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Photo by Ashleigh Palomaria

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and convention leadership gather at the building site of the new Great Commission Ministries Resource Center in Prattville on Feb. 2 to pray and participate in a groundbreaking ceremony.

Countdown begins

Upcoming move for State Board of Missions on schedule

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Employees of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) have begun the process of cleaning out, packing up and rehearsing the name of their new office structure.

Great Commission Ministries Resource Center will replace the long-time “Baptist Building” reference as soon as the SBOM staff occupies the

soon-to-be-built 39,900-square-foot facility in Prattville.

Projections are for staff members to relocate from their current location on the corner of Narrow Lane Road and East South Boulevard in Montgomery on Jan. 1, 2018.

The move from the existing 87,500-square-foot structure was approved by state convention messengers in November 2016.

SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance said the value of the proposed building and acreage is in line with the appraised value — \$7.6 million — of the current Baptist Building.

“The proposal would position missions personnel and resources closer to the geographic center of the state,” he said. “This would provide more accessibility for Alabama Baptists to

utilize their State Board of Missions facility as a Great Commission Ministries Resource Center.”

Bobby DuBois, SBOM associate executive director, added, “This is in line with the right-sizing of our staff that has been underway since the arrival in 1998 of Dr. Lance as our executive director. After Dr. Lance joined the staff, our full-time employee count was 121. Today we have 67 full-time employees.”

The relocation was made possible by an “exchange of keys” negotiation with Baptist Health, which has a medical center next door to the current SBOM building. Baptist Health is building the new facility in Prattville on land it currently owns and the two entities will then “trade” facilities.✠

Is Valentine’s Day a Christian holiday?

By Wade Paris
The Shepherd Calls

Is Valentine’s Day a Christian holiday? Well, yes and no. No it is not a day on the Christian calendar like Good Friday, Easter or Christmas. In that sense it is not technically a Christian holiday.

On the other hand St. Valentine, for whom the day is named, was an outstanding Christian. His life exemplified the spirit of Christ — love.

When we celebrate true love we surely are honoring Christ. Some might argue Valentine’s Day honors romantic love thus

excluding it from being Christian. Let me remind you that God created romance. The Bible tells us God made us male and female and caused us to be attracted to one another. He made Adam and Eve and put them in the Garden of Eden naked. That is pretty romantic stuff, don’t you think?

View of love

In America when we think of love, our minds often focus on passion and sex; but that is a very limited view of love. The biblical view of love is to love another not because of what they give you but because of who you are. For example, love is a mother or father loving their children even when they are bad. Love is children loving their parents even when they are old and out of touch. Love is a missionary family giving up the “good life” in America to serve in a remote developing country. Love is a husband or wife continuing to love and be

(See ‘Love,’ page 5)



PARIS

COMMENT

Companion the Grieving

If I say this inappropriately, then please forgive me. I don't mean to offend. It is just that helping grieving people is near to my heart and increasingly I see churches doing a disservice to the grieving.

The disservice is unintentional to be sure. As Baptist Christians we understand the Bible teaches one who believes in God through faith in Jesus Christ has everlasting life. Jesus said as much in John 6:40: "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day."

Based on that assurance more and more churches hold celebration services instead of funeral services for those who die. The unfortunate thing is that sometimes a celebration service almost makes one feel guilty for grieving the loss of a loved one.

Part of it may be cultural. American society is characterized by death avoidance and death denial. Death is treated more like a video game episode than the heart-wrenching, life-changing reality of losing a loved one.

Part of it may be personal. Most people have little contact with death and dying. We don't know how to companion someone in sorrow. It is easier for us to remember the happy times than to face the void created by the death of a loved one.

Theological confusion

Part of it may be theological confusion. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13 the apostle Paul writes, "We do not want you to be uninformed about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others who have no hope." The verse does not say "do not grieve." It says we don't grieve like other people because we have hope in Jesus Christ.

Being a Christian does not make us immune to grief. Instead it gives us hope in the midst of grief.

Grief is real. The loss of a loved one is the most stressful experience in life. It has physical and psychological expressions. One study found the body's chemical changes in grief increase the probability of heart attacks 21 times in the



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

first 24 hours following the death of a loved one. A British study found the body's immune system weakened by chemical reactions associated with grief.

Accidents and mishaps

Grieving people often report feeling like they "are going crazy" because of difficulty making decisions or remembering things.

Studies by insurance companies found grieving people are more prone to accidents and other mishaps.

These and the long list of other expressions of grief evidence the turmoil going on inside the grieving person as they cope with the emptiness created by death and the pain of absence. For one who loses a spouse there also is the challenge of identity when one has lost half of who that person has been for decades.

A sensitive Christian community will recognize these realities and find ways to walk with members in the weeks and months of finding a new sense of balance in a world which for them has turned upside down.

The declaration that Brother Jones or Sister Smith is "now with the Lord" is a declaration of the Christian faith. Adding that we therefore should not grieve misses the mark.

When someone tells survivors not to grieve because their loved one is with the Lord in heaven, that only compounds the emotions by making people feel like there is something else wrong with them because they are grieving.

In one sense grief is about the one who died.

It acknowledges that person was with us. It affirms that person was important to us and loved by us. Grief affirms the departed person will be missed.

In another sense grief is not so much for the one who died as it is for those who are left. Survivors are the ones with emptiness, with absence, with confusion, with the challenge to identity, with pain.

That is one reason moments of recall and remembrance are important. Stories affirm the value of the one who died. They affirm the departed's contributions and importance to an individual, to a community. They affirm the loss is a shared loss — a community loss.

Remembrances can be healing. They certainly are comforting.

As Christians there is another source of comfort. Standing before an open grave we dare proclaim that death is not the end. Again the words of Jesus: "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that I shall lose none of all those He has given Me but raise them up at the last day" (John 6:39).

That is our hope in the midst of grief. It is the hope Christians have proclaimed for more than 2,000 years. Reflecting on the words of Jesus, the apostle Paul said, "We know that the One who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in His presence" (2 Cor. 4:14).

Paul could ask "O death, where is your victory" (1 Cor. 15:55) because death has been swallowed up in the victory of the resurrection.

The source of our hope is the ground of our faith.

Very present help

Until that great day when time shall be no more the Christian has the comfort and companionship of God's Holy Spirit. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would "be with you forever" (John 14:16). In the midst of grief, loneliness, confusion and pain the believer is never alone. Through the Holy Spirit, God is a very present help.

As Paul wrote in Romans 8:28 we know God works all situations for the good of those who love Him.

The grieving Christian is comforted by hope of the resurrection, hope in the presence of the Holy Spirit and hope in the love of God.

Christians may not grieve like those who have no hope but we still grieve.

So tell the stories and celebrate the life of the Christian who has died in the Lord but don't forget to companion the grieving.

How blessed are those who make the grief journey in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and the encouragement of God's saints. †

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

DISCIPLE-MAKING TRENDS

I wanted to make comments after reading Grace Thornton's article on disciple-making trends from the Jan. 5 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*.

Grace wrote on "Wednesday homework" and "Sunday blue laws."

How about some more factors? To me it is amazing how small

crowds are on Sunday nights, if Sunday night services are even held. Maybe the same can be said for Wednesday nights.

Sunday night attendance can be greatly affected by events such as NFL, MLB and NBA games plus college sports, something we didn't used to have much concern over on Sun-

days.

Yes

I know

it could

be worse: On the West

Coast many televised games begin at 10 a.m. on Sundays. That does not do much for Sunday morning crowds.

(See 'Letters,' page 12)



TAB

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

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'Womb to the tomb'

Christians challenged to protect, care for human life at all stages

The sanctity and dignity of human life require Christians to care not only for the unborn but for all people at all stages of life, speakers said on the final two days of the Evangelicals for Life conference in Washington.

The phrase "the womb to the tomb" was heard during several addresses to describe the extent of the sanctity of human life and to call for protection and compassionate care from evangelical Christians.

Evangelicals for Life (EFL) — the second annual event co-hosted by the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) and Focus on the Family — addressed such issues as adoption and foster care, ministry to refugees and immigrants, caring for the sick and dying, public policies to protect life, and diversity in the Church.

The Jan. 27-28 conference — held in conjunction with the annual March for Life in Washington — broke midday Jan. 27 for attendees to join others on the National Mall for a rally and the march to Capitol Hill.

Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, said God "created a world in which human flourishing was His intention" but today there are "across so many fronts so many assaults" on human life and dignity.

"We are missing the fact that a consistent pro-life ethic requires us to see that anything that diminishes life as the Creator intended it [for His] creatures is an assault upon God's glory and God's sovereignty and God's will," Mohler said.

Christians' responsibility "to be the defenders of life cannot be localized in the buildings of government but has to be taken into every local church and every Christian heart, translated not only into right thought but right action," he said.

Seattle pastor Eugene Cho added that evangelicals should support the sanctity of life "from womb to tomb, not just our lives but their lives, not just American lives but Syrian lives, not just Christian ... lives but Muslim minority refugee lives."

