloved author, missions advocate dies

Barbara Joiner, longtime national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) writer, popular speaker and missions advocate, died Nov. 18. She was 84.

A graduate of the University of Alabama, Joiner served in various WMU positions from writer for national WMU to chair of the board of directors for Alabama WMU. She also taught at Chelsea High School and Shelby County High School in Columbiana.

She has served as a member of the board of directors for *The Alabama Baptist*; senior high Acteens adviser at First Baptist Church, Columbiana; and Sunday School teacher at First, Columbiana, where she was a member at the time of her death.

Throughout her career Joiner published nine books and authored numerous magazine publications for national WMU. She also was a guest speaker for prayer retreats,

WMU training sessions and other occasions in all 50 states, Bangladesh, Canada, the Dominican Republic, Dubai, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Germany, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Netherlands, Nigeria, Peru, Puerto Rico and Yemen.

Joiner is preceded in death by her daughter, Jacqueline. She is survived by her husband of 62 years, Homer; one daughter; five grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. (TAB)



JOINER

Reaching Zambia

Missionary couple models faith, sows gospel seeds

(continued from page 1)

actions, as James describes [in Scripture], while at the same time giving us the ability to evangelize and teach a weekly Bible study in those villages," Vines said. "Community projects and community involvement are a great way to open doors of opportunity as well as model faith and works."

Another ministry avenue unique to his Zambian missions field is assisting the Wildlife Department, serving as a volunteer the past three years. He often goes out at night to confront "problem animals." More than an opportunity for adrenaline-fueled adventure, these night calls open doors for spiritual conversation.

Insight into culture

"When we head out on a call, we will oftentimes sit in the village around the fire for hours while we wait on the problem," Vines said. "This gives me an insight into the village and culture that I cannot get via books or even an interpreter."

"Something happens when the sun goes down and you are sitting around the fire," he continued. "People begin to open up in ways that I would never be

pry to. In and through my relationship with the Wildlife Department, I have been able to peer into this culture, and God has given me so many new tools to use in sharing the gospel now that I didn't have before."

Other ministries in which the Vineses are involved include teaching in a local Bible school, volunteering at the village clinic, coaching basketball at a nearby high school and one-on-one mentorship with aspiring church leaders. And in a weekly 30-minute radio program, Vines polls the community for questions (topics ranging from "Abaddon to Zion") and answers them from the Bible.

"This is a great form of broad seed-sowing since there is only one radio station in our area," Vines said. "This means that for 30 minutes each Sunday evening, the gospel is being shared to everyone who turns on the radio."

In the midst of these efforts, one of the most rewarding aspects of the Vineses' work is witnessing

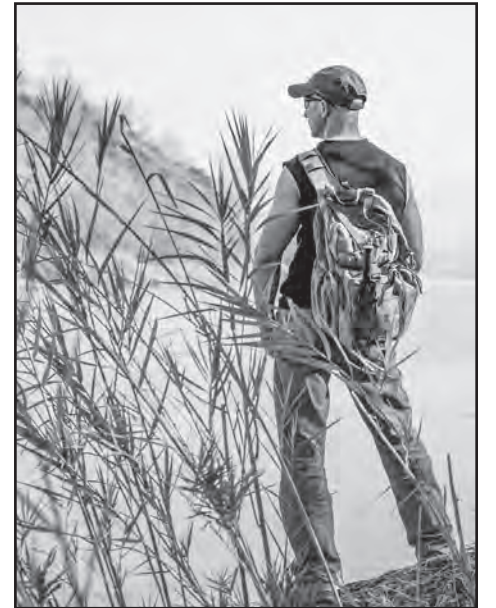


Photo by Adam Covington

Along the Zambezi River, missionary Kenny Vines creates a vision to nurture villagers with hearts for evangelism.

the maturation process of those to whom they minister. One characteristic of this process is the adoption of a similar, if not stronger, zeal for evangelism.

"It is rewarding to see those whom you have trained show up at your gate and ask for more gospel tracts," Vines said. "Then as you say, 'Sure,' you are racing through your mind, trying to remember how you forgot that we were supposed to go out visiting today, when he says, 'No, we aren't going out' — that this is something he organized on his own. [It is rewarding] to see those whom you have mentored out doing the very thing, on their own, you have spent so much time teaching."

Spiritual multiplication

Such evangelistic zeal and spiritual multiplication are important, Vines said, because of the context in which they serve. Though having a figurative open-range zoo in one's own backyard may initially seem exciting, the location has more than its share of danger from predators and disease. As such, bringing the life-giving message of the gospel to this area is an urgent necessity.

