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Can scientists, academics use mathematical laws to prove God exists?

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“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.”

Psalm 33:12

Happy 4th of July

CELEBRATING FREEDOM AND THOSE WHO SACRIFICED FOR IT AS WELL AS THOSE WHO CONTINUE TO DEFEND IT.

Background photo by Carolyn Tomlin

Families celebrate by honoring God, country

By Carolyn Tomlin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

A recent report estimates more than 43 million Americans will travel during the Fourth of July holiday. Whether your family plans to journey to other areas or plans a stay-at-home Alabama holiday, these educational, fun and creative activities will make this

a time to remember. Celebrate family, faith and patriotic community events this Independence Day.

► **Worship together as a family on July 2, the Sunday before Independence Day.** Whether you worship in a small Alabama Baptist church or a large one, plan a “pack-a-pew” day for your congregation with your group. As many relatives gather for family reunions, set an example to the younger generation that attending church is a priority with your clan.

► **Salute the Christian flag as well as the American flag.** Check with your pastor in advance for this part of the service. Teach children the words to this salutation. If a Christian flag is not available, ask if

your family can donate one for the church. Perhaps this could be given in memory or in honor of a beloved relative. Teach that as Christians, we pledge our alliance first to God, then to our country. Both pledges can be found at www.christianhomeschoolers.com/christian_pledges.html.

► **Plan a Fourth of July parade.** Do you live near a nursing home or assisted living facility? If so, ask parents in your church to bring their child and tricycle, bicycle or stroller to the parking lot. Or you could use a paved area of the church grounds. Decorate the vehicle in patriotic colors with crepe paper streamers. Dress children in the traditional red, white and blue. Give out small American flags for

children to wave. Include dogs, on a leash of course.

► **Attend a patriotic music event in your community.** Many small towns in Alabama sponsor community choirs that perform patriotic music on Independence Day. These events provide interaction with other denominations and a time of fellowship with other Christians. Enjoy the great hymns that encourage love of God and country. Hopefully, the march music of John Philip Sousa will be part of the program. Dress your family in patriotic colors of red, white and blue. If the program is outside, you may be able to bring a picnic basket and lawn chairs or a blanket for seating on the
(See ‘July,’ page 6)

COMMENT

Protecting the Right to Worship

More than 45 people were killed and at least another 120 injured in two bombings of Christians gathered for worship on Palm Sunday in Egypt. The so-called Islamic State (IS) group claimed responsibility.

So often have we read of IS atrocities in the past four years that such blaring headlines no longer shock us. We are saddened by them, even confused by such disregard of God's first gift of life, but not shocked. Stories of the heinous acts of beheadings, crucifixions, burning people alive and more by IS confirm there is no depravity to which this group will not stoop.

An IS statement said the Palm Sunday bombings in Egypt were part of the payment for acts by Christians during the Crusades. That reasoning ignores the fact that the Coptic Christians attacked had been in Egypt 1,000 years before the Crusades and 600 years before there was a Muslim faith.

Target for IS violence

The Copts were not part of the Crusades at the end of the first millennium. They just provided another vulnerable target for IS violence. That's all.

If the goal of IS is to drive out Christians from the Middle East, they are losing.

On Easter, Coptic Christians gathered for worship protected by the Egyptian army. President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi pledged to provide greater protection for the country's Christian minority. The evil done by the bombings may, in the long run, make it more difficult for IS and other radicals to continue their historic abuse of this Christian group.

In Iraq things are changing too.

On Easter, for the first time since 2014, Christians near the Iraqi town of Mosul gathered to celebrate Easter. "God willing, the celebration of the resurrection of Christ will also mark the return and rising up of the Christians in Iraq," said Kyriacos Isho, 75, who was accompanied to church by his 12 children and grandchildren, a news source reported.

St. George Chaldean Catholic Church in Tel



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Esqof, just north of Mosul, was damaged by IS when the area fell to IS in 2014. But when Kurdish Peshmerga fighters along with the Iraqi army liberated the town, it was Muslims who made a cross and put it atop the church building to replace the one destroyed by IS.

As the Chaldean Christians gathered inside the church for Easter worship, it was Muslims who stood guard outside the church building to ensure Christian believers would not be harmed or disturbed during their services.

IS atrocities also are turning off fellow Sunni Muslims in other parts of the Middle East.

In Jordan, which is known as a more moderate Arab state, young Muslims spontaneously rallied to protect Christian worshippers on Easter even though there was no known threat.

According to news sources, Kazem Kharabsheh, an organizer of the effort, posted this message, which has been translated to English, on Facebook: "Sunday night will be our fellow Christians praying in their churches and performing religious rituals. Some Mercenaries are threatening to our internal security and trying to intimidation from entering churches, as in Egypt the other day.

"And here, I and my Muslim friends will be guarding Balqa churches that night to let our fellow Christians worship as they want without concern."

Showing harmony

Another organizer said the effort was to highlight "the unity of Jordanians and to give everyone the freedom to practice their religion without restraints or fear."

Hundreds of Muslims in towns across Jordan responded to the posting and joined in guarding other churches. In Ajloun on the Red Sea participants said they were guarding Christian churches to "show the world the harmony and conviviality in Jordan."

In Madaba, a historically Christian city in Jor-

dan, Muslim young men spontaneously turned out to guard churches while Christian neighbors worshipped inside the buildings.

These reports are not the first time Muslims have banded together to protect Christians. In Kenya on Dec. 22, 2015, a busload of Muslims refused to leave Christians on a bus attacked by the Somali terrorist group Al-Shabaab which pledges loyalty to IS.

Al-Shabaab's pattern has been to attack a crowded bus, separate Muslims from Christians and kill the Christians. This time witnesses said the Muslims refused. They gave Christian women their hijabs (head coverings) and hid others behind bags.

Witnesses said they told the Islamic terrorists to kill them all or leave them alone.

Even in Pakistan with its horrific accounts of Christian persecution, Muslims and Christians have stood together in a human chain proclaiming "One Nation, One Blood."

IS brutality seems to know no end. We know the terrorists kill and maim Christians. Sometimes Christians are not as aware that IS is equally vengeful on Muslims and others who do not support IS goals.

For those living in what is called "the West" it is easy to forget there are Muslims who do not support the brand of

extremism lived out by IS followers. It would be as wrong to lump all Muslims together as it would be to label all Christians the same because of the violence of some splinter extremist group.

Continuing to bear witness

Coptic Christians, Chaldean Christians and other believers in the Middle East have endured persecution and oppression for centuries. Yet they survive and continue to bear witness to the faithfulness of God and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Christians being protected by Muslim armies while they worship and by the spontaneous actions of Muslim civilians may be signaling the beginning of a new day. Certainly the world needs to see more of this kind of unity.

To all God gave the gift of freedom of worship. Certainly protecting that gift is worth the effort of all.✠

"To all God gave the gift of freedom of worship. Certainly protecting that gift is worth the effort of all."

***The Alabama Baptist
will not publish a July 6 issue.
The next issue will be July 13.***

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TAB
THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

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Size doesn't dictate health, quality

Pastors, members of small membership churches must be more realistic

A lot of Christians share the assumption that the bigger the church, the more blessed it is. One of the biggest flaws in that assumption is that it's poor theology.

“God is not more concentrated because there are more of us in the room,” said Karl Vaters, pastor of Cornerstone Christian Fellowship, Fountain Valley, California, and a blogger and author on the challenges faced by small congregations.

The truth is small churches, when healthy, have capabilities large ones do not.

Vaters emphasized that message during a recent FaithSoaring Churches Learning Community conference call titled “Innovative Small Churches Get Unstuck.”

Vaters has become one of the nation's leading experts on the common denominators that fuel small-church health — and decline.

Many know him through *Christianity Today*, where he pens his Pivot blog on the issues facing small churches.

He is the author of “The Grasshopper Myth: Big Churches, Small Churches and the Small Thinking that Divides Us.”

He's also the founder of New Small Church, a ministry designed to provide training, leadership and other resources largely unavailable to congregations with memberships under 200.

It's a message FaithSoaring organizer George Bullard and other participants said is sorely needed in an era when megachurches are considered ultimately successful because of their size (2,000 or more) and high-quality music, ministries, preaching and sometimes even political influence.

Getting unstuck doesn't require the outside world to change their view of health and success but that small churches do. They are often held back because they share in opinions that hold membership size and growth as primarily sacred.

But even the core definitions of “small” have changed over the years, Vaters said.

It used to be that a church with a regular attendance of 100 was assumed to have 200 on the books. Now that is 300 on the rolls for 100 who worship regularly.

Even the meaning of “average Sunday morning attendance” has changed. That used to be defined as attending three times a week. Now it's two times a month, he said.

A small church typically has 25 to 200 members and 200 to 350 are considered mid-size. From there to 2,000 are big churches and congregations above that are defined as megachurches.



unsplash.com

The average church size in the U.S. is around 85 members, compared to around 65 globally, Vaters said.

The average Alabama Baptist church attendance is 97 with the average total membership being 301, according to the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. The median attendance for Alabama Baptist churches is 60.

Another assumption about small churches is that they are small in membership number because they're not doing a very good job of evangelism.

That opinion in part arises from the church growth movement during the past 40 years. An unintended negative consequence of that movement has been to look down on the value of small churches.

But there are qualities small congregations have that larger churches do not, according to Vaters.

“There are a lot of people who don't want to worship in a massive setting,” he said. “They draw closer to Jesus, feel more involved, feel more important in a small setting than they do in a larger one.”

Small churches also are incubators for leadership.

Imagine a man who has rudimentary guitar-playing skills, he said. In a smaller church he likely will be able to contribute immediately in worship and may even become the worship leader in a short time.

“When you have to step up and lead, you tend to get in there better and learn,” he said. When small, healthy churches do evange-

lism well, it does not guarantee numerical growth, Vaters said. “We have been told ... if a church is healthy it should be reaching people and people should be getting saved,” he said. But that growth, “doesn't take place in a whole lot of circumstances.”

‘Magic number’ in growth

Vaters offered his own church's situation as an example. The small congregation is regularly welcoming new members but also sending people out to serve in ministries elsewhere.

And that's a necessity because property values in their area, located just a few miles from Disneyland in Southern California, are so high the congregation cannot afford to expand in order to sustain membership growth.

For any church to grow above 200 — the “magic number” in church growth calculations — it requires larger facilities and staff. The church also needs sympathetic local government officials to rezone land as needed, Vaters said.

Usually it's not just general attitudes about small churches that need to be more realistic, but those of the members and pastors of those churches, he added.

“A small church is not a scaled down version of a big church.”

Vaters said he knows of too many small churches of 50 or so members trying to offer men's and women's Bible studies, men's and women's choirs, various youth groups and recovery programs.

Another congregation was trying to start a small-group ministry. “They were frustrated they couldn't get them going,” Vaters said.

He had to remind them the congregation itself is the small group. (BNG, TAB)

“A small church is not a scaled down version of a big church.”

Karl Vaters author on challenges of small congregations

GOD & math

$$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a} = \frac{-(-7) \pm \sqrt{(-7)^2 - 4(2)(-5)}}{2(2)}$$

$$= \frac{7 \pm \sqrt{49 + 40}}{4} = \frac{7 \pm \sqrt{89}}{4}$$

$$\text{or } \frac{7 + \sqrt{89}}{4} = -0.6085 \text{ or } 4.1085$$



Can scientists, academics use mathematical laws to prove that God exists?

By **Martha Simmons**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Lord, I believe; help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

Skeptics have been around since the dawn of man's belief in God, even as a father was desperately seeking a miracle cure from Jesus for his child, as evidenced in this Bible verse.

Despite a rising tide of secularism and unbelief, some scientists and academics contend God's existence is not only probable, it is a logical explanation of such nonphysical concepts as mathematics and human consciousness.

Noted economist Robert H. Nelson, a professor of public policy at the University of Maryland in College Park, addressed that topic in his 2015 book, "God? Very Probably: Five Rational Ways to Think About the Question of a God."

In the book and in recent articles, Nelson contends math operates in a "god-like fashion" and that scientists still cannot explain why the observable natural order follows a precise mathematical calculus.

