



INSIDE



Alabama Baptists continue to minister through disaster relief

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IMB's Platt to volunteer as teaching pastor of Virginia church

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Heroes of the Faith: 2017 marks 200 years since Fry founded association for women in prison

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'Source of UNITY'

New confession celebrates 500th anniversary of Protestant Reformation

In the early days of the Church, the word "catholic" was a term of unity.

"It literally means 'universal' or 'general,'" said Timothy George, founding dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham.

In the very earliest literature, the word was used in Antioch in the early second century, when the apostles were still in recent memory, George said.

But it took on a whole different meaning when the Roman Catholic Church took it on — and when Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses to the Wittenberg castle door 500 years ago and started the Reformation.

'For everybody'

"Part of what he did was actually reclaiming the catholicity of the Church — he was saying the Bible and the Church is for everybody," George said.

That's why George and nearly 800 others have signed a new Protestant confession commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation — to proclaim unity and reclaim the historical unity of the word "catholic."

"We think of the Reformation as a great point of division, but it can be a source of unity among believers," said George, who served as co-chair of the confession's steering committee.

The statement, called "A Reforming Catholic Confession," is not an "anti-Catholic document," it's an

effort to "say again not what we are against but what we are for," he said.

"Within the Reformation, there was a great affirmation of the tenets of the gospel. It was a back-to-the-Scriptures movement, back to the early church."

'Common core' of belief

The confession is supported by theologians across many denominations, including Anglican, Baptist, Free Church, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Nazarene, Pentecostal and Presbyterian. Their hope and prayer is "for ever greater displays of our substantial unity in years to come," as stated in the confession's introduction.

According to George, beyond any differences that various denominations may have, "there is a common core of Christian belief, and we want to stand together on that."

The Reformation, he said, "was a clarion call on behalf of the gospel of Jesus Christ, a summons to biblical catholicity. Five hundred years later, its message of forgiveness and renewal is still urgent."

Signatories include Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission; J.D. Greear, pastor of The Summit Church, Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina; and Robert Smith, professor of Christian preaching at Beeson.

To read the full text of the confession, see sidebar on this page and page 6. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of Samford University

This painting called 'Reformation' by Petru Botezatu depicting Martin Luther posting his 95 Theses on the Castle Church door in Wittenberg on Oct. 31, 1517, is displayed in Beeson Divinity School's Andrew Gerow Hodges Chapel at Samford University in Birmingham.

The Reforming Catholic Confession

What we, protestants of diverse churches and theological traditions, say together "We believe ..."

Triune God

That there is one God, infinitely

great and good, the creator and sustainer of all things visible and invisible, the one true source of light and life, who has life in himself and lives eternally in glorious light and sovereign love in three

(See 'We,' page 6)

Coming next week

FACING THE REALITIES OF TEEN SUICIDE



COMMENT

The Journey to 50/50 in CP Giving

A 50/50 divide of all money given for missions causes through the Cooperative Program (CP) — that is one of the recommendations being forwarded to messengers who will attend the Nov. 14–15 annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC). If the recommendation is approved it will mean Alabama Baptists arrive at the goal of evenly dividing CP funds two years earlier than anticipated.

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) adopted a \$37 million budget goal for the state convention during its Aug. 11 meeting at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega. Of that amount, \$18.5 million will go for Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) causes and \$18.5 million for use in Alabama. The budget has no “shared causes” or preferred items. It is an even split of all money given through the CP.

The recommendation is the completion of an eight-year journey that began when Southern Baptists accepted the recommendations of the Great Commission Resurgence Task Force. One of those recommendations called for state conventions to increase the percentage of CP funds going to SBC causes to 50 percent.

Implementing the recommendation has been challenging. Anytime one is asked to redirect 7.5 percent of a budget that is a large undertaking. The situation was further complicated because CP receipts were falling across the nation. Alabama Baptist CP receipts, for example, fell from \$44,958,759 in 2007 to \$41,727,510 in 2010, a drop of \$3,231,249 or 7 percent.

Of the 2010 amount, Alabama forwarded 42.5 percent or \$17,729,941 to SBC causes.

To complicate the situation even more, the North American Mission Board (NAMB) decided to focus primarily on what it termed “underserved areas of the nation” and began withdrawing about \$1.5 million in funding for missions projects jointly sponsored by NAMB and ABSC.

Alabama Baptist Executive Director Rick Lance and other state leaders faced a huge challenge: receipts were falling; NAMB was redirecting funds away from Alabama; the SBC wanted a larger percentage of the shrinking income and



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

missions and ministry needs in Alabama were growing.

As a cooperative partner with the SBC, Lance Alabama to begin the journey toward a 50/50 divide with a small first step.

In 2012 the percentage of the budget marked for SBC causes went up from 42.5 percent to 43 percent. For the SBC that was an increase of \$215,000 based on the adopted budget.

In 2014 state leaders took another step. The percentage going to SBC increased another .3 percent. The idea of “shared causes” also was introduced.

No more ‘shared ministries’

The SBC has long recognized the concept referred to in SBC documents as “Joint Denominational Causes.” That is a group of ministries housed in state conventions and recognized to benefit both state and national conventions. The concept has been affirmed by various SBC studies and never removed. Half the money spent on ministries such as protection benefits for ministers, Woman’s Missionary Union, CP promotion and other specific programs can be considered as going to SBC causes and the other half to state causes according to this principle.

Both the 2014 and the 2015 budget listed an array of ministries as shared causes with a price tag of \$4.1 million or 10 percent of each annual budget. In 2015 the percentage of the basic budget going to SBC causes also increased from 43.3 percent to 43.5 percent.

All the while, missions giving kept dropping. By 2015, CP receipts had fallen to \$38,216,304

— a drop of 7.8 percent or more than \$3.2 million — from the 2010 giving level.

Then something happened that allowed Alabama Baptists to find a course that could take them to the 50/50 goal in CP giving.

Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland asked the state convention to begin reducing Samford’s CP allocation by \$400,000 a year (beginning with the 2015 budget) until the allocation had been reduced about 50 percent to about \$2 million. Westmoreland explained that as part of the Baptist family, Samford could not contend for its appropriation while other Alabama Baptist programs, causes and entities suffered. His announcement sparked a standing ovation from messengers.

With this shift in dollars, state leaders would be able to move money from Samford to SBC causes and achieve the 50/50 goal for dividing CP funds in five years — by the year 2020.

In 2016 the SBC allocation jumped \$370,000 plus a \$50,000 line item called CP Advance. That brought the SBC portion to 44.98 percent. State leaders also included the \$749,338 Alabama contributes to GuideStone Financial Services to purchase protection benefits for pastors and other church workers which brought the SBC percentage to 46.69 percent according to the adopted budget. The 2017 SBC percentage stood at 48 percent when the GuideStone Financial Resources allocation was included.

Earlier this year the financial picture changed again. Samford announced it was withdrawing from CP funding while maintaining other aspects of its relationship with the state convention. In response Lance led SBOM to lower the proposed budget goal for 2018 from the current \$40 million to \$37 million. He told SBOM board members that for the first time in years he felt confident the budget goal could be met.

Lowering the budget goal by \$3 million accounted for most of Samford’s CP allocation. SBC causes received another \$107,576 of former Samford funds to make its portion \$18.5 million or exactly 50 percent of the proposed budget. Judson and UM also received increased allocations. Protection benefits for pastors and others through GuideStone was moved back to the state convention side meaning the proposed budget which messengers will consider in November has no shared causes.

The proposed budget shows the allocation to Christian higher education at \$4,131,762 or 11.1 percent. That is a significant drop from the 2017 Christian higher education appropriation of \$7,239,398 or 18.1 percent of the budget. As Lance has said, that change is a primary reason allowing the state convention to achieve a 50/50 division between SBC causes and state convention causes and complete this arduous journey two years earlier than anticipated.✠

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

NASHVILLE STATEMENT

I read with interest the full Nashville Statement and wished the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) would come out with such a statement; although, many who signed the statement are associated with the SBC.

However, Article Six begins “WE AFFIRM that those born with a physical disorder of sex development” I looked in several concordances to find “physical disorder of sex development” in the Bible but to no avail. I did, however, find many verses which state that a person is born with a sin

nature which leads to sexual perversion and all other sins.

Larry E. Beauchamp
Bay Minette, Ala. ✠



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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Responding to dual disasters

Alabama Disaster Relief begins work in Florida following Hurricane Irma

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (ABDR) efforts have shifted from Texas to Florida after Hurricane Irma devastated much of the Sunshine State.

Mark Wakefield, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), announced Sept. 13 that ABDR has been assigned to minister in Fort Myers, Florida.

"An advance team is leaving today (Sept. 13) with others to follow in the days to come," Wakefield said. "Volunteers will be serving in the areas of administration, assessment, incident management, feeding, chainsaw, skid steer, shower unit and chaplains. More specific information will be shared as it becomes available."

ABDR teams will stage out of McGregor Baptist Church, Fort Myers, Florida, which was itself damaged by Irma's heavy winds and rains.

With two regions hit by powerful hurricanes in two weeks' time, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief has been stretched thin. But Alabama Baptists have responded. More than 250 new volunteers have been trained in September alone and many of those volunteers will be called up in the Irma response effort, Wakefield said. The new volunteers will provide relief for disaster relief teams, many of whom deployed to Houston but were called back to Alabama to prepare for deployment to Florida.

