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IMMIGRATION controversies aside

United States among most welcoming countries of migrants

By Martha Simmons
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Recent immigration controversies notwithstanding, the United States not only receives more migrants than any other country in the world, it also is 1 of the 20 countries most likely to welcome them.

A recent Gallup World Poll in 2016-2017 asked citizens of 139 countries to say whether they would view the following as “a good thing,” “a bad thing” or “it depends/don’t know”:

- ▶ Immigrants living in your country.
- ▶ An immigrant becoming your neighbor.
- ▶ An immigrant marrying one of your close relatives.

Europe’s migrant crisis

The resulting Migrant Acceptance Index reported that polar opposites Iceland and New Zealand were the most accepting countries on the globe for migrants, while Macedonia and Montenegro were the least likely to throw out the welcome mat.

“Many countries on the front lines of the recent migrant crisis in Eu-

rope are among the least-accepting countries in the world for migrants, according to Gallup’s new Migrant Acceptance Index,” Gallup reported. “Nine of the 10 countries that score a 2.39 or lower (out of a possible 9.0) on the index are former Soviet bloc countries — with most located along the Balkan route that once channeled asylum seekers from Greece to Germany.

“Israel, which has dealt with its own influx of asylum seekers from Africa in the past decade, is the only non-European country with scores this low,” Gallup reported. Israel ranked as the 6th least-welcoming

country for migrants with a score of 1.87, compared with the United States, the 18th most-welcoming country, whose score was 7.27.

Immigrants and their U.S.-born children now represent 27 percent of the overall U.S. population, according to the 2016 Current Population Survey (CPS).

Top 10 countries

According to the CPS, the top 10 countries of origin for U.S. immigrants in 2015 were:

1. Mexico — 27 percent
2. India — 6 percent

(See ‘Christians,’ page 3)



COMMENT

In the Midst of Hurricanes

You have heard the illustration about a butterfly flapping its wings on one side of the earth and creating a storm on the earth's opposite side. The illustration highlights the interconnectedness of life. It is based on the principle of cause and effect.

Some argue there is a universal law of cause and effect. They say every effect has a definite cause and every cause has a definite effect. Sounds logical doesn't it? This argument continues by saying there is no such thing as chance or luck. Every outcome is the result of one's own actions.

The foundation of the Buddhist religion is the law of cause and effect. That religion holds, "Good deeds bring good results. Bad deeds bring bad results. Your own deeds bring your own results." It is a religion based on determinism. One gets what one deserves whether it be good or ill.

Recently some Christian voices have attempted to explain the devastation of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma using cause and effect. One popular radio preacher recently said the Houston area suffered from Hurricane Harvey because the city had not repented of its support for homosexuality and its persecution of preachers, an apparent reference to a lawsuit where the former mayor of Houston attempted to confiscate sermon notes from some pastors who had opposed a city ordinance protecting homosexuals.

He also described Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy as God's hand of punishment against sinful cities.

Cause and effect

This kind of reasoning draws a direct line between actions and results. In that way it is like Buddhism, teaching "your own deeds bring your own results."

Obviously, God does bring punishment for sin. The Old Testament story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah illustrates that fact. But the line of cause and effect is not always so clearly evident.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount offers a different understanding of life. In Matthew 5:45, Jesus said God "causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

Bad things happen to good people

For Jesus there is not a direct line between good and the blessings of God or between evil and God's punishment. Life can be haphazard. Bad things can happen to good people and the wicked can appear to prosper.

Again both the righteous and the unrighteous receive God's rain. Both the good and the evil benefit from the rays of God's sun.

Believing in a world of cause and effect provides a sense of control. We are masters of our own fates if we live in a world of cause and effect. We have the power to control our circumstances, to change our futures. Believing in cause and effect helps make sense out of a confusing world and bewildering circumstances.

Someone has observed that human beings would rather feel guilty than feel powerless. If we feel guilty or feel like we are bad people then we deserve all the bad that happens, but we are still in control and still live in a cause and effect universe.

Being powerless means we are not in control and that can be frightening.

In light of Jesus' words perhaps the focus

should change from why something happened or who is to blame for the unfortunate circumstances in which we find ourselves. Perhaps the focus should be more about our response to the world in which we live.

In Psalm 56:4, the psalmist asked, "What can mortal man do to me?" His answer was that man could do nothing because the psalmist confessed that his trust was in God.

In Psalm 23:4 a similar thought is described. There the psalmist says "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil." The reason? "For You are with me."

There is something about companionship that makes life more bearable.

Years ago a study attempted to determine the amount of pain a person could stand by having volunteers place their feet in buckets of ice water. To everyone's surprise when someone was with the volunteer, the feet stayed in the ice water about twice as long as when the volunteer was alone.

It is a fact of life that companionship makes pain a little less painful, misfortune a little less oppressive. That is why the physical presence of a Christian friend conveys such a positive message in times of trouble, even if a word is never spoken.

God's presence

The psalmist rejected the idea of cause and effect. In both Psalm 23 and Psalm 56, God was not doing something to the writer because of some failure or wrongdoing on the part of the psalmist. God was not against him for some past action. Rather God was with the psalmist in the midst of the circumstances, in the midst of the pain. God was on the psalmist's side and God's presence was enough.

Because God was with him, the psalmist could handle whatever came his way. So can we, just as Philippians 4:13 says — "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

The parent's presence comforts the child who cries out in the darkness of night and God's presence comforts us, His children, when we cry out in the midst of turmoil and confusion whatever their cause.

God may not make the problems disappear. He may not eliminate the evil we face. But God is with us and that is enough. That is exactly what Jesus promised when He said, "And I am with you always, even unto the ends of the age" (Matt. 28:20).

So when hurricanes enter our lives — literal hurricanes like Harvey and Irma or figurative ones — the challenge is not to determine what we did wrong. The challenge is to recognize God's presence through His Spirit and through His people and go on living because God is with us. †

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

CHANCE FOR HEALING

I recently received a call from a lady asking if I thought Hurricane Harvey was God's judgment on America. I think it is just the opposite. After weeks of stories on racial division and hatred from the events in Charlottesville, Virginia, it is encouraging to watch Americans selflessly reach out to help their neighbors and fellow citizens in a time of disaster. Watching the flotilla of johnboats,

fishing boats, rafts and even Jet Skis helping evacuate trapped citizens is inspiring. Frankly, it reminded me of the recent movie "Dunkirk" where countless everyday citizens rushed across the English Channel to rescue British troops stranded in deadly peril in France.

To be honest, seeing how Americans are reaching out to help each other revives in me the belief that America is, at heart, a truly good na-

tion. The vicious rhetoric and the violent conflicts at Charlottesville do not reflect who we really are as a people. Instead, Charlottesville represents everything Americans fought against in the last century. As a soldier in Germany, I twice visited the concentration camp (See 'Letters,' page 11)



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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Caught in the crossfire

Christians in Turkish city of Diyarbakir facing mass persecution

Turkey — it sometimes slips out of view since it doesn't make the Secretary of State's "Countries of Particular Concern" list for human rights violations.

But in the city of Diyarbakir for one, "entire neighborhoods" have disappeared. The Surp Giragos Church has been converted to an army base, the sanctuary desecrated with urine and garbage, the pews burned as firewood.

Those are just a few things mentioned in the report "Turkey's Mass Persecution of Christians and Kurds," released Sept. 4 by the Gatestone Institute. Since 2015, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been attacking Kurdish-majority areas in the country, and Christians have been caught in the crossfire, according to the report.

In Diyarbakir "virtually the entire town — and all Christian properties belonging to the indigenous Armenian, Assyrian (Syriac), Chaldean and Protestant communities — was included in an expropriation plan adopted in March 2016 by the Turkish cabinet." That expropriation plan included the Surp Giragos Church and others. Those ethnic groups haven't been able to worship in their own churches for the past three years, according to the report.

"We have been exposed to ethnic and religious discrimination for years," said Ahmet Güvener, a pastor and the spiritual leader of the Diyarbakir Protestant Church, adding that not one church has been built since the founding of the Turkish Republic in 1923.

And the government isn't the only source of "hatred," the report stated. That sentiment is "widespread among the public as well and



en.wikipedia.org

expressed extensively on social media."

It has spread even to mistreatment of Muslims who have refused to shun Christians or Kurds, said Gatestone Institute, a U.S.-based think tank and international policy group.

Harassed by Turkish police

"For instance, a 76-year-old Muslim grandmother in Diyarbakir who is active in a Kurdish political movement has been harassed by Turkish police for being a 'hidden Armenian,' simply because she reads the Bible as well as the Quran," Gatestone reported.

The situation has impacted journalists and American Christians too. Andrew Brunson, a North Carolina native who served as pastor of a church on Turkey's Aegean coast, was detained in October 2016 as a "national security risk."