Christians should seek justice for all human beings because it "reflects the very character of God," Cho said. "We need to be awakened to the injustices in our world."

In the conference's final address, poet Jackie Hill Perry said Christians should repent as the first step in developing a heart for seeing beauty in diversity. They need to repent of pride and fear, she said.



Photo by Josh Shank/Rocket Republic

Travis Wussow (left), ERLC vice president for public policy, moderates a Jan. 27 panel on ministry to refugees and immigrants at Evangelicals for Life.

"We have sinned against people when we have spoken to them, judged them, looked upon them, thought about them or treated them in a dishonorable way because of the color of their skin, the language that they speak or the culture they embody," Hill Perry said. "And these sins against people are first and foremost sins against God."

She warned Christians against seeing their "race or culture as the standard."

"We must turn from this pride and see that Christ is the standard of goodness and beauty; we are not," Hill Perry said.

Other conference speakers addressed a variety of issues.

John Stonestreet, president of the Colson Center for Christian Worldview, said civility demonstrates respect for the dignity of those on the opposite side of issues.

"Civility has nothing to do with reciprocity. In other words, we're not civil to

people because they're civil to us," he said.

Also, Stonestreet said, "Civility is not a strategy. We're not civil because it works.

"Civility is an expectation of anyone living out of the grand story of redemption" in Scripture, he said. "We do it because it's right. We do it whether it works or not."

A panel discussion on ministry to refugees and immigrants came only a few hours after President Trump signed an executive order halting the refugee resettlement program for

120 days and blocking refugees from war-torn Syria indefinitely.

Bryant Wright, pastor of Johnson Ferry Baptist Church, Marietta, Georgia, said Johnson Ferry Baptist now is responsible for nine Muslim refugee families from Syria and one Christian family from Iran.

The refugee ministry has given the church "the opportunity to witness in a rich way," he said. "We get our guidance from the Word of God, not from talk radio, not from different political winds that are blowing."

'Be willing to serve'

Matt Chandler, lead pastor for teaching of The Village Church in the Dallas area, urged churches to not miss the opportunity they have as the nations come to them. "The Church must not buy into the fearful rhetoric around refugees but be willing to welcome, to help, to come alongside and to serve," he said.

Jim Daly, president of Focus on the Family, shared about being a foster child and now doing foster care with his family.

"Everybody needs love and acceptance," he said. "Is it easy? No, but God has not called you to easiness."

A Jan. 28 panel addressed the need to foster human dignity among the sick and dying.

C. Ben Mitchell, a bioethicist and provost at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee, said the Church has a long history of helping people die well but now has "outsourced death. We don't do a very good job of caring for the dying."

"We've convinced ourselves that we are in the land of the living on the way to dying," he said. "And in reality the Christian worldview teaches us we are in the land of the dying on the way to the land of the living." (BP)



Photo by Josh Shank/Rocket Republic

Matt Chandler

Religious freedom topic of National Prayer Breakfast

By Caleb Jones
Intern, The Alabama Baptist

Speaking at his first National Prayer Breakfast on Feb. 2, President Donald Trump focused on religious freedom, describing it as a “blessing.”

The breakfast opened with a rendition of “Amazing Grace” by Mercy Me’s Bart Millard, prayer from World Series MVP Ben Zobrist and comments from Senate Chaplain Barry Black.

Trump used a quote by Thomas Jefferson — “The God who gave us life, gave us liberty” — to make his own point that “freedom of religion is a sacred right.”

Freedom of religion will be defended, he said, noting he will “totally destroy” the Johnson Amendment, which regulates churches and other similar tax-exempt organizations from aiding candidates on their political campaigns.

It is more important for Americans to obtain spiritual success than material success, he said.

“We are ... and always will be ... one beautiful nation under God.”

Trump also thanked the military personnel for their service and Americans who have committed to pray for him.

“Your faith and prayers have sustained me and inspired me through some very, very tough times,” he said. “What I hear most often as I travel the country are five words that never, ever fail to touch my heart. That’s ‘I am praying for you.’”



TRUMP



On Saturday, Feb. 4, 1843, the first issue of *The Alabama Baptist* was published in Marion. Milo Jewett, president of Judson Female Institute, was listed as senior editor. The paper was printed by Love and Dykous, publishers of the *Marion Herald*.

The Committee on Periodicals of the Alabama Baptist State Convention quickly recommended and messengers approved the new paper as the convention’s official organ for communicating with cooperating churches. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of Audrey Krier

Birmingham Baptist Association’s Vacation Bible School (VBS) clinic will be held at Sixth Avenue Baptist Church on April 29. The association’s VBS jump-start training will be held Feb. 23 at Raleigh Avenue Baptist Church.

Barriers knocked down

Birmingham Association diversifies VBS training opportunities

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Audrey Krier said when it comes to Alabama Baptist churches and summer, one thing is universal — and it’s not the heat.

It’s that number of trained Vacation Bible School (VBS) workers is on the decline and has been for about a decade.

So last year Birmingham Baptist Association — where Krier serves as VBS director — formed a task force to figure out why the decline was happening and how to develop new strategies “for this valuable outreach,” she said.

A variety of reasons rose to the surface.

“Some of the largest churches have either opted for writing their own material for VBS or have gone to alternative summer activities,” she said. “Many small churches have aging congregations or lack resources to hold VBS.”

‘Training is critical’

Some churches were skipping training their workers because of lack of time or resources, Krier said. “And training is critical. Statistically, for every trained worker, there’s a profession of faith that happens in VBS.”

Daniel Edmonds, state missionary overseeing state VBS efforts, agreed that the more trained laborers there are the better the harvest.

“We are seeing better numbers when more people are trained,” he said.

When it came to figuring out how

to address the decline in the Birmingham area, one question quickly emerged in the conversation, Krier said — why were they holding separate trainings in the same city to teach the same material every year?

A common goal

“In years past the association would hold training that would be attended by churches with Caucasian leaders serving predominantly Caucasian congregations and the African-American churches would hold training for the African-American churches,” Krier said.

It hadn’t been done that way intentionally — it had just ended up that way, she said. And when they tried to figure out the reason, they quickly realized there was no reason.

So last year they decided to combine their efforts and partner together, Krier said.

“Last year because both teams already existed the teams became one with responsibilities being shared through team teaching,” she said. “This year there is one team made up of a diverse group of leaders.”

For the past four years training had been held at Eastside Baptist Church, Birmingham, in an attempt to serve the needs of all types of churches, Krier said.

“Eastside is located in a transitional community, which did move us closer to being able to appeal to a larger more diverse group,” she said of the church, where she also serves as children’s pastor. “This year Sixth Avenue Baptist Church has graciously agreed to host the Vacation Bible School clinic for BBA.”

Vernessa Barnes, minister of education

for children and youth at Sixth Avenue Baptist, said it’s been a very helpful partnership.

“Particularly with the climate of things in the world, it’s always good to practice what we preach,” she said. “When we’re able to work together as the body of Christ, I think people truly see Christianity from a different light.”

And the more churches get involved from both communities, the better it will be, she said.

The Sixth Avenue clinic will be held April 29. A jump-start training will be held Feb. 23 at Raleigh Avenue Baptist Church, Birmingham.

‘Conscious effort’

Mike Johnson, pastor of Eastside Baptist, said it has been a “conscious effort” to build bridges and work together, and it’s paid off in a lot of understanding and headway being made for the gospel.

Adult VBS at his church has brought in people from both communities during the past few years and it’s brought a lot of great relationships, he said.

That momentum at Eastside has carried over into Krier’s effort to unite the two teams for the sake of sharing the gospel in Birmingham.

“It’s just been a wonderful marriage of the two teams such a mutually advantageous thing. Good things are happening. Barriers are being knocked down,” she said. “We just want to be an encouragement to others to do a similar partnership.”



Photo courtesy of Carolyn R. Tomlin

Valentine's Day is Feb. 14.

STAYING IN LOVE THROUGH ENTIRE marriage

Celebrate, remember blessings of spouse every day; be intentional

By Carolyn R. Tomlin
Special to The Alabama Baptist

While attending an Alabama writing workshop, I noticed an older woman talking with a group of younger participants. “I’ve been married almost 50 years and many of those from my high school graduation class are nearing the 50-year mark also,” she said. “Our love grows stronger every year.”

With today’s high divorce rate several in the group were a bit surprised.

According to a recent report from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in 1900 there were 709,000 (9.3 percent) marriages and 55,751 (0.7 percent) divorces.

In 2015 the report estimates there were 2,221,379 (6.4 percent) marriages with a 800,909 (3.7 percent) divorce rate per 1,000 population.

Not only are there more divorces but both males and females marry later than several generations ago. Yet with improvements in health care the longevity rate

rises. This means many couples can expect to celebrate a golden wedding anniversary and beyond.

Because of circumstances beyond our control not all marriages can be measured by the quantity of years together.

Instead some are highly valued by the quality of the union.

One such marriage was that of C.S.

Lewis and Joy Davidman.