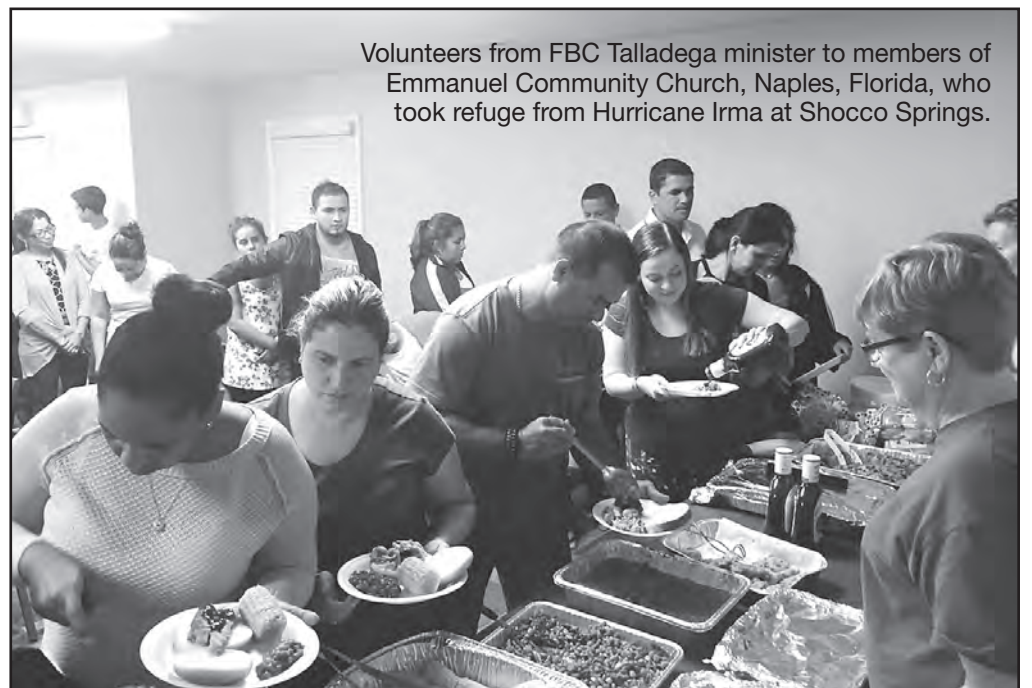
The generosity of Alabama Baptists has been evident in the response to the dual disasters. Churches large and small have contributed special offerings to disaster relief in the same week that many are giving to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering.

As Irma drew closer to the U.S. mainland and millions fled Florida, churches opened their doors and their wallets. First Baptist Church, Jasper, in Walker Baptist Association and Eastaboga Baptist Church in Coosa River Baptist Association sheltered evacuees and local churches assisted with meals and essential items. The association set up a shower unit at Eastaboga Baptist.

Help with livestock

Covington Baptist Association took its laundry units to Garrett Coliseum in Montgomery, where state officials helped evacuees traveling with livestock, including horses and cattle.

Covington Association Director of Missions (DOM) Otis Corbitt said hotel rooms in his area were full, which was the case throughout Alabama. The Alabama Tourism Department



Volunteers from FBC Talladega minister to members of Emmanuel Community Church, Naples, Florida, who took refuge from Hurricane Irma at Shocco Springs.

Photo by Robert Klotz

compiled a list of vacancies and updated it online to help evacuees make lodging decisions. Officials said most of the state's 75,000 hotel rooms accommodated Florida evacuees during the weekend of Sept. 9-10, with some cities in south Alabama seeing 95-100 percent occupancy.

That's what Pastor José Lebron of Emmanuel Community Church, Naples, Florida, realized quickly when he began to search online for hotel rooms for his family and about 40 church members. Lebron said he asked Jesus to help him find an answer and felt drawn to Alabama, even though he had never been to the state. When he couldn't find hotel reservations, he searched for a Christian place and Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega popped up.

"The Spirit said that this was the place," Lebron told Talladega news source *The Daily Home*. He contacted Shocco and public relations associate Wendy Westerhouse told him to "come on."

Larry Dover, DOM for Franklin Baptist Association, summed up the response he saw around the state and in his community with one word — compassion.

"By the time I checked with the local motels, many of you and your church had already responded to their needs," he said. "People went by the motels and paid for rooms. Churches were already scheduling to feed them. Gift cards were being given to them. I received calls from individuals wanting to know what they could do to help."

As Irma moved northward across Alabama throughout the day Sept. 11, most of the state

experienced heavy rain and wind. Some areas had downed trees and power outages. Alabama Power reported about 75,000 customers without power statewide. Most power outages were in areas around the cities of Phenix City, Eufala, Enterprise, Auburn and Anniston, and most customers had power again by Sept. 12.

Corbitt said Covington Association crews had done some minor cleanup in their county and were making plans to take a team of eight to Fort Myers on Sept. 15-18 for "whatever needs to be done," including cleanup, recovery, mudout or chainsaw work.

Various locations

"We will help make sure the state feeding unit can get into the location and do some work in the community. We will also have chaplains with the team," Corbitt said.

They will join teams from several other states and North American Mission Board (NAMB) Send Relief working throughout Florida. At least six locations in the state will be served by Southern Baptist mobile kitchen units for mass feeding needs. Smaller units will be available to serve first responders and other relief teams. A Sept. 12 Send Relief update said NAMB anticipates a need for mudout and rebuild teams as the response in Florida continues.

Send Relief also is working closely with Baptist Global Response, SBOM and government officials to get supplies and disaster relief equipment into the U.S. Virgin Islands and other islands that were impacted by Hurricane Irma. Wakefield said the SBOM airlift kitchen would be sent to the Virgin Islands once arrangements could be made.

As McGregor Baptist prepares to host ABDR volunteers, Pastor Russell Howard had

(See 'God,' page 4)

HOW CAN I HELP?

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

Coosa River Baptist Association Director of Missions Randy Hagan holds a worship service at Talladega Superspeedway on Sept. 10.

'Hands & feet in Alabama'



Photo courtesy of St. Clair Baptist Association

Disaster relief volunteers minister to Hurricane Irma evacuees in Talladega

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

As Irma approached the Florida mainland, millions in the path of the storm were urged to evacuate. About 200 grate-

ful Floridians took refuge at the Talladega Superspeedway where Alabama Baptists were ready to assist.

"Thank you, Coosa River Baptist Association. I was at Talladega Speedway and although we had everything we needed, it

was so awesome to see the love of Christ lived out in your lives," wrote David Friar in a post on the association's Facebook page. "I don't know how many of you knocked on the door of our motorhome to invite us to eat or see if we needed anything. We are so blessed and God provided all we needed before leaving, but there were many who were in great need and to see their needs being met brought me to tears. God bless you all and thank you for being God (sic) hands and feet in Alabama."

NASCAR officials tweeted Sept. 6 that Talladega Superspeedway would open its camping facilities, including hot showers, restrooms and water hookups, Sept. 7 for Hurricane Irma evacuees.

Call for help

As the weekend approached, more and more campers arrived, some in camping trailers and others with tents. The Greater Talladega and Lincoln Area Chamber of Commerce put out a call for help.

"The Chamber provided food on Friday night, and when we heard about the need our church immediately signed up to provide a meal," said Tommy Strickland, pastor of Ridgeview Baptist Church, Talladega.

Members of Talladega Creek Baptist Church, Talladega, joined Ridgeview members on Sunday evening to provide hamburger plates to approximately 125 people at the track.

"We had the opportunity to pray with several families who were displaced," Strickland said. "One family pretty much spent their last dime just to get this far. My heart is heavy for such devastated lives but also rejoicing that believers were busy sharing the hope of Christ."

Volunteers served food and listened to the stories of evacuees, Strickland said. Volunteer Alayna Pody called the experience "humbling."

"Having the opportunity to help and serve evacuees staying at local churches and at the Superspeedway and just talking with

them and hearing their stories has been an experience like no other and one that I'm likely to never forget. These people's stories are all so different, yet they all ring with tragedy and brokenness from what they ran from and hope for what they'll return to," Pody wrote in a Facebook post.

Small details

Another volunteer, Paula Johnson, posted, "We saw God even in the smallest of ways today while we were feeding families from Florida. Our church made Swedish meatballs and served it over rice. Several told us they were craving rice. It is so cool to see how much God cares about the smallest details."

Diane Smith, Mission Service Corps missionary to Anniston, gathered blankets and firewood for the campers who were unprepared for the cooler temperatures of the weekend. On Sunday, Coosa River Baptist Association Director of Missions Randy Hagan held a worship service at the track. Three salvations were

God 'has you in palm of His hand,' pastor says

(continued from page 3)

a word of encouragement for those still reeling from Irma's destruction.

In a video message on the church's Facebook page, Howard said many parts of the church's campus would be unusable in the near future because of water damage. Howard acknowledged the pain of the losses Floridians have experienced in their homes and businesses but reminded them who is in charge.

"Hurricane Irma doesn't tell us anything about the character of God that we didn't already know," Howard said. "He is great, powerful and majestic, and sometimes terrifying in what He's capable of. But even more so, He is loving, gracious and faithful, and He has you in the palm of His hand. Remember that the trials of this world, no matter how great, will one day seem small in comparison to the joy of heaven." ✝

UPDATES FROM LOCAL DISASTER RELIEF TEAMS

BALDWIN

More than 200 Irma evacuees sheltered at the Baldwin County Coliseum in Robertsdale. Lifeway Community Church, Loxley, provided a worship service Sept. 10 at the arena outside the shelter. Mission Hispana de Robertsdale provided a Spanish worship service. Volunteers from other area churches and Baldwin Association WMU assisted with child care and other aid to evacuees. First Baptist Church, Bay Minette, hosted emergency disaster relief training for 113 new volunteers Sept. 12. Baldwin disaster relief teams are preparing to go to Florida and other locations as needed. In response to

Harvey, First Baptist Church, Robertsdale, took a feeding unit to Texas and Louisiana.

COFFEE

The Coffee Baptist Men disaster relief team and other volunteers have been collecting nonperishable food, diapers, cleaning supplies and gift cards to retailers such as Walmart, Lowe's and Home Depot. The items will be sent to Florida relief efforts. The gift cards will be used by disaster relief workers in Texas to bless those they help.

COLUMBIA

A Columbia Baptist disaster relief team served in Houston on Sept. 7-10. Volunteers cleaned up downed trees in their area

after Irma swept through and teams are currently preparing to serve with Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (ABDR) in Fort Myers, Florida. The association also collected bottled water, cleaning supplies and gift cards for relief efforts in Houston. Bethel Church, Dothan, served as a receiving site for those donations.

ETOWAH

A chainsaw team from Etowah Association will serve in Fort Myers, Florida, on Sept. 19-27. Two chaplains will be part of the team.

SALEM-TROY

The Salem-Troy disaster relief chainsaw

team is prepared to serve with ABDR in Fort Myers, Florida. Chaplains from the association also are anticipating a callout.

WALKER

Walker Baptists opened a shelter for Irma evacuees at First Baptist, Jasper. Several churches prepared meals. They fed those staying at the church and also carried food to local hotels. Donations were used to help evacuees pay for food, gas and hotels as needed. The association is collecting gift cards that will be given to Florida pastors affected by the storm. The cards will be delivered when Walker Baptist disaster relief teams are called to Florida. (Carrie Brown McWhorter)

“My heart is heavy for such devastated lives but also rejoicing that believers were busy sharing the hope of Christ.”

