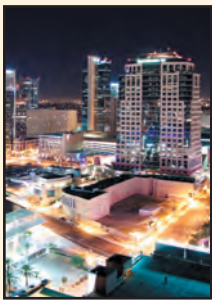




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# Acts 1:8 CHURCH

## Rural Baptist church near Gadsden sees 900 baptisms in 6 years

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

In 1995, Joey Hanner was a trucker who was about to give up on his marriage — and he was one Sunday service away from giving up on church too.

“We were going to give church one more try and then we were going to end our marriage,” he said.

They were so mad at each other they hadn’t even realized that day was their 12th wedding anniversary, Hanner said.

And they had no idea it was about to become an even more significant date.

During the altar call, husband and wife both separately ran down

the aisle, only to look up from tearful, broken prayers and see the other one kneeling there too.

“We both got saved that day,” Hanner said. “God healed me and He got me out of my truck and into ministry.”

And ever since then, he’s had no problems telling anybody and everybody about the hope that Jesus offers.

### Something missing

But when Hanner became pastor of Union No. 3 Baptist Church near Gadsden six years ago, he knew he and his church were missing something important.

He went to an event in North Carolina where discipleship was

emphasized, and with a burdened heart he came back and asked a question to the congregation of about 130 people.

“I asked them to stand if they had been discipled one on one before and only two people stood up,” he said.

That lit a fire in Hanner and it kicked off a movement toward discipleship in the rural church, which sits on 82 acres “15 minutes from everything,” he said.

They’ve seen 900 baptized in the past six years and grown from averaging 130 to 700 on a Sunday morning. And they’ve moved from one service to two.

“We’re a very strong evangelistic

church,” Hanner said, noting that about 50 people go out every Sunday and Thursday from the church to make visits in the community.

### One on one

But not only that — they follow it up with discipleship, he said. Hundreds have been discipled one on one by other members of Union No. 3 Baptist since he asked that question years ago.

“Since we started discipling, our church has matured. We’ve caught the vision of what a true Acts 1:8 church should look like,” Hanner said. “When you cross those borders, when you begin to really get into God’s Word, you get to the point (See ‘Growing,’ page 13)



Photo courtesy of Joey Hanner  
Rodney Robinson (standing) helps facilitate an evangelism class led by Phil Blair at Union No. 3 Baptist Church near Gadsden. Dozens of church members every week go out to share the gospel in their community.

# COMMENT

## How Do You See Your Association?

What image comes to mind when you think of a Baptist association? Is it a picture of some event from the association's annual meeting? Is it an image of a building or an office from which the association works? Perhaps you see the likeness of an associational missionary — past or present.

Increasingly the picture that comes to mind for Alabama Baptists when they think about their district association is a scene from a missions project with which they have been associated.

Across the state Alabama Baptists work together through their associations to share the good news of God's love and to help hurting people.

Sometimes these missions efforts are through ongoing local programs such as thrift shops, crisis pregnancy centers, food ministries, job training sites, prison and jail ministries, literacy programs, medical clinics and much, much more.

A highlight of many associational annual meetings are the passion-driven reports of dedicated men and women who creatively find ways to effectively help hurting people through association-sponsored or -supported ministries.

Sometimes the missions efforts take people to the far-flung reaches of the globe through association-sponsored national and international missions teams. Often association-coordinated teams allow those from smaller-membership churches to participate in activities not possible through their local church.

Frequently, when participants return from serving in other places, they apply their newly acquired training and skills and their enlarged missions vision to discover new opportunities for ministry right where they live.

### Meeting needs

Associations have always been about missions. They still are. Just as a pastor knows the needs of the community he serves, the associational director of missions (DOM) knows the needs of the area within the association's boundaries.

And just as a pastor knows the strength of his members, a DOM knows the strengths of cooperating churches in the association. He has the privilege of helping match strengths with needs. Sometimes the DOM is a catalyst helping a local church begin a church missions project.



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Sometimes his role is to bring the resources of several churches together to address a specific challenge.

The goal is touching lives with the love of God and sharing the Good News of Jesus in the process. That has not changed in the more than 300 years Baptists in America have worked together through associations.

Did you catch the phrase "worked together"?

Baptists understand that every Baptist church is independent.

Every church is totally free from control by any outside group.

But Baptist churches also are interdependent and the association vividly illustrates that fact. In every association there are churches with strengths that other local churches may not have. Some churches have members gifted in a particular ministry while another church may not have the same gifts within its congregation.

Through the association, strengths of churches and skills of individuals are identified, recruited and made available to churches needing extra effort in those areas. For example, how many churches have had Vacation Bible Schools (VBS) because associational VBS teams helped provide leadership for the week?

The same is true for every area of church life. The strength and knowledge of some help others. The result is more effective and efficient work by all the churches.

Cooperation is the method Baptist churches use to illustrate that independent churches can freely choose to cooperate with fellow believers in other churches.

Baptists cooperate in missions and ministries. Baptists cooperate in building up sister churches. Baptists cooperate in teaching and training.

Baptists also cooperate in inspiration and fellowship. Baptist churches do not compete with

one another. Churches do not grow by pointing out the shortcomings of other congregations. Every church is a gateway to the kingdom of God and the goal is for God's kingdom to grow, not a local church's kingdom.

That is why pastors from various churches can pray together, study together, worship together, plan together and fellowship together. That is why lay leaders can serve together and fellowship together. Baptists understand that one of the joys of being a child of God is being with and learning from others in the Christian family.

The association is at the heart of these efforts to help Baptists grow as Christian disciples through fellowship, inspiration and training.

### Providing guidance

Baptist associations also provide guidance. The association is the only Baptist organization which a church officially joins. In that process, the association examines a church's beliefs and practices. The intent is to affirm that the potential member understands the Bible in ways consistent with historic Baptist beliefs and that the church's practices reflect Baptist polity based in congregational democracy.

Associational membership is like a seal of approval. It assures other churches of like faith and order.

At crucial times in a church's life the association is there to offer guidance. It may be over a cup of coffee the DOM talks with a pastor about an important decision in his ministry or for the church. It may be when the DOM leads a training session for a local church about a particular ministry opportunity.

Often when tensions rise in a church, the congregation turns to the DOM for guidance. A DOM's experience, seasoned wisdom and local knowledge have salvaged countless situations which had all the markings of a congregational tragedy.

### Walking alongside churches

Again the DOM or the association has no control at such times. Both are there to walk with the church and offer whatever guidance may be appropriate.

Your association is more than an annual meeting. It is more than an office. It is more than a person or a particular program.

Your local association is a vital part of Baptist life working year-round to strengthen churches and build up the kingdom of God. It deserves your prayers. It deserves your support. ✠

**Associational  
Missions Emphasis  
Week is May 21-28.**

**"Your local  
association is a vital  
part of Baptist life  
working year-round to  
strengthen churches  
and build up the  
kingdom of God."**

**LETTERS**  
TO THE EDITOR

See page 13



# TAB

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

(ISSN 0738-7741;  
USPS 011-080)

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

#### PRINT

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

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

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

#### POSTMASTER

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

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# Controversial student group

## Alabama Baptists called to prayer over concerns about Samford

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) has authorized an ad hoc committee to work with Samford University in Birmingham regarding official recognition of a student organization called Samford Together (ST), according to SBOM chairman Morgan Bailey.

The description of ST on Samford's website says the group will provide a forum for Samford students "who want to discuss topics relating to sexual orientation and gender identity." But SBOM and state convention leaders are concerned the group's intent is for advocacy.

Several state Baptist leaders noted students can dialogue anywhere on campus without having an official group. But if Samford approves a discussion group as an official organization then it becomes advocacy, they said.

The ad hoc committee was approved without opposition during a closed-door, executive session of the SBOM trustees May 12 in Mont-

gomery, said Bailey, pastor of Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer. The committee will consist of the three state convention officers and the immediate past president, the SBOM chairman and vice chairman, and the SBOM executive director. This same group met with Samford President Andrew Westmoreland on May 11 in Montgomery.

During the May 12 meeting SBOM trustees also approved and affirmed without opposition the April 27 joint statement released by state convention president John Thweatt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pell City, and SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance. The statement was in response to the Samford faculty vote in favor of approving ST.

Thweatt and Lance said in the statement that

"Alabama Baptist leaders will be in dialogue with the leadership of Samford as to the serious implications this action has for the relationship between Samford University and the Alabama Baptist State Convention."

Thweatt said May 12, "Several states have lost institutions and we do not want to lose Samford. We love Samford and want to continue having a great relationship with them."

#### Open letter

Thweatt called Alabama Baptists to prayer with the following open letter.

"For almost 200 years,

Alabama Baptists have worked together, preached together and sacrificed together for the cause of missions and the strengthening of gospel ministry in this state. We have also prayed together. We are now at a moment when praying together has become an urgency. This letter is a call to prayer.

"Since 1841, Alabama Baptists have loved, supported and strengthened Samford University. Our partnership together is not merely historical, financial and structural; it is also spiritual and relational. We care deeply about Samford University and its future. We care about its leadership, trustees, faculty and students.

"We also believe in the full authority of the Word of God and Alabama Baptists have been consistently clear in affirming the Bible's clear teachings on matters related to gender, sexuality and marriage. We have every right and rea-



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash  
Morgan Bailey, SBOM chairman and pastor of Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer, leads the May 12 meeting. It was the last time the group will gather at the Baptist Building (see photo below).



THWEATT

TAB AR



Great Commission Ministries Resource Center construction in Prattville on schedule for anticipated December completion.

Photo by Doug Rogers

son to expect our ministry partners and historic Alabama Baptist institutions to do the same.

"Thus, the news that Samford is considering the granting of official recognition to a student group that would oppose those teachings and advocate for beliefs and policies that are directly contrary to Scripture is of great concern. News reports indicate that the final decision to grant such recognition has not yet been made. As Dr. Rick Lance, our executive director, and I made clear in a recent public statement, any decision to grant official recognition to this group would have serious implications for the relationship between Samford University and the Alabama Baptist State Convention."

#### 'Uphold Bible's teachings'

"We call upon President Andrew Westmoreland and the board of trustees of Samford University to stand in faithfulness with Alabama Baptists and with the authority of Scripture and to uphold the Bible's teachings on sexuality, gender and marriage and to grant official sanction to no organization that would question or oppose those teachings.