Just as David Livingstone's pioneer ministry beckoned others to follow in his evangelistic footsteps, so Vines encourages fellow believers to join him in spreading the gospel along the Zambezi River. "There is an urgency to the call of sharing the gospel amongst these people," he said, "but we can't do it alone." (BP)



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Marion ministry partners with churches, Judson to distribute Thanksgiving meals

Partnership and collaboration were the trademarks of the Sowing Seeds of Hope (SSOH) annual Thanksgiving food bag distribution that took place Nov. 17.

SSOH staff, Judson College student volunteers and members of Mountain Brook Baptist Church and First Presbyterian Church, Tuscaloosa, met at the SSOH Job Training Center in Marion to sort, package and distribute 227 bags to Perry County residents in need of Thanksgiving meals.

Volunteers decorated brown paper bags with "Happy Thanksgiving" messages and filled them with rice, potatoes, bread, canned goods and Marion Food Valu gift cards.

Audri Thicklin, a Judson freshman from Hayneville, said the experience "made her heart smile that we would be helping so many families" in Perry County. The best part, she said, was working with volunteers from various ministries "for one common goal. The project pushed us to communicate with each other to get the job done. ... I would do it all again."

SSOH is a nonprofit organization in Marion dedicated to



Photo by Kristin Storment

Volunteers (above) sort food into 227 Thanksgiving bags (right) that were screenprinted by the Judson College art department.



Photo by Amy Butler

improving the quality of living and working in Perry County through economic and community development initiatives. For more information about the project or other SSOH initiatives, contact SSOH Executive Director Frances Ford at 334-683-6152. (Judson, TAB)



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PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Christian school in Sudan allowed to reopen

MADANI, Sudan — A judge in eastern Sudan has ordered a Christian school that government officials had taken over to resume classes under the prior Christian administration, according to the headmaster.

An appeals court cancelled an order by the Madani commissioner calling for the closure of the Evangelical Basic School, which armed police along with civilians from Khartoum and elsewhere had seized Oct. 24.

"The court has ordered that the school continue to function with the current administration without interference from the commissioner," said Pastor Suleiman Anglo, headmaster at the school. "Things are normal, thank God."

The Oct. 24 government seizure marked the third raid on the school, following efforts to seize it on Sept. 5 and Oct. 4. On Oct. 6, authorities jailed for four days Suleiman and seven other Christian staff members who tried to prevent the seizure of the institution by authorities. The school serves more than 1,000 students, ages 3 to 18, and belongs to the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church.

The re-opening came after court hearings on Nov. 7 and 8. Suleiman said the school had written a letter to the government urging officials to reconsider their decision to close the school. Parents also asked the judge to request the government to reopen the school. The court found that the attempt by the Madani commissioner to close down the school and appoint a Muslim teacher to run it was inappropriate, Suleiman said. (MS)

Eastmont Baptist members volunteer time, talents at state convention meeting

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Mike Northcutt says hosting the Alabama Baptist State Convention was a "win-win-win."

"Our congregation wins, the guests win and the Lord gets lifted up," said Northcutt, pastor of Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery.

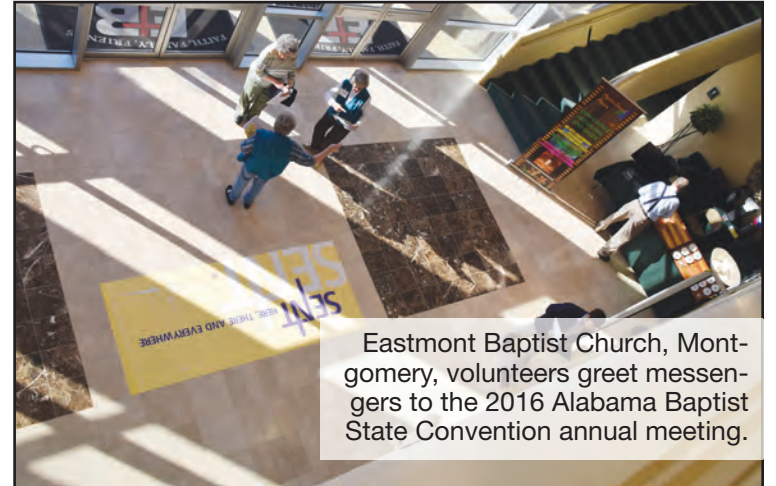
Eastmont Baptist recently served as host for the state convention annual meeting, something he said they value highly.

"Our people have a deep respect for our convention, and they learn more about it in that two or three days than I could teach in a year," Northcutt said. "It's like a missions trip — one missions trip is worth 50 sermons. Hosting the annual meeting is a great educational tool for our church."

Desire to serve

It's also a great way for the church to exercise its desire to serve, he said.