Pastor Tommy Strickland, Ridgeview Baptist Church, Talladega

reported throughout the weekend, according to Smith.

When forecasters began to warn of high winds and heavy rains on Monday, 25–30 tent campers were moved to Eastaboga Baptist Church where a temporary shelter for Irma evacuees was set up.

Eastaboga Pastor Mike Snyder said church members and community members responded to the needs in an “amazing” way.

“We had been trying to assemble a team to go to Beaumont, Texas, but it wasn’t working out,” he said. “God worked it all out for us to stay here and help the folks He sent to us.”

Once news spread of the evacu-

ees seeking refuge at the church, people began showing up to donate food, clothing, hygiene items and pet food. At one point

the parking lot was full and cars were lining the road to the church, he said. Some locals offered to wash the clothes of those sheltered at the church. The Coosa River Baptist Association shower unit was set up at the church so evacuees could bathe. Total strangers gave large donations “just because

they wanted to help somebody,” Snyder said.

“The generosity of folks was amazing,” he said. “The love of Jesus is real and I’ve witnessed it this week.”



Photo courtesy of St. Clair Baptist Association

Volunteers from Ridgeview Baptist, Talladega, and Talladega Creek Baptist prepare to feed evacuees Sept. 10.

SBDR volunteers continue working in Texas

Cleanup efforts are ongoing in Texas after the historic flooding caused by Hurricane Harvey.

Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers are working in debris removal and mud-out work, an effort the North American Mission Board’s (NAMB) Send Relief said will continue for “quite some time.”

Some homes are ready for rebuild teams. NAMB asks churches and associations to encourage volunteers to help with those efforts in the coming months. Send Relief will be recruiting college students to participate in both Harvey and Irma relief efforts.

High school students looking for disaster relief opportunities can join BOUNCE — the student disaster recovery arm of Texas Baptists’ disaster relief ministry — in Gulf Coast relief work scheduled for spring break and summer 2018, according to David Scott, director of BOUNCE.

Three spring break missions trips are scheduled in Houston on March 7–10, March 11–14 and March 14–17. Summer missions locations are expected to include Corpus Christi/Rockport, Houston and Beaumont. Trip dates are set for June 11–16, June 18–23, June 25–30, July 9–14 and July 16–21. More information will be posted at texasbaptists.org/bounce.

Restoring hope

“This will be a massive recovery effort and we welcome youth groups from across the country to partner with us. It’s going to be a great opportunity for students to restore hope, rebuild communities and reflect Christ,” Scott said.

A bulletin released by Send Relief noted that the work in Texas will be ongoing.

“We will need churches and other entities to send teams to help in this effort for many months to come.” (TAB)

THIS BAPTIST PASTOR IS HELPING MEN FIND FREEDOM FROM PORN

SPONSORED CONTENT

Pornography and sexual sin can be a hard topic to broach. Just ask Chris Ogden, Adult Ministry Pastor at Orlando First Baptist Church. He runs a support group for men at his church using a powerful cinematic study called the Conquer Series.

“For a lot of guys who have struggled in the area of sexuality, the lie becomes, ‘This is just who I am. This cannot change; this will never go away,’” Ogden shares. “I might enjoy a week or a month [of sobriety] here or there but ultimately this is embedded in my soul, I can’t get free of it.”

This despair is keeping the problem of porn use in the dark, where it is mushrooming into gigantic proportions: recent statistics show that 68% of men and around 30% of women in the church struggle with porn on a regular basis.

The consequences are devastating – 56% of divorce cases cite porn as being a contributing factor, yet only 7% of churches have a solution to this problem.



“As the guys in our church walk through [the Conquer Series], you can just see the flame of hope kind of rekindle...when that switch happens, that’s when God unleashes the power in the guy’s life.”

THERE IS A SOLUTION

“The shocking statistics were a game-changer for me,” says Jeremy Wiles, director of the Conquer Series, the first of its kind to show men how to retrain a brain that’s hooked on porn using biblical principles and insights. “We spent two years developing a 5-week discipleship study, interviewing top Christian experts and shooting battle reenactments to illustrate the war that every man faces with sexual temptation. I wanted to give men proven principles on how to find freedom.” That was four years ago.

As of September 2017, over 450,000 men in more than 65 countries around the world are in training to be set free from the bondage of porn through this invaluable, one-of-a-kind series.

CONQUER SERIES GIVES HOPE

For Ogden, he’s seen men come to the Conquer Series with hopelessness and a sense that things will never change, but they soon realize that’s a lie once they actually go through the series.

“As the guys in our church walk through that, you can just see the flame of hope kind of rekindle,” Ogden shared. “[They say] ‘I not only believe what [the Conquer Series] is saying is true, but I think it could be true for me.’ And I think when that switch happens, that’s when God unleashes the power in the guy’s life.”

Larry Tormey, who leads the Conquer Series in Lake Placid, Florida, agrees. “We have been using the Conquer Series for over a year, showing this to hundreds of men. It has been not only a God-send for these men, but for me personally.”

FREE INDEED

The Church is in the battle of its life. With the advent of the Internet, smartphones and iPads, a new problem is emerging: 11 to 17-year old boys reported being the greatest users of porn. As these boys become adults, the Church will be flooded with porn addicts.

As Pastor James Reeves of City on a Hill Church DFW, who has successfully tackled porn in his church warns, “This problem is going to sweep through the Church like a tsunami wave of destruction and we are not prepared for it.”

With the Conquer Series, there is hope. As Christians, we also know that nothing is impossible with the Lord. Anyone who struggles with porn can be set free. John 8:36 declares, “if the Son sets you free you will be free indeed.”

The time to deal with this problem is now, and by God’s grace and mercy, we shall overcome. To find out more about the Conquer Series and how you can deal with pornography in your church, visit ConquerSeries.com.

Larry Tormey leads the Conquer Series in Lake Placid, Florida.



“We have been using the Conquer Series for over a year, showing this to hundreds of men. It has been not only a God-send for these men, but for me personally”

says Tormey.

The Conquer Series is a 6-disc DVD set, which also includes a leader’s DVD. They are currently offering a 14-day money back guarantee, so if you want to see if this is something for you or the men in your church, then here’s a chance to try it risk-free.

ORDER AT CONQUERSERIES.COM

CALL 561 681 9990

**Full text of 'A Reforming
Catholic Confession'**

We BELIEVE



(continued from page 1)
persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14) – co-equal in nature, majesty, and glory. Everything God does in creating, sustaining, judging, and redeeming the world reflects who God is, the one whose perfections, including love, holiness, knowledge, wisdom, power, and righteousness, have been revealed in the history of salvation. God has freely purposed from before the foundation of the world to elect and form a people for himself to be his treasured possession (Deut. 7:6), to the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:3-14).

Holy Scripture

That God has spoken and continues to speak in and through Scripture, the only infallible and sufficiently clear rule and authority for Christian faith, thought, and life (*sola scriptura*). Scripture is God's inspired and illuminating Word in the words of his servants (Psa. 119:105), the prophets and apostles, a gracious self-communication of God's own light and life, a means of grace for growing in knowledge and holiness. The Bible is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it commands, trusted in all that it promises, and revered in all that it reveals (2 Tim 3:16).

Human Beings

That God communicates his goodness to all creatures, but in particular to human beings, whom he has made in his own image, both male and female (Gen. 1:26-27), and accordingly that all men, women, and children have been graciously bestowed with inherent dignity (rights) and creaturely vocation (responsibilities).

Fallenness

That the original goodness of creation and the human creature has been corrupted by sin, namely, the self-defeating choice of the first human beings to deny the Creator and the created order by going their own way, breaking God's law for life (Rom. 3:23). Through disobedience to the law-giver, Adam and Eve incurred disorder instead of order (Rom. 8:20-21), divine condemnation instead of approval, and death instead of life for themselves and their descendants (Psa. 51:5; Rom. 5:12-20).

Jesus Christ

That Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God become human for us and our salvation (John 3:17), the only Mediator (*solus Christus*) between God and humanity (1 Tim. 2:5), born of the virgin Mary, the Son of David and servant of the house of Israel (Rom. 1:3; 15:8), one person with two na-

tures, truly God and truly man. He lived a fully human life, having entered into the disorder and brokenness of fallen existence, yet without sin, and in his words, deeds, attitude, and suffering embodied the free and loving communication of God's own light (truth) and life (salvation).

The Atoning Work of Christ

That God who is rich in mercy towards the undeserving has made gracious provision for human wrongdoing, corruption, and guilt, provisionally and typologically through Israel's Temple and sin offerings, then definitively and gloriously in the gift of Jesus' once-for-all sufficient and perfect sacrificial death on the cross (Rom. 6:10; 1 Pet. 3:18) in the temple of his human flesh (Heb. 10:11-12). By his death in our stead, he revealed God's love and upheld God's justice, removing our guilt, vanquishing the powers that held us captive, and reconciling us to God (Isa. 53:4-6; 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 2:14-15). It is wholly by grace (*sola gratia*), not our own works or merits, that we have been forgiven; it is wholly by Jesus' shed blood, not by our own sweat and tears, that we have been cleansed.

The Gospel

That the gospel is the good news that the triune God has poured out his grace in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, so that through his work we might have peace with God (Rom. 5:1). Jesus lived in perfect obedience yet suffered everything sinners deserved so that sinners would not have to pursue a righteousness of their own, relying on their own works, but rather through trust in him as the fulfillment of God's promises could be justified by faith alone (*sola fide*) in order to become fellow heirs with him. Christ died in the place of sinners, absorbing the wages of sin (Rom. 6:23), so that those who entrust themselves to him also die with him to the power, penalty, and (eventually) practice of sin. Christ was raised the firstborn of a renewed and restored creation, so that those whom the Spirit unites to him in faith are raised up and created a new humanity in him (Eph. 2:15). Renewed in God's image, they are thereby enabled to live out his life in them. One with Christ and made alive in him who

is the only ground of salvation, sinners are reconciled with God — justified, adopted, sanctified, and eventually glorified children of the promise.

The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

That the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, the unseen yet active personal presence of God in the world, who unites believers to Christ, regenerating and making them new creatures (Tit. 3:5) with hearts oriented to the light and life of the kingdom of God and to peace and justice on earth. The Spirit indwells those whom he makes alive with Christ, through faith incorporates them into the body of Christ, and conforms them to the image of Christ so that they may glorify him as they grow in knowledge, wisdom, and love into mature sainthood, the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13). The Spirit is the light of truth and fire of love who continues to sanctify the people of God, prompting them to repentance and faith, diversifying their gifts, directing their witness, and empowering their discipleship.

