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123rf.com

# for God's house

## Cost of prevention often minor compared to cost of repair in churches

By Carrie Brown McWhorter  
The Alabama Baptist

**D**avid Whitworth has a reputation around the campus of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham.

"They call me Ebenezer Scrooge," said Whitworth, Dawson's director of facilities, who says saving money is one of his goals as he oversees repairs, replacements and renovations at the church.

Taking care of church buildings and grounds is a year-round job. Like any home or building, church facilities have mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems that need regular upkeep and maintenance. They also have rooms to clean, grass to trim and walls to paint — routine tasks that if left undone can create a poor impression of the church to visitors and members alike.

"My role boils down to ensuring that everyone who comes to church has a comfortable place to learn about God," Whitworth said. "I just don't believe in wasting God's money."

The cost of prevention is often minor compared to the cost of repairing a major system, according to GuideStone Property and Casual-

ty. Proper maintenance may require spending money in the short-term, but the long-term savings often mean more money is available for ministry needs.

### Walking a fine line

Jay Moore, business administrator at Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, in Mobile Baptist Association, says the church walks a fine line in spending money on preventive maintenance but he believes it is money well spent.

"A church can spend a large part of its budget on preventive maintenance, but at the same time, not doing that could result in having to spend thousands of dollars to replace a system," Moore said.

The heating, ventilation and air conditioning system (HVAC) is

a good example. The HVAC system for a large building can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. The cost to run the system also is a major utility expense. Regular maintenance like changing filters, checking belts and lubricating moving parts helps the system run more efficiently, which improves indoor air quality, saves money on monthly utility bills and keeps the system in good working order.

Having a filter-changing schedule and a person responsible for following that schedule is one of the easiest ways a church of any size can maintain an HVAC system, Whitworth said.

For churches that have them, the septic system is another hidden and expensive necessity that people take  
(See 'Saving,' page 3)

# COMMENT

## Who Is Responsible?

Those active in social media may have read some of the heated exchanges that took place following the deadly school bus accident in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on Nov. 21, 2016. A school bus overturned, killing 6 of the 37 children on board.

The arguments have been about who is responsible for this tragedy. What made news in *The Christian Post* was the number of people who argued it was God's will that the children die so God is ultimately to blame for the accident and for their deaths.

This is an old debate. The theological word for it is "antinomianism." The belief holds that all personal behavior is foreordained by God. Thus what happens in life is all God's will and individuals are not responsible for what they do.

Antinomianism believes free will is an illusion and gives no value to the impact of sin on people's actions.

Following this belief with the school bus accident, whether or not the school bus driver was driving too fast, on the wrong route or driving recklessly would make no difference. It would all be the will of God, making God ultimately responsible.

### Who is to blame?

In his book, "The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness," noted Baptist historian H. Leon McBeth writes of a church where the pastor sought church discipline against a member who was habitually drunk, a clear violation of Bible teaching. The church member argued he could not help himself because God controlled everything he did — antinomianism.

According to the record cited by McBeth, the church agreed with the church member and fired the pastor.

Today that anecdote has a humorous ring to it but it still illustrates the tension behind the social media debate over who is responsible when bad things happen. It also illustrates the approach many of us take in our own lives.

A few years ago a pastor friend had served a church for about 10 years. He had a successful



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

and fulfilling ministry that drew attention from churches around the state. A larger church in a more prosperous community eventually invited him to become its pastor. After much prayer and soul-searching the pastor accepted, said a sorrowful goodbye to his longtime congregation and moved to the new community.

The members of his new church welcomed the pastor with open arms and a wonderful initial service with record attendance. But the pastor was miserable. That first Sunday afternoon he called his former church saying he had made a terrible mistake and asked them if he could come back. The church agreed and in the evening service of his first Sunday, the pastor resigned from his new congregation and returned "home."

Who was responsible for the confusion of this situation? Was God? Was the pastor search committee? Was the pastor?

And how do you explain the number of times a pastor goes to a new church only to realize that he and the new congregation are a bad match? Is that God's fault or is there human responsibility?

Theologically speaking the tension is between the sovereignty of God and the free will of mankind. The more one tilts toward sovereignty, the more one makes God responsible. The more one leans toward free will, the more one makes us responsible and accountable for the results of our decisions and actions.

The answer has practical outworkings as well. The more one tilts toward sovereignty, the more one is tempted "to rest in Zion" because it all depends on God anyway. Human striving is unnecessary and demonstrates a lack of trust in God.

Conversely the more one leans toward free will, the greater the temptation to conclude that everything depends on human action, that God leaves us to our own strivings.

Yet one must ask if God can will sinful behav-

ior? And what role does sin play in the lives of people, even Christians?

Theologians talk about the intentional will of God where God only purposes good for His creation. They discuss permissive will where God permits what He does not purpose. Some teach the circumstantial will of God where God acts in the midst of life's circumstances for man's redemption and wholeness.

Not to be left out is the punitive will of God where sin is punished in keeping with God's holy nature. This is most clearly demonstrated in Jesus' death on Calvary's cross for the sin of humankind.

And there is the ultimate will of God whereby God's intentional will for the good of His creation will be done for all who believe in His redeeming work.

***"When we have presented our bodies as living sacrifices to God we take no responsibility or no opportunity lightly."***

The debate between God's sovereignty and man's free will has been going on for centuries and will likely continue until our Lord returns. But there is still guidance for the Christian about how believers should live in every circumstance.

The apostle Paul writes in Romans 12:1, "Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service."

Obviously Paul was talking about presenting the whole person to God — mind, body, spirit and soul. He was not referencing the physical body alone. Through presenting the totality of one's being to God, one acknowledges God's ownership of all that one is and all that one has. That includes talents and abilities as well as responsibilities and opportunities.

### For God's honor and glory

If God is the owner of all that we are then all we do must be done for His honor and His glory. All that we do must be done with "your whole heart." The writer of Ecclesiastes says, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Eccles. 9:10). Colossians 3:23 says, "Whatever you do, do with your whole being."

When we have presented our bodies as living sacrifices to God we take no responsibility or no opportunity lightly. There is no sloughing off as if what we do does not matter. We give all that we are, our very best as an act of worship.

Perhaps the old adage we have all heard is still the best advice — "Pray like it all depends on God and work like it all depends on you." Then it does not matter who gets the credit or the blame.✠

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

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# Saving MONEY

## 'Maintenance of church facilities a stewardship issue'

(continued from page 1)  
for granted until it stops working. Consistent servicing can avoid a Sunday morning emergency, says Joey Sprayberry, owner of JDS Septic and Services in Heflin.

"Regular pumping of the septic tank and inspection of sewer lines can keep a system in good working order for many years and avoid major problems for your facilities," Sprayberry said.

The frequency of pumping depends on several factors, including use and age of the system.

In a church with a smaller congregation that occupies the building only a couple of days a week, the state-recommended schedule of 3-5 years is probably a good guideline, Sprayberry said. A church with 200-300 worshippers on Sunday that has a lot of activities during the week should schedule service more often.

The best measure of how often a new system should be pumped is to have it done once a year for

a couple of years and then determine if the service period can be extended, Sprayberry said. Older systems may need more frequent pumping, replacement of field lines or replacement of the entire system.

"Just like a car or roof, a septic system is going to wear out," Sprayberry said. "There's only so much the soil around a septic system can absorb. But with preventive maintenance, the system can work efficiently for many years."

Warning signs such as gurgling toilets and slow draining in sinks should not be ignored, since those are signs a problem may be imminent, and repairing the problem is usually more costly than preventing it, he said. Regardless of

membership and size, any church can stay on top of things like loose carpet and roof leaks, Moore said.

From pews to kitchen appliances, repairing minor damage immediately can extend the life

**"At the end of the day, you're taking care of the Lord's house."**

**David Whitworth**  
director of facilities  
**Dawson Memorial Baptist**  
Church, Birmingham

of the equipment and prevent major expenses later.

The best way to do that is to keep a record of all equipment that includes the purchase date, the recommended maintenance schedule for each item (including part sizes and filter numbers) and a person responsible for routine upkeep.

Moore suggests utilizing volunteers for tasks they can handle.

"We give new members the opportunity to share if they have any specialized skills they might

employ around the church. For example we have volunteers who cut the grass and maintain the grounds. They enjoy the work, and their help saves us several thousand dollars a year," he said.

### Preventive measures

Keeping church facilities in top working condition is often a product of reactive maintenance — especially in tight budget years, according to GuideStone Financial Resources. However, preventive maintenance has been proven to save money.

"Every dollar saved on maintenance is a dollar that can have direct ministry value," according to GuideStone.

Ultimately maintenance of church facilities is a stewardship issue, Whitworth said.

"At the end of the day, you're taking care of the Lord's house, trying to take care of what the Lord's given us. It's stewardship of His house," he said. ☩

## Sample preventive maintenance schedule

Studies show that even when facilities are properly maintained, they deteriorate by approximately 1-2 percent per year. In the absence of preventive maintenance, the rate of deterioration doubles, increasing to about 4 percent per year.

The solution?