'Religion has become central'

In a recent interview with *The Alabama Baptist*, the Princeton-educated economist said religion had become central to his public writings since the 1980s. "I decided to take that to the next level. It was also a matter of personal fascination with the 'God question' and the fact that I think by writing," he said.

So how does mathematics indicate that God exists? Like God, mathematical laws are not proven by the physical world.

Mathematics exists independent of physical reality, and modern mathematics generally is formulated before any natural observations are made to prove them, Nelson said. "Einstein's general theory of relativity, for example, was based on theoretical mathematics developed 50 years earlier by the great German mathematician Bernhard Riemann that did not have any known practical applications at the time of its intellectual creation."

Moreover, Nelson pointed out, Isaac Newton spent a lifetime trying to find a natural explanation for his mathematical law

of gravity, based in part on his discovery of calculus, but ultimately concluded that it was simply God's will, Nelson wrote.

"Like mathematics, the events in human consciousness have no measurable spatial and temporal dimensions," Nelson said. One leading atheist, frustrated that he couldn't reconcile his own scientific materialism with the existence of the non-physical world of human consciousness, simply denied that consciousness even exists.

Nelson said he was somewhat skeptical about the existence of God when he embarked on "God? Very Probably." As he wrote it, however, he came to believe in God and now considers himself "a Christian but in quite unconventional ways."

Mobile-based Kenneth G. McLeod, a Christian apologist who is a Southern Baptist, has written five books on the subject and employed similar arguments from physics, human consciousness, evolutionary biology, mathematics and the history of religion and theology to defend the existence of God. He goes further than Nelson, however, contending there certainly is a God and Christianity is the only religion that can make sense of God's existence.

"I am trained in theology, mathematics and statistics and I believe that the natural world has an underlining mathematical structure that does not comport with random, unguided, unintelligent input," McLeod told *The Alabama Baptist*. "In my early years as an adult Christian, there were many scientists affirming a conflict between God and science. As a proponent of Christianity and science, this concerned me. I needed to reconcile this conflict, and in doing so, I found a world of evidence that supports my Christian faith," McLeod said.

"The Bible does contradict a few scientific theories but not any scientific facts. The Bible does not say the world is flat or

the earth is the center of the universe. Obviously the main conflict is over the existence of God, the origin of the universe and the origin of all life," McLeod said.

"But these questions are outside the scope of empirical scientific inquiry. This is not a scientific argument at all but a disagreement on the philosophical interpretation of science. As a result the 'war' between science and Christianity is mostly a ruse."

There's room for both skeptics and those operating on "faith alone" under Christianity's big tent.

"Many Christians, especially Christian apologists like myself, are skeptics by nature. The foundation of my apologetics ministry is that Christianity is the only world religion that can stand up to skepticism and rational enquiry," McLeod said. "In the second century Justin Martyr explained the process between faith and reason for the

Christian like this: 'A man seeks the truth by the unaided effort of reason and is disappointed. The truth is offered to him by faith and he accepts. And having accepted he finds that it satisfies his reason.'"

Troy Henderson, who teaches mathematics at the Baptist-affiliated University of Mobile, said he brings his faith into the classroom.

Christian mathematician

"I like to share the gospel with my students during the first day of class each semester. This not only exposes the students to the truth of the gospel, but it also demonstrates my position as a Christian mathematician," Henderson said. "With this foundation I make myself available for discussion about the truth of God in His word.

"My biblical worldview provides me with examples of how God manifests Himself through His creation and specifically through mathematics which is used to

artistically and scientifically describe and model His creation. Several of these examples include the description of the molten/brazen sea, the golden ratio, the Fibonacci sequence, the golden spiral and radiocarbon dating. Each of these topics are used to give testimony to specific passages or general principles in Scripture, and these testimonies provide deeper understanding of many of the attributes of God."

Henderson has not encountered any secular pushback for his Christian viewpoint in the world of mathematics.

Controversial topics

"Unlike many of the sciences, pure mathematics is essentially void of faith-based topics that may be considered controversial. However, applied mathematics can be controversial when addressing scientific topics such as the age of the universe/earth, creationism/evolution and climate change," Henderson said. "Since my areas of research have little overlap with these controversial topics, I have not encountered criticism from secular academics. If future research prompts controversy, then my understanding of God and His purpose for me, through the His word, will serve as my guide in responding to criticism."

Henderson contends that studying the Scriptures rather than mathematics provides the answers to the most puzzling of questions.

"As much as I have learned about and enjoy mathematics, I have to say that mathematics is not the most important discipline of study," Henderson said. "Rather I am convinced that the study of theology is man's noblest pursuit since it is the critical and rigorous study of who God is and man's relationship to Him.

"I have observed that most theists regard God as simply a supernatural being, and their beliefs and convictions about who He is are based on instinct and intuition (their own and/or those of others). However, I am dogmatic in my belief that if I am to know anything about God (whether His existence or any of His attributes), it must be because He has chosen to reveal Himself. The Lord has chosen to reveal Himself in four ways: in His word, in creation, through conscience and in Christ." ✠

"Unlike many of the sciences, pure mathematics is essentially void of faith-based topics that may be considered controversial."

**Troy Henderson
mathematics professor,
University of Mobile**



Photo courtesy of Metro Changers

Groups from Florida, Illinois, Ohio and Georgia serve with Metro Changers Inc., a ministry of Birmingham Baptist Association, in neighborhoods of north Birmingham, Norwood, Fairmont and Inglenook during the first two weeks of June.

More than 750 volunteers repair houses in Birmingham

Teenagers and adults from several states — including Florida, Illinois, Ohio and Georgia — are volunteering to repair houses and enrich communities in Birmingham during June and July. They are working as part of World Changers. Their groups' logistics — housing, food, etc. — are coordinated by the Metro Changers ministry of Birmingham Baptist Association (BBA).

More than 750 volunteers will work on 60-plus houses, averaging 125 hours per volunteer each week. The volunteers will work on projects in at least six areas of the city. The first two weeks of work were done June 17–30 and the final week will take place July 17–20.

"The volunteers are filled with a desire to help in the lives of elderly and low-income families," said Butch Henderson explained.

son, director of Metro Changers for BBA and coordinator of World Changers projects in Birmingham.

World Changers is sponsored by LifeWay Christian Resources' student ministry department. It began annual events in Birmingham in 1992 with the help of Birmingham's Community Development office, Henderson said, adding the mayor's office also supports the effort.



Photo courtesy of Metro Changers
Metro Changers volunteers repair the roof of a home.

The City of Birmingham funds the building materials through a grant and homeowners must qualify for assistance, Henderson explained.

Metro Changers is a year-round ministry engaging community volunteers to assist in eliminating substandard housing in the Birmingham metro area, he said.

For more information, call 205-796-5128. (BBA, TAB)

Almost 30 percent of the Birmingham population lives below the poverty line ... more than twice the national average.

Metro Changers

And the survey says...

Only 17 percent of Christians report biblical worldview

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

With the rise of technology has come the rise of information — specifically the spread of competing ideas and worldviews. With the extra exposure to different thoughts and ideas, Christians have the opportunity like never before to better understand and relate to those with opposing beliefs.

But there's a cost, a possibility that the opposing beliefs could morph Christians' beliefs. And, according to a recent Barna Group study, that's exactly what has happened.

Barna's research, titled "Competing Worldviews Influence Today's Christians," shows that only 17 percent of Christians who consider their faith important and attend church regularly actually have a biblical worldview.

Varying views

Among practicing Christians, the study found that 61 percent agree with ideas rooted in New Spirituality; 54 percent resonate with postmodernist views; 36 percent accept ideas associated with Marxism; and 29 percent believe ideas based on secularism.

While some may read these statistics and be shocked, two Alabama Baptist pastors were not.

"I am not surprised (that only 17 percent of Christians have a biblical worldview), given the wide-ranging definition people apply to the word 'Christian,'" said Bill Cannon, pastor of First Baptist Church, Union Springs, in Bullock Baptist Association.

Longtime pastor James Preachers agreed.

"It's a startling statistic and it hurts but it doesn't surprise me," said Preachers, who serves as director of missions for Sardis Baptist Association as well as pastor of Mount Carmel Baptist Church, Coffee Springs.

When *The Alabama Baptist* called Preachers for an interview, he was writing an article on just this subject — the effects of postmodernism on today's Christians.

Postmodernism is the idea that there is no such thing as objectivity, that "at best we can know only what is true for ourselves," the study states. A postmodern viewpoint, for instance, would be the statement: "What is morally right or wrong depends on what an individual believes." Almost one-quarter (23 percent) of practicing Christians strongly agree with that statement, according to Barna. And as a whole, more than half (54 percent) of practicing Christians embrace at least one of the postmodern statements assessed in the research, the study found.

Preachers said, "In the post-modern era in which we live, Americans have deviated from the values that have made us great. Deviating from a biblical worldview, we have deviated from moral values. Many Americans have come to believe that truth is relevant and have come to believe that there are no absolutes."

Many practicing Christians — at least 61 percent — also embrace at least one of the ideas rooted in New Spirituality. For example, 52 percent strongly agree the Bible teaches the idea that "God helps those who help themselves."

Across generations, "millennials and Gen-Xers, who came of age in a less Christianized context, are in some cases up to eight times more likely to accept these views than boomers and elders," research showed. And men are typically more open to these worldviews than women, often at a 2:1 ratio.

Brooke Hempell, senior vice president of research for Barna, said, "We expected millennials to be most influenced by other worldviews, but the most dramatic increase in support for these ideals occurs with the generation before them. It's no surprise then that the impact we see today in our social fabric is so pervasive, given that these ideas have been taking root for two generations."

In the face of the facts, what can church and ministry leaders do to combat the shift toward nonbiblical ideas?

Churchgoers can help. Cannon says, "This trend can be turned around through faithful biblical exposition by pastors in their pulpits and faithful biblical teaching through Sunday School and small groups," he said.

"Churchgoers can play a key role by reading the Bible, encouraging others to read the Bible, participating in a Bible study and applying biblical truth in their lives."

Preachers seconded that motion, adding that true revival is needed. "Instead of having a meeting which we generally call 'revival,' we need a heaven-born, God-sent, Holy-Spirit-directed revival in our midst. That's what I think. That's what's going to turn us around. I think that we need the Spirit of God moving around us so great that people come to the church and ask us, 'What must I do to be saved?'"

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"This trend can be turned around through faithful biblical exposition by pastors in their pulpits."

**Pastor Bill Cannon
FBC Union Springs**

"It's a startling statistic and it hurts but it doesn't surprise me."

**James Preachers
DOM, Sardis Baptist
Association**

July 4th provides opportunity to teach children about another era, have fun

(continued from page 1)
ground. Events are usually free.

► **Plan an old-fashioned family picnic.** Ask an older member of your family how they observed the Fourth of July. Chances are they included family and church picnics. Food probably consisted of hamburgers and hot dogs on the grill, slices of cold watermelon, hand-squeezed lemonade in gallon containers with hand-chipped ice and homemade ice cream made in a hand-cranked freezer.

► **Participate in games and activities from another era.** Put away the latest technology and interact with your clan in games of yesterday. Pitch horse shoes, throw washers (available at a building supply store), set up a badminton court, play tug-of-war and play "I Spy." If no one remembers the rules, Google the term — a concession to using technology for the day.

► **Visit a pioneer or early American village.** Check with Alabama tourism for places across the state. Before you visit, talk with your children about how life has changed since the first celebrations of the day. However, the "family" has the same needs as years ago. We need to love and respect each member, honor God and be grateful to live in America. Psalm 33:12 says, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." ✠

Patriotic mini-dessert

Guide your child to create a red-white-blue dessert all the family will enjoy. Pack vanilla ice cream into muffin liners. Top with fresh strawberries and blueberries. This recipe serves four.



Photo by Carolyn Tomlin

Ingredients

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 cup vanilla ice cream | Whipped topping |
| 1/2 cup fresh strawberries | Muffin liners |
| 1/2 cup blueberries | |

Directions

Wash and remove caps from strawberries. Children can use a plastic knife. Slice, if berries are large. Place 4 muffin liners on a plate. Scoop 1/4 cup ice cream in each. (Return to freezer if not ready to serve.) Top each with strawberries and blueberries. Add a dollop of whipped cream to complete the dessert.