Watchdog groups, such as the American Center for Law and Justice, have accused President Erdogan of keeping Brunson in prison without cause, but in August, officials stated his charges as "gathering state secrets for espionage, attempting to overthrow the Turkish parliament and government, and to change the constitutional order." (TAB)

Christians 'can't differ on call of Jesus to reach ... all people'

(continued from page 1)

3. China (including Hong Kong but not Taiwan) — 5 percent
4. Philippines — 5 percent
5. El Salvador — 3 percent
6. Vietnam — 3 percent
7. Cuba — 3 percent
8. Dominican Republic — 2 percent
9. Korea — 2 percent
10. Guatemala — 2 percent

So how do these statistics square with recent immigration controversies, Judeo-Christian traditions and Christians' obligations to welcome the sojourner? In an article published in the fall of 2016, the Southern Baptist Convention's International Mission Board (IMB) called for "opening the borders of the U.S. church" and serving "the immigrants among us."

The article's authors are Kara Blakeley and Thi Mitsamphanh. Blakeley lives in Southeast Asia where she works with local believ-

ers to make disciples and mobilize missionaries. Mitsamphanh came to the United States in 1986 with his Buddhist family and now has a doctorate in missions, focusing on diaspora missiology, from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Cordova, Tennessee.

Top destination

"The United States is the top destination for the world's migrant population," Blakeley and Mitsamphanh wrote. "In 2015 it was home to 46.6 million foreign-born residents, while Russia ranked a distant second with 11.6 million immigrants. With an increasingly diverse population, experts predict that by 2055 the United States will not have a single racial or ethnic majority.

"Now more than ever, the U.S. church has the incredible opportunity to welcome people from many backgrounds," they wrote. "The

end goal, though, is not to just welcome them into our congregations but also to empower them with the gospel and mobilize them to make disciples of the nations themselves."

The U.S. represents the third largest number of unreached people behind China and India, according to missiologist J.D. Payne, who serves as pastor for church multiplication for The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham.

"Migration and mission converge to create a new frontier in Kingdom expansion," Payne wrote in promoting the conference "Reaching the Nations in North America" in Tennessee in 2016. "For most of us, the peoples next door are strangers. There is something missionally malignant if we are willing to make great sacrifices to travel the world but unwilling to cross the street.

"If the Divine Maestro has or-

chestrated the movement of the nations to our communities, then we should know how to respond (Acts 17:26-27)."

Ed Stetzer, executive director of the Billy Graham Center for Evangelism at Wheaton College, said at the conference that while there's room for disagreement on issues like border security and immigration, there can be no doubt as to Christians' marching orders with regard to the strangers among us.

Staying on mission

"We might differ on that," he said of current immigration controversies, "but you can't differ and be a Christian on the call of Jesus to reach all kinds of people from different nations.

"Our task is to be about the mission that Jesus has given us," Stetzer said. "In the midst of the politics we're called to be prophetic." ¶

Alabama disaster relief volunteers trained in administrative and logistical support recently set up a command center at Bayou City Fellowship Church, Houston, Texas, to direct operations in the area.

'We need people'



Photo courtesy of Debbie Andrews

Hundreds of Alabama Baptists to respond to flood recovery in stricken areas

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**
The Alabama Baptist

As Hurricane Irma made its way through Florida and the Atlantic-Gulf Coast region, Alabama Baptist associations, churches and disaster relief teams continued to do what they could to help Hurricane Harvey survivors in Texas and Louisiana.

Debbie Andrews and her sister, Heather Hitchcock, drove all day Sept. 6 headed to Bayou City Fellowship Church-Spring Branch campus in Houston. There they helped set up the Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (ABDR) adminis-

trative headquarters to coordinate teams and donations that will come in and go out of the area in the weeks ahead.

An encounter with a woman in Walmart reminded Andrews that "divine appointments" are one reason ABDR volunteers do what they do.

Praying in Walmart

"We were in line for self-checkout and a woman thanked us for being here. I asked if she had any damage and she said not much, just some leaks," Andrews posted to Facebook. "I asked if I could pray with her. She said 'yes.' Right there in line at Walmart."

Andrews and her teammates were some of the first Alabama Baptists deployed to Houston.

Three mudout teams have worked in Texas since Harvey's floodwaters receded, including an 18-member team with volunteers from both DeKalb and Sand Mountain Baptist associations.

Coordinator Morris Clements said he didn't know what to expect when they arrived in Texas but one thing was certain.

"We're carrying Christ to people in crisis," he said. "We work with people whatever their needs are."

Mudout teams from Tuskegee Lee and Columbia Baptist associations also were deployed to Texas in the aftermath of Harvey.

two shower units and two operators were deployed to Houston and a skid-steer loader was sent to Victoria, Texas, with two operators, according to Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) disaster relief strategist Mark Wakefield. Support units for feeding volunteers also were set up in Houston.

As Hurricane Irma threatened, Wakefield said the mudout teams would transition out of Texas but the laundry and skid steer units would stay with their assigned Texas-based teams with minimum ABDR staffing.

Several associations and churches sent relief supplies to help local churches in Texas and Louisiana.

Columbia, Coffee, Randolph and Cleburne Baptist associations sent trucks loaded with bottled water, cleaning products, disposable diapers and toilet paper, as did several churches including: Beatrice Baptist Church in Pine Barren Baptist Association; Ray Baptist, Alexander City, and Rockford Baptist, both in Central Baptist Association; First Baptist, Roberts-dale, in Baldwin Baptist Association; and First Baptist, Albertville, in Marshall Baptist Association.

As Texas and Louisiana continue to recover and Irma's full impact is assessed, the good news is that new disaster relief volunteers are being trained and will be ready to deploy as the need arises, Wakefield said.

Several hundred volunteers have

been added to the pool of credentialed workers through emergency disaster relief training classes held around the state, according to Scotty Goldman, director of the office of global missions at SBOM.

Training sessions

Seventy people attended the first training session, held in Prattville and 78 were trained in Dothan. Additional trainings scheduled in Decatur and Bay Minette were expected to draw large crowds, as is a fifth training scheduled for Sept. 24 at First Baptist Church, Opelika.

"These new volunteers are training for mudout and flood recovery, so they will have opportunities to go to Florida, Texas or wherever they're needed," Wakefield said.

In Texas the need for volunteers will continue to be great, said Tom Billings, director of missions for the Houston-area Union Baptist Association. In a Facebook post, Billings told of his visits among flood survivors, describing the images as heartbreaking.

"The accumulated possessions of a lifetime — we now call it trash — were piled in yards all along the neighborhoods," he wrote. "Unless you've seen and experienced it firsthand, it's hard to describe."

Billings urged churches, associations and communities to mobilize volunteers.

"Sure, we need money and prayer. But we need people who can come and help." ✝

Critical work

Frank Nelson, Bessemer Baptist disaster relief coordinator, said widespread flooding like that in Texas and southwest Louisiana makes the work of mudout teams both critical and challenging.

"Generally we have to scoop out mud, carry out appliances and furniture, pull up carpets and then cut out drywall about a foot above the water level," he said. "Then we have to spray everything down with a solution to treat and prevent mold and mildew."


Many possessions damaged in a flood cannot be salvaged. But if mudout work is not done quickly, a home's structure may be damaged beyond repair too.

In addition to mudout teams,

Since the flooding following Hurricane Harvey, more than 150 Alabama Baptists have attended Emergency Disaster Relief Training classes like this one in Prattville on Sept. 2.



Photo courtesy of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions



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Photo courtesy of Debbie Andrews

Left: Volunteers Tammy Hutchinson and Evelyn Rojas unpack goods at Austin-area FBC Pflugerville where a Baptist disaster relief kitchen is preparing meals for Hurricane Harvey evacuees housed in the city's mega-shelter. **Above:** An Alabama Baptist shower trailer deployed to Houston will provide warm baths for volunteers serving on disaster relief teams in the area.

HOW CAN I HELP?

Visit sldr.org/hurricanerelief for ways to pray, give and serve.

Maximizing resources

Second major hurricane in two weeks to present major challenges, opportunities

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**
The Alabama Baptist

As Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (ABDR) coordinators set up temporary quarters in flood-stricken areas in Texas and Louisiana, they also kept a nervous eye on Hurricane Irma's track through the Caribbean toward Florida.

"We have been keeping a very close eye on Hurricane Irma knowing that it will bring another set of challenges to Florida, the Atlantic coastal states and parts of Alabama," Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), said Sept. 7.

Mark Wakefield, SBOM disaster relief strategist, said Sept. 8 that Irma "has the potential to significantly stretch our resources."

'Be flexible and pray'

"We must gear up for a lengthy response. Please encourage your people to prepare, be flexible and pray," Wakefield wrote in an e-mail to SBOM personnel and associational leaders.

Wakefield said some ABDR resources will stay in Texas but most resources will transition from Harvey relief to Irma relief.

