

INSIDE



Why is there less congregational singing in churches today?

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Reaching young adults

123rf.com

Millennials have passion for theology, community, serving others

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

It's a marathon, not a sprint." This common saying is true of many things — remodeling a house, networking with other professionals, running an actual marathon. It's also the mindset that Daniel Woodcock, pastor of The Cornerstone Church, Gadsden, has when it comes to ministering to young adults, or millennials.

"I believe there has to be intentionality with churches in reaching young adults (and) millennials and failure to do so not only hurts the

Church, but hurts the future of the Church," he said.

According to "Engaging Young Adults," a 2015 study that involved 4,436 congregations and was conducted by Faith Communities Today, in the United States young adults make up about 23 percent of the total population, yet only 1 in 10 congregations reflects this level of representation. Nearly 1 in 5 congregations reported no young adult presence in their congregations.

Why is that?

Kam Pugh serves as pastor of Iron City Church, Birmingham, a downtown church plant where approximately 220 of its 250 regulars are between the ages of 18 and 35.

"I have found that many who grew up in the Church were given

'fluff' with Jesus attached to it. They were mainly entertained and taught morality in the name of Jesus, but there was no real gospel or theological substance offered," he said.

"Young people ... want to be challenged to think deeply."

**Pastor Kam Pugh
Iron City Church,
Birmingham**

And for some young adults, the fade away from church is simply a matter of transitions, said Dewain Clemons, who works with Frontline, the young adult ministry of Central Baptist Church, Decatur.

"After graduation we assume 'adulting' will begin and former youth members will assimilate into the 'normal' congregation," Clemons said. "This is where a lot of young adults get lost. ... They simply don't know what to do next."

Whatever the reason for their slipping away, young adults have

become a missions field that must be reached with the gospel. To do that, according to the study, "strategy (a plan) and prioritization (taking steps to act on that plan) are both necessary to create thriving young adult ministries."

Social media is one way to enact any strategy and it is a "primary means of building relationships," the study found.

Woodcock agreed.

Social media

"We are heavy into social media and interaction with our social media imprint. We encourage people to 'check in' via Facebook on their phones and in doing so they are helping our good causes, like [in October] we partnered with Compassion International and every 'check in' mattered in providing care for those kids in need," he said.

Service is another area that's (See 'Churches,' page 13)

COMMENT

Help Celebrate *TAB*'s 175th Anniversary

By now you probably know *The Alabama Baptist* (*TAB*) will soon celebrate its 175th anniversary of continuous service to Baptists in Alabama and beyond. The first edition of the publication rolled off the press on Saturday, Feb. 4, 1843, in Marion. It was a total of four pages and sold for \$3.

Today Marion is a quiet, picturesque little town, the county seat of Perry County. In 1843 it was an economic center of the state with its plantation economy. Marion was called "the Athens of the South" with both Judson College and Howard College (now Samford University in Birmingham) located there.

Two years later when the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) was organized Marion was such an important city the SBC located its Home Mission Board (HMB) there. The first desk of the HMB's leader can still be seen at Siloam Baptist Church, near the campus of Judson, which is still at its original location in Marion.

Years of ministry

February 2017 will mark the beginning of the paper's 175th year of ministry. That is an unusual accomplishment made possible only by the blessings of God, the hard work of those associated with the paper and the graciousness of Alabama Baptists.

It is an accomplishment worth celebrating and we hope to do just that. As part of the celebration the first book devoted to the history of *The Alabama Baptist* will be published in late September. During the fall of 2017 the paper has requested time from each of the 75 Baptist associations in the state to share a brief historical presentation highlighting the contributions made by *The Alabama Baptist* over the years.

Upcoming symposium

On Feb. 6, 2018, a 175th Anniversary Birthday Party will be held in Marion with the help of Judson and Siloam Baptist.

On March 2, 2018, Samford University and the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission will help sponsor a symposium examining the work and contributions of the state Baptist paper across the decades.

Speakers will include Timothy George, founding dean of Samford's Beeson Divinity School; Andrew Westmoreland, president of Samford; Mark Baggett, professor of English and law at Samford and son of former editor Hudson Baggett; and Steve Stewart, assistant professor of journalism at Troy University and former owner of *The Monroe Journal*.

For 175 years the paper has:

- ▶ reported events from the world of religion.
- ▶ provided practical help for everyday problems.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

- ▶ examined moral and ethical issues from a biblical perspective.
- ▶ shared resources for Christian living.
- ▶ undergirded what Baptists do together.
- ▶ imparted information of God's work at home and around the world.
- ▶ inspired readers for missions and ministries.

The paper has become a welcome visitor and a trusted friend in tens of thousands of Baptist homes across the state with more than 150,000 regular readers. Today it is the most widely circulated state Baptist paper among Southern Baptists.

In his book "Alabama Baptists: Southern Baptists in the Heart of Dixie," Wayne Flynt noted the purchase of *The Alabama Baptist* by the state convention in 1918 and called editors L.L. Gwaltney (1919–1950), Leon Macon (1950–1965) and Hudson Baggett (1966–1994) the most influential Baptists of their days.

The breadth, duration and impact of *The Alabama Baptist* altogether make the paper's story an important part of Alabama Baptist life.

History book

That is the story told in the first book devoted to the history of *The Alabama Baptist*. Elizabeth Wells, retired archivist for Samford and librarian for its Special Collection and Archives department, is writing the book.

She is weaving the history of the paper through the many wonderful stories about the contributions and impact of this ministry drawn from Alabama Baptist history and from the publication itself.

The more than 200-page book will be a four-color, fully illustrated coffee table-style book. Having read the first few chapters, I believe it will be a great read.

To ensure the widest circulation of the book, tentatively titled "*The Alabama Baptist: Celebrat-*

ing 175 Years of Informing, Inspiring and Connecting Baptists," the book has been priced about 25 percent below recommended market value. Our goal is not a profit from the book but the widest circulation of the story of this valued ministry.

Consistent with this decision, the board of directors of *The Alabama Baptist* voted to lead a \$50,000 fundraising campaign to underwrite the production of the book and the other anniversary events.

Underwriters will be listed in the book and acknowledged at other events. In addition, each underwriter will receive an autographed copy of the book based on giving level.

Levels of giving

Directors approved three levels of giving opportunities for underwriters:

- ▶ *TAB* Founders' Society for gifts of \$1,000 and up.
- ▶ *TAB* Ministry Partners for gifts of \$500–\$999.
- ▶ *TAB* Friends' League for gifts of \$250–\$499.

The members of the board of directors unanimously voted to each give at the Founders' Society level. So did the administrative team of the publication and the editor. That is how much those privileged to lead this ministry believe in the importance of telling this important story and helping celebrate the remarkable achievement of the ministry evidenced by its 175th anniversary.

As subscribers and regular readers you know the importance of *The Alabama Baptist*.

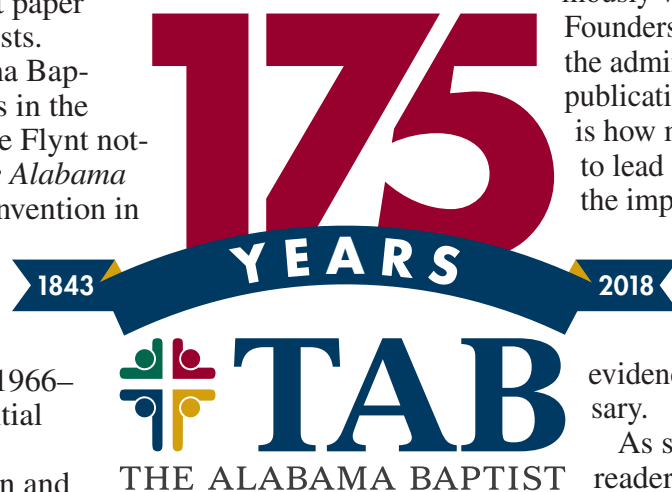
Many of you grew up seeing the paper in your parents' home and your grandparents' home. Now it is in your home. It also is available on your computer and on your smartphone so the ministry can be a part of the lives of your children and grandchildren.

Tax deductible gift

You can help tell the story of how God has used *The Alabama Baptist* to inform and inspire Baptists for 175 years and help celebrate this special anniversary with a special tax deductible gift to *The Alabama Baptist*.

Please consider making an underwriting gift to *The Alabama Baptist*. Simply send your donation to *The Alabama Baptist*, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Be sure to mark the gift for the 175th anniversary.

Thank you for your regular readership of the paper and for your continued support. 🌟



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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MAKING family memories

Creating Christmas decorations from nature can be family adventure

By Carolyn R. Tomlin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Remember when your family made the traditional trip to the meadows and woods in search of that perfect Christmas tree? Or when you cut armloads of holly, pine and cedar to bring the scent of winter holidays into your home? Perhaps you recall homemade ornaments that held a special place on the cedar tree.

Consider recapturing the joys of making family memories while using greenery and seed pods from nature for decorations during this Christmas season. Don't stop with tree decorations — carry the designs to door wreaths, table centerpieces and mailbox garlands.

Make this a family adventure by checking the calendar in December. Pick a date with family and friends. Wear comfortable walking shoes and warm clothing for this outdoor adventure.

Searching the woods and back roads for dried materials turns into a fun adventure for all ages. Unless your yard contains magnolia, pine, cedar and holly, you'll need permission from a landowner to gather this greenery. Don't overlook roadside vendors and highway stands as a good source.



Photo courtesy of Carolyn R. Tomlin

As you find greenery and dried seed pods, think of all the different ways to use these as creative objects in your home. Be aware of dried vines that may be poison ivy. Without leaves, identification is difficult.

Look for these materials and follow directions for making decorations (see sidebar, this page):

- ▶ Natural greenery (choose from cedar, fir, holly, magnolia, pine and spruce)
- ▶ Seed pods
- ▶ Nuts (walnuts, pecans, Brazil nuts to glue in clusters)
- ▶ Spray cans of paint (white, gold and silver)
- ▶ Wire, wire cutters, florist foam
- ▶ Container or basket for arranging
- ▶ Slices of citrus, including lemons, grapefruit and oranges

As part of each Christmas season, the nativity scene should have a place of honor. As children place each character represented from the manger scene, explain how they were part of God's plan in this miracle birth. Read the Christmas story from Luke 2:1-19.