Develop a mindset of prevention, according to GuideStone Property and Casualty. Follow the recommended maintenance schedule for your equipment and major systems and then budget so funds

are available to repair small problems before they turn into big ones.

This schedule from GuideStone Financial Resources provides a general guideline for maintenance/inspection frequencies for equipment often found in church facilities.

Note: These guidelines are for informational purposes only. Please follow recommended manufacturer's recommendations for the maintenance and upkeep of your church's property.

### MAINTENANCE/INSPECTION

- Review building codes and safety regulations
- Fire code inspection
- Fire alarm system
- Fire extinguishers
- Kitchen ranges, ovens and vent hoods
- HVAC system inspection and change filters
- Boiler
- Water heaters — inspect, drain and de-scale
- Inspect pipes
- Protect exposed pipes with insulation sleeves or wrapping
- Storm drains
- Lawn sprinklers
- Inspect roof, flashings, caulking and sealants for leaks or cracks
- Exterior condition of building
- Rain gutters
- Inspect wiring

### FREQUENCY

- Annually
- Annually
- NFPA 72 recommended testing intervals or AHJ (Authorities Having Jurisdiction) recommendations
- Inspect monthly
- Maintain annually
- Semi-annually (NFPA 17A recommendations)
- Quarterly
- Annually or bi-annually, depending on the type of system
- Annually
- Annually, before winter months
- Before winter months
- Semi-annually
- Weekly
- Semi-annually
- Quarterly
- Quarterly
- Every two years for new installations
- Annually for installations more than five years old
- Weekly

- Monitor property for general repairs:
  - Windows and doors — weather stripping, thresholds, hinges, door closers and locks
  - Balcony and stairwells — loose fastenings
  - Sidewalks and parking lot — cracks and potholes
- Sound and projection systems review and maintenance
- Office computers
- Instrument tuning and repair

- Monthly
- System recommendations
- Semi-annually or contract recommendations

(Source: <https://www.guidestonepropertycasualty.org/AboutUs/Articles/SamplePreventiveMaintenanceSchedule>; Compiled by Carrie Brown McWhorter)

## Famous Christians from previous centuries

# Heroes of the Faith

## January 31 marks 125th anniversary of Spurgeon's death

**C**harles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892), known as the “Prince of Preachers,” was a pastor, evangelist, author and philanthropist.

This year is the 125th anniversary of his Jan. 31, 1892, death.

Born June 19, 1834, in Essex County, England, he was the eldest child of John and Eliza Spurgeon. They had 17 children. Nine died in infancy. His father and grandfather were Nonconformist (non-Anglican) ministers.

Although his formal education was limited, Charles Spurgeon valued learning. He read theology, literature and the works of great Christians, including Saint Augustine, Martin Luther and John Calvin. His personal library eventually exceeded 12,000 volumes.

### Profession of faith

His conversion occurred Jan. 6, 1850. A snowstorm forced him into a Primitive Methodist chapel in Newtown, England. The preacher's text from Isaiah 45:22 led to his salvation — “Look unto Me and

be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else.”

Four months later he joined a Baptist church in Newmarket and was baptized.

The next year he preached his first sermon in a cottage near Cambridge and served as pastor of a small Baptist church nearby. In April 1854, at 19 years old, Charles Spurgeon was called to lead New Park Street Chapel, the largest Baptist congregation in London. He preached to the common people in their own language and had a natural dramatic flair and style. His beautiful speaking voice had a melody, depth and resonance that could be heard by thousands.

In 1856 he married Susannah Thompson. Although an invalid much of her life, she was a devoted helpmate.

When New Park Street Chapel's building became too small for the congregation, it rented Exeter Hall, which seated 4,500. It soon outgrew the crowds. Charles Spurgeon then leased Surrey Gardens Music

Hall, which could accommodate more than 10,000 people.

On Oct. 19, 1856, the building was packed when someone cried, “Fire! The galleries are giving away, the place is falling!” In the panic to flee the building, seven people died. Charles Spurgeon became extremely depressed over the tragedy and grief overpowered him. It took him two weeks to recover enough to preach again.

In 1861 the Metropolitan Tabernacle was completed. For the next 31 years he preached to an average of 5,000 people each Sunday morning and evening. He never gave altar calls but asked anyone who was interested in Christ to meet him at his vestry the next morning. People always came.

He published his sermons each week. They fill 63 volumes. He wrote numerous books. Today more of his writing is in print than that of any other Christian, past or present.

Charles Spurgeon made millions in his lifetime but gave it away.



SPURGEON

By Joanne Sloan

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



He founded 66 ministries financed from sales of his books and sermons. Among them were two orphanages, many almshouses, nursing homes and a book fund. He also established a Pastors' College in 1857 which was renamed Spurgeon's College in 1923.

### Last sermon

He preached his last sermon June 7, 1891.

Suffering many years from gout and Bright's disease (kidney), he often recuperated at Menton, near Nice, France. He died there Jan. 31, 1892.

In London flags flew at half-staff. His body lay in state at the Metropolitan Tabernacle for three days as 60,000 people paid their respects. Around 100,000 people lined the streets Feb. 11 as a funeral procession two miles long traveled from the church to West Norwood Cemetery.

Samford University in Birmingham has a collection of original Charles Spurgeon sermon manuscripts dated from 1879 to 1891.✝

## REFLECTIONS



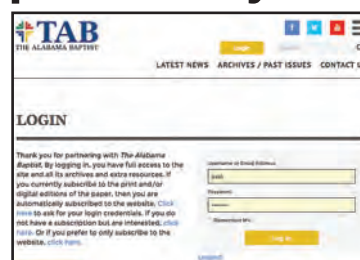
## Request your login credentials for TAB's new website – complimentary for subscribers

**H**ave you checked it out yet? If not, then you will definitely want to put this on your to-do list today.

The Alabama Baptist's new website officially launched Jan. 2 — [www.thealabamabaptist.org](http://www.thealabamabaptist.org) — with more than 35,000 articles.

Migrating from a site custom-built in 2007 to the new mobile-responsive option was no small feat. And while we are still tweaking various sections the new site is up and running for a much-improved user experience.

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# Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

## James Ivy



IVY

*McIntyre Baptist Church, Ashville  
St. Clair Baptist Association*

**FAVORITE VERSE:** John 3:16

**FAVORITE HYMN:** "We've Got the Power"

**HOBBIES:** Doing carpentry, mechanical and electrical work; compiling historical cemetery inventories

**FAMILY STATUS:** Married 62 years to wife, Betty; daughters, Dyanne and Beverly; son, James; 9 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren

*James Ivy, 84, of Ashville, is his church's minister of pastoral care and associate pastor. At age 42 he became a minister and also began the quest to earn his bachelor's degree from Mobile College (now the University of Mobile). The U.S. Air Force veteran previously served as full-time pastor of Bethel Baptist Church, Flomaton, and Sardis Baptist Church, Atmore, and moderator of Escambia Baptist Association. From 1976 to 1983 he was a missionary to the Creek Indians in Atmore. For 10 years he simultaneously served as minister of pastoral care at the former CrossPoint Community Church, Gadsden, and interim pastor of Triune Baptist Church, Attalla.*

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

**A:** Many Christian friends. A devout Christian schoolteacher. I was led to Christ by my Christian mother and grandmother. My mother was Cherokee and my father was a lay preacher. They always had me in church and taught me right from wrong. A circuit-riding preacher told me I was going to be a preacher. I guess he knew more than I did.

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

**A:** I had a deep desire at the age of 16 to preach the gospel. I was told to finish school and

get a little older before doing that. They said I needed to be at least 25 to do that. I didn't fully get the call (to ministry) until I was 42, even though I was already doing church work.

**Q: What does your ministry work demand?**

**A:** Whatever is necessary to carry out the gospel. It includes counseling, visiting, support — whatever the Church needs. I always try to be available to do anything and everything.

**Q: What do you get from your ministry work?**

**A:** Sheer joy. Absolute joy of serving the Lord and His people and the joy of knowing I am His child. And I know my destination.

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

**A:** Anything the Lord wants me to do. I will be involved in the ministry until the Lord takes me across the Jordan (River). I never intend to stop. I'm going to stay involved in the ministry.

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

**A:** I hope it is to do more than I've done in the past.

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

**A:** He has changed a sinner by grace and He has given me life in Him. He is my Life. He has taught me to love.✝

*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.*

Bush Memorial Baptist Church, Troy, holds a baptism service in November 2015. Dwayne Norman (back, right) is pastor. Marshall LeCroy (red shirt) is family pastor.



Photo courtesy of Bush Memorial Baptist Church, Troy

# Community

## Troy church seeks to disciple by 'living life together'

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**M**alachi Gandy says hardly a week goes by that he doesn't run into discipleship happening when he's out and about in Troy.

His wife is part of a discipleship group that meets at a local coffee shop on Monday nights. If he goes into Chick-fil-A on a Wednesday or a Thursday night, he bumps into another group or two.

"It doesn't matter where you go throughout the week, you're running into discipleship in community, and I think that's a great testimony," he said.

