



INSIDE



Part 1 of 8 —
Who are the
evangelicals?

◆ Pages 4-5



Pickens County
native follows
God's calling to
be pastor, mis-
sionary in Paris

◆ Page 9



ERLC's Moore
says he never
intended to criti-
cize Trump sup-
porters during
2016 election

◆ Page 11

Disciple- making

TRENDS

Relational discipleship resurfaces while church programs lose fans

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

When you ask Daniel Edmonds about where the Church is headed with discipleship these days, he likes to quote Pastor Ken Adams — “Jesus started the Church the way He wanted it, and now He wants the Church the way He started it.”

It's to that end, Edmonds said, that churches today are circling back around to the relational type of disciple-making Jesus Himself did — the all-day-every-day, personal-influence kind.

“For a lot of people, it's scary because they've never done it that way before,” said Edmonds, director of the office of Sunday School and discipleship for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. “But we're getting back to the way Jesus

intended for it to be done.”

Jay Robertson, assistant professor in the School of Christian Studies at the University of Mobile, said Jesus divided His time into three types of relationships — relationships with the Father, with other believers and with the unsaved.

Those three, Robertson said, could be described as abiding, connecting and sharing.

But after Jesus' ascension and the spread of the gospel, as the Church was legalized and accepted by the

Roman Empire, “a shift occurred away from personal relationships and

the biblical concept of every Jesus follower ministering and serving,” he said.

The divide between clergy and laity “created and encouraged a performance mentality” when people attended church, Robertson said — “leave the worship and ministry to the ‘professionals.’”



123rf.com

Edmonds said as a performance mentality worked its way into recent decades, it turned into a program-oriented approach.

Different times

“It may have worked OK for a little while for discipleship,” he said. “Life looked different back then. It wasn't a 24/7 society like it is now. For example, there used to be a time when teachers wouldn't give homework on Wednesday nights and blue laws prevented businesses from operating on Sundays.”

This opened up people's schedules to make them more available

for programs, Edmonds said.

But in recent years, life has definitely changed, he explained. “There's hardly any program that matches everybody's lifestyle anymore, so you can't say that ‘you're not going to be a disciple unless you come to church at this time, this time and this time.’ That's kind of where many churches are struggling,” he said.

“To carry on with this kind of discipleship leaves out a huge segment of society.”

So churches have realized more and more in recent years the
(See ‘Biblical,’ page 8)

Check out our new website at
www.thealabamabaptist.org



COMMENT

Who Are the Evangelicals?

Evangelical” is a popular word these days. When people are asked to self-identify their religious preferences as many as 40 percent of Americans claim to be evangelicals. The National Association of Evangelicals (NEA) places the number of evangelicals in the United States at about 32 percent of all Americans.

The George Barna Research group in California scoffs at such claims. Barna says only about 9 percent of Americans are evangelical.

Part of the difference between the various conclusions is in the definitions used by various groups. NEA and LifeWay Christian Resources use a four-step process in their research to determine if one is an evangelical. To fit in that category, one must strongly agree with the following statements:

In agreement

1. The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe.
2. It is very important for me personally to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior.
3. Jesus Christ’s death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin.
4. Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God’s free gift of eternal salvation.

Barna’s criteria

Barna is more restrictive, using a nine-step criteria. For Barna, an evangelical is one who:

- ▶ Has made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ,
- ▶ Believes that when they die they will go to heaven because they have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as Savior,
- ▶ Maintains their faith is very important in their life today,

Personal responsibility

- ▶ Believes they have a personal responsibility to share beliefs about Christ with non-Christians,
- ▶ Believes Satan exists,
- ▶ Believes eternal salvation is possible only through grace and not works,
- ▶ Believes Jesus Christ lived a sinless life,
- ▶ Believes the Bible is accurate in all it teaches and



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

- ▶ Describes God as the all-knowing, all-powerful, perfect deity who created the universe and still rules it today.

Different definitions

Differences in definitions can be important. Because its definition is more restrictive, Barna recently argued that President-elect Donald Trump actually received a smaller percentage of evangelical votes than did Mitt Romney in 2012. Barna contends that Trump received 79 percent of white evangelical votes and Romney received 81 percent.

Barna argues that exit polls which found Trump doing better than Romney among white evangelicals relied on voter self-identification which resulted in inaccurate information.

‘Good news’

The term “evangelical” comes from the Greek word “euangelion” which means “good news” or “gospel.” That is why the evangelical faith focuses primarily on the good news of salvation made available to all sinners by Jesus Christ.

NEA says, “Evangelicals are a vibrant and diverse group including believers found in many churches, denominations and nations. Our community brings together Reformed, Holiness, Anabaptists, Pentecostals, Charismatic and other traditions.”

Theological convictions

Evangelicals are defined by theological convictions — not political, social or cultural trends. One historian explained those theological commitments as:

- ▶ The belief that lives need to be transformed through a “born-again” experience and a life-long process of following Jesus.
- ▶ The expression and demonstration of the gospel in missionary and social reform efforts.
- ▶ A high regard for and obedience to the Bible as the ultimate authority.

- ▶ A stress on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross making possible the redemption of humanity.

As NEA contends, Christian believers from many traditions hold these basic beliefs while disagreeing about other important theological issues. Obviously there are differences between those of the Reformed tradition and the Anabaptist tradition, between the Methodist tradition and the Holiness tradition. Yet all can embrace the theological beliefs forming the core of evangelicalism.

Differences within denominations

And while some believers from these traditions may be evangelicals that does not mean everyone from that denomination is an evangelical. Differences exist within denominations just as they do between denominations.

Beginning with this week’s issue and for the next seven weeks *The Alabama Baptist* will fea-

ture a series of articles designed to address the question “Who are the evangelicals?” Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh, professor of religion at Samford University in Birmingham, will examine the historical background of those denominations most often considered evangelical.

WHO are the evangelicals?

About the writer

Roxburgh, a frequent contributor to *The Alabama Baptist*, holds degrees from the London School of Theology, the University of Aberdeen and the University of Edinburgh, both in Scotland. He was president of Scottish Baptist College in Glasgow, Scotland, before coming to Samford.

The articles will provide insights into Christian denominations rooted in the theological commitments of evangelicalism.

The articles reflect the beginnings of the various groups but do not consider all that has happened in the different bodies since their founding.

Sense of appreciation

Hopefully the series will help readers develop a sense of appreciation for those who, like Baptists, embrace and are described by the word “evangelical.” The articles may demonstrate that while significant differences exist between various religious bodies, many share core commitments to the doctrines that make them evangelical.

Be sure to read the first article in this series on pages 4–5 of this issue and look for “Who are the evangelicals?” each week through the Feb. 23 issue. ✠

LETTERS
TO THE EDITOR

See page 10



TAB

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

(ISSN 0738-7741;
USPS 011-080)

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

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

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

DR. BOBBY S. TERRY
EDITOR

Jennifer Davis Rash
Editor-elect

Neisha Roberts
Editorial Production Coordinator

Maggie Walsh
News Writer

Lauren C. Grim
Designer

Wanda Bergeron
Local Editions

Linda Harrison
Financial Administrator

Bill Gilmore
Advertising Director

Debbie Campbell
Director of Circulation
and Public Relations

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

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

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

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

Full member of
Alabama Press Association

Accredited member of
Evangelical Council for
Financial Accountability



'Nation's Top Regional
Christian Newspaper'

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

Modernized approach

New US law strengthens fight against religious persecution

The Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act, signed into law by President Barack Obama on Dec. 16, 2016, seeks to further combat religious persecution across the world.

Also known as HR 1150 and named after the recently retired Virginia Rep. Frank R. Wolf, the bill was introduced by Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., in 2015 and co-sponsored by 100 lawmakers before it passed the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate in early December.

Co-sponsors hope the bill will "strengthen and modernize" the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998.

Top priority

As acts of violence and terrorism against religious minorities run rampant from Vietnam to Syria to Sudan, the upgraded legislation aims to strengthen key positions within the federal government to make religious freedom a top priority, *The Christian Post* reported.

"The freedom to practice a religion without persecution is a precious right for everyone — of whatever race, sex or location — on earth," said Smith, chair of the Global Human Rights Subcommittee. "This human right is enshrined in our own founding documents, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and has been a bedrock principle of open and democratic societies for centuries."

HR 1150 will "require more frequent executive actions to counter severe violations of religious freedom across the world. ... Force all foreign service of-

ficers to receive international religious freedom training and ... integrate religious freedom into

every aspect of U.S. foreign policy," according to a press release from Smith's office.

Among several steps to improve the United States' global diplomacy, the law will create a "special watch list" of countries that engage in or tolerate violations of religious freedom; create a "designated persons list" that will pinpoint people

who have committed acts of violence against religious freedom; and complete a "comprehensive religious prisoners list" of those

who are detained or imprisoned because of their faith.

'For those suffering'

Alliance Defending Freedom International's deputy director Paul Coleman said the bill's passage "demonstrates that the U.S. is serious about the importance of religious freedom both for those who are suffering and for all those who love freedom in general," according to christiantytoday.com.

Providing protection

HR 1150, an update to IRFA, also includes protection to "theistic and nontheistic beliefs and the right to not profess or practice any religion," a first in the law's 18-year history.

Wolf, who spent 20 years advocating for international persecuted minorities, said the new legislation gives the office of the ambassador at large for religious freedom "more teeth" and "a lot more clout," the *Post* reported. (TAB)

"The freedom to practice a religion without persecution is a precious right for everyone — of whatever race, sex or location — on earth."

Rep. Chris Smith chair, Global Human Rights Subcommittee

TAB's new website offers 'manage my account' option

Need to make some updates to your church's subscription list?

It's easy now, thanks to *The Alabama Baptist's* new website. Just visit www.thealabamabaptist.org, scroll to

the bottom of the page and click on "Manage My Account" in the "Navigate" column on the left.

From there, you will be taken to the paper's web portal, where you can log in, view and make changes to your church's list.

If it is your first time visiting the web portal, click on the link to create a login account. It will take you to a screen where you can put in your church's account number and zip code. For login type, select "group." (Note: There is an option in the drop down for "individual," but an individual can only edit his or her account if it is not part of a church's group subscription.) After completing this page, you will be able to register your name

and email address and choose a login ID and password. You'll be taken to a second screen to confirm this information. After confirming your registration, you are set to go back to the starting page to log in to your account.