"The initial plan for Hurricane

Irma has been to send our large kitchen to Florida along with appropriate support," Wakefield said. "However, the models are increasingly bringing the storm track toward Alabama."

Wakefield said SBOM leadership would be working together to assess needs in Alabama and neighboring states once Irma made landfall and moved north.

Florida Baptist Disaster Relief (FLDR) workers also were making plans for a post landfall response. As residents across the peninsula gathered supplies and began to evacuate, all FLDR volunteers were put on alert that a callout was coming. Florida Baptist Convention offices were readied to serve as a Disaster Operations Center and sites to house out-of-state disaster relief teams

were readied in Pensacola, Marianna, Tallahassee, Live Oak and Jacksonville. Feeding units were on standby with plans for eight strategically located kitchen sites. One projection anticipated the need for 288,000 to 320,000 meals.



BP photo by Jane Rodgers

In hard-hit Rockport, Texas, disaster relief volunteer Lizz Jelsma assists a flood survivor to her car with a cartload of goods from a distribution center at Coastal Oaks Baptist Church.

One FLDR feeding team of volunteers had already deployed to Beaumont, Texas, to help in the relief effort following Hurricane Harvey. In anticipation of Irma's landfall, all teams scheduled to go to Texas were asked to stand down, according to FLDR.

Forecasters called Irma the most powerful Atlantic storm ever recorded. The Category 5 storm maintained sustained winds of 185 mph with higher gusts. At press time Sept. 8, Irma was expected to make landfall in southern Florida in the early hours of Sept. 10 as a Category

4 hurricane and track northward through the center of the state. Most of Florida was expected to take a direct hit, with much of Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina affected by tropical storm force wind and rain Sunday night through Tuesday.

Power outages

Unlike in Houston, where power mostly remained on as flood waters rose, damage in Florida is expected to include widespread power outages, damage to roofs and buildings and localized flooding. Power crews from neighboring states were already on standby days in advance as officials waited to see when and where Irma would make landfall.

Irma caused massive damage as it passed through the Caribbean. At least nine deaths were reported as of Sept. 7 and the island of Barbuda was all but destroyed by the storm. With disaster relief teams

from Baptist state conventions and the North American Mission Board (NAMB) focused on Texas, Louisiana, Florida and the Southeast, Baptist Global Response (BGR), a Southern Baptist partner, said it would focus primarily on relief efforts outside the U.S.

"We are in initial conversations with NAMB and the Florida Baptist Convention (representatives) who have work/ministry assignments for Puerto Rico, Hispanola, etc.," BGR CEO Jeff Palmer told Baptist Press. "We are trying to find the best ways to work to maximize resources for the needed Caribbean response."

ABDR also plans to have a presence in the Caribbean, Wakefield said. Plans to send Alabama's airlift kitchen with a team for up to two weeks was still on track as of Sept. 8. If possible, a small chainsaw team with supplies was going to Puerto Rico for several days. ✝

"We must gear up for a lengthy response. Please encourage your people to prepare, be flexible and pray."

Mark Wakefield, SBOM disaster relief strategist

'Generous and prayerful'

Disaster relief takes center stage as Alabama Baptists focus on Week of Prayer for State Missions

By **Janella Martinez**
Alabama WMU

As Alabama Baptists observe the second Week of Prayer for State Missions, which began Sept. 10, hearts are tuned to the important and timely work of disaster relief — one of the featured Great Commission Ministries that directly benefits from the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering.

In the days before Hurricane Irma was set to hit the coast, Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers were making preparations for the aftermath. And within days of Hurricane Harvey's landfall, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

(SBOM) had already sent an initial round of relief funding. All of this was possible, in part, because of gifts given to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering and through the Cooperative Program.

"Thanks to the generosity of Alabama Baptists from all over the state, last year's inaugural Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering was well received, and the goal was exceeded," said Rick Lance, SBOM executive director. "That was one of the contributing factors to our having disaster relief people, infrastructure and funds in place for a quick response."

In years past, disaster relief had its own offering each February. In

2016 that offering was combined with Alabama Woman's Missionary Union's (WMU) Kathleen Mallory Mission Offering and expanded to include other Great Commission Ministries, thereby forming the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering. In addition to Alabama WMU and disaster relief, church planting, Alabama Partnership Missions and church revitalization also are featured.

'Amazing things'

Along with the formation of the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering in 2016, an annual Week of Prayer for State Missions was begun.

Alabama WMU Executive Director Candace McIntosh said, "We saw the Lord do amazing things through the Great Commission Ministries featured in the Week of Prayer for State Missions. We continue to see fruit from the specific prayers offered up last year."

According to McIntosh, some of that "fruit" includes 12 new churches planted in Alabama last year, countless faith decisions at

WorldSong's Missions Adventure Camp this summer and at least 40 professions of faith because of Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief work. "And those are just the ones we know about," she said.

The 2017 Week of Prayer for State Missions is taking place this week (Sept. 10-17), with each day dedicated to concentrated prayer for a different Great Commission Ministry. The Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering emphasis coincides with

the Week of Prayer but gifts may be given throughout the year.

Lance noted, "We already know that Alabama Baptists are a generous and prayerful group. This Week of Prayer and [Myers-Mallory] State Missions Offering are just additional ways of showing how much."

Offering goal

This year's Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering goal is \$1 million, with a "Hallelujah Goal" of \$1.2 million. #


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about the offering
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feature videos, visit
myers-mallory.org.**

Samford establishes group to discuss issues at intersection of faith, culture

Discussions about faith and culture, including matters related to human sexuality, are set to take place at Samford University in Birmingham.

The organized conversations will fall under an administration-appointed group, rather than an independent student organization, however.

The new group fulfills the promise Samford President Andrew Westmoreland made in July when he announced the controversial Samford Together organization would not be officially recognized by the school.

Samford Together's stated purpose was to facilitate the discussion of topics related to human sexuality. When Westmoreland decided not to seek formal recognition of the group through the board of trustees, he promised to organize a way to address topics of culture that Christians face.

In a Sept. 1 email to Samford employees, Westmoreland announced the 12-member team.

The members are from the Samford community and "have accepted my invitation to serve as the working group for coordinating ... our efforts to discuss issues at the intersection of Christian understanding and cultural reality," he wrote.

Group includes:

► Four faculty members — Chuck Stokes as chair (associate professor, department of sociology), Dr. Michael Hogue (professor of pharmacy and associate dean for the Center for Faith and Health), Sara McCarty (associate professor of economics and Brock Scholars Program coordinator) and Fred Shepherd (professor of political science and chair of the Department of Political Science).

► Two Samford alumni — Wil-

liam Hargrove (Class of 2017) and Stephen Moss (Class of 2010).

► Two staff members — April Robinson (minister to students and University Care Team coordinator) and Jordaan Whitehead (production stage manager for the Wright Center).

► Four students — Lilla Bea Granger (senior), Lucy Kate Green (sophomore), Nelson Park (senior) and Isaac Sours (junior).

"It will take some time for the group to become organized and to begin their work," Westmoreland wrote. "I hope that you will join me in prayer for each of them in the days ahead."

"To the hundreds of you who have written to me regarding these issues in recent months, I'm grateful for the full range of your comments," he added. "Please know of my appreciation for your messages and your sustained prayers." (TAB)

ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Holt celebrates 50 years in gospel ministry

When Stanley Holt first became a pastor, a circuit-riding preacher gave him some good advice.

"He said, 'If you're going to be an effective minister, you have to remember two things. First don't let church problems become personal problems. And second love the people even when they are unlovely,'" Holt said. "I've tried to put those into practice."

It's been half a century since he walked down the aisle, surrendered his life to full-time ministry and accepted the pastorate of New Ebenezer Baptist Church, Highland Home.

Since then, he has served churches in Alabama Crenshaw, Autauga, Elmore and Montgomery Baptist associations.

But for the past 33 years, he has served one congregation — a group of people that has "become like family," Holt said.

"When you're with people that long, you fall in love with them," he said.

The congregation started out as Memorial Heights Baptist Church, where he served for 25 years before it merged with Trinity Baptist Church in 2009 to form Trinity Memorial Baptist Church, Montgomery.

Tom Snowden, minister of music for Trinity Memorial, said Holt is a well-respected pastor.

"He's a good man, a great preacher and he preaches the Word in the right way," Snowden said.

Holt said he has been "truly blessed."

"It has been an awesome journey serving the Lord and seeing people saved," he said.

Over the years, Holt studied through the extension of Samford University and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Sherry, have five children, nine grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Trinity Memorial held a 50th anniversary tea for Holt on Sept. 10. (Grace Thornton)



HOLT



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Biblical 'Twins'

Anger and Wrath

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

Last week we were thinking about the divine attributes of mercy and grace by suggesting a way of distinguishing them as aspects of God's love. This week we think about the twin human reactions of wrath and anger, terms we commonly take as synonyms or identical verbal twins, sharing the same meaning. Both terms appear independently in the Bible. For example, James 1:19-20 admonishes, "Be ... slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." On the other hand, Jesus warned, "I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matt. 5:22). In these instances wrath and anger translate two different Greek terms.