**Hint: Place muffin liners in a Mason jar lid ring for support when filling with ice cream.*

ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Smith retires from SBOM, continues ministry

Chip Smith's passion for bivocational ministry began behind the pulpit, grew during his time with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) and will continue as he plans to return to bivocational pastoring.

Smith served as an associate in SBOM's office of LeaderCare and church administration for 10 years, concluding his service there in May. In that role, he had three different focuses: church administration, preschools and bivocational ministry.

"I am passionate about bivocational ministry because the majority of Alabama Baptist churches have bivocational pastors [and without them many] of our churches would be pastorless and probably end up closing.

"They pastor for no other reason but to fulfill the call of God upon their hearts," Smith said.

Retiring from SBOM isn't a step back from ministry, he said, but rather a continuation of his calling to preach, a calling he has been faithful to for 54 years.

Prior to SBOM, Smith served as a pastor for 40 years at churches such as Glynwood Baptist Church, Prattville; First Baptist Church, Geneva; First Baptist Church, Midfield; Catoma Baptist Church, Montgomery; Sweet Water Baptist Church; and Cubahatchie Baptist Church, Shorter. He also served in various associational and state positions such as vice moderator for Autauga Baptist Association and chairman of University of Mobile's board of regents, among others.

Smith holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Elise, have two children and three grandchildren.

To contact Smith for preaching availability, call 334-365-5636 or 334-322-1227. (TAB)



SMITH

River Road Baptist observes Senior Adult Day



Photo courtesy of River Road Baptist Church

River Road Baptist Church, Alexander City, observes Senior Adult Day on May 7 during the morning service. Six people were recognized with a total of 337 years of service to the church: (l to r) Juanita Baker, 61 years; Bobby Baker, 60 years; Linda Trussell, 58 years; Pastor Albert Pike; Walter Thompson, 55 years; Margaret Thornton, 50 years; and Annette Rice, 53 years.

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at Lindsay Lane



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July 2
Junior Hill



July 16
Bucky Kennedy



July 9
Ron Lynch



July 23
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Lindsay Lane Baptist Church
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Athens, AL 35613
(256)232-0020
www.lindsaylane.org
9:00 AM Connect Group
10:30 Morning Worship



July 30
Andy John King

Justice Declaration

Beeson's Timothy George among Baptist leaders calling for criminal justice reform

Timothy George, dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, has joined 96 other Christian leaders supporting a campaign for criminal justice reform called the Justice Declaration.

Spearheaded by Prison Fellowship, the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the National Association of Evangelicals and the Colson Center for Worldview, the Justice Declaration seeks to rally evangelicals and other Christians against mass incarceration and for alternative sentencing for criminals who don't pose a significant threat to society.

"We have a criminal justice system that does not stop crime but in many cases actually furthers crime," ERLC President Russell Moore said in comments at a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington quoted by *The Washington Times*. He said this makes "criminals out of those who are not yet criminals [and] ignor[es] those who have been victims of crime."

"I think most of us in American

life can agree our criminal justice system doesn't work the way it's supposed to," Moore said. "We should fix it. And, as evangelical Christians, we should be among the first to say so."

10 points

The 10-point declaration urges Christians to:

- ▶ Affirm that the God of the Bible is a just God: justice flows from God's very character and the works of God's hands are faithful and just;
- ▶ Treat every human being as a person made in God's own image with a life worthy of respect, protection and care;
- ▶ Foster just relationships between God, fellow human beings and property, which will lead to human flourishing;
- ▶ Redouble our efforts to prevent crime by cultivating the "seedbeds of virtue," including families, churches, neighborhoods, schools and other sources of moral formation;
- ▶ Care for the physical and emotional wounds of survivors of crime, ensure their safety and support their meaningful participation in the justice system;
- ▶ Take up the cause of the

poor and vulnerable, ensuring fair access to education, economic opportunity, the social safety net and, for those accused of crimes, the instruments of justice;

▶ Advocate for proportional punishment, including alternatives to incarceration, that protects public safety, fosters accountability and provides opportunities to make amends;

▶ Preach the good news of the gospel and proclaim that true freedom in Christ is available to all, including prisoners, recognizing that His atoning sacrifice covers all sin;

▶ Invest in the discipleship of incarcerated men, women and youth, protecting their safety and human dignity and ministering to the needs of families and children with incarcerated loved ones;

▶ Celebrate redemption in our congregations and communities by welcoming back those who have paid their debt to society and by providing opportunities for all persons to reach their God-given potential.

'Be a witness'

"Because the good news of Jesus Christ calls the Church to advocate (or 'be a witness') for biblical truth and to care for the vulnerable, we, His followers, call for a justice system that is fair and redemptive for all," says a white paper accompanying the declaration drafted by Union University professor Ben Mitchell. "The Church has both the unique ability and unparalleled capacity to confront the staggering crisis of crime and incarceration in America and to respond with restorative solutions for communities, victims and individuals responsible for crime."

According to the paper, nearly 2.2 million people are behind bars in the United States, 3.7 million are on probation, another 870,000 are on parole and an estimated 65 million Americans have a criminal record. Meanwhile the rate of violent and property crimes has decreased by half since the early 1990s, mostly attributable to reasons other than incarceration.

Over-incarceration dispro-



tionally affects minorities and youth, the paper says. African-Americans are significantly more likely to be arrested for a drug crime — even though rates of drug use and trafficking are roughly equal across all races — and, if convicted, face tougher sentences. Juvenile court caseloads have nearly tripled since 1960 even though the number of crimes committed by youth is about the same.

Moore and Prison Fellowship CEO James Ackerman said in a blog announcing the initiative on Politico, "As a society we have turned to prisons as the one-size-fits-all response to public safety concerns.

"Meanwhile we have allowed our centers of moral formation to erode, we have enacted draconian sentencing policies based more on fear than on evidence, and we have failed to imagine or enact effective alternatives to prison time. In an effort to secure law and order, we have lost sight of justice based on the God-given value of each human life."

The two leaders said some churches and denominations have long sought prison reform, but the broader Christian community, and particularly evangelicals, is just now waking up to the problem. A recent Barna poll reported 87 percent of practicing Christians agreed to some degree that caring for prisoners is important based on their values.

"The time has come for Christians and churches to apply those

same values to advance a justice system that is fair and redemptive for all," Moore and Ackerman said.

Other signers of the declaration include Daniel Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina; David Allen, dean of the school of preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; Nathan Finn, dean of the School of Theology and Missions at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee; and John Mark Yeats, dean and associate professor of church history at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and College in Kansas City, Missouri.

Support from pastors

The presidents of Baptist-affiliated Louisiana College in Pineville and Union University and executive directors of the Missouri Baptist Convention and Hispanic Baptist Convention of Texas also are among signatories. Pastors include David Crosby, pastor of First Baptist Church, New Orleans, and former SBC president James Merritt, pastor of Cross Pointe Church, Duluth, Georgia.

While most of the names supporting the declaration identify as conservatives, the list also includes social progressives such as David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World, and Ron Sider, founder and president emeritus of Evangelicals for Social Action. (BNG)

Retired Pastor Max Youngblood recommends

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NMLS #207518

Graham's online evangelism ministry marks milestone

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association's (BGEA) online evangelism ministry is thanking God for the 10 millionth indicated decision for Christ," said Kelly Klemmensen, BGEA public relations specialist. "People from all over the globe have made commitments, including people from Alabama."

In the past six years, more than 50 million people have come across BGEA's evangelistic website, PeaceWithGod.net (or PazConDios.net in Spanish). And June 9 the organization's internet evangelism ministry, Search for Jesus — which oversees PeaceWithGod.net — marked the 10 millionth indicated decision.

"It's humbling and overwhelming to realize that God has given us the opportunity to introduce the gospel to so many," said Search for Jesus Director Mark Appleton.

God has drawn people to PeaceWithGod.net all kinds of ways. Maybe it's through an online ad or a Facebook post or a link on someone's blog. However they get there, each one is exposed to the unchanging gospel — "how God's love for us runs so deep that He wants to guide us through life and spend eternity with us. And how we must first repair the broken relationship between us and Him by putting our faith in our mediator, Jesus Christ."

Title change, expectations list sought for directors of missions

Alabama Baptist directors of missions (DOM) may need new business cards in about a year. The DOM title is expected to be updated in 2018 following recommendations from a 12-member study group. The group also plans to recommend a DOM credentialing process and a list of expectations of effectiveness.

The Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders (SBCAL) appointed the group at its conference held June 11–12 in Phoenix. The team is charged with submitting a report at the SBCAL 2018 meeting in Dallas.

The changes are needed as the SBCAL works to better serve missional leadership needs across the Southern Baptist Convention, said SBCAL Executive Director Ray Gentry.

"We feel like it's time for a new name for the new century and the new demands upon us and the new opportunities before us," Gentry said. "In addition, a profile of

Each one of the 50 million visitors who have experienced the gospel has had an opportunity to respond. Commitments to Christ on the day of the milestone number came from places like Argentina, Hungary, Egypt, Cuba, India, Malaysia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and all across the U.S. — from Philadelphia to Detroit to Hermosa Beach, California.

It's not lost on the ministry that in each of these locations is a real person with real needs, BGEA officials noted. The goal with all of them is to share the hope offered by Jesus Christ, to disciple them in their faith and when possible to connect them with a local church.

One-on-one connections and follow-ups have taken place with more than 1.3 million of those online visitors so far — the ones who have passed along their contact information.

"With the growth of our reach, God has also raised up a team of ministry partners all over the U.S., Canada and now Mexico to bring personal ministry to our online presence," Appleton said. "It is this team of nearly 600 trained coaches that bring depth and value to Search for Jesus."

In May the ministry celebrated five years of volunteers, each one trained to offer spiritual guidance through live chat, email or an online discipleship course called Know Jesus. (BGEA, TAB)

associational effectiveness with competencies ... is even a bigger enchilada than the title.

"There really is no commonly accepted job description for a DOM," he said, "and so we want to come up with a profile with competencies for search committees and for purposes of coaching and helping new DOMs. We feel like that's going to be very, very important and very helpful to raise the credibility and the profile and the effectiveness of DOMs."

Credentialing process

SBCAL has never had a process of credentialing for DOMs, Gentry said, pointing out the common practice of business associations in particular to have credentialing processes.

"We have a cross section to help us to really be attentive to all of the different demands and priorities that need to be addressed in 2017 and in the coming days," he said. (BP)



FBC Hokes Bluff 175-year service 'foretaste' of heavenly celebration

Pastor Ryan Morris saw the celebration as "but a foretaste of the unending celebration that is going on in heaven."

The 175th anniversary of First Baptist Church, Hokes Bluff, was a two-service affair where "God was exalted," Morris said. The 11 a.m. service focused on "What God has Done"



Photo courtesy of FBC Hokes Bluff

while the 2 p.m. service looked at "What God is Doing." During the morning service, former pastor Jerry Starling preached a message from 1 Corinthians 1 and Sheree Estes presented a historical report. Allen Hudson sang special music and the church choir performed. Also, Kim Sewell Dilg played "a beautiful piano" solo.

After taking a break for lunch, the congregation again came together for worship and reflection. Musical highlights of the service included Curtis Buttram's saxophone-led hymn, worship led by the youth praise team and special music by the Reunion Youth Choir. Morris brought a message from Acts 16.

The May 7 celebration services also included presentations of certificates by Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative Wendell Dutton and Etowah Baptist Association Director of Missions Gary Cardwell.

The day was concluded with the dedication of the church's Ministry Field.

FBC Selma reflects on rich history during anniversary service

The rich history of First Baptist Church, Selma, was well remembered during the 175th anniversary celebration May 28.

From the speakers to the special presentations, former and present members were reminded of the path First, Selma, has taken through the years. Pastor Jerry Light (pictured right) spoke on



Photo by Alaina Deshazo

"Our Time in History" while Judson College President David Potts spoke on "The Rock from Whence We Were Hewn."