The Church

That the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church is God's new society, the first fruit of the new creation, the whole company of the redeemed through the ages, of which Christ is Lord and head. The truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is the church's firm foundation (Matt. 16:16-18; 1 Cor. 3:11). The local church is both embassy and parable of the kingdom of heaven, an earthly place where his will is done and he is now present, existing visibly everywhere two or three gather in his name to proclaim and spread the gospel in word and works of love, and by obeying the Lord's command to baptize disciples (Matt. 28:19) and celebrate the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19).

Baptism and Lord's Supper

That these two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which some among us call "sacraments," are bound to the Word by the Spirit as visible words proclaiming the promise of the gospel, and thus become places where recipients encounter the Word again. Baptism and the Lord's Supper com-

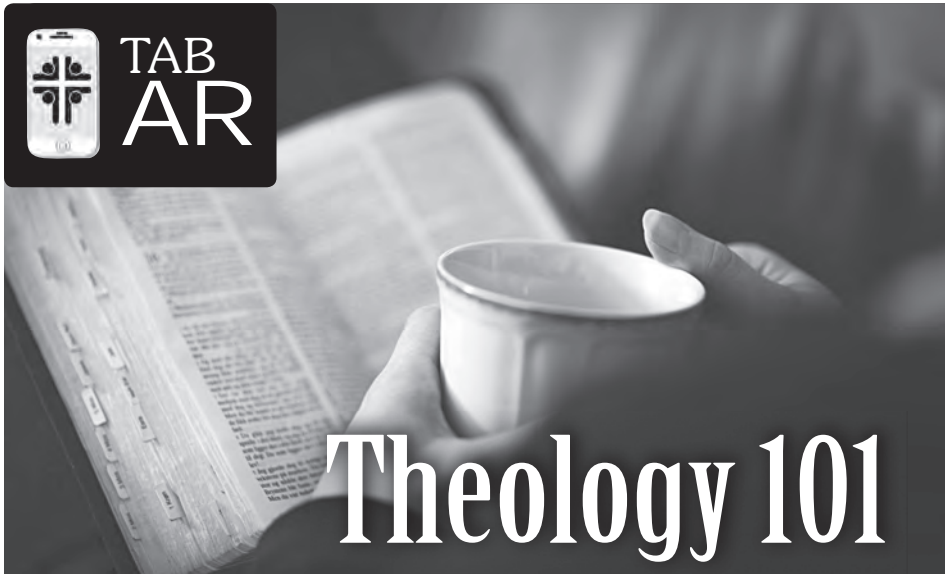
municate life in Christ to the faithful, confirming them in their assurance that Christ, the gift of God for the people of God, is indeed "for us and our salvation" and nurturing them in their faith. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are physical focal points for key Reformation insights: the gifts of God (*sola gratia*) and the faith that grasps their promise (*sola fide*). They are tangible expressions of the gospel insofar as they vividly depict our dying, rising, and incorporation into Jesus' body ("one bread ... one body" — 1 Cor. 10:16-17), truly presenting Christ and the reconciliation he achieved on the cross. Baptism and the Lord's Supper strengthen the faithful by visibly recalling, proclaiming, and sealing the gracious promise of forgiveness of sins and communion with God and one another through the peace-making blood of Christ (1 Cor. 11:26; Col. 1:20).

Holy Living

That through participating in baptism and the Lord's Supper, as well as prayer, the ministry of the Word, and other forms of corporate worship, we grow into our new reality as God's people, a holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9, 10), called to put on Christ through his indwelling Spirit. It is through the Spirit's enlivening power that we live in imitation of Christ as his disciples, individually and corporately, a royal priesthood that proclaims his excellent deeds and offers our bodies as spiritual sacrifices in right worship of God and sacrificial service to the world through works of love, compassion for the poor, and justice for the oppressed, always, everywhere and to everyone bearing wise witness to the way, truth, and life of Jesus Christ.

Last Things

That in God's own time and way, the bodily risen and ascended Christ will visibly return to consummate God's purpose for the whole cosmos through his victory over death and the devil (1 Cor. 15:26). He will judge the world, consigning any who persist in unbelief to an everlasting fate apart from him, where his life and light are no more. Yet he will prepare his people as a bride for the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9), giving rest to restless hearts and life to glorified bodies (1 Cor. 15:42-44; Phil. 3:21) as they exult in joyful fellowship with their Lord and delight in the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. 21:1-2). There they shall reign with him (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 22:5) and see him face to face (1 Cor. 13:12; Rev. 22:4), forever rapt in wonder, love, and praise. ("A Reforming Catholic Confession" full text)



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Biblical 'Twins'

Joy and Happiness

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

Joy and happiness are two positive human emotions. In everyday use we often interchange these words to speak of the same enjoyable and exhilarating feeling, making these words into twins. However, if we reflect on how the Bible uses the word "joy," we detect some distinguishing characteristics between these verbal twins that serve to set them apart from each other.

Analyze the word "happiness." Obviously, it is built on the root word "happy" and belongs to the category of "happenings." What happens points to external events, persons and/or circumstances. For example, if the weather is sunny and mild, one might speak of experiencing happiness based on what is happening with the weather. If one gets a good report from medical tests, the feeling might be expressed as relief or happiness based on information external to us. If receiving a practical or desired gift, one might say the gift brings happiness. When it comes to happiness, the word itself implies that this good emotion depends on what happens to us or around us.

Sustained by the Lord

When we think of joy as it is set forth in the Bible, we are dealing with a good human emotion that can be unrelated to circumstances or happenings. Joy is given and sustained by the Lord. The psalmist confessed long ago before the Lord, "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Ps. 16:11). Jesus told His disciples, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11). Later Jesus prayed to the Father, "I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves" (John 17:13). The joy of the Lord flows from the Lord into our lives and can remain

in our hearts quite apart from outward circumstances. In fact, Galatians 5:22 lists joy as part of the fruit of the Spirit. Rather than produced and preserved by outward circumstances, the joy of the Lord is bestowed and sustained by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Ezra and Nehemiah encouraged the people of their day with the observation, "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8:10). Proverbs 15:13 offers the observation, "A glad heart makes a cheerful face."

Bearing and producing

Jesus' analogy of Himself as the True Vine in John 15 contains another pair of closely connected ideas. With God as the Vinedresser and Himself as the Vine, Jesus referred to His followers as branches. The promise in His analogy is found in the observation that branches that abide in a vine bear fruit and with pruning can bear even more fruit. Often when we speak of this analogy we change words on Jesus. He spoke of bearing fruit but we sometimes speak of producing fruit. Within the bounds of the analogy, the vine produces the fruit and the branches, which have no independent roots, simply bear what the vine produces. The spiritual intent of Jesus is to teach us to take seriously our task of abiding in Him. When that happens, He will produce fruit that is our delight to bear. Through our spiritual union with Jesus through His earthly representative, the Holy Spirit, we bear what divine life in us produces. †

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.



IMB's Platt to volunteer as teaching pastor in VA church

What started as a temporary position for International Mission Board (IMB) President David Platt may become a permanent role.

For the past eight months Platt has served as interim teaching pastor at McLean Bible Church in Northern Virginia. In August Platt told the IMB executive committee he felt called to accept the position on a permanent basis while continuing as IMB president.

During the Sept. 11-13 IMB trustee meeting at Ridgecrest Conference Center in Asheville, North Carolina, the executive committee reported it has agreed to study the proposal and evaluate Platt's performance as IMB president until their February meeting.

The teaching pastor position will be nonpaid and not responsible for day-to-day leadership of the church, according to imb.org/faq.

Platt said the position would not change his schedule for IMB in any way because he came to IMB on the condition he could spend 65 percent of his weekends at home with his family in one local church. His IMB travel would take place during the week and 35 percent of his weekends.

IMB public relations manager Julie McGowan said, "Of the approximately 35 percent of weekends when Dr. Platt is traveling, his traveling includes a mixture of being overseas with IMB personnel and being stateside in Southern Baptist churches. In addition to these weekends, Dr. Platt travels extensively during the week across the

country and convention in his role as IMB president."

Alabama Baptist trustee Max Croft, associate pastor of Agape Baptist Church, Scottsboro, was part of the September meeting. A supporter of Platt's leadership at IMB, Croft said Platt "is doing a great job."

"At the same time I will insist, and I believe other board members will insist, that we take a very close look at his performance in the next few months," Croft

added. "I believe it will be very difficult for him to handle both roles over an extended period of time. I am willing to wait and see what happens."

Alabama trustee Jay Wolf, pastor of First Baptist, Montgomery, said, "David is energized by the experience of preaching. It provides him a unique opportunity to mobilize a great church to mobilize a strategic area. This is a different paradigm, an experiment until February when the (IMB)

executive committee will look at it again."

Wolf was not at the September meeting but served on the search committee that selected Platt. "The committee agreed that he would be at home 65 percent of the time (about 35 weeks a year) where he could be with his family and significantly involved in a local church. We do not want him to sacrifice family on the altar of missions service.

"David is a gifted and wonderful leader," Wolf added. "We have to be careful not to superimpose our limitations on David's abilities. David has assembled a stellar team that will enable him to do something unique in this situation." (TAB)



PLATT

Parkway dedicates improved sanctuary



Photo courtesy of Donna J. Wynn

Nearly 600 members and guests participating in one of two services gather outside Parkway Baptist Church, Auburn, on Aug. 27 for ceremonies dedicating the church's newly renovated sanctuary. Worshipers were greeted inside with new lighting, an updated sound system, padded chairs, carpet, fresh paint and other improvements. "It is our desire that this building and our very location continues to be a spiritual beacon to our city and world in spreading the love of Jesus," said Pastor Jeff Redmond.

in Loving Memory

O F A L A B A M A B A P T I S T L E A D E R S , F R I E N D S



Luther M. Dorr Former Alabama DOM dies at 84

Luther M. Dorr, longtime professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) and Southern Baptist pastor for more than 60 years, died July 18. He was 84.

A resident of Oneonta at the time of his death, Dorr served as director of missions for Washington Baptist Association from 1960 to 1962.

For the last 17 years of his active ministry, he taught preaching to hundreds of seminary students at NOBTS. He was the author of "The Bi-Vocational Pastor" and was a frequent writer for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources).