As you work, get in the holiday spirit by singing Christmas carols and enjoying steaming mugs of hot chocolate. Invite neighbors to your home as a way to welcome in the season. You'll discover natural greenery and dried materials turn your home into one that says "Merry Christmas" to family and friends. Plus it's a way to tell the Christmas story from Luke 2, make memories and cherish this time together as a family. ☛

DIRECTIONS FOR NATURAL Christmas decorations

- 1.** Using a hammer, mash about two inches of the bottom stem of your greenery (make sure an adult is monitoring this activity).
- 2.** Place the stems in a bucket of warm water for several hours before arranging. By allowing the stems to absorb water, the greenery stays fresh for several days in a cool room or outdoors. This is especially important for a door wreath or mailbox garland.
- 3.** Practice fire safety by never allowing candles or a flame to be near greenery.
- 4.** Remove dust and dirt from seed pods, nuts, etc., and then either leave natural or spray with white, gold or silver paint to make ornaments. Use raffia or jute twine to attach to tree.
- 5.** Cut citrus into round slices and place on a cookie sheet. Bake them in an oven at 250 degrees for one hour. Punch a hole on one side and secure with a length of raffia or jute twine. Add as clusters to a door wreath or hang as a Christmas ornament. Punch whole cloves into the citrus for a fragrant holiday scent.

Source: Carolyn R. Tomlin

Natural decorations FROM THE GARDEN

Sawtooth oak acorn
Golden pear
Orange, lemon, lime slices
Ginkgo leaves
Locust seed pods
Hydrangeas
Okra pods
Pinecones
Sweetgum balls
Nandina berries

String these on a fishing line (10 lb. weight) and hang on a tree. Fresh cranberries and popped corn are another way to add color to your tree. Another option is to combine with natural greenery and use for a door wreath, mantle or table centerpiece.

Source: Carolyn R. Tomlin



Why is there less congregational singing?

LifeWay's Rainer addresses 6 primary reasons why worship has 'become nominal'

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Thom S. Rainer says that when people are gathering for worship these days, they're singing less and less. It's a "clear reality" that congregational singing is waning in many churches, he wrote Oct. 24 on the blog he keeps as president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville. "In some churches it seems to have disappeared altogether," he wrote.

Why is that the case? Rainer lists six primary reasons as to why he — with the

input of Mike Harland, director of LifeWay Worship — thinks "that act of worship before God (has) become nominal in so many contexts."

They range from songs being in an unsingable key to the music being too loud.

Some Alabama Baptist worship leaders agree with his reasons. Others differ.

But Dan Odle, minister of worship arts at Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, says at the end of the day, part of the role of the worship leader is to put great thought into how to involve more members of the congregation in worship.

Because, he said, "at the end of the day, everybody wants to sing their song. Whether you're 85 or 8, everybody wants to sing their song. So how do we give every member of our church an opportunity to sing their song?"

For Odle, one of the ways is to address Rainer's first reason.

1. Some church members do not prepare themselves for worship.

On his blog, Rainer wrote that some come to church "to judge, to check off an obligation or to go through the motions. We have not prayed for God to do a work in us through the worship."

Keith Hibbs, director of the office of worship leadership and church music for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said he agreed with that idea.

"I have always said that the corporate worship of a church cannot be any stronger than the individual member's personal worship," Hibbs said. "We don't prepare for worship; we come expecting what can we get out of it instead."

He noted that Odle is doing a good job addressing this in his church through a website aimed at helping people prepare for congregational music (see story, this page).

"It has some things on it that individual members can do to prepare to come to worship," Hibbs said.

One of those is to list the songs that will

be sung that Sunday morning, thus addressing Rainer's second reason.

2. We don't know the songs.

"We sing the songs we know," Rainer wrote. "That is obvious. But if we are introduced to a steady influx of new songs without sufficient time to learn them, we don't participate. The best congregational singing includes both the familiar and the new."

Hibbs said he was trained to introduce a new song by teaching it to the choir first, then singing it on Sunday nights, then introducing it on a Sunday morning.

But, he said, the prevalence of Christian contemporary radio now means that "for the large part churches are pretty familiar with the songs already."

"When we introduced 'Good, Good Father,' for instance, I wasn't sure how well they would know it, but they sang along with it," Hibbs said.

Michael Adler, worship pastor at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills,

said he doesn't see this reason as much of an issue, as most worship pastors he knows "understand intimately the connection between familiar songs and a church that will sing."

Adler, who also coaches worship leaders across the country through Slingshot Group, said most churches he knows also do a good job of addressing Rainer's third reason, but he does know there are some who don't.

3. The songs are not sung in a range where we can participate.

Rainer pointed out in his blog that many trained musicians have a wider vocal range than most of the rest of their congregation. "If we are expected to sing in a range that is beyond our ability, we won't try," he wrote. "Worship leaders make the decision, intentionally or not, if they want to lead the congregation or perform for the audience."

Hibbs said that, as he visits churches, he often sees members of congregations "struggling all the time to sing the range the wor-

Be intentional about worship

A lot of people in many churches have grown up "where you just show up on Sunday morning" without much, if any preparation, said Dan Odle, minister of worship arts for Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover.

So a couple of years ago, he and others in his church decided to help their people better prepare their hearts for Sunday morning worship, he said.

They set up a website — hunterstreetworship.org — to give their congregation early access to the order of worship, along with other things to help them prepare to meet God on Sunday mornings through singing.

"We wanted to help people be more intentional and teach them that corporate worship is something that you can prepare for," Odle said. "We post links to songs and lyrics that we will sing, and I write about the purpose of the song and why we are singing it. We hope this will help them connect better with the songs when they come to the service." (TAB)



***“The corporate worship of a church
cannot be any stronger than the individual
member’s personal worship.”***

**Keith Hibbs, director of the office of worship leadership
and church music, SBOM**

ship leader is singing the song in.”

Roy McNiel, minister of worship for Gardendale First Baptist Church, said he definitely agrees, “especially since I’m a baritone that has a few high notes.”

Most singers “aren’t Chris Tomlin or the singer for Elevation worship,” he said. “We lower the majority of our songs to put them in a more singable key not only for me but also for the congregation.”

4. The lighting communicates performance rather than participation.

Rainer writes under his fourth reason that congregation members participate in singing when they can hear and see each other.

“If the lighting for the congregation is low, but it is bright for the platform, we are communicating that a performance is taking place,” he said. “We thus fail to communicate that the worship by singing should include everyone present.”

But Adler said he has found this to be far from the case in his experience.

“I have had this conversation across age groups and it seems to be an issue that is segmented by age,” he said. “Millennials consider a darkened room much more conducive to worship and don’t consider it performance at all. They feel that glaring light showing everyone in the room opens the opportunity for posturing and posing in the congregation when they just want to be alone and anonymous with God. I tend to agree.”

McNiel also said he thinks dimming the lights at certain times for some can “help your personal time with God to really focus on Him.”

5. The music is too loud to hear others in the congregation.

Rainer writes that when it comes to the volume of music, the “greater issue” is whether individuals can hear others singing. If the music is so loud that people can’t hear others, they won’t sing, he writes.

It’s a legitimate concern, Adler said.

“The combined factors of room acoustics and front-of-house volume will definitely skew whether the congregation has a sense of

community or isolation,” he said.

“If the sound is so loud that the human voice is inaudible if not on a microphone, there is also the issue of participation.”

McNiel said it’s something that needs balance.

On energetic songs, he said, “I think some folks are actually encouraged to sing louder because they don’t feel like they’re standing out if the music was too low.”

But on the other hand, McNiel said, “The reason I end worship many times singing a cappella or telling the band to play softly is because I want to hear the congregation singing. It’s good to let them hear themselves singing and to hear how incredible all their voices sound when they’re praising the Lord.”

6. The worship leaders are not listening to the congregation.

Rainer writes that worship leaders can only lead when they can actually hear the congregation singing.

“Some (leaders) can only hear the instrumentation and platform voices from the monitors. And some have ear monitors where they are truly blocking the voices of the congregation,” he writes. “Congregational singing becomes powerful when it is well led. And it can only be well led if the worship leaders can hear those they are leading.”

Hibbs said he agreed that it’s important for leaders to hear the congregation.

“Leaders should provide energy to the congregation, but they should also feed off the congregation,” he said. “It’s like a dialogue.”

In the end, it’s most important for worship leaders to spend time assessing what will help their congregation best participate in singing.

“It’s so important for everybody in the congregation to participate, cross generationally,” Hibbs said. “One of my favorite things is to see a child sing like gangbusters. They love to sing. If you’re doing a song that is singable and senior adults can sing along and learn the songs, to see them participating too is some of my favorite moments in worship. It’s about participation; it’s not about performance.”



Sweet Water Baptist Church celebrates 100th anniversary

Much has changed in the last 100 years for Sweet Water Baptist Church but the one thing that has remained the same is the kindness of the church members, according to former pastors who spoke during the church’s centennial celebration Oct. 9.

Among those who returned to their former pastorate to share that morning were Jack House, Howard L. “Chip” Smith Jr., Randall Tucker, C.J. Townsend and Aaron Ray. A special feature of the service came when Margaret Lewis, the church’s oldest member, was honored. Jerrol Hare, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative, also made a historical presentation during the service.

As participants fellowshiped during lunch they viewed old bulletins, books and pictures from the church’s past along with a special find — the original minutes and notes from Sweet Water Baptist’s inaugural meeting, which were found in a forgotten file cabinet in a crawl space beneath the baptistry.

“When we found that file cabinet and discovered all the documents inside, it was like finding a treasure chest,” said Pastor Robert Baker.

Bay Minette’s Calvary Baptist marks 75 years of ministry

As former and current members walked toward the front doors of Calvary Baptist Church, Bay Minette, on Oct. 16, they hugged and greeted each other warmly under the shade of the oak trees that have been there as long as anyone can remember.

The day marked the 75th anniversary of the Baldwin Baptist Association church, a day to celebrate its history and look forward to its future.

Randy Byrd, former pastor of Green Acres Baptist Church, Bay Minette, brought a message about the promises God makes to His people.

Pastor Mark Daniel led the congregation in singing hymns and Wayne Tidwell sang special music.

Alabama Baptist Historical Commission Executive Director Lonette Berg made a historical presentation.

Mifflin Baptist celebrates 25th anniversary with special music

When Sara Lyrene played an impromptu piano medley of hymns during the 25th anniversary celebration of Mifflin Baptist Church, Elberta, on Oct. 23, it was a special moment.

The spontaneity of Lyrene, wife of founding

pastor Ed Lyrene, was just one of several musical performances. Lawasa Haygood, Destiny Flowers, Sandie Clark and Kadena Carmichael also sang specials that morning.

Pastor David Albritton brought the message based on John 3:16 and the Lyrenes were recognized during the service. A historical presentation was made by Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

Pictures were on display for participants to view amid the blue and silver decorations that lent a festive air to the occasion.