Lewis writes, “We feasted on love, every mode of it — solemn and merry, romantic and realistic, sometimes as dramatic as a thunderstorm, sometimes as comfortable and unemphatic as putting on your soft slippers.”

Douglas Gresham, the stepson of Lewis talks about the marriage of his parents.

Instead of the 40 or 50 years experienced in many

marriages they had only four because Joy died of cancer early in their married relationship.

C.S. Lewis died three years later. Yet through his writings we can learn about the true nature of marriage and love.

If you’re like many couples, then you

“And now these three remain; faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

1 Cor. 13:13

‘Love seeketh not its own’

(continued from page 1)

faithful even though their partner is ill or no longer young and attractive. True love seeks the best for the significant other rather than self. The Bible says it this way: “Love seeketh not its own” (1 Cor. 13:5).

Arnold came out of his office and found a street kid admiring his beautiful sports car. “Do you like it?” Arnold asked.

“Yeah, man! How much did it cost?”

“I don’t really know. My brother gave it to me.”

“Gave it to you? You mean for free — for nothing?”

“Yes for free, for nothing.”

“Wow,” the boy exclaimed. “I wish ...,” Arnold waited expecting him to say, “I wish I had a brother like that.” But he didn’t. Instead he said, “I wish I could be a brother like that.” You see the boy had a brother at home who like himself had nothing. He wanted to do good things for his brother.

That is love. That is Christian. Now you decide. Is Valentine’s Day a Christian holiday?

EDITOR’S NOTE — This column first appeared in Missouri’s Word & Way state Baptist newspaper. ✝

celebrate the anniversary of your wedding, birthdays, Valentine’s Day and Christmas each year. But when you think of the blessings of having a longtime marriage partner — wouldn’t it be fun to celebrate more than once a year?

Serendipitous occasions

Like other worthwhile things in life any form of celebration requires some planning. However, most adults report that those serendipitous occasions often provide the most fun and adventure. Some may be expensive while others are low- to no-cost. Use the following to make the most of your years as a couple.

► **Plan a vacation together.** Have you dreamed of taking a cruise, a trip to Europe or a summer excursion to Alaska? Expensive? Yes. Difficult? no. Working out the details of travel and sightseeing as a couple could be one of your best investments in the health of your marriage.

► **Check with local colleges and universities in your area for plays, musical performances and concerts.** Usually free or low-cost, these provide cultural enrichment you or your spouse may enjoy.

► **Write a love letter to your spouse.** Tell him or her how much they mean to you and how they enhance your life.

► **Attend a Christian marriage enrichment conference.**

► **Surprise your spouse with a “spur of the moment” event.** Drop by a coffee shop just to talk and enjoy a flavored drink. Grab your umbrella and walk in a gentle rain. Hike through a state park and search for wildlife with your camera. Take turns with a special surprise — just for the two of you.

► **Talk about your life and future as a couple.** Pull out your family’s photo album and revisit those early years of marriage, look through pictures when your children were growing up or keepsakes of cards given years ago.

► **Keep a journal of your celebrations for the year.** Include ticket stubs, restaurant menus, travel brochures and of course photos of these events. Place it in an area where you’ll be reminded of these special times as husband and wife.

► **Make prayer and Bible study a time**

to be together. Husbands and wives who pray for each other — in each other’s presence — maintain a deeper relationship with God.

Share your ideas with other married couples in your Sunday School class and church. Become a role model for your adult children and grandchildren. Could your commitment as husband and wife become the foundation for their marriage? ✝

Helpful resources

“The Marriage You’ve Always Dreamed Of”

by Greg Smalley

“Secrets of Lasting Love”

by Gary Smalley

“The 5 Love Languages”

by Gary Chapman

“15 Minute Devotions for Couples”

by Bob and Emilie Barnes

“Still the One”

by Martha Bolton



RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

Trump's LGBTQ support unsettles conservatives

WASHINGTON — On Jan. 31, President Donald Trump announced he was continuing the executive order by former President Barack Obama that protects gay and transgender employees from discrimination while working for federal contractors.

And not only did Trump extend the protections but he did so in powerful language that used the community's own "LGBTQ" identifier while vowing he would be "respectful and supportive of LGBTQ rights." The statement with the announcement added Trump was "proud to have been the first ever GOP nominee to mention the LGBTQ community in his nomination acceptance speech, pledging then to protect the community from violence and oppression."

Erick Erickson, editor of The Resurgent news site and a leading Christian conservative, said, "This executive order treats the faithful adherents of major religions as second-class citizens when it comes to competing for government contracts."

Two bishops who lead the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' religious freedom and family life committees issued a statement calling Trump's decision not to rescind Obama's 2014 executive order "troubling and disappointing."

The workplace discrimination protection order is "deeply flawed," said Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia and Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore. It "creates problems rather than solves them," they said. "In seeking to remedy instances of discrimination it creates new forms of discrimination against people of faith." (RNS)

Boy Scouts now allow transgender boys

IRVING, Texas — The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) announced Jan. 30 it will accept transgender children who identify as boys into its historically boys-only programs, according to The Christian Post.

The new policy, effective immediately, states BSA will accept members based on the gender they list on their application — the one they identify with — rather than the one listed on their birth certificate.

"For more than 100 years the Boy Scouts of America, along with schools, youth sports and other youth organizations, have ultimately deferred to the information on an individual's birth certificate to determine eligibility for our single-gender programs," the organization said in a statement. "However, that approach is no longer sufficient as communities and state laws are interpreting gender identity differently and these laws vary widely from state to state."

The change came after an 8-year-old transgender child named Joe was asked to leave a Cub Scouts pack in New Jersey.

The new policy brings BSA into equal standing on the issue with the Girl Scouts of America, which began accepting transgender members in May 2015, according to the Post. (TAB)

Pro-life student group sues NYC college

NEW YORK — After being sued in late January a New York college has changed its mind on whether to officially recognize a pro-life student organization.

The office of student affairs at Queens College of The City University of New York system released a statement Jan. 27 saying it had reversed the earlier decision of a student committee to deny the approval of an on-campus group called Queens College Students for Life.

Casey Mattox, senior counsel of the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), which filed the suit on behalf of the group, said the situation was "particularly troubling because Queens College bills itself as 'the most diverse campus in America'" but had excluded this pro-life group.

Despite the reversal, Mattox said Jan. 30 that ADF does not intend to drop the suit. "The college still needs to change its egregiously unconstitutional policies," Mattox said, according to The Christian Post. (TAB)

Ongoing fruit

WMU fund starts life-changing chain reaction

In the capital of Uzbekistan, a heavily Muslim country, Lisa found Jesus.

And then hard times found her. When she was still a teenager, her mom died. She left Lisa with an apartment, which would've been a big help — except that other family members wanted it for themselves. So they made Lisa's life even harder. "Lisa was forced to leave Uzbekistan to save her life, leaving everything behind," Oleg Turlac said.

She landed in Moldova. That's when she found the Baptist college. And that's where she met Turlac, a graduate of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, who moved to the former Soviet nation to teach theology at the college.

"She wanted to study missions so that she could then tell people from different cultures about Christ," Turlac said.

And that went well until funding became an issue.

"Seeing this, I remembered about the Second Century Fund, of which I read on the website of Woman's Missionary Union (WMU)," Turlac said. "I decided to apply for a grant for Lisa. Because of funds received through the grant, Lisa was able to finish the college program. She graduated in 2005 with a bachelor's degree in missions."

And she hasn't slowed down since.

Lisa is now serving in a small town in southern Moldova, reaching out to young people and teaching at the town's only Baptist church.

Along with Galina, her friend and fellow graduate of the Baptist college, she started a tailoring school with the purpose of teaching a trade to girls at risk of human trafficking, Turlac said.

It's a vital ministry, he said. "More than 100,000 women have

been trafficked out of Moldova by human traffickers since 1990. In the town where Lisa ministers, school has been closed and teens had nowhere to go."

So Lisa held summer camps for them and during winter she and Galina would gather the teen girls into the mission station and have Bible study, do crafts and teach them tailoring.

"Lisa is saving the lives of these young women from human trafficking," Turlac said. "Personally I have seen few people as dedicated to ministry as Lisa is. In spite of very challenging circumstances, God is using Lisa to reach people for Christ in the former USSR."

The ongoing fruit of Lisa's \$2,000 grant in Moldova is one of many ways WMU Foundation is seeing the impact of the Second Century Fund continue years after the grants are made.

The grants have been providing women's leadership training domestically and internationally since 1988. For more information, visit wmufoundation.com. (WMU Foundation)



LISA

Endowment named for Elizabeth Wells



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Veteran archivist Elizabeth Wells (left at podium) receives a surprise announcement Jan. 31 during the Samford University Library White Glove Event highlighting and raising funds for the library's Special Collection and Archives Department. Wells retired after 40 years in Samford's library, overseeing this department most of those years. The Elizabeth Wells Special Collection and Archives Endowment is part of the university's \$300 million 'Forever Samford' campaign.