Gandy himself has a group that meets on Friday mornings at McDonalds.

"This is my second one — it's been going on for a little more than a year," he said. "There's four of us in it, folks in all phases of life."

### Accountability

They study the Bible together. They hold each other accountable. They ask each other the tough questions.

And eventually, they'll each move on and start new groups.

And that makes Dwayne Norman, pastor of Bush Memorial Baptist Church, Troy, thank God for what He's done.

About three years ago, Norman

got the church started with what he called D groups, three or four people meeting together for the purpose of discipleship and then multiplication.

"It doesn't always work out this way, but we try to be intentional about being intergenerational, about pairing older people with younger people and college students," he said.

Since it started, the church has seen

growth, both spiritually and numerically. In November 2015 six people were baptized, followed by seven more on consecutive Sundays.

"We've got a lot to celebrate," Norman said, adding that "some of those new believers stem from the D group ministry, and for the others we are trying to get them involved in D groups so they can be discipled."

When Bush Memorial Baptist first started D groups in 2013, it used the curriculum "Discipleship Essentials." Since then a shift was made to other books or simply to studying the Bible itself, he said.

It's something God has really moved in as the church focused on discipling as Jesus did — in the framework of living life together, Norman said.

"We're trying to do it the way Jesus did," he said. "I didn't want

it to be something that was just for a season. This is too important. It's equipping people to do the work of ministry."

Because of that, Norman has intentionally worked to keep casting the vision for the congregation.

And as Bush Memorial has stayed pointed in the direction of missions and discipleship, leaders and members have seen God expand their ministry way past the city limits.

With the ministry to college students at Troy University, the church has seen how far discipleship can reach.

### Opportunities to disciple

"It's been an opportunity for us to disciple them while they're here and teach them to disciple others, then send them out," Norman said. "And God has sent them literally all over the world."

For example, one college student graduated and moved overseas to share the gospel in a closed country.

"God is using him mightily, and we had a small part to play in his spiritual journey," Norman said. "For all of us, keeping momentum in the D groups has not been easy always, but from obedience we've gotten to see God do some amazing things."✝



# Anabaptists

## Anabaptists emphasize believers' church, focus on discipleship

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

**D**uring the European Reformation, a group of radical Christians began to reject the close relationship between Church and State and started to speak about the importance of a believers' church where individuals were baptized because of their faith, thereby rejecting infant baptism. The movement became known as Anabaptism, which meant to be "baptized again." The Amish, Hutterites and Mennonites are direct descendants of the early Anabaptist movement. The combined membership of all three groups in the United States is around 450,000.

Arnold Snyder has described Anabaptists as "an outpost of the kingdom of God," a counter-cultural movement that "proposed an alternative understanding of the meaning of the Christian faith and an alternative model of society." Anabaptist groups proliferated throughout Europe in the 16th century, each movement emerging within its own historical context. It arose in Switzerland, South Germany and the Netherlands — independently of each other for the most part. Early Anabaptists shared many core beliefs and practices — values which continue to challenge their descendants in their daily lives of discipleship.

One great emphasis of the Anabaptist movement was that of discipleship. They were dissatisfied people, frustrated by the way in which many mainline Reformers such as Martin Luther, Martin Bucer and Huldrych Zwingli held back from implementing the slogan of "Sola Scriptura." They were convinced that a high view of Scripture was irrelevant if it never functioned authoritatively in a life of radical discipleship. They had a vision of the Bible as a deeply subversive text that corrects and reproves, builds up and encourages, enabling believers to be equipped for service within society.

### Grace and gratitude

Their story was one that stressed grace and gratitude. The Anabaptists emphasized the generosity of God's grace being shown to humankind, demonstrating the necessity of personal faith being expressed in believer's baptism. The heart and soul of their theology was the integral linking of the inner and outer lives of believers so that saving faith was expressed in works of love. They were not so concerned with winning converts and recording decisions, but in the formation of Christian character and daily discipleship. For Anabaptists the life of faith was a life of obedience and part of that was seen in the outward witness and commitment to believer's baptism and commitment to Christ's teaching in the gospels. Anabaptist author Dirk

Philips spoke of water baptism as the outward seal that "one has committed oneself and united oneself with God and all the saints, no longer to live for oneself, but as a person obedient to God and his community, insofar as God gives grace."

### Living out convictions

The Anabaptists were willing to live out their convictions, no matter what the cost might be. For example Balthasar Hubmaier reconstituted his parish church on the basis of personal profession of faith and believer's baptism in 1525. At Easter, Hubmaier and 60 other citizens were baptized by a visiting Anabaptist evangelist, Wilhelm Reublin. The next day Hubmaier baptized, by effusion out of a milk pail, 300 persons. Three years later in March 1528 he was condemned to death by burning, his wife accompanying him to the stake, praying for him and encouraging him to remain faithful. Three days later she confessed the Lord in her martyrdom by drowning in the Danube River.

The Anabaptists generally had a high view of Scripture, although they tended to stress the teaching of Jesus. That led them to view discipleship as a lifestyle of obedience to His words. They believed that the priesthood of all believers allowed the community of faith to be the best place where the text of Scripture was interpreted, as each believer had something to contribute out of their own experience in discerning the mind of Christ. They had a willingness to learn from one another as fellow pilgrims.

### Daily discipleship

For Anabaptists it was the love of Christ in the hearts of believers that provided the crucial measure of daily discipleship, a love that escaped the bondage of legalism and empowered believers to read the Scriptures, especially the Gospels, and to live out its implications in everyday life. Thus their vision of the spiritual life was that of a walk, a progression, a pilgrimage of growth which was first and foremost about a relationship with Jesus, a discipleship of the heart and not a rigid adherence to an external legal code.

Anabaptists believed the most effective environment in which they could be encouraged to live as disciples was in the context of a community. Apart from the Hutterites, most Anabaptists did not live in "communes," but they did believe that commitment to Christ could only be effective within the fellowship of sisters and brothers in Christ who cared for one another. Baptism and community were closely connected in their understanding of spiritual growth. Baptism was baptism into the Church, and not a private transaction between the believer and God. The life of the community was the family into which the baptismal candidate was re-

ceived as a member of the body of Christ. The Christian life involved a commitment to the family of God which strengthened and encouraged the believer to live the life of discipleship. Thus the Church became the workplace where "apprentices" in faith could develop the habits of godly living.

The Anabaptist vision of the Church as a covenant community was a commitment to the idea of the priesthood of all believers, where each was seen to be a "priest" to his fellow sisters and brothers, ministering the grace of God. It was a community where women as well as men were committed to lives of costly discipleship, on occasions contravening common societal restrictions on their gender in both the Church and society of their times. Hans Goertz suggests that "the notion of the priesthood of all believers" was "enacted with particular zeal. ... The laity, both men and women, began to take over priestly ministries, preaching, celebrating communion and baptizing. ... Women engaged in corner preaching and evangelism."

### Active faith

Anabaptism also was based on an active faith in the ministry of the Spirit to initiate and sustain the life of faith, to illuminate and provide a proper understanding of Scripture, to give an enthusiastic experience of the Spirit within their lives. The radical nature of their vision of a Church renewal movement would not have been possible without their expectation of the Spirit's presence and power in their midst. They saw themselves as a Spirit-endowed, Spirit-empowered and Spirit-led community which was called to follow Christ on costly paths of discipleship. Moreover their stress on the ministry of the Holy Spirit had implications for the wider needs of society, of those who were beyond the walls of their own faith community. They shared a passion to spread the good news of God's love and to make an impact on the surrounding society.

### Christ's return

Most Anabaptists were convinced they were living in the last days, and Christ's return was imminent. They believed the Church was the present realization of the kingdom of God within society, a representation of the coming of God's kingdom to this world, a symbol of hope. This led them to develop political, economic and social goals no less than religious and theological hopes. They brought the cri-

tique of Scripture to bear upon the existing economic arrangements in Europe which they said were exploitative, advocating a better way of life through their own communities which became prototypes of a more just society. They called people to love their enemies, renounce selfishness and violence. Many of these groups became pacifists and maintain that tradition in the 21st century.

Because Anabaptism was a lay and not a clerical movement, they emphasized the part that each and every believer had to play in communicating their message. They realized that the division of the Church into clerical leaders and lay followers was a distortion of biblical truth. Although monks, priests, priors and even one bishop joined the movement, it was not the clerical classes which spread the word most effectively but simple brothers and self-confident sisters. The latter, in particular, were effective in spreading the Anabaptist message in their local communities. The impact of their witness led to reports of entire communities being converted to Anabaptism.

They were convinced that their communities were outposts of the Kingdom, where God's rule would be embraced. They realized the kingdom of God chal-

lenged the patterns and structures of public life as well as the lives of individuals. They longed for a restructuring of society along more biblical and egalitarian lines and because they did not believe that economic and social issues were peripheral to God's kingdom, they believed that the whole of life should be regulated by the norms of the kingdom of God. Although they differed in their interpretation of Acts 2 in relation to the sharing of possessions, they all agreed that Christians should be concerned about the poverty they saw around them, particularly when the poor were members of the body of Christ. Anabaptists were convinced the Church had a responsibility of social concern for the needs of those within and outside of the family of God.