DORR

A graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton and NOBTS, Dorr served as pastor of churches in Alabama, Mississippi, Maryland and Virginia through the years. He also was a U.S. Air Force veteran.

He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Nell; two children; six grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. (TAB)

Willie Crawford Pastor of 2 Pine Barren Assoc. churches dies

Willie Crawford, pastor of two Pine Barren Baptist Association churches, died Sept. 3. He was 91.

During his 60-year ministry, Crawford served as pastor of churches in Tuscaloosa, Pickens and Wilcox counties. He began his ministry as a bivocational pastor when he was working at B.F. Goodrich in Tuscaloosa.

While working and raising a family, he earned bachelor's and master's degrees from the International Bible Institute in Orlando, Florida. The Navy veteran also attended New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

After retiring from B.F. Goodrich, he continued to serve as a pastor. Even up to his death, Crawford served as pastor of two churches, splitting his Sundays between Bethsaida Baptist Church,

Furman, and McWilliams Baptist Church, which met monthly. He had been with McWilliams Baptist since 1990 and Bethsaida Baptist since 2003.



CRAWFORD

Other churches he served during his ministry include Cross Roads Baptist Church, Carrollton, and Friendship Baptist Church, Pine Apple.

Crawford was preceded in death by two sons, Gary and George, and two grandsons, Anthony and Michael Cauthen. He is survived by his wife, Carolyn; six children; 14 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren; and one great-great-grandchild. (TAB)

Harold Lee Anderson

Former Alabama pastor, state missionary dies

Harold Lee Anderson, longtime pastor who served for 37 years with the State Board of Missions (SBOM), died Sept. 12. He was 87.

A native of Montgomery, Anderson was ordained into the ministry in 1948 while he was still in high school. He held a bachelor's degree from Howard College (now Samford University); a master of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky; and a doctorate from Luther Rice Seminary in Lithonia, Georgia.

Anderson served as the first pastor of Pinedale Baptist Church, Montgomery, and was an associate pastor for Southside Baptist Church, Birmingham, while in college. He also served as pastor of Kuttawa Baptist Church in Kentucky and Glenwood Baptist Church, Nashville.

He joined SBOM in 1957 and served in various positions during his tenure, holding the position of director of church building and new work at the time of his 1995 retirement.

Anderson was a member of Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Montgomery, for more than 40 years,

but moved his membership to First Baptist Church, Montgomery, in 2007.

Anderson was an active member of the Montgomery Lions Club for more than 30 years and was named "Lion of the Year" in 2005.

He was preceded in death by his wife of more than 50 years, Opal. Anderson is survived by six children, 19 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. (TAB)



ANDERSON

Jonathan David Bean Church at Brook Hills minister dies at 43

Jonathan David Bean, pastor of global disciple-making for The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, died Sept. 8 after a six-year battle with brain tumor cancer. He was 43.

"During these difficult days, let's hold fast to the reminder Pastor Jonathan would give us so often: that God works all things 'for our good and for His glory,'" wrote communications director Chris Kinsley on behalf of church leadership at brookhills.org.

Prior to his role as pastor of global disciple-making, Bean served in student and college ministry at Brook Hills. During his

ministry, he also planted Shades Mountain Baptist Church's Hispanic church, Iglesia Christiana Agape, and served with the International Mission Board in Mexico and Central Asia.

"The legacy of Jonathan's life is one marked by faithfulness to God, an unyielding commitment to the Great Commission and an abounding love for his family, the Church and all

peoples yet to be reached with the gospel," Kinsley wrote. "In his last sermon preached at Brook Hills he reminded us that we all 'must be faithful stewards of the gospel as we await the King's return.' We know with confidence that Jonathan's steadfast stewardship was rewarded ... as he was granted ultimate healing. ... Yet we miss him greatly."

Bean was a graduate of William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri, and Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham.

He is survived by his wife, Karla, and three children. (TAB)



BEAN

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A woman's heart holds many secrets.
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Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

By Joanne Sloan

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



2017 marks 200 years since Fry founded association for women in prison

Elizabeth Fry (1780–1845) was an English Quaker prison and social reformer. She is known as the “Angel of Prisons.”

This is the 200th anniversary of her founding an association for women in prison.

She was born to a prominent Quaker couple, John and Catherine Gurney, on May 21, 1780, in Norwich, England.

Her mother made sure Elizabeth had a good education and taught her to work with the poor and sick.

When she was 12 years old, her mother died. Since she was one of the oldest of 12 children, she helped with the care and education of her younger siblings.

At the age of 18 she heard Quaker William Savery preach. She later wrote about her conversion: “Today I felt there is a God ... we had much serious talk ... what He said to me was like a refreshing shower on parched up earth.” She de-

cidied then to help the downtrodden.

During the next few years she collected clothes for the poor, visited the sick and taught children to read.

In 1800, Elizabeth married a fellow Quaker, Joseph Fry, the son of a successful merchant. They had 11 children.

She became a Quaker preacher in 1811. Two years later she met Quaker minister Stephen Grellet, who had toured the men’s section at London’s Newgate Prison.

Known for its inhumane conditions and public executions, Newgate served as a prison from 1188 to 1902.

Grellet found dreadful conditions at Newgate and asked Elizabeth Fry for her help. She immediately visited the women’s prison. She discovered 300 women and their children huddled together in two wards and two cells. They slept on the floor without nightclothes or bedding. She supplied the

women with clothes and started a school and a chapel. She introduced a supervision system, which matrons and monitors administered.

In 1817 she formed the Association for the Improvement of the Female Prisoners in Newgate. This association led to the founding of the British Ladies’ Society for promoting the Reformation of Female Prisoners, which was the first nationwide women’s organization in Britain.

In 1818 the House of Commons asked her to testify about conditions at Newgate. Her speaking marked the first time a woman presented evidence to Parliament.

Fry published “Observations, on the visiting superintendence and government of female prisoners” in 1827.

Her reforms led to the founding of prison reform associations all over Europe.



FRY

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Gettys bring ‘Task Unfinished’ Tour to Auburn’s Lakeview BC

Modern hymn writers Keith and Kristyn Getty will bring their “Facing a Task Unfinished” Tour to Lakeview Baptist

Church, Auburn, on Sept. 24. The Gettys released an album of the same name in June 2016. The title track is a modern rewriting of a 1931 hymn propelling believers to missions.

The Gettys led a global hymn-singing of the hymn Feb. 21, 2016. An estimated 1.1 million people sang the hymn in 100 countries. The tour, which is scheduled to wrap up in early November, also features congregational singing.

The Lakeview concert will begin at 6:30 p.m. Doors open at 5:30. A love offering will be received.

Keith Getty, co-author with Stuart Townend of the popular hymn “In Christ Alone,” also will be the speaker at Lakeview’s worship leadership luncheon, “Hymns, Worship and the Christian life,” which is scheduled to be from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. the day of the concert. There is a registration fee and child care is available.

For more information, contact Lakeview Baptist at 334-887-7094. (TAB)



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Annual prayer gathering See You at the Pole to urge students to fix eyes on 'pioneer of faith'

All around the globe in every time zone, millions of students will gather around their school's flagpole Sept. 27 for a time of prayer for the annual See You at the Pole (SYATP). SYATP is a student-initiated, student-organized and student-led event that will involve tens of thousands of Alabama students. This year's SYATP emphasis is "Fix Our Eyes," based on Hebrews 12:2.

"This year's theme encourages us to fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith," said Debi DeBoer, First Priority Greater Birmingham ministry director.

"In the midst of what is happening all around the world and the devastation from all the storms, what a great reminder to keep our eyes on the one who is the solution. Jesus is the one and only Almighty God. We can't let



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distract us around us consume our thoughts; we need to focus on Jesus."

First Priority, an Alabama-based Christian nonprofit that seeks to reach students with the gospel, organizes prayer rallies in conjunction with SYATP.

At press time, the following ral-

lies were set to be held Sept. 27:

► **North Jefferson Area Rally** will be held at Enon Baptist Church, Morris, 6 p.m. Contact James Cato: james@firstpriorityal.com.

► **West Jefferson Area Rally** will be held at Garywood Assembly of God, Hueytown, 6:30

p.m. Contact James Cato: james@firstpriorityal.com.

► **Minor Community Rally** will be held at Westwood Baptist Church, Birmingham, 6:30 p.m. Contact James Cato: james@firstpriorityal.com.

► **Pell City Area Rally** will be held at Pell City Center for Education and the Performing Arts (CEPA) Building, 6:30-8 p.m. Contact Jacque Snow: rev.jacque.snow@gmail.com.

► **East Network Rally** will be held at Moody Civic Center, 6:30 p.m. Contact Ashlee Lambert: ashlee@firstpriorityal.com.

► **North Shelby County Area Rally** will be held at North Shelby Baptist Church, Birmingham, 6:30-7:45 p.m. Contact Ben Birdsong: bbirdsong@meadowbrookbaptist.org.

For more information, contact First Priority at 205-871-8886 or info@firstpriorityal.com. (TAB)

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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

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

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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.

Michigan farmer fights back following banishment over gay 'marriage' views

By Emilie Kao and Laura Cermak
Religion News Service

Small businesses — those with fewer than 50 workers — already pay, on average, more than \$11,000 per employee per year because of federal regulations. Now city officials in East Lansing, Michigan, are adding a new burden: Anyone wishing to do business in their town must toe the (city) line on politically correct beliefs.

Specifically they've made compliance with their views on gay "marriage" a new "cost of doing business."

City officials saw a Facebook exchange in which Steve Tennes said his family couldn't host same-sex weddings on their farm, Country Mill, because such ceremonies are inconsistent with the family's deeply held beliefs about marriage. The officials promptly banned Country Mill from the city's farmers market, where Tennes had been selling his fresh produce since 2010.

Tennes and his wife, Bridget, have never discriminated on the basis of sexual orientation. They have sold their produce to — and hired — people who identify as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender). They didn't treat anyone differently because of their sexual orientation, but they believe marriage is between one man and one woman and don't want to violate their consciences.

Nor should they have to. When the Supreme Court re-defined marriage in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote the traditional view of marriage was based on "decent and honorable premises." He added that no one should be disparaged for holding those beliefs. But the city of East Lansing has done exactly that, misusing *Obergefell* to justify punishing the Tennes family for their beliefs.

The Supreme Court's decision was about the obligations of state governments. It didn't give governments carte blanche to force farmers, bakers, florists and photographers to host or celebrate same-sex weddings.