Participants were provided with a brief history of the church in the morning bulletin, which also included a responsive reading that was led by Anna Speir.

The church's Sanctuary Choir sang special music and historical presentations were made by Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, and Tom Stacey, director of missions for Selma Baptist Association.

A special feature of the celebration was the naming of the church's education building "DeVotie Education Building," after Noble Leslie DeVotie. DeVotie was a pastor who served First, Selma, around the turn of the century. He also was one of the founders of Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity at the University of Alabama. To commemorate DeVotie's service and the newly named building, Brandon Weghorst, director of communications for the fraternity, shared during the morning service.

Stacey also led the closing prayer for the service, which was followed by lunch.

Rockford's Providence BC marks 175 years with special guests

Special guests were the hallmark of the 175th anniversary service of Providence Baptist Church, Rockford, in Central Baptist Association, on June 4.

Josh Sammons, pastor of Hillabee Baptist Church, Alexander City, brought the message



Photo by Lonette Berg

during the 10 a.m. service and special music was sung by Spoken 4, a southern gospel trio from Prattville.

A history

of the church was read by Pam Burtram. Alabama Baptist Historical Commission Executive Director Lonette Berg presented a certificate to the church for its years of faithful service to the Lord.

Current church members stood out, as each wore matching bright T-shirts for the group photo that was taken (pictured above).

George Gardin is pastor.

FBC Gordon celebrates 150 years with current, former members

The 150th anniversary of First Baptist Church, Gordon, in Columbia Baptist Association was celebrated June 4 as former and current members gathered for the 11 a.m. service.

Former pastor Willie Parker brought the message and Jean Huckaby read the church history. Pastor Bobby Elliot and his wife, Jo Carol, invited family friend Lydia Berry to sing special music.

A special moment of the celebration service was when Ellen Dewberry, an Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative, made a historical presentation of a commemorative plaque. Instead of presenting it to the pastor, as is the custom in many churches, Dewberry presented it to Anna Jean Lee, the church's oldest member.

Old records were on display for participants.

Alabama Baptist Convention **State Board of Missions**



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TRAINING FOR CHURCH LEADERS

THE SUMMIT

Shocco Springs, August 4-5, 2017

Register online: shoccosprings.org or call 1.800.280.1105

Maybe you have been teaching Sunday School; facilitating a discipleship class; leading a missions study; or working with a men's, women's, singles, seniors, children's, preschool or other group in your church for years.

Maybe you are a long-time pastor or have served on a church staff for quite a while. Maybe you feel like there's nothing new to learn. Really?

Well, several people who came to **The Summit: For Church Leaders at Shocco Springs** in August 2016 told us that so much training is offered at this event that they couldn't take in all the sessions in which they would like to

participate. That's a great problem to have!

Here are some of the comments participants wrote on their evaluation forms:

- "The course selection was so diverse and informative. Fantastic opportunity for any staff or lay person."
- "As a leader, I can always learn more to become a better leader. When I attend The Summit, I am always encouraged and challenged."
- "I always learn new concepts, and I am always reminded of proven and valuable concepts I have neglected. Excellent!"
- "The only problem was having

to choose from so many good conferences."

There are always new things to learn, so whether you have extensive experience as a church leader or none, begin making plans now to come to **The Summit: For Church Leaders at Shocco Springs, Friday and Saturday, August 4-5, 2017.**

For more information, please contact State Missionary Jamie Baldwin at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 240, or (334) 613-2240, jbaldwin@alsbom.org.

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THIS 16-MONTH CALENDAR (Sept. 2017–Dec. 2018) has State Board of Missions events and emphases already printed with plenty of room for you to add your church's events. It also includes an alphabetical listing of ministries and services along with directories of associational, state and SBC contacts.

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or

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Church Planters Network Dinner

IT IS NOT TOO EARLY TO MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS FOR A GATHERING OF ALABAMA CHURCH PLANTING "TYPES" AT THE ALABAMA CHURCH PLANTERS' NETWORK DINNER ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2017, 4:30-8:30 P.M., at Essential Church, 1806 University Dr., Huntsville. (This is the Sunday before two other key meetings in Huntsville: the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference on Monday, November 13, and the annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist

State Convention on Tuesday and Wednesday, November 14-15.)

This event serves as a family reunion of church planter "types." It is really for any Kingdom-minded person. The cost is \$15 for individuals, \$25 for couples.

The speaker for this event will be Connection Pastor and Lead Church Planter Coach Tommy Duke of Calvary Baptist in Savannah, Georgia. He has served as pastor of churches in Georgia and Pennsylvania and planted churches in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Boca Raton, Florida. Tommy has more than five years' experience of training, resourcing and coaching church leaders as vice-president of training for Church Leader Insights Nelson Searcy. Alongside Searcy, Tommy co-taught the Launch Conference to more than 500 church planters. Since 2014, Tommy has trained more than 150 men in coaching networks across

Alabama. He and his wife, Amber, live in Savannah, Georgia. They have two children.

The schedule includes:

4:30-6 p.m., registration and fellowship; 6-6:30, dinner; 6:30-6:45, worship led by Darin Lightfoot; 6:45-7:15, inspirational message by Tommy Duke; 7:15-8:30, wives session led by Susan Lovett and planter/pastor session led by Tommy Duke; and 8:30, pick up of children from childcare provided by the Alabama Disaster Relief Childcare Unit.

ONLINE INFO: PLANTALABAMA.ORG

For more information about this event or church planting among Alabama Baptists, please contact State Missionary Lamar Duke, lead church planting strategist, at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 332, or (334) 613-2332, lduke@alsbom.org.

By Lamar Duke
State Missionary



GET ACQUAINTED DAY

AT THE STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS, 2001 E. SOUTH BLVD. IN MONTGOMERY
Thursday, September 7, 10 am - 3:30 pm
9:30 - 10 » Check-in and refreshments

Meet your state missionaries » Discover how we can partner together to fulfill the Great Commission » Spouses welcome
» Lunch provided

Ideal for pastors, church staff, secretaries or associational staff who are new to Alabama, new to their position, or who have never attended a **Get Acquainted Day**

Register by calling or emailing Sheila Rikerd, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 249, or (334) 613-2249, srikerd@alsbom.org, or go online to alsbom.org/gad.

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July 21-22, 2017 Shocco Springs, Talladega

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Sandy Wisdom Martin

Executive Director/
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► For more info:

AlabamaWMU.org/Equip, 800.264.1225 ext. 223
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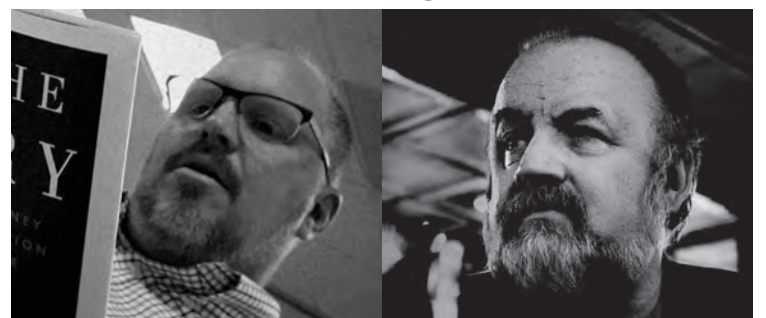
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TOPIC:

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MONDAY, AUGUST 7

8:30 A.M. REGISTRATION

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Regions Room, Cooney Hall, 4th Floor
Register online at www2.samford.edu/eve

For more information, contact Amy Nelson at
1-800-264-1225, ext. 258, (334) 613-2258,
anelson@alsbom.org.



Super Summer Alabama

July 10-14, 2017, Samford University

Super Summer Alabama is an intense week of discipleship and leadership training for students 8th-12th grade (completed). It is an amazing "beyond the basics" discipleship experience!

For registration, cost, camp schedule and other details, please go online to: supersummeral.org.

For more information, please contact State Missionary Scooter Kellum, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 280, or (334) 613-2280, skellum@alsbom.org or State Missionary Jamie Baldwin, ext. 240, (334) 613-2240, jbaldwin@alsbom.org.

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FALL SENIOR ADULT RETREAT

MONDAY - WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9-11, 2017

Shocco Springs

PREACHER: Daniel Wilson, Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove

CELEBRATION LEADER: Mike Johnson, Eastside Baptist Church, Birmingham

WORSHIP LEADER: Chris Weide, First Baptist Church, Opp

This retreat is for senior adults to get together, get into God's Word, get into worship and get away with having a grand old time at Shocco Springs! Conference leaders from around the state will lead a variety of conference breakout sessions. A complete list of speakers, topics and schedules will be posted about six weeks prior to the event at alsbom.org/fallsenioradultretreat.

REGISTRATION: shocco.org or 1-800-280-1105. The cost per person is based upon your choice of lodging.

For more information, please contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, emitchell@alsbom.org.

North Regional Sunday School & Discipleship Leader Training

Saturday, August 26, 2017, 8 a.m.-noon

Lindsay Lane Baptist Church, 1300 Lindsay Lane South, Athens

Age-graded leadership training for teachers and workers in Sunday School and Discipleship, as well as training for staff members, Sunday School/Discipleship directors and general leaders will be available. Each leader will have the opportunity to attend as many as three conferences with multiple topics from which to choose.

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Registration: alsbom.org/north You will also find a complete list of speakers, topics and schedules on this webpage at least six weeks prior to the event. | Price: Early registration is \$5 per person if registered by August 24. Registration received after August 24 will be \$10 per person. | For more information, please contact State Missionary Jamie Baldwin at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 240, or (334) 613-2240, jbaldwin@alsbom.org . |
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"Is Your Ministry Safe?" Workshop

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2017 • 10 A.M. - 3 P.M.

CANAAN BAPTIST CHURCH, 2543 MORGAN RD., BESSEMER • LED BY GREG LOVE AND KIMBERLEE NORRIS OF MINISTRYSAFE

Visit alsbom.org/ministrysafe for updated information and to register.

Questions? Contact Ministry Assistant Nancy Cornett at 334-613-2208 or ncornett@alsbom.org.

"We at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions are impressed with MinistrySafe as effective team equippers for churches to utilize in facing the growing challenges related to sexual abuse in our culture. Gregory Love and Kimberlee Norris are proven experts in helping churches and other ministry organizations train their leaders in sex abuse prevention and in preparation for dealing with these horrific problems when they occur. Being prepared ought to be our operating principle. MinistrySafe will help you to be prepared."

Rick Lance, Executive Director
Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions



The MinistrySafe Workshop will equip you with an awareness, understanding, tools and strategies needed to help protect children from sexual abuse in churches and protect churches through policy and procedure development.

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July 21-22

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For more information, please contact State Missionary Scooter Kellum at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 280, or (334) 613-2280, skellum@alsbom.org.

Faith-Focused Safe Travel Training: Level A

State Board of Missions,
2001 E. South Blvd., Montgomery
9:30 a.m.-2 p.m.



CHOOSE FROM TWO DATES:

- ~ Thursday, August 31, 2017
- ~ Thursday, October 26, 2017

Cost: \$25 per person (non-refundable, includes training, brunch and snacks). Limited to 20 participants.

These generic Faith-Focused Safe Travel Trainings will be led by **David Dose**, founder and president of StrongHold Security Stewardship. The training will be taught via webinar/Skype. The completion of Level A training will provide you and your team Emergency Traveler Support while traveling overseas.

This training is highly recommended for all churches taking mission trips and is **REQUIRED** for participants in State Board of Missions projects.

For more information or to register, go online to a18c.org/ffst or contact Ministry Assistant Sheron Poole at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 298, or (334) 613-2298, spool@alsbom.org.