"With this letter, we also call Alabama Baptists to pray for Samford University, President Westmoreland and the board of trustees. Further, let us pray for all who study, learn and teach at Samford. Let us pray that Samford will be a university that models both respect for persons and respect for God's truth.

"Pray for those entrusted with leadership for the Alabama Baptist State Convention. Please pray for God's wisdom and truth to prevail in every dimension of our work together and for the power of the gospel of Christ and the truth of God's Word to be cherished and upheld in all we do."

At press time, Samford had not yet reviewed nor responded to Thweatt's open letter because of ongoing university commencement ceremonies held throughout the day on May 12. (TAB)

**When:** June 13–14

**Where:** Phoenix, Arizona

**For details:** Go to [www.thealabamabaptist.org](http://www.thealabamabaptist.org) and click on the SBC Annual Meeting button



commons.wikimedia.org

# ‘Pray!’ For such a time as this’

## Phoenix to host upcoming 2017 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting June 13–14

**A**s this year’s Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting approaches, SBC President Steve Gaines says fellow Baptists should anticipate emphases on prayer, evangelism and financial stewardship at the June 13–14 gathering in Phoenix, where the 2003 and 2011 annual meetings also were held.

This year’s annual meeting theme is

“Pray! For such a time as this” based on Luke 18:1 and Esther 4:14. Gaines hopes that through a commitment “to fervent, frequent, faith-filled prayer,” the SBC will become “a catalyst for spiritual awakening and revival.”

“I believe Southern Baptists can be used of God to spark a mighty movement of prayer, evangelism and discipleship across our nation and around the world,” said Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, Tennessee. “If we will pray and abandon ourselves to the Lord, He will use us exponentially to take the gospel to people.”

### Evangelism emphasis

In addition to several seasons of prayer, Gaines said, annual meeting highlights will include a personal evangelism emphasis Tuesday evening (June 13) led by California pastor and evangelist Greg Laurie and a Wednesday afternoon (June 14) panel discussion on financial stewardship.

Regarding stewardship, Gaines said Southern Baptist churches cannot give more to SBC missions and ministries than church members give through their local congregations.

“The solution for increased funding for world missions begins in the heart of every individual believer in Christ,” Gaines said. “Southern Baptists need to get our financial houses in order.”

The SBC annual meeting also will feature a “Sending Celebration” as International Mission Board (IMB) celebrates missionaries, along with their church families. The Sending Celebration is scheduled for Tuesday, June 13, at 8:30 p.m. in the Phoenix Convention Center.

This year’s Crossover evangelism efforts in Phoenix will center on a June 11 Harvest Crusade led by Laurie. Crusade organizers will work with volunteers to help local churches conduct door-to-door visitation across the city, engaging residents in gospel conversations and extending personal invitations to attend the Sunday night event.

For information about volunteering at the Sunday crusade, visit [harvestamerica.com/serve](http://harvestamerica.com/serve). For information about outreach opportunities on Friday and Saturday, visit [harvestamerica.com/pre-events](http://harvestamerica.com/pre-events). For more information about Crossover and how you and your church can be involved, visit [harvestamerica.com/crossover-events](http://harvestamerica.com/crossover-events).

Messengers gathering in Phoenix will consider a variety of recommendations including:

- ▶ a recommendation that SBC Bylaw 18 be amended to grant one Executive Committee (EC) representative each to the Dakotas, Iowa, Minnesota-Wisconsin and Montana even though they currently have too few church members to apply for EC representation under the provisions of SBC Bylaw 30.
- ▶ a recommendation that IMB be permitted to adopt a fiscal year of Oct. 1–Sept. 30 and that the convention amend the SBC Business and Financial Plan to reflect the change.
- ▶ a recommendation that the convention approve a 2017–2018 Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget of \$192,000,000. The budget would maintain current CP allocations to all convention ministries. However, the formula for distributing any over-

age of gifts above the CP Allocation Budget would be amended to increase IMB’s portion from 51 percent to 53.4 percent and decrease the SBC Operating Budget portion from 2.4 percent to 0 percent.

Messengers planning to propose resolutions must submit them no later than 15 days prior to the annual meeting. Detailed guidelines on submitting resolutions are available at [sbcanualmeeting.net/sbc17](http://sbcanualmeeting.net/sbc17) under the Messengers/Guests tab. Resolutions may be submitted online but must be followed up by a letter of credentials from the submitter’s church.

Register online at [sbcanualmeeting.net/sbc17](http://sbcanualmeeting.net/sbc17) under the Messengers/Guests tab. Messengers, exhibitors and guests need to be registered and properly badged for entrance into the general sessions June 13–14.

### Express registration

After completing online registration, each individual will receive an eight-digit registration code to present at the annual meeting’s express registration lane. There the registration code can be entered into a computer and a nametag will be printed.

Registration is open for preschool child care, Giant Cow Children’s Ministries, Children in Action Missions Camp and Youth on Mission in conjunction with the annual meeting.

Pre-registration is required and is available online at [sbcanualmeeting.net/sbc17](http://sbcanualmeeting.net/sbc17) under the “children/youth” tab, with a deadline of whenever the space limitation of 120 children is reached. Registrations will not be taken onsite. (BP)



GAINES

### Going to the annual meeting?

Stay up-to-date on activities with the SBC Annual Meetings app. Download the app on your mobile device by accessing the App Store, Google Play or by visiting [app.core-apps.com/sbc\\_am2017](http://app.core-apps.com/sbc_am2017).



And follow along on Twitter @BaptistPress, @SBCLife, @SBCMeeting, @sbccp and @SBCPastorsConf. This year’s preferred hashtag will be #sbc17. (BP)

# Defining Moments

## Missionary speakers to share at National WMU annual meeting

Those who attend will be encouraged to identify defining moments that affect and inspire their missional journey during the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) Missions Celebration and Annual Meeting, June 11–12, in Phoenix.

"Defining Moments" will be the consistent theme of featured missionary speakers, including Kelly and Brandi Parrish, church planters serving with the North American Mission Board (NAMB) in Denver; Jacob and Jessica Dahl, church planters serving with NAMB in Washington; and Ross and Dena Frierson, International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries.

Focused times of prayer will be led by Carlos Ferrer of NAMB; Edgar Aponte of IMB; and Ken Weathersby, representing the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee.

Onsite registration opens at 2 p.m. on Sunday with conference options beginning at 3 p.m., including 10 speed conferences that run 20 minutes each in length. A reception to greet Sandy Wisdom-Martin, the

new executive director of national WMU, will be held from 4:45 to 6 p.m. prior to the first general session at 7 p.m.

A special celebration of the 20th anniversary of lives being transformed through Christian Women's Job Corps, a ministry of WMU, will be part of the evening session.

*For more information, visit [wmu.com/phoenix](http://wmu.com/phoenix)*

On Monday general sessions will be at 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. In addition, 14 conferences will be offered during breakout sessions from 11 a.m. to noon and 4 to 5 p.m. Topics range from strategic prayer to working across generations to ways to create community among volunteers, in addition to conferences led by NAMB and IMB missionaries.

At 6:30 p.m. on Monday, there will be a special pre-screening of "Mully," a movie about Charles Mulli, a man born into poverty in Kenya. (The different spelling of "Mully" is intentional.)

At age 6, Mulli was abandoned by his parents as they left in search of a better life. He grew up begging on the streets and became a Christian as a teenager.

When Mulli was 17, he walked more

than 40 miles to Nairobi to seek employment. He found work and met his future wife, Esther. He became a wealthy entrepreneur and respected community leader and the couple had eight children.

In 1989 he founded the Mully Children's Family. He sold all his property and businesses in order to provide street children in Africa with shelter, medical care, education and more. Since then Charles and Esther Mulli have taken guardianship of more than 12,000 abandoned children.

Following the movie, the Mullis will be available for a Q-and-A session.

### On-site missions effort

The WMU Missions Celebration and Annual Meeting will be at the Renaissance Phoenix Downtown Hotel Ballroom at 100 N. 1st Street, just prior to the June 13–14 SBC annual meeting (see story, page 4).

Participants are encouraged to bring supplies for hygiene kits that will be put together by children participating in SBC child care during the week.

These kits will go to Arizona Baptist Children's Services to bless the individuals and families it serves. (BP)

## SBC Pastors Conference to focus on 'above every name'

With the theme "above every name," the June 11–12 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Pastors Conference is centered on 12 pastors of average-sized Southern Baptist churches preaching through Philippians to exalt Jesus' name.

The Pastors Conference will feature preaching, worship and prayer to undergird the ministry of pastors and their wives. The sessions at the Phoenix Convention Center will be held June 11–12, prior to the SBC's June 13–14 annual meeting there.

The 12 conference preachers lead churches ranging in size from approximately 60 to 500 in worship attendees.

Larger churches traditionally have helped fund the Pastors Conference.

This year, however, conference costs have been covered by New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's Caskey Center for Church Excellence and other sponsors, freeing the conference's traditional sponsors to help by funding attendance for pastors of smaller congregations who would not otherwise be able to make the trip to Phoenix.

More than 30 \$1,000 scholarships have been distributed, which exceeds the goal Pastors Conference leaders had of helping around 20 people attend the conference and SBC annual meeting.

"We are thrilled that we have been able to help this group of men to attend, grateful to those who have given and anticipate giving out even more in the near future," Pastors Conference President Dave Miller said.

"Our regret is that we will not be able to help everyone who wants to come to the annual meeting and Pastors Conference."

Miller, pastor of Southern Hills Baptist Church, Sioux City, Iowa, said the preacher-selection process for the conference

was in average attendance illustrated how many outstanding pastors lead average-sized churches.

Miller's advice for conference attendees is to "read and look through the Book of Philippians" in advance because the meeting "is all about the text" of Scripture.

The ethnically diverse lineup of speakers features three African-Americans, six Anglos, one Jamaican American, a Cuban American and an Asian American.

Each session also will include a "common ground testimony" by a pastor of a larger church.

The Pastors Conference offering will go to Mission:Dignity, a ministry of GuideStone Financial Resources to supplement the incomes of retired pastors and their widows.

### Child care available

Child care for children ages birth through 12 years will be offered by Southern Baptist Disaster Relief child care volunteers during all Pastors Conference sessions.