WELLS



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Anthropology

What is Man?

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

The question that lies at the heart of the doctrine of man is one that has been pondered for ages. The question is simply, “What is man?” Job raised it long ago, asking, “What is man that You make so much of him, that You should set Your heart on him?” (Job 7:17). The Psalmist asked it more than once. We read it in Psalm 144:3: “O Lord, what is man that You take knowledge of him?”

Perchance most famously we read of it in Psalm 8: “What is man that You are mindful of him and the son of man that You care for him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor” (vv. 4–5).

Creation of God

A beginning point in considering the question is the Bible’s witness that God created human life. Scripture’s basic premise is not that humans gradually evolved from other life forms but that we are the direct creation of God. So our point of beginning in thinking about the doctrine of man is to confess that in the beginning God who created the heavens and the earth later said, “Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” (Gen. 1:26). That is exactly what God did according to Genesis 1:27: “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them.”

In His image

Of all the living creatures God created only humans are said to have been made in His image and likeness. We are the part of creation that most resembles God. The obvious question is: What does it mean that we are in God’s “image” and “likeness”? These two terms do not suggest some difference in meaning between image and likeness. Rather by putting both terms together the two words serve to intensify or stress in a strong way that some cor-

respondence exists between God and human beings.

We humans in some way uniquely reflect God in ways the beasts of the field, birds of the air and fish of the sea do not. We use modern photography to capture images of scenes and people. The images are not the scenes or people themselves but mirror them. We humans reflect something that is like God but we are not in possession of His divine attributes or perfections.

One-way street

We might go further to say this likeness to God is a one-way street. We cannot accurately analyze a human being in order to reason out what God is like, given we bear His image. That would amount to making God after our image and likeness. Rather the correspondence moves from God to us. We discover what God is like from what He has chosen to reveal about Himself, then seek to understand what that tells us about ourselves. We are created in His image and not the other way around. However, having been sullied by the fall of man we are imperfect reflections of what God is like.

In His full and perfect humanness Christ alone is the supreme representation of God. The Bible attests that Christ is the very image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15) thus Jesus could say with total accuracy, “Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

Next week we will look more closely at ways that we are in the image and likeness of God.✠

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.



State Evangelism Conference seeks to encourage pastors

By Caleb Jones
Intern, The Alabama Baptist

Every day there are opportunities for the gospel to be preached but those opportunities are not always taken.

The goal of the upcoming State Evangelism Conference — with the theme “Evangelism Resurgence” — is to help pastors and churches rekindle a flame for consistent evangelism. The conference will be held Feb. 27–28 at First Baptist Church, Pelham.

“There seems to be a changing of mindset that our country needs to swing the pendulum back (on certain issues) and churches are recognizing that they need to refocus on evangelism,” said Sammy Gilbreath, director of the office of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

“The goal is to encourage pastors to put evangelism back on the front burner and make evangelism intentional this year,” he said.

Roy Hill, pastor of First Baptist Church, Satsuma, has been a featured speaker at the conference before and is looking forward to participating this year as a pastor who’s seeking to be filled.

“Wow, I’m excited for this year because the conference always brings in speakers that remind us and challenge us in our walks and ministries and remind us to stay in the fight (of evangelism).”

‘Jesus is the answer’

“I think it will be especially great this year,” Hill said. “With all that has been going on in our country, people need something desperately that will give people hope and get pastors passionate about telling people Jesus is the answer.”

The speakers and worship leaders have hearts set on encouraging, challenging and energizing pastors and church members to go back to their respective churches motivated to share the gospel and expectantly waiting to see the Holy Spirit work, Gilbreath noted.

Among the list of speakers is Chuck Kelley, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS), who will

kick off the event and set the tone for the conference. Gilbreath anticipates Kelley will spark people’s desire to live out the Great Commission once they leave the Tuesday evening session of the conference.

Guest speakers

Along with Kelley, speakers include Alex McFarland, speaker, author and director of the Center for Christian Worldview and Apologetics at North Greenville University in Tigerville, South Carolina; Chad Burdette, pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church, Ranburne; Larry Robertson, pastor of Hilldale Baptist Church, Clarksville, Tennessee; James Merritt, pastor of Cross Pointe Church, Atlanta, and former Southern Baptist Convention president; Joel Carwile, pastor of First Baptist Church, Athens; Blake Newsom, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, and NOBTS professor; and Kenny Grant, pastor of Calvary Baptist Temple, Savannah, Georgia.

Wes Hampton from the Gaither Vocal Band will lead worship as will the choirs of First, Pelham, and Enon Baptist Church, Morris.

Gilbreath said participants will hear “gifted speakers” and experience “strong worship” but his goal is for the event to be more than a two-day activity.

“I want to be able to get up on Wednesday morning and say to myself, ‘Wow, God showed up,’” Gilbreath said.

“The greatest thing that could come out of this conference is pastors saying they need to develop an ongoing strategy for evangelism in their areas,” he added. “Hopefully we can help pastors train up their congregation and make people feel equipped and ready to share their faith.

“We could literally see an evangelism resurgence come out of this year’s conference. Wouldn’t that be neat?”

Additionally the Ministers’ Wives Luncheon will be Feb. 28 at noon and will feature Allison Wilks of One Step Ministries. To register, visit alabamawmu.org or call 1-800-264-1225, ext. 325.✠

For more information, visit
www.alsbom.org/event/sec/.



Photo by Neisha Roberts

The annual State Evangelism Conference changes locations each year. The 2017 event will be held Feb. 27–28 at First Baptist Church, Pelham.

The legislative session began Feb. 7.

Clearing the air

Alabama gambling laws 'crystal clear;' confusion 'caused' by those profiting

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

There is this idea that there's confusion about gambling in Alabama," said Eric Johnston during the sixth meeting of Gov. Robert Bentley's Alabama Advisory Council on Gaming. "But the law is crystal clear."

In October 2016 — when Bentley announced the creation of the council — the governor said the issue of gambling is "such a quilt work of local constitutional amendments around the state ... so it's a confusing issue that's not being resolved."

Johnston, a Birmingham lawyer who also represents the Alabama Policy Institute and Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP), presented a report to the council that responded to Bentley's statement: "There is no 'confusing quilt work' of Alabama law on gambling," the report read. "To the contrary, the (Alabama Su-

preme) Court has clearly and consistently explained our law in many published decisions over the past seven years."

Specifically in Macon, Greene, Lowndes and Houston counties — where constitutional "bingo" amendments prompt the alleged confusion — the Court has repeat-

edly concluded in separate rulings that Alabama law doesn't allow electronic gambling or slot machines.

But if the law is so clear, why do even legislators find the state's stance on gambling "thoroughly confusing," as Rep. John Knight, D-District 77, said during the legislative special session in August 2016?

Because, Johnston said, while the law is clear, there's confusion "about what they (Alabamians) think the law is." According to the report this

confusion has two sources: casino operators and local law enforcement in the four counties with constitutional amendments.

If casino operators can keep the public

The question isn't, "Is electronic bingo legal? The question is, "Do we want to have gambling in Alabama?"

Eric Johnston
Birmingham lawyer

Gov. Bentley's gambling advisory council extends deadline, hears from voters

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

Gov. Robert Bentley's Alabama Advisory Council on Gaming didn't deliver any recommendations to the Legislature by its original deadline of Jan. 31, but it has heard from various passionate representatives on both sides of the issue in its six meetings since Nov. 3.

At the Jan. 26 meeting, council member and Alabama Sheriffs Association Executive Director Bobby Timmons said, "If it's good enough for the other people, for Indians, it's good enough for the native Alabamians."

On the other side of the argument Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program, said, "When government sponsors gambling lottery governs the state, making the state government prey upon its own people."

Ken Allen, director of missions for DeKalb Baptist Association, spoke against the harmful effects of gambling and shared

stories of addiction he witnessed firsthand when living in Louisiana.

"How many stories will there be like that as we expand gambling?" he asked.

Differing timelines

And Iva Williams, of Birmingham, urged the council to act sooner rather than later.

"You don't need a lot of time to make up your minds on this issue," Williams said. "Most of you already had your mind made up when you came here. ... We need additional revenue in the state ... any level of gaming would be appreciated."

The council received a deadline extension from Bentley with a June date but council chairman and Alabama Baptist Clinton Carter said a report won't be that long in coming.

"Our plan is to put eight different options together," he said. "The options will range from no gambling at all to the status quo to (all forms) of gambling and

will list the pros and cons of each option. "We want to deliver a summary that is fair and balanced and move as quickly as we can but this is too important an issue to move too quickly," Carter said.

Timmons spoke against the council taking too much more time to report back to the Legislature, however, saying it would be procrastination.

"I pray we will do what we need to do before the Legislature dies," he said, advocating a statewide vote on the issue.

Council member Sen. Bobby Singleton, D-District 24, said he too is in favor of bringing a proposal up for statewide vote but agreed indepth research and presentations from the various experts on the issue have been important to educate the council members.