Kinsey Baptist dedicates historical marker during 125th anniversary

While Oct. 16 was a historic day for the members of Kinsey Baptist Church personally, it also was a historic day in the state as the church dedicated its historical marker from the Alabama Historical Association.

During the 125th anniversary celebration, old friends returned to take part in the service. David Starling, pastor of Sylvania Baptist Church, who grew up at Kinsey Baptist, was the guest speaker and Judge Alan Furr, district judge for St. Clair County who was Kinsey Baptist’s minister of music and youth in the mid-80s, led worship and sang special music.

Ellen Dewberry, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative, presented a commemorative plaque to the Columbia Baptist Association church.

Participants were able to flip through scrapbooks and run their hands along quilts made by members and former members as they closed out the celebration with lunch. Cookbooks and church history booklets also were available for participants.

Brad Hardy is pastor.

Eutaw Baptist shares memories at 175th anniversary celebration

Sharing seemed to be the theme of the 175th anniversary celebration of Eutaw Baptist Church in Bigbee Baptist Association on Nov. 6.

Former pastors Roy Sanford, George Henley and Jim Smith shared their memories about Eutaw Baptist during the morning service, as did Jake Case, a former youth director, and longtime member Judson Cork.

Wilson “Bubba” Henderson Jr., a former member who surrendered to ministry while at Eutaw Baptist, which began a 60-year ministry, led the congregational music and also sang special music.

Also during the service, letters from former members were read and the oldest living member, 95-year-old Chris Beeker, was recognized. Charline Henderson was the guest organist for the celebration and Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a commemorative plaque.

Church member Patti Beeker said of the celebration, “It was just perfect. Good memories were made.”

Rick Williams is pastor.



Photo by Lonette Berg

'Rich history'

70-year-old roll book shows 'crazy connections'

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

It was the talk heard round the world, the day that Gilbert Guffin had a conversation with an auto mechanic in Walker County.

The mechanic — Edmond Eddy — also was a preacher. Not a pastor, he said — just a preacher.

"I feel I have been called to be a pastor, but all I am is a preacher, and I am a poor one at that," Eddy said. "I can't be a pastor because I don't know how."

That conversation stuck in Guffin's brain, and it wasn't long before he was teaching the first Baptist Seminar class with the sole purpose of training preachers like Eddy.

As the story goes, 19 students gathered for that first class in September 1942. Some of them had never been inside a college before, and one of them had been taught to read by his wife, according to Samford University's Ministry Training Institute (MTI), which grew out of that class.

'Cool story'

Kevin Blackwell, MTI executive director, said, "It's a pretty cool story — a really rich history."

What was happening in Walker County caught the attention of Harwell Davis, then president of Howard College (now Samford), and it wasn't long before he asked Guffin to move the class to Howard instead and expand it to reach the entire state.

"He (Guffin) moved from his pastorate at First Baptist Jasper to start the Howard Extension, which became the Samford Extension, which became MTI," Blackwell said.

And it became the model that the Southern Baptist Convention encouraged colleges and seminaries to spread to offer training to as many as possible.

And spread it they did.

By September 1947, 21 extension centers were in operation across the state. By 1952 there were 44.

"As far as we know, what Gilbert Guffin started was the oldest

extension work in any higher education in the U.S. — not just Baptist, that's generally speaking. No one else was doing it, secular or spiritual," Blackwell said. "It was kind of a watershed moment for academics in general. The program grew to national prominence."

That's why when Scott Guffin, pastor of Liberty Park Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, recently found a brown notebook in the bottom of his dad's office closet, he knew pretty quickly that it was significant.

"My dad passed away back in February, my brothers and I got together with my mom to go through his office," Scott Guffin said. "It was filled to the brim with decades' worth of stuff."

His dad's first BB gun was there. So were elementary school textbooks from the 1920s.

And so was a little brown notebook with "Roll Book" written on the front.

"It didn't look old to me, but when I opened it up, it said it was from the Baptist Seminar and it was dated 1946," Scott Guffin said.

He realized it was actually his grandfather's.

"I remembered that what he started with the Baptist Seminar became the Howard Extension," he said.

So he called Blackwell and said, "I've got something I know you're going to want to see."

It was a historic find, Blackwell said.

"The book ... actually precluded the actual Howard Extension courses," he said. "It's from the year that the Howard College board of trustees voted on the ex-

tension program and announced it to the convention."

So, naturally, he called it a privilege to share the book with messengers at the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting Nov. 15 during Samford's report at Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery.

'Newsworthy'

"It's extremely newsworthy," he said, because of what it started.

But, he added, the extension program hasn't forgotten where it came from.

As Scott Guffin was reading through the names written in his grandfather's roll book, he saw one that looked a little familiar.

"There's a guy in my church whose last name is Banks, and I knew he had family at First Baptist Jasper," Scott Guffin said. "Greg Banks — he's a doctor here, we've been friends over the years, he's operated on my wife and he was part of the pastor search

committee that brought me to Liberty Park."

So the name M.D. Banks caught his eye.

"I sent Greg a text and said, 'Are you related to anybody named M.D. Banks?' And he said, 'That's my grandfather — why?'"

Turns out M.D. Banks was an itinerant preacher in Walker County, kind of like Edmond Eddy. Banks planted churches. And he took classes from Gilbert Guffin.

"It's just so amazing," Scott Guffin said, "all the crazy connections that you have in life, and how crazy is it that the guy who was responsible for bringing me to this church, our grandfathers knew each other."

Not only that, he said — they were part of making history. ☛



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Scott Guffin, pastor of Liberty Park Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, recently found a notebook in his dad's office closet. 'Roll Book' was written on the front and it was dated 1946.

ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

WMU groups bring Christmas to nursing homes

It's a tradition that's taken place in Walker Baptist Association for more than two decades — Christmas Shops at nursing homes.

Kelly Wright, who serves as the Woman's Missionary Union director for the association, said more than 20 churches participated this year by donating items or volunteering at the Christmas Shops held Dec. 10 in five nursing homes in the county: Shadescrest Health Care Center in Jasper; Ridgeview Health Services in Jasper; Ridgewood Health Care Center in Jasper; Walker Rehabilitation Center in Carbon Hill; and Cordova Health and Rehabilitation in Cordova.

Donations such as pajamas, flannel shirts, socks, blankets, throw pillows, dolls, stuffed animals, hair brushes, underwear, body wash and more were collected through Dec. 9 at individual churches and then taken to each nursing home assigned to that particular group of churches, Wright explained.

Her church, New Canaan Baptist Church, Jasper, was assigned to serve at Ridgewood, for example.

Volunteers set out donations on tables at each nursing home and residents, who "absolutely love the Christmas Shops," lined up and picked three items that they wanted and placed them in their bag they were given at the door.

"Sometimes it's the only time of year they get any gift," Wright said. "Or they don't have family around. ... I can't begin to tell you what a blessing it is."

Residents also sometimes find items they want to give their family members who come for a visit, Wright said. After every resident is given a chance to "shop," any remaining items were donated to the nursing home to be used "as prizes throughout the year for bingo," Wright said.

"If you could just go one time and see what a blessing it is, you'll want to go back every year."

For more information, call the associational office at 205-387-1820. (Neisha Roberts)

Phillips retires from jail ministry after 24 years

William Pete Phillips, of Ashland, retired in October after 24 years as coordinator of the jail ministry he started in 1992.

While serving as director of missions (DOM) for Carey Baptist Association, Phillips established the ministry at Clay County Jail in Ashland. Each year about 16 pastors have volunteered to be on a rotating schedule to give weekly sermons at the jail.

"We saw a lot of people's lives changed," Phillips said of the jail ministry. "We baptized a lot of people."

Bruce Willis, current DOM of Carey Association, observed Phillips' diligence in leading the jail ministry. "He would arrive every Sunday before 9 a.m., meet the preacher, go in to set up the gospel music, lead in prayer and introduce the minister and serve the inmates. On some occasions, he would even speak himself."

In 1990, Carey Association's search committee asked Phillips, a layman, to fill the DOM vacancy for a few months while a replacement was sought. Those few months turned into 13 years. Phillips retired as DOM in 2003.

And 88-year-old "Mr. Pete," as he is known, said he retired from the jail ministry because, "I have had too many birthdays."

Before becoming DOM, Phillips served full time in the Alabama Army National Guard for 35 years. He retired as chief warrant officer. Ashland's armory is named in his honor.

Phillips is a deacon and treasurer at First Baptist Church, Ashland, and a golfer. When asked about his future plans, he said, "The next thing for me is the rapture."

Phillips has been a widower for nine years. He and wife, Mary, were married 56 years. He has three daughters, three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. (Leigh Pritchett)



PHILLIPS

TAB
AR

Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Angelology

Angelic Distinctions

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

Angels as they appear in the Bible have both positive and negative characteristics. Consider first the negative distinctions. We have noted previously that angels have not always existed, but were created by God, just as humans have not always existed, but were created by God. However, some significant differences distinguish these creations. Unlike human beings, angels are not created in the image and likeness of God. When it suited God's purposes angels on occasion appeared as human messengers to declare the mind of God to human listeners. Human beings on the other hand are never said to take the form of angels, neither during their lifetimes nor thereafter. Innocent babies or young children, however cute and loveable, are never said to become little angels when they die nor are uncommonly devout believers ever said to become big angels when they die.

Unlike humans whom God created as male and female with the specific mandate of "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28), angels do not produce offspring in the form of little angels. Such a conclusion is implied in the biblical declaration that angels neither marry nor are given in marriage (Matt. 22:30). The unexpressed and underlying reason for God's mandate to men and women is that humans die. We might then conclude that angels do not need to procreate because angels do not die. Since from the beginning God created "an innumerable company of angels" (Heb. 12:22), no need exists for angels to bring forth after their kind.

Multiplicity of angels

Christ referred to the multiplicity of angels when He faced the arresting mob in Gethsemane. Having told Peter to put away the sword, Christ asked, "Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than 12 legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53).

Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4 speak of some angels that sinned and have been cast

into hell to await judgment. Unlike sinning humans, sinning angels do not have opportunity to be forgiven. Of course, unlike humans who have all sinned and come short of the glory of God, not all angels have sinned. These angels are not in need of forgiveness and do not experience salvation, as do human sinners who repent and turn to Christ in saving faith. Hence, angels cannot sing redemption's song based on personal experience. Nonetheless, angels are said to have keen interest in the saving work of Christ (1 Pet. 1:12), and they look with joy upon humans who repent (Luke 15:10).