Children ages 4–12 may register for a conference provided by Children's Conferences International. Register at [www.childrensconferences.com](http://www.childrensconferences.com). (BP)

*For more information, visit [sbcpc.net](http://sbcpc.net).*

**On Monday, June 12,** the International Mission Board (IMB) will host a complimentary dinner prior to the final session of the Pastors Conference. The dinner will be in the Phoenix Convention Center, Room West 301A/B/C, and tickets can be picked up at the IMB booth. (BP)

## Alabamians nominated to serve

Nominees to serve on the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee, the four denominational boards — International Mission Board, North American Mission Board, LifeWay Christian Resources, and GuideStone Financial Resources, — the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, the six seminaries and the Committee on Order of Business have been selected by the 2017 SBC Committee on Nominations.

Nominees will serve if elected by the messengers to the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, June 13–14 in Phoenix.

Alabama Baptists nominated:

**Executive Committee** — Nominated for a second term, Benjamin F. "Ben" Kelley Jr., Montgomery.

**New Orleans Seminary** — Nominated for a second term, Mike Shaw, Pelham.

**Southeastern Seminary** — Nominated for a second term, Gregory T. Pouncey, Mobile.

**Midwestern Seminary** — Nominated for a second term, Ben O. Character, Oxford.

**Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission** — Nominated for a second term, Bill Morgan, Prattville. (BP)

## Women's events set for SBC

Ministers' wives attending the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Phoenix are invited to a trio of women's events.

The events include a Pastors' Wives Conference (June 12, 8:45 a.m.–11:45 a.m.), a Ministers' Wives Luncheon (June 13, noon) and a Women's Expo.

Authors and speakers Kelly Minter of Nashville and Kay Warren of Lake Forest, California, will headline this year's events to be held in the North Ballroom of the Phoenix Convention Center. The expo will be held in the lobby outside the ballroom and will offer a variety of resources "expose, engage, enlighten and empower ministry wives."

This year's theme is "Brave," based on Proverbs 31:25: "She is clothed with strength & dignity, and she laughs without fear of the future."

Luncheon tickets may be purchased online at [lifeway.com/Event/womens-event-sbc-ministers-wives-luncheon-2017](http://lifeway.com/Event/womens-event-sbc-ministers-wives-luncheon-2017).

To learn more about all three events, visit <http://sbcwives.com>. (BP)

## Famous Christians from previous centuries

# Heroes of the Faith

## 2017 marks 150th anniversary of Brazilian missionary's birth

**S**olomon Ginsburg (1867–1927), a Jewish convert to Christianity, was a courageous missionary to Brazil for 35 years.

This year is the 150th anniversary of his birth.

The son of a Jewish rabbi, he was born Aug. 6, 1867, in Poland. At age six he was sent to Germany for his education.

At 14, he returned home. His father had plans for him to be a rabbi and marry a 12-year-old girl. He rejected both, ran away from home and sailed to London. He worked for his uncle, an Orthodox Jew.

He attended a church service with a converted Jewish missionary who spoke on Isaiah 53, a prophetic chapter about Jesus. Ginsburg wanted to become a Christian but knew his uncle would cast him out of the house. For three months,

he struggled. Then at a mission service a preacher spoke on the words of Jesus: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." He surrendered to God and later said, "I knew that my sins were washed away by the precious blood of Jesus."

### Confession of faith

Ginsburg made a public confession of faith at the mission. When he told his uncle, he was chased away with curses, sticks and hot water. The story of his conversion spread widely and more than 3,000 attended his baptism.

After witnessing to Jews in east London, he was severely beaten twice.

He felt God leading him to foreign missions in Brazil. He traveled to Portugal and learned Portuguese before sailing for Rio de Janeiro. He reached it June 10, 1890.

Excited about evangelizing, he soon

went to a public square, stood up on a stool and started singing and then preaching. He had an audience of around 5,000 people.

In 1891 his fiancée, Carrie Bishop, arrived from England. They married but she died four months later of yellow fever.

In 1893 he married Emma Morton and they started missionary work in San Fidelio, Campos, and smaller towns in the region. He often angered parish priests because he evangelized Catholics. Thieves often chased him and beat him with clubs.

He traveled on a long journey to the Amazon. The first person to baptize converts in the Amazon River, Ginsburg also organized the first evangelical church.

After returning from the Amazon, he faced two notorious assassins.

Ginsburg preached in Pernambuco to thieves and murderers. One local priest even hired a giant desperado named Herculano to kill him. Even though Gins-

burg found out about the assassin, he preached boldly. Herculano fell asleep that day but later became a Christian and told the church about his plan to murder Ginsburg.

Antonio Silvino, hired to kill Ginsburg, went to hear him preach. He couldn't kill him because Ginsburg seemed good. The two men met. They talked and prayed for hours. Silvino, who had killed 66 men, became a Christian.

### Publishing literature

Ginsburg led the Baptist Mission that published evangelical literature. The 750 prisons in Brazil were sent Bibles and other writings.

He wrote an influential book, "A Wandering Jew in Brazil: An Autobiography."

The tireless missionary died April 1, 1927, and is buried in São Paulo. ✠

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).



## Children's Homes' Party at the Parks event celebrates, raises awareness of foster care

**L**ooking around at all the different colors of face paint she had to choose from, a little girl couldn't decide what design she wanted Kym Mitchell to paint on her face.

Mitchell — a volunteer at the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries' (ABCH) annual Party at the Parks event May 6 in Birmingham — said the little girl then asked, "Can I just have 'ABCH' on my cheek?"

It's those little interactions that encourage volunteers and ABCH staff and remind them of what their mission is at events like this — to celebrate the children and families God has placed in their care.

As ABCH President and CEO Rod Marshall describes the event: "Party at the Parks is an opportunity to celebrate the wonderful ministry that happens every day for our foster parents, Campus Care Homes and Family Care Homes."

Party at the Parks got started in 2015 by three young adult volunteers who wanted to celebrate



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Participants at the third annual Party at the Parks community event enjoy inflatables, food, music and face painting at Railroad Park in downtown Birmingham on May 6.

ABCH foster families while raising awareness about foster care. The resulting annual event is free and open to the public, and is put on by ABCH's Birmingham Regional Advisory Board, a volunteer group of young leaders in the community.

Current members of the Regional Advisory Board are Scott

Johnson, Buck Poole, Anna Leigh Marshall and Heather Hancock.

At this year's Party at the Parks, children bounced around inflatables, munched on popcorn and snow cones and enjoyed family-style music. Face painting, of course, also was a highlight of the day.

And many foster families were among the more than 2,000 participants at Railroad Park in downtown Birmingham.

Michelle Drashman Glassford, ABCH director of communications, said, "Nearly 50 of our families got to attend, mostly from the Birmingham area, but many of our kids from our Campus Care homes in Decatur and some from Oxford foster care were also there."

Many moms and children in Family Care from Alabaster and Gardendale also participated, she added.

Rod Marshall said, "It was a delight to see so many kids having so much fun."

But none of it would have been possible without the volunteers like Kym Mitchell from area churches and businesses, Glassford said.

"We could not have done it without those 65 hands, feet and hearts to serve."

Foster families also received sponsored tickets for the Birmingham Barons baseball game that night. (Maggie Walsh)

## Disaster relief teams assist in Missouri

**T**wo Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief teams have been deployed in response to the flooding caused by what meteorologists are calling "once-in-a-millennium" rainfall in Missouri at the end of April and early May.

Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens declared a state of emergency April 29. Since that time authorities have conducted hundreds of evacuations and more than 30 rescues. According to media reports, at least five people have lost their lives.

Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson also declared a state of emergency for his state after entire towns were overtaken by floodwaters. At least five deaths have been reported there.

At press time, teams from Chilton and Morgan Baptist associations were assisting in Missouri. (TAB)



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Soteriology

# Salvation as Sanctification (continued)

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

Last week the concluding emphasis was on sanctification viewed as Christians becoming in experience what we are already in God's sight. God counts us as righteous, having accredited Christ's perfect righteousness to us, while also counting our sinfulness as perfectly covered by Christ's sacrifice.

Thinking about the doctrine of sanctification is as good a place as any to remind ourselves that good theology is not merely theoretical but also must be experiential. Heavenly truths must show up at street level in shoe leather. How we behave must correspond with what we say we believe. Therefore, when it comes to a truth like sanctification we must give attention not only to "what is" (theology believed) but also to "how to" (theology practiced).

In attempting to do this, two key terms come to mind — "impetus" and "enablement." Where do we find the impetus for this kind of progression in Christian living, and what are the means God has provided for us to achieve such a goal?

When we think of the impetus for growing in righteousness or holiness of life, we are thinking about what happens within us that fosters the "want to" in pursuing spiritual growth. What fuels a desire to please God through obedience and purity? What prompts a Christian to desire to be a vessel "sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work" (2 Tim. 2:21)?

The primary impetus for growing in likeness to Christ is what we may term "reciprocal love." First John 4:19 expresses this quite succinctly: "We love Him because He first loved us." Just as love prompted God to send His Son to be our Savior, so our love in return becomes the highest and most sustaining motivation for us to desire to become more and more what God wants us to be. Before we can seriously address the

"way to" such a life, we may have to beg God for the "want to" or impetus for this life.

When the impetus happens within us, we then turn to what God provides for us as enablement for growth in likeness to Christ. Thinking about how to experience progress takes us to some of the very basic disciplines we already know. For example, God has given us the Bible. Abiding in that Word through regular reading and quiet meditation is an essential provision from God for our spiritual development over time.

God also has provided the Spirit of truth. Second Thessalonians 2:13 brings together the provision of the Word of truth and Spirit of truth with the promise, "God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth." As part of the inspiration for leading a godly life we have the example of Christ. Of this example 1 Peter 2:21 states, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps."

If these provisions were not enough, God also has given us further assistance and encouragement through Christian fellowship. The importance of this fellowship lies behind the admonition of Hebrews 10:24-25: "Let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." The enablement for Christian growth has core provisions — the Bible, the Holy Spirit, the example of Jesus and church fellowship. †

*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 Bible Drill & Speakers Tournament

## 2017 winners

The 2017 State Bible Drill and Speakers Tournament events were held April 29 at First Baptist Church, Montgomery. The winners of each division are listed below.