What we see in East Lansing is an overly aggressive local government targeting a small business because of a difference of opinion. The clear evidence of this is the lack of a complaint from any cus-



RNS photo courtesy of Alliance Defending Freedom

Farmer Steve Tennes is suing the City of East Lansing, Michigan, after he was banned from a farmers' market because of his refusal to host a lesbian couple's wedding.

tomers alleging any actual harm by Country Mill, because there was none.

Which is why the Tennes family recently went to court over its lawsuit against East Lansing.

Steve and Bridget Tennes both served in the U.S. military. When they left to start running a farm, they never expected the government they served would punish them for their religious beliefs.

By all accounts, Country Mill had been a model vendor at the East Lansing market, graciously serving all customers. But when officials saw the Facebook post, they discouraged Country Mill from coming to the market, hinting there might be protests.

The couple wasn't deterred so the city then drafted a policy to exclude Country Mill from the market. The policy treats sexual orientation as a protected class, something federal civil rights law does not do.

The policy also applies not just to what happens at the farmers market, but to how business owners operate anywhere in the state. East Lansing is overreaching beyond its own jurisdiction — violating Michigan's "Home Rule City Act" to punish Country Mill, which is 22 miles outside of East Lansing.

The new cost of doing business is high. "It's a major financial burden to be shut out and excluded from the farmers market," Steve Tennes said.

Kate Anderson, an attorney with Alliance Defending Freedom who represents the family, said the

city's message is clear: "We can hurt your livelihood if you don't ascribe to a belief we agree with."

East Lansing city officials never enforced their policy against any other vendor. The city's use of the market as a weapon to force the Tennes family to disavow their beliefs violates their freedom of religion and expression.

When governments use economic weapons to silence individuals for their beliefs, all Americans should pay attention. If a government can punish one family-owned business for its beliefs, what power restrains it from punishing other businesses for other beliefs? If a government can ban a farm from selling at one market, what's to stop it from banning other businesses from selling in other marketplaces?

Not backing down

East Lansing suggests it may allow Country Mill to return if the Tennes family denies its beliefs and conforms to the city's ideas of marriage. But Steve and Bridget aren't backing down.

And they shouldn't have to choose between their faith and their livelihood. East Lansing's policy violates the freedom of Americans to run their businesses according to their consciences.

No American should be coerced by local, state or federal government into abandoning his or her religious or moral beliefs. Violation of individual conscience should never be the price of doing business.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Emilie Kao is director of the Heritage Foundation's DeVos Center for Religion and Civil Society. Laura Cermak is a member of the foundation's Young Leaders Program. †

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Sudanese police arrest 7 church leaders

OMDURMAN, Sudan — Police in Sudan arrested and interrogated seven church leaders in late August in Omdurman, Sudan, before releasing them on bail, sources said.

The Christian leaders with the Sudanese Church of Christ (SCOC) were jailed for six hours Aug. 23 and charged with refusing to comply with an order to turn over leadership of their congregation to a government appointed-committee.

Sudan's Ministry of Guidance and Religious Endowments had written a letter dated Aug. 14 ordering them to hand over church leadership to the committee appointed by the government ministry, sources said.

When they refused, police opened a case against them, though it was unclear under what law.

Police said that in arresting them they were implementing orders from the Ministry of Guidance and Religious Endowments to impose its committee as new SCOC leadership, presumably to sell off the church property in Sudan's bid to rid the country of Christianity.

The pastors said the committee was contrary to SCOC's constitution, which calls for general elections every three years to appoint new leadership.

Ayoub Mattan, Sudanese Church of Christ (SCOC) moderator, and Kwa Shamaal, head of missions at SCOC, were among the church leaders arrested. Pastor Shamaal was previously arrested Dec. 18, 2015, and acquitted on Jan. 2 this year of charges ranging from spying to inciting hatred against the government. (MS)

Somali militants kill 4 Christians in Kenya

BOBO, Kenya — Members of the Somali militant group al-Shabab killed four Christians in coastal Kenya on Sept. 6, a local source said.

Shaken residents of Bobo village left their homes and slept outdoors or in nearby Hindi after al-Shabab members called three Christians out of their homes in the village at 3 a.m. and slit their throats. The fourth Christian who was killed, Hillary Njuguna, was abducted by the militants prior and forced to reveal the names of the other three Christians.

"We are looking for the Christians in this village," a militant said before calling out the names provided by local residents.

Slain were Guchu Peter, Jared Maiko and Joseph Kinuthia. The militants from al-Shabab, which is allied with al-Qaida, also burned the shop of Peter.

The slaughter follows an Aug. 18 assault in the nearby town of Kasala Kairu where Islamic militants reportedly killed four Christians.

Kenya ranked 18th on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2017 World Watch List of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)

Hindu extremists beat pastor in India

DABLI RATHAN, India — A pastor in India's Dabli Rathan village suffered serious head and leg injuries Aug. 16 after a band of Hindu extremists snuck into a house church service and beat him with steel rods and sticks.

One of Pastor Harjot Singh Sethi's attackers yelled at him that they would stop if he shouted "Hail, Lord Ram," but he refused.

"I am glad the Lord considered me worthy to share His pain," he said. "I don't have to be treated special or elevated because I am persecuted. My Lord was crucified, His disciples were persecuted, and violence against Christ followers is not a new thing. This was to come."

The extremists attacked the young pastor and eight other Christians, accusing them of forced conversions. Police reportedly detained six of the attackers, but the extremist who ordered the pastor to shout "Hail, Lord Ram" while they beat him is reportedly roaming free even though he posted videos of the attack on Facebook. (MS)

National rankings

Samford, UM earn top ranks for veterans, value, innovation

Samford University in Birmingham and the University of Mobile (UM) both ranked as No. 1 for veterans in their respective categories, according to the 2018 *U.S. News & World Report* rankings released Sept. 12.

Samford, which ranked first for veterans in the regional university category, also ranked No. 3 overall among all regional universities in the South.

Regional universities are those institutions that offer a full range of undergraduate programs and some master's programs but few doctoral programs, according to *U.S. News & World Report*.

UM ranked No. 5 overall for Christian colleges in the South region, rising from No. 8 last year.

Regional colleges are institutions that focus on undergraduate education but grant fewer than half their degrees in liberal arts disciplines.

Samford and UM also ranked in their respective categories as a Best Value school — Samford, No. 22, and UM, No. 23. This ranking takes into account a school's academic quality and the

2016–2017 net cost of attendance for a student who received the average level of need-based financial aid.

“The higher the quality of the program and the lower the cost, the better the deal,” according to *U.S. News & World Report*. “Only schools ranked in or near the top half of their categories are included because *U.S. News* considers the most significant values to be among colleges that are above average academically.”

Reflection of mission

Dr. Timothy L. Smith, UM president, said, “These new rankings are a reflection of our ability to fulfill the mission of University of Mobile to offer an intellectually challenging, Christ-centered academic community where students can be prepared to fulfill their professional calling.”

Samford also ranked No. 5 among regional universities in the South as one of the “Most Innovative Schools” — the only Alabama school out of 66 colleges and universities nationwide to achieve this designation.

The innovativeness of universities was measured through surveys of university presidents, provosts and admission administrators to assess “cutting-edge changes”



UM Ram

Photo courtesy of University of Mobile

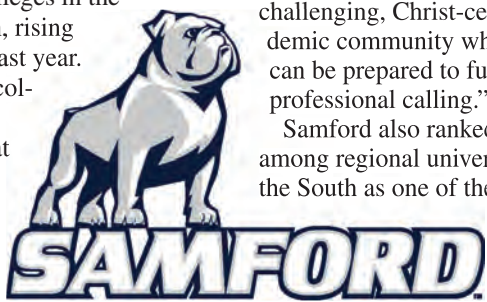
with respect to curriculum, faculty, student services, campus life, technology and facilities.

Andrew Westmoreland, Samford president, said, “National rankings are just one important measure of our success, but they continue to affirm Samford’s growing national reputation as one of the best Christian universities in the country.”

Affirming excellence

The *U.S. News & World Report* annual ranking is based on the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching classifications and assesses such criteria as academic reputation, graduation and retention rates, class size and faculty-to-student ratios.

The positive rankings affirm a continuation of excellence by Alabama Baptist institutions of higher education. (TAB)



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Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

August CP giving 4.2 percent above projection

NASHVILLE — Cooperative Program (CP) giving nationally of \$15,030,281.75 for the month of August is above budget and an increase from the previous year. Designated gifts were down, coming in at \$5,560,936.66.

Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) national and international missions and ministries received by the SBC Executive Committee (EC) through 11 months of the current fiscal year are 4.2 percent above the year-to-date CP Allocation Budget projection. Giving also is 0.77 percent above contributions received during the same time frame in 2016. The totals were provided by EC President and CEO Frank S. Page.

As of Aug. 31, gifts totaled \$180,533,934.62. This total is \$7,283,934.62 above the \$173,250,000 year-to-date budgeted projection and is \$1,372,917.27 more than the \$179,161,017.35 received through the end of August 2016.

Designated giving of \$186,843,284.86 for the same year-to-date period is 6.57 percent, or \$13,146,533.06, below the \$199,989,817.92 received at this point in 2016. This total includes only those gifts received and distributed by the EC and does not reflect designated gifts contributed directly to SBC entities. (BP)

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.

BIBB

► **Marvel Church, Brierfield**, will celebrate homecoming Sept. 24, 11 a.m. Lunch will follow the service. Special music by The Samaritans. Stan Dawson is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Lakewood Church, Birmingham**, will celebrate its 90th anniversary Oct. 1. An open house will be at 10 a.m. with a worship service beginning at 10:30 a.m. Pastor Larry Wimberly will bring the message. Lunch will follow. For more information call at 205-332-3449. ► The senior adult ministry of **Ridgecrest Church, Trussville**, will host The Clay Boys on Sept. 24, 4 p.m. A love offering will be received. For more information call 205-661-3722. Ric Camp is pastor.

COFFEE

► **Victoria Church, Elba**, will hold revival services Sept. 24–27. The Sunday service will begin at 5 p.m. Monday–Wednesday services will be at 7 nightly. Cliff Quincey, pastor of New Home Church, Enterprise, will be the guest speaker. Reatha Kelley and the Victoria choir will lead music. For more information call 334-897-5471. Donnie Marler is pastor.