Part of God's will

Turning to the positive distinctions of angels, the Bible presents angels as unfailing worshippers of God, something that cannot be said for the most faithful of Christians. In addition, angels who have never sinned carry out perfectly the will of God in their heavenly abode. Against the background of heaven's perfection, Christ teaches us to pray that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10). Angels are part of God's will being done perfectly, without failure or exception and without delay or only occasionally. Angels are not to be faced with the last enemy of humans, that is, death. Being spiritual in nature, angels have the distinction of never dying. Not only did Christ say in Luke 20:35-36 that angels "neither marry nor are given in marriage," in speaking about the resurrection life of believers, He added, "nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels" at the point of being beyond the reach of death.✠

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.



Religious freedom amendment gets cut from final defense bill

Religious freedom advocates have expressed deep disappointment about congressional leaders' failure to protect the rights of faith-based organizations in a national defense bill.

The reaction came after it was revealed Nov. 29 the Russell Amendment would not be included in the final version of the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which designates nearly \$620 billion in spending for the armed services.

The Russell Amendment — sponsored by Southern Baptist Congressman Steve Russell of Oklahoma — would have protected the rights of nonprofit religious contractors to maintain hiring practices in keeping with their beliefs. The House of Representatives passed NDAA with the Russell Amendment included, but a conference committee of legislators named to work out the differences between the versions approved by the congressional chambers failed to keep it in the final report.

Some politicians labeled the amendment as discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans.

Senate Democrats threatened to filibuster the bill if it retained the provision and President Barack Obama warned he would veto it.

The measure is the latest battleground in the ongoing conflict between religious liberty and sexual liberty.

'Moral and political tragedy'

Southern Baptist religious freedom leader Russell Moore described the removal of the Russell Amendment as "a moral and political tragedy."

"Faith-based organizations that meet the needs of people in crisis deserve to be protected and promoted, not leveraged in culture war," said Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. "Conscience freedom and compassion are not enemies." (BP)

'Discriminatory' website calling for Target boycott gets shut down

The web company that hosted the site for a campaign to boycott Target has shut that site down, saying its content is "hateful and discriminatory."

The campaign was started to encourage a boycott until the retail company changed its policy that allows customers to choose the bathroom that correlates with the gender they feel they identify with.

"Our #AnywhereButTARGET campaign has been so effective that at 9 a.m. Thanksgiving morning our Minneapolis-based web host (Leadpages) unfortunately shut us down for being 'hateful and discriminatory' to try to stop this movement!" wrote Lance Wray in a press release. Wray is executive director of 2nd Vote, the organization behind the website.

Conservatives have been asking Target to change its controversial bathroom and fit-

ting room policies and say the boycott has contributed, at least somewhat, to Target's loss in revenue — 1.4 million people committed to participate in the boycott.

Buddy Smith, senior vice president of American Family Association (AFA), wrote in a recent article, "Target is hoping that you won't care that they allow men into women's bathrooms and changing rooms."

Leadpages said it removed the campaign's site because it wants to promote "inclusiveness," according to The Christian Post.

Leadpages' director of operations Doug Storbeck wrote to Wray, "At Leadpages we strive to create an inclusive workplace that upholds the dignity of all people. We value, respect and celebrate everyone's individualities and honor their unique strengths from all different walks of life." (TAB)

in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders

Kenneth Wayne Voss Longtime pastor dies at 86

Kenneth Wayne Voss, who served for more than 50 years as pastor of various churches in North Alabama, died Oct. 24. He was 86.

A member of Bellview Baptist Church, Decatur, Voss served as a pastor, interim pastor and worship leader throughout his years of ministry. Churches where he served as pastor include Walden Chapel Baptist Church, Danville; Mount Carmel Baptist Church, Falkville; Mount Nebo Baptist Church, Falkville; Chalybeate

Springs Baptist Church, Hillsboro; Hillsboro Baptist Church; Fish Pond Baptist Church, Hillsboro; Oakdale Baptist Church, Athens; Belmor Baptist Church, Belle Mina; Panama Baptist Church, Vinemont; Poplar Creek Baptist Church, Athens; as well as Trinity Baptist Church, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

He served as a worship leader at Mount View Baptist Church, Trinity, and as interim pastor at Bellevue Baptist at various times during his ministry.

Voss is survived by his wife, Eloise; four children; eight grandchildren; and 13 great-grandchildren. (TAB)

Debating physician-assisted suicide

Most Americans say physician-assisted suicide is morally acceptable

The American Medical Association has described physician-assisted suicide as a serious risk to society and “fundamentally incompatible with a physician’s role as healer.” Millions of Americans disagree.

Two-thirds say it is morally acceptable for terminally ill patients to ask their doctors for help in ending their lives, according to a new survey from Nashville-based LifeWay Research. A similar number says doctors should be able to help terminally ill patients die.

Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research, says Americans want more say over how they die. That’s especially true if facing a painful terminal illness, he says.

“If they are facing a slow, painful death, Americans want options,” he said. “Many believe that asking for help in dying is a moral option. They don’t believe that suffering until they die of natural causes is the only way out.”

Physician-assisted suicide first became legal in the United States in 1997 under Oregon’s “Death with Dignity” law. Since then, 991 patients in Oregon have ended their lives using medications prescribed by a doctor under the law, according to that state’s reports.

Today six states allow physician-assisted suicide. The latest is Colorado, where voters approved Proposition 106, which allows a terminally ill patient to request a fatal dose of sleeping medication, by a 2-to-1 margin in November.

Gaining favor

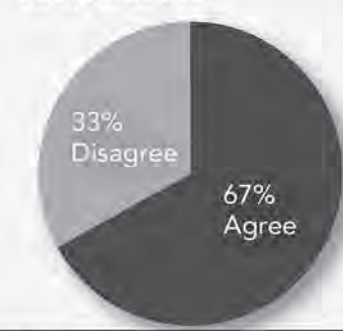
Washington, California, Vermont and Montana also allow physician-assisted suicide. The city council in the District of Columbia recently approved a measure allowing the practice — a decision that must be reviewed by Congress.

In LifeWay Research’s survey, 67 percent of Americans agree with the statement, “When a person is facing a painful terminal disease, it is morally acceptable to ask for a physician’s aid in taking his or her own life.” Thirty-three percent disagree.

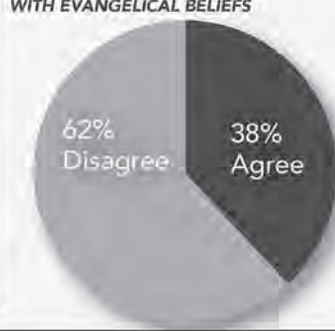
Among faith groups, more than half of all Christians (59 percent), Catholics (70 percent), Protestants (53 percent), Nones (84 per-

When a person is facing a painful terminal disease, it is morally acceptable to ask for a physician’s aid in taking his or her own life.

AMONG AMERICANS



AMONG THOSE WITH EVANGELICAL BELIEFS



cent) and those of other religions (70 percent) agree. Most of those who attend religious services less than once a month (76 percent) also agree.

A few demographic groups are skeptical. Fewer than half of those with evangelical beliefs (38 percent), African-Americans (47 percent) or those who attend religious services at least once a month (49 percent) say physician-assisted suicide is morally acceptable.

“Traditional Christian teaching says God holds the keys to life and death,” McConnell said.

“Those who go to church or hold more traditional beliefs are less likely to see assisted suicide as morally acceptable. Still a surprising number do.”

Researchers also found widespread support for removing restrictions on physician-assisted suicide.

Evangelicals disagree

Many Americans (69 percent) say physicians should be allowed to assist terminally ill patients in ending their lives. Thirty-one percent disagree.

Those in the Northeast (73

percent), Catholics (70 percent), white Americans (73 percent), those with graduate degrees (77 percent), Nones (88 percent) and those who skip religious services (78 percent) are among those most likely to agree.

Again, those with evangelical beliefs (42 percent) do not.

LifeWay Research’s findings echo those of other studies. A 2015 Gallup survey found 68 percent of Americans said physician-assisted suicide should be legal, up from 53 percent in 2013. Gallup also found that support for legalized physician-assisted suicide has wavered over the past 20 years. It previously peaked at 68 percent in 2001 before declining to 53 percent.

The debate over physician-assisted suicide is unlikely to go away, McConnell said, and it raises troublesome questions.

“Such requests are asking doctors to betray one of their most sacred oaths — which admits, ‘It may also be within my power to take a life,’ but concludes, ‘I must not play at God,’” McConnell said. “To ask physicians to turn from their task of healing is not a decision to make lightly.”

For more information on the survey, visit LifeWayResearch.com. (LifeWay)



(augmented reality)

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Sipsey Association gets disaster relief trailer

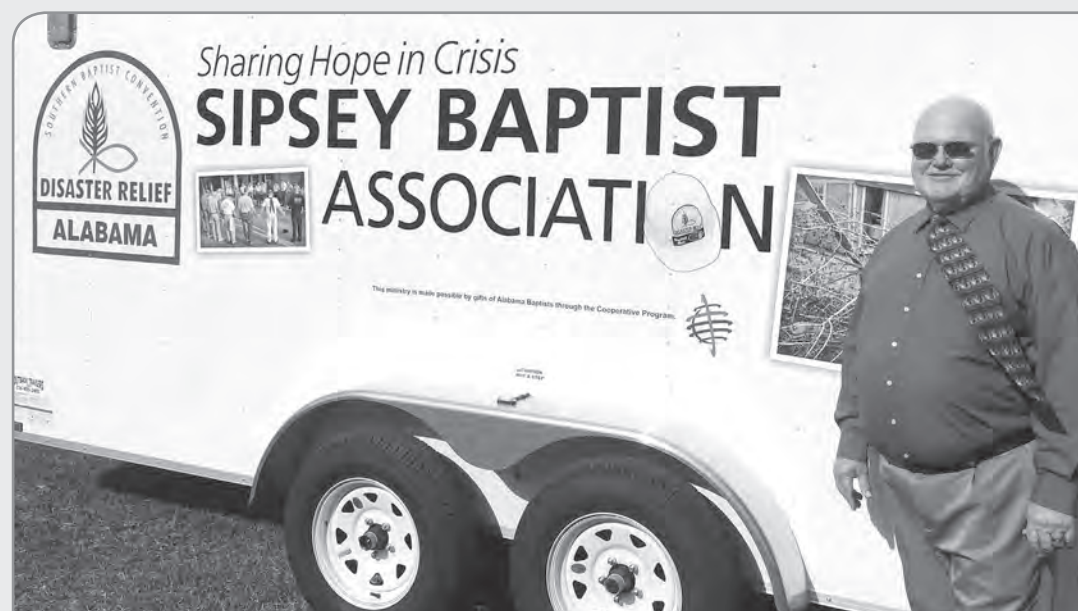


Photo by Debbie Campbell

Gary Bonner, director of missions for Sipsey Baptist Association, proudly displays the association’s new disaster relief trailer at the 127th annual associational meeting. This is the first time for Sipsey Association to have a disaster relief trailer.