### Mission of the Church

For Anabaptists there was no dichotomy between the spiritual and social needs of humankind. They shared a broad vision of what constituted the mission of the Church. Although they belonged to an age which has long disappeared from the stage of world history, the principles which shaped their "being" and "doing" continue to challenge the Church of the 21st century to become more loving, more committed to Christ and more interested in every aspect of the mission of God through the life of the Church for the sake of the world.

*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. †*

**WHO**  
are the  
**evangelicals?**

*Part 3 of 8*

# ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

## Elmore Assoc. DOM Jim Jackson retires

Although the role will look different, Jim Jackson will continue doing what he's done for the last 52 years. Retiring as director of missions (DOM) for Elmore Baptist Association at the end of February won't change that, he said.

"I plan to continue to seek the Lord's will for my life, serving Him in ministry and missions," Jackson said. Now, however, it will be in pulpit supply and interim preaching capacities.

Jackson held his first pastorate as a senior in high school. He has served as pastor of Cardiff Baptist Church; First Baptist Church, Tallassee; First Baptist Church, Lafayette; Ashville Baptist Church; Dogwood Grove Baptist Church, Montevallo; and Indian Grave Baptist Church, Billingsley, before serving as DOM. He is a graduate of Samford University in Birmingham, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

While Jackson loved and values the years he spent as a pastor, he said serving as DOM has been his most fulfilling role.

"I have had the joy of getting to know so many pastors and families, staff members and church members who have prayed for me, encouraged me, laughed at and with me and partnered with me."

Jackson and his wife, Betty, have three children and seven grandchildren. To contact him for pulpit supply or interim preaching, call 334-300-4939. (Maggie Walsh)

## Harmony Grove pastor celebrates 40 years

Doug Prestridge, pastor of Harmony Grove Baptist Church, Edwardsville, has seen children grow up in the church and then have their own children, he said. He's served as the Cleburne Baptist Association church's bivocational pastor for 40 years, even after retiring from Moore Business Forms Inc. in Heflin six years ago.

Prestridge said he knew the Lord called him to preach because he was "miserable until I started doing it."

Ordained in 1973 at his home church, Pine Grove Baptist Church, Heflin, Prestridge went on to serve as pastor of McCollum Baptist Church, Lineville, and then Harmony Grove Baptist. "It's been a blessing to see the families grow (at Harmony Grove)," he said.

The church held an afternoon reception in his honor in November 2016 at Edwardsville Baptist Church.

Prestridge and his wife, Cleo, have three children, nine grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren. (Neisha Roberts)



JACKSON



PRESTRIDGE

Photo courtesy of The Anniston Star

# Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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

## BIRMINGHAM

► **First Church, Fultondale**, will host a Valentine's Day dinner Feb. 14. Dinner will be served at 5:30 p.m. B.B. Hudspeth will perform at 7 p.m. For more information and to register visit [myffbc.com](http://myffbc.com), email [psimooore@gmail.com](mailto:psimooore@gmail.com) or call 205-849-0184. Mika Marcum is pastor.

## ETOWAH

► **Seth Stanton** is the new minister of music at **Twelfth Street Church, Gadsden**. He previously served as minister of music at Giliam Springs Church, Arab. He also served at Pintlala Church, Hope



STANTON

Hull. Stanton holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham. He and his wife, Brandi, have two children. Craig Carlisle is pastor.

## COLUMBIA

► **Malvern Church** will host the Tribute Quartet in concert Jan. 29, 6:30 p.m. A love offering will be collected. Hosea Parker is pastor. ► **John Thomas** is the new director of missions for **Columbia**

**Association**. He previously served as assistant director of missions for Calhoun Association. He also served at Heritage Church, Dothan, and Rehobeth Church. He holds a bachelor's degree from the Baptist College of Florida in Graceville and is pursuing a master's degree from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Cindy, have three children and three grandchildren.



THOMAS

## JUDSON

► **Kevin Freeman** is the new pastor of **Camp Springs Church, Columbia**. He previously served as pastor of Cowarts Church. He also served at Southside Church, Ozark, and Antioch Church, Ashford. He holds a bachelor's degree from Florida Baptist College in Tampa and two master's degrees and a doctorate



FREEMAN

degree from Bethany Divinity College and Seminary in Dothan. He has four children.

## MORGAN

► **Walnut Grove Church, Decatur**, rescheduled its Jason Runnels concert to March 19, 11 a.m. John Bain is pastor. ► **Shoal Creek Church, Decatur**, will hold LifeWay Christian Resources' pastor date night Feb. 10. North Alabama ministers and spouses are invited for a fun, free date night with a meal, LifeWay gifts and lots of encouragement. Junior and Carole Hill of Junior Hill Ministries, Shoal Creek Pastor Gary Linville and his wife, Heather, and Mark and Janet Dance of LifeWay will speak. Child care is available. To register, visit [lfwy.co/2ggeoFv](http://lfwy.co/2ggeoFv).

## TUSCALOOSA

► **Big Sandy Church, Tuscaloosa**, will join with churches around the world as they host Night to Shine, a prom experience for people with special needs sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation, on Feb. 10. There will be a red carpet with paparazzi, hair and makeup stations, shoe shining areas, limousine rides, corsages and boutonnières, dinner, karaoke, prom favors and a dance floor. For more information, visit [www.bigsandybaptist.org/shine](http://www.bigsandybaptist.org/shine). Terry Lolley is pastor. †

# GuideStone to hold Employee Benefits Summit

Key ministry decision makers, along with human resource professionals and financial officers of churches and ministries, are invited to register for the first Employee Benefits Summit presented by GuideStone Financial Resources on March 27-29 in Dallas.

The Summit, a combination of GuideStone's popular Southern Baptist Business Officers' Conference held each spring and the Benefits Forum held in the fall, will provide an expanded menu

of networking and training opportunities in one annual conference.

Speakers at the conference include Richard Hammar, a noted expert in the area of ministerial taxes; David S. Spika, GuideStone Capital Management, LLC, president who has been featured on CNBC, Fox Business Network, *The Wall Street Journal* and other publications; Danny Miller, a lawyer and expert on church and ministry retirement plans; Greg Baylor, senior coun-

sel for the Alliance Defending Freedom, a noted legal group that fights for religious freedom in the courts; and Mark Rienzi, senior counsel for the Becket Fund, which has argued many cases dealing with religious liberty before the U.S. Supreme Court; along with many other speakers.

"The Employee Benefits Summit brings together leading experts to provide the latest news and actionable insight for personnel leaders in churches and ministry organizations," said O.S. Hawkins, GuideStone president.

"Any church or ministry leader who is responsible for employee benefits needs to mark their calendar and make plans to attend."

Early registration is available through Jan. 23. There also will be a dinner and optional tour of the George W. Bush Presidential Library. To register, visit [EmployeeBenefitsSummit.com](http://EmployeeBenefitsSummit.com). (GuideStone)

## Seminary graduates update

The Alabama Baptist recognizes Alabamians who earn a master's level degree or higher from a seminary or college. The recent list of graduates, provided by each of the schools, ran in the Jan. 5 issue.

In that issue one name was left off New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's graduate list: Trevor A. Perry Sr., of Montgomery, received a master of arts in pastoral ministries.

# Alabama Baptist GIVING



Year to date through Dec. 31, 2016

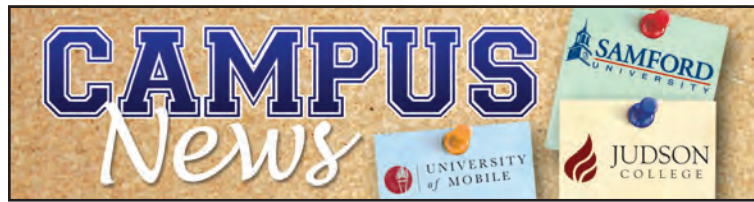
## DECEMBER

CP Challenge Budget Goal .....	\$3,333,333.33
CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....	\$3,382,531.00
Over Goal for Month.....	\$49,197.67

## YEAR TO DATE

CP Challenge Budget Goal .....	\$40,000,000.00
CP Challenge Budget Gifts.....	\$38,770,875.00
Under Goal for Year.....	\$1,229,125.00

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



### SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford University Summer Institute Makes Forbes List:** Samford University's Great Ideas Summer Institute was recognized as one of the top summer short programs for high school students by Forbes.

The 2017 institute, coordinated by Samford's University Fellows honors program, will be June 19-24.

### UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **University of Mobile Exhibit features Fairhope Artist:** The Alabama School of the Arts at the University of Mobile is hosting "Vantage Points," an exhibit of landscapes by Fairhope artist Janet Hinton, from Jan. 17 through Feb. 28 at the Donald Gallery on campus.

Hinton will discuss her work at Art Talk on Feb. 23 at 1 p.m.

For more information about the exhibit, contact Phillip Counsel-

man at 251-442-2283 or pcounselman@umobile.edu.

### JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Grace Thornton to speak at Judson College's Christian Emphasis Week:** Grace Thornton, a freelance writer, author, blogger and special assignment editor for *The Alabama Baptist*, will be the speaker for Judson College's annual Christian Emphasis Week on Jan. 24-26.



THORNTON

The author of "I Don't Wait Anymore," Thornton will speak in three services and at a special session for pastors Jan. 24. Participants of the special session will receive a free copy of Thornton's book.

For more information, contact Jill Stokes at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 316, or jstokes@alsbom.org. ☞



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# Sanctity of Human Life Sunday

## What does this day mean to you?

By Crystal S. Bachus  
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Allow me to tell you what Sanctity of Human Life Sunday means to me. Consider Becky (see photo). Becky learned she was pregnant. Again. She knew as a single mother already raising a young daughter in the 70s, she simply could not care for another child (who happened to be me) at this time in her life. She feared she could not provide for the basic needs of both children. She would have to sacrifice. She loved both children before they were born. God loved both children before either of them were even formed in the womb.

Becky had a choice. She was told to abort me because I was conceived in her affair with a married man.

### Unplanned pregnancy

Despite the world's pressures to end the unplanned pregnancy, including close family members who strongly encouraged the abortion, she chose life. My life.

Upon my birth I was immediately placed with my forever family who has graciously loved and raised me as their own flesh and blood from the moment they knew I was coming home



Becky (left) & Crystal

Photo courtesy of Crystal S. Bachus

with them. My momma, daddy, big sister and big brother — a forever family who welcomed me into their loving home. Me ... a child whose birth mother loved her enough to give her a second chance at a life she couldn't give.

A forever family who loved me enough to take me in and love me with every fiber of their being and provided for my every need. Still does. I love my birth mother for the God-honoring decision she made and I cherish the relationship we are building. We met for the first time Nov. 17, 2012 (the day the photo was taken).

### Forever family

I love my forever family for the endless love they continue to show me on a daily basis. I love my Cre-

ator, my Heavenly Father for the sacrificial love He offers through His death on the cross and the eternal gift of salvation. Love. There was so much love from every aspect of that one decision. That one choice — Love, Life, Live.

### Lover of life

God is a lover of life — “You formed me in my mother's womb” (Ps. 139:13).

Since God formed us and created us, it stands to reason that we are of value to Him. Jesus made it clear that He came to give life “and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

There are many passages in God's Word that say God created life and loves life and values life. On Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, I honor my Heavenly Father with my life. A life He created. A life He values. ✠

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- 5** Hold your device over a page or image in *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) marked as augmented reality and watch the paper come to life.
- 6** If the image is slow to load at any point, then it may be your data speed or Wi-Fi strength. Change locations and try again.
- 7** Each week when TAB arrives, open the app and hold your device over the augmented reality articles.



# Bingo runs out of chances

## Electronic bingo in all forms illegal, Alabama Supreme Court says

By Jennifer Davis Rash and Maggie Walsh  
The Alabama Baptist

The game is up for electronic bingo in Alabama. Two recent rulings by the Alabama Supreme Court, combined with a March 2016 ruling already in the books, officially clarified that electronic bingo in all its forms is illegal in Alabama, according to Attorney General Luther Strange.

In the case of Greenetrack's 825 electronic bingo machines seized by the State in a 2010 raid (see timeline, page 11), the Alabama Supreme Court ruled in favor of the State, reversing a lower court judgment siding with the casino, according to a press release from Strange's office. As a result, the State of Alabama is allowed to destroy the seized machines.

In its 29-page ruling, the Alabama Supreme Court reaffirmed its March 31, 2016, ruling in a similar case involving the legality of electronic bingo machines at

VictoryLand in Macon County.

"There is no longer any room for uncertainty, nor justification for continuing dispute, as to the meaning of [the term 'bingo']". And certainly the need for any further expenditure of judicial resources, including the resources of this Court, to examine this issue is at an end. All that is left is for the law of this state to be enforced," the Court said.

The second case dealt with VictoryLand, also reinforcing that electronic bingo machines are illegal and constitute gambling in Alabama. In this case, the Court ruled that individuals have a right to sue illegal gambling institutions.

"Because the 'contracts' ... in these cases were based on gambling consideration, they were based solely on criminal conduct and are therefore void. Consequently, the provisions of

those 'contracts,' including arbitration provisions, are void and unenforceable," the Court ruled.

Strange urged local law enforcement to do their duty to enforce

**"There is no longer any room for uncertainty, nor justification for continuing dispute, as to the meaning of [the term 'bingo']."**

**Alabama Supreme Court ruling**

## Greene County officials push back, support Greenetrack

After eight years, is it really over in Greene County? Has the electronic bingo narrative finally reached its end (see timeline, page 11)?

The Alabama Supreme Court has examined the county's constitutional amendment — which is what has fueled its case for years — and found it lacking. So it seems the answer is "yes."

But some Greene County officials are saying "no."

### Pledging support

During a meeting called by Greenetrack CEO Luther Winn Jr. on Jan. 3 in response to the Supreme Court ruling (see story, this page), Reps. A.J. McCampbell, D-District 71, and Ralph Howard, D-District 72, along with Sen. Bobby Singleton, D-District 24, each pledged support for

Greenetrack, according to *The Tuscaloosa News*.

Singleton reportedly said during the meeting, "I believe there is conspiracy — a conspiracy between the Supreme Court, (Attorney General) Luther Strange and the Republican Party," according to *The Tuscaloosa News*.

In response, Strange said, "The effort to enforce Alabama's gambling laws began before I took office and has continued after I became attorney general to ensure that each operator of unlawful electronic bingo operations in Houston, Lowndes, Macon and Greene counties has their day in court."

None of the three legislators had announced plans to take legal action at press time. (TAB)

the law, noting the rulings should remove any doubt regarding the legality of these machines.

"Local sheriffs and police officers in most parts of the state are enforcing our gambling laws," he said. "The sheriffs in Greene and Macon counties must uphold

their sworn duty to enforce the law as interpreted by the Supreme Court and not continue to sanction this illegal activity.

"As I have previously stated, my office stands ready to render any required assistance to enable them to carry out their legal duties." ¶

## TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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### CHURCH POSITIONS

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Flint Baptist Church in Decatur, Alabama. Submit resumés to Peggy Cobb at flintbaptist-church@att.net.

#### BIVOCATIONAL/FULL-TIME PASTOR

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

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

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

#### BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER

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

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# Greenetrack timeline

- ▶ **Nov. 4, 2003** — Greene County voters approve constitutional amendment to allow ‘bingo games’ to be operated by nonprofit organizations.
- ▶ **Dec. 29, 2008** — Then-governor Bob Riley creates Task Force on Illegal Gambling. Undercover investigation on Greenetrack begins.
- ▶ **July 1, 2010** — State agents seize 825 electronic bingo machines from Greenetrack, along with additional documents and records relating to the machines.
- ▶ **June 22, 2016** — Former Jefferson County Circuit Judge Houston Brown rules in favor of Greenetrack, giving the State 30 days from June 22 to return the electronic bingo machines.
- ▶ **July 20, 2016** — Alabama Supreme Court grants Attorney General Luther Strange’s request to hold onto the electronic bingo machines while the State appealed the circuit court ruling.
- ▶ **Dec. 23, 2016** — Alabama Supreme Court sides with the State, ruling the 825 electronic bingo machines ‘illegal’ and giving the State the green light to destroy them. (Compiled by Maggie Walsh)

## in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders

### H.L. “Lindy” Martin Longtime pastor dies at 85

H.L. “Lindy” Martin, longtime Alabama Baptist pastor, died Jan. 9. He was 85.

Martin served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Chalkville, in Birmingham; First Baptist Church, Vincent; Fayetteville Baptist Church, Sylacauga, and in various positions on staff at Mountain Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham, before retiring in 2015.

He also worked at Samford University in Birmingham for more than 25 years, serving as dean of the division of student services for 13 years. Martin served on the board of directors for *The Alabama Baptist* in the 1990s and early 2000s and also ministered to Native Americans as chief emeritus of his tribe of Cherokee Powhatan Indians.

He held a bachelor’s degree from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, a master’s degree from Auburn University and doctoral degrees from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina; Union Theological Seminary in New York City; and California Coast Uni-



MARTIN

versity in Santa Ana, California.

Martin is survived by his wife of 59 years, Sue; six children; and 12 grandchildren. He was a member of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, at the time of his death. (Hannah Muñoz)

### Ron Phillip Hudgens Former Clayridge pastor dies

Ron Phillip Hudgens, recently retired pastor of Clayridge Baptist Church, Clay, died Jan. 7. He was 57.

He began serving as pastor of Clayridge Baptist in 2007 and retired Jan. 1, 2017. He also served as a chaplain at an area nursing home and preached on WURL radio station.

