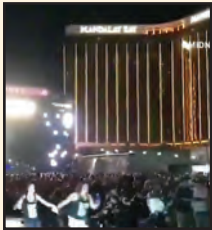




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'Godless society' is to blame for mass shootings, father says

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Tim Tebow, Colin Kaepernick kneeling on football field represent 2 forms of US Christianity

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Photo courtesy of Slavik Rimskyi

Ukrainian youth pastors and leaders collaborate with and learn from Tuscaloosa Baptist Association youth pastors during a two-week visit in August. The Ukrainian ministers sought to improve their outreach and ministry to young people in their churches and communities.

'Love 'em like crazy'

Ukrainian youth pastors partner with, learn from Tuscaloosa ministers

By Sammie Jo Barstow
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Y'all" and "Roll Tide" were not familiar words to the 10 Ukrainian youth pastors and leaders who came to Tuscaloosa in August — but they learned quickly.

During their two-week visit, they quickly came to appreciate Southern food, especially barbecued ribs

and chicken casserole. They appreciated their host families and the local youth pastors who made their visit so beneficial.

Lasting impressions

But most importantly, they carried home some lasting impressions that will enable them to improve their outreach and ministry to young people in their churches and communities.

It's part of a partnership that's been going on for nearly 20 years.

In 1999, Rosalind and Jim Holloman and several other members of First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, traveled to Ukraine's Odessa Oblast on a short-term missions trip. While there they met faithful Christians, including 12-year-old Slavik Rimskyi.

In the years that followed, the Hollomans made numerous trips

back to minister to Rimskyi's church, and in turn he visited Tuscaloosa several times. He used those visits to enhance his leadership and teaching skills.

While visiting Tuscaloosa with his wife, Sasha, two years ago Rimskyi revealed an idea that God had given him about bringing other youth ministers to the U.S. for training. He and the Hollomans

(See 'Outreach,' page 17)

Coming soon ...

FAITH & FAMILY
Dealing with disappointment

Part 4 of 4 — working to avoid disappointment in relationships

COMMENT

The Ever-Changing Pastor

Research seems to confirm what anecdotal observations indicate. The length of service by a pastor at a single church — his tenure — is growing.

Several years ago the average tenure of a Baptist pastor was about two years. People joked that pastors were like migratory birds. Every season they changed locations.

Now the average pastorate is between five and seven years according to one source at LifeWay Christian Resources. The exact length of service is still illusive. One study indicated the average is 8.2 years, another 9 years and still another reports 7.7 years. But Barna Research reports the average pastoral tenure among mainline congregations at about 4 years.

No matter the exact number, the length of service in a single church is growing. Perhaps that is because pastors and churches are both realizing that longer tenured pastorates generally produce healthier churches than a constant turnover of pastoral leadership. Lyle Schaller said it this way. “Longer tenure does not guarantee church growth but shorter pastoral tenure almost always insures lack of growth.”

Five stages

Thom Rainer, president of LifeWay, wrote in an article entitled “Five Stages of a Pastor’s Ministry,” “A church is likely to experience some of its best years, by almost any metrics, during this period (stage four — 6 to 10 years) of a pastor’s tenure.”

During years 11 and beyond, the pastor and church can be reinvigorated and ready to tackle new challenges, Rainer observed.

Even though the same person is leading a congregation for a longer period of time than in years past, it is important to recognize that the pastor is ever-changing. In fact, to say the same pastor stands before the congregation Sunday after Sunday may be a misnomer because it fails to recognize the pastor himself is ever-changing.

Perhaps that principle is most clearly seen in the contrast between the young, brash, eager, driven young man in his first pastorate. Ideas overflow. Things need to get done now. The new pastor may have little patience with those who don’t share his vision for the church or who are not as committed as he.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

See that same pastor some years later. Now he may be more understanding of others, more sensitive to the circumstances of life. Differences do not frighten him because he has learned to work through them to reach common understandings. His appreciation of the family of God has grown and he is not as invested in his own ideas.

He is the same person but a totally different pastor. Neither is wrong. The difference only illustrates the pastor is ever-changing.

Consider the changes that take place in the pastor’s spiritual life. Each week he spends hours in Bible study and prayer. He reads and trains to keep his skills sharp. He attends seminars and conventions for inspiration and understanding. He even prioritizes time for continuing education.

New understandings come along the way, new insights to the meaning of Scripture. The pastor’s walk with the Lord is deepened and it shows in his preaching and ministry. The story of how Moses was changed by his encounter with the Lord is described in Exodus 3. He was a different person after his experience with God at the burning bush than he was before that experience.

Though not as dramatic, pastors are ever-changing, ever-growing through their devotion to prayer, Bible study and training. The result of their time with God is that even though it is the same person standing before the congregation, it is a changed pastor.

Life experiences have a similar impact. Experiences generally have a way of changing us. Occasionally someone acts as if he has all the answers when he has never really faced the problems.

Years ago a pastor advertised himself in *The Alabama Baptist* as a marriage counselor. His qualification was that he had been married three months.

Walking through a serious illness or making a grief journey or experiencing disappointment in a family relationship — all of these have a way of changing us. Many people mark their lives by such events. Listen and you will hear people marking their lives with phrases like “before my illness” or “after my operation” or “since _____ died.”

Life happens — the good and the bad. We learn from both and so does the pastor. Standing in the pulpit after such an experience, he is a changed pastor.