The council has heard from representatives of the Department of Revenue, Poarch Band of Creek Indians, VictoryLand Gaming and Greyhound Park in Shorter,



Alabama State Capitol

Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

confused by claiming to have machines that are "compliant" with Alabama laws, then they can continue to run a profitable business. Hand in hand with that if local law enforcement "fail to enforce Alabama law (or simply cooperate with casino operators)" it misleads "both the press and the public to think that the reopened casinos may be operating legally," the report reads.

At the end of the day as far as current Alabama law is concerned "all that is left is for the law of this State to be enforced," to borrow the words of the Court.

The question isn't, "Is electronic bingo legal?" Johnston said. The question is, "Do we want to have gambling in Alabama?"

"That's the bottom line." ✠

GreeneTrack in Eutaw, Alabama Policy Institute, Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute and Stop Predatory Gambling, among others.

The council members — who seem to be about evenly split on those for and against expanding gambling in the state — did come in with their own opinions and some with specific agendas but all of that has been "on the table" as the group has done its work, Singleton said.

Purpose of council

The council was created to focus on evaluating state and local gambling laws (see story, this page), tax revenues from existing illegal gambling operations in the state and tax revenue structures from gambling in other states.

While the council does its work, Bentley said it was "safe to say" there would be no raids on VictoryLand or GreeneTrack, where illegal electronic bingo gambling is going on currently. ✠



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Left: Members of Gov. Robert Bentley's Alabama Advisory Council on Gaming hear from both sides of the gambling issue during the Jan. 26 meeting. **Above:** Birmingham lawyer Eric Johnston clarifies for council members what Alabama law has to say about gambling.

Gambling not 'a given'

Bingo machines on Indian reservations 'not legal,' Birmingham lawyer says

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

The Poarch Band of Creek Indians (PCI) operate casinos in Atmore, Montgomery and Wetumpka on reservation land. One of the solutions for Alabama's struggling General Fund is to enter into a compact, or legal agreement, with PCI where gambling is restricted or prohibited in other parts of the state in order to promote the success of the reservation casinos. The State, in turn, would be allowed to tax the gambling revenue.

But there's a key piece of information that legislators are missing, said Birmingham lawyer Eric Johnston, who shared with Gov. Robert Bentley's Alabama Advisory Council on Gaming on Jan. 26.

Because gambling on Indian reservations is under the regulation of the National Indian Gaming Commission (NIGC) and subject to federal law, legislators have been working under the belief that "the gambling on Indian reservations is 'a given,' so we might as well enter into a compact and tax it," Johnston said.

However, federal law depends on state

law with the general principle being that an Indian tribe must be treated equally with non-Indians, Johnston explained. Basically what the laws allow for non-Indians also must be allowed for Indians.

And since the Alabama Supreme Court has ruled multiple times that electronic bingo machines are illegal in the state so must be the electronic bingo machines on Alabama reservations, according to Johnston's report.

Skewed track record

Clinton Carter, council chairman and Alabama Department of Finance director, asked Johnston, "Is it your opinion that [the] machines they're operating aren't in line with Alabama law?"

"Correct," Johnston said. "They're not legal."

So why are they still in operation? Because it's regulated by NIGC, which has "a track record that favors tribal activity," and NIGC approved the machines, according to the report.

There also are complications to creating a lottery under state law.

Under Alabama law a lottery is any game

of chance. However, under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act a lottery is Class III gaming. If the Legislature approves a general lottery then it would allow Indians to engage in any form of Class III gambling,

which includes card games, roulette, etc.

"Authorizing a lottery of any description will open the floodgates of open casino gambling at all tribe venues," the report reads. ♣

"Authorizing a lottery of any description will open the floodgates of open casino gambling at all tribe venues."

Eric Johnston's report

Alabama LEGISLATURE U P D A T E S

Bills to be addressed this session include:

Gambling

▶ **HB 6 (sponsored by Rep. Alan Harper, R-District 61)** — Constitutional amendment authorizing Legislature to provide lottery by general law.

▶ **HB 10 (sponsored by Rep. Craig Ford, D-District 28)** — Constitutional amendment directing portion of lottery revenues for college scholarships. Related to and dependant on HB 11.

▶ **HB 11 (sponsored by Rep. Craig Ford, D-District 28)** — Constitutional amendment establishing lottery and regulatory commission. Allows gambling at racetracks "where pari-mutuel wagering is currently legal." Allows governor to negotiate a compact with Poarch Band of Creek Indians. Creates Lottery Trust Fund.

▶ **HB 16 (sponsored by Barbara Boyd, D-District 32)** — Constitutional amendment allowing a tribal compact for gambling.

Church security

▶ **HB 36 (sponsored by Lynn Greer, R-District 2)** — Alabama Church Protection Act; establishes church security program and authorizes designated members to carry firearms.

Fantasy Sports Betting

▶ **SB 28 (sponsored by Tom Whately, R-District 27)** — Fantasy Sports Contests Act; authorizes the creation and operation of fantasy sports contests through licensing to be administered by the secretary of state. Also creates Fantasy Sports Fund.

Compiled by Maggie Walsh

Americans split over Syrian refugee situation, survey says

Americans have historically been opposed to admitting large numbers of refugees from war-torn countries, and tepid public support for U.S. resettlement efforts has cooled even more in the past 15 months.

A Pew Research Center survey conducted in September 2015 showed Americans split on U.S. intentions to provide refuge for migrants fleeing from Syria and other countries with 51 percent approving of the decision and 45 percent disapproving. In October 2016, 54 percent of registered voters said the U.S. does not have a responsibility to accept refugees from Syria.

An executive order signed Jan. 27 by President Donald Trump suspended refugee admissions for 120 days while security procedures are reviewed but this is not the first time U.S. refugee admissions have been stopped. After the 2001 terrorist attacks the U.S. largely suspended refugee resettlement for three months while security measures were examined. Fewer than 27,000 refugee admissions were processed in 2002 but numbers have trended up since.

The U.S. admitted 84,995 refugees in the fiscal year ending in September 2016, the most in any year during the Obama administration.

An additional 31,143 refugees have been admitted to the U.S. from Oct. 1, 2016, through Jan. 24, 2017, including more than 1,136 refugee admissions since Trump became president Jan. 20. Previously the Obama administration had announced a goal of admitting 110,000 refugees in 2017 which would have been the highest number since 1994. Under Trump's proposal 2017 admissions will likely decline from 110,000 to 50,000.

Congo tops list

Last year the highest number of refugees to the U.S. (16,370) came from the Democratic Republic of Congo, a country plagued by a poor economy and violence. Refugees from Syria (12,587), Burma (12,347), Iraq (9,880) and Somalia (9,020) continue to come in higher numbers than from other nations.

Since Congress passed the Ref-

ugee Act of 1980, about 3 million refugees have been resettled in the U.S. The process can take 18 to 24 months and includes a review of applications by the State Department and other federal agencies, in-person interviews, health screenings and, for many, cultural orientations.

Christian organizations that serve as National Voluntary Resettlement Agencies include Church World Services, Episcopal Migration Ministries, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services and World Relief. In fiscal year

2016 more than half of the 84,995 refugees to the U.S. (54 percent) were resettled in just 10 states including the top five resettlement states: California, Texas, New York, Michigan and Ohio. During the same period 120 refugees were resettled in Alabama, none of whom were from Syria, according to U.S. State Department data.

Also in 2016 the highest-ever number of Muslim refugees entered the U.S., according to an analysis of data from the State Department's Refugee Processing Center.

Nearly 39,000 Muslim refugees entered the U.S. in fiscal 2016, 46 percent of refugee admissions. Christians accounted for 44 percent of refugees admitted. It was the first year Muslim refugees outnumbered Christians since 2006, when a large number of Somali refugees entered the U.S.

Historically Christian refugees have far outnumbered Muslim refugees. From fiscal years 2002 to 2016, the U.S. admitted 399,677 Christian refugees and 279,339 Muslim refugees, meaning 46 percent of all refugees who have entered the U.S. during this time have been Christian while 32 percent have been Muslim.

International events, particularly uprisings against Communist rule in countries around the world, have greatly influenced the total number of refugees coming to the U.S. in past decades.

In each case a majority of the American public expressed disapproval of the decision to resettle refugees in the U.S. (Carrie Brown McWhorter)

**In October 2016,
54 percent of
registered voters
said the U.S.
does not have a
responsibility to
accept refugees
from Syria.**

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Anglicans

Anglicanism acknowledges Scripture as 'ground' of Christian faith

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

Anglicanism emerged out of the 16th century medieval Catholic Church. The history of the Reformation in England in this period of time is a complex story involving religion, politics, the economy and international relations. Some historians argue the Reformation during the reign of Henry VIII was quick, imposed from above and that people conformed to the law of the land — not from the heart. Other historians maintain that over the course of the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary Tudor and Elizabeth I, there were several movements of reform and only one was truly evangelical in nature, the rest being political.