Couple translates Bible to Budik language

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Ken and Kathy Satorius have dedicated the last three decades to serving the Budik population in Senegal, West Africa, through New Tribes Mission. They've lived among this people group and learned about their culture and their language, and knew a big need was a Bible translation in their native Budik language. The interesting challenge, though, was that this group of people didn't have a written language.

"There are steps we needed to do before we could do translations," Ken Satorius said. "We had to teach literacy because we needed people literate in order to read the translation we were going to be doing. It takes several years to take care of that part of the process."

And before the literacy teaching could begin, of course, the couple had to spend time truly immersing themselves in the culture and the language to make sure their under-

standing of both was crystal clear.

Once some of this initial literacy groundwork had been laid, Ken and Kathy Satorius set to work translating, eventually completing all of the New Testament and some of the Old Testament into Budik. They're currently working on translating 1 Samuel and hope to be done with that endeavor by early 2017.

Literacy barrier

To help overcome the literacy barrier, they also started providing evangelistic lessons on MP3 players so people could hear the Scriptures even when they weren't at a church service or Bible study session.

"We have one man who builds homes, and he would plug in and listen to these lessons all day," Ken Satorius said.

This people group's native tradition is animism — the belief that the natural world is controlled by a collection of spirits, and that those spirits can be controlled by

performing certain ceremonies or practices.

Kathy Satorius said, "The women used to run with their babies when they were sick because they felt they could run to another compound to get away from the spirits trying to kill their babies. That's been a huge change for the women who are believers now. They know that running doesn't take them away from any bad spirits, and God is greater than any spirits that could be 'eating' their children."

Ken and Kathy Satorius have seen as many as 50 Budiks convert to Christianity during their years in West Africa, and since Bible translations have become available they say it's so rewarding to witness groups of converts sitting together after working in a field, surrounding the Budik Bible teacher among them who has prepared a lesson to share.

Now the Satoriuses are based in the United States and make about two trips (about six to seven weeks per trip) each year back to Senegal.



Photo courtesy of Kathy Satorius

Believers from the Budik population in Senegal, West Africa, read their Bibles aloud, so those around can hear.

While there, they do translation checking, discipleship and help in any other ways they can. Though they have a home church in Florida, they spend much of their time in Pell City (where Kathy Satorius' family is from and near where their grandchildren are), and attend Cropwell Baptist Church, Pell City.

At Cropwell Baptist, their Sunday School teacher is Wayne Sherbet, who has immense respect for the couple's total obedience to Christ.

"When you think of all they deal with in Senegal, most would throw in the towel and give up," Sherbet said. "The language barrier, living conditions ... yet you never hear them complain. Being able to produce a New Testament in their

native tongue, so now the people can share the love of Christ with others — how awesome that had to be to see it happen."

Prayers from US

Because the group of Budik Christians is such a small one, the Satoriuses say it's so encouraging to know that fellow Christians in the U.S. know about them and pray for them regularly.

Looking toward the future, the Satoriuses said they want to finish 1 Samuel and other projects for the Budik believers.

"Because this is an isolated group that doesn't have Bible aides available, we also provide resources that help them understand the Scriptures as they're reading them," Ken Satorius said.

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 final of four sets of ornaments is featured below.



Palm branch: Symbolizes peace. It represents Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem.



Shepherd: Shepherds visited the manger to offer adoration to the Christ child.



Passion cross: Symbolizes a cross of suffering.



Shepherd's crooks & cross: Symbolizes the Good Shepherd.



Prince of Peace: One of the names of the promised One given in Isaiah 9:6.



Epiphany star: Represents the manifestation of Jesus to the Gentiles.



Sand dollar: Often referred to as the Holy Ghost shell. The markings recall events in the life of Christ.



Sun of righteousness: Symbolizes how both the sun and the Son bring light into the world.



Shell: Spilling drops of water symbolizes baptism, the way we are marked as followers of Christ.



Three gifts: The wise men brought gifts to Jesus of gold, incense and myrrh.

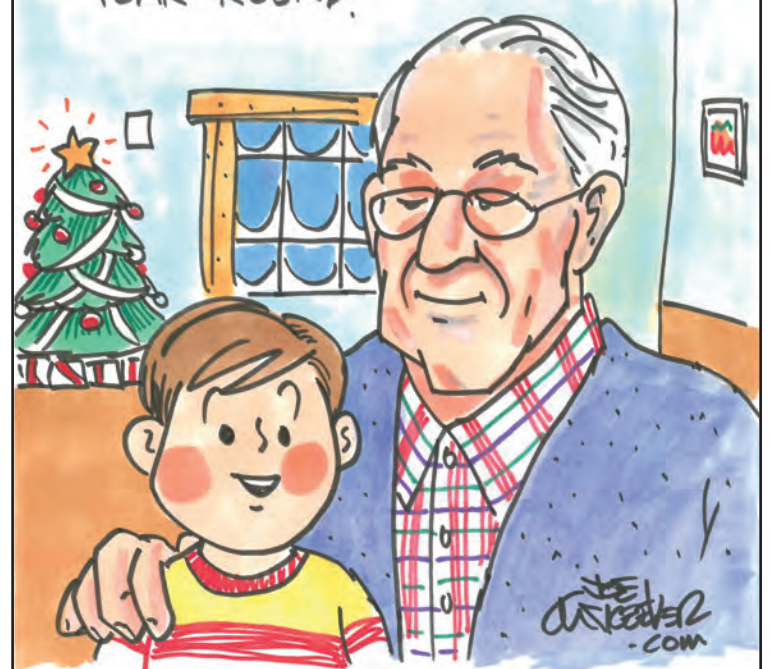


Wheat: Represents bread, the Lord's Supper.

(Compiled by TAB)

REFLECTIONS

"GRANDPAS ARE BETTER THAN SANTA. THEY'RE JOLLY, THEY'RE GENEROUS, AND THEY'RE HERE YEAR ROUND!"



Alabama pastor calls for 'frank' conversations about Calvinism

Alabama pastor Rick Patrick would like to see intentional "frank" conversations happening among Southern Baptists related to how Traditionalists and Calvinists can better co-exist in the denomination.

"I believe we have thousands of Traditionalist Southern Baptist churches starved for resources and ministry initiatives that make sense within a more Traditionalist ministry paradigm," he said. "The overwhelming number of Calvinist resources and ministry initiatives are like square pegs in round holes."

"This lack of alignment at the national level compared to the state, association and local church level has produced much of the tension," said Patrick, pastor of First Baptist Church, Sylacauga. "Over the past decade, the leaders we have chosen as our entity heads, speakers and authors have been much more Calvinistic than the average Southern Baptist."

"We need some frank conversations regarding practical solutions to get us all on the same page."

Patrick — who said he affirms Calvinists' rights to share their beliefs and practices — made headlines with his Nov. 29 chapel sermon at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, about the importance of salvation doctrine.

Using Hebrews 2:1–3 as his supporting text, Patrick's topical message was structured around three points of application — that we not neglect the story, study nor significance of salvation.

"The first section was basically a personal testimony and has engendered little critique," Patrick said. "The second section was



PATRICK

criticized as a commercial, but might more charitably be referred to as a lecture reviewing current books and resources in Traditionalist theology.

"The thesis of the third section was that salvation is the most important thing that ever happens to anyone, so whatever else we get wrong about God, we must be certain to get salvation right," he explained. "This theme was developed by tracing various doctrines of reformed theology that come along for the ride when one embraces Calvinist soteriology."

'Presbyterian view'

"In addition to these doctrines, some practical ministry applications that flow from these underpinnings were then explored prior to the conclusion."

For instance, near the end of his 5,000-word sermon to current students of his alma mater headed by President Paige Patterson, Patrick said:

"Southern Baptists cannot help but wonder what is happening as we increasingly embrace the Presbyterian view of salvation doctrine, church government, mode of baptism, avoidance of the altar call, use of beverage alcohol, approval of societal mis-

sions funding and so on.

"It is naïve to think that we can gradually reform our beliefs without simultaneously reforming our practices."

"And the question we must ask is whether or not these reformed practices are making things better or worse."

Following Patrick's sermon, Patterson responded to the "rude behavior on the part of a few students who had ... walked out to show their displeasure."

"If I held Presbyterian beliefs, I would be a Presbyterian," Patterson said. "If I held charismatic beliefs, I would probably affiliate with the Assemblies of God. If my only difference with Presbyterians were that I favored only baptism of adult believers rather than the baptism of infants, I would probably be conflicted, but I might affiliate with Primitive Baptists."

Clarifying the original reports of his statements, Patterson posted a Dec. 2 blog explaining, "Let it be clear that I asked no one to leave the [Southern Baptist Convention]. ... I expressed what I would do just as every Baptist is free to do and especially as is our custom in the academic world."

To read Patrick's full sermon, visit bit.ly/2gtMGn1. (TAB)

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CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$3,333,333.33
CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....	\$3,305,886.00
Under Goal for Month	\$27,447.33

YEAR TO DATE

CP Challenge Budget Goal	\$36,666,666.67
CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....	\$35,388,344.00
Under Goal for Year	\$1,278,322.67

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

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- ▶ Should be IMMEDIATELY REMOVED FROM PLAY/ACTIVITY
- ▶ Should be evaluated right away by a doctor/healthcare professional
- ▶ Should not be left alone
- ▶ Should not drive a motor vehicle

www.ChildrensAL.org/concussion

In case of medical emergency, call 911 or go directly to your local ER

Sharing the true meaning of Christmas

Christmas symbols provide teachable moments for children during holiday season

By Denise George
Special to The Alabama Baptist

The traditional symbols of the Christmas season provide the perfect tools for parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and others to teach children about Christ and the true meaning of Christmas. By simply pausing at an opportune moment in the midst of busy everyday lives, Christian adults can use everyday Christmas symbols to help explain theological truths, biblical beliefs and church history to teach children in fun, memorable and creative ways.

Here are some suggestions for using Christmas symbols to present teachable moments for the little learners in your life:

Birth and death of Christ

The candy cane: Legend tells us that an old candy maker designed the candy cane to teach children about the birth (Isa. 7:14), life (Matt. 20:28) and death of Christ (Heb. 1:1-3). The stick of white candy represents purity — the virgin birth and the sinless life Jesus lived. Shaped like a staff, it reminds us of the cane-holding shepherds who came from the fields to worship the infant Christ (Luke 2:8-12). The red

stripes represent the suffering Christ endured and His sacrificial death (John 3:16).