Even time in ministry contributes to the ever-changing nature of the pastor. A different approach to ministry is required

when every experience is new than when experience has made one comfortable, if not confident, in the mist of ministry needs.

Time in the ministry produces other changes too. A pastor is changed when his expectations of a church turn out to be misguided or inaccurate. He is changed when he recognizes he is unable to fulfill all the expectations some have of him. He is changed when a church acknowl-

edges its own shortcomings as well as his.

A pastor is changed when conflicts and challenges are worked through rather than the church resorting to separation. He is changed when he and his family become part of the congregational family rather than being the outsiders who will be gone soon.

Changes for the better

When trust replaces suspicion, when confidence replaces doubt, when inclusion replaces being an outsider, then everyone involved is changed. And these changes are usually better than those produced by the “remove and replace” approach to pastoral relations.

The point is whether your pastor has been there two years or 20 years he is not the same as on his first day. He is not the same that he will be as he continues to walk with the Lord and with the church. The pastor is ever-changing.

You and your congregation have a great influence in the direction these changes take — for good or for bad. Hopefully churches and pastors can work together so the results are God-pleasing pastors leading healthy churches of growing Christians.✠

October is
Pastor
Appreciation
month.



LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

IMMIGRATION

Martha Simmons’ front-page article on immigration in the Sept. 14 issue — “United States among most welcoming countries of migrants” — was a good one. She noted that the United States receives more migrants than

any other country in the world, and it also is 1 of 20 countries most likely to welcome them. I like that.

The article also asks how various statistics “square with recent immigration controversies, Judeo-Christian traditions and Christian’s obligations

to welcome the so-journer?”

With that question in mind, I would like to offer some
(See ‘Letters,’ page 15)



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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'God is a refuge'

'Godless society' is to blame for mass shootings, father says

A Las Vegas shooting victim with ties to Alabama is expected to make a full recovery. Danae Gibbs, the niece of Charles Gibbs, pastor of West Mobile Baptist Church, was shot in the leg when a gunman opened fire on an open air country music concert Oct. 1.

In an interview with local NBC-affiliate KXAN, Todd Mears, one of Danae's pastors at Riverbend Church, Austin, said news of her injuries hit close to home.

"It's hard, this one is really personal," he said in an Oct. 2 interview.

Sources say Danae, a recent graduate of Texas Tech, worked 20 hours a week in the children's ministry at Riverbend. Pastors at the church helped her family travel to Vegas to be with her. Surgeons performed emergency surgery on Danae but decided not to remove the bullet, which is close to her spine.

"She'll be metal-detected every time she goes through an airport metal detector," her father, Darrell Gibbs, told NPR.

Darrell Gibbs told NPR that he blames "a godless society" for mass shootings like the one Danae survived.

At least 58 people were killed and more than 500 injured when 64-year-old Stephen Craig Paddock opened fire on the crowd of 22,000 concertgoers from a 32nd floor hotel room in the Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino, located across the street from the concert venue.

President Donald Trump, who visited with Danae and others recovering in Las Vegas-area hospitals, called the attack "an act of pure evil."

Searching for meaning

"In times such as these, I know we are searching for some kind of meaning in the chaos, some kind of light in the darkness. The answers do not come easy. But we can take solace knowing that even the darkest space can be brightened by a single light, and even the most terrible despair can be illuminated by a single ray of hope," the president said in a statement Oct. 2.

Alabama native Vance Pitman, founder and pastor of Hope Church in Las Vegas, mobilized his congregation to provide physical and emotional support to those affected by the tragedy.

"This is the day when we get the opportunity to really rise up and serve the city and love the city and demonstrate the love of God for the city," Pitman said.

Hope Church is only a few miles from the shooting scene. The church opened Oct. 2 for prayer, counseling and shelter for anyone displaced as a result of the shooting.

Las Vegas is home to 2.2 million residents and draws an estimated 1 million tourists weekly. There are 118 Southern Baptist congregations in the city, according to North



Screen capture from CBS News

A lone gunman with a bird's eye view fired a fully automatic weapon into a crowd of 22,000 Las Vegas concertgoers, killing 58 — one an alumnus of Union University in Jackson, Tennessee — and injuring more than 500 before killing himself Oct. 1.

American Mission Board (NAMB) figures. The church-to-resident ratio is roughly one to 18,300. Less than 8 percent of the city identifies as evangelical, NAMB said on its Send City website, and about two-thirds of the city is unchurched.

Pitman encouraged Americans to remember that Las Vegas is much more than a tourist attraction.

"You've got some people who are believers, yet even their faith has been shaken," Pitman told Baptist Press. "And then you've got a lot of people in Las Vegas, a city that's 92 percent non-evangelical, 60 percent unchurched, that are already really skeptical of faith and now, very much so."

Pitman acknowledged that in moments of tragedy, people are tempted to run from God. Scripture teaches a different response, he said, quoting Psalm 46:1.

"God is a refuge in help, a very present help in time of trouble," Pitman said. "The Scripture teaches that God is to be run to in mo-

ments like this, that He's a refuge. He's a shelter that we can run to in moments of tragedy and find comfort, find peace, find redemption, reconciliation and find hope.

"This is a moment to run to the Father, to cry out to Him and to pour out your heart to Him," Pitman said.

Pitman said Hope Church will seek to be part of the city's healing in the weeks ahead.

"(We) pray that God would take what the enemy intended for evil and out of that God would produce good that would ultimately result in Him being glorified and exalted among the peoples of the earth," Pitman said.