Religious change in England took place within a context of the broader movement for reform on the continent of Europe. In England much change was piecemeal and it took 20 years to get to the first Protestant church service in 1552 which was reversed later by Mary Tudor. However, by 1558 when Elizabeth I ascended the throne the Reformation movement known as Anglicanism was to all intents and purposes intact. It was a mixture of Lutheranism and Calvinism, a kind of middle way between the old Roman Catholic ritual and the radical thinking of Protestantism.

The word “Anglican” originates in a medieval Latin phrase dating to at least

1246 that means “the English Church” but in the past two centuries the tradition has been adopted around the world. By the 21st century Anglicanism spread throughout the world with followers calling themselves “Anglican” or “Episcopal” in some countries such as Scotland and the United States. It comes under the umbrella of the Anglican Communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury as one of the leaders who seeks to hold a diverse movement together. Anglicanism unites itself under the 39 Articles

of Religion, which emerged out of the 16th century, and centers around the common liturgy of the Book of Common Prayers service of worship with the central act of worship focused on the Eucharist, sometimes called “communion” or the “Lord’s Supper.”

The Anglican Episcopal family consists of an estimated 85 million Christians who are members of 44 member churches (also called provinces) spread across the globe. In the U.S., Anglican worship was first celebrated on the coast near San Francisco by Sir Francis Drake’s chaplain in 1579. The first regular worship began in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. Following the Revolutionary War, the new Episcopal Church was or-

ganized around a bishop consecrated by the Scottish Episcopal Church in 1784. It was at this point the Episcopal Church in the U.S. became fully autonomous. The Episcopal Church today includes 100 dioceses in the U.S. with just under 2 million members. Like many mainstream churches some congregations are growing, many are stable in membership and others are declining. Most conservative and evangelical religious bodies have been growing and mainline denominations have been in decline since the mid-1960s. There are proportionately more conservative Episcopal churches in the South and more liberal churches in the Northeast. Yet instances of growth as well as decline exist in all types of Episcopal congregations in the U.S.

Expressions of worship

Anglican doctrine is built upon Scripture, the ancient creeds of the Church, their distinctive ways of worship and doctrinal statements such as the 39 Articles of Religion. Scripture is acknowledged as the “ground” on which any expression of Christian faith must be founded. That faith is expressed during worship by using The Apostles’ Creed from the second century and the Nicene Creed from 382 as personal and corporate means of confessing the faith of the Church.

Although there are many modern expressions of worship used in Anglican congregations the Book of Common Prayer is a collection of services that worshippers in most

Anglican churches have used for centuries. It was called “common prayer” because it was intended for use in all Church of England parishes. The term was retained because Anglicans worldwide used to share in its use. The form of worship found in the liturgy dates back to 1549 when the first Book of Common Prayer was compiled by Thomas Cranmer, who was then Archbishop of Canterbury under Edward VI. It has undergone many revisions and Anglican churches in different countries have developed

other service books but the book is still acknowledged as one of the ties that binds the Anglican Communion together.

Anglicans observe both Baptism and the Eucharist. Baptism of infants is practiced, although in an increasingly secular context, especially in Europe. Anglicans also baptize those who have never had any connection to the Christian Church who come to faith in Christ and are baptized as believers either by immersion or by effusion.

Anglicanism is often referred to as a “Broad Church” because there are different groupings which come together to form the Anglican Communion. There are more evangelical Anglicans whose spirituality

and theology connect strongly with the Reformation focus on Scripture alone, grace alone and faith alone. Evangelical Anglicans stress the importance of personal conversion and tend to have a more memorialist understanding of the Lord’s Supper. Secondly there are Anglo-Catholic Anglicans whose spirituality is influenced by the teaching of the early Church fathers. They tend to have a strong connection to ornate liturgy, the use of incense, kneeling to receive communion and frequent celebration of the Eucharist.

They also express a strong desire for strong ecumenical relationships with the Roman Catholic Church because they see themselves as a part of this ancient Church. They view the English Reformation as a reformed continuation of the ancient “English Church” and not a new institution. Finally Liberal Anglicans maintain a theology which stresses the importance of Scripture and reason along with a passion for justice, human rights and pastoral care. This has led this wing of Anglicanism to support the ordination of women, the remarriage of divorced persons and the full inclusion of persons of different sexualities within the life of the Church. These diverse tendencies have in recent years caused divisions with Episcopalianism in the U.S. and other parts of the world.

Anglican Church government is not congregational but hierarchical in which the chief local authorities are called bishops. The bishops will ordain ministers and confirm members at their first celebration of communion. Those members of the church who are called to pastoral ministry are first of all ordained as deacons and then ordained as priests in order to serve in local churches. Several Episcopal groups ordain both men and women to pastoral ministry although this has caused division among both Anglo-Catholics and evangelicals within the Episcopal Church in the U.S.

Trinitarian theology

Anglicanism holds to the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith and especially a strong belief in Trinitarian theology. Along within the Nicene Creed they affirm a faith in each member of the Trinity declaring in the context of worship that the “Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life ... who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified.” The debt which Anglicanism owes to the Protestant Reformation is clearly stated in their statement about justification in which they assert: “We are justified by faith only (which) is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort.” Justifica-

tion is linked to the work of Jesus Christ as the only means of salvation because “Holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby we must be saved.” Anglicanism rejects an understanding of the Lord’s Supper which affirms transubstantiation. They do, however, hold that believers experience a special awareness of the presence of Christ when they take the bread and wine. For Anglicans communion is not merely an ordinance but also is a sacrament and so the bread and wine are given, “taken and eaten in the supper ... in a heavenly and spiritual manner” and in this way believers may “feed on Christ in their hearts by faith with thanksgiving.”

In the 1980s the Anglican Communion reaffirmed its commitment to mission. It speaks of the Five Marks of Mission which include the proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom and the need to teach, bap-

tize and nurture new believers; respond to human need by loving service; transform unjust structures of society; challenge violence of every kind; pursue peace and reconciliation; safeguard the integrity of creation; and sustain and renew the life of the earth. They view missions as a

holistic expression of the love of the God for every spiritual, physical and emotional need of women and men in the world including the whole of creation.

Episcopal churches are likely to seek to work as closely as possible with other Christian denominations. In a document known as the “Lambeth Quadrilateral” adopted by Episcopalians in the U.S. in 1886 they state: “Deeply grieved by the sad divisions which affect the Christian Church in our own land, we hereby declare our desire and readiness ... to enter into brotherly conference with all or any Christian bodies seeking the restoration of the organic unity of the Church.”

The current Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, believes “living reconciliation can transform our world.” He has made it clear that “reconciliation doesn’t mean we all agree. It means we find ways of disagreeing — perhaps very passionately — but loving each other deeply at the same time, and being deeply committed to each other.

That’s the challenge for the Church if we are actually going to speak to our society which is increasingly divided in many different ways.” He views the importance of reconciliation and Christian unity as a prerequisite for effective evangelism in the 21st century.

Anglicanism is to be found in most communities where Baptists express their faith. Their congregations may not be as numerous as Baptist churches in the South but the expression of their faith is a vibrant understanding of their love for God, their faith in Christ and their obedience to the mission of the Holy Spirit in 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 6 of 8

Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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

BIRMINGHAM

► **Derrell Crimm** is the new interim pastor of **Huffman Church, Birmingham**. He previously served at Carrollton Church and as the director of support services/annuity and insurance for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Alabama and a master's degree from Southwestern Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas. He and his wife, Terry, have two children.

CAHABA

► **Siloam Church, Marion**, will host a screening of "The Disturbances" on Feb. 12, 6 p.m. Bill Cowley will speak. There will be a Q-and-A time following the screening. For more information call 334-327-6791. John Nicholson is pastor.

CHOCTAW

► **Lusk Church, Gilbertown**,

will host The Isaacs in concert Feb. 25, 6 p.m. A love offering will be collected. Howard Gaston is pastor.

COFFEE

► **New Hope Church, Brundidge**, will hold an annual chili cook-off and cake auction Feb. 18, 6 p.m. Proceeds from the cake auction will go to Forgotten Children Ministries and For Life Ministries. For more information call Judy at 334-475-6098. Lanny Shepard is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Harold "Hal" Warren** is the new pastor of **Bethel Church, Columbiana**. He has served as pastor of evangelism and missions at First Church, Jackson, Mississippi, and pastor of Calera Church. Warren and his wife, DeeDee, have three children and seven grandchildren. ► **Bill Trawick**, retired as pastor of **Enon Church**,

Montevallo, on Dec. 25, 2016, after 11 years of ministry there. He



TRAWICK

also served at Mountain Creek Church, Marbury; Wadley Church; Collinsville Church; First Church, Hokes Bluff; Lookout Avenue Church, Gadsden; South Sauty Church, Langston; and Macedonia North Church, Vincent. He holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master's degree from Southwestern Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas. He is married to Sadie.