"We have a host of people who have the gift of helps or the gift of service — they love hospitality," Northcutt said. "One of our previous ministers who has passed away



Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery, volunteers greet messengers to the 2016 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting.

Photo by Doug Rogers

was big on service ministry. He trained them well, and they enjoy that ministry and exercise it well."

Billy Dickey, discipleship and senior adult pastor at Eastmont, is one of those who enjoys service and enjoys empowering others to serve.

"We have a lot of people who love to be a part of helping with events like this, including a lot of retired church members who enjoy hosting," he said.

For the convention, Dickey put together a team of several dozen volunteers to take care of

everything from setup to greeting convention messengers. About a month and a half out from an event like this, he begins to start work on logistics, deciding on how many rooms are needed and if there are enough tables and chairs.

"The prep work takes a little time, but it's second nature to us now," Dickey said.

The church is a missions-minded congregation, and they see this as missions work, he said. "So many of our people have the good gift of hospitality and like being able to use it as often as possible." ✠

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For unto us a child is born ... Isaiah 9:6

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For December 4

Explore the Bible

By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D.
Dean, School of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

COMMISSIONED
Joshua 1:1-9

“Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.” William Carey preached a sermon with this title and lived for more than 50 years with this mentality. He was convinced the Great Commission was still relevant for Christians in his generation, just as we are committed to make disciples of all nations in our generation.

In our study for this quarter, we will encounter individuals who were commissioned to specific tasks. Inherent in those commissions was an understanding that God promised to be present with them and that He expected their obedience to His Word. Joshua was commissioned to lead God’s people into the promised land. The judges were commissioned to guide the people in the application of God’s law as they settled in the land. Ruth reminds us that during a time when the judges lost sight of God’s presence and their responsibility to obey, God had a Redeemer for His people.

A New Leader (1-5)

Moses was dead. This stark reality begins our narrative. Joshua, the faithful assistant of Moses, was his logical successor. He stood by Moses through the tribes’ infantile rebellions recorded in Numbers. He stood with Caleb in the minority when the spies from the other 10 tribes said taking the land was impossible. He led the army in military victories that demonstrated the hand of God. Twice in the law (Num. 27:18-20; Deut. 31:23), God indicated that Joshua would lead His people after Moses.

Joshua also heard the complaints. Israelites complained about God, about Moses, about the food and about the discomfort of living as nomads. He saw the re-

sults of disobedience to God as spies died, rebels were swallowed up by the earth, a generation of elders died in the wilderness and Moses and Aaron were denied access to the promised land.

The new leader had the ultimate promise from God. It wasn’t the land, though it was promised. It wasn’t the vastness of the inheritance, though that too was promised. God promised to be with Joshua, as He had been with Moses. God would never leave him nor forsake him, which was the sovereign Lord’s ultimate promise to Joshua.

A New Task (6)

“Be strong and courageous.” The words to Joshua echo throughout the chapter. Perhaps it was the magnitude of the task before him. After all, he was preparing to lead an army to take possession of a land promised to their ancestors more than four centuries earlier. Perhaps it was witnessing people rebel against God’s commissioned servant that made him hesitant. That in itself would be sufficient to discourage most men from this mantle of responsibility to take possession and oversee the distribution of the land. Whatever the reason, Joshua was challenged to be strong and courageous, both by God and by the people (1:6, 7, 9 and 18).

A New Trust (7-9)

Keeping the Book of the law was Joshua’s new trust. He was to read this written law, he was to speak it, he was to meditate on it and he was to live it. As the leader over Israel, Joshua was to model a life of faith in God and faithfulness for God. “Carefully observe” required him to follow the instruction obediently. If Joshua did not deviate from the Book, then God would grant him His success. And He did.

“Observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always” (Matt. 28:20).✠

Bible Studies for Life

By Jim Barnette, Ph.D.
Samford University & Brookwood Baptist Church, Mountain Brook

GOD’S WORD DELIGHTS
Psalm 119:1-8

Joy comes from obeying God’s Word. (1-3)

Psalm 119 is an eloquent, ingenious and passionate meditation on the law of God. “Law” in the Old Testament should not be confused with Pharasaic legalism. The Hebrew word is “torah,” meaning “teaching.” It refers to the will of God revealed to Israel. Some have likened it to the loving instruction of a parent (see Prov. 4:1-2). The torah here is viewed not as a burden but as a lifeline to God and a demonstration of His grace and guidance.

This Psalm has an acrostic pattern. Each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet is made the initial letter of eight verses in successive sections. The major feature is the repetition of eight synonyms of the will of God: law, teaching, testimonies, statutes, judgments, ordinances, precepts and commandments. One of these terms occurs in every verse of the Psalm with the exception of verse 122.