Light of the gospel

"Today is a dark, dark day in the city of Las Vegas, which means that's a backdrop for an incredible display of the glorious light of the gospel," Pitman said. "And that's what we pray to see happen here, is the church rises up and begins to serve the city." (Compiled by TAB with contributions from BP and RNS)

How are we as Christians to respond?

In the wake of another mass shooting in the United States, faith-based communities will once again be called on to make sense out of a senseless tragedy.

Without a doubt, Christians will ask and be asked how God could allow something like the Las Vegas concert attack to happen.

How should we respond?

Kevin Blackwell, executive director of Samford University's Ministry Training Institute in Birmingham, says we must

first look to the origin of the event — Eden.

"Some are tempted to ask, 'How could God have allowed this to happen?' I want to be clear, this was not God's plan for His creation," Blackwell writes.

Though humankind was created in God's image, sin marred that image, Blackwell writes.

"A heart that was created to worship
(See 'Message,' page 8)



Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, holds a car show in its parking area every fourth Saturday in October. Pictured above is an aerial drone shot of last year's show which featured 167 cars. Photo courtesy of David Grayson

Embracing OPPORTUNITY

Alabama churches use car shows for outreach, service, missions funding

By Martha Simmons
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Churches throughout Alabama have found an effective way to rev up their community outreach: car shows.

Shiny automobiles — whether speedy and new or sedate and classic — enjoy an enthusiastic following, and many Baptist churches have found a

way to get mileage out of them for their missions.

“We are in our eighth year of the Shirley Looney Memorial Car Show,” said Jeremy Montgomery, student pastor at Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile. “The way it got started was that Gene and Shirley Looney wanted a way to provide scholarships to youth missions trips and camp scholarships for people who didn’t have the means.”

As car show aficionados, the Looneys had the connections and knowledge to put on a show. “They came to my office with the idea and we prayed over it. They were actively involved in car shows around the area and thought this was a way for them to raise money for church missions,” Montgomery said.

Dauphin Way holds the car show in its parking area every fourth Saturday in October and it has grown to feature approximately 170 cars. Through entry fees and sponsorships, the show raises \$7,000 to \$8,000 each year for church missions. Organizers aren’t sure how many people attend, Montgomery said, because there is no admission charged. “We do guesstimate though,” Montgomery said. “One year, we counted 650 people on a rainy, cold day, not counting the car owners.”

For Dauphin Way, however, the event is about much more than admiring shiny wheels and raising money.

“We knew that the Lord was leading us to do this show to be a fundraiser but what we didn’t know was how God was going to use this to help us reach our community.

Be intentional

“We are very intentional about sharing the gospel during the car show,” Montgomery said. “Eight to 10 teams of pastors, lay leaders and youth go to every car, meet with the owners, ask how we can pray for them and share the gospel with them.”

Those encounters lead to personal connections that eventually bring new members to the church, Sunday School and other programs. “Now the church as a whole embraces this as a community outreach,” Montgomery said.

That’s a good thing, since organizing and executing the car show is nearly a year-round effort and requires more than 50 volunteers.

“Eight to 10 teams of pastors, lay leaders and youth go to every car, meet with the owners, ask how we can pray for them and share the gospel with them.”

Jeremy Montgomery
student pastor, Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile



Photo courtesy of Dauphin Way Baptist Church

Pastor Blake Newsom (right) of Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, talks with some church members at the Oct. 22, 2016, car show.

Shirley Looney passed away after the first car show but her husband has remained faithful to the project. “Gene Looney is a wonderful lay leader who pours himself into it year-round,” Montgomery said. “He’s helped several other churches in the area start their own car shows.”

Sharing Christ

Montgomery said Dauphin Way Baptist encourages other churches to start their own car shows because of the benefits it brings to church missions.

“It has been a blessing to our church as it is such a draw from the community and the way our church plugs into it,” he said. “The whole thing is a way to share Christ.”

At Gardendale First Baptist Church, the car show that takes place in the church parking lot is part of the annual community-wide Gardendale Magnolia Festival and the church’s outreach strategy.

“We just allow the city to use our parking lot for the car show,” said Phil Cronin, minister of new members and outreach. “We don’t oversee it.”

“Our outreach actually takes place at the same festival but in a different area with huge inflatable slides, a shooting gallery, a remote-control car track and games that families can play for free,” he said. “We also provide multiple golf carts to help folks get to and from the festival from various parking lots surrounding the area.”

“We try to use these types of events to help our people find the blessing of serving and helping the people and our communities,” Cronin said. “It also helps the community to get to know the Church in a neutral area.”

Outreach activities such as these, Cronin added, “are bridges that help people relate to the Church, as well as it helps others to

find their purpose in serving Christ.”

Wall Highway Baptist Church, Madison, is in its second year of hosting a car show, said Pastor Greg Lee.

“The first year we had 44 entries and this year we had over 70,” Lee said. “The car show draws all ages. We see a significant number of families with small children, as well as couples and individuals. Our show is spread out over five hours and there are people coming and going the whole time.”

“I can tell you that it takes about 50 church members to put on this event. We cook barbecue, hamburgers and hot dogs and sell them, so we have to have church members working the grills and the cash registers. Also we have church members directing traffic, operating the registration table and so on.”

Wall Highway’s car shows generate funding for missions and for outreach to the community, with the bulk of the proceeds to help fund the church’s annual missions trip to Nepal.