However, on occasion these terms occur together, implying that in some respect they are not totally identical. Ephesians 4:31 implies a difference between wrath and anger by naming both of them in its list of attitudes and actions that Christians should eliminate by exhorting, "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice." Colossians 3:8 also names wrath and anger with the implication that we are to understand some difference exists between them, "You yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth."

Distinguishing differences

Why would biblical admonitions name both wrath and anger if these are identical twins? The fact that each term translates a different Greek word further suggests they can somehow be distinguished from one another. This week we give some thought to a possible distinction between wrath and anger.

The Greek term for wrath ("thumos") was sometimes used in ancient times to describe a passionate outburst of rage or a pitch of fury. So used, "wrath" seems to describe the expression of anger that rises suddenly to a fever pitch and is released in sudden passionate outbursts.

In street language we might say "wrath" carries the idea of "losing it" or "flying off the handle." Often such outbursts are short-lived as a fury that is quickly spent.

The Greek term for anger ("orge") in James 1:19-20 is used in the admonition that reads, "Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires." Various English versions of the Bible sometimes translate "orge" as "wrath" and "thumos" as "anger." This serves as a caution that we must be careful not to locate the distinction between wrath and anger in the dictionary definitions of these words.

Warning against

However, for a practical handle on one way to express why both terms show up in lists of human actions that the Bible warns us against, we can simply note that some people are given to sudden, almost violent outbursts of rage, but the fury is soon spent and they return to relative calm.

Contrariwise, some people experience a kind of quiet, inner anger that builds slowly and continues to seethe over time. Against this kind of manifestation of anger, we understand with greater force the instruction of Ephesians 4:26: "Do not let the sun go down on your anger." Anger held onto over time works all sorts of havoc to one's spiritual condition as well as one's physical well-being.

Whether sudden and short-lived or quietly simmering over a long time, wrath and anger are not only unbecoming for members of God's family, they also sabotage our witness to those around us.✠

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.



in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders

James Randall 'Randy' Driggers

Former Alabama minister, NOBTS vice president dies

James Randall "Randy" Driggers, an Alabama native who served as vice president for institutional advancement of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) from 2011 to 2017, died Aug. 27. He was 61.



DRIGGERS

Driggers also had served as director of development for NOBTS a decade or so prior to his return to the seminary. Between stints at NOBTS, Driggers served as vice president for development with The Baptist Foundation of Alabama from 2001 to 2011.

Earlier in his career, Driggers served as president of his own agency that represented close to 30 AAA-rated insurance companies. He held a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master of divinity degree from NOBTS. He was ordained in January 1993 by First Baptist Church, Hoover, where he served as children's minister and in administration from 1990 to 1994.

Driggers is survived by his wife, Paula; two children; and four grandchildren. (TAB)

Lendon Palmer 'Lenny' Bolton

Longtime Montgomery pastor dies at 78

Lendon Palmer "Lenny" Bolton, former pastor of Chisholm Baptist Church, Montgomery, for 27 years, died Sept. 2. He was 78.

At the time of his death, he was serving as pastor of Wares Ferry Road Baptist Church, Montgomery. Bolton also served as pastor of Pine Level Baptist Church and First Baptist Church, Stevenson.

Bolton had long had a strong relationship with the Montgomery Baptist Association, serving as its moderator from 2002 to 2004 and chairing the committee that brought former director of missions (DOM) Ken May to the association.



BOLTON

Neal Hughes, current DOM for Montgomery Association, said, "Lenny was a pastor who genuinely loved every person he met."

Bolton was a longtime instructor with the Montgomery Institute of Samford University's Extension Division. In his later years, he served with Southern Care Hospice.

He is survived by his wife, Judy; two children; six grandchildren; and one great-grandchild. (TAB)

Trinity Baptist holds note burning service



Photo courtesy of Trinity Baptist Church

Trinity Baptist Church, Roanoke, holds a note burning service for its Family Life Center on Aug. 20. Among the guests in attendance were representatives from the State Board of Missions and former pastors. Richard Richie (third from right), who was pastor at the time of the planning and completion of the building, gave a 'spirit-filled message.' Jeff Burns (fourth from right) is pastor.

Ministering

to families of individuals with

special needs

Number of those with special needs is rising; Alabama Baptist churches can have impact

By Carolyn Tomlin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In recent years, the percentage of people with special needs has increased across our nation.

Some Alabama churches have programs that minister to families of children, youth and adults with special needs. However, more churches are needed with this type of outreach and ministry.

One question to ask is: If a family attends your church, will there be inclusive programs for their child or loved one with special needs?

Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, is one

Alabama Baptist church that realizes the importance of this ministry and even has a minister assigned to it.

“Our church has a community of people involved in this outreach, which started as a lay ministry due to the need. We minister to the entire family — not only the child,” said special needs minister Amy Kirby.

Kirby points out the ministry is not a baby-sitting service — they emphasize teaching God’s

Word, beginning at about age two. An average of 70 kids and young adults are enrolled in the classes. Bible school draws many from the church and community.

Throughout the school year, a monthly support group meets and speakers address issues affecting these families.

“It’s been a huge blessing to Shades Mountain,” Kirby said. “In this group, we’ve reached new families who

are now attending our church.” First Baptist Church, Huntsville, also offers a range of services for individuals with special needs and their families.

The building and restrooms are accessible for wheelchairs. Hymns and order of worship bulletins are available in large print and American Sign Language is used during worship.

The church offers a special needs adult Bible study class on Sunday mornings and a “buddy ministry” to provide one-on-one assistance for individuals with special needs and their families during church services and activities.

In February, First, Huntsville, along with several other Alabama

“We minister to the entire family — not only the child.”

**Amy Kirby
special needs minister,
Shades Mountain Baptist
Church, Vestavia Hills**



Photo by Eleanor Stenner

Logan Gammell (left) and volunteer Wayne Sheets of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, work on a puzzle together.

Baptist churches, partnered with the Tim Tebow Foundation to sponsor Night to Shine, a prom for special needs individuals ages 14 and older. Night to Shine has 150,000 volunteers from 375 churches around the world and serves more than 75,000 people.

Opportunity to serve

Centered on God’s love for people with special needs, the prom gives those in Sunday School classes and group homes an opportunity to participate in social programs.

These ministries serve as an example for what is possible for a ministry to those with special needs at churches of all sizes in Alabama. Here are some additional suggestions for ministering to families and individuals with special needs:

- ▶ Look for teachers trained in this area in your church.
- ▶ Assess your facilities and address potential barriers and needs (wheelchair access, large print materials, sensory rooms, etc.).
- ▶ Have a “buddy” or volunteer system in place to assist visitors and members so they can participate in activities and worship.
- ▶ Plan a night-out for families and provide care for their child or loved one.
- ▶ Plan monthly meetings with speakers qualified to speak on health care, medical issues, legal questions or other relevant topics. Another option could be a panel of parents who respond to questions from the audience. ✠

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“For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

PSALM 139:13-14

Four percent of children ages 3–5 have special needs as well as 7 percent of those ages 6–21, according to Alabama data on children/youth with special needs.

School enrollment of children with special needs: 72,794 students ages 6–21 (10.6 percent of the total student population of 689,708). The national rate is 12.9 percent of the total student population (5,789,884 identified with special needs out of 45,056,472 total students).

(2011–12 School Year Data Source: <http://www.ideadata.org> and <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/>)

Helpful resources

▶ **National KIDS COUNT Project**

One of the best available resources on the economic, physical, educational and relational well-being of children and families in the United States.

▶ **The Alabama Council on Developmental Disabilities (www.acdd.org)**

A state advocacy organization that provides resources for families and caregivers.

▶ **TheMighty.com**

A free, weekly online newsletter that encourages

and enlightens families with practical tips for raising children with special needs.

▶ **“Chosen for Charlie: When God Gifts you With a Special Needs Child” by Jan Forsthoff**

A transparent insight into the author’s journey of faith as she realizes God chose her to be the mother of a special needs child.

▶ **“Hope Unfolding” by Becky Thompson**

Being a parent or grandparent is an awesome responsibility. God will give you the answers needed when you doubt your own ability.

Compiled by Carolyn Tomlin

Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) Bags

When a baby is born with a disability, a stay in the NICU is the norm. Sunday School classes can collect items for NICU Bags for church members or people in your community. Use this as a missions project or outreach for your church. Show the love

of Christ by supporting families during this difficult time.