When the Psalmist describes a follower as “blameless,” he is not referring to moral perfection; he confesses later, “I have strayed like a lost sheep” (v. 176). Likewise, the Psalmist being “happy” must involve something very different from simply reaping material benefits for obedience. Happiness has to do with entrusting one’s life to God, which means constant openness to God’s life-giving torah. Significant to note here is what is implicit throughout the Psalm, that Scripture is revered for being His sayings, and God’s followers thereby seek Him and not the book for its own sake.

God commands us to obey His Word. (4-6)

With verse four the Psalmist addresses his meditation to the Lord. In every verse to follow, with the exception of verse 115,

the Psalm is directed to God Himself.

God commanded His “precepts” by entering into a covenant relationship with Israel freely out of grace, and within that relationship He gave them His teachings to obey. Here the Lord was not asking them to earn His favor or pay for their redemption. Rather this was a means of thankful obedience for those in covenant with the grace-bestowing God. Verse five makes it clear that the Psalmist does not think of himself as an example of perfect obedience. Thus his yearning to be more steadfast in keeping God’s statutes.

The Lord has commanded zealous adherence to His expectations, and the Psalmist confesses an earnest desire to comply. His attention must zero in on the Lord’s “commandments.” In doing so the Psalmist will not be put to shame; he will have confidence toward God and boldness of access to His throne of grace.

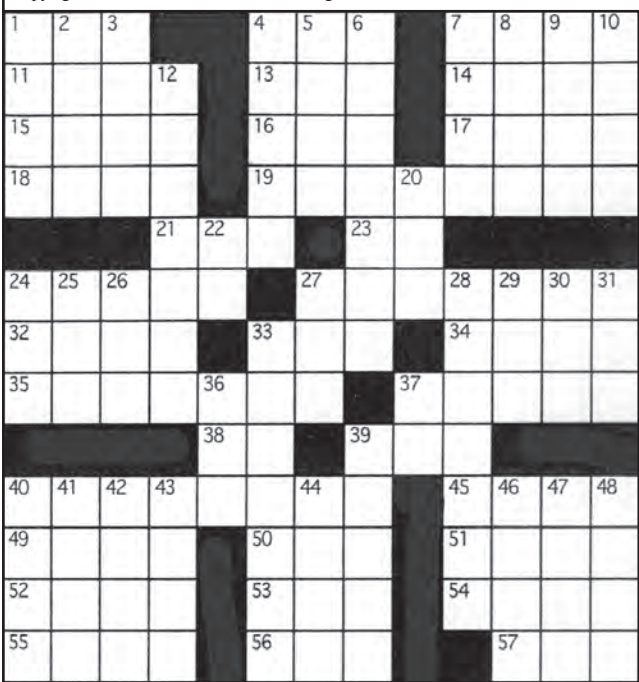
Lean on God’s presence to obey His Word. (7-8)

The Psalmist makes the request that the Lord never utterly forsake him. The fact that the Lord is both the Source of his instruction and the Guide and Help in executing that instruction is stressed for the first of many times in the Psalm. The word “ordinances” is the plural form of a noun usually translated “justice,” a reminder that the purpose of God’s instruction is to achieve righteousness in the world. Again, while the repeated terms in Psalm 119 can suggest written formulations of God’s will, the obedience He seeks should not be understood as a simple matter of following a set of rules.

Verses 1-8 convey that the Psalmist continually seeks God for the sake of bringing justice and righteousness into the world. We are called to be agents of such rightness all the more, as the grace of Jesus Christ has justified us before His Father. May His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.✠

Christian Crossword

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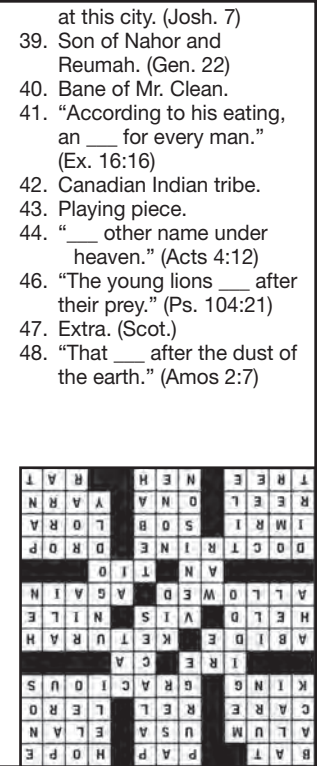