CAHABA

► **Pine Flat Church, Suttle**, will celebrate homecoming and its 182nd anniversary Oct. 1, 10:30 a.m. Guest speaker will be John Nicholson, pastor of Siloam Church, Marion. Special music will be provided by Kenny Hatcher, pastor of FBC Guin. Lunch will follow the service. For more information contact Kay Suttle at 334-874-6787 or judith.suttle@gmail.com.

CALHOUN

► **Parker Memorial Church, Anniston**, will host the 125th annual meeting of Calhoun Association on Oct. 8, 6:15 p.m. A missions fair will be from 2 to 4 p.m. Mac Amis is pastor of Parker Memorial. Roger Willmore is director of missions.

MONTGOMERY

► **Trinity Memorial Church, Montgomery**, will celebrate its 8th homecoming Sept. 24, 11 a.m. Lunch will follow the service. The celebration will kick off a revival to be held Sept. 25–27, 7 nightly. Cliff Stever, pastor of Yarbrough Street Church, Montgomery, will be the guest speaker. Stan Holt is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **St. Clair Association** is offering English as a Second Language classes for adults each Wednesday at three locations. The 9:30–11:30 a.m. classes meet at the association office in Ashville. The 6 p.m. classes meet at **First Church, Ashville**, and **Central Church, Argo**. For more information call Mary Ann Burrtram at 205-467-6534. Chris Crain is director of missions.

WALKER

► **Donald “Donny” Elliott** is the new pastor of **Friendship Church, Jasper**. He previously served as pastor of Macedonia Church, Jasper. Elliott furthered his education through the Samford extension program at the associational office. He and his wife, Ruby, have two children and four grandchildren.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Pepperell Church, Opelika**, will celebrate its 91st homecoming Oct. 1, 10:30 a.m. Billy Hunt will be the guest speaker. Special music by Scott Demick. A covered dish meal will follow the service. Mike Newman is pastor. ► **Central Church, Opelika**, will celebrate its 80th homecoming Sept. 24, 10 a.m. Special music by 49 North. A covered dish meal will follow the service. The church will hold revival services Sept. 25–27, 6:30 nightly. Ferron Golden will be the guest speaker. Larry Doster is pastor.

WASHINGTON

► **Frankville Church** will celebrate homecoming Oct. 1, 10:30 a.m. Former pastor Fisher Humphreys will speak. Lunch will follow the service. Grant Barber is interim pastor. ✠

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LOGOS

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 24

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

VICTORY Exodus 14:13-28

The Setting (13-18)

At face value, the redemption of Israel from Egypt seems like a face-off between the Lord God and a so-called "lord god." In one corner is Yahweh, the Almighty Creator. In the other corner stands pharaoh, a created pretender to the power and authority of his enemy. The prize? The worship of Israel.

In reality, however, this prized match is not a competition between two even rivals; rather, it is God's judgment against a so-called god. Even more, it is a hope-filled picture of God's desire and power to rescue and redeem. Yet, apparently, Israel did not see it this way at first. In a moment of intense fear, Israel latched on to the wrong idea that God and pharaoh were equals in contention. So God reminds Israel that He is in control. It is God who freed them and it is He who will see their redemption through to completion.

Act 1: The Separation (19-20)

God promised Israel that He would lead her out of Egypt and away from danger (Ex. 6:2-8). Yet, after following Him, they were caught between an impassable barrier (the sea) and a destructive force (the army). What could they do? Nothing, and that's the point. God is the one who saves Israel because they could not save themselves. Even though God led Israel into the impossible, He promised their delivery and stayed true to His word. This is a wonderful reminder that God stands before us as our unwavering guide and behind us as our unfailing guard. Why do we fret when, having followed God, it looks like the end of the road? Take comfort knowing that part of following God's will means that He has got your back.

Act 2: The Crossing (21-22)

Israel stands with destruction behind

her — pharaoh's army is closing in. Israel stands with destruction before her — the waters of the sea would consume them. Then, through Moses, God makes a way for His people to pass through the waters while the waves come crashing down on pharaoh in a sure picture of God's judgment against them. Earlier in the Bible we also see water in relation to judgment and redemption through the story of Noah and his family. God made a way for them to pass through the floodwaters in the ark.

In both stories, water represents God's judgment. In both stories, God does not place His people outside his judgment; rather, He makes a way for His people to pass through His judgment (2 Cor. 5:10, 18-19). Jesus is the way. He took upon Himself the judgment we deserved. He is the greater ark into which we find shelter. He is the greater Moses who leads us safely through destruction. God rescues us from the inundating waters of His judgment, sparing us from its destructive power by pulling us up from its depths and making us new in the image of His Son (Rom. 6:4; 8:29; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 2:12).

Act 3: The Victory (23-28)

The so-called god-king of Egypt is now swallowed up in the judgment of the Lord God, King of kings. It was never an even match; it was never even a match to begin with. God's victory over the enemy, sin and death is a sure promise without possibility of failure or delay. By God's grace, through faith in Christ, we may experience this beautiful redemption foreshadowed in the Exodus.

God redeems us from the bondage of slavery to sin (Rom. 6:15-23). Through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, we are able to escape the grip of sin and death, pass through judgment safely to the other side, only to turn and see God's promises fulfilled in the defeat of our enemy. †

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

FEAR NOT 1 John 4:1-6

Our sessions thus far have focused on the dark side of the spiritual world: Satan, demons and the paranormal. These are areas that are difficult to fully understand, in part because the Scriptures give us so little information about them. What we do know is that these forces stand in opposition to God, so as believers we are called to resist them (James 4:7). But our ability to resist is compromised by the fact that these forces do not always come at us head-on. In 2 Corinthians, Paul warns of the danger of being "outwitted by Satan" and being "ignorant of his designs" (2:11). Later in the same book, he reminds his readers that "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (11:14). While horror movies may spend their time conjuring up terrifying images of demonic power, the Bible gives a great deal more emphasis to spiritual deception and deceit. Believers are urged to stock up on wisdom and discernment, not crucifixes and holy water.

Unfortunately, spiritual discernment is not easy to come by. In the Hebrew Bible, we see this in the difficulty the Israelites had in distinguishing false prophets from true. Deuteronomy 18:22 instructs the people that a person is a false prophet "if a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord but the thing does not take place or prove true." The problem, of course, is that this way of identifying false prophets only works in hindsight. It doesn't tell us how to tell whether a prophet is true or false in advance.

Deuteronomy does give another test of a true prophet in Chapter 13 where the people are instructed not to judge prophets based on their signs but rather on their message. Specifically, they are told that false prophets are those who would urge the people to follow any god other than the true God, the Lord. It is interesting to note how 1 John makes a

similar case when it comes to testing spirits.

Test the spirits and believe only those that hold to the truth of Jesus Christ. (1-3)

In Chapter 4, John warns his readers: "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God." As he does so, John calls attention to the fact that "many false prophets have gone out into the world." The structure of John's argument suggests there may well be an allusion to Deuteronomy 13 in his warning. This seems especially likely given the parallels between the two passages' instruction on how to recognize false prophets (and spirits). Just as Deuteronomy emphasized the true prophets' confession that only the Lord was Israel's God, John emphasizes the true spirit's confession that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Both texts regard a right view of God as the mark of one sent from God.

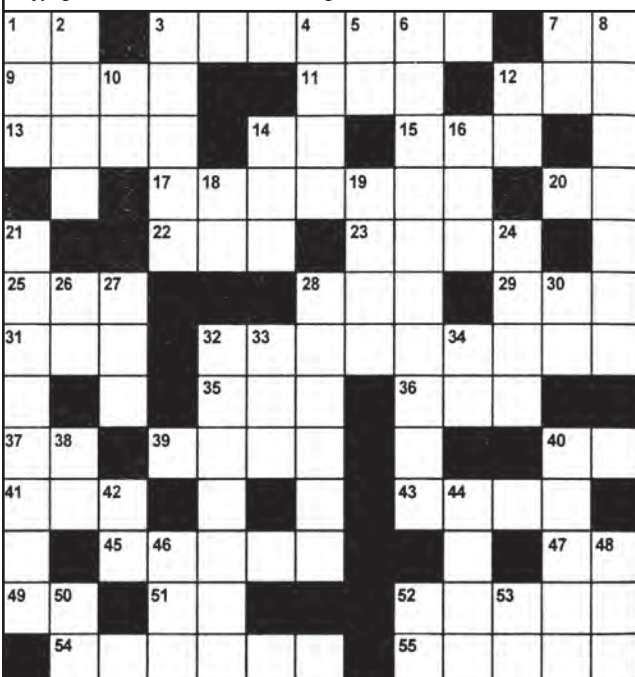
In the time of Deuteronomy, the spiritual danger the people faced was idolatry. For John matters were more complicated. Some Christian communities had developed a view of Jesus that was too low, regarding him as nothing more than a man. Others had developed a Christology that was too high, considering him only divine and not human. John's confession that Jesus (human) Christ (divine) has come (divine) in the flesh (human) insists that Jesus is both God and man.

Christ in us is greater than and victorious over Satan. (4-6)

John's instruction in this passage concludes with a note of hope for his readers. While there may be competing doctrines and deceptive spirits, John's readers have no need to fear. Ultimately, our spiritual safety as believers does not depend on our own strength and discernment. It depends rather on our heavenly Father. As John assures us, "The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." †

Christian Crossword

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Across

- ___ angel of the Lord. (Judg. 6:11)
- He ___ the number of the stars. (Ps. 147:4)
- This is the way, walk ye in ___. (Isa. 30:21)
- What have I ___ anymore with idols? (Hos. 14:8; 2 words)
- Eli ... sat up ___ seat. (1 Sam. 1:9; 2 words)
- It is ___ of the twelve. (Mark 14:20)
- Prefix meaning "within."
- Each. (abbr.)
- Gold is often formed into a ___.
- Paul ... ___ God, and took courage. (Acts 28:15)
- Filled them ___ to the brim. (John 2:7)
- When the sun waxed ___. (Ex. 16:21)
- They took him, and brought him unto ___ pagus. (Acts 17:19)
- To hurry somewhere.
- Woman's name.
- Plural of Pi.
- ___ wine is better. (Luke 5:39)

Down

- I ___ no pleasant bread. (Dan. 10:3)
- There is ___ like unto thee, O Lord. (Jer. 10:6)
- Trouble is like a broken ___. (Prov. 25:19)
- For the ___ which is lent to the Lord. (1 Sam. 2:20)
- Printer's measure.
- Will build again the ___ of David. (Acts 15:16)
- ___ panteth my soul. (Ps. 42:1)
- Poisonous snake. (Deut. 32:33)
- Exacted ... of ___ man 50 shekels. (2 Kings 15:20)
- A manifest ___ of the righteous judgment. (2 Thess. 1:5)
- God ___ high.
- Learn to ___ well. (Isa. 1:17)
- Regarding.
- In her mouth was an ___ leaf. (Gen. 8:11)
- A crown of ___.
- Sin which doth so easily ___ us. (Heb. 12:1)
- There is ___ like unto thee, O Lord. (Jer. 10:6)
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- Sin which doth so easily ___ us. (Heb. 12:1)

Down

- Cut off his right ___. (Luke 22:50)
- Mom.
- It ___ his angel. (Acts 12:15)
- To push and ___. (1 Physical Therapy. (abbr.)
- He is ___ also to save. (Heb. 7:25)
- Gold in Spanish.
- Drew the ___ to land. (John 21:11)
- Old Testament. (abbr.)
- Obstetrician. (abbr.)
- How good ___ it! (Prov. 15:23)
- Cut off his right ___. (Luke 22:50)
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- Obstetrician. (abbr.)
- How good ___ it! (Prov. 15:23)



WHAT ARE YOU READING?