To assemble a NICU Bag, purchase an inexpensive canvas bag and fill it with small gifts. Include items such as gift cards for coffee, a devotion book, small toiletry items for parents, chil-

dren’s books, a soft baby blanket and a snuggle toy. Include a church newsletter, bulletin or Christian magazine. Introduce the family to your congregation with a brief, personal visit to the hospital’s waiting room. (Carolyn Tomlin)

Types of special needs

- ▶ Autism
- ▶ Developmental delay
- ▶ Down Syndrome
- ▶ Emotional disturbance
- ▶ Hearing impairment
- ▶ Intellectual disability
- ▶ Orthopedic impairment
- ▶ Specific Learning Disabilities
- ▶ Speech or language impairment
- ▶ Traumatic brain injury
- ▶ Visual impairment

Compiled by Carolyn Tomlin

ChildrensAL.org/committedtoacure

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Although the cancer cure rate has risen from 50 to 84 percent and strokes in patients with sickle cell disease have decreased by 90 percent, we are actively working toward a **CURE** for children and young adults like Matthew.



Children’s of Alabama®



Alabama Center for Childhood Cancer and Blood Disorders

UAB MEDICINE
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*The Children’s Oncology group is a clinical - translational trials organization with more than 9,000 experts worldwide dedicated to finding better cures and improving the outcomes for all children with cancer.



Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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

ALABAMA-CRENSHAW

► **First Church, Luverne**, will celebrate homecoming Sept. 24, 10:30 a.m. Lamar Duke will be the guest speaker. Lunch will follow the service. For more information contact the church at 334-335-5264. Clay Crum is pastor.

AUTAUGA

► **White Pond Church, Marbury**, will celebrate homecoming and its 105th anniversary Sept. 24. Holy Destiny will perform at 9:45 a.m. and former pastor Woody Turner will speak at 11 a.m. Lunch will follow the service. Donnie Burns is pastor. ► **New Prospect Church, Marbury**, will celebrate

homecoming Sept. 17, 10 a.m. Ashley Miller will be the guest speaker. Special music will be by Calvary's Call. Lunch will follow the service. Jeff Fray is pastor.

DEKALB

► **New Harmony Church, Geraldine**, will host Backwoods Revival in concert Sept. 24, 6 p.m. Lynn Darnell is pastor.

BESSEMER

► **Canaan Church, Bessemer**, will host the "Is Your Ministry Safe?" workshop sponsored by the State Board of Missions on Sept. 19, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. To register visit www.alsbom.org. Lunch is pro-

vided. Morgan Bailey is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **First Church, Ashville**, will host a Myers-Mallory Luncheon and Fashion Show on Sept. 23, 11 a.m. The speaker will be 2017 Miss Alabama Courtney Grill. Jay Stewart is pastor. ► **Taylor's Church, Odenville**, will celebrate its 60th anniversary and homecoming Sept. 17. Leonard Estes is pastor. ► **New Lebanon Church, Springville**, continues its Super September Revival through the end of the month. Don Walker, pastor of Mount Moriah Church, Tuscaloosa, will speak Sept. 17, followed by Ted Traylor, pastor of

Olive Church, Pensacola, Florida, on Sept. 24. Each service begins at 6 p.m. Johnny Robertson is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Piney Grove Church, Tuscaloosa**, will host Brian Free & Assurance in concert Sept. 17, 6:30 p.m. Everyone is invited and a love offering will be taken. D. Wayne Davis Jr. is pastor.

WEST CULLMAN

► **Fairview West Church, Hanceville**, will hold revival services Sept. 20, 27 and Oct. 11, 7 nightly. Samuel Tucker will be the guest evangelist. Randall Waldrep is pastor.✠

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

PASTOR

Pastor needed at Flint Baptist Church in Decatur, Alabama. Send resumé to: 4119 US Hwy 31 South, Decatur, AL 35603, or submit by email to: flintbaptistchurch@att.net.

PASTOR

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

PASTOR

Camellia Baptist Church, 201 Woodvale Rd., Prattville, AL 36067, prayerfully seeking God's choice for a full-time pastor. Resumés with photo may be mailed, Attn: Pastor Search. www.cbcprattville.org.

WORSHIP LEADER

Deerfoot Baptist Church, Trussville, Alabama, is seeking a part-time worship leader. The primary responsibility is, as a

Christ-follower, to lead and grow a "blended" worship ministry. Resumés may be submitted by email to: churchoffice@deerfootbaptist.org, or mailed to: Deerfoot Baptist Church, 5450 Mount Olive Church Rd., Trussville, AL 35173.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC

Sampey Memorial Baptist Church in Ramer, Alabama, is looking for a part-time minister of music. We would like to have a mixture of contemporary and traditional music in our services. Please send resumés to: rnoffsin@bellsouth.net.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF EDUCATION & FAMILIES

New Hope Baptist Church, located in southern Lauderdale County, Mississippi, in the Clarkdale community, is an actively growing church. We are prayerfully seeking to fill a new full-time staff position of associate pastor of education and families. Those who are passionate for God and passionate about developing and ministering to church families, please email a resumé to: nhbcassocpastorsearch@gmail.com.

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

West End Baptist Church, Chilton Association, Clanton, Alabama, is seeking full-time children's minister. Send resumés with references: West End Baptist Church Search Committee,

2005 2nd Ave. North, Clanton, AL 35045.

OTHER POSITIONS

BIVOCATIONAL DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

Central Baptist Association, Rockford, Alabama, is receiving resumés for bivocational director of missions. Send resumé to: CBA Missions Committee, P.O. Box 188, Rockford, AL 35136. Email: centbaptist@charter.net. Deadline: Oct. 24.

CHURCH SECRETARY

Eastside Baptist, Birmingham. Proficiency in Microsoft Office, publication design, office equipment, office administration and good communication skills required. Monday-Thursday, 30 hours/week. Send resumés to: bfmurphy@bham.rr.com.

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- 2 Choose the "ALBaptist" profile under channel and tap "Follow." You will only have to do this one time. (Any ALBaptist options will allow you to follow *The Alabama Baptist*.)

- 3 Tap the [] icon at the bottom of the screen.

- 4 You will see pulsating dots, which indicate the app is searching for a target. Once it finds a target the dots will turn to a bull's-eye. The bull's-eye will remain until the augmented reality image loads.

- 5 Hold your device over a page or image in *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) marked as augmented reality and watch the paper come to life.

- 6 If the image is slow to load at any point, then it may be your data speed or Wi-Fi strength. Change locations and try again.

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

A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

The Beatitudes series — Matthew 5:3-12

'Blessed are the persecuted' (v. 10)

To this point in the Sermon on the Mount, what Jesus said was counter cultural and counter intuitive: "Blessed are the meek," for example, and "Blessed are those who mourn." But in verse 10, He drops a beatitudinal bombshell: "Blessed are those who are persecuted."

Jesus built up to this verse like a musical crescendo. Earlier verses make us feel like, "If I follow Jesus, I will be out of step with the world." This final beatitude makes us feel like, "If I follow Jesus, I might get my head chopped off."

In the first three centuries of the church, Christians were persecuted, murdered, set on fire and were, at best, treated as second-class citizens.

The result? The Church grew all over Europe.

In many lands where the Church is being persecuted today, the Church is growing.

A 28-year-old Christian woman from the Middle East spoke at Meadowbrook Baptist Church, Gadsden, on Aug. 7, 2016. The way she answered the question, "How can Christians in America pray for Christians in the Middle East?" is shocking. Here's what she said, as reported by Yellowhammer News:

"Do not pray for the persecution to stop because the Church is growing when the Muslims see how we love them anyway. Instead, pray that God would give us the strength and courage to endure it so that He will be glorified."

When asked how the persecution was impacting the Christian Church in the Middle East, the young woman opened her Arabic Bible and read Exodus 1:12: "But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad."

Forms of persecution

I believe it is disrespectful to our Christian brothers and sisters in places like North Korea, Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan to complain that Christians in the U.S. are being persecuted. We are not, at least not in the same way they are. It is true we no longer have privileged status. That is not all bad.

Our persecution probably will come in the form of what Jesus said in verse 11: "They will insult you and say all



By Travis Collins

Travis Collins is pastor of First Baptist Church, Huntsville, and serves as director of mission advancement for Fresh Expressions US.

Collins, a native of Aniston, holds a doctorate in Christian missions. Travis and his wife, Keri, have three children and a growing number of grandchildren.

kinds of evil against you because of Me." Likewise, 1 Peter 4:14 reads, "If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed." Our persecution will probably mean people belittling, disparaging and vilifying us.

Not ashamed

Let's make sure we aren't too intimidated, too timid, too embarrassed, too uncomfortable or too mortified to openly let people outside our Christian circles know that our faith is in Jesus. Let's make sure we aren't ashamed of Jesus and His story, for that is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

If you are paying a price, be strong. You are part of a rich heritage. You are taking your place alongside people of faith through the centuries who have believed following Jesus is more important than life itself.

You also are identifying with Jesus. And there will be a reward.