“We also use the event as outreach,” Lee said. “Many of those who come onto our campus for the show are unchurched. We do our best to meet, greet,

establish some working relationship and extend invitations to join us for worship. We have a team of church members who oversee the car show and we also have a team of hosts who meet and greet.

“We begin planning months in advance,” Lee said. “We advertise through every means available to us but the best advertisement is passing out flyers at other car shows.”

“Each year has been a lot of a lot of work but a lot of fun,” he added. “We did the first one not knowing what to expect and not sure if we would do it again, and it went so well, we couldn’t wait to do the next one.”

AG Marshall files civil lawsuits to combat illegal gambling

Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall announced Oct. 4 that he is pursuing legal action against casinos in five counties where illegal slot machines continue to operate.

“It is the responsibility of the attorney general to ensure that Alabama’s laws are enforced, including those laws that prohibit illegal gambling,” Marshall said in a press release announcing the lawsuits. “Through multiple rulings in recent years, the Alabama Supreme Court has made it abundantly clear that electronic bingo and the use of slot machines are illegal in all Alabama counties. Therefore, we have taken action to hold accountable those who defy the laws of our state.”

Civil lawsuits were filed in Greene, Houston, Lowndes, Macon and Morgan counties against the operating casinos, machine manufacturers and vendors, and the governmental authorities responsible for licensing and overseeing electronic bingo operations in those counties.

The lawsuits call upon local circuit courts to prohibit the defendants from promoting, operating and transporting so-called “electronic bingo” machines and slot machines in those counties. The State also filed motions requesting that the circuit courts grant preliminary injunctions to cease unlawful gambling operations in these counties while the lawsuits are pending.

Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP), praised the attorney general’s actions.

‘Upholding the law’

“We applaud what he is doing, which is upholding the law,” Godfrey said. “We are confident that the state Supreme Court will once again rule that these are illegal slot machines.”

Godfrey said he was disappointed when former Gov. Robert Bentley instructed then-Attorney General Luther Strange to leave prosecution of such cases to local law enforcement officials.

Following that instruction several casinos reopened in the state, including VictoryLand in Macon County and

Greenetrack in Greene County.

“It appears the attorney general’s office is doing what they should have been doing all along and that is enforcing the law,” Godfrey said.

The lawsuits filed Oct. 4 are the result of ongoing investigations into casino and gambling operations around the state, an effort Marshall said he has been involved in since taking office in February when Strange was appointed to the U.S. Senate by Bentley.

Different approach

Marshall is taking a different approach than past attorneys general by filing civil lawsuits instead of criminal cases, said Eric Johnston, a Birmingham lawyer who represents ALCAP and other organizations on gambling-related issues.

The civil complaints call for the closure of the casinos because “the illegal gambling they offer presents legal nuisances in the state.”

According to Alabama law, a public nuisance is one which damages all persons who come within the sphere of its operation, though it may vary in its effects on individuals. A public nuisance generally must be addressed by a process instituted in the name of

the state, as Marshall is doing through these lawsuits.

A civil case allows Marshall to get an injunction to put the casinos permanently out of business rather than pursuing case after case through the criminal court system, Johnston said.

“This approach hasn’t been tried before,” Johnston said.

Alabama officials have pursued numerous cases over the past five years to bring clarity and enforcement to the anti-gambling laws of the state. The Alabama Supreme Court has repeatedly determined that the game of bingo cannot be played on electronic devices and that machines claiming to be electronic bingo are in fact slot machines and therefore illegal in Alabama, Johnston said.

“It’s a criminal act they are committing,” Johnston said. “The Alabama Supreme Court has said over and over that these are unlawful machines. I’m very happy now to see Marshall go after casino operators.”



TAB photo



Across ALABAMA'S Associations

AUTAUGA

► **James Jackson** is the new pastor of **Glynwood Church, Prattville**. He previously served as the grow pastor for First Church, Prattville. He also served as student events coordinator and later content editor for LifeWay Christian Resources in Nashville. He holds a bachelor's degree from Georgia State University in Atlanta and a master's degree from Southern Seminary in Lexington, Kentucky. Jackson and his wife, Trish, have two children.

BESSEMER

► **Jared West** is the new pastor of **Grant Street Church, Bessemer**. He was ordained at Grant Street on Sept. 24. He previously served as student minister for Grant Street. He holds a bachelor's degree from The Baptist College of Florida in Graceville and is working on his master's degree from the Birmingham Extension Center of New Orleans Seminary. He is married to Natalie.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Missionary Church, Holly Pond**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 15, 10:30 a.m. Point of Honor will perform special music. Lunch will follow the service. Everyone is invited. There will be no Sunday School or evening service. For more information call 256-796-5986 or 256-590-4468. Randy Burtram is pastor. ► **First Church, Oneonta**, honored **Pastor Larry Gipson** for his 15 years of service with a reception Sept. 24. He and his wife, Wanda, have two children.

CAHABA

► **Friendship Church, Lawley**, will hold its second annual turnip green supper and gospel music singing Oct. 14, 4 p.m. Musicians are welcome to bring their instruments and join in with the singing. William Harris is pastor.

CALHOUN

► **First Church, McClellan, in Anniston**, will hold the women's event "Walk by Faith. Not by Sight." on Oct. 21, 9:30 a.m.–12:40 p.m. There will be teaching, worship and fellowship. Ashley Rinehart Ramage and Linda Yost will speak. All women and teenagers are invited and children are welcome. For more information call 256-847-0230. Donnie Sills is pastor.