Angels: Angels had an important place in the birth of Christ. Angel Gabriel told Mary about her pregnancy (Luke 1:26-38); angels announced Christ's birth to shepherds in the fields (Luke 2:8); and angels appeared in the sky giving glory to God (Luke 2:13-14).

Lights and candles: Early Christmas trees were lit with candles to represent Jesus, "the light of the world," coming into a dark world (John 1:1-5).

In 1895, American telephonist Ralph Morris invented the first electric Christmas tree lights because of the number of fires lit candles were causing.

Stars: The star of Bethlehem guided the three wise men to the baby Jesus (Luke 2:1-12), who gave Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh (Isa. 60:6). These three gifts were given to kings in ancient times. Gold was a precious metal. Frankincense was an expensive perfume that also

had medicinal uses and myrrh was used as an anointing oil.

The Evergreen Fir tree: Becoming popular in the early Middle Ages, Christians used Evergreen trees to represent the love and mercy of God. The tree's branches and needles point to heaven, a Christian's eternal home. The Evergreen's color, remaining green throughout the year and even in the dead of winter, represents everlasting life.

Early Christmas trees were decorated with apples, gingerbread, sweets and candles.

St. Nicholas: The bishop of Myra (now Turkey) felt compassion for poor children in his community, so he gave them anonymous gifts. One legend tells of St. Nicholas secretly dropping gold coins in the socks hung to dry overnight by a poor family's fireplace. When the children woke up the next morning, they were surprised and delighted with the gold-stuffed stockings. "Santa Claus" is the symbol as-

sociated with the compassionate, kind and generous St. Nicholas. In 1822, Clement Moore wrote the poem "'Twas the Night Before Christmas" and helped to bring the modern whimsical character of "Santa" to life.

Celebrating Jesus' birth

Christmas gifts: The custom of giving gifts during the celebration of Christ's birth became popular during the lifetime of German reformer Martin Luther in the 16th century. These gifts were given anonymously and sometimes hidden for children to search for and find. Wrapping gifts in layers and layers of colorful paper was an old Danish custom.

This Christmas, as families get together and engage in seasonal activities to celebrate Christ's birth, adults can use the simple symbols of Christmas to provide teachable moments to help younger family members better understand the true reason for the season.

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.



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Concord Baptist, Concord Missionary Baptist hold first joint worship service

They used to worship in the same building, back before the Civil War — but they didn’t worship together.

Members of Concord Baptist Church, Salem, in Russell Baptist Association, would hold their service in the mornings, and in the afternoons slaves would gather to have their own worship service in the basement.

“But their record shows that they (the slave congregation) grew weary of that,” said Bud Passmore, pastor of Concord Baptist. So it wasn’t long before members of Concord Missionary Baptist Church got a piece of land just down the road and built their own building.

They share a heritage but the two congregations have gone their own ways for the better part of two centuries.

But 175 years after they both started, members of both congregations gathered together Nov. 20 to worship at the same time in the same building.

“It was a great time of fellowship,” Passmore said. “We really got to know each other and had a great time.”



Photo courtesy of Concord Baptist Church
(L to r) Pastor Bud Passmore, of Concord Baptist Church, Salem; Concord member Neil Koon; Judge Calvin Milford; and Concord Missionary deacons Donald Roberson, Nicholas Roberson and Joe Davis commemorate the two churches’ anniversaries.

Joint worship was led by Brent Nowell, worship leader at Concord Baptist, and special music was provided by Johnnie Mae Jackson and her backup choir from Concord Missionary Baptist.

Deacon Nicholas Roberson brought greetings from the missionary church, and Neil Koon shared a little of what he has seen

in his 80-plus years as a member of Concord Baptist. Judge Calvin Milford, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative, was on hand to present framed certificates commemorating the anniversaries to both churches. Following the service everyone gathered in the family life center to enjoy a Thanksgiving feast. (TAB)



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RELIGION *in America*

Compiled from Wire Services

Abstinent teens 'healthier' than peers

ATLANTA — A new study from the Centers for Disease Control shows that teens who report abstaining from sex are much healthier than their peers who engage in sexual activity.

The report — "Sexual Identity, Sexual Contacts, and Health-Related Behaviors Among Students in Grades 9–12, United States and Selected Sites" — concluded that students "with no sexual contact have a much lower prevalence of most health-risk behaviors," according to The Christian Post.

The study, compiled in 2015, showed that teenage virgins are considerably less likely than their peers to smoke daily, use indoor tanning beds, binge drink, smoke marijuana, ride in cars with a drunk driver and get in fights.

"Our children should know there's very compelling scientific evidence on so many levels showing how saving the precious gift of their sexuality for ... marriage is nothing about old-time moralism or unhealthy sexual repression. Just the opposite is true," wrote Glenn Stanton, director of global family formation studies of Focus on the Family, in The Federalist web magazine. (TAB)

'In God We Trust' to stay on US currency

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio — A ruling in Ohio has upheld the constitutionality of having "In God We Trust" on the national currency of the United States, according to The Christian Post.

District Court Judge Benita Y. Pearson of the Northern District of Ohio stopped a move by atheist activist Michael Newdow to strike the motto from being printed on money. In a Nov. 30 ruling, Pearson said the Religious Freedom Restoration Act — which Newdow's group of plaintiffs was claiming — was not applicable because they "cannot demonstrate that the use of the motto on currency substantially burdens their religious exercise."

She also wrote that using currency with the motto printed on it does not mean they are being forced to support a religious message: "No reasonable viewer would think a person handling money does so to spread its religious message." (TAB)

Churches should put away 'underlying assumptions regarding young adults'

(continued from page 1)

important to young adults, according to the study.

Clemons agreed that "young adults have a passion to serve Christ" and added that Frontline helps to direct that passion with the help of a "transition coach."

"The purpose of a transition coach is to answer questions, provide support and facilitate young adults into developing and implementing ministry that is relevant to reach people like them," he said, adding that this person can be either paid or a volunteer.

Pugh also said service is very important to the young adults at Iron City, as are theologically conservative messages that are thought-provoking, which was another key finding of the survey.

"We have found that young people crave theological substance and want to be challenged to think deeply and serve broadly," he said.

Craving community

And while large churches naturally have a leg-up on ministering to this group simply because of greater resources and more people, small churches — congregations with less than 250 members — can be very attractive to millennials seeking a church, according to Eddie Hammett, president of Transforming Solutions in Hendersonville, North Carolina.

"[Smaller churches] have a

Reaching millennials takes time

Churches need to prepare for significant changes if they are to garner the interest of young adults, according to the "Engaging Young Adults" study conducted by Faith Communities Today.

"If there is little openness to change or a lack of willingness to meet new challenges, then attracting young adults will be an uphill battle," the study stated.

The Cornerstone Church, Gadsden, understood this early on and structured itself accordingly.

"Our church decided from its inception that if we were going to reach the unchurched and millennials, [we] would have to give up a lot of preferences to do so and we have. ... We operate on a simple church mentality that less is more and we strive to do everything with excellence," said Pastor Daniel Woodcock.

"We're Sunday morning

service only, small groups, one-on-one discipleship and missions. That's all we do, but we strive to do all of them well. We don't bog people down with time commitments; we want to make the most of their time."

Trial and error

"I tell our people all the time we're going to try stuff that they may not like or things they're not used to and it may fail. If it fails we'll just try something else, but if it's successful we'll tweak it to make it even better. They are very used to this now and know that we have to do things that no one else is doing to reach people no one else is reaching.

"It's very exciting, but hard work. The pay off is worth it, but it's definitely a battle of remembering that reaching and engaging the next generation is a marathon, not a sprint." (TAB)

great future because millennials want community" which is often a given in smaller congregations, Hammett said.

Before they can reach this elusive generation, congregations regardless of their size must put

away any "underlying assumptions regarding young adults," the study said.

Of the churches surveyed that do not have 15 percent of attendees who are young adults, 67.4 percent said there has to be more interest on the part of the young adults and 65.7 percent said they needed a greater passion to reach this group.

"Stereotypes of young adults as lazy, inattentive, materialistic and not interested in spiritual matters might contribute to a congregation's overall lack of desire to engage this population," according to the study. ¶

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Fairview Baptist Church, Valley, in East Liberty Baptist Association is *The Alabama Baptist's* latest partner church using the local edition service. Congratulations to Pastor Tim Bass and the congregation of Fairview.

Thank you for your ministry partnership.

To find out more about the local edition service, email pr@thealabamabaptist.org or call 1-800-803-5201.

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

By Joanne Sloan

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



2016 marks 250th anniversary of preacher Christmas Evans' birth

Christmas Evans (1766–1838) was one of the greatest preachers of Wales.

This year is the 250th anniversary of his birth.

He was born to Samuel and Joanna Evans in Llandysul, Wales, on Dec. 25, 1766.

His father died when he was young and his mother sent him to work at his uncle's farm, where he received food and clothing. For the six years he lived with him, his cruel and drunken uncle proved a poor example. Evans escaped death several times.

Young converts

He then worked on the farm of David Davies, a Presbyterian minister. Christmas Evans attended a Presbyterian chapel during a spiritual awakening in 1784–85, one of several revivals during his lifetime in Wales. He and other young men were converted.

"The fear of dying in an ungodly state," he said, "especially affected me ... and this apprehension clung to me till I was induced to rest on Christ."

The new believers met at night in a barn with candles and their Bibles. Within a month the illiterate Evans could read his Welsh Bible. For the next six months he studied at Davies' school, the only formal education he received.

His conversion resulted in a lifelong love of learning. He later became proficient in Hebrew and Greek.

Evans' former friends resented his conversion. Six of them attacked him one evening, beat him brutally and struck him in the eye with a stick. He lost his sight, which resulted in his being called the "One-eyed Preacher of Wales."

Because he disagreed with some of Davies' views, he left the Presbyterians and

joined the Baptists. A Calvinist Baptist minister baptized him when he was 20.

Ordained at Salem in South Wales in

1789, he preached in the remote Llyn peninsula for two years and married Catherine Jones, a member there. Often he preached five times on Sunday. The membership doubled.

Evans frequently traveled on foot or horseback to North Wales. Less than 10 Baptist chapels existed. Burdened about the lack of the gospel on the island of Anglesey, he became pastor of a chapel at Llangefni in Anglesey in 1791.

He planted new churches and visited farms and villages, preaching three times every Sunday. By 1794 he became known as a leading Baptist minister.