**YOUTH BIBLE DRILL**  
(l to r) Third place: Aubrey Reivitt, Ridgecrest, Dothan (Columbia Association); first place: Maggie Nelson, Whitesburg, Huntsville (Madison Association); second place: Gabriel Taunton, Santuck, Wetumpka (Elmore Association)

**HIGH SCHOOL BIBLE DRILL**  
(l to r) Second place: Moriah Pfizer, Whitesburg, Huntsville (Madison Association); first place: Michael Hopkins, Whitesburg, Huntsville (Madison Association)



**SPEAKERS TOURNAMENT**  
(l to r) Third place: Lauren Williams, Winwood Baptist Christian Fellowship, Birmingham (Birmingham Association); first place: Joy Handley, Whitesburg, Huntsville (Madison Association); second place: Bentley Stroud, Meadow Brook, Birmingham (Shelby Association)

Photos by Doug Rogers

# Florida Baptist churches baptize 1,285 people on 'Acts 2:41 Sunday'

Florida's beaches, rivers, lakes and even pools came alive May 7 with the gospel testimonies of 1,285 new Christian believers as 112 Florida Baptist churches partnered for "Acts 2:41 Sunday — Baptizing Coast-to-Coast."

From the sandy white Gulf beaches of Perdido Key in Pensacola to the blue waters of the Atlantic Ocean that stretch from Jacksonville to Miami; from the Suwannee River to lakes and state parks in every region, thousands of Florida Baptists and onlookers gathered to celebrate and witness the hundreds of Christians who publicly professed their faith through baptism.

Several churches reported that following the public baptisms, those who watched from the beach and other public places listened to gospel presentations and were led to the Lord and baptized right on the spot.

## Unified celebration

Florida Baptist Convention Executive Director-treasurer Tommy Green created Acts 2:41 Sunday and challenged Florida Baptist churches to engage in the effort.

"My desire was to celebrate the gospel of Jesus Christ in a unified manner across our state," Green said. The idea was sparked after a conversation with David Uth, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Florida, about the church's annual beach baptism celebrations.

"I thought it would be exciting for churches to join together from coast-to-coast. The conversation stirred my heart to extend the challenge for Acts 2:41 Sunday."

With nearly 1,300 baptisms reported, Green said, "The results of the day demonstrate the power of the gospel and the evangelistic passion of our churches. It is thrilling to witness the incredible reports of our Florida Baptist churches celebrating baptisms throughout our state."

While a handful of Florida Baptist churches baptized large numbers of new believers, the majority of churches baptized less than 20 and some in single digits. Each soul making a public commitment to Christ was cheered and celebrated.

Many pastors baptized their own children or grandchildren, as did Elbert Nasworthy, pastor of Myrtle Lake Baptist Church, Land O' Lakes, Florida. "It was such an exciting time," Nasworthy said, referring to the baptism of his grandchildren, Isabella and Anthony Cobb. "Tears were flowing as I



Photo by Jerry Favorite/Florida Baptist Convention

Barbara Ringer (right) is baptized by Scott Yirka, pastor of Hibernia Baptist Church, Fleming Island, Florida, during Acts 2:41 Sunday's baptism emphasis held May 7 across the state of Florida.

was able to say, 'I baptize you my brother and sister in Christ.'"

More than a dozen Hispanic churches united through the Miami Hispanic Fellowship of churches to celebrate the public professions of faith together. Led by Pastor Moises Robaina, pastor of Iglesia Bautista Adonai, as many as 300 people gathered at Virginia Key.

Located at the entrance to Key Biscayne with the Miami skyline looming in the background, the crowd saw the testimony of 83 persons who were immersed in the water.

That strait was the one many of the Cubans crossed as refugees to reach America and now it has become their waters of baptism and testimony of transformation by Jesus.

## Answered prayer

Through an interpreter, Robaina, a Cuban native, said he had not seen this kind of public demonstration and witness since arriving in this country many years ago. He said he had been asking the Lord to send revival and the opportunity to see a great movement of the gospel as he had seen through revival in Cuba. On Sunday the pastor said his prayers were answered as churches and believers gathered

to give a public testimony and the gospel was preached.

The day was filled with amazing stories of new believers coming to know Christ and following in believer's baptism.

For instance Andres Lavanderos, pastor of Oak Harbor Church, Mayport, Florida, baptized a 73-year-old man the pastor had led to Christ the week of the baptism. Paula Phillips said she had been praying for her husband, Ron, to be saved for 50 years.

## 'Intentional evangelism'

Louis Egipciano, pastor of Elevate Church, Miami Lakes, Florida, performed 11 baptisms in the shallow waters of Key Biscayne. He said he loves how public beach baptisms are.

"The worst invention probably was a baptistery because it's the most hidden form of a public testimony," he said.

Willy Rice, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Clearwater, Florida, applauded the Acts 2:41 emphasis.

"Specific baptism events like Acts 2:41 help our church focus on intentional evangelism. ... Acts 2:41 gave us a great opportunity to call people to respond to the (gospel) message and I'm grateful for that." (BP)

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## Pakistani leaders consider taming blasphemy laws

LAHORE, Pakistan — Gruesome violence against Muslims accused of blasphemy in Pakistan has reignited calls for amending blasphemy statutes commonly used to persecute Christians.

The lynching of a Muslim university student in northwestern Pakistan, the murder of a Muslim in Punjab Province and mob violence against a mentally challenged Muslim — all on similar blasphemy accusations — have compelled officials at high levels to call for changes in the statutes.

The National Assembly passed a resolution April 17 calling for amending the blasphemy law to include strong safeguards to help prevent its misuse. At the same time, the Senate called for amending the statutes to provide punishments to those who concoct blasphemy accusations against others.

More than 200 people in Pakistan were charged under blasphemy laws in 2015, many of them minorities such as Christians, who make up 1 percent of Pakistan's population. The laws are often used to settle personal scores and Islamist groups and lawyers often advocate the harshest punishments and apply pressure for convictions on police and courts.

And outside the court system, blasphemy suspects have long been targeted by Islamist vigilantes in Pakistan. At least 65 people, including lawyers, defendants and judges, have been murdered over blasphemy allegations since 1990. (MS)

## Global missions mapping resource closing down

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colorado — A global mapping project that has been providing churches and missionaries with information for 33 years will close its doors June 30, according to *Christianity Today* (CT).

Global Mapping International (GMI), which began long before Google Maps, pioneered digital mapping and instructed many missions organizations on how to conduct research. GMI is best known for its work on the resources used in Operation World.

It is disbanding because of a lack of donors, according to GMI President and CEO Jon Hirst. Funding research, he said, has always been more difficult than funding missionaries themselves, and it is a hard sell with millennials, who would rather donate to causes that provide things like food or water.

"When we tried to make the transition to multiple revenue streams we couldn't make it quickly enough to stay sustainable," Hirst said, according to CT. (TAB)

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# FACING PERSECUTION

## Christians being attacked respond by surviving, bonding with others, fighting back

**W**hether Americans see it or not, one thing is sure — Christians are facing persecution in large volumes around the world.

And a second reality follows — no matter what form the persecution takes, Christians have some sort of response, from nonviolent protest to flight to taking up arms.

These responses were studied as part of a collaborative, three-year research project called Under Caesar's Sword (UCS) and funded by the Templeton Religion Trust. The report, which analyzed data from 25 countries, was released April 20.

The study was conducted for the most part in the 10/40 Window, a term used to refer to the parts of Africa, Asia and Europe located between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator. However, notably some countries with severe perse-

cution were not included because of lack of access, such as Eritrea, Somalia, Yemen and North Korea.

Though persecution can be hard to measure, it has reached record levels in the past three years, largely because of Islamic extremists and ethnic nationalism, Open Doors reports. And 60 to 80 percent of that persecution falls squarely on Christians, according to UCS researchers, who grouped their response to that persecution into three categories — survival, association and confrontation.

For evangelical Christians, more than 40 percent of responses to persecution fell in the survival category. That can mean “going underground, flight and accommodation to or support for repressive regimes,” according to the report.

For example, in Syria and Iraq, most Christians have fled to escape the Islamic State terror group, which has ravaged their

land with attacks and executions.

In Iran and Saudi Arabia, Christians cope by staying quiet about the government and avoid saying anything that might suggest they are not Muslims, according to the report. And Christians in Vietnam and Laos have gone underground to escape jail and torture. Each of these survival responses is intended to save their lives and keep their communities intact, according to the report.

The second response, associa-

tion, is not as frequent — just shy of 40 percent try this tactic, which is to build ties with others to strengthen your resilience.

### Avoiding isolation

According to the report, it's a viable strategy because isolation can be a major problem for persecuted churches.

Associating with other communities offers support and can unite them to provide social services, something that can help to portray

them as a positive presence in the area, the report said.

The third strategy — confrontation — is the least-used one at 19 percent, the report stated. “Christian responses to persecution are almost always nonviolent and, with very few exceptions, do not involve acts of terrorism,” it said.

All three categories of responses have seen success and the responses of Christians under persecution are not limited to these strategies, the report stated. (TAB)

**For more information or to read the full report, visit [ucs.nd.edu/report](http://ucs.nd.edu/report).**

## Egyptian Sunni Muslim leader organizes call for peace

**O**n the heels of two Palm Sunday church bombings that killed dozens of Christians in Egypt, Pope Francis visited Cairo to take part in a World Conference on Peace hosted by the country's top Sunni Muslim leader.

Francis; Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew; Coptic Pope Tawadros II; and Sheikh Ahmed Mohamed al-Tayeb, the grand imam of the Egyptian Muslim institution al-Azhar, gathered April 27–28.

They met “to eliminate the causes of conflict, violence and hate” and call for peace among all countries and religions, according to The Christian Post.

### ‘Overwhelming crises’

Officials with the Egyptian Islamic seminary say “human society is currently experiencing overwhelming crises threatening our existence and destroying the essence of human life” and the “bloody, armed conflicts” that

have resulted “contradict sublime religious values and humanitarian ideals.”

The seminary called for cooperation to eliminate suffering and violence, according to the Post.

Francis did too — during his speech at the conference, he urged leaders to foster “unconditional respect for inalienable human rights such as equality among all citizens, religious freedom and freedom of expression, without any distinction,” according to the *New York Times*.