Across

- 1. Fowl that is unclean. (Deut. 14)
- 4. Baby food.
- 7. “Faith, ____, and charity.” (1 Cor. 13:13)
- 11. College grad.
- 13. Patriotic inits.
- 14. Zest.
- 15. “Casting all your ____ upon him.” (1 Pet. 5:7)
- 16. Kin. (abbr.)
- 17. Dodecanese island.
- 18. “Fear God. Honour the ____.” (1 Pet. 2:17)
- 19. “The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be ____ unto thee.” (Num. 6:25)
- 21. Wrath.
- 23. West. state.
- 24. “Let thy servant ____ instead of the lad.” (Gen. 44:33)
- 27. Abraham’s second wife. (Gen. 25)
- 32. Kept from falling.
- 33. ____-a-vis.
- 34. Blue ____.
- 35. “We were ____ of God to be put in trust with the

- gospel.” (1 Thess. 2:4)
 - 37. “And ____ the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.” (2 Sam. 24:1)
 - 38. Article.
 - 39. Aunt’s mate in Matanzas.
 - 40. “They will not endure sound ____.” (2 Tim. 4:3)
 - 45. Dew ____.
 - 49. “Next to them builded Zaccur, the son of ____.” (Neh. 3:2)
 - 50. Weep.
 - 51. Feminine name.
 - 52. “The earth shall ____ to and fro.” (Isa. 24:20)
 - 53. ____ limb.
 - 54. Tale.
 - 55. “Be like a ____ planted by the rivers of waters.” (Ps. 1:3)
 - 56. He follows Ezra. (abbr.)
 - 57. King ____, Clavell work.
- Down**
- 1. ____ court.
 - 2. Turkish regiment.
 - 3. “And Naomi said, ____ again my daughters.” (Ruth 1:11)
 - 4. “____ me with hyssop.”

- (Ps. 51:7)
- 5. Tribe of Israel (var., Luke 2)
- 6. “Peace ... within thy walls, and prosperity within thy ____.” (Ps. 122:7)
- 7. Radiant. (comb. form)
- 8. Tastes like butter.
- 9. Butterfly fish.
- 10. Son of Seth. (Gen. 5)
- 12. Where Ahaziah and Josiah were slain. (2 Kings 9, 23)
- 20. Tractor.
- 22. Back. (prefix)
- 24. Exclamation of surprise.
- 25. ____canto.
- 26. “Love worketh no ____.” (Rom. 13:20)
- 27. Leather.
- 28. “The floods of ____ men made me afraid.” (2 Sam. 22:5)
- 29. Stream.
- 30. Feminine nickname.
- 31. “As a ____ gathereth her chicks under her wings.” (Matt. 23:37)
- 33. Prepared by Esau. (Gen. 25)
- 36. “And there was ____ in heaven.” (Rev. 12:7)
- 37. Achan’s sin caused defeat



BOOKS



Media reviews

Christy Nockels

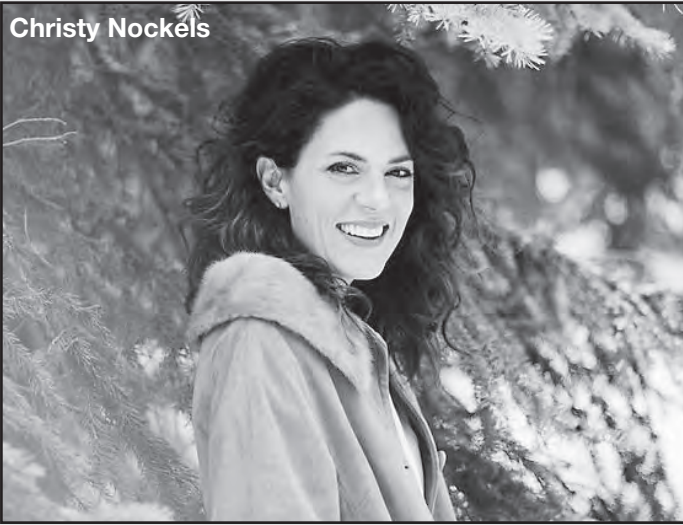


Photo courtesy of The Media Collective

Nockels shares deep truths on Christmas album

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

With the release of her highly anticipated debut Christmas album “The Thrill of Hope,” three-time Dove Award-winning recording artist Christy Nockels desires to help listeners reflect on the reason for the season with anticipation, expectancy and joy.

In the midst of the hustle and bustle of the busy weeks leading up to Christmas, Nockels hopes these songs will help listeners slow down and focus on our Savior.

“I want people to experience Jesus through these songs,” Nockels said. “I wanted these songs to be filled with deep and meaningful truths about Jesus that could seep into our hearts when we are doing things like wrapping presents or decorating around the house.”