You will experience the Kingdom of God (Kingdom of heaven) — the reign of the King in and through you. Life at its best in a fallen world. Life that makes a difference.

That's not all. Jesus says you have a reward waiting in a real and wonderful place called heaven. That, I believe, is the message of the book of Revelation: You shall not live here always.

The book of Revelation wasn't intended primarily as a book into which 21st century Christians could read their ideas and come up with specifics about when and how time was going to come to an end. Revelation

was intended primarily as a message of hope for persecuted Christians.

It was an assurance to people in prison and to those who had husbands and daddies in prison. The book of Revelation was written to families whose loved ones had died for their faith, to people who worshipped at their own risk and to those who faced the possibility of being locked up, thrown to the lions or burned at the stake. The message was that one day Christ will return, the persecuted Christ-followers will be vindicated and all the world will know that God is in control.

How was that message hopeful for a second-century Christian tied to a stake watching the executioner light the torch to start the fire that would burn him to his death? The hope was this: That faithful Christian could know in his heart that God ultimately conquers evil. The martyr would die painfully but with dignity, hope and confidence in his heart. And he would know the words of John in Revelation 21:3-4: "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Reward in heaven

We are not going to live here always. Don't forget that when you are insulted because of your faith.

When they say your intellect is inferior and your opinions are obsolete, remember: You shall not live here always.

When they say your attitudes are antiquated and your morals are mindless, remember: You shall not live here always.

When they say your styles aren't stylish and your habits aren't hip, remember: You shall not live here always.

When you get left out, singled out, blessed out and cussed out, remember: You shall not live here always.

"Stand up for Jesus," the hymn says, "the strife will not be long."

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me," Jesus said. "Because great is your reward in heaven." †

LETTERS

(continued from page 2)

at Dachau and saw what unbridled hate is capable of. I know what Nazism looks like and it is not America.

The scenes I see on TV right now show me the real America. Through the grimness of this great disaster I see a light that shines on the America I believe in, and the message it illuminates touches my heart. Real Americans are not about hurling hate but about helping hands.

Robert L. Van Elsberg Jr.
Enterprise, Ala.

WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS

What a great article Elizabeth Wells had in the July 13th issue of *The Alabama Baptist* — "The Alabama Baptist & women (1843-1920): Contributions of early Alabama Baptist women chronicled, praised." Thank you, Elizabeth, for sharing that with us.

Nearing 80 years old, I have seen the times when our churches and pastors greatly appreciated the work of the women in their churches. Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) was greatly respected and rightfully so as the women worked hard to do God's work.

I remember well when the WMU ladies celebrated with annual meetings where pastors of our churches attended. But today we are seeing churches and pastors that are not supporting the work of WMU and women of their churches.

To the women and the churches who are carrying on this great work, we salute you. May I encourage the pastors to support them. There is much to be done and women feel God's call to be a part of that work.

Bonnie Windle
Carrollton, Ala. †



According to the Jan. 8, 1847, issue of *The Alabama Baptist*:

Pastors in Choctaw Baptist Association objected to the state convention employing traveling agents to "advocate and collect subscriptions for the furtherance of the causes of Christ." The pastors called the system inefficient, expensive and unequal. They proposed pastors raise one dollar per church member to be used for missions (international and domestic), educational purposes and the distribution of religious books and tracts. (TAB)

"And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?" 1 Cor. 14:8



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Clayton's Prospect Baptist Church celebrates homecoming, 150 years

Prospect Baptist Church, Clayton, celebrated homecoming and its 150-year anniversary in a joint service Aug. 6, which also kicked off a four-day revival.

Special music was a highlight of the service, with Tommy McLendon leading the congregational music with pianist Tammy Faircloth. Lela Rogers, granddaughter of deacon Rodney Dasinger, sang a solo. Also during the morning service, Barbour Baptist Association Director of Missions Don Hatcher brought the message and Ellen Dewberry, representative for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a certificate to the church. Hollis Ritter is pastor.

Mount Zion Baptist, Section, celebrates 150th anniversary

People from as far away as Mississippi crossed the state Aug. 6 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Section, according to church secretary Stephanie Walker.

The day featured guest speaker Chris Guinn, director of missions for Sand Mountain Baptist Association, and Springs of Hope Quartet from Flat Rock. The 10 a.m. service also included the presentation of a commemorative certificate by Wendell Dutton, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative.

Dutton, who also serves as director of missions for Cherokee Baptist Association, presented the certificate to Vera Wilson, who has been a member of the church for more than 70 years. Wilson also shared her experiences and memories through the years with the congregation.

Belinda Anderson compiled a slideshow of past photos for participants to enjoy and a catered lunch concluded the day. Johnny Anderson is pastor.

Collinsville's Mount Zion holds 150th anniversary celebration

For church member Kirk Glass, "a good turnout and a good lunch" were two of the hallmarks of the 150th anniversary celebration of Mount Zion Baptist Church, Collinsville, on Aug. 20.

Other highlights included a message by Wendell Dutton, director of missions for Cherokee Baptist Association, who also presented a commemorative certificate on behalf of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. Special music was provided by Ole Time Christians Quartet from Fort Payne. The church's oldest deacon, Roy Inman, shared his memories of the history of the church.

Lloyd Borden, director of missions for Lookout Mountain Baptist Association, also was in attendance for the occasion. Howard Holland is pastor.

Compiled by the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and TAB

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 17

Explore the Bible By Kyle Beshears Instructor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

LIBERATION Exodus 12:1-13

Prepared (1-5)

There are moments in time that redefine how we view history. The significance of these moments is so great that we cannot help but set aside a day on the calendar to celebrate them annually. For example, the signing of the Declaration of Independence — that significant moment of July 4, 1776 — is forever etched into the American story and calendar.

What if there was an event that was not merely a mark on the calendar for annual celebration but reset the calendar entirely?

The Passover was just such an event for the ancient Hebrews. Immediately before God's plan to rescue His people from slavery was culminated, He called the Hebrews to remember their liberation by situating their entire calendar around that moment.

Why, though, was this moment so significant? The gospel of Christ tells us the Passover was not merely pointing to the beginning of a new year for the Hebrews but to the new beginning for all God's people from across the world through the Son of God.

Truly, this moment pointed toward the moment when all of God's promises manifested themselves in the Lord Jesus, through His death, burial and resurrection.

Sacrificed and Delivered (6-7, 12-13)

The Passover called for God's people to sacrifice an unblemished lamb or goat and apply its blood on their doorframe. Doing so would allow the wrath of God to pass over the household and spare the firstborn male. Here, then, is a great proclamation of the gospel.

Back in Genesis when humanity first fell from righteousness, Adam and Eve covered themselves in fig leaves — a picture of our

attempt to cover our own sin (Gen. 3:7). However, God alone covers and forgives sin, so he fashioned a different covering out of animal skin which naturally required the death of that animal (3:21).

Why? As Paul reminds us, the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). If we are to be spared from paying this debt of death, then, we must place our hope in the death of the Lamb of God (Rom. 5:9; Heb. 9:12). We are reminded of John's glorious vision of Christ as the Lamb of God whose blood washes the robes of His saints (Rev. 7:14).

A bloodless gospel is not good news, for the wages of death would not have been paid. Likewise, a resurrection-less gospel is not good news, for the wages of death would not have not been paid in full. The Lord Jesus Christ, the unblemished Lamb of God, suffered death so God's wrath might pass over us and rose from death so God's life might fill us for eternity (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

Hurried (8-11)

God instructed the Hebrews to prepare for the exodus in short order. The immanency of redemption is made obvious here. The Hebrews dressed in traveling clothes and sandals and stood ready with staff in hand. God had an immediate destination and purpose for His people; He did not save them just to see them sit. Indeed, the whole point of redeeming the Hebrews from slavery was to allow them to serve a new and better master, the Lord God (Ex. 7:16).

In the same way, we are not saved merely for the sake of salvation but for the purpose of glorifying God in our new lives.

We are called out of the "spirit of slavery" and into adoption as sons and daughters of God in order to serve our Father and the Lord Jesus (Rom. 8:15; Eph. 2:10).

What are you waiting for? Grab your sandals and walk in obedience to the one who redeemed you. †

Bible Studies for Life By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Religion, Samford University

THE PARANORMAL Deuteronomy 18:9-18

In Ecclesiastes 3:11, the preacher tells us God has "set eternity in the human heart." God has made us in such a way that we are aware of a world much larger than our own. We look past the present and wonder what lies beyond. We consider, we question and we want to know more. As humans we are bound together by a seemingly universal desire to gain a glimpse into the unknown.

This desire to know the unknown manifests itself in ways too numerous to count. When we want to know who ought to go first in a sporting contest we flip a coin. When we want to know who should take on a difficult and dangerous task we draw straws. So compelling is our desire to know what the future (or even the present) holds that we often make bizarre connections between two entirely separate events. If we find a penny on the ground (heads up!), we tell ourselves it is our lucky day. If we drop our keys when our hands are full, we say, "It's going to be one of those days." If we play our best game and later discover we did so wearing socks that didn't match, those become our lucky socks.