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Northwest Alabama-Florence ~~~~~
Earle Trent Assembly

- July 17-19, 3rd-6th grade Boys Camp (\$100 per person)
- July 17-19, 1st-3rd grade Boys & Dad Camp (\$150 per pair)

Northeast Alabama-Guntersville ~~~~~
Marshall Baptist Retreat Center

- July 20-22, 3rd-6th grade Boys Camp (\$100 per person)
- July 20-22, 1st-3rd grade Boys & Dad Camp (\$150 per pair)

Central Alabama-Cook Springs ~~~~~
WorldSong Camp

- July 24-26, 3rd-6th grade Boys Camp (\$100 per person)
- July 24-26, 7th-12th grade Boys Camp (\$100 per person)
- July 27-29, 1st-3rd grade Boys & Dad or Mom Camp (\$150 per pair)

For more information go to alsbom.org/boyscamp or contact Ministry Assistant Monica Thompson at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 227, or (334) 613-2227, mthompson@alsbom.org.

The INSANITY of GOD
ENCOUNTER
 Featuring
Nik Ripken
July 13-15, 2017
 First Baptist Church
 Birmingham, Alabama

Come hear Nik and Ruth Ripken, IMB career missionaries who have visited 72 countries, as they lead this compelling event focused on the persecuted church. Nik is the author of *The Insanity of God* and *The Insanity of Obedience*. **This conference is a must** for mission pastors, pastors, and others seeking to penetrate the unreached people groups of our world, as well as our own neighborhoods, with the Gospel.



To register, scan this QR code or visit alsbom.org/iog.

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Senior Adult Singin'

CHOOSE FROM TWO LOCATIONS/TWO DATES – BOTH 10 A.M. - NOON:

Tuesday, September 12, 2017
 Mount Calvary Baptist Church, Albertville
Thursday, September 14, 2017
 Prattmont Baptist Church, Prattville

COST: \$10 per person (includes lunch)

Psalm 98:4 (NIV) says to

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song.



Join Frank Jones as he leads senior adults to sing hymns to God. Choose your location and day to join in

musical praise and “shout with joy to the Lord” in song! You may even want to come to both of these “Singin’s.”

ONLINE INFO AND REGISTRATION:

alsbom.org/senioradultsingin

For more information, please contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, emitchell@alsbom.org.

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MIX @ **musiCamp Shocco**
JULY 10-14 SHOCCO

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REGISTRATION/OTHER INFO: mixmusiccamp.org

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Cindy Parrish at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 230, or (334) 613-2230, cparrish@alsbom.org.

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The Troy L. Morrison Leadership/Church Health Awards will be given to those individuals who have demonstrated evidence of leadership that has advanced the church in four key areas: kingdom growth, ministry advancement, missions involvement and numerical growth.

The recipients will be from three categories – New Work (church less than ten years old), Established Work (church older than ten years), and Bivocational (church where pastor holds dual employment).

Nominations may be made by visiting alsbom.org/TLMLeadershipawards, or you may contact our office for a copy (see contact info below).

Send your nomination form to ≈ Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions ≈ LeaderCare & Church Health ≈ **Attn: Debbie Dickey** ≈ 2001 East South Blvd. ≈ Montgomery, AL 36116

The deadline for receiving nominations is September 22, 2017.

For more information call or email *Debbie Dickey, ministry assistant, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 218, or (334) 613-2218 or ddickey@alsbom.org.*

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State Board of Missions, 2001 East South Blvd., Montgomery

**Theme: Raise up leaders after God's own heart...
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SPEAKER: Ken Adams, lead pastor, Crossroads Church, Newnan, Ga., founder of Impact Ministries and 315 Leadership Model

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Saturday, August 19

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ONEMISSION:TheGreatCommissionONEPROGRAM:TheCooperativeProgramMANYMINISTRIES:GreatCommissionMinistries

ALABAMA ACTS 1:8 CONNECTIONS CONFERENCE Thursday, August 3, 2017, 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

at First Baptist Church, 2209 Lakeshore Drive, Birmingham

COST: \$10 per person (includes lunch)

REGISTRATION: a18c.org/a18c

Join us for the third annual celebration of Acts 1:8 Connections. It's an opportunity to meet and learn about the work of:

- ▲ representatives from all IMB affinities
- ▲ church planters from NAMB
- ▲ church planters who are in Alabama

You will have the opportunity to connect with them and their work during three sessions to meet with these Alabama folk who are sharing the Gospel in Alabama, across the U.S. and around the world.

For more information about Acts 1:8 Connections, please contact State Missionary Scotty Goldman at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 387, or (334) 613-2387, sgoldman@alsbom.org.



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July 17-21

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 (girls completing grades 7-12)
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 (coeds completing grades 2-6)
July 10-14





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Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Doctrine of Sin

Sin as Impiety

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

Impiety can be one of the more subtle sins of our times. If being pious is to possess reverence for God and the things of God, then impiety is disrespect or irreverence for Him. In this sense, impiety is a synonym for ungodliness — speech and actions that are not in character with God who is perfectly holy. Living in a world in which God is not always regarded or respected, people get sucked into a vacuum of godliness. Good churchgoing people can become careless in speaking of God and the things of God.

One manifestation of impiety or disrespect for God is in the use of His name. Long ago God commanded to His chosen nation, “You shall not profane My holy name but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel” (Lev. 22:32). Something holy is profaned when it is treated as common or handled carelessly.

Far too often we hear speech that uses God’s name in vain. Carelessness with God’s name is quite common in human curses that are wrapped around the name of God. We all know of some of the more gross uses of the name of God in verbal profanity, in which God is called on to damn someone.

Somewhat less gross but still impious is the careless invoking of the holiest of names in bywords heard almost daily such as “O, my God” and its text-language version, “OMG.” This seems to have become an almost unconscious taking of God’s name carelessly and with lack of piety or reverence. Our times could stand a widespread revival of sensitivity for holy things, especially the holy name of our Holy God.

Impiety is manifested not only in the common disrespect of God’s name but also in the widespread lack of respect for the Lord’s Day, which has rapidly lost all vestiges of the holiness in which God commanded that the Sabbath should be held.

All too easily we tend to diminish the special emphasis God put on a day of rest and worship by treating it as any

other day for engaging in secular or common activities instead of treating it as holy. Secularism has almost totally swallowed up the Sabbath, leaving only faint vestiges of its special character.

Our Baptist Faith and Message statement holds, “Activities on the Lord’s Day should be commensurate with the Christian’s conscience under the lordship of Christ.”

Impiety or ungodliness sometimes takes the form of total disrespect and disregard for the truth of God. Romans 1:18 sets forth clearly God’s reaction to human beings who deny and reject God’s holy commandments by declaring, “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”

Place of worship

Is it being too picky to think that God’s house as a place of worship should be given special treatment?

Whether running in the church building constitutes disrespect may be debatable. Certainly prior generations counted it so. And on occasion we can still hear a child admonished, “Don’t run in the church.”

Of greater concern would be letting places of worship become neglected or unkempt. A place of worship is lacking our respect if we seek to furnish its rooms with castoff furniture we no longer want in our homes. God’s directions for building and furnishing the temple suggest that a place of worship is treated as common if it is not the best that His people can afford.✠

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.



Ken Ham disputes reports that Ark Encounter is sinking

Answers in Genesis (AiG) founder Ken Ham is disputing reports the ministry’s Noah’s Ark-themed park is taking on water.

The Ark Encounter in Williamstown, Kentucky, hasn’t seen bad attendance, Ham blogged on AiG’s website, just bad press. And a good number of Alabama Baptists have been among those visiting the park.

The 800-acre theme park includes an ark built to the measurements God gave Noah in the biblical flood account. Its exhibits defend a “young Earth creationist” interpretation of Scripture that maintains the Earth is about 6,000 years old and that the flood account is literally, historically true.

America’s Research Group had estimated the park would attract between 1.4 million and 2.2 million visitors its first year.

As the Ark Encounter marks its first anniversary on July 7, attendance at the ark “will draw near the low end of the estimated guest number,” Ham wrote.

Park co-founder Mike Zovath told the *Lexington Herald-Leader* it will attract its 1 millionth visitor by July.

In addition to the low turnout at the park, Williamstown businesses haven’t seen the flood of customers they had expected as a result of the park’s opening, according to the *Herald-Leader*.

Ham, however, has disputed these reports.

“Nowadays, it seems very few reporters in the secular media actually want to report facts regarding what they cover as news,” he wrote. “When it comes to reporting on theologically conservative Christians like those of us at AiG, whose ideology they strongly oppose, many writers have an agenda to undermine Christianity as they file their stories.”

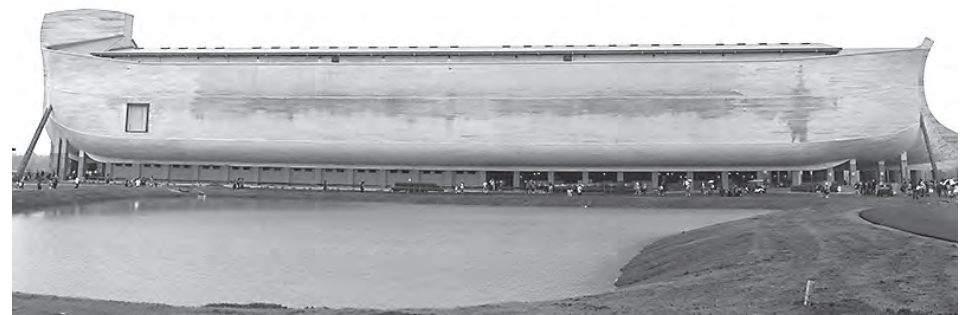
The newspaper quoted the mayor of the nearby town

of Dry Ridge saying the park “has been great” for business, and it noted county tourism revenue is up based on hotel tax receipts.

But Ham seemed to take issue with anecdotal evidence from several Williamstown business owners that people visiting the park weren’t necessarily visiting their shops and restaurants. (RNS, *TAB*)

“When it comes to reporting on theologically conservative Christians ... many writers have an agenda to undermine Christianity.”

**Ken Ham
Answers in Genesis founder**



RNS photo by Emily McFarlan Miller

At 510 feet long, 85 feet wide and 51 feet high — based on the measurements in cubits found in Genesis — the full-scale Noah’s Ark replica at the Ark Encounter is the largest timber-frame structure in the world, according to the Ark Encounter.

My JESUS Story

By Jenni Ingram
Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

What if you were told by God that you were to write the new Bible? That you were to write the next chapters to show the world God’s love, peace and most of all His mercy?

What would you write? How far out of your comfort zone would you be willing to go?

Would you be willing to recount the most painful, horrible time of your life and how God pulled you from it?

Would you be willing to lay open your heart to disclose your pain and cry in front of strangers just to be able to tell someone who is hurting how God comforted you?

Would you be willing to sit at the bedside of someone who is about to complete their earthly journey just so they would not have to die alone?

One attribute of God that I love the most is recounted in Exodus 4:10. It says, “Moses said to the Lord, ‘Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.’”

What is God’s attribute?

It is the willingness to use someone as lowly as me to tell others how much I love Him.✠



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'Children's Homes was a godsend'

ABCH went 'above, beyond' for twins in its care

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

When Michaela Sanderson Guthrie was 11 years old, a social services caseworker gave her an unimaginable choice — live with a family member or enter foster care.

"My sister looked at me and I said 'foster care.' What 11-year-old would say that? But looking back, I totally believe it was the Lord speaking through me," Guthrie said. "I knew nothing would change if we went to live with my grandmother and I didn't want that for us."

For years, Michaela and her siblings — twin sister Danielle, older sister Mary Elizabeth and brother Jesse — had witnessed drug abuse and domestic violence. Her father was a drug dealer and random strangers came in and out of their

home regularly. "Home" changed often and most of the places they lived were roach-infested, molded and run-down. Some had no running water or heat. "I went to seven elementary schools because we spent a lot of time running from my dad," she said.

Emotional time

The summer after her 2nd grade school year, someone took notice. Michaela and her siblings moved in with an aunt and uncle. In addition to the strain of her family's struggles, Michaela's older sister, Mary Elizabeth, got sick.

Eight years older than Michaela and Danielle, Mary Elizabeth had mothered her younger siblings for most of their lives. The disease took her ability to eat and required removal of one of her lungs. When Mary Elizabeth was just 16, pneumonia took her life.

By this time, Michaela and her

siblings were living with their mother once again. She had taken parenting classes and seemed to be on a better path. Mary Elizabeth's death was hard on all of them and it seemed to exacerbate their mother's bipolar disorder. Her struggle intensified, culminating in a terrible night when Michaela was in the 6th grade.