From your account page, you can view your church's subscription list, change a member's address or information and add or delete a subscriber. You also can view your church's invoices and payment history.

The web portal isn't set up for online payments, but you may call *The Alabama Baptist* at 205-870-4720 or 1-800-803-5201 at any time to pay an invoice with a credit card. (TAB)

NAVIGATE

- Customer Service
- Manage My Account
- Subscriptions
- Advertise
- Classified Ads
- Videos
- Podcasts
- Special Promotions
- Privacy Policy/Terms of Use

ABOUT

- Contact Us
- Our Story
- Our Mission
- Affiliations
- Awards and Recognitions
- Partner Links
- Staff
- Internships
- Find Churches

REFLECTIONS





Unsplash.com

By **Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh**
Special to The Alabama Baptist

The term “evangelical” is a slippery one to grasp, partly because its usage has changed down through the centuries. It even has a different meaning for people on both sides of the Atlantic. Sometimes the term “evangelical” has taken on a political tone, generally right wing, although there are evangelicals such as Jim Wallis of the Sojourner movement who are “left wing evangelicals.”

One common misunderstanding of the term is that many evangelicals are equated to fundamentalists. Although all people who would claim to be a fundamentalist also would adhere to evangelical doctrines, not all evangelicals would be fundamentalist in their theology.

History

The history of evangelicalism is fascinating, perhaps principally because the shape of current evangelicalism cannot be understood without a reference to the many streams and tributaries of the past. It is a significant movement within the history of the Church — a movement which bridges the divides of denominationalism and has characterized much of the history of Britain, North America and many other areas of the world.

Many evangelicals have only a vague understanding of their roots — roots

which reveal strengths and weaknesses. In discovering their history, churches can encounter the rich diversity of a movement that will challenge Christians to live out their faith in a way which is relevant to the culture of the 21st century.

A 1990 survey of the 500 fastest growing Protestant churches in the United States revealed that 89 percent were evangelical. Latin America is expected to become dominated by various forms of evangelicalism by the year 2025.

Once regarded as marginal, evangelicalism has now become mainline — it is not a sectarian sideshow in spirituality — it has moved in from the wings to become a major constituent element of global Christianity. It is a living movement and while holding on to essentials, it has adapted itself to its contemporary context.

The term “evangelical” was first used in Europe in the early 16th century among Protestant Reformers. Martin Luther spoke of “this common evangelical cause.” The word itself comes from the Greek word for “good news” and in the 18th century

Isaac Watts spoke of those who were of an “Evangelical Turn of Thought.” One modern author speaks of evangelicals as being “those who believe the gospel is to be experienced personally, defined biblically and communicated passionately.”

Evangelicalism looks back to the Protestant Reformation to discover the distinctive doctrines it holds to be central in its

faith, particularly stressing the importance of the watchwords of the Reformation — “Sola Scriptura.” Thus the Anglican evangelical, John Stott, declared in 1977, “We evangelicals are Bible people.”

Evangelicals stress the importance of the cross, faith and the assur-

ance of salvation through the forgiveness of sins. Evangelicals have always stressed a religion of the heart and a personal experience of God’s grace. It was among evangelicals that the Great Awakening of 1740 took place with prominent preachers such as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield and the Wesley brothers.

In his book “Evangelicals in Modern Britain,” David Bebbington developed a definition of evangelicalism around a

quadrilateral of different terms. He spoke of evangelicals as Bible-based, centering their message on the cross of Calvary, calling people to an experience of conversion and engaging in active service for Christ.

Bible

Evangelicalism has always included people with different views on election, baptism, the Lord’s Supper and eschatology, the part of theology concerning death, judgment and the final days. Evangelicals are to be found within Calvinism and Arminianism. At the heart of evangelicalism is a commitment to unhindered access to the Bible and a passionate desire to study it and apply its teaching to daily living.

A famous saying of one of the best-known evangelicals, Billy Graham, was, “The Bible says,” and this has generally dominated the thinking of evangelicals with regard to what they believe and how they behave, seeking the plain, natural interpretation of Scripture to guide them.

One area which has divided evangelicals is that of “inspiration” and “inerrancy.” Inspiration means the Scripture is God-breathed and is thus utterly reliable and trustworthy. Inerrancy sharpens the focus and claims the Bible is without error in every detail and entirely trustworthy in all its assertions, not just with regard to faith but also in areas of history, geography and philosophy. Sometimes the phrase “plena-

WHO
are the
evangelicals?

Part 1 of 8

“Evangelicals are more and more coming to realize that the journey of faith is not only sudden for some but also a long pilgrimage toward the eternal Kingdom.”

ry verbal inspiration” is used to mean that all its actual words are fully inspired and consequently the very words of God.

Cross

Bebbington identified crucicentrism as a further distinctive of evangelical belief. John Wesley wrote that “the substance of all is, ‘Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.’”

However, this emphasis on the cross has often led to the atonement eclipsing the incarnation among evangelicals. Although evangelicals seek to study and expound the whole of the Bible, they believe that to “make any theme other than the cross the fulcrum of a theological system was to take a step away from evangelicalism,” according to Bebbington.

Evangelicals have tended, especially in recent years, to emphasize one way of understanding the atonement, namely substitutionary atonement, which understands that Jesus died to pay the debt we owe, bearing punishment for sins of the world. This is often referred to as penal substitution.

One of the most popular contemporary songs of worship, written by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend from Britain is “In Christ Alone.” The theme of the song is the life, death and resurrection of Christ. It expounds the message of the cross as declaring that:

*Till on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied.*

Evangelicals are aware there are other ways the New Testament reveals further understanding of the cross — as the victory of Christ over the powers of darkness, as the means by which God has reconciled the world to Himself, as well as a demonstration of the love of God toward sinners which calls people to make a response of love and obedience. However, this model tends to be predominant in the thinking of evangelicals in the 21st century.

Conversion

Bebbington speaks of conversionism as another fundamental feature of being an evangelical. This aspect of evangelical thinking has been stressed because evangelicals see their faith not as a passive assent to propositions but as a living and dynamic relationship. Evangelicals make much of being “born again” and “making a decision” and seeking to “open their hearts to Christ.”

On Jan. 23, 1961, as a young child my brother led me, using a prayer of commitment, to receive Christ as my Savior. Yet J.I. “Jim” Packer makes the comment that “the only proof of past conversion in present convertedness.”

Evangelicals are more and more coming

to realize the journey of faith is not only sudden for some but also a long pilgrimage toward the eternal Kingdom.

The doctrine of the Church has not always been high on the agenda of evangelicals. Some would say one of the weaknesses of evangelicalism is its focus on personal growth to the exclusion of the corporate dimension of our faith.

Furthermore the involvement of evangelicals in parachurch agencies can often drain the local church of vital resources, of gifts and money and give a truncated vision of what the Church should be doing in terms of its mission in the world.

Evangelicals recognize they are not committed to any one theory or model of the Church and are to be found in different churches and denominations. This is a strength of evangelicals but it also is a weakness as evangelicals fail to commit themselves to regular engagement in the life of a local church.

This is not a doctrine so much as a further distinctive feature which Bebbington has identified as giving evangelicals an identity.

R.W. Dale spoke of how “work has taken its place, side by side, with prayer.” In the 19th century a Methodist minister was expected to work an average of 90–100 hours a week. The Methodist Connexion soon established a “Worn-out Ministers Fund.” It was their evangelical desire to spread the knowledge of personal salvation which motivated this activity.

In the 19th century C.H. Spurgeon stated, “Brethren, do something, do something, do something. While committees waste their time over resolutions, do something.”

Not only in evangelism but also in social action, evangelicals were tireless in their efforts to bring about change. Elizabeth Fry began to become involved in prison reform work. Thomas John Barnardo of the Plymouth Brethren sought to care for orphans. A group of evangelicals in London had a considerable impact upon British society and worked tirelessly to abolish the slave trade in the British Empire in 1833 through the leadership of William Wilberforce.

Yet the emphasis on involvement in society in mission as well as evangelism was lost by many evangelicals and recovered

in the great statements of the Lausanne Covenant in 1974 in which evangelicals began once again to be committed both to the Great Commission and the great commandment. The statement argued that evangelicals:

“Should share His concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression. ... We express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with other people is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbor and our obedience to Jesus Christ.”

Spirituality seeks to join together devotion, discipline, liturgy and life. It has to do with bringing head and heart together, encouraging a spiritual journey and spiritual formation. Jonathan Edwards received a letter from a young convert who wanted advice as to “the best manner of maintaining a religious life.” Evangelicalism has its

“A characteristic of a ‘godly’ evangelical would be that he or she is a ‘prayer warrior.’”

own distinctive way of doing this.

The emphasis on the Bible has meant that many evangelicals are enthusiastic about Bible study, Bible exposition and Bible reading because there is the conviction that God speaks directly to people through the Bible. Yet evangelicalism also has focused devotion on Christ and is cross-centered. In Charles Simeon’s words it is “the religion of a sinner at the foot of the cross.”

Furthermore, prayer has always been prominent in evangelicalism — including private, family and corporate prayer. A characteristic of a “godly” evangelical would be that he or she is a “prayer warrior.”

Diversity

Gabriel Fackre, from the Andover Newton School of Theology in America, speaks of six varieties of evangelicalism. Some years ago Derek Tidball, a British evangelical, talked about the “12 distinctive tribes” of evangelicals in Britain. Yet despite its diversity, evangelicalism is focused on the Bible, the cross, conversion and active service in the cause of Christ.

Evangelicals will continue to be at the heart of Christianity in the global world. Evangelicals in North America are often seen maintaining a common front on theological issues while at times being divided by political concerns.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh is professor of religion at Samford University in Birmingham and serves as pastor for preaching and teaching at Southside Baptist Church, Birmingham. ✝





Photo courtesy of Bread for the World

Several Alabamians participate in the 2016 Bread for the World lobby day including (l to r) Alabama Congressman Gary Palmer; former Alabama congressman and Alabama Baptist Spencer Bachus; Suzanne Martin, chair of the Birmingham Bread for the World group; Elizabeth Haberstroh, recent intern from Alabama at the Bread headquarters in Washington; and Vic Adamo, Birmingham businessman and member of the Bread board of directors.