“That’s what I always desire to do as a songwriter and as a musician is to merge deep, meaningful truths with beautiful lyrics. ... I want people to experience the life that Jesus offers in the here and now — that He is with us, He is Emmanuel. That’s my heart for this album.”

Special significance

In addition to several Christmas classics, the album features original songs inspired by Nockels’ favorite Christmas memories and traditions.

One of the new songs, “Amaryllis,” holds a special significance by providing hope and healing in her own life.

“The song was inspired by a gift that I received from my sister-in-law,” Nockels explained. “A few years ago, [she] gave me this ceramic pot and

a beautiful letter. In that particular time in my life, it was a really hard season. We were approaching a real winter, but in my soul, it was winter as well. ... It was a dark season for me personally. I was going through some loss with some things.”

‘Beautiful symbolism’

“During those times, God prunes us. He gives and takes away. I was experiencing trusting Him with some things that I didn’t understand and some things that were hurtful to me. My sister-in-law knew what I was struggling with, and she had the wisdom to write me this letter. ... I pulled actual lines from her letter and turned it into a song.”

“The whole gist of the song is that an amaryllis bulb grows in the winter. They don’t grow in the spring so there’s already this beautiful symbolism. ... The beauty of it is that sometimes in the darkest seasons of our lives is when Jesus is still saying, ‘I’m with you. You can grow in winter even still.’

“As I watched that bulb come out of that white ceramic pot ... I started thinking about Jesus and how He came when conditions were poor and how He was unexpected and how He surprised the night. He broke through a silence that the world had never known and a winter of the soul of the world. He brought with Him this life that He offers us today. The song refers to how we can break through the hardest of seasons and surprise the night just like our Savior did.”

During her December concerts, Nockels hopes to remind audiences about the importance of slowing down to savor every moment of the season. ❖

By Martine Bates Fairbanks, Ed.D.

The Insanity of God: A True Story of Faith Resurrected

Nik Ripken. Nashville: B&H Publishing. 323 pp. (Digital Edition).

Many of you (I hope) saw the movie version of this book that was simulcast recently at some of our churches. If you did not and have not read this book, put *The Alabama Baptist* down now (don’t tell Jennifer Davis Rash or Dr. Bob Terry I said that), go get it or download it and read it. You say you need to know why you should read it? It’s a life-changer.

Nik Ripken and his wife were missionaries in one of the toughest places in the world. It was discouraging to say the least, and when their son died, unable to continue, they returned home to the States to re-evaluate their calling. I have to be honest with you and tell you that the first half of this book was so dark and depressing that it took me several months to get through it. I would read a little, then put the book

down. I finally finished it because my Sunday School teacher kept asking me about it.

I’m glad I did. The second part of the book chronicles the Ripkens’ journey around the world to talk with others who served in tough places — China, Russia, Ukraine and other dark and difficult places. Never especially engaged in information about the persecuted

Church (is it un-Baptist to admit that?), I was surprised to find something very different from what I expected. Instead of the despair and depression I braced myself for, I read stories of hope and joy and God’s provision and more. Much more. Read it.

Moving On: Surviving the Grief of Forced Termination

Deanna Harrison. Fort Collins, Colorado: A Book’s Mind, 2016. 126 pp. (Digital Edition).

Deanna Harrison is a former pastor’s wife. “Former” is the operative word here; her husband’s forced termination by a church prompted this book. When I got the copy of this book I expected to find a book with a limited audience — one that would appeal only to pastors and their wives, and only those who had been terminated or were facing termination by their churches.

That turned out to be incorrect. The book, even with its stated target audience, would be helpful for anyone who has struggled with forgiveness, restoration of self esteem after embarrassment or maltreat-

ment or any other aspect of grief brought on by the actions of others.

The author laid the book out by chapters that dealt with the commonly recognized stages of grief, noting that the stages might not be experienced sequentially. She constantly encourages her readers in a voice that

contains traces of the pain she experienced and now hopes to help others work through. She ends the book on a strong note of encouragement:

“Six years into my journey of grief and grace, I can honestly say that life is good. No, life is very good. It is not the life my husband and I had planned. It is nothing like the first 30 years of our marriage and ministry. We would

never have chosen to travel this road. But God in His infinite mercy and grace has made beauty out of ugliness. He has blessed us beyond what we ever imagined possible.”