"She woke me up, asking for the gun, which I had hidden from her. She wanted to know where it was and finally I told her," Michaela said. "I woke up again when I heard the gun cock. I ran to her room and tried to convince her not to shoot herself. I was there when she did."

Michaela's mother shot herself in the stomach right in front of her daughter. Michaela ran across the street to the nearby volunteer fire department to get help. Her mom survived but the shooting was the turning point in the girls' young



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lives. And it meant the brother would be separate from his sisters.

After speaking with the social worker, the twin sisters moved into the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes (ABCH) Gardendale Campus Care home (now Family Care Home). For the next two years, Michaela and Danielle experienced the consistent love of their house parents, June and Woody Lafontaine. They also learned what it meant to be responsible members of a household.

"We learned a lot of life skills by doing chores, including vacuuming our rooms before school and washing our clothes," Michaela recalled. "We had never even had a washer and dryer."

Some of the rules, like wearing socks and shoes to meals, seemed silly to a young girl.

"I'm not sure how much I loved it then," Michaela said with a laugh. "But it was such a blessing. Of all the places we could have been placed, that was a great place."

On the girls' 13th birthday, they found a permanent home with cousins Stacy and Johnny Brooks. The Brookses had made the decision to be foster parents for the girls earlier but a delay in process-

ing their fingerprints postponed placement. Looking back, Stacy Brooks believes the delay was part of God's plan.

'Where they needed to be'

"The time the girls spent at the Children's Homes was a godsend for them. They were taught so many things, like doing homework and chores. Their house parents laid down ground rules that made the transition easier into our home. I am convinced the Lord was protecting them. It was where they needed to be," Stacy Brooks said.



Photo courtesy of Michaela Sanderson Guthrie
Michaela Sanderson Guthrie (right) and her twin sister Danielle

It was also while living at the Children's Home that Michaela started going to Gardendale First Baptist Church. Her youth group and student pastor became a big part of her support team, especially after her mother died suddenly from a seizure shortly after Michaela moved in with the Brookses.

Unbeknownst to Michaela, ABCH was in the background too. In fact, ABCH wanted to do something for the girls after their mother's death and purchased an urn for her ashes as a gift to the family.

Year after year, ABCH representatives contacted the Brooks family at Christmas to get a wish list.

"They went above and beyond," Stacy Brooks said. "They could have said 'we're done with them' but any way ABCH could help, they did."

When Michaela graduated from high school with honors and headed to the University of Alabama to earn a degree in social work, ABCH was there for her once again. Though almost all of her college expenses were paid for through scholarships and financial aid, additional assistance from ABCH helped Michaela concentrate fully on her academic work.

In four years, she completed her undergraduate work and a master's degree in social work and graduated debt-free, despite being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) at the age of 19.

Helping students like Michaela transition into adulthood is possible through the generous support of donors, according to Michael Smith, ABCH chief operations officer for North Alabama, who works with job training and college assistance programs.

Nationally, only about 2 percent of children coming out of foster care earn a college degree. In contrast, about 70 percent of students transitioning out of ABCH care graduate from college, Smith said.

That success rate has gotten national attention and Smith said it has everything to do with the structure of the program.

"We have a 'College Contract' that lays out what ABCH will do for the student and what the student is expected to do to maintain standing in (our) program," Smith said.



Michaela (center) with Stacy and Johnny Brooks

Photo courtesy of Michaela Sanderson Guthrie

On average, 4-5 children in ABCH care graduate from high school each year. Not every student is college-bound, of course. Some students participate in technical certification or job training programs. Regardless of their interests and abilities, ABCH works to help each student transition from care to independence successfully.

'Learning about Lord'

"We always try to individualize to what will help each child have the most success," Smith said.

In the years since graduation, Michaela has married her high school sweetheart, Jason, who was part of the youth group at Gardendale First Baptist. Her MS is in remission and Michaela works as an assessment coordinator for Georgia Cares, a nonprofit that works with youth who have been sexually exploited. The couple lives in the Atlanta area where they are part of a local church. Michaela says they are "constantly growing and still learning about the Lord," a desire kindled in part by her time at ABCH.

"My husband is a great spiritual leader for me and the group home

helped build that foundation by showing me what it looked like to have a spiritual leader in the home," she said.

Most recently, Michaela's story was featured in "Be the One: Six True Stories of Teens Overcoming Hardship with Hope," by veteran journalist Byron Pitts, co-anchor of ABC's Nightline. She also will be featured on Nightline in late June or early July.

Michaela met Pitts when she was chosen from among 50,000 applicants nationally as 1 of 104 recipients of the Horatio Alger Scholarship and was asked to share her story at the organization's annual convention in Washington.

As Michaela works with children coming out of difficult situations, she can see parallels to her own childhood and she knows what made the difference for her.

"Looking back, one of the biggest things for resilience is a support network," she said. "From an early age, I had the mindset that I wasn't going to fall into the same pattern as my parents. I had Stacy and Johnny and ABCH — and their support has made all the difference." ✝

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BIRMINGHAM

► **Mark Barber** is the new pastor of **East Gardendale Church, Gardendale**. He previously served as pastor of Hillview Church, Forstdale. He will begin his new ministry in July. He and his wife, Karon, have three children.



BARBER

CLARKE

► **Union Grove Church, Coffeetown**, will celebrate homecoming and its 100th anniversary July 16. A special service at 10 a.m. will include a time of memories. Worship will begin at 11 a.m. Former pastor Butch Starks will speak. Lunch will be served at noon followed by a time of worship led by Glory Road. Everyone is invited including former members and family.

If you have any photos of the church or church functions over the past 100 years please call Becky Kyles at 251-246-4602 or email cleonk@bellsouth.net. Cleon Kyles is pastor.

FRIENDSHIP

► **Locust Fork Church** will hold a retirement reception honoring Pastor Rufus Harris on July 30, 2:30-4 p.m. Harris has served in ministry for almost 40 years, nearly 19 of those as pastor of Locust Fork. He also has served churches in Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia and Mississippi. He and his wife, Emily, have two children and three grandchildren.

SARDIS

► **Mount Carmel Church, Coffee Springs**, will celebrate homecoming July 9, 11 a.m. Lunch will follow the service. Mount Carmel also will hold revival services July 10-12, 7 nightly. Joe Ward will speak at both homecoming and revival services. James Preachers is pastor.

WINSTON

► **First Church, Double Springs**, will host Billy Bob Bohannon in a special event July 16, 11 a.m. Phillip Twilley is pastor. ► **New Home Church, Houston**, will host Billy Bob Bohannon in a special event July 16, 6 p.m. Donnie Gaither is pastor.

ALABAMA-CRENSHAW

Ben Chandler is concluding his time as director of missions (DOM) for **Alabama-Crenshaw Association**. He has served in the role since March 1, 2016, following his retirement as DOM for

St. Clair Association after 16 years. He also served as DOM for Tennessee River Association from 1997 to 2004 and prior to that as pastor of Springfield Baptist Church, Brundidge, and First Baptist Church, Dawes, in Mobile. Chandler will launch his new Spiritual Measures Ministry in July. He also plans to work with intentional interim pastorates and intentional transitional ministries as well as continue writing and editing books. He and his wife, Patricia, have two children and five grandchildren.✠

According to the June 1, 1844, issue of *The Alabama Baptist*: George W. Gunn announced the ministers and deacons of Liberty Baptist Association would meet at the Church



at Farmville on Thursday before the fifth Sunday of June. The association's executive committee was scheduled to meet on Friday, the second day of the gathering. (TAB)

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

Full time for FBC Chalkville, Birmingham, Alabama. Please send resumé to: 2100 Old Springville Rd., Birmingham, AL 35215, Attn: Beryl McWaters or email fbcbchalkville@att.net.

PASTOR

Harmony Baptist Church, Walnut, Mississippi. Seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumé to: harmony.pastor.search@gmail.com by July 15.

PASTOR

James Memorial Baptist Church (Etowah County) is accepting resumé for a part-time/full-time pastor. Please email to: rachel@jamesmemorialbc.org.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Johntown Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, Johntown Baptist Church, 5201 Vance Rd., West Blocton, AL 35184.

MINISTER OF MUSIC

First Baptist Church, Talladega,

Alabama, is seeking a part-time minister of music to lead blended worship services (20 hours/week). Send resumé to: First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 696, Talladega, AL 35161. Attn: Music Search Committee or email to: fbcpublishments@bellsouth.net.

PART-TIME WORSHIP LEADER

Valley Creek Baptist Church is seeking a part-time worship leader (10-15 hours per week) to serve in a collaborative team environment focused on the church mission of making disciples who make disciples. Leading musical congregational worship that is expressive and engaging is the primary responsibility of the VC worship leader. VCBC serves the areas of Hueytown, Bessemer and McCalla. Resumé can be mailed to: Valley Creek Baptist Church, 3523 Virginia Dr., Hueytown, AL. 35023 or emailed to: info@vcchurch.com.

INTERIM MUSIC DIRECTOR

Barnwell Baptist Church seeking interim music director. Part time, 6 hours/week Wednesdays and Sundays. Mail resumé to:

7780 US Hwy 98, Fairhope, AL 36532 or rcohronpmc@aol.com.

OTHER POSITIONS

KEYBOARDIST

Wilton Baptist Church near Montevallo is prayerfully seeking a keyboardist. Please contact Randy Johnson at crjohnso@southernco.com or 205-903-4017.

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- 7** Each week when TAB arrives, open the app and hold your device over the augmented reality articles.



Rashional THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist



SNAPSHOTS OF LIFE WHEN LIFE HAPPENS

Touch of kindness makes a difference

Big Jim didn't like the formality at all. "James Salles" on his nametag just wouldn't do.

He promptly requested a Sharpie and took care of it. Now that's better, he said.

The proud Texan and his wife, Sue, (or Mother, as he called her) were late registering for the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Phoenix.

They had car trouble along the way and were exhausted by the desert heat but the sweet southern accents and polite nature of two young Alabama Baptists made everything right again.

Jacob Tidwell of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, moved immediately to creating a new nametag for Big Jim with the approved nickname so he didn't have to wear the Sharpie-corrected version.

Tidwell showed the same care for "Ms. Sue" as he made sure she collected her book of ballots, convention program and nametag. Tidwell's astute observation skills and polite but quick action combined with Judson College student Kaylee Roth's sweet banter pulled big smiles and lots of laughter from the Salles family.

And Roth's warm smile and Cracker Barrel-trained "thanks, honey bunches" sealed the deal — Big Jim and Ms. Sue felt totally at home.

Greeting with grace

Tidwell and Roth were among 23 college-age young adults from Alabama Baptist churches serving at the SBC registration counters and as greeters and ushers at the doors.

Once I knew the secret code — they were all wearing white golf shirts — then they were easy to spot in the crowds.

As I approached the front door to the convention center the next morning, friendly smiles and warm welcomes greeted me. And yes — white shirts. More Alabama Baptist



Big Jim

young adults representing our state and our faith with joyous hearts and gracious spirits.

Alyssa McGee of Hillcrest Baptist Church, Maplesville, and a student at the University of Alabama; Korey Cowart of Central Heights Baptist Church, Florence, and a student at the University of North Alabama; and Rita Pearson-Daley of First, Montgomery, and a student at UAB — all showcasing the Light as they served.

These roles aren't seen as glamorous like the activities of the platform personalities or the featured presenters at the top-level exhibits but they are acts of service that affect the experience of the participants. They are what a friend of mine calls "staying with the stuff."

There must be a dependable support team in place consistently working through the routine parts of any ministry, organization or event. Without that team the people called to be out front wouldn't be able to sustain their responsibilities.

My co-worker Wanda emailed me a prayer as I departed for Phoenix: "May God bless you in your coming and going. May you be so full of the Holy Spirit that He splashes out wherever you walk."

Her words resurfaced in my mind as I watched our Alabama students in action. What a difference a touch of kindness, joyous heart and gracious spirit make — even in the routine moments. ✝

RASHIONAL Extras ...