Finding solutions

Spencer Bachus honored for work against poverty

Former Alabama Congressman Spencer Bachus was recently honored at the U.S. Capitol as a Jubilee Champion by the faith-based anti-poverty coalition Jubilee USA Network, a group of more than 650 faith communities.

Bachus — a member of Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, and chairman emeritus of the U.S. House of Representatives financial services committee — served Alabama's 6th congressional district from 1993 to 2014. He was recognized in late 2016 for his long-standing commitment to promoting economic opportunity and alleviating poverty in the world's poorest nations.

In 1999 many of the world's poorest countries were saddled with unpayable debts to financial institutions and wealthier nations. Some were spending more money paying back debts incurred by former dictators than on the health and education of their own people. Drawing on the biblical practice of Jubilee, people of faith across the world called to forgive these debts if the funds were then used for social betterment.

Religious groups across the U.S. advocated for debt relief.

Inspired by faith-based advocates in Birmingham — and with the support of his wife, Linda, who serves on the board of trustees for Samford University in Birmingham — Spencer Bachus became a champion for the cause on Capitol Hill, according to Jubilee and Bread for the World officials.

Working tirelessly

As a leading member on an influential House committee and a member of the Bread board of directors, Spencer Bachus worked tirelessly to convince his Republican colleagues and the Clinton Administration to approve a debt relief bill that became a model for worldwide initiatives, Jubilee and Bread representatives noted. The legislation included significant measures designed to reduce graft, corruption and waste.

In a passionate speech to his colleagues, Spencer

Bachus said, "We have the responsibility, we have the obligation and we have the direction as to what is the right thing to do." His argument carried the day.

Debt relief has enabled countries to invest in schools, health care and other anti-poverty initiatives. Because of his work on debt relief, more than 50 million kids went to school in Africa and life expectancy increased in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Eric LeCompte, executive director of Jubilee, and David Beckmann, president of Bread, wrote in a Dec. 1, 2016, blog post on thehill.com, "Bachus showed legislative skill and personal courage in promoting these life-changing and life-saving advancements.

"Mr. Bachus has led on many other issues, from protecting the vulnerable from predatory 'vulture' funds to providing wise and experienced judgment during the 2008 financial crisis that threatened the foundations of the U.S. economy," LeCompte and Beckmann wrote.

"As the highest-ranking Republican on the House financial services committee, Rep. Bachus authored language that permitted emergency, short-term capital assistance to

stabilize the faltering banking system in exchange for unprecedented taxpayer protections including warrants and dividends. This approach, ultimately adopted by the Treasury Department over an original plan to purchase 'toxic assets' from banks, worked to stabilize the financial system, returned a profit in the billions to taxpayers and helped put a brake on an economic freefall that could have resulted in an even deeper recession or the misery of a depression.

"Washington receives its fair share of criticism for not working. But substantive and important things can get done with the right leadership," they continued. "In Congress, Spencer Bachus repeatedly demonstrated leadership by striving to find solutions to difficult problems. It is why Jubilee USA and Bread for the World are proud to have recognized his accomplishments and grateful for his willingness to sacrifice to achieve the public good and listen to the Creator for wisdom." (Rewritten from Dec. 1 blog post on thehill.com; used with permission from the authors)

"We have the obligation and we have the direction as to what is the right thing to do."

**Spencer Bachus
Former Alabama
congressman**

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Debbie Early



EARLY

*Second Baptist Church, Fort Payne
DeKalb Baptist Association*

FAVORITE VERSE: Zephaniah 3:17

FAVORITE HYMN: "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"

HOBBIES: Restoring and repairing furniture, writing plays, hunting bargains, going to antique auctions, spending time with grandchildren

FAMILY STATUS: Married 32 years to husband, Mike; daughter, Caitlin (husband, Wade); son, Joel (wife, Jalisa); two grandchildren

Debbie Early, 54, of Fort Payne, sees her ministry as helping people experience missions and evangelism. She has coordinated missions trips and serves as her church's Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) director, DeKalb Association's WMU director and Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions board member. She is a Sunday School teacher, choir member, youth drama director and coordinator of her church's Hallelujah Harvest Festival, which attracts about 1,000 visitors each year. Early retired after 32 years as an educator with DeKalb County Board of Education.

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

A: I didn't become a Christian until I was an adult. My husband was a Christian. I would see him read his Bible and question why. ... It wasn't until a pastor asked my husband and me if we were Christians and my husband shared his testimony that I realized I didn't have that. That was on a Wednesday night. ... I became a Christian the following Sunday.

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

A: I think I had been a Christian maybe a month when they asked me to take over what was then Baptist Young Women (BYW), a part of WMU. ... And

just over 20 years ago, we started going with Carpenters for Christ and have had the opportunity to build several churches. That is a big passion of mine. I'm actually the "saw lady." ... It all was born out of mission work and leading BYW as a young Christian.

Q: What do you get from your ministry work?

A: Fulfillment, a sense that in some way I'm giving back, a sense of humility. Joy. Probably tired and aching bones too. The sense of — no matter what we do — it is never enough. Anything He requires of me is not too much.

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

A: I hope the ministry keeps me young, keeps me active and opens the door for others to come to know Him. I want to see my grandchildren come to know the Lord. I hope my husband and I can do more traveling together in missions.

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

A: Oh goodness. How do you even explain the difference? You go through life looking for something that will fill the void in your life. And when you come to know Christ, you realize it was a need to get to know the Creator. ... He's given me a different way of looking at other people. He has given me a love that I don't understand. #

If you know of a person who should be featured as "Someone You Should Know," send his or her name, a contact number and the reason you think he or she should be featured to: Someone You Should Know, c/o The Alabama Baptist, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209 or news@thealabamabaptist.org.

Supplementing income



Direct sales companies offer ministry opportunities but ethical lines should be evaluated

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

With the announcement of Betsy DeVos as President-elect Donald Trump's choice for education secretary, the nearly multiple billion dollar, 60-year-old, direct-selling giant Amway also made news. DeVos is the daughter-in-law of Amway cofounder and billionaire Richard DeVos.

And while Amway is likely the best known direct-sales distribution operation, doing business in more than 100 countries, it now has lots of competition.

In 2015 approximately 1 in 7 U.S. households included someone involved in a direct-sales business, also known as multilevel marketing (MLM), according to surveys. Some MLM companies have even become household names like Tupperware, Mary Kay or Pampered Chef. AdvoCare, Avon, doTerra, Juice Plus+, Rodan + Fields, Scentsy and Young Living are just a few other examples of the dozens of MLM companies in existence.

Reasons for participating in MLM businesses range from supporting a hobby to being able to purchase products at a major discount to having a more flexible work schedule. In many cases MLM opportunities are a way for those in bivocational ministry to supplement their income.

"I am able to serve smaller churches that can't support a full-time salary for their pastor by serving as a distributor for Plexus," said Tommy Strickland, pastor of Ridgeview Baptist Church, Talladega. "It helps me support my family while also living out my ministry calling. However, I always want to be careful not to cross any ethical lines related to my business and my ministry. I think that is something anyone in ministry working with direct sales must be aware of."

Selling at church

According to Thom S. Rainer, president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources, "fellow church members should not be seen as targets for MLM and sales."

In podcast episode No. 270 on thom-rainer.com, Rainer addressed the question of MLM in churches and the best course of action for leaders and congregants.

"If you're using the church for a purpose other than that which it was intended, then it shouldn't be done," Rainer said. "If you're going to church just to sell products then you just don't need to go to that church. And if someone is abusing that in your church, have someone confront them about it."

Looking to sign up with a direct sales company?

If you're considering investing in a direct sales company, also known as multilevel marketing (MLM), make sure you understand the ins and outs of the specific company that has your interest.

Not all MLMs are legitimate companies. If you make money based on sales to the public, it is probably legitimate. If, however, you make money based on the number of recruits you make and/or your sales to them, the MLM is probably an illegal pyramid scheme.

Pyramid schemes are often disguised as simple business strategies that start with one person who recruits a second person who then is required to invest a certain amount in the company, paid to the initial recruiter. The plan eventually falls apart when there is no one left to recruit and the cycle cannot sustain itself — causing people to eventually lose their money.

Be aware of 'lies'

As far as legitimate MLM business models, they do allow a person to transition into a business owner role much easier and cheaper than opening a brick and mortar company. But there are some "lies" to be aware of in almost every MLM network, according to Robert FitzPatrick, co-author of "False Profits: Seeking Financial and Spiritual Deliverance in Multi-Level Marketing and Pyramid Schemes."

Lie No. 1: Success in MLM is easy. "Friends and relatives are natural pros-

pects. Those who love and support you will become your lifetime customers."

Truth: "The commercialization of family and friendship relations or the use of 'warm leads' which is required in the MLM marketing program is a destructive element in the community and very unhealthy for individuals involved," FitzPatrick wrote. "Capitalizing on family ties and loyalties of friendships in order to build a business can ... place stress on relationships. ... Beyond its destructive social aspects, experience shows that few people enjoy or appreciate being solicited by friends and relatives to buy products."

And for some Christians, the church seems like the perfect storehouse of friends and family, or in MLM terms, prospective customers.

Lie No. 2: You can do MLM in your spare time.

"As a business it offers the greatest flexibility and personal freedom of time. A few hours a week can earn a significant supplemental income."

Truth: "Decades of experience involving millions of people have proven that making money in MLM requires extraordinary time commitment as well as considerable personal williness, persistence and deception," according to FitzPatrick. "Beyond the sheer hard work and special aptitude required, the business model inherently consumes more areas of one's life and greater segments of time." (Neisha Roberts)

Podcast host Jonathan Howe added, "So we're not saying people shouldn't be selling Mary Kay or whatever, just don't use the church as your primary base for sales."

In a thegospelcoalition.org article, Courtney Reissig said she has a family friend who had been in MLM for years. As the woman recruited her daughters and they began their own MLM careers, the mother "encouraged them to keep the local church separate from their business."

Appropriate boundaries

"This can be a real struggle when your customer base is your church directory," Reissig wrote. "The makeup consultant can view her Bible study friends as potential clients, bringing samples every week.