His preaching was powerful. He used vivid illustrations, and he was always sincere. In 1814–15, it was estimated 600 peo-

ple were converted under his preaching.

Evans served 35 years in Anglesey and saw incredible changes in the religious life there. Forty times he traveled on horseback from North to South Wales to raise money for 16 new chapels.

Tripled membership

His wife died in 1823. After he remarried in 1826, the couple moved to Caerphilly where his church's membership tripled in two years. He then served as pastor of a chapel in Cardiff for four years. His preaching still attracted large congregations and he continued to make frequent tours of Wales.

He became ill while preaching at Swansea and died July 16, 1838. His final testimony was to "Preach Christ to the people. Look at me in my sermons; I am nothing but ruin. But look at me in Christ, and I am heaven and salvation."

He was buried in the cemetery at the Baptist chapel in Swansea. ☛



EVANS

Sulphur Springs holds stocking drive



Photo by Kristi Turner

Sulphur Springs Baptist Association exceeds its goal of 100 stockings by collecting more than 130 for its Stockings for Kids drive for the Cane Creek Food Bank. Cane Creek Baptist Church, Warrior, hosts a food giveaway on every third Saturday of each month but the stockings were given to families who came to the food bank Dec. 10. Families also left with a grocery cart full of food for Christmas. Daniel Nichols is director of missions.

Historical HIGHLIGHTS

FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



50 years ago December 1966

The first World Congress on Evangelism was held in Berlin. There were 1,200 delegates and observers from 106 nations in attendance. The meeting was thought to have started an ecumenical movement that Southern Baptists could fully endorse; although, the main emphasis of the meeting was solely world evangelism. There were 70 Southern Baptists who attended the Congress. Evangelist Billy Graham was the honorary chairman of the World Congress and was the key person behind the 10-day meeting. The Congress had one major purpose — to instill in those at-

tending the urgency and primacy of evangelizing the entire world.

100 years ago December 1916

The front page of the Dec. 13 issue of *The Alabama Baptist* featured Howard College Glee Club, which would be performing at the Jefferson Theater on Dec. 15 for the admission prices of 25 and 50 cents. The paper encouraged churches to take an offering to remember the fatherless and motherless at the Orphans' Home. In good humor, the paper also reminded those taking the paper to catch up their past due accounts or renew their subscriptions, stating they would take it

as a Christmas present. Judson College was offering free tuition for the following month for those who entered the college as a student immediately following the Christmas holidays.

150 years ago December 1866

Gov. Patton of Alabama, who was elected only eight months after the Civil War ended, spoke favorably about the freedmen in the state. Gov. Patton stated that gratifying information had reached the department from different parts of the state in relation to the freedmen in Alabama. The governor stood by the ideal that no white man should want a rule on a freedman that he himself was not willing to abide by. "No good to the country can result from having one code of laws for the whites and another for the blacks, in their new relations, so far as concern the rights of persons and property." ☛

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

Email your information to news@thealabamabaptist.org, fax it to 205-879-6026 or call 1-800-803-5201. Church announcements should arrive three weeks prior to the event.

Want to know GOD?

By Jenni Ingram
Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

Have you ever been tempted? Heaven knows that I have and most of the time, I was weak and gave in to that temptation — especially before my salvation. Every day we face temptations and I fully believe the enemy knows exactly which buttons to push.

It is astounding that Jesus left heaven willingly to be born human, to be tempted, to live, to teach and to suffer immensely — for me and for you. I am so unworthy that the King of the universe would value me so much.

Jesus knew what it was like to be tempted especially when He was physically weak. If you need clarification, see Luke 4:1-13, Luke 11:14-16 or Hebrews 2:18.

This season can be a time of temptation if we let it. It can be a time to overspend, to indulge, to be gluttons and, unfortunately, a time to ignore the true reason for this holiday season.

The true meaning of Christmas is not found in any department store or in anything that's wrapped under a tree.

The true meaning is found when we celebrate our Lord's birth.

I want my family's celebration of the holiday to be a true reflection of what Jesus means to me. I want everyone to know how much I love this man who was born in a stable, laid in a manger, suffered a poor man's life when even at 12 years old, He knew He was a King, to live and be tempted only to suffer and die a criminal's death just so He could save us.

Jesus went out to save souls. He did not sit complacently by and know people were going to hell. He reached out and loved. I am going to do the same.✠

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Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

November CP gifts below projected budget

NASHVILLE — November's Cooperative Program (CP) allocation receipts for Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) work totaled \$14,879,544.25. Designated gifts amounted to \$3,419,964.15.

The amount is 5.07 percent below the same time frame in 2015, according to a news release from SBC Executive Committee President and CEO Frank S. Page.

The combined October and November totals for the current fiscal year also are 4.13 percent below the projected budget for the time frame.

As of Nov. 30, gifts received for distribution through the CP Allocation Budget totaled \$30,199,554.25, which is \$1,300,445.75 below the \$31,500,000 allocation budget projection.

Designated giving of \$6,938,601.07 through November was 3.97 percent, or \$287,050.02, below gifts of \$7,225,651.09 received through November 2015. (BP)

Midwestern Seminary receives large gift

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, has received a \$200,000 pledge toward the construction of its Mathena Student Center, bringing total gifts toward the project to nearly \$9 million. The total cost of the project is estimated at \$12 million.

The pledge comes from the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (SBTC).

Midwestern President Jason Allen said, "We cannot be more grateful to the SBTC executive board and to Southern Baptists throughout Texas for their generosity in providing this gift and for their partnership in preparing the next generation of pastors, missionaries and ministry leaders for the Church.

"This gift is another sign of God's faithfulness and provision in making Midwestern Seminary's dream of having a student center become a reality," he said. (BP)

Across ALABAMA'S Associations

MADISON

► **Edwin Jenkins** is the new interim pastor of **Mount Zion Church, Huntsville**. A retired pastor and former state missionary, Jenkins previously served as interim director of missions for Morgan Association.



JENKINS

COFFEE

► **New Home Church, Enterprise**, will host "Breakfast In Bethlehem" on Dec. 17, 9-10:30 a.m. The event will include a pancake breakfast, photo booth, live telling of the Christmas story, live animals and songs. For more information call the church at 334-347-3646. Clifford Quincey is pastor. ► **Park Avenue Church, Enterprise**, will present the Christmas musical "Come Let Us Adore" on Dec. 18, 11 a.m. Leon Adams is pastor.

MOBILE

► **Rob Hatfield** is the new pastor of **Spring Hill Church, Mobile**. He previously served as associate pastor of Mount Zion Church, Huntsville. He also served in other ministry roles at Mount Zion Church.

He holds a bachelor's degree from Berry College in Rome, Georgia, and a master's degree from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He and his wife, Laurie, have three children.



HATFIELD

PINE BARREN

► **Enon Church, Camden**, will hold a Christmas social Dec. 18, 5 p.m. A candlelight service and communion will be included. Fellowship and secret Santa will follow. All are invited to attend. Michael Yancey is pastor. ✠



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TAB CLASSIFIEDS

For information about placing a classified ad, contact the advertising department of The Alabama Baptist at 205-870-4720, ext. 102, or ads@thealabamabaptist.org. Copy deadline is two weeks before publication.

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Immanuel Baptist Church in Lawrenceburg, TN, 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 myimmanuel.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.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC

First Baptist Church of Childersburg is seeking a part-time minister of music. Please submit your resumé to: First Baptist Church, 200 8th Ave. SW, Childersburg, AL 35044, or email to: fb-childersburg@mindspring.com.

BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER

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

MINISTER OF CHILDREN/PRE-SCHOOL

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

CHILDREN'S MINISTER

Centreville Baptist Church, Centreville, Alabama, is currently seeking a full-time children's minister. Please send resumés to: centrevillebc@bellsouth.net.

MUSIC MINISTRY ASSISTANT

First Baptist Church of Boaz is seeking a part-time (25 hours a week) music ministry assistant. Experience with Word, PowerPoint and Publisher. Some music reading helpful. Send resumé to: First Baptist Church Boaz, Attn. Tommy Pierce, P.O. Box 337, Boaz, AL 35957 or tpierce@fbcboaz.org.

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Dorough, T.J., Centreville: Centreville BC
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Maness, Roger, Arlington: County Line BC of Pine Hill
Orr, Frances F., Trussville: Mr. & Mrs. J. Wray Pearce
Rider, Tessie M., Bay Minette: Durant Chapel BC of Bay Minette
Smith, Mack: Awin BC of Pine Apple
Weatherly, Mildred, Fulton: Mr. & Mrs. Joe M. Daniels

Honors are listed below (the name of the honoree is **bolded**).

Josey, John & Carolyn, Birmingham: Mr. & Mrs. J. Wray Pearce

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CAMPUS News

JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson Hosts Annual Christmas Tea and Vespers Service:** Judson College in Marion held its annual Christmas Tea and Vespers service Dec. 3, which celebrates Advent.

Christmas Tea was the annual semi-formal "open house" Christmas event and the Vespers program, presented by Judson's Department of Music, was comprised of sacred songs, scriptural and responsive readings and congregational hymns performed by the Judson Singers, FAITH Ensemble and special guests.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **University of Mobile Names Alumni Programs and Annual Giving Director:** The University of Mobile (UM) announced the appointment of Lauren McCaghren as senior director for alumni programs and annual giving Dec. 6. Prior to UM, McCaghren served

in areas of alumni relations and fundraising at Samford University in Birmingham. As senior direc-



MCCAGHREN

tor of alumni programs and annual giving at Samford, she expanded homecoming activities, established an alumni volunteer program, re-established alumni chapters in eight

cities, created an internal alumni professionals network and instituted an Alumni Showcase.

► **University of Mobile Creates the Alabama School of the Arts and Renames Center for Performing Arts:** The University of Mobile (UM) has created the Alabama School of the Arts as the academic entity for the departments of music, worship leadership, theatre and visual arts. These departments previously resided in other areas. UM also renamed its Center for Performing Arts the Roger Breland Center for Perform-

ing Arts, which will serve as the professional entity of the Alabama School of the Arts in providing venues for students to engage in community productions.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Westmoreland Receives Distinguished Leadership Award:** Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland was honored Dec. 5 as the 2016 recipient of the James T. Rogers Distinguished Leadership Award given by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.



WESTMORELAND

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'Experiencing real freedom'

Urban Rescue connects audiences with God's redemptive story

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

As the contemporary group Urban Rescue leads worship at events, they desire to help audiences realize the power of God's redemptive story that can bring beauty from brokenness by setting the captive free.