Although some may disagree, I find most of these sorts of practices to be harmless. There is a related class of practices, however, that the Bible takes very seriously. We find one of a number of passages that condemn these practices in Deuteronomy 18.

Our culture is full of paranormal practices. (9-11)

Deuteronomy 18 warns the Israelites that when they enter the promised land, they must not follow the practices of the Canaanites. Alongside child sacrifice, the practices the Deuteronomist singles out as especially abhorrent are divination, soothsaying, augury, sorcery, casting spells and consulting the dead. While the names of some of these

practices may seem especially ominous — sorcery, consulting the dead — in many ways they overlap with practices as innocent as flipping a coin or plucking flower petals. They are all attempts to gain access to hidden knowledge.

Paranormal practices are condemned by God and should be avoided. (12-14)

What is it then that makes these practices so particularly abhorrent? At a very basic level, it is the fact that the Canaanites' practices move beyond the realm of chance and probability and move into the spiritual realm. In the minds of the Canaanites (and in the minds of the Israelites who displaced them), practices like sorcery, divination, soothsaying and consulting the dead were attempts to gain spiritual knowledge by tapping into and even trying to control the spiritual world.

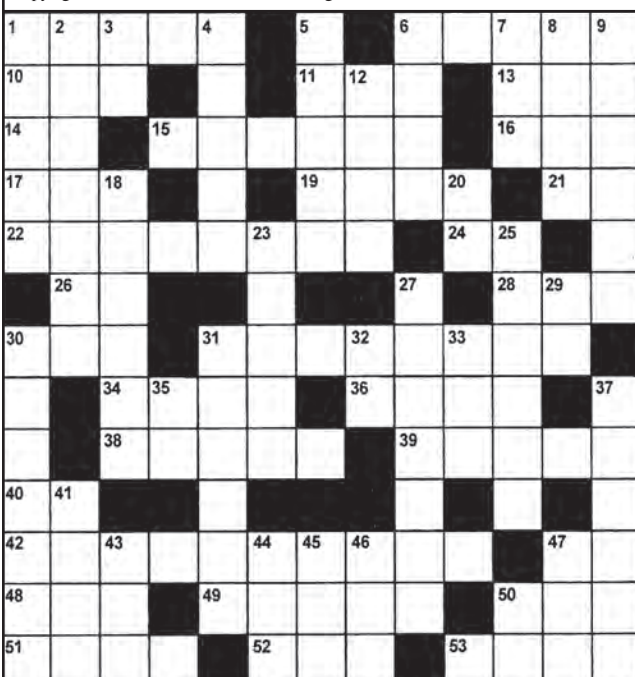
The direction we seek — and need — is found in God. (15-18)

For the Israelites, this was a bridge too far. While they acknowledged the reality of the spiritual world, the Israelites balked at the notion that humans should try to control or manipulate that world. For them the spiritual world was one presided over by a sovereign Deity, the God of Israel, and it was humanity's responsibility to serve, not attempt to control, that Deity. It is this conviction that explains the Deuteronomist's command: "You must remain completely loyal to the Lord your God" (v. 13).

God desired that Israel remain loyal to him, to serve him rather than seek to control him. For this God gave Israel a different kind of guide, prophets not diviners. It was the prophets who would give the Israelites the knowledge they needed about God's plan for the future but they also would challenge the Israelites to remain faithful to the God who had sent them. †

Christian Crossword

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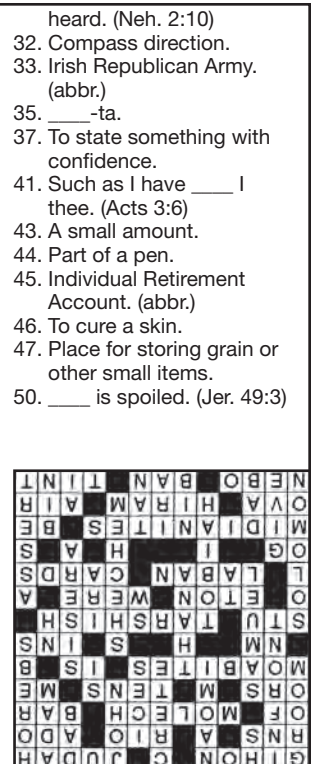
Across

- The name of the second river is _____. (Gen. 2:13)
- If it please the king ... send me unto _____. (Neh. 2:5)
- Registered Nurses. (abbr.)
- River, in Spanish.
- Why make ye this ____? (Mark 5:39)
- He that doeth good is ____ God. (3 John 11)
- ____, the abomination of the children ... (1 Kings 11:7)
- A sorcerer ... whose name was ____-Jesus. (Acts 13:6)
- Eithers/_____.
- Captains over _____. (Deut. 1:15)
- I in them, and thou in _____. (John 17:23)
- The ____ became David's servants. (2 Sam. 8:2)
- God ____ my strength and power. (2 Sam. 22:33)
- New Mexico. (abbr.)
- Immigration and Naturalization Service. (abbr.)

- A boy named Stuart is probably called ____.
- Jonah rose up to flee unto _____. (Jonah 1:3)
- Town in central England with a famous school.
- ____ not ten cleansed? (Luke 17:17)
- Rebekah's brother. (Gen. 24:29)
- Used for sending greetings on holidays.
- Geber ... in the country of _____. (1 Kings 4:19)
- Do unto them as unto the ____; as to Sisera. (Ps. 83:9)
- To ____ or not to be.
- Eggs. (Latin)
- ____ king of Tyre. (2 Sam. 5:11)
- The way of an eagle in the _____. (Prov. 30:19)
- Moab shall howl over _____. (Isa. 15:2)
- To forbid something is to ____ it.
- A slight coloration.
- the bride _____. (John 3:29)
- The porch that was ____ the ____ of the house. (2 Chron. 3:4; 2 words)
- High School. (abbr.)
- Elimelech's wife was _____. (Ruth 1:2)
- Left I thee in _____. (Titus 1:5)
- Mary the mother of _____. (Acts 12:12)
- A little ____ will do you.
- ____ gave names to all cattle and ... fowl of the air. (Gen. 2:20)
- Belonging to a certain mountain. (Ex. 3:1)
- Decorates a cake.
- Hannah ... called his name _____. (1 Sam. 1:20)
- Yes, in Spanish.
- Widow cast in ____ all. (Luke 21:3; 2 words)
- The captain of Jabin's host was _____. (Judg. 4:2)
- Jacob came to Shalem, a city of _____. (Gen. 33:18)
- ____ built the house and finished. (1 Kings 6:14)
- Sanballat ... and ... ____

Down

- He that hath the bride is



WHAT ARE YOU READING?



Alabama Baptists share about what they are currently reading

JENNIFER DAVIS RASH

The Alabama Baptist

www.rashionalthoughts.com

“The Anatomy of Peace: Resolving the Heart of Conflict”
by The Arbinger Institute

“The Principle of the Path: How to Get from Where You Are to Where You Want to Be” by Andy Stanley

My brother and brother-in-law both recommended books to me within a few days of each other recently, and I scooped up both immediately. They have different purposes and styles but reading them over the course of the same few weeks reminded me how vital it is to fight through the ugliness and deceptiveness of the world around us and keep our hearts pure.

Both books are quick reads, well-written and convicting. Specific areas, experiences or episodes in your own life will likely surface as you read them, but you also will think of others you want to share the book with as soon as you are finished reading.

A major takeaway from Andy Stanley’s “The Principle of the Path” is: “The direction of your life will determine your destination. ... What captures our attention influences our direction. Attention, direction, destination. That’s the principle of the path in three words. And as your attention goes, so goes your life.”

The story in “The Anatomy of Peace” takes the reader through a process to grasp the full picture of resolving conflict but a few key points revolve around seeing others as people, not objects, and how to value others despite having extreme differences.

One passage says, “The people ... appeared more concerned with their own burdens than with others’. ... It would have been well for them and their cause if they had begun to think as carefully about others as they did about themselves. ... What are [their] challenges, trials, burdens and pains? How am I, or some group of which I am a part, adding to these challenges, trials, burdens and pains?”

And a concluding message of hope noted in the book is, “However bleak things look on the outside, the peace that starts it all, the peace within, is merely a choice away. ... If we can find our way to peace toward [those who have hurt us], what mountains are too high for human hearts to scale?”

Tell us what you are reading, a quick summary of what it is about and your response to it so far. Email news@thealabamabaptist.org or visit www.thealabamabaptist.org/submissions/what-are-you-reading/ and fill out the form. You may also mail your information to: 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.



(L to r) Actors Asger Folmann as Bandy, Patrick Thompson as Vangel and In-Pyo Cha as Elder shoot a scene for the upcoming film ‘Heavenquest: A Pilgrim’s Progress.’