About 10 percent of the population of Egypt is Christian. (TAB)

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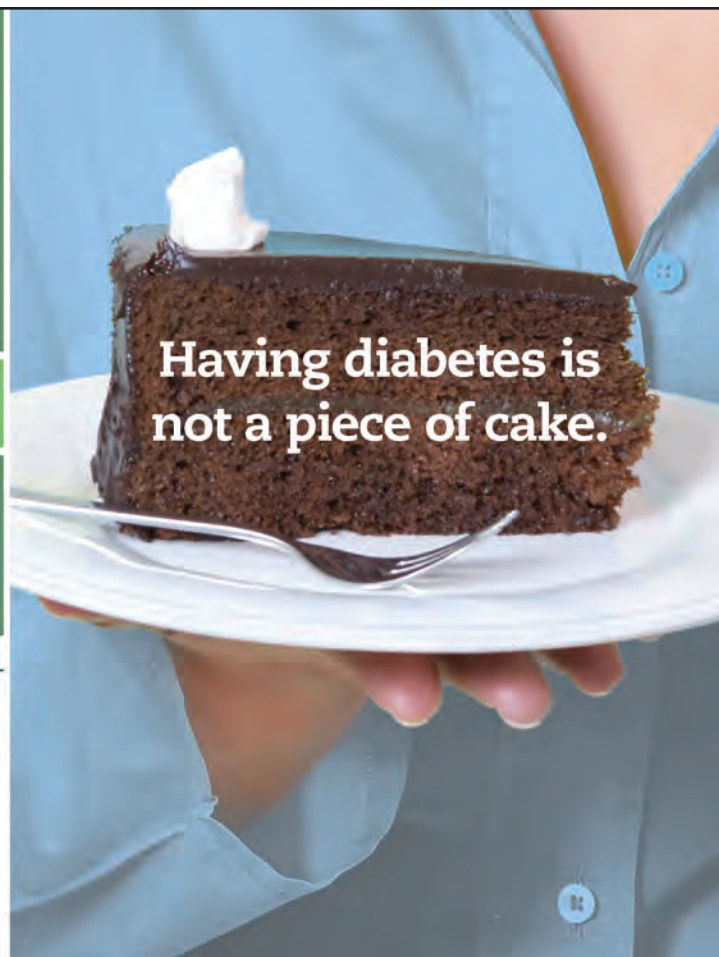
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In April 1966, Hudson Baggett was named editor of *The Alabama Baptist* by the board of directors. Baggett was considered well qualified for the position having previously served as a religion professor at Samford University in Birmingham. Upon accepting the position Baggett said, “I am honored at the confidence placed in me by the board of directors. By the help of God I will seek to justify this confidence as I serve the Baptists of Alabama in this important position.” (TAB)



# 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.

## AUTAUGA

► **First Church, Posey Cross Road, in Prattville**, will celebrate its 10th anniversary June 4, 10 a.m. The Shilo Mountain Boys will perform special music. Lunch will follow the service. Tommy Roy is pastor. ► **Mark Wakefield** is the new interim pastor of **Glynnwood Church, Prattville**. He also serves as disaster relief and chaplaincy ministries strategist for the State Board of Missions. He holds degrees from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Debbie, have one child and one grandchild.

## BIBB

► **Ashby Church, Brierfield**, will celebrate homecoming May

21, 10:30 a.m. Lunch will follow. New Ground will perform special music during the service and after lunch. Shannon Allen is pastor.

## CALHOUN

► **Donald Sills** is the new pastor of **First Church, McClellan, in Anniston**. He previously served as pastor of West Weaver Church, Weaver. He also served at West Side Church, Jacksonville. Sills holds a bachelor's degree from Jacksonville State University, a master's degree from New Orleans Seminary and is currently pursuing a doctorate from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Lori, have two children.

## CHILTON

► **Shiloh Church, Clanton**, is celebrating homecoming and its 186th anniversary May 21, 10 a.m. Ray and Rhonda Headley and Squire Parsons will be special guests. For more information call Pastor Ernest Fike at 205-217-1540.

## COLUMBIA

► **First Church, Gordon**, will celebrate homecoming and its 150th anniversary June 4, 11 a.m. Former Pastor Willie Parker will speak and Lydia Berry will provide special music. Past members and friends are invited to help celebrate this special occasion. Lunch will follow the ser-

vice. Bobby Elliott is pastor.

## COVINGTON

► **West Highland Church, Andalusia**, will celebrate homecoming and its 77th anniversary June 4, 10:30 a.m. Director of music Linda Hartin will lead worship, accompanied by Sue Reeves and Jane Graddy. Alva Lambert will speak. Lunch will follow the service. Larry Stewart is pastor.

## MADISON

► **University Church, Huntsville**, will honor Pastor Bobby Burt for his 10 years as pastor and 40 years in the ministry with a reception May 21. He and his wife, Rana, have two children. †

## TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

### CHURCH POSITIONS

#### FULL-TIME PASTOR

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#### PASTOR

Immanuel Baptist Church in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, is accepting resúmes for a full-time pastor. The candidate selected will have 5 years senior pastor experience, seminary training, expository preaching style and be able to attract and appeal to all age groups. We currently have an elderly congregation and no other ministerial staff. We have underused, debt-free, excellent facilities and a good location. Candidates with the above qualifications can email resúmes to: [immanuel38464@bellsouth.net](mailto:immanuel38464@bellsouth.net). Our website is [myimmanuel.net](http://myimmanuel.net). Please include current sermons on websites.

#### PASTOR

James Memorial Baptist Church (Etowah County) is accepting resúmes for a part-time/full-time pastor. Please email to: [rachel@jamesmemorialbc.org](mailto:rachel@jamesmemorialbc.org) before May 31.

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Macedonia Baptist Church in

Russellville, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resúmes to: Pastor Search Committee, 37050 Hwy 724, Russellville, AL 35654.

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Pineywood Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational pastor. Requirements will be discussed between the candidate and church committee. Please forward resumé with references to: [office@pineywoodonline.com](mailto:office@pineywoodonline.com).

#### PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER OR FULL-TIME MUSIC/SENIOR ADULT MINISTER

Sardis Springs Baptist Church, Athens, Alabama, is seeking God's will for a part-time music minister or full-time music/senior adult minister. Please send resumé to: 18310 AL Hwy 251, Athens, AL 35613 or email to: [sardis1@integrity.com](mailto:sardis1@integrity.com) (with subject line: music minister applicant).

#### BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC DIRECTOR

South Chapel Hill Baptist Church in Morgan County organization is looking for a part-time bivocational music director. Resúmes may be sent to: [hayes8137@gmail.com](mailto:hayes8137@gmail.com).

#### MUSIC DIRECTOR

First Baptist Church, Union Grove, is seeking a bivocational music director. Submit resumé to: FBC Union Grove, P.O. Box 125, Union Grove, AL 35175.

### BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER TO STUDENTS

Mount Philadelphia Baptist Church in Cordova is seeking a minister to students. The ideal candidate is called to youth ministry with a desire to invest in the lives of students. Email resumé to: [fred.mpbc@outlook.com](mailto:fred.mpbc@outlook.com).

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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.

## North Korea detains American Christian man

North Korea has detained a U.S. citizen — a self-described Christian missionary — raising the number of Americans held there to four.

Kim Hak-song, who was taken into custody May 6, taught at Pyongyang University of Science and Technology (PUST). The university, founded in 2010 with donations from South Korean and American Christians, including the Illinois-based Church of the Brethren, remains the only private university in the country.

### ‘Concerning’

“Obviously, this is concerning. We’re well aware of it and we’re going to work through the embassy of Sweden ... through our State Department, to seek the release of the individuals there,” White House spokesman Sean Spicer told reporters May 8.

Song was detained on suspicion of “hostile acts” against the state, the North’s KCNA news agency said.

One other of the four Americans detained, Kim Sang-duk, also taught at PUST.

Experts on North Korea consider the detentions an attempt by the authoritarian North Korean regime to gain bargaining chips as it resists U.S. pressure to rein in its nuclear program, with which it has threatened South Korea and the U.S. (RNS)

## Faith-based adoption safe in Ala.

When Gov. Kay Ivey signed the Child Placing Agency Inclusion Act into law May 3, Alabama became the fifth state to pass legislation protecting the rights of faith-based adoption and foster care agencies to restrict child placement based on religious beliefs.

South Dakota passed a similar measure in March, and Virginia, Michigan and North Dakota already had laws in place prior to this year. Texas and Oklahoma currently have freedom of conscience bills in legislative committees.

About 30 percent of the adoptions in Alabama are secured through faith-based agencies, according to Eric Johnston, legal adviser for Alabama Citizens Action Program and president of the Alabama Pro-Life Coalition.

The state’s new law is limited to faith-based agencies that do not receive government funding. (BP, TAB)



# Award-winning

For the 21st consecutive year, *The Alabama Baptist* has been named among the top regional Christian newspapers in the nation. Below is a list of awards won by *The Alabama Baptist* and other state Baptist entities based on work published in 2016.