123rf.com

Alabama Baptists share about what they are currently reading

PEGGY H. OAKLEY

Columbia, Ala.

I'm currently reading the following books:

- ▶ "Ward No. 6 and Other Stories" by Anton Chekhov
- ▶ "Watch Me Disappear" by Janelle Brown
- ▶ "I is for Innocent" by Sue Grafton
- ▶ I'm also reading "The New Yorker," "Open Windows" and the Holy Bible.✠

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.



Photo courtesy of Michael Foust

'Ecclesiastes on the big screen'

Steve McQueen's faith explored in powerful new documentary

By Michael Foust
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

He was the "king of cool," the highest-paid actor in the world and the idol of moviegoers from coast to coast. Some even called him the next John Wayne.

But for Steve McQueen — who starred in more than 30 films and 20 TV series during the 1950s, '60s and '70s — it wasn't enough. Fame didn't satisfy him. Neither did women, motorcycles or cars.

In fact, McQueen didn't find inner peace until the final months of his life when he accepted Christ and had plans to tell the world about his newfound faith. But that public testimony never came, as McQueen died in 1980 at the age 50, having told only a handful of people how Jesus had saved him.

The rest of the story

A new documentary may change how we view McQueen. Called "Steve McQueen: American Icon," it follows his journey from a troubled youth to Hollywood stardom and then tells us the rest of the story — that is, how McQueen converted to Christianity. It is hosted by Greg Laurie, a lifelong McQueen fan who serves as the pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship, Riverside, California. Alabama's Jon and Andrew Erwin (Erwin Brothers Entertainment — "Woodlawn," "Mom's Night Out" and "October Baby"),

along with Ben Smallbone ("Priceless"), direct the film. Jon Erwin is a member of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham.

The documentary is scheduled to show in theaters only two nights (Sept. 28 and Oct. 10) and is one of the most powerful and inspiring documentaries I've ever seen. It's also one that churches easily can get behind. (There's no language or sexuality.)

"The only time he was truly happy was when he became a born-again Christian," Marshall Terrill, the author of "Steve McQueen: The Salvation of an American Icon," tells Laurie in the film.

McQueen's pastor agrees: "There was a peace. There was a calmness" in McQueen.

Laurie also interviews McQueen's wife (model Barbara Minty McQueen), actor/director Mel Gibson, stuntman Stan Barrett and even the pilot who taught McQueen how to fly.

McQueen was known for such hits as "The Magnificent Seven," "The Great Escape," "Bullitt" and "The Towering Inferno."

But toward the end of his life he dropped out of Hollywood and turned down major acting roles, sensing something was missing. He finally found it thanks to a series of providential encounters: one with a Christian on the set of a film and the other with a pilot. During the final hours of his life he even met Billy Graham, who gave McQueen his personal Bible.

'All is vanity'

"Steve McQueen: American Icon" is Ecclesiastes on the big screen with the storyline of a man who obtains fame and fortune and then reaches the end of his life only to proclaim, "All is vanity."

McQueen's discovery is one that all of us need to hear.✠

"The only time he was truly happy was when he became a born-again Christian."

Marshall Terrill

author of "Steve McQueen: The Salvation of an American Icon"



According to the July 7, 1848, issue of *The Alabama Baptist*:

Brother Smedley, missionary of the Indian Mission Association, reported several additions to the Choctaw Baptist Church he had planted and plans to begin a second church "on my next visit." He called the work with the eastern section of the Choctaw Nation "encouraging." (TAB)



Photo by Ben VanHouten/Seattle Mariners

Shawn O'Malley

Jesus means everything

Mariners' O'Malley relies on God for strength, courage

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Shawn O'Malley's first professional home run was a near comedy of errors. Playing for the Princeton Rays in West Virginia, he hit the ball, which then hit the wall and next the net that covered the scoreboard before coming back onto the field.

"I looked up and saw it on the ground and I kept running. It hadn't been signaled a home run yet and I ran around third, slipped, got in a pickle and got tagged out. Then they said it was a home run and I scored," O'Malley said with a laugh.

Since that minor league moment in 2006, O'Malley has hit multiple home runs for the Seattle Mariners as a utility player. He became a major leaguer in 2014 for the Los Angeles Angels after a trade from Tampa Bay, where he started his pro career. He also was a Pacific Coast League and MLB organizational all-star with Salt Lake in 2014.

He played for the Montgomery Biscuits from 2010 to 2013, and former Biscuits manager Billy Gardner Jr. said O'Malley plays hard. "He is a guy that you want on your club because he is going to go out there and give everything he has," he said.

Defense and speed

When it comes to baseball, the stats show that O'Malley's strength is his defense combined with his speed. He was a Pacific Coast League and MLB organizational all-star in 2014.

He may have played all over, but his most life-changing baseball moment happened off the field in 2008 while rehabbing an injury in Florida. Ben Zobrist, then a shortstop for Tampa Bay, also was rehabbing an injury and he invited O'Malley to lunch.

"We got on the topic of Christ and my life," O'Malley said. "The more I got in-depth with my

life, the more responses he had, the more answers he had."

Zobrist, the 2016 World Series MVP with the Chicago Cubs, backed his answers with Scripture and that impressed O'Malley.

"Ben Zobrist led me to Christ. I actually call him 'The Walking Bible' because anytime I have a problem or a question, if I bring it up to him, he will give me a way to solve it or a way to deal with it through Scripture," O'Malley said.

Finding answers

Growing up Catholic, O'Malley said he was "religious but I wasn't into it. I knew there was a God and I believed in God but I didn't really expand much further than that."

During shoulder recovery from November 2007 through May 2008 he had time to try to find answers to faith questions. He had seen a difference in the lives of an ex-girlfriend and her parents.

"She was really big into it and her family was pretty devoted Christians," O'Malley said. "I saw the way her parents lived and I knew it was something different. Seeing Ben, he had something different. I knew it was something that I wanted but I couldn't figure out what it was. After that lunch I realized that was the part of my life that was missing."

And now, he said, Jesus means everything to him.

"He is my strength. He is my courage. He is my shoulder when I am down or when I need somebody there. He is the one person that I know in this world, like He says in the Scripture, He will never forsake me. He is always that one person that I know that I can count on," O'Malley said.

He freely shares that faith with others. "If someone asks me for help or someone approaches me about my faith, I am not afraid to let people know where I stand with God," O'Malley said.✠

RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

Windows honoring Confederates removed

WASHINGTON — Following "considerable prayer and discussion" prompted by the August protest in Charlottesville, Virginia, Washington National Cathedral has decided to remove stained-glass windows honoring two Confederate generals.

The leadership of the landmark church in the nation's capital had planned to spend a lengthy period discussing race-related issues before deciding what to do with the windows. That plan was made after the fatal shooting of nine members of a Bible study group at a black church in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2015.

But a statement released Sept. 6 said that "after considerable prayer and discussion," the cathedral's board, called Chapter, voted a day earlier "to immediately remove the windows."

"The Chapter believes that these windows are not only inconsistent with our current mission to serve as a house of prayer for all people, but also a barrier to our important work on racial justice and racial reconciliation," reads a letter from Washington Episcopal Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde, Washington National Cathedral Dean Randy Hollerith and Cathedral Chapter Chair John Donoghue.

In August 2016 the cathedral quietly removed the panels depicting the Confederate flag and replaced them with red and blue panes to match surrounding glass. But the overall glass and stone bays honoring two generals, Robert E. Lee and Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, remained.

"These windows will be deconsecrated, removed, conserved and stored until we can determine a more appropriate future for them," the leaders wrote. "The window openings and stonework in the Lee-Jackson Bay will be covered over until we determine what will go in their place." (RNS)

Majority of US parents choose public schools

WASHINGTON — Eighty-five percent of parents in the United States choose to send their children to public schools. That was the finding of a Gallup Poll research study released Aug. 28. The finding was based on a survey of more than 4,500 parents across the nation.

Among parents who attend church weekly the percentage of parents who chose public schools for their children dropped to 78 percent, the lowest percentage of any of the subgroups studied. Parents from households with an annual income of \$75,000 or more chose public schools 79 percent of the time, the report said. Parents who considered themselves Republicans sent their children to public schools 81 percent of the time.

Parents who are weekly churchgoers chose private schools 11 percent of the time compared to nine percent of all U.S. parents. Parochial schools were the choice of 5 percent of weekly church attending parents. Home schooling was the choice of four percent of such parents.

Nationally, 3 percent of all parents chose parochial schools, the same number that opted for home schooling. (TAB)

State constitutions mention 'God' or 'divine'

WASHINGTON — "God" or "the divine" is mentioned in all 50 state constitutions, even though such things are never explicitly mentioned in the U.S. Constitution, according to Pew Research Center. Of the more than 200 references overall, three belong to Alabama's constitution. Massachusetts — one of the nation's least religious states — has the most with 12, with North Carolina coming in second with 10.

According to Pew, 116 of the total references are direct uses of the word "God." All but four state constitutions mention God directly — Colorado, Iowa, Hawaii and Washington don't, though they mention a "Supreme Being," "Supreme Ruler of the Universe" or that the people are "grateful for Divine Guidance."

Three of the nation's least religious states have the most uses of the word "God." Massachusetts' constitution uses it eight times, while the constitutions of New Hampshire and Vermont each mention Him six times. (TAB)