TENNESSEE RIVER

► **Center Point Church, Scottsboro**, will host the Tennessee River Association revival "Awaken America" on March 7-8. Phil Hoskins will speak Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. Ted Traylor will speak Wednesday at 10 a.m. Kevin Hamm will speak Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. Rick Stone will lead worship. David Moorman is pastor. Dwight Everett is director of missions. ✠

LETTERS

(continued from page 2)

Let's switch to Wednesdays. One church some years ago decided to switch that service from 7:15 p.m. to 5:45 p.m. What happened to the crowds? It was a disaster. Maybe 46 persons in a room of more than 2,000 seats. That lasted for 12 years until a chapel was built.

Why did the church switch times? Because the choir said it didn't want to come out "another night" for practice which would be a Thursday.

If I had spoken up during the debate, then it would have been to tell the choir, "OK, practice on Wednesdays. But you do it at 5:45 and then we can still have a great service at 7:15." I can hear the response now, "5:45 is too early. We can't get there that soon." I would have said "Oh really? You

care about nobody but yourselves."

Now there is supper at 4:30.

Ever heard of the workday and rush hour? Can't win with a time like that. And who wants to eat at 4:30 when under the old plan meals didn't begin until 5:15?

I imagine other churches have or will go through such changes. Churches have so much potential. I think Baptists should discuss the workday and rush hour when planning their events. A church cannot go up against those factors and win.

I would say night services need to start at 7 on Sundays and Wednesdays. Have a meal before each or at least a snack.

John D. Ferry
Huntsville, Ala. ✠



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FBC Orange Beach turning fire damage into 'renewal' time

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Pastor John Price said he doesn't know yet how the fire started in the sanctuary of First Baptist Church, Orange Beach. And he doesn't know why.

But he does know he's grateful for the provision of God through the buildings the church still has and the gracious response of the Alabama Baptist community.

"We appreciate folks' prayers," he said. "Been so blessed to have all of our sister churches here call and offer their prayers and offer to help, and we've been grateful for the community of Baptists around the state rallying to support us."

The fire, which started a little after 5 a.m. on Jan. 31, quickly engulfed the church's worship center in flames, according to Jimmy Nichols, deacon chairman.

The exact cause was still unknown at press time, but officials have told church leaders they believe it was not begun by criminal activity.

"By the time the fire department was on the scene, flames were shooting from the roof," he said.



Photo courtesy of Orange Beach Fire Department

Pastor John Price sees the fire that damaged FBC Orange Beach on Jan. 31 as 'an opportunity for a new day.'

"The structure is still standing but about half of the building inside has been damaged by fire."

The church lost musical instruments and hymnals, and the adult and children's Sunday School space suffered smoke and water damage. Insurance adjusters don't yet know the extent of the damage to the other end of the building

which housed educational space and the church offices, Price said. "We are in a wait-and-see kind of mode with that."

But the church is already switching gears to ready for services in its old worship center, a building that's been housing youth group gatherings and other activities since the new sanctuary was built in the mid 1990s.

"Our immediate plan is to just roll right into the buildings we already have," Price said. "We're blessed to have our old church worship center and facilities still standing and ready to go."

Not only that — he said he also believes this will be a time of "renewal and reinvigoration" for the church.

The members of the congregation will each process what happened differently, he said, but as a whole, "we are sad about the building but at the same time realizing that God's going to work through this. There will be positive to come out of the negative. It's an opportunity for a new day at First Baptist Church of Orange Beach." (Debbie Campbell and Amy Hacker contributed)

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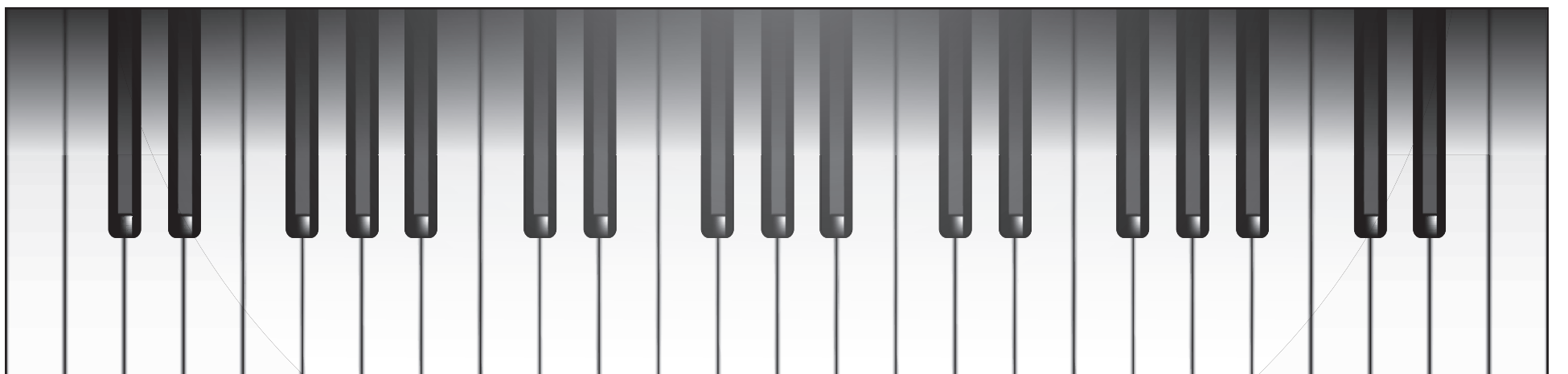
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Want to know GOD?

By Jenni Ingram
Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

Have you ever heard the phrase: “Mind your Ps and Qs?”

I know I’ve heard it and that there are several interpretations.

To me it always meant for me to mind my manners. But maybe it should mean to mind your priorities and qualities. We all have priorities and we all have personal qualities — like manners — that are ingrained in us.

One quality I believe is God-given is a caring heart. If you watch a child, the inherent goodness of that little person is abundantly evident. But as the child grows the world starts to break his or her heart. As that hurt begins to scar over some of the caring can disappear. This world causes closed, cold, uncaring hearts in people, especially people who do not have a relationship with the Lord.

The Bible tells us in Proverbs 4:23: “Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.”

We must not allow this world to close our eyes to the blessings all around us. If you have been scarred by life and believe God no longer watches over you, no longer cares for you or has abandoned you, stop right now, right where you are and talk to your heavenly Father. He has never moved. He will “never leave you, nor forsake you” (1 Chron. 28:20).

If you think maybe it’s too late to approach God, that maybe you have too much in your past, don’t worry about it. He already knows and He loves you anyway. Don’t believe the lies the enemy places in your mind. God can restore a broken heart. He will restore you and He is waiting just for you. †



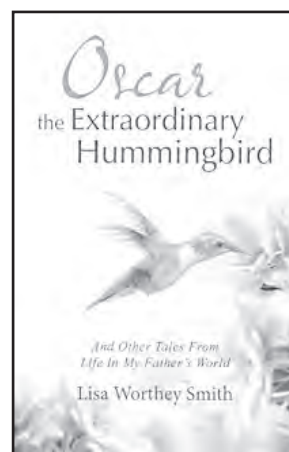
Media reviews

Oscar the Extraordinary Hummingbird and Other Tales from Life in My Father’s World

Lisa Worthey Smith. Bloomington, Indiana: Westbow, 2015. 124 pp. (Paperback).

What a lovely little book this is. Author Lisa Smith discovered an injured hummingbird in her garden and named him Oscar. She nursed him back to health and in the process learned lessons about God and His love and care for us.

Smith has a gift for seeing the deeper meaning in everyday events. With a gentle tone and a sweet spirit she shares those lessons in her



book then moves into lessons from the pond (from watching the fish) and lessons from her garden. A few of her gems:

▶ Curiosity might have killed the cat but it also could lead you to see a miracle you might have missed otherwise.

▶ God cares for the tiniest birds of the air

and He loves you far more than any of them.

▶ Rejoice in the little things. Even when life is hard it helps to sing in the shower.

▶ Brokenness and blessing can come hand in hand.

▶ If it brings you closer to Him, then it’s good.

As good as these thoughts are they are even more meaningful in the context of Oscar’s story so you might want to get the book. You won’t be disappointed.

Smith also writes a blog, teaches a women’s Bible study and is currently working on a program to teach people how to study the Bible. She is a member of East Highland Baptist Church, Hartselle, in Morgan Baptist Association.

The Last Day

Cleveland Brown. AtL Publishing Co., 2016. 109 pp. (Paperback).

The Last Day” is about ... you guessed it — no surprises in the title. Now for the text.

The longest section of the book consists of several chapters that present current teachings about various aspects of the end of time — the rapture, the Antichrist, the temple, the Battle of Armageddon and more. The author shows

verses from the Bible about these topics then explains what he believes the Bible passages mean. It is helpful that the author actually reproduced the biblical passages instead of just giving the references, since I often fail to look up the verses. I’m pretty sure I’m not the only one.

Also included is a two-page treatise on the origin of current teachings on dispensationalism and a pretribulation rapture. The author makes the point — not a new one but perhaps not well known — that the doctrines were first developed in the 1800s and the Schofield Bible

was largely responsible for disseminating the ideas and making them part of our beliefs.