### The Alabama Baptist

▶ **The Alabama Baptist overall** by TAB staff — award of excellence, best in class: print: regional newspaper (ACP); first place, overall print publication: state Baptist newspaper (BCA); award of merit, periodicals: newspaper, local or regional (RCC)

▶ **The Alabama Baptist single issue** by TAB staff — award of merit, periodicals: single issue: newspaper, local or regional (RCC)

▶ **“Faith and Family”** by Carrie Brown McWhorter, Lauren C. Grim and TAB staff — award of excellence, reporting and writing: department: print media (ACP); award of merit, writing for publication: newspaper feature: series (RCC)

▶ **The Alabama Baptist overall design** by Lauren C. Grim and TAB — first place, design: state Baptist newspaper (BCA); award of merit, newspaper design (ACP)

▶ **Newspaper front page (Jan. 28, 2016)** by Lauren C. Grim — second place, design: newspaper front page (BCA); award of merit, newspaper front page (ACP)

▶ **“Mocking the Alabama Supreme Court”** by Bob Terry — first place, news writing: opinion/editorial (BCA); third place, higher goals awards: editorial (EPA)

▶ **“A Lesson from the First Century Church”** by Bob Terry — honorable mention, theological: biblical interpretation: all media (ACP)

▶ **“Gambling” series** by TAB staff — first place, news writing: series (BCA)

▶ **“Prison Ministry” series** by TAB staff — third place, news writing/series (BCA)

▶ **“Doing Missions Behind Bars”** by Jennifer Davis Rash — award of merit, writing for publication: miscellaneous (RCC)

▶ **“IMB cuts”** by Jennifer Davis Rash — third place, news writing: single article: short (BCA)

▶ **“Rashional Thoughts — When Reporters Get It Wrong”** by Jennifer Davis Rash — third place, feature writing: first-person column (BCA)

▶ **“What’s it worth?” photo spread** by Neisha Roberts — award of merit, photo spread: newspaper/newsletter/news service (ACP)

▶ **“Undone Redone”** by Grace Thornton — second place, news writing: single article: long (BCA)

▶ **“Pride Aside”** by Grace Thornton — first place, feature writing: single article: short (BCA)

▶ **“Volunteers Fill Food Bags for Children”** by Hannah Muñoz — second place, student news writing/single article (BCA); third place, student photography: single photo (BCA)

▶ **“Read TAB Day”** by Bethany Rogers and Debbie Campbell — award of merit, public relations/marketing: video (ACP)

### Samford University

▶ **“175 Years of Samford University”** — third place, video: promotion less than three minutes (BCA)

▶ **“Inside Samford”** — third place, print publication: other (BCA)

▶ **“2014–15 Annual Report”** — first place, print collateral: annual report (BCA); second place, print publication: other (BCA); award of merit, public relations materials: annual report (RCC)

### Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

▶ **“Church and Sexuality Conference”** by Office of Communications Services — first place, communications/marketing: less than \$25,000 budget (BCA)

▶ **BCMLink.org** by Brian Harris and Bethany Rogers — third place, website: organization or company site-adapted template (BCA)

▶ **“YEC Snapchat”** by Brian Harris — third place, social media: single post (BCA)

▶ **“Doug Vance, Disaster Relief Volunteer”** by Doug Rogers and Bethany Rogers — first place, video: editorial feature more than three minutes (BCA)

▶ **“2016 Missions Volunteer of the Year”** by Doug Rogers and Bethany Rogers — third place, video: editorial feature more than three minutes (BCA)

▶ **“Tim Haney — Grace from Tragedy”** by Doug Rogers and Bethany Rogers — third place, video: other (BCA)

▶ **“Pursue 2017”** by Bethany Rogers — first place, promotion and advertising: digital ad: series (BCA)

▶ **“Disaster Hit Home Ad”** by Doug Rogers — first place, promotion or advertising copy (BCA)

▶ **“And Suddenly, Conflict Broke Out”** by Doug Rogers — first place, scripts (BCA)

▶ **“It All Makes Sense”** by Jesse Conte — third place, promotion and advertising: direct mail (BCA)

### First Baptist Church, Montgomery

▶ **“Children’s Hope Brochure”** by Amanda Smith — second place, print collateral brochure (BCA)

▶ **“Faithful Giving”** by Amanda Smith — first place, promotion and advertising: poster or flyer (BCA)

▶ **“Our First Priority”** by Amanda Smith — third place, book (BCA)

### Tuscaloosa Baptist Association

▶ **Tuscaloosacba.com** by Bethany Rogers — first place, website: organization or company site-adapted template (BCA)

### Other

▶ **“The Belle Belle Story”** by Jennifer Davis Rash and Bethany Rogers — first place, video: other (BCA)

▶ **“Faith and Family: Miscarriage first-person”** by Lisa Keane for TAB — honorable mention, reporting and writing: personal experience: newspaper/newsletter (ACP)

▶ **TAB Media Kit** by Cummings Creative with direction by Bill Gilmore and Lauren Grim — second place, design: media kit (BCA)



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# Growing, maturing in Christ key to success, pastor says

(continued from page 1) where you will go anywhere, say anything and talk to anyone for the sake of the gospel.”

That’s why Dan Garland, director of pastoral ministries and church consulting for LifeWay Christian Resources, said he recommended Union No. 3 Baptist to be featured in a video at the 2017 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting June 13–14 in Phoenix, Arizona.

“I was impressed with the number of young men who are

being disciplined at the church,” Garland said. “We’re talking about a church in the middle of nowhere, in a place called Ballplay, Alabama, and some people drive more than a half hour to be a part. It’s a great church and God is doing amazing things there.”

The key to all of it has been the church growing and maturing in Christ, Hanner said.

“It’s been humbling and phenomenal to see what God has done. We’re just trying to stay out of His way.”

**For more information about Union No. 3 Baptist, visit [u3bchurch.com](http://u3bchurch.com).**

**Disciple Be One. Make One.**  
Matthew 16:24

Annual Meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention  
November 14-15, 2017  
Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, Alabama

“Disciple — Be One, Make One” will be the theme of this year’s Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting, set for Nov. 14–15 at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville. Watch for more details in upcoming issues of *The Alabama Baptist* and visit [alsbom.org/convention](http://alsbom.org/convention).

# LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR



## JOHNSON AMENDMENT

As Bible preachers, it is impossible in our society today to present the two sides of an argument without naming names. Naming the name removes the doubt of who you are talking about. Removing the Johnson Amendment would relieve the preacher of trying to explain something without naming the persons.

In the early years of the country, politicians were known to confer with the pastors. It would be wonderful if the preachers of this land (once again) had a loud enough voice that politicians would listen to them.

If a pastor is carefully presenting Bible principles to show what the Bible says then names of the individuals are strategic to defining the issues.

The liberals have no problem endorsing candidates because the “fake news” as it has become known, takes the side of the godless, socialistic, purveyors of humanism. When ungodly people are in control, the nation is in trouble.

When John the Baptist told Herod he should not have his brother’s wife, he was very specific that he did not support Herod and Herod’s lifestyle. Elijah did not hesitate to say, “You are the man.”

When a pastor endorses a candidate, he must make it clear that it is his own personal choice but if he tries to explain why he supports

him, then he will need to give specific illustrations that support what he is saying. The Johnson Amendment could easily be referenced in that situation and the pastor would be guilty. The more the government restrains the Bible preacher, the more trouble our country will have.

Because of these thoughts, I see good reason why the Johnson Amendment should be repealed.

Pastor Earl B. Wise  
Highland Gardens Baptist Church, Montgomery

## FREE SPEECH

I read with interest your commentary in the April 27 issue of *The Alabama Baptist* — “Never

More than a Shell of What It Could Have Been.”

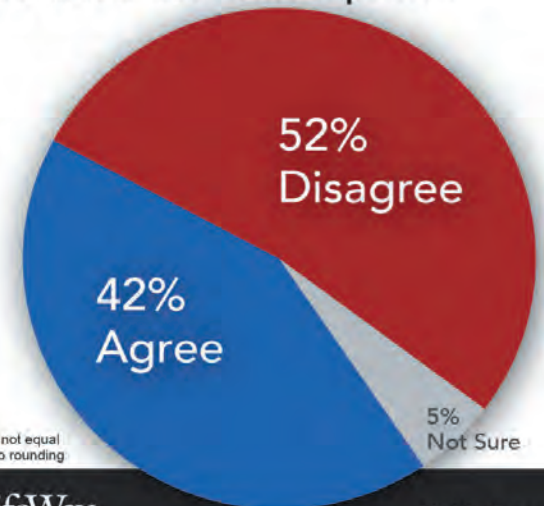
I feel that if you had done a little more research on the Johnson Amendment you might not have closed the article with the statement that “it seems that the amendment promotes good policy for the government and good practice for the churches.”

I strongly disagree. It seems to me that the government has used it on some occasions in an attempt to deny the Church the right to free speech.

Doug Williams  
Oneonta, Ala.

Among Americans

Churches who publicly endorse political candidates should lose their tax exemption



Note: Does not equal 100% due to rounding

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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 21

**Explore the Bible** By Robert Olsen, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

**Bible Studies for Life** By James Riley Strange, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Religion, Samford University

**CRUCIFIED**  
**Matthew 27:41-52**

**Mocked (41-44)**

After Jesus' trial, He was taken to be crucified. The crowd and religious leaders mocked Him, citing a portion of Psalm 22. This citation is ironic because it is a Messianic Psalm. In fact, Jesus Himself quotes it later. And yet in spite of the wickedness of those around Him, Jesus endured the cross, forgiving those who were crucifying Him.

As Christians this teaches us how we should act toward those who persecute us. It is natural to lash out and condemn those who hurt us, but as followers of Christ we pray for those who persecute us.

**Forsaken (45-49)**

Many people wonder about the meaning of Jesus' question on the cross; after all, "My God why have you forsaken me?" seems to suggest the crucifixion caught Jesus off guard. However, we know this is not the case because throughout the gospels Jesus refers to His impending death. A better way of understanding this is that Jesus is referring to the entirety of the Psalm. By referencing the first line of Psalm 22, Jesus was recognizing the entire fulfillment of this Messianic Psalm which predicts the suffering the Messiah was going to endure. Take verses 16-18 for example:

*"For dogs have surrounded me;  
a gang of evildoers has closed in on me;  
they pierced my hands and my feet.  
I can count all my bones;  
people look and stare at me.  
They divided my garments among themselves,  
and they cast lots for my clothing."*

Anyone familiar with the scene of Jesus' crucifixion must marvel at the parallels between this Psalm and the crucifixion. Jesus knew Psalm 22 was being fulfilled as He

hung on the cross. But the Psalm does not end in tragedy; it ends in victory.

*"All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord.*

*All the families of the nations will bow down before You, for kingship belongs to the Lord; He rules over the nations.*

*All who prosper on earth will eat and bow down;*

*all those who go down to the dust will kneel before Him — even the one who cannot preserve his life. Their descendants will serve Him; the next generation will be told about the Lord.*

*They will come and tell a people yet to be born*

*about His righteousness — what He has done" (vv. 27-31).*

Jesus' quoting this Psalm is not a cry of despair; it is a cry that reveals the victory that will come in the resurrection.

**Sacrificed (50-52)**

Jesus gave up His spirit — He was in control. The crucifixion was not a surprise to Jesus. The suffering was real but Jesus knew it was coming. When He died the curtain of the temple was torn in two. The curtain in the temple created a separation and only one time a year the High Priest would enter for the Day of Atonement. On this day the high priest would enter and perform a sacrifice for the sins of the nation.