"But these scenarios replace the local church gathering with personal agendas.

The church is for the people of God to gather together around the preached Word, prayer and the sacraments.

"It's where we leave our agendas at the door and gather together as one body to worship the risen Christ."

According to Reissig, MLM can be a form of ministry if used appropriately.

If you look at MLM as the world looks at work it will become "all about you and your business. ... But it doesn't have to be," she wrote. "Our work is about God's glory and our neighbor's good."

If you look at an MLM business as a way to help your neighbor, then "caring for the people who work underneath you and above you also is a way to love your neighbor," she wrote.

If you're a part of an MLM team, make sure "your work is benefitting the people

you sell to and the people you sell with."

Still before you sign up with any company, double check the legitimacy of the company itself. If you make money based on sales to the public, it is probably legitimate. If, however, you make money based on the number of recruits you make and/or your sales to them, the MLM is probably an illegal pyramid scheme (see story, this page).

Some legitimate MLM companies also require sellers to buy inventory, pay a monthly fee or meet sales quotas, according to christianitytoday.com.

According to consumer.ftc.gov, here are some steps to take when looking at MLMs:

1) Consider the products.

"Are there similar products on the market? Are they competitively priced? Are they safe? Be sure your marketing materials are truthful and that there's solid evidence to back up the claims you make about the products. Before you repeat claims the company has made verify that there's competent and reliable research to back them up."

2) Learn more about the company.

"Find and study the company's track record. How long have they been in business? Do they have a positive reputation for customer satisfaction? Has the company been sued for deceptive business practices?"

3) Evaluate the plan.

"Don't pay or sign a contract in an 'opportunity meeting.' Take your time to make your decisions. Ask for the compensation structure, potential expenses, support for claims about how much money you can make, the name and contact of someone at the company who can answer your questions, etc. Get this info in writing. Keep in mind that when you recruit new distributors, you're responsible for the claims you make about how much money they can earn. Be honest and realistic."

4) Ask questions.

"Ask other distributors tough questions and dig for details. Their responses can help you detect false claims about the money you make and whether the business is a pyramid scheme. What are your annual sales of the product? How much product did you sell to distributors? What percentage of your sales was made to distributors? What were your expenses last year? How much money did you make last year? How much time did you spend last year on the business? How long have you been in the business? How long did it take before you started making money?"

Seminaries confer degrees on Alabama Baptist grads

Alabama Baptists graduated with degrees at the master's level or higher from Southern Baptist seminaries and divinity schools in December 2016. *The Alabama Baptist* was provided the following list of graduates by the schools.

► New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Master of Arts in Christian Education — Ron Robinson, Pell City; Nicole Stewart, Oak Grove

Master of Divinity — Phillip Clark, Robertsedale; Cameron Mohajerin, Montgomery; Gary Thomas West, Cullman

Master of Music in Church Music — Carly York Fulmer, Gulfrest

Doctor of Ministry — David Russell Bradford, Hoover

Doctor of Philosophy — Nathan Wayne VanHorn, Fort Payne

► Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

Master of Arts in Christian Studies — Daniel Carson Arant, Kimberly

Master of Divinity with Christian Ministry — Dustin Matthew Lee, Dothan; John Harrison Maiden, Birmingham; David Forrest Mills, Tuscaloosa; Kendall Britton Smith, Mobile

Master of Divinity with Pastoral Ministry — Nathan Glenn Thompson, Millbrook

Doctor of Ministry — Matthew Anthony Benson, Birmingham; Marlon Joseph Hethcoat, Scottsboro

► Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Master of Arts in Christian Education — Allen Tate, Meridianville

Master of Divinity — Will Drake, Birmingham; Jordan Michael Nelson, Holtville

Doctor of Ministry — Christopher Jermaine Turner, Harvest; Ben Bowden, Enterprise; Paul Harvey, Madison

► Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Master of Arts — Alex Wayne Buckler, Tuscaloosa; Brenda O'Shea Lowery, Red Bay

Master of Divinity — Michael Hawk Mills, Moundville

► Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Doctor of Ministry — R. Scott Harrell, Butler

► Gateway Seminary

No graduates from Alabama

► Beeson Divinity School

Master of Arts in Theological Studies — Michelle Annette Little, Helena

Master of Divinity — Colton Taz Conrad, Hoover; Meredith Anne Conrad, Hoover;

William Jacob Freeman, Montevallo; Stephen Taylor Geurin, Birmingham; Shaphan Isaac Helms, Homewood; Hinton Hammer Hendrix, Homewood; Lindsey Ruth Jacob, Tuscaloosa; Steven Michael Lanclos, Birmingham; Carmen Tucker Messamore, Homewood; Sarah Parker Morris, Birmingham; Andrew Michael Moskau, Birmingham; Kevin Douglas Naylor, Birmingham; Matthew Preston Neely, Birmingham; Louis Dale Norrell III, Hayden; Bradley Robert Patton, Homewood; Bradley Connor Pinkerton, Southside; Joshua Patrick Steele, Vestavia Hills; Irby Earnest Wallace III, Fort Payne

Doctor of Ministry — Adam L. Brewer, Jasper; Matthew Robert Burford, Pelham; Jermain Gadson, Helena; Robert B. Hatfield Jr., Huntsville (TAB)

'Biblical discipleship runs on rails of relationships,' professor says

(continued from page 1)

responsibility to reach the people around them rests on the believers who live among them, Edmonds said. "The beauty in what Jesus did is that it bridges the gap between the culture and the Church. It becomes personal."

Robertson agreed.

"Thankfully ... a renewed interest in the biblical model of discipleship is clearly emerging (among Southern Baptists)," he said.

"There is a renewed focus on relationships. Biblical discipleship runs on the rails of relationships. The emphasis today is not as much on structured programming as it is on the building of relationships with God, with other Jesus followers and sharing the gospel with the unsaved."

Trends in disciple making are beginning

For more information about the upcoming FlashPoint conference, visit birmingham.flashpointconference.com.

to emphasize more racial and economic diversity in small groups and churches, as well as a desire to disciple the entire family, Robertson said. "There is also a hunger for more 'meaty' teaching and the application of biblical truth in daily life shared in small groups conducive to strengthening relationships."

Edmonds said relationships are vital for people who want to "make disciples who make disciples" and get the Church back to what Jesus intended, like Adams said.

Adams, founder and director of Georgia-based Impact Discipleship Ministries, will be one of the speakers at the FlashPoint Conference on discipleship set for Jan. 13-14 at Samford University in Birmingham. ✠



BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Angelology

Distinctions Among Angels

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

During December, Theology 101 surveyed aspects of the nature of angels and their activities in biblical times. In those prior weeks we noted that the Bible presents angels as real beings who are spiritual in nature and normally invisible.

We also noted that they have not always existed but were created by God, apparently at some indeterminate point prior to the creation of the world — heavenly beings are said to have been joyfully present when creation happened. When God spoke directly to Job, He asked, "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation ... while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy" (Job 38:4-7)?

Angels apparently exist in uncounted numbers. The Bible speaks both of armies of angels (Rev. 19:14) and choirs of angels (Luke 2:13-14), even referring to them as "10,000 times 10,000 and thousands of thousands" (Rev. 5:11-12). Interestingly out of such a host of angelic beings the Bible refers to only two by name. From the Christmas story we learn of an angel named Gabriel who appeared to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, introducing himself by saying, "I am Gabriel who stands in the presence of God" (Luke 1:19). Gabriel also delivered the birth announcement to Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:26), and appeared to Daniel (Dan. 8:15-16; 9:21). The second named angel was Michael, who is referred to in Jude 9 as a contender with the devil over the body of Moses. Michael is named again in Revelation 12:7-8 as one of the contenders in a vision of war that erupted in heaven.

'Seraphim,' 'cherubim'

Of further interest is the variety of ways these heavenly beings are referred to other biblical passages. We read of such terms as "seraphim" and "cherubim." Other references seem to indicate an organizational structure or ranking of angels. For example Michael is termed an archangel in Jude 9, implying some kind of authority over other angels.

In Revelation 12:7-8 it seems that as an archangel, Michael led an army of other angels when it says, "Michael and his angels" were envisioned fighting against an army called "the dragon and his angels." Some biblical interpreters have understood angelic ranking and order to be reflected in such general terms as "dominions," "powers," "authorities" and "principalities."

Guardian angels

Particular interest has sometimes been stirred about the possibility of individuals having guardian angels, based on Jesus' statement about little children: "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 18:10). Others raise this idea based on the reported reaction of some of those gathered behind locked doors. After Peter's unexpected deliverance from prison he appeared and knocked on the door. Their thought was apparently that he could not be at their door inasmuch as they had just been praying for him in his imprisonment. In disbelief that it was Peter, the response was, "It is his angel" (Acts 12:15).

In its extreme expression, the idea would be that God assigns a particular angel to each Christian in the world. While such an idea would be a source of great comfort at times, it goes quite beyond anything the Bible expressly or clearly teaches. The better approach would be to understand that in a general way, angels might on occasion be protectors without each angel being assigned to a specific individual. ✠

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.



Find us on
Facebook

The Alabama Baptist newspaper.



'Missions-minded pastor'

Photo courtesy of Parker Windle

Parker Windle preaches during a service at Emmanuel International Church in Paris, France.

Pickens County native follows God's calling to be pastor, missionary in Paris

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Parker Windle grew up with what he called a good dilemma. He had a heart for the nations. But he felt like he was meant to be a pastor.

"I wanted to be a missions-minded pastor," Windle said.

It was a vision that happened early. He grew up in church in Selma, then was disciplined in high school at First Baptist Church, Aliceville, where he said he felt a call to missions. He carried that call with him to the University of Mobile and then Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham before applying to go overseas with the International Mission Board as a two-year Journeyman.

"I expected to do the Journeyman program, come back home and get a pastor job," Windle said. "I felt that if I did a missionary term, I would be a better pastor."

Ripe for harvest

But what he found on the other side of that plane ride was a city ripe for the harvest — and a way to mesh his two passions, he said.

"When I'd been getting ready to go, it was a decision between Paris, Rome and Japan, and in the end I picked Paris just because I'd rather learn French," he said. "But when I moved here, the city charmed me and I fell in love with it."