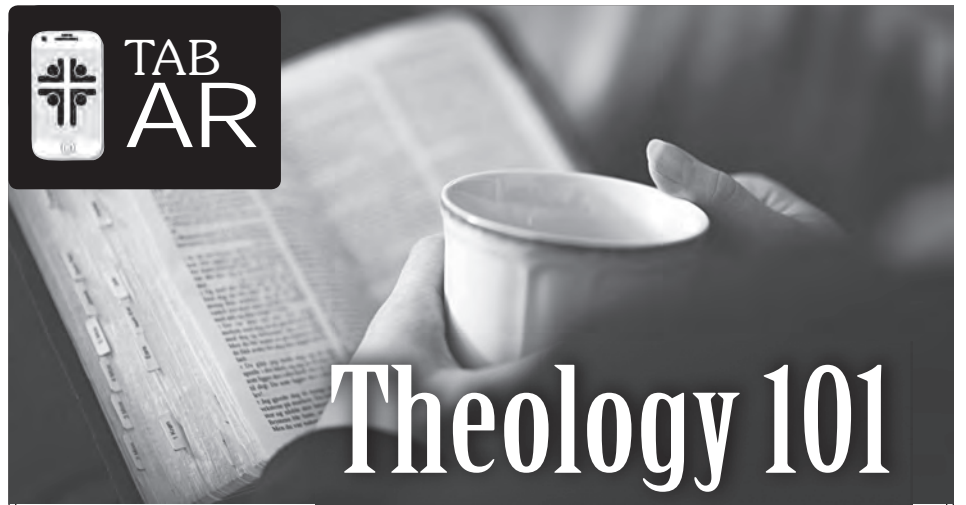
Hudgens served in the U.S. Army for three years and in the National Guard and worked at Jefferson County Department of Health from 1991 to 2016.

He held a bachelor’s degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and also attended New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Hudgens is survived by his wife of 30 years, Beverly, two children and one grandchild. (Hannah Muñoz)



HUDGENS



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Angelology

# Angels Tomorrow

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

**T**he Bible attests the presence and activity of angels in times past and also points to activities of angels in the present, a subject that occupied us last week. What about the future? What will angels be doing when time is no more?

According to the Bible, angels will accompany Christ at His second coming. Jesus put it this way: “For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with the angels” (Matt. 16:27). In the same vein, 2 Thessalonians 1:7 speaks of the Second Coming “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.” When Christ returns, an archangel will join in proclaiming His coming (1 Thess. 4:16).

### Involvement of angels

Several passages in Revelation tell of the future involvement of angels in the unfolding of God’s judgment upon the ungodly. For example, Revelation 16:1 describes one vision of that future judgment in these words: “Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, ‘Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.’” In a similar way, another vision concerns the role of an angel in a binding of Satan: “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit and shut him up and set a seal on him so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished” (Rev. 20:1-3).

### Final appearance

The final appearance of an angel in the Bible was in the role of a guide who showed John a glorious vision of the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:9-27) and the throne of God and the Lamb (Rev. 22:1-5), before offering final assurance

of Christ’s Second Coming (Rev. 22:6-11). The climactic mention of angels is the endorsement of Christ upon their witness in relation to the end times: “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches” (Rev. 22:16).

### In God’s time

One other aspect of angels in the future is rather astounding inasmuch as it will involve us as believers. Without giving us specific details about how it will unfold, 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 sets forth in the form of two questions: “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?” and “Do you not know that we shall judge angels?” Who are these angels? Good angels or fallen angels? It remains for God to reveal in His time the details surrounding the saints’ participation in a future judging of both the world and angels.

While the Bible witnesses to the participation of angels both in the past and in the climax of human history and the establishment of the eternal order, the Bible did not come into being in order to tell us all we might like to know about angels. It exists to tell us all we need to know about Christ and His saving mission, the Holy Spirit and His role in carrying out that mission, as well as about our Heavenly Father and His ultimate intention in gathering a heavenly family.

As for the present and future activity of angels, admittedly we are looking through darkened glass, but one day all things will be made clear. No questions will remain unanswered, even those that have to do with angels. †

*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.*



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# Most dangerous countries for Christians

## Open Doors USA releases annual World Watch List where Christians face most persecution

For the 15th consecutive year North Korea tops the list of countries deemed most dangerous for Christians, according to Open Doors USA. And 2016 is now labeled the “worst year of persecution of Christians on record.”

Open Doors, which aids Christians threatened by hostile governments and extremist groups, provides an annual report card of sorts with its World Watch List.

During the release of the 2017 list Jan. 11 in Washington, Open Doors officials explained that the list is calculated with an equation that takes into account crimes against Christians and restrictions on practice.

### ‘Shocking’ number

“A shocking 215 million Christians experienced high levels of persecution for their faith [in 2016],” said David Curry, president and CEO of Open Doors.

“Nearly 1 in every 12 Chris-

tians in the world today lives in an area or in a culture in which Christianity is illegal, forbidden or punished.

“And yet today the world is largely silent on the shocking wave of religious intolerance,” he added.

U.S. Rep. Robert Aderholt, R-Ala., who spoke at the news conference, said the persecution of Christians is not just “something that happened 2,000 years ago that we read about in the Bible.”

The list is 50 countries long, with the most problematic concentrated in the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Aderholt was joined by U.S. Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., who has tried to push persecuted religious minorities higher on the agenda of both Congress and presidential administrations since being elected to the House in 1980.

Smith said he had not talked

to President-elect Donald Trump about the issue but had given a copy of a bill he is sponsoring to strengthen protections for Christians abroad to Vice President-elect Mike Pence.

### ‘Central issue’

Curry, who met with Trump in October 2016 and Jan. 10, went as far as to say that if the Trump Administration doesn’t take the persecution of religious groups around the world seriously then his administration will ultimately fail.

Religious liberty “is the central issue that they’re going to have to deal with, whether you’re looking at it through the lens of immigration, whether you’re looking at it through the lens of terrorism,” Curry said.

The rest of the top 10 most dangerous countries are Somalia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Yemen and Eritrea. (RNS)



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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 22

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

**REBELLION'S CYCLE**  
**Judges 2:11-19**

This week we transition from the period of a single leader, Joshua, to multiple leaders ruling over Israel. The record is not clear whether all the named judges of the book ruled over all the tribes sequentially or whether they were concurrent. Though the judges did not rule Israel until this new era in Israel's history, they had been established at the beginning of the exodus according to Jethro's counsel (Ex. 18:13-26).

Throughout the history of the judges, we encounter an ongoing cycle — perhaps better described as a sin wave — of highs and lows, with the character of the judges serving as a barometer of the spiritual climate of Israel's tribes. Peace brings on material prosperity and contentment. Prosperity leads to self-reliant pride. Pride invites internal and external problems. Problems drive them to their knees in prayer. Piti-ful prayer brings provision of a deliverer, though their hearts are not subject to God. This provision leads to peace with their neighbors. This continuing cycle rolls through the book.

**Abandonment (11-13)**

Israel abandoned Yahweh and turned their attention and affections toward the fertility deities of the Canaanites. They observed that their neighbors worshipped gods and goddesses in order to ensure fertile women, fertile livestock and fertile lands. Then the Israelites joined them in worship of the idols. This likely included participating in the sexual rites forbidden by God in the law (Lev. 18). The very idolatry that Joshua warned their fathers about became a part of their lives (Josh. 24:20). They invited God's wrath upon themselves. Every generation who abandons the Word and will of God asks for God's judgment.

**Oppression (14-15)**

In these verses we are introduced to unnamed marauders who raided and defeated the Israelites. This was the first of many occurrences in which they fell into enemy hands because of their abandonment of the covenant. Each time they rejected Him, God brought judgment. With each judgment they were broken and, in desperation, they called upon the Lord. When they cried out to Him, God raised up deliverers.

**No Repentance (16-19)**

Out of compassion and pity, God delivered Israel. Again and again, the Lord showed compassion for His covenant people, saving them though they were unrepentant. This should serve as a reminder to us of the hardness of our own hearts: "God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

Judges 2:17-19 reads: "They did not listen to their judges ... they quickly turned away from the way of their fathers ... they did not do as their fathers did. ... Whenever the judge died, the Israelites would act even more corruptly than their fathers, going after other gods to worship and bow down to them. They did not turn from their evil practices or their obstinate ways." Israel was fully aware of their past. They had seen the examples of their parents who honored the Word of the Lord. This generation simply chose to fit in with the Canaanites, honoring their neighbor's practices rather than living a separated life of faith and obedience in the one true God.

Every generation and the people of that generation are accountable to God. Each one must come to a crisis of faith: What do I really believe? Why do I believe it? Where do I fit in? Do I live for God, for myself or for someone else? The Israelites followed their own way rather than God's way. †

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

**PRAYING WITH JOY**  
**Philippians 1:3-11**

**Pray with joy for what God has done. (3-6)**

Paul offers a strong word of thanksgiving and joy, prompted by every remembrance of the Philippians. Remembrance is the "when" of his thanksgiving; the "how" of his thanksgiving is "with joy." Joy is one of the great keynotes of this letter, the noun occurring five times and the verb or its compound 11 times. After the "when" and "how" in verse 5, Paul moves to the "why," which is his partnership with the Philippians. It is noteworthy that the "koinonia," or communion, between Paul and the Philippians is not simply fellowship in Christ, but "in the gospel." We are bound together in Christ, but we also are bound together in sharing the good news with a world that needs to hear it. The frequency of "partnership" in the letter (1:5,7; 2:1; 3:10; 4:14) testifies to the full identification of the Philippians with Paul's message and mission. "The first day" may mean the beginning of Paul's time in Philippi, when Lydia opened her home to him and helped advance the preaching of the gospel.