COFFEE

► **Eanon Church, New Brockton**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 15. Day Three Trio will perform special music at 10 a.m. and the service will be at 11 a.m. Lunch will follow the service. Everyone is invited to attend. For more information call 334-494-1068. Mark Ward is pastor.

CLARKE

► **Ulcanush Church, Coffeerville**, will celebrate its 200th anniversary with an

old-fashioned fun day Oct. 14, 10 a.m.–3 p.m. and a special service Oct. 15, 2–4 p.m. The fun day will include family events and games, face painting, horse and buggy rides, karaoke and more. The service will feature guest speakers and a time of sharing memories. A reception will follow the morning service. For more information call Meloye Hooper at 251-589-2236. Jesse Griffith is pastor.

DEKALB

► **New Harmony Church, Albertville**, will hold a Judgment House on Oct. 18, 21, 22, 25, 28 and 29. For reservations call Kelly Armstrong at 256-738-0752. Lynn Darnell is pastor.

FRIENDSHIP

► **Union Hill Church, Oneonta**, will hold a children's pumpkin carving event Oct. 21, 10 a.m. For reservations contact Stephen Smith at 205-274-9232 or stephen@unionhillbaptist.com. Bill Barnett is pastor.

GENEVA

► **New Hinson Church, Slocomb**, will hold "Whosoever Believeth 2017 Trail of Truth" on Oct. 18, 6–8 p.m.; Oct. 22, 1–7 p.m.; and Nov. 1, 6–8 p.m. There will be live praise music. For reservations call 334-886-3097. Bryan Klobe is pastor.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

► **Lookout Mountain Association** will hold its annual Outreach Saturday on Oct. 21. Each church is encouraged to meet at 10 a.m. for prayer and visit 20 homes within its community. Lloyd Borden is director of missions.

MOBILE

► **Union Church, Grand Bay**, will celebrate its 149th homecoming Oct. 15, 10 a.m. Former youth pastor Joey Bentley will speak. Lunch will follow the service. For more information call the church office at 251-865-6284. David Walley is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Catoma Church, Montgomery**, will hold an indoor yard sale Oct. 13, 5–7 p.m. and Oct. 14, 7 a.m.–noon. Donnie Dickens is pastor. ► **Open Acres Church, Montgomery**, will hold a deacon ordination service Oct. 15, 11 a.m. Four deacons will be ordained. Neal Hughes, director of missions for Montgomery Association, will speak. Ron Davis is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Providence Church, Opelika**, will host a simulcast of Re-FUEL on Oct. 14, 8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Re-FUEL is a men's event to help ministry leaders strategically reach and disciple men to live powerful, transformed lives. To register call the church office at 334-745-4608. Rusty Sowell is pastor. ☛



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Demonology

Organized Evil

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

The Bible suggests that we might think of demons as the evil counterparts to angels. As angels are God's invisible ministers and messengers, so demons are invisible enemies of God. We readily acknowledge that not everything that is real is visible. Love is invisible, as is hate, joy, jealousy and other human emotions. We can only see the results of these invisible realities. Evil spirits have a built-in advantage in opposing God's work in that they have the advantage of being invisible.

Furthermore, being invisible, demons operate in the invisible realm. The Bible reminds us that what is earthly can be seen but what is heavenly cannot be seen. Evil spirits are not heavenly in their nature, but heavenly in that they function in the invisible realm. Ephesians 6:12 speaks of them as "spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." The phrase "heavenly places" actually translates as an adjective. This adjective also is plural, suggesting a translation that is literally "the heavenlies." The idea of this unusual plural adjective is to remind us that there is an invisible realm of reality that lies beyond what can be seen. Demons operate in this realm, just as "all spiritual blessings" flow to us in the invisible realm of reality (Eph. 1:3). The fact that we cannot see demons does not negate their existence and activities, just as our inability to see the Holy Spirit does not negate His reality and work.

The Bible does not belabor proving the existence of demons or systematically setting forth their origin, but clearly assumes their existence, simply setting forth the observation that at some point "God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment" (2 Pet. 2:4). In its assumption of the reality of demons, the Bible uses a variety of terms by which to refer to them, such as "evil spirits" (Acts 19:12), "unclean spirits" (Mark 3:11), "deceiving spirits" (1 Tim. 4:1) and "angels that sinned" (2 Pet.

2:4). In addition, the Bible points toward some kind of hierarchical arrangement among these beings in such statements as the phrase, "the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41), indicating at least a minimal arrangement with Satan as leader of a host of his emissaries. Another pointer toward some kind of hierarchical arrangement is the warning of Ephesians 6:12: "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." While not delineated, some kind of demonic organization exists among "the spiritual hosts of wickedness," such as is referred to as "principalities, powers and rulers of darkness."

Instruments of Satan

This invisible host of wickedness works to develop, maintain and control structures and institutions of society and culture, which in turn become instruments of Satan to attack and enslave people, leading them away from God. Society — with its institutions of government, entertainment, politics and ethics (or lack thereof) — become part of the devil's strategy to alienate individuals and people groups from righteousness, honesty, morals, truth and the like. All the while people may well remain unaware that these human institutions have been usurped by the devil and his angels as instruments or channels by which to promote ungodliness and evil. No wonder the Bible admonishes God's people to take unto themselves "the whole armor of God" in order to withstand in an "evil day" (Eph. 6:13). ☛

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.