God is drawing all kinds of people to cities like Paris, Windle said.

"There's the poorest of the poor, the richest of the rich and everyone in between," he said. "It's also a great place to find unreached people groups."

That's what happened during his Journeyman term — he found the Punjabi people. Or rather, he said, the Punjabi found him.

Church planting

"We started an Indian church with this people group because we'd had eight men who prayed to receive Christ," Windle said.

That was something that no one had seen happen among that people group back in India, he said. "It had nothing to do with me; they were just hungry when they got out of their context, and they reached out."

So he stayed in Paris to work with that church, but over time his reason for staying shifted into something different — something more like what he'd had in mind all along.

"I had really fallen in love with Paris and seen the opportunities for ministry here but never felt called to be a missionary as much as called to be a pastor," Windle said.

That's when Emmanuel International Church asked him to be its youth pastor.

He accepted. He served in that role for three years. And now for the past year and a half, he's served as pastor.

The church — an English-speaking congregation — represents 40 nationalities on a normal Sunday. They're part of the International Baptist Convention's church planting ministry called Catalyst, which aims to plant English-speaking churches for internationals throughout non-English-

speaking countries (see story, this page).

"The younger generation wants to live in cities, so we have a very good young adult ministry," he said. "We try to be that home away from home for lots of people."

Windle himself has definitely made a home here where his ministry is — he and his wife, Kyrah, whom he met through the church, were married in her home country, the Philippines, in December 2016.

"She's embraced this calling as well and loves to share her faith," Windle said.

And the Alabama boy from Pickens County has found that God made him both pastor and missionary and put him in Paris on purpose, he said.

"I think my temperament is more suited for ministry in urban areas even though I came from a small town," Windle said. "I think I found my place here." ✝

Opportunities for pastors

Do you have a heart for missions but a desire to serve as a pastor?

"We have opportunities for people like that," said Parker Windle, pastor of Emmanuel International Church in Paris, France.

Windle, originally from Alabama, leads a multicultural congregation that is part of the church planting ministry of the International Baptist Convention, a fellowship of English-speaking churches in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Central and South America.

Its church planting ministry, Catalyst, focuses on starting English-speaking churches in non-English-speaking countries.

More than 200 million people are living outside their home country, accord-

ing to the United Nations. So finding them in strategic cities is an incredible way to reach unreached people groups, Windle said.

"If someone's gifts are preaching and teaching and they feel comfortable in a multicultural atmosphere, there's not a better group to serve with," he said. "We're working right now to recruit church planters to come and either plant a new church or pastor a church that needs a leader."

They're currently looking for people to lead church work in Paris, Amsterdam, Barcelona and other strategic cities, Windle said.

"When I look at these places, I see a ripe harvest," he said. "There's a lot of potential here." (TAB)

For more information, visit internationalchurchplanting.com.

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR



SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

First of all, I wish to thank *The Alabama Baptist* for comprehensive coverage of the annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention in Montgomery. Baptists respond well when we know the breadth of our mission work.

However, I do believe that coverage of the convention resolutions missed the significance of Resolution No. 3 titled "On prayer and support for Israel." This resolution made specific statements concerning the effort to support economic boycotting, encourage divestments and im-

pose sanctions upon the nation of Israel.

The resolution adopted by Alabama Baptists specifically defined the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement: "The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement seeks to isolate the nation of Israel economically and socially;" and further expressed "that we support the right of Israel to exist as a sovereign state and reject any activities that attack that right by promoting economic, cultural and academic boycotts against Israel."

Alabama Baptists are on record stating, "We commend the Alabama Legislature and the governor for passing legislation opposing BDS." The 2016 Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution opposing BDS.

I am thankful that Southern Baptists and Alabama Baptists are on record opposing the BDS efforts.

John H. Killian

Past president, Alabama Baptist State Convention
Pastor, Maytown Baptist Church

DISCUSSING CALVINISM

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has a rich and fascinating theological heritage well reflected in today's controversies between the "Traditionalist" view and Calvinistic perspective.

The recent article in *The Alabama Baptist* about the message by Alabama Pastor Rick Patrick and the comments by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary President Paige Patterson was rather one-sided.

I gladly affirm Pastor Patrick's right to promote his perspective though I disagree with him in many ways. I agree with having an honest and charitable conversation of these matters but a conversation generally includes both sides.

Dr. Patterson did say that those with Calvinistic views ought to join another denomination which is hardly the way to encourage mutual respect and acceptance. If I had visited a church and they said to me, "I'm sure you would be more comfortable somewhere else" I would have a hard time interpreting that as an invitation to come back.

Various strains of Calvinism and non-Calvinism are well represented in the history and current culture of the SBC. For either side to try to show the other the door is historically insensitive, practically unwise and spiritually unkind.

We have got to learn to get along with one another despite our theological differences on this matter.

I recommend an excellent booklet called "Building Bridges: Perspectives on Baptist Unity" by David Dockery and Timothy George (Convention Press, 2007) for a helpful perspective.

Pastor Steve Potts
Westwood Baptist Church,
Birmingham, Ala. ¶

Gateway Seminary opens in Fremont

A final piece in Gateway Seminary's campus relocation efforts drops into place as the seminary's new San Francisco-area campus opens in Fremont, California, on Jan. 10. Spring classes begin Jan. 30.

The campus will serve 250-300 students as the seminary continues its ministry in the Bay Area that began with its Mill Valley location in 1959. Fall 2016 classes for the campus opened in Mill Valley as construction continued in Fremont. The seminary also dedicated its new main campus

in Ontario, California, in October 2016.

"We're very excited to open this brand new theological training center that will help start, finish or advance a student's ministry education," said Rick Durst, director of the San Francisco-area campus.

The land on which the campus is located was donated by Mission Way Baptist Church. Valued at \$2.9 million, it is the largest single gift ever contributed to the seminary.

For more information, call 415-380-1890. (BP)

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES

The associate pastor of discipleship ministries will be the lead person for assimilating new and inactive church members into the church body and thus helping them to become better disciples of Jesus Christ. He will oversee, monitor, evaluate and adjust the discipleship-making process of Farmstead Baptist Church. The minister will work with other team leaders to implement an active and vibrant Sunday School program as well as a church-determined discipleship process. The minister will have complete oversight of the intentional equipping and serving ministries of the church. The minister will work in cooperation with other staff to develop outside-the-walls relationships and ministries. The minister

will report to the senior pastor and the personnel committee. He must be a self-starter, able to be innovative and cast vision. In addition the minister will be given the opportunity to strengthen and develop his God-given gift of preaching at various services at Farmstead Baptist Church. The church currently averages approximately 325 in Sunday School and approximately 400 in worship attendance. Please send resumé to: belindaksmith@bellsouth.net or mail to: Farmstead Baptist Church, 265 Curry Hwy., Jasper, AL 35503.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER

Actively growing church in Meridian, MS, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational youth minister to engage and be passionate about our youth. Please email resumé to: newhopebcyouthministersearch@gmail.com.

PART-TIME BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC DIRECTOR

Calvary Heights Baptist Church, Alexander City, AL, is receiving applicants for a part-time bivocational music director. Resumés and inquiries may be sent to: CalvaryHeightsBaptist@gmail.com.

BUSINESS

TIME TO REPLACE THAT OLD CHURCH SIGN?

Reliable Sign Services, a Christian-operated, full-service sign company for two decades, is ready to assist you as you expand your church sign ministry. From electronic message boards to traditional signs, Reliable will fabricate and install statewide or ship anywhere. www.reliablesigns.com. 1-800-729-6844, 205-664-0955.

CHURCH CONSTRUCTION SERVICE

Lewis Webb Builders, Inc., active

in church construction service for over 30 years. Remodel, rehab, repair. Call 334-285-9302.

GREAT PRICES

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

TRAVEL/VACATION

LOG CABIN RENTAL

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

PIGEON FORGE CABIN

Great rates; Prime location, 3 blocks from The Parkway; 2 BR, 2 BA. Sleeps 6. Fully furnished. Phone Denise at 205-275-9684 or visit www.vrbo.com/493050. Mention ad.



(augmented reality)

Follow these instructions

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

Clarifying comments

ERLC's Moore says he never intended to criticize Trump supporters during 2016 election

Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) President Russell Moore has clarified that he never intended to criticize all evangelical supporters of President-elect Donald Trump, noting many were motivated by “biblical convictions” and “voted their conscience.”

In a Dec. 19, 2016, blog post, Moore acknowledged “pointed conversations in my denominational family about the election” over the past month, “some of them ... directed at me.”

“I remember one situation where I witnessed a handful of Christian political operatives excusing immorality and confusing the definition of the gospel,” Moore wrote. “I was pointed in my criticisms and felt like I ought to have been. But there were also pastors and friends who told me when they read my comments they thought I was criticizing anyone who voted for Donald Trump.”

“I told them then and I would tell anyone now: if that’s what you heard me say that was not at all my intention and I apologize. There’s a massive difference between someone who enthusiastically excused immorality and someone who felt conflicted, weighed the options based on biblical convictions and voted their conscience,” Moore wrote.

Moore’s blog post was published the same day as a *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) article about the ERLC president with the headline “Baptist figure faces backlash over his criticism of Donald Trump.”

Moore, who provided an advance copy of his blog post to the WSJ, has voiced criticism of Trump’s candidacy since at least September 2015.

The WSJ article included critiques of Moore by former Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Jack Graham, Louisiana Baptist Convention (LBC) Executive Director David Hankins and former SBC Executive Committee (EC) chairman William Harrell among others.

Support for Moore

Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and evangelical voter Ruth Malhotra, a millennial Republican who opposed Trump, expressed support for Moore to the WSJ.

ERLC trustee chairman Ken Barbic said Moore “is a gospel-centered and faithful voice for Southern Baptists.”

“He speaks with prophetic clarity to the pressing cultural and ethical issues of our time, with which every Christian must wrestle,” Barbic, a member of Capitol Hill

Baptist Church, Washington, said in an email. “I am particularly grateful for his courageous and convictional leadership, under which I’ve observed, within our convention and beyond, significant newfound energy and excitement about the work of the ERLC the last several years. I have had the privilege of seeing up close the remarkable efforts he leads the ERLC to undertake here in Washington, across this country and abroad, all of which make me thankful for his leadership within the SBC.”