"Urban Rescue means to set free the city life," said singer/songwriter Jordan Frye. "We're from Los Angeles and we came

up with the name in college when we started the band. We try to represent what we hear coming from the city in our worship music. We believe that God is in the business of setting people free. The city is this metaphor of compression, and we want people to realize that being in Christ means experiencing real freedom.

"We want people to know that they are so deeply loved by God. He loves us and pursues us just as we are. There's nothing we can do

to earn His love because it's a free gift. I have found that the truth of that sets people free in worship."

'In midst of brokenness'

"So many times people come in carrying their guilt and shame. It's amazing to see how God uses these songs to impact people's lives and draw them closer to Him in the midst of their brokenness and allowing them to receive His love and redemption."

One of the most personal and poignant songs on the independent worship project's new album "Wild Heart" is called "Song Of My Father."

"Growing up, my dad left the scene at an early age," Frye said. "The song comes from Zephaniah 3:17 where God says, 'I delight over you with singing.' That's an incredible thought to me because I'm just now experiencing the Father's heart, and I feel like I'm on this journey with the people I'm meeting. It's one broken person telling another broken person about God's unending love that He lavishes on His children."

At a young age Frye dealt with the pain of his parents' divorce in addition to his mother being diagnosed with leukemia. In the midst of his trials he desired to bring



Photo courtesy of The Media Collective

Jordan Frye, singer/songwriter for Urban Rescue, found hope and healing past his painful experiences through worship music.

himself and others closer to the Lord while using worship music to find hope and healing.

Desire for restoration

Now as he passionately leads worship at events, Frye hopes to inspire the next generation of worshippers with a desire to see broken cities, churches and communities restored.

During a recent tour in the

United Kingdom and Ireland with the Irish worship band Rend Collective, the worship project was humbled and amazed to witness how God is using their songs to impact audiences around the globe. They also had the opportunity to join Hillsong United on a few stops of their Empires Tour.

"It's pretty special how God is using this music to reach people and we're just in awe of it." ✠

Book review

By Grace Thornton, *The Alabama Baptist*

Offered

Bill R. Morrison. *Bloomington, Indiana; WestBow Press. 177 pp. (Paperback).*

Everything we do that is not offered to God as worship is idolatrous and therefore sin. A person's life is either given to God in its entirety, or it is not."

They're straightforward words from Bill Morrison, director of Baptist Campus Ministries at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. In his book, "Offered," Morrison comes

out of the gate with the "all or nothing" viewpoint and then methodically explains how worship is designed to happen in every shred of the believer's life.

For decades, many Christians have thought of God in a hierarchical mindset, he wrote — "God is No. 1, family No. 2 and work or country No. 3." But that gets "Christians caught in the futile struggle of trying to live a balanced life," he wrote. "The key to a life offered as

worship is not to prioritize God above all things but to dedicate each and every area of our lives to God as worship."

Morrison begins by explaining who the God is whom Christians worship.

He then walks through the different ways in which that

worship works itself out in everyday life — through a commitment to deny ourselves to give everything to God; to have self-control, discipline, etc.; and to worship God through hope, love and forgiveness, among other things.

He also talks about how these work themselves out through all of life, from starting block to finish line, whether that be through parenting, rest, marriage, school, work or doing tasks like buying groceries.

Morrison's book isn't new material, but it is pulled together in a comprehensive way that's fresh and readable for Christians desiring to look at how and why their life should be offered on the altar — and stay there. ✠



University of Mobile's Christmas Spectacular to air on TV



Photo courtesy of the University of Mobile

University of Mobile (UM) students perform in the 14th annual Christmas Spectacular which drew an audience totaling more than 10,000 during the four-night performance Nov. 17-20. The event was moved to a new location this year — Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile — to accommodate the record crowd. Christmas Spectacular featured more than 300 students, faculty, staff and alumni in 20 ensembles. Daystar Television Network will air Christmas Spectacular throughout the holiday season. For more information, visit www.umobile.edu/Christmas.

And it all happens in a breath



Photo courtesy of the Baptist and Reflector

Wildfires raged in late November across parts of the Smoky Mountains. Chris Turner, director of communications for the Tennessee Baptist Convention, traveled to Sevier County to cover the story.

Turner shares first-person experience in Tennessee fires

By Chris Turner
Tennessee Baptist Convention

One moment it was a blustery late November evening secluded in the Smoky Mountains; the next a fiery hell. And it all changed in the time it takes to draw a breath.

Somewhere along the way I became a disaster chaser. That was never my intention; it just worked out that way. My background is rooted in journalism and at one point I was an overseas correspondent for the International Mission Board. I've chased hurricanes, floods and earthquakes. I've never seen the ravages of fire until those in Sevier County, Tennessee.

Baptist and Reflector Editor Lonnie Wilkey and I dashed over to Sevierville less than 24 hours after Gatlinburg had been evacuated and fire was sweeping across the mountains. By God's grace we awoke to a drenching rain. Our objective: connect with disaster relief teams and better understand what the human needs are going to be. Along the day's journey we spent time at Rocky Top Sports World, normally an athletic center with multiple courts, but transformed into a makeshift shelter for hundreds of displaced people.

And that's where I met Joyce. She and her husband are fortunate to be alive. As we sat waiting on cell-phones to charge, I asked if she would share her story.

Sharing her story

"I heard a popping sound near the window Monday night and looked outside," she said. "Embers were falling like rain. No one ever warned us to evacuate but then again the fire was nowhere near where we lived. The wind was whipping at about 80 mph and it's like it carried the fire up and over the mountain."

In fact, it did. The fire jumped several mountains and nestled in the hills surrounding Gatlinburg, and in Joyce's backyard. She and her husband wet their hair and their clothes and scrambled to grab their Bible and car keys — and made a break for it. They tried to cautiously bolt through blinding smoke and down the winding road away from the fire only to find they were driving into the heart of it. The wind was sweeping the fire up the hill rather than down.

The hope of making it out suddenly died when a tree fell across the road and left them cut off. They

raced back up the hill to their condo and were thinking the pool might be their only hope of salvation. Just then, lights from a four-wheel drive fire truck emerged through the smoke to rescue them. They barely made it down. The windshield wipers melted on the truck by the time they got to safety.

'He delivered us'

"God saved us," she said. "There was no way we were going to get out. We kept praying and He delivered us."

They lost everything but that Bible and the clothes on their backs.

Covering a disaster is a two-edged sword. The looks on the faces of people who have lost everything and the despondency in their eyes never leave you. I'll never forget Joyce's face, or the face of the old Honduran woman who clung to the root ball of a large tree as it swept violently down a raging Aguan River, or the filthy faces of teenaged boys digging out of the debris after an earthquake in Peru.

But I'll also never forget the stories of God's providential care either. There was no doubt in Joyce's mind that God arrived just in time through the smoke in a hard charging pickup truck. She and her husband had life, and salvation, and were saved. She didn't know what they were going to do, but she knew that if God could save them from the fire on the mountain, then He could meet their needs moving forward.

As I walked around the smoldering ruins of Roaring Fork Baptist Church, Gatlinburg, and past the slab and rubble of neighboring houses, it struck me as odd that not everything in the fire's path burned to the ground.

In fact, it is incomprehensible to understand how one house stood without a single shingle melting and the house 30 feet away on the next lot over was reduced to ashes. It definitely makes one think about those Scripture passages that speak of things in our lives that will be turned to ash and that which has permanence.

And it makes one think how, in a moment, one can go from living the blustery life of this world with all its distracting activities to eternity.

And it all changes in the time it takes to draw a breath.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This story first appeared in the Baptist and Reflector.✝



JOYCE



World of
RELIGION
Compiled from Wire Services

Hospitals opt out of Canada's euthanasia law

WINNIPEG, Canada — Two Christian hospitals in Winnipeg, Manitoba, have opted out of the assisted suicide law passed by Canada's government in June. Concordia Hospital, a Mennonite institution, and St. Boniface Hospital, a Catholic facility, announced they will not euthanize patients but agreed to refer those seeking assisted suicide to other groups that will.

On Nov. 16, Concordia Hospital ran a response to Canada's Medical Assistance in Dying law (MAID) in a local newspaper. After consulting its doctors and staff in June, it adopted a policy against MAID. The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority honored the hospital's decision to opt out based on "ethical and moral beliefs," the ad stated.

Although the law allows for conscience protections for hospitals, not everyone approves of the waiver. Arthur Schafer, director of the University of Manitoba's Centre for Professional and Applied Ethics, said hospitals should be forced to comply.

"The people who work within those institutions have a conscience, the institution doesn't," he told the Canadian Broadcasting Company. "Their belief, which is a legitimate religious conviction they have, shouldn't be imposed on patients, doctors, nurses or the general public."

In California a situation similar to the one in Manitoba arose when medical centers opted out of the End of Life Option Act that went into effect in June. Five U.S. states — Oregon, Washington, Vermont, California and Colorado — currently have laws legalizing assisted suicide. (TAB)

Catholic Church accused of inflating numbers

OSLO, Norway — Norway's Roman Catholic Church has reportedly been slapped with a \$140,000 fine for inflating its membership numbers with names from the phonebook so it would be eligible for state financial aid.

The Diocese of Oslo denied the allegations, but it said there had been mistakes made, according to The Christian Post.

"We've never done anything illegal or received too much money," the Catholic church said in an official statement. "We have always recognized that we have made mistakes and an unfortunate practice in parts of our registration. This was cleaned up a long [time] ago."

But prosecutors said Thuan cong Pham, the church's chief administrative officer, has been charged with aggravated fraud, and that the church had gone through phone books between 2011 and 2014 to get names of immigrants that looked as though they might've been from Catholic countries.

Many on the list weren't aware church officials had added them, prosecutors said, but they say the diocese got government subsidies because of the reported size of its membership, the Post reported. (TAB)

Franklin Graham shares gospel in Myanmar

YANGON, Myanmar — More than 170,000 people in Myanmar heard the gospel during a three-day festival led by Franklin Graham, according to The Christian Post.

About 7,600 people made decisions for Christ over the course of the event Nov. 18–20, the majority of whom had never been inside a church building before, according to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

It was the first event of its kind in the Buddhist-majority nation.

On the first night, Graham preached about how one can find forgiveness in Jesus Christ and that He died to save men from their sins. As many as 46,000 people attended the revival rally on the opening night and 2,500 responded to Graham's invitation to come forward and accept Christ.

"I am so thankful that thousands of ... people in Myanmar have responded to the invitation to 'come home' and trust Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of their lives," Graham said. "I thank God for working and give Him the glory. We know there was great celebrating in heaven over each one." (TAB)