A tale of two CHRISTIANITIES ON THEIR KNEES

Tebow, Kaepernick represent chasm between 2 forms of American Christianity

By Michael Frost
mikefrost.net

They're both Christian footballers and they're both known for kneeling on the field, although for very different reasons.

One grew up the son of Baptist missionaries to the Philippines. The other was baptized Methodist, confirmed Lutheran and attended a Baptist church during college.

Both have made a public display of their faith. Both are prayerful and devout.

This is the tale of two Christian sports personalities, one of whom is the darling of the American church while the other is reviled. And their differences reveal much about the brand of Christianity preferred by many in the church today.

First up, there's Tim Tebow.

Tebow was homeschooled by his Christian parents and spent his summers in the Philippines, helping with his father's orphanage and missionary work.

During his college football career, the Heisman Trophy winner frequently wore references to Bible verses on his eye black, including the ubiquitous John 3:16 during the 2009 BCS Championship Game.

He has been outspoken about his pro-life stance and his commitment to abstinence from sex before marriage.

He is a prominent member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, an organization which insists that leaders sign a

Statement of Sexual Purity, stating that sex outside marriage and homosexual acts are unacceptable to God.

He has preached in churches, prisons, schools, youth groups and a welter of evangelical conferences.

And he is well known for his signature move — dropping to one knee on the field, his head bowed in prayer, his arm resting



Colin Kaepernick

commons.wikimedia.org

on his bent knee known throughout the world as “Tebowing.”

He's clean cut, polite, gentle, respectful. Then, there's Colin Kaepernick.

Kaepernick, until recently the San Francisco 49ers quarterback, was born to a 19-year-old, single, white woman. His black father had left the picture before Colin was born. His mother was destitute and gave him up for adoption. He was raised by the Kaepernicks, a white couple from Milwaukee.

His body is festooned with religious tattoos, including depictions of scrolls, a cross, praying hands, angels defeating demons, terms like “To God be the Glory,” “Heaven Sent” and “God will guide me” (Ps. 18:39; 27:3).

Activist and philanthropist

He has said of his faith: “My faith is the basis from where my game comes. I've been very blessed to have the talent to play the game that I do and be successful at it. I think God guides me through every

day and helps me take the right steps and has helped me to get to where I'm at. When I step on the field, I always say a prayer, say I am thankful to be able to wake up that morning and go out there and try to glorify the Lord with what I do on the field. I think if you go out and try to do that, no matter what you do on the field, you can be happy about what you did.”

And Kaepernick's faith isn't just about making him feel happy. It's turned him into an

activist and philanthropist.

This year, during the offseason Kaepernick launched a GoFundMe page to fly food and water into suffering Somalia. It surpassed its \$2 million goal in just four days. In March, the plane loaded with essential supplies landed in Mogadishu.

He had already pledged to donate \$1 million, along with the proceeds of his jersey

sales from the 2016 season, to charitable work.

Recently, Meals on Wheels announced it had received \$50,000 from Kaepernick.

In September, he joined with the charitable organization 100 Suits, to pass out free suits in front of the New York State Parole office for people who have been released from prison and are looking for jobs.

But we all know why Colin Kaepernick is most famous.

Beginning in 2016, he refused to stand to attention during the playing of the American national anthem.

Kaepernick decided to either remain seated or kneel during on field renditions of the Star Spangled Banner in support of Black Lives Matter and in protest against police violence against black people.

He explained, “I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color. To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder.”

He vowed to continue to protest until he feels like “[the American flag] represents what it's supposed to represent.”

You know what happened next, right?

Kaepernick was voted the “most disliked” player in the NFL.

People posted videos of them burning his jerseys.

He was called “an embarrassment” and “a traitor.”

He was blamed for a significant drop in NFL television ratings, with fans boycotting the NFL because of his protest.

He received death threats.

Then, there's Christianity on its knees.

It seems to me that Tebow and Kaepernick represent the two very different forms that American Christianity has come to.

And not just in America. In many parts of the world it feels as though the Church is separating into two versions, one that values personal piety, gentleness, respect for cultural mores and an emphasis on moral issues like abortion and homosexuality, and another that values social justice, community development, racial reconciliation and political activism.

One version is kneeling in private prayer. The other is kneeling in public protest.

One is concerned with private sins like abortion. The other is concerned with public sins like racial discrimination.

One preaches a gospel of personal salvation. The other preaches a gospel of political and social transformation.

One is reading the Epistles of Paul. The other is reading the Minor Prophets.

One is listening to Eric Metaxas and Franklin Graham. The other is listening to William Barber and John Perkins.

One is rallying at the March for Life. The other is getting arrested at Moral Monday protests.

Contemporary Christianity

You can see where this is going. The bifurcation of contemporary Christianity into two distinct branches is leaving the church all the poorer, with each side needing to be enriched by the biblical vision of the other.

Biblical Christianity should be, as Walter Brueggemann expresses it, “awed to heaven, rooted in earth.” We should, as he says, be able to both “join the angels in praise and keep our feet in time and place.”

Sadly with the suspicion and animosity shown toward each side of the divide by the other I can't see a coming together any time soon.

In the meantime, Christianity remains on its knees in the West. (Reprinted with permission)



Tim Tebow

Photo courtesy of Denver Broncos

Message of hope important to share in times of tragedy

(continued from page 3)

became fallible to the point of total corruption. In Genesis 4 we find the first murder and by Genesis 6, God was 'grieved in His heart' over the absolute deplorability of creation," Blackwell writes.