Overcoming cancer

By B. Davis Campbell

One in 2 men and 1 in 3 women in the United States will have cancer at some point in their lifetimes, according to the American Cancer Society. I am one of those statistics.

Diagnosed with Stage 3 bladder cancer in 2004 at age 43, I underwent major bladder reconstruction surgery in addition to lifestyle changes. In 2006 cancer was re-discovered in my lymph nodes and I underwent three and a half months of brutal chemotherapy. In 2011, I was declared cancer-free and remain healthy to this day but the battle was brutal and the challenges are real.

During my cancer struggle I developed an acronym with the word cancer that helped me and might be helpful to others.

C — Cling to the Lord. Remember the victory will come through the Lord and not necessarily medical therapy, although modern medicine certainly has its place in dealing with cancer. Our hope should not be in chemotherapy or radiation. Such treatments are tools God uses but the cancer patient should draw strength from the Lord and other motivations such as wanting to see children graduate from college or get married.

A — Acknowledge the magnitude of the battle. Cancer is not like getting a cold, the flu or any other illness. Cancer is a major war and takes big guns to overcome it. Most cancer treatments take several weeks or months so the patient needs to be prepared for a prolonged, difficult battle.

N — Never give up. Winston Churchill said, "When you're going through hell, keep going." In John 5:6, Jesus asked the lame man by the pool of Bethesda, "Do you wish to get well?" It sounds simple but if a person wants to overcome cancer, the chances are better if he or she wants to overcome it.

C — Continue to do the nor-

mal activities of life. I recommend continuing to go to church, spending time with family, going shopping, whatever the normal routine may be as long as the health status is permitting. I believe it sends a message to the body that "I want to live." It also may make the cancer patient feel better and inspires others in their own struggles.

E — Enlist others to assist in the battle. Cancer is not a valley that needs to be faced alone. Cancer patients should get others to pray for them and allow them to assist them with housework, meals, yardwork or any other needs.

R — Rest in the Lord's sovereignty. Remember that God possesses all power and He rules over all things. "We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Even though the cancer may have been a shock to the patient or their loved one, it didn't catch God by surprise. He knew exactly when the cancer first occurred.

Will utilizing these guidelines guarantee that a cancer patient will survive? I cannot promise that. There are too many factors involved. Yet in fighting the cancer with these guidelines, whether being cured or not, the cancer patient may ultimately feel a sense of overcoming this dreadful disease.

EDITOR'S NOTE — B. Davis Campbell is a member of North-Park Baptist Church, Trussville, and author of three self-published books available at Amazon.com. They are "A Place I Didn't Want To Go: My Victory Over Cancer," "Glorified Sickness: Honoring God Through Illness" and most recently "Bullet Points: Absolute Essentials For Facing A Fallen World." He also blogs at <http://cancerovercomer.blogspot.com>.

"Given that almost all functions in almost all companies are looking to be more innovative, studies such as this will challenge the orthodoxy of modern management and provide a new way forward. Innovation cannot be a product of micromanagement or filling peoples' diaries with meetings. Rather, we must trust our teams to act innovatively when we give them the time and incentives to do so."

—Excerpt from the March 31 article "How to create more innovation in your team? Fewer meetings and more slack time" on forbes.com

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

—John Quincy Adams

Craig Carlisle

@brocraig12st

"Every day God manifests Himself and most days we miss Him, clouded by secular cataracts and exhausted by the barrenness of a busy life."

Chick-fil-A is one of those rare companies that understands the magic of true customer service. I have never seen their actual process for responding to problems or complaints but I think it is this:

- ▶ Have a process for listening to customers.
- ▶ Respond to those customers quickly and personally.
- ▶ Be nice, be friendly and do something a little extra.

—David Allen, Jump Marketing Team

"The Chick-fil-A Way of Handling a Complaint"
excerpt from March 10, 2016, article on LinkedIn

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email me at jrash@thealabamabaptist.org.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 2

Explore the Bible By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D. Dean, Office for Global Engagement, University of Mobile

HIS PRESENCE Psalm 84:1-12

Our psalm this week is another from Book Three (Psalms 73-89), written primarily by Asaph and the sons of Korah. First Chronicles 26 lists the sons of Korah as “gatekeepers” who were assigned their responsibilities by David. They then cast lots for their duty schedule (1 Chron. 26:1, 13). This provides historical and cultural context for the author’s reference to being a doorkeeper in the house of God (Ps. 84:10).

Passion (1-4)

Our lyricist loved the temple in Jerusalem. Note how he highlights “Your dwelling place,” “Your altars” and “Your house.” His focus, however, was not on the edifice itself, but the One with whom he met there: “Lord of Hosts,” “living God” and “my God and King.”

The psalmist’s observations within the temple are clear from the reference to birds finding shelter in the building. Like the sparrow and the swallow, he finds shelter there. He too lifts his voice in joyful praise to God.

Priority (5-7)

The author’s reference to the highways, the Valley of Baca and the rains forming pools of water all point to the need for strength in hiking through the hills of Judah. Making the pilgrimage to Mount Zion was challenging and traveling to and from Jerusalem could be dangerous. Remember the merchant in our Lord’s parable of the Good Samaritan.

“Next year in Jerusalem.” This favorite Jewish adage retains the desire of the Hebrew people longing to make their pilgrimage to the site of Solomon’s temple and later the second temple. Even to this day, tourists and pilgrims from Jewish, Muslim

and Christian backgrounds visit the ancient mount where the one true God agreed to meet with His people. We must be careful, though, to keep in mind the words of Jesus to the woman at Sychar: “An hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ... God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:21, 24).

Prayer (8-9)

These two verses voice a bold prayer on behalf of the anointed one. Author Derek Kidner, in his Psalms commentary (Tyndale OT Commentaries) suggests that this may have been from a time of national calamity, as in the time when King Jehoiachin was deported by the Babylonians (2 Kings 24:15; Lam. 4:20).

The apostle Paul instructs followers of Christ to pray for those in authority (1 Tim. 2:1-2). Believers may find it easy to identify the faults of a president, a governor, a mayor, a boss, a pastor or a dad. We will discover, however, that when we pray for those in authority over us, we will see the hand of God move in unmistakable ways.

Presence (10-12)

This psalmist was born to be a doorkeeper. Standing at the gate was the assignment granted his fathers by the great King David himself. His whole life, he knew that the time would come and the lot would fall for his division to serve at the temple gates. He would finally have the chance to do what he was born to do. The very thought of that experience brought him joy. He was truly grateful for God’s favor, honor and blessing on his life.

May the followers of Jesus find joy in the presence of God as they gather to worship the Lord. “Better a day in Your courts than a thousand anywhere else” (v. 10). †

Bible Studies for Life By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh, Ph.D. Professor of Religion, Samford University

SHARE CHRIST John 1:35-49

D.T. Niles, an evangelist from Sri Lanka, wrote a book on evangelism called “That They May Have Life” and suggested that, “Evangelism is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.”

John 1 tells the story of early evangelism as people who had encountered Jesus Christ for themselves began to tell others about Him. We sometimes fool ourselves into thinking the Church will just grow automatically. This can be a particular problem in the Bible Belt where it is culturally acceptable to attend church. We assume everybody knows the message of the gospel, but the majority of people in Alabama do not attend church. God’s hand of blessing comes in a sovereign way, but it comes upon churches who go out and tell others about Christ.

Seek a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. (35-39)

The first thing we must discover is a personal encounter with Jesus Christ for ourselves. John the Baptist preached a very simple message: “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (v. 29). It was a message that would make perfect sense to Jewish people who remembered the saving action of God every year at Passover, when they ate the Passover lamb and gave thanks to God for grace, mercy and love in providing deliverance from slavery in Egypt. John is now telling them of a far greater deliverance, a more revolutionary freedom from sin which comes through Jesus Christ.

We cannot share an encounter with Jesus unless we have met Him and experienced His love in our lives. We need to know His grace in forgiveness, His mercy in meeting us and His peace within our hearts. Our ex-

perience must have an effect on our lives.

Tell others of your experience with Jesus. (40-45)

It would be easy to enjoy the grace of God and not tell others. This would be an act of selfishness on our part. In John 1 we find three people who share their encounter with Jesus with others. The first is John the Baptist in his preaching. The second is Andrew who goes immediately to find his brother and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (v. 41). Sometimes the hardest people to speak to about our faith are family members. They know us well and we cannot pretend to have encountered Jesus if it doesn’t make a difference in our daily lives. We start in our families before we tell others. Then in John 1 we discovered Philip who went to tell his friend, Nathanael, “We have found him” (v. 45). Don’t be guilty of the sin of silence. We don’t want people to say to us, “Why didn’t you tell me?”

Invite others to know Jesus for themselves. (46-49)

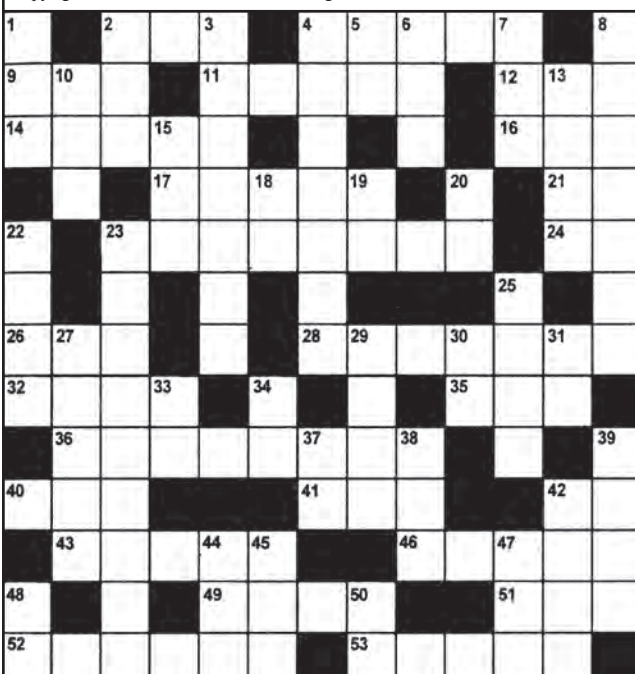
William Temple, a former Archbishop of Canterbury, once said, “The Church is the only institution in the world that exists for the benefit of those who are not yet its members.”

Jim Graham, the British pastor who conducted my marriage service, once gave me his definition of the grace of God as “the beauty of God and the bounty of God.” Grace is the sheer undeserved generosity of the heart of our Father in heaven who delights to “pour out His love into our hearts through the gift of His Spirit.” This message is not something that human beings have devised — it comes as a revelation of God, not to be tampered with but shared with others. Why would we ever want to keep that message to ourselves? †

The Alabama Baptist will not publish a July 6 issue. Sunday School lessons for July 9 will be available at www.thealabamabaptist.org. To receive your complimentary website credentials or to subscribe, go to the website and click on the gold “Login” button at the top of the site.