Although the author failed to address a few biblical passages that might have answered some of my questions, it was an interesting and thought-provoking read overall. Since the author’s purpose was to encourage people to read the Bible and think instead of blindly accepting everything we hear, I’d say he accomplished his purpose.

Author Cleveland Brown, a former pastor and director of missions, lives in Evergreen.

Selecting Pastors and Church Members

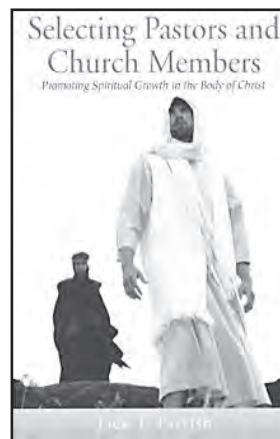
Jack T. Parrish. Bloomington, Indiana: Westbow, 2014. 57 pp. (Paperback).

I wonder if you also scratched your head when you read the title of this book. We could always use guidance in selecting pastors

for our churches but we don’t select church members — at least, not in my experience.

Halfway through the book I was thinking the author had made a mistake in choosing his title. The first half was taken up with a treatise on the need to have

elders in Baptist churches instead of deacons. The author makes the point (among others)



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.



Martine@kingdomresearch.org

that elders are mentioned many more times in the New Testament than deacons. I had noticed the distinction but I always assumed the terms are considered to be interchangeable in Southern Baptist practice. I wondered if it is an issue in any of our churches — or if it should be.

After a conversation with a seminary graduate who was willing to patiently explain the issue to his mother, I realized there is much more to this issue than I had realized — and the author has some valid concerns.

Finally after a section on giving — well done but seemingly out of place in this book — I got to the part that discusses selecting church members. The author points out the disheartening percentage of church members who are nowhere to be found on any given Sunday, leading him to conclude those members are unregenerate. Parrish lays out a convincing — but, I fear, wasted — argument that any prospective new member should be examined carefully prior to admittance to the fellowship.

Parrish has served as pastor of churches in several states including Alabama and now ministers to snowbirds in Baldwin County. †

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'Constant target'

Boko Haram attempts to drive out Christians

More than 900 churches have been destroyed in Nigeria as a reported war on Christians continues at the hands of Islamic radical group Boko Haram.

The youth wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) reported the "carnage" is "not accidental" and is intended to drive all Christians from the northern part of the country.

Currently the roughly 180 million people of Nigeria are equally divided between Muslims and Christians, according to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

The overwhelming majority of northern Nigeria identifies as Muslim, The Christian Post reported, and in that area, Boko Haram — which aligns itself with the Islamic State — has been slaughtering Christians, raiding villages, kidnapping women and children and forcing victims to become suicide bombers.

CAN called on the government to step

up its protection of Christians and International Christian Concern (ICC), a persecution watchdog group, shared CAN's viewpoint.

"Christians continue to be the main and constant target of Islamic radicals like Boko Haram and Fulani militants without any hope of ever being protected or for the

authorities to bring justice," ICC said in a note, referring also to the Fulani herdsmen, a different Islamic radical group that reportedly killed more than 800 Christians and moderate Muslims in the second half of 2016.

Some Christian leaders in the area, such as CAN Chairman Diamond Emuobor, have encouraged Christians to "buy a sword" and protect themselves.

"Christians should defend themselves and he who has no sword, should sell his coat and buy one to

defend himself," Emuobor said, according to the Post.

"We are all human beings. Nobody should catch you like a snail and slaughter because you believe in Jesus Christ." (TAB)



MS photo

Only remains are left of St. Paul's Catholic Church in Mile One village, Kaduna State, Nigeria, after Muslim Fulani herdsmen set fire to it in 2016.

Communist Party in China fears rapid growth of Christian faith

As Christians now far outnumber members of the Communist Party in China, the Chinese government is focusing heavily on forcing Christians to conform to the party's agenda, according to a report from China Aid.

"[W]e have good reasons to worry that the major religions in China, especially house churches and underground Catholic and Protestant churches, will suffer the most unprecedented suppression under the name of the 'transforming into the Communist Party of China' since the Cultural Revolution," read the report from China Aid, which documents abuses against Christians.

The year 2016 marked a major turning point in the country's religious policy from former President Jiang Zemin's "active guidance of religion and socialist society to mutually adapt" policy to Xi Jinping's "adhere to the direction of the religions' Sinicization" policy, according to the report.

The government has tried to "Sinicize," or bring under Chinese influence, religions

with legislation aimed at forcing house churches to join the state-run church, called the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, according to The Christian Post. Another method used to "Sinicize" religions has been to destroy the crosses on church roofs and force churches to use the symbols and activities of the Communist Party to their religious sites.

Control the growth

Bob Fu, China Aid's founder and president, told the Post that the Chinese government's main goal is to control the growth of Christianity.

"The top leadership is very increasingly worried about the rapid growth of Christian faith and their public presence and their social influence," Fu said. "It is a political fear for the Communist Party, as the number of Christians in the country far outnumber the members of the Party."

Pastors who have spoken out against the destruction of crosses have faced legal consequences, the Post reported. (TAB)

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Several missing after Muslim mob attacks prayer meeting

KATIRA, Uganda — A pastor in eastern Uganda and eight other Christians are missing two weeks after a Muslim mob attacked a church prayer meeting, locked the congregation in, beat several members and raped 15 women, sources said.

Ninety Muslims broke into the evening prayer meeting of Katira Church of Uganda, in Katira village, Budaka District on Jan. 15 and beat them with clubs and sticks, area sources said.

Pastor Moses Mutasa had been outside the church when several Muslims arrived shouting, "Away with the pastor who is converting our Muslims to Christianity," and he fled, said Musa Mukenyne, who oversees several churches in the district's Iki-iki County.

"We do not know what has happened to our pastor," Mukenyne told a meeting of local officials, police and other security officers.

The assailants locked about half of the 80 members in attendance inside the building, beat and tied up the men while they raped women, said a church elder who escaped the building. Some who fled the church before the doors locked were assaulted and raped by Muslims stationed outside.

Police arrived about two hours after the assault began, causing the attackers to flee, sources said. Several church members also were injured as they were trampled in the rush to get out of the building and much of the church property was damaged. (MS)

Mexico Christian jailed for refusing to deny faith

RANCHERIA EL ENCANTO, Mexico — A Christian in Mexico's Chiapas State was summarily jailed for three days the evening of Jan. 7 for refusing to deny his faith and contribute to Traditionalist Catholic festivals, according to an advocacy group.

Local authorities who practice the Traditionalist Catholic blend of indigenous pagan and Roman Catholic rituals also told Juan Gabriel Lopez Perez, 28, he would not be released unless he sold his house and left the area within 20 days, the Coordination of Christian Organizations (COC) said in a statement.

Authorities in Rancheria El Encanto had given Lopez Perez the option of paying a fine or 72 hours in jail. After refusing the fine, he was sent to jail for declining to sign a document denying his evangelical faith and agreeing to contribute to the Traditionalist Catholic festivals, which frequently involve drunkenness.

When Lopez Perez fell ill two days into his 72-hour sentence and was temporarily released to obtain medical care, his wife was obliged to serve the time in jail in his place.

The incarceration came after area Christians had filed a complaint in December against Traditionalist Catholic authorities cutting their water supply and suspending government benefits and medical services as well as denying their children the right to remain in school, according to COC. (MS)

Missing assistant pastors found in Burmese prison

MAE SOT, Thailand — Two Baptist pastors who had disappeared Dec. 24, 2016, after visiting a military base in northeastern Burma have been located.

On Jan. 25 the Burma military charged Dumdaw Nawng Latt, 65, and his nephew, Langjaw Gam Hseng, 35, for unlawful association with an armed ethnic group, an accusation the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) church leaders deny. The men face at least eight years in prison based on their charges. They were arrested Dec. 24, 2016, for helping journalists cover the Burma military's Nov. 23-24 bombing of the St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church building, *The Alabama Baptist* reported in the Feb. 2 issue.

Zau Rau, an official from KBC in Muse Town, Shan State, visited the two pastors recently and confirmed their good health.

The military has accused the two men of serving as "informers and spreading false news on behalf of the armed insurgents," according to a report by the Information Committee of the State Counsellor's Office. They also have accused the two pastors of recruiting and spying for ethnic armed groups such as the Kachin Independence Army. (MS)

Suspects charged with burning homes acquitted

LAHORE, Pakistan — A judge in Pakistan recently acquitted all 115 suspects charged with burning more than 150 homes belonging to Christians in 2013, according to The Christian Post.

The suspects, who had been charged with attempted murder, robbery, arson and terrorism, were released Jan. 28 after the judge claimed the prosecutors lacked evidence, the Post reported. They were among a mob of about 3,000 Muslims who burned houses, shops and a church.

The burnings — conducted on the grounds that a Christian had blasphemed Muhammad — were seen as the largest attack against Christians since nine were killed in 2009 in the same area. (TAB)