Now, however, we do not have a curtain of separation. Christ has become the mediator between God and man, and the curtain ripping demonstrates the end of the sacrificial system. We do not sacrifice cows and sheep for the forgiveness of sins; Christ has fulfilled this sacrificial system and Christ's sacrifice provides for the forgiveness of sins. This is why Christians no longer perform sacrifices — Christ is the final sacrifice that had to be made (see Heb. 10). †

**LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY**  
**Matthew 25:31-46**

Today's passage is quite a famous parable. Only Matthew records it and the context is important. It is the final parable in the last of five long discourses in Matthew, so in a way it represents Jesus' final statement on what life will look like in God's kingdom and hence how we should begin living now.

Jesus' reference to the Son of Man in verse 31 harkens back to Daniel 7:13-14. Earlier in this same long discourse, Jesus said He will return (24:30; compare 26:64) and now He talks about what will happen when He does. "Nations" usually refers to Gentiles but the phrase "all nations" in verse 32 probably includes Jews.

**We are surrounded by opportunities to meet basic human needs. (31-36)**

The Son of Man is now "the king," another reference to Daniel 7:14. His words to the sheep draw from Isaiah 58:6-7. Meeting basic human needs is not a new idea at all, for we find it in the law (particularly in Leviticus), and many prophets frequently remind God's people of their duty (see also Micah 6:6-8). Did you notice the language, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom"?

Back in 5:3, Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." There Jesus was talking about people who willingly give up their status (as Jesus will in Gethsemane); in today's parable He is talking about those who have no station to begin with.

The people whom Jesus is talking about were helpless in their situations. The hungry were in danger of starvation and the thirsty of dehydration. "Stranger" refers to the alien, who had few legal rights in the first century. The naked lacked adequate

clothing. The sick were at the mercy of their own immune systems. Prisoners relied on people to bring them food and clothing which the prison system wasn't responsible to provide.

**Serving others is serving Jesus. (37-46)**

The righteous are shocked for two reasons. The first is that they don't recall helping the king and they helped a lot of people. The second is that the king, at the top of the social and economic ladder, is likening himself to people below its bottom rung. How can helping the destitute be helping the king?

One answer comes from Matthew's dramatic irony. The reader knows that in just a few verses most of these situations will apply to Jesus and no one will come to His aid. He will be in chains, thirsty and naked, and He will be treated like an alien with no basic rights. On the cross He will be like those who, without modern medical treatment, did not survive their diseases and infections. He will die of His wounds.

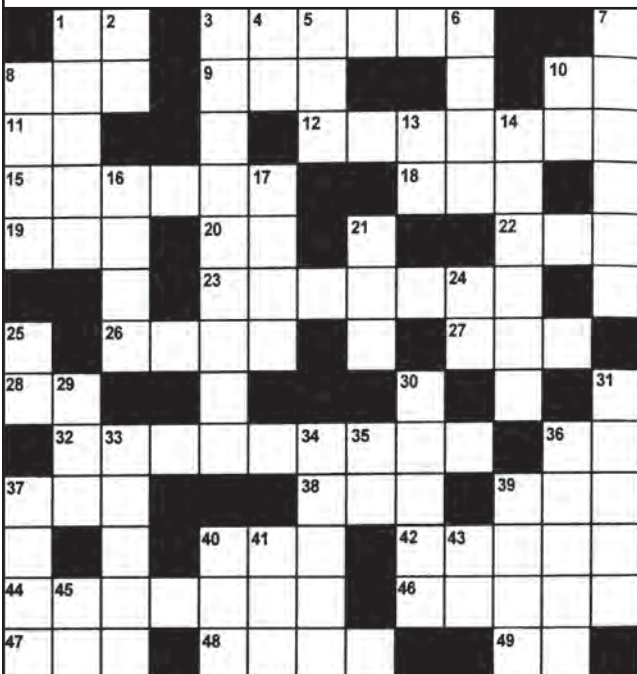
Another answer comes at verse 40. Normally "my brothers" should refer to fellow Jews. Others have said Jesus is referring to His own followers here. I think it is more likely that Jesus is using a well-known Jewish idea that the poor are righteous by virtue of their poverty. How so? They rely on God for their very existence.

The wicked by contrast are shocked to hear they are being judged for not helping the king. If they had known he was in need they would have fallen over one another to help. But they never lifted a finger to help those who were in real need right under their noses.

It helps us Baptists who profess salvation by grace through faith to remember we are not exempt from performing works of compassion. †

## Christian Crossword

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**Across**

- Expression of satisfaction.
- Stayed.
- God heard the voice of the \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 21:17)
- A prohibition.
- Mom.
- One \_\_\_\_\_ the other.
- Joseph ... entered into his \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 43:30)
- The child Jesus tarried \_\_\_\_\_. (Luke 2:43)
- Drink originally from China.
- Compass direction.
- \_\_\_\_\_ not this folly. (Judg. 19:23)
- The people sin against \_\_\_\_\_ Lord. (1 Sam. 14:33)
- As they that must give \_\_\_\_\_. (Heb. 13:17)
- \_\_\_\_\_ and good. (Gen. 41:5)
- And they did eat of the \_\_\_\_\_ corn. (Josh. 5:11)
- I am. (contraction)
- Set your \_\_\_\_\_ on things

- above. (Col. 3:2)
- Let not the sun \_\_\_\_\_ down on your wrath. (Eph. 4:26)
- Deliver thyself as a \_\_\_\_\_ from the ... hunter. (Prov. 6:5)
- Ribonucleic acid.
- 2,000 pounds.
- Larry, Curley and \_\_\_\_\_.
- Their \_\_\_\_\_ hath been to feed cattle. (Gen. 46:32)
- That all men through him might \_\_\_\_\_. (John 1:7)
- What a boat needs if it has no motor.
- Estimated Time of Arrival. (abbr.)
- Of your daily \_\_\_\_\_. (Ex. 5:19)
- Added to a word to make it an adverb.
- What a sheep says.
- Incorporated. (abbr.)
- English noblewoman.
- Three measures of \_\_\_\_\_ for a penny. (Rev. 6:6)
- Part of the ear or brain.
- He walked with \_\_\_\_\_. (Mal. 2:6)
- In a certain place.
- When kings go forth to \_\_\_\_\_. (2 Sam. 11:1)
- Ye therefore \_\_\_\_\_ them not. (John 8:47)
- A place to tie a boat.
- He that is of \_\_\_\_\_ hearth. (John 8:47)
- There had been \_\_\_\_\_ rain. (1 Kings 17:7)
- Hello!
- Former Chinese leader.
- Take ye a kid of the \_\_\_\_\_ for a sin offering. (Lev. 9:3)
- Full of dead men's \_\_\_\_\_. (Matt. 23:27)
- Guy, pal, a good \_\_\_\_\_. (Ex. 5:19)
- All the \_\_\_\_\_ of the field are withered. (Joel 1:12)
- Not out.

- Reverence and \_\_\_\_\_ fear. (Heb. 12:28)
- They put on Jesus a scarlet \_\_\_\_\_. (Matt. 27:28)
- Take it by the \_\_\_\_\_. (Ex. 4:4)
- Martha ... went and \_\_\_\_\_ him. (John 11:20)
- Eggs.
- Egyptian god.
- "Entertainment Tonight." (abbr.)



## PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



### Pakistani prime minister fights forced conversions

HAFIZABAD, Pakistan — A 14-year-old Catholic girl in Pakistan, taken from her family in December and forcibly converted to Islam, was rescued April 26, her lawyer said. This move indicates Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's fight against forced conversions is being heard by local leaders.

Attorney Tahir Bashir said police officer Munir Ahmed on Dec. 6 illegally detained Sumbal Arif of Hafizabad District, Punjab Province, and coerced her into converting to Islam while forcing her to live with him, despite attempts by her indigent family to recover her.

The girl's mother, Elizabeth Arif, on April 21 asked Bashir to recover Sumbal from the illegal custody of Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Munir Ahmed of Hafizabad Police Station, according to Bashir. Bashir said he filed for the recovery of the girl in Lahore High Court, and a court bailiff rescued her from the policeman's home on April 26 and presented her in court the next day.

The Punjab Criminal Law (Protection of Minorities) Bill 2016, pending with the Punjab Assembly, proposes that no one below 18 years old shall be deemed to have changed their religion. A law adopted by the Sindh Assembly in November applies the same conditions for religious conversions.

Sharif, addressing a gathering of the Hindu community in Karachi in March, warned against forced conversions and destruction of non-Muslim places of worship, describing such acts as a "crime in Islam."

"Pakistan didn't come into existence to be against any religion," he said. "It is wrong to consider any religion inferior. I want to see a Pakistan where there are equal opportunities for every person of any religion to progress and make a good life for himself and his family. And there is peace and protection for everyone." (MS)

### Sudanese authorities demolish church building

SOBA AL ARADI, South Sudan — Khartoum state authorities in Sudan demolished a church building May 7 as Christians were preparing to worship, sources said. In the Khartoum suburb of Soba al Aradi, which began as a refugee camp for south Sudanese, a bulldozer sent by Jebel Aulia locality and the Ministry of Planning and Urban Development arrived at block 7 at about 2:30 p.m. and destroyed the Sudanese Church of Christ building, they said.

Authorities had notified church leaders of the impending demolition a week prior. The church building was one of at least 25 the Sudanese government designated for destruction in 2016. The government reportedly claimed the churches were built on land zoned for residential or other uses, or were on government land, but church leaders said it is part of a wider crackdown on Christianity.

The building in Soba al Aradi was used by three congregations as it was the only one left in the area following the demolition of 12 area church buildings. The order targets a wide range of denominations, from Roman Catholic to Pentecostal.

Sudan ranked fifth on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2017 World Watch List of countries where Christians face most persecution. (MS)

### Christian gets life in prison for blasphemy

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan — A Christian in Pakistan has been sentenced to life in prison for blasphemy.

A trial court in Rawalpindi sentenced Zafar Bhatti to life imprisonment, even though conviction under the blasphemy law mandates the death penalty and a fine for the "use of derogatory remarks ... that defile the name of Muhammed."

Bhatti, who has been in jail since 2012, was accused of sending blasphemous text messages from his mobile phone. He continues to deny that the messages were sent from his phone.