An earlier sign of the partnership between apostle and Church was when the Philippians sent material help more than once while Paul labored in Thessalonica (4:16), at which point the Church in Philippi could not have been more than a few months old. The most recent expression of "koinonia" was the help sent through one of their members, Epaphroditus (4:18).

**Pray with joy for what God is doing. (7-8)**

References to the praetorian guard, or palace guard, and to Caesar's household tell us Paul is in the powerful hands of Roman authority. Paul is apparently being held in a barracks or guardhouse where Roman officials and supporting military are quartered.

Imprisonment was for persons awaiting trial and not punishment following conviction. "Defense and confirmation" are legal terms. "Confirmation" probably meant vindication of one's claims. Paul's trial also is the trial of the gospel, and he expects it not only to be defended but vindicated. The thought of distancing himself from his claims for Christ for his own security apparently never entered his mind. He is prepared to defend the gospel whatever the consequences.

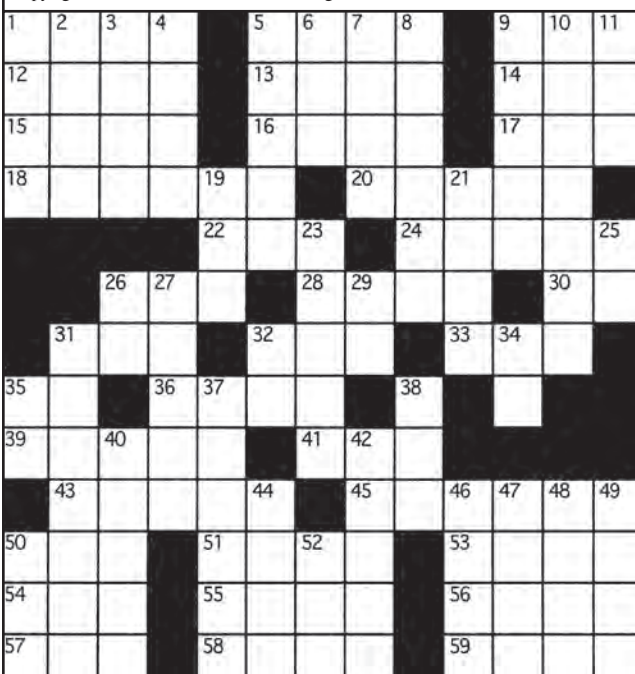
**Pray with joy for what God will continue to do. (9-11)**

In verses 9-11, Paul asks three things for the Philippians: "love" that will increase and overflow, "knowledge" that will give them the gift of discrimination and "righteousness" that will ready them for the day of Christ. Paul confesses his yearning to be with them. Note that he yearns for them not just with his own love, but with the "affection of Christ Jesus" in him. Joseph Lightfoot explains this love effectively in his 1868 commentary: "The believer has no yearnings apart from his Lord, his pulse beats with the pulse of Christ."

"Discernment" signifies insight or perception. In this context, love is seen as having the moral instinct to perceive what is right. Love's disposition is to trust and to understand, but it also must be informed if it is to function adequately. "Determine what is best" used to be translated as "approve what is best." However, more recent translations suggest that it refers to "discerning the things that matter." Prudent discernment of what really matters in life and faith can lead us to the righteousness attained by effectively following Christ. "Righteousness" is both right standing with God and the salvific work of God that makes us righteous should we profess faith in Him. This gracious act is God's work and not the result of our own works, no matter how good they might be (Eph. 2:8-9). †

## Christian Crossword

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**Across**

1. "The \_\_\_ above the liver, with the kidneys." (stomach part mentioned in Lev. 3:15 for an offering)
5. Gasp.
9. Mordecai the \_\_\_.
12. A king of Israel. (1 Kings 16)
13. West African tribe.
14. Japanese apricot.
15. Disfigure.
16. "We spend our years as a \_\_\_ that is told." (Ps. 90:9)
17. Uproar.
18. Make possible.
20. Aka Araunah the Jebusite.
22. "Do not \_\_\_ because ye know not the Scriptures." (Mark 12:24)
24. Makes less difficult.
26. Summer drink.
28. Actor Robert.
30. Ancient Thebes. (Jer. 46)
31. Mid. Eastern country.
32. \_\_\_ Grande.
33. Witty remark.
35. I \_\_\_. (God)

36. "Shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching \_\_\_." (2 Tim. 4:3)
39. Judah's daughter-in-law. (Gen. 38)
41. Compass dir.
43. Hosea's wife.
45. Area of Judea that included Beersheba.
50. "All they are brass, and \_\_\_, and iron." (Ezek. 22:18)
51. Appear indistinctly.
53. Kaiser \_\_\_.
54. Chemical suffix.
55. "God \_\_\_ \_\_\_ respecter of persons." (Acts 10:34)
56. Duke \_\_\_. (Gen. 46)
57. Cruise the \_\_\_. (pastime for the '90s)
58. "Justified in the Spirit, \_\_\_ of angels." (1 Tim. 3:16)
59. \_\_\_ room.

**Down**

1. "\_\_\_ unto me." (Matt. 11:28)
2. "Will \_\_\_ \_\_\_ rob God?" (Mal. 3:8)

3. Auk genus.
4. Arm, for example.
5. Cephas.
6. Alias. (abbr.)
7. \_\_\_ contendere.
8. Layered.
9. \_\_\_ tree.
10. "Thou buildest thine \_\_\_ place in the head of every way." (Ezek. 16:31)
11. Benign skin tumor.
19. Actress Grant.
21. Son of Caleb. (1 Chron. 4)
23. "I will \_\_\_ me up a faithful priest." (1 Sam. 2:35)
25. Egyptian king. (2 Kings 17)
26. Preposition.
27. "Your old men shall \_\_\_." (Acts 2:17)
29. Biblical interjection.
31. "The people \_\_\_ a vain thing." (Ps. 2:1)
32. B & O, e.g.
34. \_\_\_ a roll.
35. Preposition.
37. Belonging to the son of Gad. (Num. 26)
38. "Take up thy \_\_\_, and go unto thine house." (Matt. 9:6)

40. French impressionist.
42. "\_\_\_, called Peter." (Matt. 4:18)
44. \_\_\_ of Sharon. (Song of Sol. 2)
46. "The breastplate of judgment the \_\_\_." (Ex. 28:30)
47. Less is \_\_\_. (fashion dictum)
48. Zeal.
49. "That thine \_\_\_ may be in secret." (Matt. 6:4)
50. Mus. part.
52. Chemical. (suffix)



## Want to know GOD?

By Jenni Ingram  
Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

I have a grandmother's journal that I purchased for my granddaughter, Sara. Inside it asks for information such as our family tree, her birth statistics, her favorites as a child and our history. It also has pages that ask me to give her advice on certain subjects such as raising a family, dealing with life, handling finances and so on.

In reading the Book of James, it dawned on me that in many ways the Holy Bible — no matter what version you use — is God's journal to us.

When I was teaching, my favorite acronym was B-I-B-L-E, which stands for B-Basic, I-Instructions, B-Before, L-Leaving, E-Earth. I am not God, nor do I claim to be all-wise or perfect, but essentially that is what I hope my journal will give to Sara as she goes through her life and maybe even be passed down to her children. On several pages I have listed my favorite Bible verses, how I interpreted those verses and how I applied it to my life.

I believe this is what God wants us to do with His journal to us. Our lineage is listed in there, what struggles our ancestors faced in order to live a life acceptable to God and finally what reward we have waiting for us. I believe God gave us this to be a comfort to us when we are in pain and struggling, a guide for us to navigate the rough seas of life and an owner's manual of sorts to live a life that is a legacy for others to follow to salvation.

Won't you read the owner's manual with me? And yes, along with the journal I will give Sara my old worn-out Bible that has guided me.✝



# Media reviews

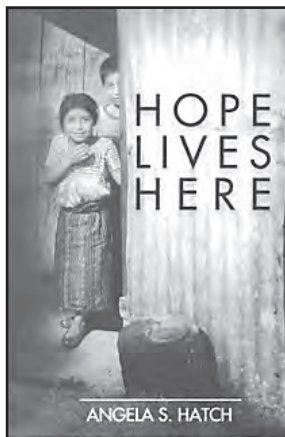
By Martine Bates Fairbanks

## Hope Lives Here

Angela S. Hatch. Greenville, South Carolina: Ambassador-Emerald International, 2015. 128 pp. (Paperback).

I first heard of "Casas por Cristo," or Houses for Christ, from my son, whose church makes annual trips to Guatemala to build

houses for needy families. I knew basically what the organization does and how and where it operates. I had even heard about the grateful families who were presented the key to a new house — something the families would never have been able to afford on their own. What I



had not been exposed to was a close-up look at the recipient families. Angela Hatch has changed that with "Hope Lives Here."