Alleged ‘disrespectfulness’

In the WSJ article, Graham, pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church, Plano, Texas, and a member of Trump’s evangelical executive advisory board, cited Moore’s criticism of Trump during the presidential campaign for alleged “disrespectfulness towards Southern Baptists and other evangelical leaders, past and present.”

“It’s disheartening that this election has created this kind of divisiveness,” Graham said, adding Prestonwood Baptist is “considering making major changes in our support of the SBC,” presumably a reference to designating financial gifts to specific SBC causes rather than giving through the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists’ unified channel of supporting missions and ministries in America and worldwide, including ERLC.



MOORE

Hankins told the WSJ he knows of churches that “have said they are going to” divert their giving away from ERLC. Messengers to

this year’s LBC annual meeting referred to the convention’s executive board a motion regarding concerns with ERLC.

Harrell, EC chair from 2006 to 2008, made a similar assertion about churches potentially withholding funds from ERLC in a Nov. 15, 2016, blog post, stating ERLC “was never meant to be a political voice which would promote a certain candidate or ... discourage people from voting for another one.”

As examples of allegedly inappropriate statements by Moore, Harrell, a retired Georgia pastor, cited a September 2015 *New York Times* op-ed in which Moore argued “evangelicals and other social conservatives” must “repudiate everything they believe” to support Trump and a January 2016 Roll Call article that quoted Moore as stating, “Ted Cruz is leading in the ‘Jerry Falwell’ wing [of evangelicalism], Marco Rubio is leading the ‘Billy Graham’ wing and Trump is leading the ‘Jimmy Swaggart’ wing.”

Former Republican presidential candidate Mike Huckabee wrote in an email obtained by Townhall.com, “I am utterly stunned that



BP photo

Donald Trump speaks about immigration, the military, Iran and trade deficits during the Jan. 18, 2016, convocation at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia.

Russell Moore is being paid by Southern Baptists to insult them.”

In support of Moore, Mohler told the WSJ in an email, “I know his heart and his character and his love for the SBC. I also have confidence in his ability to serve all Southern Baptists as president of the ERLC.”

Ministry assignment

Jason Duesing, provost of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, and former SBC president Bryant Wright have expressed similar sentiments.

Duesing wrote in a Nov. 8, 2016, blog post that Moore and ERLC staff fulfilled their ministry assignment well during the presidential election season.

“While no leadership team of the convention’s public policy arm, past or present,” Duesing wrote, “can carry out this task with perfection or to the full approval of every member of the churches they serve — nor should they be held to that unassailable expectation — it is always right to express thanks to them and for them for their service, courage and efforts. Particularly that is true during this election year.”

Wright, pastor of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church, Marietta, Georgia, tweeted May 9, 2016, following criticism of Moore by Trump, “Coming from Trump, this is a badge of honor. Thankful for Russell Moore’s leadership.”

In May 2016, Trump mentioned Moore by name when he tweeted, “Russell Moore is truly a terrible representative of evangelicals and all of the good they stand for. A nasty guy with no heart!” to which Moore responded on MSNBC, “I am a nasty guy

with no heart, which is why I need forgiveness of sins and redemption through the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

The WSJ quoted Malhotra, a 32-year-old Baptist, as illustrative of the “younger evangelicals” who allegedly support Moore and “who are becoming more diverse and [appear] to be turned off by the culture wars of their parents’ generation.”

Moore seemed to reference that supposed generational divide in an Oct. 9, 2016, op-ed for *The Washington Post*, in which he stated, “The [evangelical] old-guard is easier to engage in politics because they find identity in a ‘silent majority’ of Americans. The next generation knows that our witness is counter to the culture.”

‘Hoping for the best’

Moore called “reaffirmation of support for Trump” by members of “the old-guard religious right establishment ... a scandal and a disgrace” but “not ... a surprise.” His op-ed followed reports of “sexually predatory recorded comments” made by Trump.

In his Dec. 19, 2016, blog post, Moore clarified that “many Christians, including some of my very best friends and closest ministry partners approached the ballot box conflicted but felt compelled to cast a ballot for the ‘lesser of two evils,’ hoping for the best with a less than ideal president.”

Moore added, “We all owe it to our brothers and sisters in Christ to understand their convictions and be slow to judgment when biblical motivations are the primary motivations.”

“In the heat of an extraordinarily divisive campaign, that is something all of us, myself included, are wise to remember.” (BP)

FREE
ADMISSION

2017 State Evangelism Conference

February 27 & 28, 2017

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
PELHAM

Monday at 6:15 p.m. • Tuesday at 8:45 a.m.

Speakers

Chuck Kelley
Josh McDowell
Chad Burdette
Larry Robertson
James Merritt
Joel Carwile
Blake Newsom
Kenny Grant

Special Music

Wes Hampton
from the Gaither Vocal Band
First Baptist Pelham Choir
Enon Baptist Choir



EVANGELISM RESURGENCE

Does your church have an effective evangelism strategy?

For More Information,
contact Ministry Assistant
Amy Nelson at 1-800-264-1225,
ext. 258, or (334) 613-2258,
anelson@alsbom.org



Alabama Baptist State Convention
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

This conference is made possible by gifts of Alabama
Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

Reliable
SIGN SERVICES

DIGITAL SIGNS



"The sign is working great! We are very pleased with the end result of our digital sign and our vendor, Reliable Signs. Please do not hesitate to call us for a reference."

— **Jay Jerman, church member**
St. Catherine's Episcopal Church



www.reliablesigns.com
1.800.729.6844 • 205.664.0955

Advertise in *The Alabama Baptist*

Contact Bill Gilmore
at 1-800-803-5201, ext. 107 or bgilmore@thealabamabaptist.org.



MID-SOUTH
MEN'S BIBLE CONFERENCE
February 24-25, 2017

Faith Baptist Church in Bartlett, Tennessee

Doors open at 4:00pm for check-in on Friday. Conference begins at 6:30pm.



Jeff Crook
Pastor
Blackshear Place
Baptist Church
Buford, Georgia



Herb Reavis, Jr.
Pastor
North Jacksonville
Baptist Church
Jacksonville, Florida



Brett Pitman
Pastor
Highland Park
Baptist Church
Muscle Shoals, Alabama



Faith Celebration Choir & Orchestra
Led by Terry Easley
Associate Pastor, Music & Worship
Faith Baptist Church,
Bartlett, Tennessee

Go to myfaithbaptist.org to register online.

'Expect the unexpected'

UM graduates challenged to focus on Christ

University of Mobile (UM) President Timothy L. Smith challenged graduates to be open to fulfilling the unexpected opportunities that God will place in their lives.

"While the view outside may look very clear today and you may have your life planned based on your equipping from your academic preparation, I ask that you keep your eyes open for the unexpectedness that will come from Him," Smith said during fall commencement ceremonies Dec. 16 at Redemption Church, Saraland.

UM awarded 67 diplomas at its first fall semester graduation in 18 years.

The university has held fall semester graduation only three years previously: in 1996, 1997 and 1998. All other years, students who completed their requirements for graduation at the end of fall semester would participate in graduation ceremonies held the following May.

Smith told the biblical story of the birth of Christ during



Photo courtesy of the University of Mobile

University of Mobile President Timothy L. Smith challenges graduates to be open to fulfilling unexpected opportunities.

his commencement address, highlighting the roles of the innkeeper who turned Mary and Joseph away and the shepherds who responded.

"Some recognized what was happening while others missed Him and the picture that God was creating before the very eyes of man," Smith said.

"At the end of this commencement, you will walk out those glass doors and you will begin to navigate the world in accordance to the shepherd or the innkeeper. In other words, you will begin to maneuver through life with a focus on this world as an inn-

keeper, or a focus on Christ as a Shepherd in allowing Him to direct you in this world," Smith said.

**"It is my prayer ...
that you choose to
... focus on Christ in
allowing Him to direct
your world instead
of you taking on the
world yourself."**

Timothy L. Smith
president, University of
Mobile

"It is my prayer and encouragement that you choose to ... focus on Christ in allowing Him to direct your world instead of you taking on the world yourself. I can promise you that if you would take this path, you will not have to worry about the rules of life because He will be the guide of your heart and

mind that will lead to actions directed by Him," Smith said. "And as this occurs, expect the unexpected." (UM)

LEEDS STAINED GLASS, INC.

SINCE 1995

Toll-free: 888.699.9679
AL local: 205.699.9679

Call for **FREE** on-site consultation
Ask for Terry Barnes, Owner

information@LeedsStainedGlass.com
Visit www.LeedsStainedGlass.com
for online gallery!



SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 8

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

CHALLENGED
Joshua 24:14-28

After reminding the elders of God's faithfulness to His word and His covenant relationship with Israel, Joshua turns his attention to the whole assembly in his farewell address. In Chapter 23 he calls on them to cling to the law of Moses and to be strong, just as God said to Joshua at the beginning of the book. He warns them of the consequences of forsaking the Word of God, following false deities and finding their affections drawn to the people who reject the one true God.

The final chapter opens with the setting in Shechem, significant because God had promised this land to Abram when he arrived in Canaan (Gen. 12:7) and later Jacob had purchased a plot of land (Gen. 33:19). Representatives from all the tribes of Israel are gathered now as well as their authorities: elders, leaders, judges and officers. Joshua reminds them of the time before the patriarchs when Terah worshipped other gods on the other side of the Euphrates. He recalls the plagues of Egypt as God set their fathers free from idolaters on the other side of the Nile. He reminds them about crossing over the Jordan to take possession of the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The Example Set (14-15)

"Fear the Lord and worship Him in sincerity and truth" (24:14). These words and the words of 24:15 are serious reminders of the warning given by God when they prepared to enter the land. Deuteronomy 6:10-13 records the warning not to forget the Lord who had delivered them but to "fear the Lord your God, worship Him and take your oaths in His name." Deuteronomy 6:14-15 warn against worshipping gods of the land, making clear the consequence for idolatry is death.