Nasir Saeed, director of the Centre for Legal Aid, Assistance and Settlement-UK, said, "Instead of freeing him the court has sentenced him to life imprisonment because of pressure from Islamists." (MS)

## Learn how to teach spiritual discipline of generosity

Churches managed by a single staff member — the pastor — or a small number of paid and volunteer workers will be the target audience for an upcoming workshop on church finances.

The "Small Church, Big Responsibility: How to be Financially Savvy No Matter Your Size" workshop presented by Samford University's Ministry Training Institute will be June 3 from 9 a.m. to noon. There is no fee to attend and lunch is included.

The event is co-sponsored by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper.

Samford's Gary Fenton and SBOM's Jim Swedenburg will share information on stewardship, budgeting, increasing tithing and basic financial management.

### Biblical understanding

Fenton, senior advancement officer at Samford and retired longtime pastor of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, said the sessions will provide biblical understanding and how-tos related to teaching and preaching on stewardship with confidence.

"Generosity is not a personal-

ity trait," Fenton said. "It is a spiritual discipline.

"Biblical generosity builds community. When people do not hear the call to give, they also may not hear the call to community.

"Paul's last instructions to the Ephesians, his last quote of Jesus to this group, involves stewardship," Fenton said. "Lack of stewardship is not lack of faith; often it is rejection — 'I don't give because I don't believe.'"

Along with two instructional sessions, participants will have an opportunity for one-on-one consulting and will receive a workbook and resource bag if pre-registered. Those not pre-registered will receive the workbooks and resource bags on a first-come, first-served basis until supplies run out.

The workshop will be held on the third floor of the Sullivan-Cooney Family Field House (the building on the south end of the football stadium, closest to Lakeshore Parkway and the west campus entrance).

For more information, call 205-726-4055, email [mti@samford.edu](mailto:mti@samford.edu) or visit <https://www2.samford.edu/eve/index.php?formid=1643>. (TAB)

## Want to know GOD?

By Jenni Ingram  
Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

I was thinking about rules this morning and things I had read and heard in the last few days.

This led to a natural progression to thinking about the Ten Commandments — remember them? If you need a reminder look up Exodus 20; they are all written for you there.

Everything in this world has rules and in order to honor God we must obey them. Even Jesus talked about the law. He told audiences that He has not come to earth to get rid of the law and all rules. He said, "I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt. 5:17).

He even clarified this later in the Gospel of Matthew when the disciples asked Him, "Teacher which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

Jesus answered them, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:36-39).

We are to love God with everything we are and over and above anything or anyone. How do we show this love?

Even Scripture answers that question for us in 1 John 5:3: "In fact this is love for God: to keep His commands."

There are many more commands in Scripture and it is impossible for us to obey them all. That is why I personally am thankful for Jesus who loves us so much that He will forgive us whenever we fail Him.

I also am thankful for Philippians 4:13: "I can do all this through Him who gives me strength."

We cannot pick and choose which part of the Bible to obey. He loves us with an irreplaceable dedication. Shouldn't we do the same for Him? †

## Internship experience at TAB



Photo by Jay Galloway

Thanks to Molly Catherine Brown (left), who served in TAB's 175th anniversary campaign internship for the spring semester, and Hannah Muñoz (center), who has served in TAB's editorial internship for more than three years. Molly and Hannah are among the May graduates of Samford University in Birmingham. Another thanks to Caleb Jones, who served in TAB's second editorial internship role for the spring semester. Caleb will graduate from Samford in December. Congratulations, Molly, Hannah and Caleb, and thank you for a job well done.

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# 'God has changed my life'

## Holiday is 'good example' for Knicks teammates

By Bill Sorrell  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**H**ome for the Holidays has consistently been the basketball court. The three sons and daughter of Shawn and Toya Holiday have followed their hoop dreams: Justin Holiday plays for the New York Knicks, Jrue Holiday for the New Orleans Pelicans, Aaron Holiday for UCLA. Lauren Holiday, who was coached by her mother at Campbell Hall High School in Studio City, California, played on the UCLA women's team.

"We all love to play," said Justin Holiday, a shooting guard/small forward. "That makes it easy for us to work and get better in our jobs."

But there is something more that runs in the family, he said.

"The biggest thing that has helped me is we are a family that all believes.

"Without my faith, I wouldn't be here," said Justin Holiday, whose parents led him to Christ. "I know that this is God's plan for me, what He made me to do because of how He has taken care of me; how He has blessed me even in the hard times I have gone through and made me the person I am today. It goes 100 percent to the Lord."

Nicknamed "The Fireman" at the University of Washington in Seattle for his ability to "cool-off" hot-shooting opponents with his defensive intensity and rebounding, Justin

Holiday was named to the Pac-10 Defensive Team as a junior in 2010 and Pac-10 Defensive Player of the Year his senior season in 2011. He averaged 10.5 points, 5.2 rebounds, 2.1 assists and 1.2 steals as a senior and was co-captain with now Boston Celtics guard Isaiah Thomas.

Undrafted in 2011, he played overseas for Okapi Aalstar of Belgium, winning the Belgium Cup championship in 2012. He also played for Szolnoki Olaj in Hungary. That team won the Hungarian League and Hungarian Cup in 2014.

"Overseas I was still persevering. Being in a foreign area, an uncomfortable area, I was still able to display God in my life and improve as a basketball player," he said.

He played in the Developmental League (Idaho, Santa Cruz), on NBA Summer League teams Cleveland, Philadelphia, Golden State and was waived by Cleveland, Portland, Philadelphia and Utah.

"The list goes on but I am here," said Justin Holiday, who signed with Golden State for the 2014-15 season. In the NBA finals against Cleveland, he averaged 4.3 points and 1.2 rebounds.

The 2015-16 season was spent with the Atlanta Hawks and the Chicago Bulls, being traded in February 2016.

Justin Holiday was traded to the Knicks in June 2016. During the 2016-17 season he averaged 7.7 points, 2.7 rebounds and 1.2 assists. The Knicks finished 31-51. He has a career average 5.7 points, 2 rebounds and 1.1 assists.

Knicks forward Marshall Plumlee said Justin Holiday's maturity is evident "by watching the way he plays, the way he handles himself on a daily basis. He is the kind of guy that has worked his way up and has done it the right way. He hasn't taken shortcuts. He knows what it is like to be part of a winning team and he brings that every day. I know every moment that I have taken to learn from Justin and listen to him, I have benefitted from it. He is a good example."

Justin Holiday, 28, wants to encourage others with his story.

"My way to the NBA wasn't simple and I had to rely on the Lord. It is allowing yourself to grow in the hard times, trying to understand what God wants you to learn in those times, to lean on Him in those times," he said. "I think the biggest way I have

let my faith grow, every time I have gotten out of a hard time or tough situation, I am that many more steps farther (ahead)."

### 'Big platform'

"It is a big platform. That is the reason why I am here. God has changed my life. That is the reason why I have gone through all I have gone through."

Justin Holiday has not allowed NBA pressure to get to him. "I have learned about myself, I don't back down from anything. I know I have a God who loves me and every situation I'm in no matter if it's not working out or going great, I don't ever give up. I know I can't ever give up on anything. This is what God has blessed me with.

"He is the reason why I am able to live with joy because first of all I know that this life is just temporary. I have a place that I am going to be able to live forever with Him and He loves me and I am thankful." ✠



Justin Holiday

Photo by Dave Saffran/MSG Photos

RELIGION

in America

Compiled from Wire Services

### Investigators search televangelist's headquarters

GRAPEVINE, Texas — Federal investigators searched the headquarters of televangelist Benny Hinn on April 26, according to news station WFAA, the Dallas ABC affiliate. A federal source told WFAA that the Internal Revenue Services' investigation into Hinn has been lengthy, but investigators at the scene offered no specifics about what they were looking for at the Grapevine office.

Ole Anthony, whose nonprofit group Trinity Foundation tracks religious fraud, said Hinn has raised millions of dollars through his so-called "healing" ministries. Hinn's TV program, "This Is Your Day," is one of the world's most-watched Christian programs, according to the show's website.

In 1999, Hinn announced the future construction of a \$30 million healing center in Irving, Texas, a project that raised millions. But the center was never built, Anthony said.

"What happened to the money? Same thing that always happens. It goes to meet the needs of Benny and his confidants," Anthony said. "There is more fraud in the name of God, not just in America, but in the world, than any other kind of fraud."

WFAA reported that Hinn's spokesperson had no comment on the investigation. (TAB)

### Kentucky law allows for school Bible courses

FRANKFORT, Kentucky — Public school boards in Kentucky are now authorized to offer elective Bible classes, thanks to a bill signed into law recently by Gov. Matt Bevin.

HB 128, which passed 34-4 in the Kentucky Senate in April, will provide state guidance to help start the elective courses, according to The Christian Post.

According to the bill, such classes "teach students knowledge of biblical content, characters, poetry and narratives that are prerequisites to understanding contemporary society and culture."

Rep. D.J. Johnson (R-District 13), who introduced the bill, said the law "is not a mandate."

Local school boards already have the option to offer Bible courses so the point of the bill is to provide guidance and constitutional support for how to go about it, he said, according to the Post.

However, the bill has been criticized by the Kentucky Council of Churches, which said it could damage religious liberty, according to Christian News Network. (TAB)

### Groups against contraceptive mandate still in limbo

NEW ORLEANS — East Texas Baptist University (ETBU) in Marshall, Texas, and several other religious groups who challenged the Affordable Care Act's contraception requirement are still in limbo because of a Justice Department appeal.

On April 24 the Justice Department asked the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals to pause its 2015 ruling in favor of ETBU and others who had requested exemption from the conception requirement. Those groups had objected to the act's mandated coverage of contraceptives and abortion-inducing drugs for employees, according to the *National Catholic Reporter*.

In May 2016 the U.S. Supreme Court sent the cases against the mandate back to lower courts. Then in early 2017 religious groups hoped they would get a reprieve from the newly installed President Donald Trump's administration. So far, that hasn't happened, according to the *Reporter*.

ETBU and others have asked the Justice Department to drop the appeal. (TAB)

## VOICE YOUR OPINION

**SPEAK UP** on issues in the Baptist world by writing a letter to the editor of *The Alabama Baptist*.

### Remember to:

- Include your name and address
- Focus on issues, not people
- Be as concise as possible