Hatch is a veteran of missions trips to build with Casas teams; the work is close to her

heart. What "Hope Lives Here" did for me is to introduce a family in Guatemala from their own perspective; it is one thing to hear about people, but another entirely to see their lives through their own eyes. Hatch has written a moving story of a family experiencing grinding poverty as they try to survive, perpetually on the verge of disaster, but holding onto hope for a better future.

The book is well written and entertaining, but more than that it grips the heart — the aim, one presumes, of this new but very capable author.

## Saving Eric

Joan Deneve. Holly Springs, Georgia: Write Integrity Press, 2015. 410 pp. (Paperback).

It's always hard to review a fiction book; I don't want to spoil the experience for the prospective reader, but I do want to give enough information to help you make a good decision. It's somewhat easier with this book, because the decision should be easy — buy it. It's good.

The story is about a CIA agent who discovers a traitor inside the organization, but not soon enough ... oops. See what I mean? Better not give that away. I didn't see it coming, and that's one of the main things that excited me about this book — it was unpredictable. I didn't expect a lot of the things that happened, and after two solid months of Hallmark Christmas movies, what a welcome relief.

The core story is a combination romance/conversion story, told beautifully and with

just enough restraint to make it believable and oh so enjoyable. Joan Deneve, please write another one soon.

## Gambling with Eternity: The Loser Wins!

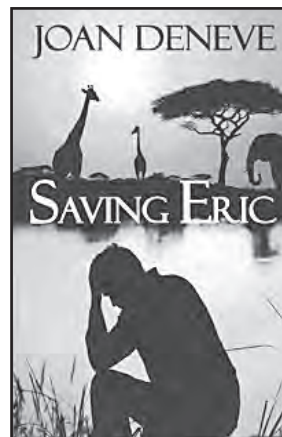
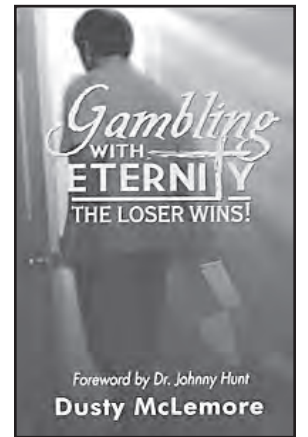
Dusty McLemore. Athens, Alabama: Lindsay Lane Publishing. 170 pp. (Paperback).

A young Alabama man has a gambling addiction. It gets worse and worse, endangering his marriage and his future. Time after time, he vows he will stop gambling but he always goes back to it. His life is crumbling and he owes his bookie an impossible sum.

Fast forward from 1979 to the present. That compulsive gambler has been gloriously saved, stopped gambling and paid back all of the money he owed to his bookie. Most surprising of all, that young man is now pastor of a church with more than 2,500 members.

"Gambling with Eternity" is the autobiography of Dusty McLemore, pastor of Lindsay Lane Baptist Church, Athens. Because of the growth of the church under his leadership, other pastors and church staff members are likely to be interested in what McLemore has to say. Because of his amazing story, lay people also will be interested in reading about the change brought about in his life.

The book is well written for the most part, although it could have benefited from more editing. The minor issues are not enough to diminish the impact or the enjoyment of the book.✝



## WHAT ARE YOU READING?



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## Meet the reviewer

Martine Bates Fairbanks, Ed.D., reviews books and movies for The Alabama Baptist. She is a university professor and retired principal. She is a member of Central Baptist Church, Decatur.

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A restorer works on a wall of mosaic tiles in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

Photo courtesy of Piacenti SpA

# Archaeological importance

## Restoration comes to Bethlehem's Church of Nativity

**I**t is revered by different Christian sects and draws more than a million visitors to the Holy Land every year, making it the biggest tourist attraction in the Palestinian territories.

The Church of the Nativity, built by Roman Emperor Constantine in the fourth century, sits in Bethlehem above what's believed to be the birthplace of Jesus in one of the most politically divisive regions of the world.

The church is administered jointly by Greek Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Armenian Apostolic authorities, and all have monastic communities there.

Since 2013, Italian experts from the art restoration firm Piacenti SpA have been working with the Palestinian government to overcome cultural and religious differences and forge ahead with an ambitious restoration expected to cost \$15 million when completed.

"For those who have faith, this is the place where God arrived on earth, born in a cave that really existed under this church," Giammarco Piacenti, head of the project, said on a visit to Rome. "It was immediately venerated, so historically and archaeologically it is very important."

### Collaboration between 170 experts

Around 170 experts have been working on the restoration of the church's ceiling, wooden architraves and walls for the past three years. During their research they uncovered a mosaic angel, the seventh that still remains in the church, and cleaned and

restored more than a million brilliantly colored tiny mosaic tiles.

"This work has been made possible thanks to the collaboration of people from different companies, with different backgrounds and skills," Piacenti said. "It's also involved people of different religions, nationalities and cultures."

The church was completed on Constantine's orders in 339 A.D. but later destroyed during conflict in the sixth century. A new basilica was built by Byzantine Emperor Justinian I in 565 A.D. and lined with colorful wall mosaics during the 12th century.

"The design of the transept is an example of exceptional craftsmanship, and so too are the mosaics, the columns, the capitals and the architraves," Piacenti said.

Over the years the structure has suffered from degradation and water infiltration. It was declared a U.N. World Heritage site in 2012 in a bid to save it from further decay and it's also on the World Heritage endangered list.

But Piacenti said few realize it also withstood invasions, war and natural disasters.

"This church is a fortress that has survived attacks and 15 terrible earthquakes and it is still standing today," he said.

Around two-thirds of the work is finished; funds are being sought to help restore the 50 columns and the floor mosaics and for the installation of fire prevention and lighting systems.

The restoration is being funded by countries including France, Germany, Italy, Turkey, Morocco and the Vatican. The project is expected to be completed in 2019. (RNS)

**"This church is a fortress that has survived attacks and 15 terrible earthquakes."**

**Giammarco Piacenti  
head of restoration project**

## RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

### American Jewish centers receive bomb threats

WASHINGTON — At least 16 Jewish community centers (JCC) received bomb threats Jan. 9 in an apparent attempt to rattle American Jews, who have seen a spike in anti-Semitism incidents in the past year.

The threats — some by live callers, some by robocall — were made to JCCs in Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, Tennessee, South Carolina and at least four other states.

All of the reports were false, but several forced the evacuation of centers, which are gathering places for Jews and often include preschools, senior centers, gyms and facilities for readings, classes and prayer.

The Jewish Chronicle of London also reported bomb threats at a "small number" of Jewish and non-Jewish schools in Britain on Jan. 9. These also were determined to be false.

Targeted JCCs included those in Baltimore; Miami; Columbia, South Carolina; West Nashville, Tennessee; and Jacksonville, Florida. Law enforcement officials are investigating the possibility that the calls came from a single source.

The Jewish Community Center Association of North America — the umbrella group of JCCs — thanked local and federal law enforcement authorities for their "quick and thorough response."

David Posner, director of strategic performance at the JCC Association, said JCCs will continue to work with law enforcement "as they do all year long" to ensure the safety of the centers. (RNS)

### Adults who identify as LGBT in US increases

WASHINGTON — Adults who identify as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender) is on the rise in the United States, according to a recent Gallup poll. Ten million Americans (4.1 percent) now identify as LGBT, as opposed to 3.5 percent in 2012.

Based on interviews from a random sample of more than 1.6 million adults, millennials (those born between 1980 and 1998) are the steam behind most of the increase in LGBT self-identification. The portion of millennials identifying as LGBT rose from 5.8 percent in 2012 to 7.3 percent in 2016. Gen Xers (those born between 1965 and 1979) maintained a 3.2 percent identification and baby boomers shrank from 2.7 percent to 2.4 percent, according to the findings.

The poll also found that LGBT identification increased more in women than it did in men, with 3.5 percent of women identifying themselves as LGBT in 2012 and 4.4 percent in 2016, where 3.4 percent of men identified as LGBT in 2012 and rose only to 3.7 percent in 2016.

Looking at racial and ethnic lines, the largest increase since 2012 in LGBT identification occurred among Asians (3.5 percent to 4.9 percent) and Hispanics (4.3 percent to 5.4 percent), Gallup reported. (TAB)

### Virginia mandates gender identity protections

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — The state of Virginia has implemented steps that will prevent contracts from going to businesses without antidiscrimination policies related to sexual orientation and gender identity, according to The Christian Post.

The new mandate comes from an executive order signed Jan. 5 by Gov. Terry McAuliffe that took immediate effect.

"All Executive Branch entities are ordered to include in their procurement contracts valued over \$10,000 a prohibition on discrimination by the contractor, in its employment practices, subcontracting practices and delivery of goods or services, on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, political affiliation, disability or veteran status," the executive order read in part. One exemption in the mandate pertains to "certain private child-placing agencies."

McAuliffe said in a statement that the order was signed in response to reported incidents of discrimination by businesses in Virginia, the Post reported. (TAB)