The events in Eden are directly connected to events like the Las Vegas massacre, Blackwell says.

Satan is still at work in the world and individuals are still susceptible to following the base instincts of human nature.

The message of hope that Christians can speak into times of tragedy is important, says Terry Wilhite, an Alabama-based crisis communication specialist.

"What we do right now matters," Wilhite says.

"Eternity could be in the balance for someone who sees the love of Jesus and the hope of glory in us at this very moment."

Neighbors, friends and coworkers will be hurting and they will seek answers, which is why Wilhite offers several tips for Christians as they respond to a crisis like the attack in Las Vegas:

▶ Stop now and pray for all of those who attended the concert.

▶ Especially pray for first responders and their families, those whose love ones have died and those who are healing from their injuries. Pray for leaders who are now barraged with mountains of decisions that must be made.

Show grace

▶ Love and show grace with your words. Refrain from political commentary and remarks of judgment and don't forward these type comments on social media or participate in a back-and-forth with those who are offering idle talk.

▶ Point people to Jesus but don't beat them up with Scripture. Share the comforting words of the Bible in a loving, graceful way.

Our only hope

▶ Share lovingly and in your own words and life experiences how one can accept Jesus as Savior and how He carries our burdens and our sorrows; Jesus is not our best hope, He is our only hope. By entrusting our lives to Him we can have personal victory in times of crisis and the strength we need to go forward. "Because He Lives, we can face tomorrow."

▶ Be available to listen. Open your mind and heart, your home, your house of worship for prayer. Crises are our best opportunities to

be available to share the hope that is within us. Be available. Listen. Pray with others.

▶ Be one. If we call on Jesus as Lord and Savior, let's stand together — put religious differences aside — and show the nation and the world what unity in Jesus is all about.

Following a national tragedy, grief is inevitable.

However, in times of confusion and sorrow, the Church has an opportunity to encourage and comfort those who suffer, Blackwell says.

"We should fervently pray for the Church to be at its best in the days ahead so that we can minister to the hurting, weep with the brokenhearted and tell of the love of Christ." (Carrie Brown McWhorter)

EDITOR'S NOTE — Read the full-text of Kevin Blackwell's blog post at www.DrKevinBlackwell.com. Learn more about Terry Wilhite at www.terrywilhite.com.



BLACKWELL

— the blood of Jesus and His immense sacrifice on the cross.

When His side was pierced on the cross, it began to flow blood and water (John 19:34).

He literally gave every drop of Himself for us. This is why I am so willing to be a servant of the Most High God.

No, this life is not easy. It is filled with pain, heartache, worries and strife. Serving Jesus is not a task to take on lightly but I can promise you it is a life of love and peace.

If you truly know God is in control of every moment of every day and that He formed you with His holy purpose in mind, you can have a peace that surpasses all understanding (Jer. 1:5).

It is up to you if you accept His grace, His love and His peace.

You only need to surrender your life to Christ and repent of your sins.

Don't go back to the way of the world — go the way of the Lord. Be blessed.✠

ALABAMA

UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Henderson to retire as Central Association DOM

In the past 10 years as director of missions (DOM) for Central Baptist Association, Wayne Henderson has sought to build relationships with the lay-people, ministry leaders and pastors in the churches he serves. Looking back, Henderson says he hopes he's been able to encourage them to greater ministry service, as his time as DOM is coming to a close. He will retire Dec. 31.

But he leaves Central Association different than he found it.

"The past year and a half have been a time of transition as I have felt the Lord leading me to look honestly at the association to lead them to make the hard, but necessary, decision to move to a bivocational DOM with a part-time ministry assistant," Henderson said. "This will free up some funds so that the association can do more ministry rather than spending the majority on personnel."

Prior to his role as DOM, Henderson served as a pastor for nearly 29 years in the eastern part of the state, including Zion Hill Baptist Church, Daviston; Kellyton Baptist Church; Airview Baptist Church, Opelika; and Rockford Baptist Church. He also served as a member of the State Board of Missions.

With experience on both sides of the DOM-pastor relationship, Henderson has some advice for each side. For pastors, he said, "keep your relationship with the Lord fresh and love your people ... (and) realize that God did not place you there to be above the people but to walk beside them." And he urged DOMs to "be visible in the churches."

Henderson holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master's degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

"I have a deep love for the people here (in Central Association) and pray that greater days are ahead," Henderson said.

He and his wife, Margaret, plan to retire to Alexander City and be involved in the lives of their two children and six grandchildren as much as possible. (Maggie Walsh)

Roy Cordle celebrates 50 years in ministry

Roy Cordle said he was around 16 when the Holy Spirit started working on him about becoming a pastor. He preached his first sermon in August

1967 at the church where his father served as pastor — Mount Pisgah Baptist, Pell City. He was working simultaneously at a local supermarket, where he worked his way up from bag boy to manager — a job he said God used to prepare him to relate to people, even difficult ones.

"You've never felt the wrath of anyone until you smash a lady's loaf of bread," he said with a laugh.

Over those years, God affirmed Cordle's call to ministry. He earned two bachelor's degrees, a master's degree and two doctoral degrees, all the while serving as a bivocational pastor. He served at a number of Alabama Baptist churches, including First Baptist, DeArmanville; Calvary Baptist, Oxford; and Louis Street Baptist, Gadsden.