Jesus alludes to both of these passages

from Joshua and Deuteronomy. The first comes in the Master's conversation at Sychar when He tells the Samaritan woman true worshippers must worship in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). The second comes in the temptation when Jesus responds with a quotation from Deuteronomy 6:13 (Matt. 4:10; Luke 4:8).

With Deuteronomy 6 in mind, Joshua's commitment is firm: "As for me and my family, we will worship the Lord." His challenge to them is clear — make a decision for you and your children. In this collective culture where elders are honored, the head of each subtribe governs the worship practices of his home and family.

The People's Reflection (16-18)

The Israelites knew their history and they had listened to Joshua's challenge. They acknowledged the power of God, the deliverance of His people from Egypt and the victories which they had witnessed firsthand. They had no other reasonable choice than to commit to worshipping their own God.

A Somber Warning (19-20)

Joshua requires them to count the cost. Once again, he echoes the warning of Moses (Deut. 6:15), reminding them Yahweh is jealous for His name and will not be content with anything less than total commitment. Complete destruction awaits those who commit to and then forsake the living God.

A Public Declaration (21-28)

The warning continues in this final section of our lesson. Joshua explains their words are a testimony against themselves if they forsake the Lord.

"We are witnesses," they said. Not only are they witnesses but the book and the stone were witnesses as well.

We too are witnesses — both of our wretched state apart from the work of Christ and of our salvation through the crucified and risen Lord. †

Bible Studies for Life By Jim Barnette, Ph.D.
Samford University and Brookwood Baptist Church, Mountain Brook

GOD'S WORD IS TRUTH
Psalm 119:153-160

God's Word points to our salvation. (153-155)

The ongoing basis of the psalmist's plea for deliverance from the oppression of his insolent adversaries is threefold: The Lord's unchanging love, his own devotion to the Lord (which results in love for the Lord's instruction) and the enemy's disregard of His revelations. The latter places the opponents under the Lord's judgment.

This stanza of Psalm 119 begins with and is dominated by petition. Like all the psalmists, when trouble comes he runs to God in prayer not from Him in rebellion. Three times the poet prays, "Give me life," appealing in turn to God's "promise" (the will of God), God's "justice" (God's decisions) and God's "steadfast love" (the heart of God). As affirmed throughout, God's justice ultimately takes the form of merciful love and is carried out only as He deems fit.

God's "law" is not to be interpreted as a legal code, as the Torah or as the tradition of the scribes. It is the Lord who teaches the law and all of it points back to Him and His will. By keeping the law one is seeking the Lord and therefore a faithful disciple.

The law is not kept simply by human determination but through prayer and God's help (see vv. 10, 18, 25, 36). Contrary to a worldly perspective obedience to the law becomes not a burden but a source of unflinching joy (see vv. 24, 35, 77, 92).

God's Word points to His love. (156-159)

The psalmist affirms the Lord's bountiful mercy and compassion. God's Word has its beginning in honesty and His judgment is forever just. With these assurances the poet vows not to turn away from the Lord's precepts despite the number of those who oppress him. He loves the Lord's command-

ments and will not swerve from God's will.

As for the wicked persons who attack the writer they make no effort to learn or cherish the Lord's "statutes." The poet knows deliverance is far from them.

We can be sure God's Word is true. (160)

As in earlier passages verse 160 highlights God's faithfulness, declaring the "sum" of His Word is "true" or "truth." Again this attribute of reliable truth is regularly associated with God's mercy and love (see Ex. 34:6-7) and with God's righteousness (see vv. 75, 142). Only the Lord knows the perfect balance by which mercy and righteousness are meted out. Thankfully God is love and His unconditional love extends to many of us who do not deserve it.

The "sum" here literally means "the head" and its use here is equivalent to the "census" in Exodus 30:12 and Numbers 1:2. Just as God's census demanded every member of Israel be accounted for, here the word declares every part of God's Word is true. An appropriate rendering would be "God's Word in its entirety is true."

As this study comes to a close it is worth noting that many scholars look upon Psalm 119 and especially its later stanzas as an introduction to the Psalms of Ascent that were sung on pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem (Pss. 129-134). Pilgrims often passed through hostile territory (119:81-88) and were grateful at the end (vv. 89-96). The sojourners would pray during their stay in Jerusalem (vv. 97-128) and before departure from the Holy City (vv. 129-136). They would reflect on God's Word during the return journey (vv. 137-160) and upon arrival home (vv. 161-176).

As fellow travelers on this journey of faith, likewise may we sing and live our faithfulness to God's Word which is true in its entirety. †

Christian Crossword

Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12				13					14	
15				16		17			18	
		19		20		21				
	22			23	24		25			
26				27		28		29	30	31
32				33					34	
35			36					37		
			38			39		40		
41	42	43		44		45	46			
47						48		49		50 51
52				53			54		55	
56				57					58	

Across

- "Thy Word is a ___ unto my feet." (Ps. 119:105)
- Actor Alan.
- "___ iniquity unto their iniquity." (Ps. 69:27)
- Egg shaped.
- Oust.
- Feminine name.
- Rectangular sections.
- "The heavens ___ the glory of God." (Ps. 19:1)
- Object of adoration.
- Believed.
- Asian country. (abbr.)
- In the same place. (Lat.)
- Initials for audio visual.
- "Perfumed my bed with myrrh, ___ and cinnamon." (Prov. 7:17)
- Pioneer in steel.
- Kin. (abbr.)
- "From the tower of ___ shall they fall." (Ezek. 30:6)
- Inhabitant of. (suffix)
- "In his law doth he ___ day and night." (Ps. 1:2)
- "They love to ___

Down

- "The Lord of hosts shall ___ the bough with terror." (Isa. 10:33)
- Star of The Barefoot Contessa.
- "Yet thou in thy ___ mercies forsook them not." (Neh. 9:19)
- "What ___ shall I give thee?" (Gen. 38:18)
- Direction for printer. (abbr.)
- First ___.
- Slave Scott.
- To die.
- Son of Kemuel. (Gen. 22)
- "For a good man some would even ___ to die." (Rom. 5:7)
- Act.
- King of Egypt. (2 Kings 17)
- Lift. (Fr.)
- Tripoli is its capital.
- Toward the wind.
- Red vegetables.
- Branch.
- Move stealthily.
- "For no man can do these ___." (John 3:2)
- State. (Fr.)
- King. (Sp.)
- Alien.
- Bulwer-Lytton heroine.
- "Sin is a reproach to any ___." (Prov. 14:34)
- Seed covering after fertilization.

42. Lugosi.

- Peak.
- "The bright and morning ___." (Rev. 22:16)
- Currency of India. (abbr.)
- A Nethinim family, the children of ___. (Neh. 7)
- Chewed.
- Anderson's High.
- Bible division.



Want to know GOD?

By Jenni Ingram
Member First Baptist Church, Gantt

One of my favorite verses in the Bible is Jeremiah 29:11, “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ saith the Lord, ‘Plans to prosper you not to harm you.’”

The new year is upon us and I must confess I am anxious for the Lord’s return.

I am concerned however that there are those who may read this who do not know the Lord and have not accepted the free gift of salvation through Jesus’ blood and sacrifice. Make no mistake dear friends — the time of judgment is coming.

If you have any doubt just read Matthew 24. This world is in labor.

The time is coming and so many will suffer an eternal hell because of unbelief in the Savior.

I had a discussion like this recently with one of my nurses as I was hospitalized. She never said if she was a believer or not, but she did ask me why I was “wasting my time” with Jesus. That got me started and I talked to her on and off all night about the gospel of Jesus.

She had some questions and I answered them as best I could. Before I was discharged I said, “I don’t believe I am wasting my time and I love the Lord, but if I were wasting my time, what have I lost? Time.

However, I have gained eternal life. If you waste your time and turn a blind eye to the gospel, what have you lost? You have lost it all. We all have things we do that wastes time. I just urge you to open your heart to the salvation of Jesus. Please don’t be blind.” †

Message through music

1 Girl Nation encourages young girls to guard their hearts

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

More than providing a fun concert, the pop/contemporary group known as 1 Girl Nation hopes to connect young girls to a life-changing message.

The group is made up of Lauryn Taylor Bach, Kayli Robinson and Carmen Hadley.

Through their music and message, these three young women desire to shine a light on the truth of the gospel as they encourage

young girls to stand strong against the lies that the enemy tries to put before them.

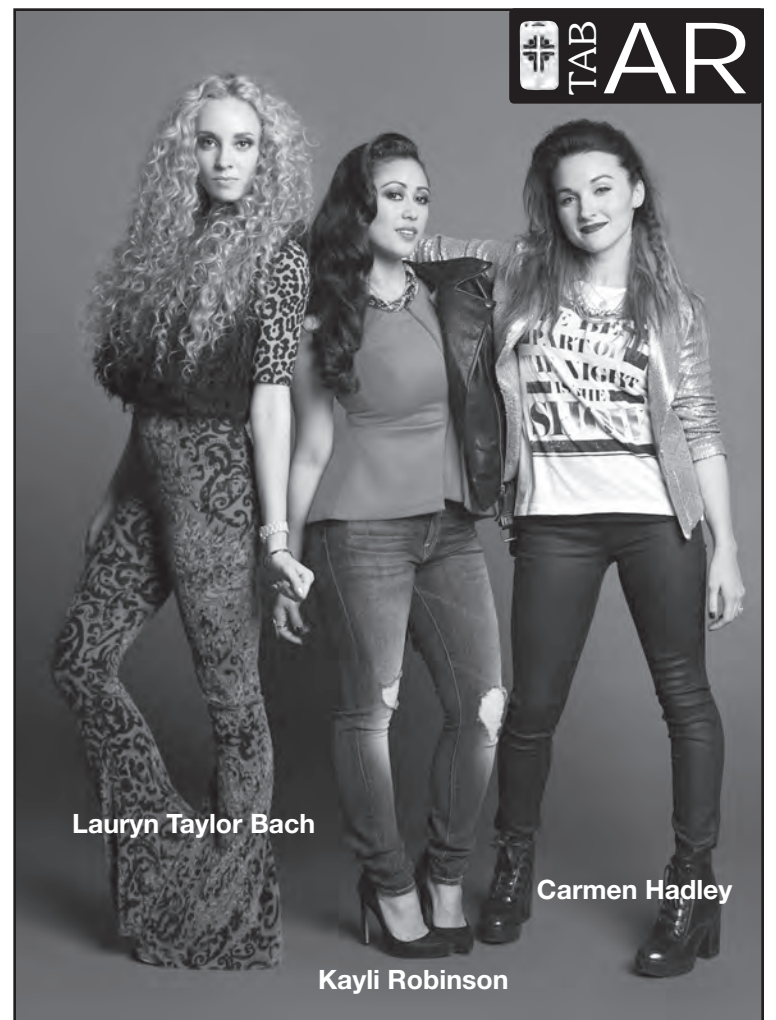
“I love when we get to meet with girls at our shows and hear stories about how our songs are impacting them,” Hadley said.