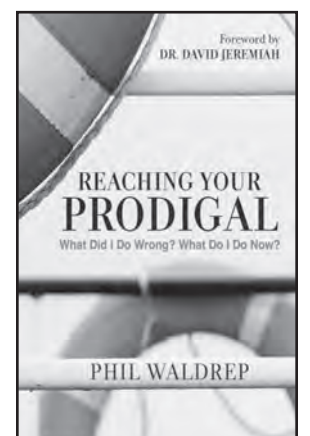
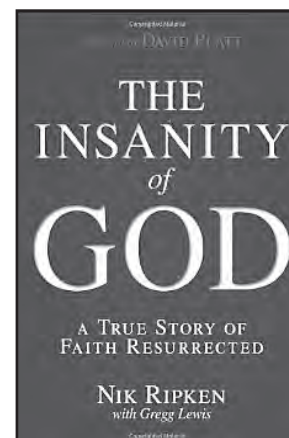
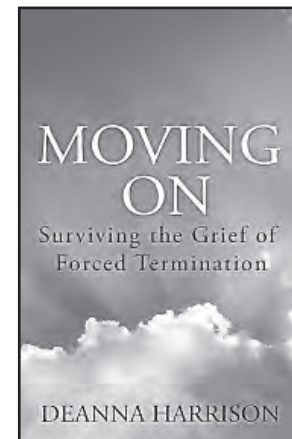
Reaching Your Prodigal: What Did I Do Wrong? What Do I Do Now?

Phil Waldrep. Franklin, Tennessee: Worthy Publishing, 2016. 114 pp. (Hardback).

Fans of evangelist Phil Waldrep (of which I am one) will remember an earlier book by the evangelist about parenting prodigals. Although this one has the same basic subject, it is a very different book.

Waldrep has a heart for hurting parents of adult children who have gone astray, and this book was written in an attempt to support them with sound advice and encouragement. After laying some solid groundwork in some introductory chapters, Waldrep offers six principles for dealing with the prodigal and the pain inflicted by the wayward offspring. The principles concentrate on relieving any guilt parents might feel and following a kind of modified tough love approach in holding the prodigal accountable while loving him unconditionally.

My guess is anyone with a prodigal son or daughter would love this book. I suspect it would help offset some of the anguish they feel and give hope to what might seem like a hopeless situation. ❖



**If you have a book you would like reviewed,
mail a copy to: P.O. Box 1504, Hartselle, AL 35640.**

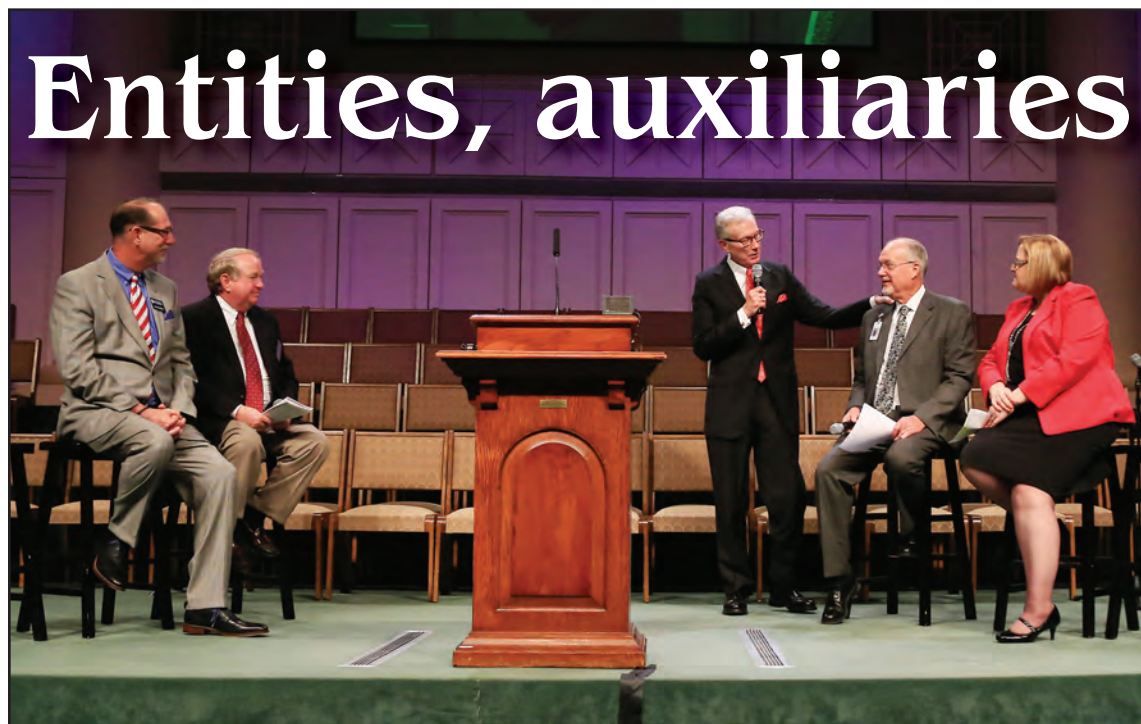


Photo by Neisha Roberts

Rick Lance (center), SBOM executive director, introduces Buster Taylor (second from right), executive director of Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega, during a report of Alabama Baptist entities and auxiliaries. Taylor announced his plan to retire in December 2017.