Christian Crossword

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Across

- Behold, it ___ very good. (Gen. 1:31)
- Thou and thy house shall be ___. (Acts 11:14)
- Sound of sudden enlightenment.
- Long-legged bird.
- Before. (poetic)
- West African river.
- The beast ... shall make ___ against them. (Rev. 11:7)
- Peels.
- Intravenous. (abbr.)
- My ___ ye shall keep. (Ex. 31:13)
- Yes. (Russian)
- Love worketh no ___ to his neighbor. (Rom. 13:10)
- She bound the ___ line in the window. (Josh. 2:21)
- A type of star.
- ___ ye drink of the cup that I drink of? (Mark 10:38)
- ___ them through thy truth. (John 17:17)

- To ___ at liberty them that are bruised. (Luke 4:18)
- The price set by a professional person.
- ___ and fro.
- I have sinned ... and in thy ___. (Luke 15:21)
- Them also which ___ in Jesus. (1 Thess. 4:14)
- Israel ... had made a great ___. (Judg. 21:5)
- Elevated trains.
- God be merciful to me a ___. (Luke 18:13)
- They had a few ___ fishes. (Mark 8:7)

Down

- A prohibition.
- Every one that passeth by shall ___ his head. (Jer. 18:16)
- The pen of the ___ is in vain. (Jer. 8:8)
- Gird thyself, and bind on thy ___. (Acts 12:8)
- Sent ___ angel and brought us out of Egypt. (Num. 20:16)
- ___ certain of the church. (Acts 12:1)
- God give thee of the ___ of heaven. (Gen. 27:28)
- O thou wicked ___. (Matt. 18:32)
- Let ___ that readeth understand. (Mark 13:14)
- A sudden attack.
- Equal Rights Amendment. (abbr.)
- New Brunswick. (abbr.)
- Saint. (abbr.)
- There ___ none good but one. (Mark 10:18)
- Use not ___ repetitions. (Matt. 6:7)
- Thou art the God of my ___. (Ps. 25:5)
- The revenger of blood ... shall ___ the murderer. (Num. 35:19)
- Doesn't win.
- Sidewalk ___. (abbr.)
- Royal Canadian. (abbr.)
- Printer's measure.
- I will be ___ enemy unto thine enemies. (Ex. 23:22)

- How is ___ that ye are come so soon? (Ex. 2:18)
- ___ now I have found favor in thy sight. (Gen. 18:3)
- Yea.
- The ___ of the mountains seen. (Gen. 8:5)
- ___ John what things ye have seen. (Luke 7:22)
- Tool for wedding.
- ___ and feathers.
- Snake-like fish.
- This ___ the way. (Isa. 30:21)
- High School. (abbr.)



WMU Foundation partners with Mully project

Mully Children's Family operates six facilities in Kenya. One location, the Yatta Vocational Training School, employs artisans who are young, many of whom are impoverished women seeking to rebuild their lives after being trafficked.

"When we learned more about how the Yatta Vocational Training School helps young women out of trafficking and teaches them skills such as sewing and making jewelry, we knew we wanted to invite them to be an artisan group of WorldCrafts," said Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director of national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU). "We wanted to help them market the beautiful necklaces and purses they create, but upfront funding to place a significant order was going to be a challenge."

'God provided'

"We prayed," Wisdom-Martin continued, "and God provided \$115,000 through the WMU Foundation so we could increase our orders not only to this group, but also to other WorldCrafts artisan groups. We are so grateful for the WMU Foundation and generous donors that made this possible so quickly."

Cindy Walker, of Minden, Louisiana, a WMU Foundation board member, said, "From the moment we learned about the Mully project and how it had the potential to transform hearts and lives, our WMU Foundation board members wanted to be a part. The possibility of providing training and employment through this partnership truly resonated with us."

Sylvia DeLoach, of Richardson, Texas, who also serves on the WMU Foundation board, agreed. "The Mully partnership struck a chord in me from the first time I heard about it. What a perfect opportunity to partner with a project that's meeting needs and providing opportunities congruent with WMU's ongoing purpose." (WMU)



Mully Children's Family, a nonprofit organization in Kenya that seeks to transform the lives of street children and youth living in poverty, was founded by Dr. Charles Mully (center, crouching) in 1989.

WMU photo

Transforming lives

WorldCrafts partners with Mully movie to share 'gripping' story

By Julie Walters
National WMU

WorldCrafts, the fair-trade division of national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), is partnering with Mully Children's Family (MCF) to help share the story of Charles Mully and expand WorldCrafts' impact among impoverished artisan groups around the world.

MCF, a nonprofit organization in Kenya that seeks to transform the lives of street children and youth living in poverty, was founded by Mully.

Mully was the firstborn in a family of eight, living in poverty in Kenya.

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

When Mully 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 he and Esther had eight biological children.

In 1989 the Lord laid it on Mully's heart to

help other children living in poverty in Africa. 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 Mully have taken guardianship of more than 12,000 abandoned children.

The couple's compelling story has been made into a movie, "Mully."

"We are delighted to be a part of sharing this life-changing story about how one man's obedience to God has transformed a nation," said Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director of national WMU. "Beyond a gripping storyline, watching this movie will inspire Southern Baptists to examine ways God is calling them to personally serve and minister to others."

Wisdom-Martin describes this project as a natural fit with WMU's vision of challenging Christian believers to understand and be radically involved

in the mission of God and WMU's existing ministries.

"This partnership will bring more visibility and support for WorldCrafts' artisan groups in poverty and coming out of sex trafficking so we can minister to exponentially more artisans

and their families," Wisdom-Martin said. "It will also underscore the ... impact Christians can make through orphan care and adoption."

Churches interested in hosting a pretheatrical showing of the movie between June 25 and September 24 are encouraged to request more information and a personal screening. (WMU)

Media kits available

WorldCrafts has developed two media kits to bring screenings of Mully movie to life.

A host kit — designed for congregations, small groups and families — contains resources to help promote a prescreening, including videos, reflection questions, talking points and a six-week devotional book and small group study guide centered around the Mully family's story of discipleship.

A viewer kit for individuals includes some of the same resources in the host kit, including the devotional book, but is designed to encourage personal reflection and ministry action. (WMU)

All resources in both kits are digital and are available at WorldCrafts.org.

For more information about how to host a viewing of the film in your church before the October theatrical release, visit catalystresourcegroup.com/mully.

For ticket information, visit WorldCrafts.org/MullyMovieTickets.

Jesus means 'everything'

Tolliver plays for higher cause than himself

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Professional basketball player Anthony Tolliver, 31, isn't shy about sharing his faith.

"Obviously I try to be as big a competitor as possible but at the same time I want to let people know that I can play for a higher cause than myself," he said. "The NBA has provided me a platform to glorify Him and bring other people into the Kingdom. It's great having this platform. I feel like that is the reason why I am here so I can share my faith with others, especially the younger generation. They look up to NBA players and say, 'Wow, what did they do?' How did they get here?"

"I try to point in the direction of God and let them know, 'This is how I got here.'"

Tolliver made it to the NBA despite the fact he was not drafted out of Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, where he studied finance. Before graduating in 2007, he scored more than 1,000 career points and was first team All-Missouri Valley Conference (MVC) in 2007. He was on the All-MVC Most Improved team in 2006 and was All-MVC Scholar-Athlete first team in 2007 and second team Academic All-American.

Tolliver did make the opening day roster for the Cleveland Cavaliers in 2007 but he never played. He has been on three Developmental League teams (Iowa, Austin, Idaho) and played for teams in Germany and Turkey.

Tolliver made it to the NBA despite the fact he was not drafted out of Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, where he studied finance. Before graduating in 2007, he scored more than 1,000 career points and was first team All-Missouri Valley Conference (MVC) in 2007. He was on the All-MVC Most Improved team in 2006 and was All-MVC Scholar-Athlete first team in 2007 and second team Academic All-American.

Constant faith amid change

He was signed by San Antonio in 2008–09 and averaged 2.7 points and 2.2 rebounds but was sent to Austin. His average of 17.8 points, 7.8 rebounds topped his D-League stats.

Along with the Spurs and Kings, he has played for Portland (2009–10), Golden State (2009–10), Minnesota (2010–11, 2011–12), Atlanta (2012–13), Charlotte (2013–14), Phoenix (2014–15) and Detroit (2014–15, 2015–16).

In eight seasons in the NBA, Tolliver has played for nine different teams.

With so much change faith has been the one constant in Tolliver's life.

"The rest of the league is definitely changing all the time — teams and situations — but faith is the one constant. I have been able to stay faithful and keep my faith," he said.



TOLLIVER

"I have learned that I can go through a lot and still keep going. I have been through a lot and had a lot of ups and downs but have been able to sustain because of my faith.

"One story in my life that resonates with other people is when I lost my mom. It was a tough time for me," Tolliver said. "[My faith] is the only thing that kept me sane and kept me going in life. There have been a lot of ups and downs but at the end of the day, I try to stay faithful and focused."

His favorite Bible verse, Proverbs 3:5–6, "is what I live by every single day." It says, "Trust in the

Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths."

"I try to stay in the Word and try to read the Bible every single day. I try to read devotions," Tolliver said. "I try to live it out and do as much as I can for other people and to represent Christ in every single way."

To Tolliver, Jesus means "everything, everything. That is what sustains me. That is what my life is all about."

Sacramento Kings teammate and fellow believer Garrett Temple

said Tolliver's faith is evident.

"Just continuing to be the kind of teammate that he is no matter if he is getting 35 minutes or 40 minutes a game or not playing in the rotation, he is always the same positive guy, always exuding that energy, coming to work, being a professional every day. His leadership and positive mindset in the locker room is real big for this organization."

A guard for Sacramento, Ben McLemore said he has seen "great faith" in Tolliver.

"He definitely pushes and pursues (others) to have a great faith and to learn and understand."

Tolliver became a Christian at age 12 while sitting in his Springfield church.

'Holy Spirit tugging'

"That's when I had the moment. The pastor had the message that resonated with me. It was one of those things. I really felt the Holy Spirit tugging at my heart. When he was talking I made sure that I listened. It was a different feeling about it this time than every other time.

"I tried to make sure I was cognizant of it and it has worked out really well. I have never been the same since then. It's been a great ride." ✝

"The rest of the league is definitely changing all the time — teams and situations — but faith is the one constant. I have been able to stay faithful and keep my faith."

Anthony Tolliver, professional basketball player

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Christian families forced into Hindu ritual

JALALABAD, India — Villagers in India's Uttar Pradesh state beat Christians, forced them to participate in Hindu rituals and have refused to provide them water, sources are reporting. Four couples who were attacked in Jalalabad village in the Ghazipur District rely on the water to irrigate their fields.

The couples were among about 25 Christians accused of forcibly converting Hindus to Christianity.

"The mob, supported by the village president, forced us to drink gangajal (water from the Ganges River, considered holy), eat tulsi leaves (basil considered holy) and declare that we deny Christ," said one of the adults, Pushpa Kumari. "When we resisted, the men and women of the village beat us even more severely."

The four couples along with four other Christians refused to participate in the ritual or deny Christ, but 13 younger Christians involved felt compelled to participate in the Hindu ritual and deny Christ, they said.

"The police asked the villagers to let anyone follow their own Dharma (religious teaching) peacefully, and that nobody shall disturb the prayer services in the village's house church," Pushpa Kumari's husband, Manoj Kumar, said.

In the presence of the village head, the Hindu villagers said they would abide by the police request and neither side filed a formal complaint. However, the agreement made no mention of water service and the villagers have refused to sell it to the Christians. Village President Santosh Kumar Gupta said he cannot prevent the Hindus from cutting off the Christians' water.

India ranks 15th on Open Doors' 2017 World Watch List of the countries where Christians experience the most persecution. (MS)

Raids on Baptist worship meetings increasing

TARAZ, Kazakhstan — A growing number of Baptist congregations in Taraz, Kazakhstan, are being scrutinized by state police. Some worship meetings are being raided, resulting in officials being cited and fined for "meeting without state permission."

Other encounters are resulting in the participants being taken to the police station to be photographed and fingerprinted. Their personal information and addresses also are recorded.

At least four individuals also have been fined for saying "amen" aloud in mosques during prayers.

The power to impose summary fines without initial due process was first given to police under the 2015 revision of the Code of Administrative Offenses. Such fines are first known to have been imposed in 2016, also against Baptists.

It is possible to challenge police-imposed fines through the courts or a prosecutor's office. However, this process is more difficult (as with court convictions) than lodging an appeal to a higher court against a lower court decision.

The official group representing Baptists in the area has adopted a policy of civil disobedience, refusing to pay fines imposed to punish them for exercising their human rights. Many who refuse to pay such fines are then placed on Kazakhstan's exit blacklist which prevents them from leaving the country. Some have property confiscated, such as washing machines or cars. Others have restraining orders placed on property, such as homes, cars or calves, preventing them from selling or disposing of them. (F18)

Deporting Chaldean Christians 'a death sentence'

WASHINGTON — Southern Baptist religious freedom advocate Russell Moore has joined other evangelical leaders in urging the Trump administration to stop its deportation of Christians to Iraq.

Recent reports have indicated the federal government has started the process of deporting Chaldean Christians back to their homeland, where the United States government has designated the murderous campaign of the Islamic State as genocide.

"This is wrong, wrong, wrong," Moore said. "Deporting these Iraqi Christians is nothing less than a death sentence." (BP)