“We’ve heard some really special things that God has done through our music. During one of our shows last year, we heard about how a song reached this girl who was overcoming a drug addiction. It’s been incredible how these girls come up to us and

share about their insecurities, and then tell us how these songs have given them confidence because of realizing that their identity is found in Christ alone. There is nothing that compares with knowing that we are doing the will of God and seeing the fruit of our labor.”

With the songs on their sophomore album “Unite,” the group tackles relevant subjects and introspective questions for the purpose of pointing teenage girls to the answers found in Scripture and an identity found in Christ.

Bach said, “We are so excited about this new album and have really put our hearts into it. I feel like as our faith has grown and we have grown as women, we put a lot of our experiences into these songs. We hope when people hear these songs they would be encouraged to live more boldly for Christ. One of the main messages on this album comes from a song called ‘Guard Your Heart’ and is based on Proverbs 4:23, which says, ‘Above all else guard your heart because everything you do flows from it.’



1 Girl Nation

Photo courtesy of Merge PR

“Even recently we’ve been talking as a band about how that’s so important since our generation is being given so many mixed messages from social media, movies and magazines. We want the lyrics of this song to combat those messages by pointing to God and reminding girls above all else to guard their hearts against those lies from the enemy. We feel passionate that this song and the message will speak words of encouragement to our generation.”

Uplifting message

With their energetic music and uplifting message, 1 Girl Nation has received encouraging feedback from mothers of teenage girls.

“We’ve received so many comments from moms thanking us for being positive role models for their daughters,” Bach said. “When we started working on the songs for this record, we asked moms about the messages they would like to share with their daughters and what they would like us to communicate.

“One of my favorite songs on the new album is called ‘Cinema.’ It’s been a hard year for us and really made us step back and re-evaluate why we are doing what we do. I feel like this song is a heart check, asking if my life was a cinema would it point to Christ or point to myself? That really stops and makes you think about what you are focusing your priorities on.” †

Bobby Bowden documentary kicks off in theaters Jan. 8

Legendary college football coach Bobby Bowden and his family will kick-off the NCAA Football National Championship weekend Jan. 8 with the release of the true story, “The Bowden Dynasty: A Story of Faith, Family and Football.”

The film explores the life and career of Bowden, a Birmingham native and Howard College (now Samford University) graduate who coached the Florida State Seminoles from 1976 to 2009. He is the winningest coach in college football.

‘Legend on the grid-iron’

“There is no question Coach Bobby Bowden is a legend on the grid-iron, but he also is a man that has ‘run the race’ in order to

live a life that honors God in all he does,” said Trey Reynolds, director of LifeWay Films, which is partnering with the film’s promotion. “We encourage churches, small groups and families to go to theaters Jan. 8 and experience ‘The Bowden Dynasty’ on the big screen.”

Bowden noted, “The most amazing thing about our dynasty years is how consistent we were. But what makes those dynasty years so ridiculously satisfying is that we ended each season ranked no lower than No. 4 in the polls, won two national championships, played for three others and won 11 bowl games, including nine in a row.”

“None of us thought about these things at the time,” he said. “Nor did we plan for them. In hindsight, I realize we accomplished some-

thing unique in college football history.”

From 1987 to 2000 the Florida State Seminoles thrilled their fans with 14 consecutive top-four seasons with 10 or more wins.

One-night premiere

The feature documentary’s all-star cast includes Kenny Chesney, Burt Reynolds, Nick Saban and Deion Sanders.

“The Bowden Dynasty” will be shown in theaters for a one-night premiere Jan. 8 at 5 p.m. A Q-and-A session with Bowden will follow the feature.

For tickets or participating theaters, visit www.FathomEvents.com. For more information about the film, visit www.BowdenDynasty.com. (BP)

Want to get your news in

The Alabama Baptist?

Call us! 1-800-803-5201



IMB photo

These members and others of a Southeast Asian people group are able to learn Scripture under the tutelage and ministry of International Mission Board missionary Layla Murphy (not pictured).

Trusting God

Missionary reaps harvest as 'refugee' in foreign land

After years laboring in a restricted-access country, International Mission Board (IMB) missionary Layla Murphy began reaping a harvest as people became more open to the gospel and former Buddhists were baptized.

"Things were starting to progress," said Murphy, who serves in Southeast Asia. "We were starting to get chances to do evangelism in some new places we'd never gotten to go before. It was really getting exciting — and then the bottom sort of fell out of everything. That's when I got kicked out of the country."

It had been a long journey to that point. But she managed to live there, working as an IMB Journeyman in public health and then — after earning a seminary degree back in the United States — as an English teacher sharing the love of Jesus.

"Ever since I was in college, God has given me a great love for the people of that country; it has that feeling of being home," Murphy said.

During her years there, she suffered setbacks. Immigration officers shut down her English classes and forced her to leave the city for months at a time. Still Murphy found ways to share the gospel and deepen her relationships with a small band of believers and new converts.

Preparing the soil

"We knew that prayerwalking is ... pre-evangelism," Murphy said. "We wanted to get the ground ready for doing more work in the city."

Then, at the end of one of Murphy's long, dusty days of outreach, government officials swarmed into the lobby of her hotel where she was staying and told her to leave the country and never return. In that one knee-shaking moment, so much of what she had worked for seemed to unravel. "I was completely shell-shocked, realizing that I just got kicked out. I

had to leave this country that I have loved very, very much."

Murphy landed in a nearby Asian urban center and prayed about what was next.

"God's plans don't always make sense," Murphy said. "It didn't make sense to get kicked out of my old country. It didn't make sense to stay in the new country. But that's exactly [what] God wanted."

Finding 'home' folk

One day Murphy was walking through the vegetable market and heard a familiar sound — words spoken in the language of her beloved country. Soon she learned that hundreds of thousands of undocumented migrant workers and refugees from "her" country lived in this city. There was even an established church for the people group. She stayed.

On the first day of class for the new Bible school she began, she hoped for 15 students to attend. Fifty showed up.

And though, just like many of those she teaches, Murphy would rather be back in the country of her heart, "this has taught [her] to have that deepened trust in God." Her students tease her that she too is a refugee — the American refugee. "That sort of binds our hearts together," Murphy said.

Pray that God will continue to bring students to Murphy who want to grow in their knowledge and love of Christ, and that they also will be willing to share their faith with their countrymen.

Pray for immigrant factory workers who come to the city to earn money for their families in their homeland. Pray that while they're strangers in a strange land, they would experience spiritual freedom by becoming followers of Jesus.

Pray for church leaders in the immigrants' home country, that they would hunger to grow in knowledge and faith, and would be strengthened spiritually. (BP)

RELIGION

in

America

Compiled from Wire Services

Samaritan's Purse, BGEA on top 10 list

BOONE, N.C. — Samaritan's Purse and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) have been named on a list of the top 10 charities working to change the world, according to The Christian Post.

It's an "incredible privilege" to be included, said evangelist Franklin Graham, president of Samaritan's Purse. "All of our work is done in the name of

the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is the One able to change hearts and lives — and able to change the world. I am so thankful for all of the dedicated staff God has brought to these ministries, both here at home and around the world."

The list, which is put together by the agency Charity Navigator, looked at big-name charities both in the United States and abroad that do "exceptional work" while "maintaining top-notch financial management and transparency standards."

BGEA, founded by Billy Graham in 1950 and currently run by his son, Franklin, has responded significantly to the needs of disaster survivors and was ranked No. 7 on the list.



Samaritan's Purse
INTERNATIONAL RELIEF

**BILLY
GRAHAM**
Evangelistic Association

Samaritan's Purse, which ranked No. 4, has distributed more than 135 million shoeboxes filled with gifts for needy children through Operation Christmas Child, according to the Post.

Direct Relief, MAP International and the Rotary Foundation were the top three on the Charity Navigator list. (TAB)

Giving to evangelical Christian groups rises

WINCHESTER, Va. — Giving to evangelical Christian organizations in the United States continues to rise, according to the annual report from the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA).

Charitable giving to those groups rose from \$12.2 billion in 2014 to \$12.5 billion in 2015, according to ECFA.

The report notes giving to short-term missions recorded a growth of 25.2 percent; camps and conferences, 21.2 percent; groups working in the area of drug and alcohol, 13.1 percent; orphan care, 12.4 percent; community development, 11.7 percent; and prison-related ministries, 11.7 percent, according to The Christian Post.

"Both new and long-standing donors are continuing to give faithfully to support the important work of our member organizations," Dan Busby, ECFA president and CEO, said in a statement. "It is encouraging to see generosity in action and it is interesting to note how trends in giving change from year to year." (TAB)



Macy's stops giving to Planned Parenthood

CINCINNATI, Ohio — A conservative group said it got a "great early Christmas present" when it discovered the department store chain Macy's is no longer donating funds to Planned Parenthood, America's largest abortion business.

"Macy's confirmed with 2ndVote (in December 2016) that the company no longer gives and no longer matches donations to Planned Parenthood," a post on 2ndVote's website states.

The store is following in the footsteps of other corporations like Ford, Coca-Cola, Xerox and AT&T, which all stopped giving money in 2015 to the business responsible for aborting more than 300,000 babies per year, according to The Christian Post.

2ndVote, which published in 2015 a list of companies that donated to Planned Parenthood, credits public pressure with Macy's move. After the Center for Medical Progress released undercover videos in 2015 accusing Planned Parenthood of selling aborted babies for profit, conservatives and pro-life advocates set out to get federal and private funding pulled from the abortion giant, according to the Post. (TAB)