Entities, auxiliaries

Alabama Baptist entity and auxiliary leaders shared about how each ministry is called to be "Sent ... Here, There and Everywhere" during the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting Nov. 15-16 at Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery.

Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP) Executive Director Joe Godfrey shared about ALCAP's continued action against gambling in the state. He also mentioned the new American Character Builder's curriculum and shared a video trailer about it with messengers.

Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, shared a story about the salvation of Uncle Cudjoe Lewis, the last known survivor of the Atlantic slave trade, and how the history of Baptists needs to be preserved and

shared so future generations can know about those who have been sent by God.

Bob Terry, editor of *The Alabama Baptist*, told messengers about the impact the weekly

newspaper continues to make in the lives of Alabama Baptists. He also noted the paper's upcoming 175th anniversary.

Rod Marshall, president and CEO of the Alabama Baptist

Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH), shared about the impact ABCH makes in the lives of thousands of children through the ministry's foster care and

adoption services before sharing a video about an Alabama couple who has fostered and adopted children because they feel they are sent to serve in their own home.

Reaching, equipping

Candace McIntosh, executive director of Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), shared about her story of being called and sent, adding that Alabama WMU continues to reach and equip women to serve in God's Great Commission call.

Others sharing were Ray Burdeshaw of the Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers; Barry Bledsoe of The Baptist Foundation of Alabama; Jim Graham of the Christian Life Commission; and Shocco Springs (see main photo above). (TAB)

Look for features and more information on individual Alabama Baptist entities and auxiliaries in upcoming issues of The Alabama Baptist.



MCINTOSH



TAYLOR



BURDESHAW



MARSHALL



GRAHAM



GODFREY



BERG



BLEDSE



TERRY



Rape victim arrested for having 'extra-marital sex'

DUBAI — A British woman who says she was gang raped in Dubai was arrested for having illegal "extra-marital sex," according to The Christian Post.

The woman, who was on vacation in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in October, said she was assaulted by two British men, according to online news source The Independent. But when she told Dubai police, she was arrested for breaking local laws against extra-marital sex.

"The UAE has a long history of penalizing rape victims," said Radha Stirling, founder and director of Detained in Dubai, in a statement. "We have been involved with several cases in the past where this has happened, and we work with the lawyers and families and have campaigned to change attitudes in the police and judiciary. Recent cases ... show that it is still not safe for victims to report these crimes to the police without the risk of suffering a double punishment."

The organization said the woman, whose name is withheld, was released on bail, but she could face trial and punishments including jail time, flogging and even being stoned to death, according to the Post. The men face zero punishment.

"This is tremendously disturbing," Stirling said. "Victims go to [police] expecting justice, and end up being prosecuted. They not only invalidate their victimization, they actually punish them for it." (TAB)

BWA general secretary announces retirement

WASHINGTON — Neville Callam announced his intention to retire as general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) on Dec. 31, 2017.

Callam, a Jamaican, made history when he was elected to the position in July 2007 during the BWA Annual Gathering in Accra, Ghana, as the first African-American to hold the position. Since its founding in 1905, all previous general secretaries were American or European.

Callam led the organization through the financial crisis of the Great Recession with minimal dislocations and impact on day-to-day operations. He also worked to streamline the administration of the BWA office by employing relevant technology to improve BWA functions while minimizing cost.

In response to Callam's announcement, BWA President Paul Msiza said, "You (Neville) are one of those gifts from God for the Church. I have been touched and encouraged by your deep faith and commitment to God and to the mission of the Church. Your hard work and sacrificial service describe your deep commitment and love for BWA." (TAB)



CALLAM

Persecution of Christians on rise, report finds

BRUSSELS, Belgium — The majority of the world still doesn't have religious freedom — in fact, persecution of Christians is getting worse, said Jan Figel, the European Union's special envoy, on International Freedom of Religion or Belief Day on Oct. 27.

"Therefore those who believe that humanity should prevail can and should do much more for freedom of religion," Figel said. "We are witnesses of a systematic and mass murder, martyrdom and persecution on several territories."

Open Doors, a Christian watchdog group, claims that more than 10,000 Christians were killed for faith-related reasons during its reporting period for the 2016 World Watch List, an increase of more than 3,000 deaths from the previous reporting year.

The increase in persecution is partially because of the rise of Islamist extremist groups like the Islamic State group, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab in the Middle East and Africa, according to The Christian Post. (TAB)