Big-screen adaptation

Movie based on ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’ set for 2018 release

By Michael Foust
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

One of the most legendary and popular books in Christian history soon will have a big-screen live-action adaptation.

“Heavenquest: A Pilgrim’s Progress” is scheduled for release in 2018 and will feature what director Matt Bilén calls a “prequel” to John Bunyan’s 1678 fictional classic “The Pilgrim’s Progress,” which has been translated into 200 languages and is sometimes called the first English novel.

The goal is for “Heavenquest” to be the first of several films based on the book.

The book tells the story of a man named Christian as he makes his way from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City aided along the way by multiple characters, including Evangelist. “Heavenquest” recounts the backstory of Evangelist.

“We decided to do more of a prequel story because we don’t just want to make one movie,” Bilén told *The Alabama Baptist*. “We wanted to build a world like you see in ‘Narnia’ or ‘The Lord of the Rings’ — an epic world. In the book, Evangelist is the wise old sage. We went back and told Evangelist’s story as if he were a 30-year-old man and how he became that guy.”

‘Beautiful locations’

In “Heavenquest,” Evangelist starts off as a “pretty wicked guy” but eventually finds his way, Bilén said.

The movie is being made on a budget of under \$1 million — pennies by Hollywood standards — al-

though Bilén says it will be anything but “cheesy.” To make up for the lack of money, Bilén and the crew focused on finding “beautiful locations” accompanied by solid cinematography and a “really good cast,” he said. They then used visual effects to help “build the world.”

Bilén said he realizes that Christian action movies have a bad name.

“I didn’t want to do one of these cheesy, bad visual effects, bad music, bad acting films,” he said. “I had no interest in doing that.”

International cast

The cast includes actors and actresses who may not be famous in the United States but are respected in their home countries: South Korea’s In-Pyo Cha and Ricky Kim, Mexico’s Karyme Lozano and Australia’s Peta Sergeant. Among the American actors is Alan Powell (of “The Song” and former lead singer of the Christian group Anthem Lights). Bilén hopes the international cast will give the movie an international appeal.

“When you’re making a fantasy film, sometimes the dialogue can come across as really cheesy and really clunky,” Bilén said. “I feel like the performances in this movie are really, really solid.”

The film is being released by King Street Pictures which, according to its website, “develops and produces faith-based and faith-inspired genre films of uncompromising artistry, sensibility and craft.”

“I felt from the beginning that this had to be a beautiful movie to be taken seriously not just by the faith-based audience but the non-faith-based audience too,” Bilén said. “We spent a lot of time to make sure that will happen.”

Changing lives

Jail ministry reaches out to inmates' children

By Kendra Peek
Danville (Ky.) Advocate-Messenger

A new ministry at the Boyle County Detention Center in Danville, Kentucky, is aimed not at those who are incarcerated, but at their children — the ones who often suffer most when parents are behind bars.

"The children are paying for their parents' addictions. It's a horrible, horrible cost. We want to put some joy in the lives of these children," said Tom Grugel, chaplain at the center and member at Calvary Baptist Church, Danville, Kentucky. "Ironically, jail might be the one place (these) children can come and act like children."

Opening soon, in a barely used hallway off from the lobby and away from the main doors, near where chairs and video call screens line the wall, will be what Grugel calls the "Children's Corner." It will be a kid-friendly space with furniture, toys and more for the kids to occupy themselves while their parents are busy.

Grugel said the idea came to him one day while he was at the jail.

"I came out (in the lobby) and there was this group of children, some sitting in the chairs staring at the bathroom wall, others in the floor. It broke my heart," he said.

Grugel had to step into another room because he had been crying, he said.

"You have to be careful what you ask for — I pray for the heart of Jesus on a daily basis and to see through His eyes," he said.

Grugel said he began speaking with the deputies in the facility, along with jailer Barry Harmon and deputy jailer Brian

Wofford, trying to come up with something to do for the kids.

That's when they came up with the idea of turning an unused hallway off from the lobby area into a space for the children. He began speaking with churches in the area, seeking donations of toys, time and money.

"I'm excited to see what the Lord is going to do with this," Grugel said. Several churches have agreed to help, some by painting murals on the wall, he said.



The children's corner at the Boyle County Detention Center will be near where people can speak to inmates via a video-phone from the facility's lobby, keeping children close to their parents, but away from the doors.

Photos courtesy of Advocate-Messenger/Kendra Peek

Grugel has used some of his budget to purchase a television for the area, which will remain on a child-friendly station, and there are plans being made for carpeting for the floor.

"I can see it," Grugel said, getting teary-eyed as he stared down the hallway.

But they need more donations, he said. They are seeking child-size furniture for the area. If they get more than can be used at one time, that's good — extras can be stored and swapped out as pieces get used, he said.

A consistent request will be for coloring

books, crayons and gently used stuffed animals and other toys, especially items that are friendly for younger children.

The group organizing the effort worked with an area church and other ministries to secure drop-off locations for items, then promoted the locations and items needed.

Grugel said he wants plenty of items so children can take their new friends home with them if they want. He said storage is not going to be a problem — he has

storage at the facility and another space has been given to him to use.

"I knew with the outpouring, we would need the space. ... God will fill it," he said.

Grugel said he believes this is a ministry everyone can get behind because it's for the children. He has reached out to churches, but said it's not a church-specific effort, and he welcomes the community support.

"I just can't wait to see the end result," Grugel said.

Getting involved

There will be volunteers coming in to clean the items on a regular basis as well. The deputies at the facility also plan to get involved, he said.

"We have the best staff on the planet. I know from being on the inside and the outside," he said. "They really care."

This space is just another example of that, Grugel said.

"We want to foster a better relationship. ... We want to show these men and women that our deputies aren't here just to house them as criminals; we're here to help them change their lives," he said. "We want to extend that to the children." (Reprinted with permission)



GRUGEL

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Egypt closes church, blocks worship at another

MINYA, Egypt — Egyptian officials have closed at least 15 Christian worship sites in the Upper Egypt bishopric of Minya and blocked worship at another, calling them security risks.

The most recent closure in July was that of the Virgin Mary and St. Paula Church which serves three villages in the province that lies along the Nile south of Cairo. Coptic Orthodox Bishop of Minya Anba Makarios spent weeks appealing to security officials to re-open the church before making the rare decision to go public with his discontent in August.

The bishop denies security agency assertions that area Muslims object to the 1,300 member church, saying they live peaceably with Coptic Christians.

Church leaders believe local officials have closed the church in order to appease Islamic extremists. Hard-line Muslims damaged it after a funeral in March 2012 as police stood by, and then local officials closed it for an extended period on the pretext of security concerns rather than committing to protect it, according to church leaders.

On Aug. 20 in the same region, police used force to keep a church from meeting in a private home. According to a local resident, police said the church lacked a permit to worship in the home, but Makarios said no permit is necessary.

Orthodox Copts have been trying to find places of worship while minding prohibitions against potentially dangerous, mass movements of Christians, Makarios said. Egypt's constitution affirms freedom of worship but that right is continually denied. As a result, 70 villages, farmsteads and hamlets do not have places for prayer, he said. (MS)

Herdsmen attack Christian farmers in Nigeria

RIYOM, Nigeria — Muslim Fulani herdsmen attacks on predominantly Christian Berom farmers in Plateau state, Nigeria, amount to "economic terrorism," Christian leaders told Morning Star News.

While Plateau state officials say "relative peace" prevails, Christian leaders point to herdsmen attacks in the past eight months that saw 18 Christians injured and two villages seized. More specifically a pastor and his 5-year-old son were injured in May, four Christian women were raped, 12 Christians were injured and two communities displaced in the attacks on 17 villages in the Barkin Ladi and Riyom Local Government Areas, said area Christian leaders.

Whether the "peace" is said to be relative to violence in northern neighbor Kaduna state, where attacks are so prevalent that officials dictated a news blackout, or with Plateau state flare-ups of past decades in which thousands died, Christian leaders said attacks by Muslim Fulani herdsmen since December have quietly continued. (MS)

Sudanese police raid homes of church leaders

OMDURMAN, Sudan — In further efforts to help a Muslim businessman take over church property, police in Sudan evicted two church leaders and their families from their houses.

On Aug. 15, police raided the two homes belonging to the Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church (SPEC) in the city of Omdurman. They evicted the families of pastors Yahia Abdelrahim Nalu and Sidiq Abdalla. The action was the latest show of force in a government-aided bid to help Muslim businessman Hisham Hamad Al-Neel take over the church property for investment, sources told Morning Star News. Police told the church leaders that they were carrying out a court order.

"The situation is very difficult, and we are living on the street," Nalu said.

SPEC leaders said they have appealed to nullify the evictions, but that any resolution would not come soon. Sudan ranked fifth on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2017 World Watch List of countries where Christians face most persecution. (MS)