He "retired" from Riddles Bend Baptist Church, Rainbow City, a few years back, but five months after moving back to Anniston, he accepted an interim pastor position at New Haven Baptist Church. Five years later, he was still their pastor, then he accepted the call to Refuge Baptist Church, Lincoln, where he's been for the past three years.

Maintaining long relationships, seeing people come to faith and seeing the fruit of Bible study — those have been Cordle's "greatest joys," he said.

Refuge Baptist honored his 50 years in ministry with a plaque and a luncheon in August. Cordle and his wife, Joan, have one married daughter, Jacque, and a granddaughter. (Grace Thornton)



CORDLE



HENDERSON

My JESUS Story

By Jenni Ingram
Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

When I think of slavery, I think of human souls being sold to the highest bidder for a lifetime of horrendous pain and arduous work. However, in reading a devotional recently from David Jeremiah, I realized something.

I am a slave.

I am a willing, blessed, loved, cherished slave for Jesus. I came to this thought because of the Scripture that was in that devotional, 1 Corinthians 6:20 which says, "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your Spirit which are God's."

We were all bought at a hefty price



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A chainsaw team from Etowah Baptist Association serves in Florida on Sept. 19–27 following Hurricane Irma.

Recovery phase

Alabama Disaster Relief effort in Florida turns to recovery; more deployments anticipated

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

Approximately 25 percent of Florida's population is Hispanic, which is why a Spanish-speaking chaplain working with Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (ABDR) was a valuable member of one team serving in the state.

"There are pockets of people (in Fort Myers, Florida) who speak little or no English," said Cookie Baker, an Etowah Baptist ABDR volunteer who said ABDR chaplain Ana Raymundo was helpful in allowing volunteers to "bridge the language barrier and help those who need it."

One of those who needed help was Juan, an elderly man who had recently had knee replacement surgery but had been working to clean up around his home. Baker said the team gave Juan and his wife a Bible and prayed with them. Another was Clyde, a blind man whose Spanish-speaking neighbor sent ABDR volunteers to help.

Divine appointment

"We were able to minister to him," Baker said. "We would never have met him had Ana not been with us to talk to his neighbor."

Clyde and Juan are just two of the hundreds of hurricane survivors assisted by ABDR volunteers working in disaster-stricken areas of Florida, Texas and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI).

Most ABDR teams are working in the Fort Myers, Florida, area, according to an Oct. 2 update by Mark Wakefield, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

Volunteers have served 1,770 volunteer days during which they prepared 115,000 meals, distributed 287 Bibles and more than 700 tracts, presented the gospel 115 times and reported 13 professions of faith. In a Facebook post, Pleasant Grove Baptist Association Director of Missions Dan Wiggins said ABDR workers in Florida are doing "tremendous work for the Lord and the people of Florida."

The large-scale ABDR relief effort in Florida is beginning to transition into the recovery phase, Wakefield said. The mass feeding kitchen shut down on Oct. 4. A small feeding unit from First Baptist Church, Trussville, will continue to prepare food for volunteers as cleanup efforts continue.

Wakefield also noted that vol-

unteers are operating a laundry unit in Beaumont, Texas, and other volunteers are working with North End Baptist Church, also in Beaumont. Associational directors have noted that several Alabama Baptist churches have

teams working in Houston and surrounding areas in coordination with local churches there.

Hundreds of new ABDR volunteers have been trained in Alabama since Hurricane Harvey hit the coast of Texas and Louisiana, and Wakefield said the state is working on a strategy to deploy many of those volunteers to Texas.

Other ABDR volunteers were scheduled to arrive in Puerto

Rico over the weekend of Oct. 7–8 to assist in preparing and distributing food, Wakefield said. The island is still reeling after Hurricane Maria knocked out power, cell service and potable water supplies across the island.

ABDR workers will join other Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers also making their way



Photo courtesy of Etowah Baptist Association

to Puerto Rico. Volunteers will be assisting local churches with whatever needs present themselves, Wakefield said.

"The future plan is for the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief network to divide the island into regions and for various state conventions to work to take care of any needs that [disaster relief] can meet. This is indeed a long-term response," Wakefield said in an online update.

Franklin Baptist Association has undertaken an effort to send supplies to Puerto Rico. The association collected cases of water, canned foods, baby diapers and toiletries and shipped four crates to Puerto Rico on Oct. 2. Those crates are expected to arrive the week of Oct. 9, according to Franklin Association Director of Missions Larry Dover. The association hopes to ship 3–4 additional crates soon.

"We should have some charcoal grills and charcoal, batteries and flashlights, as well as food and water in those crates — the essential things you need when you don't have power," Dover said.

The Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) Foundation also has made grants to help pastors in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands purchase water and other basic supplies for their congregations.

Nellie Torrado, executive director of Puerto Rico/Virgin Islands WMU, said people are "beginning to despair" in the midst of

the devastation surrounding them.

"On our three islands — Puerto Rico, Vieques and Culebra — there is no drinking water, not even bottled, nor electricity," she said. "Gasoline is limited. Communication is sporadic. Lines at the gas stations are very long."

David George, president of the WMU Foundation, said the organization will continue to look for ways to help with relief and rebuilding in Puerto Rico.

Airlift kitchen onsite

Elsewhere in the Caribbean, the SBOM airlift kitchen has arrived in St. Thomas USVI and two volunteers are there to assist in setup and operation of the kitchen, Wakefield said.

Wakefield praised ABDR volunteers for their hard work over the past four weeks. There is much still to do, he said, but much has been done.

Meanwhile, forecasters with the National Hurricane Center were watching Tropical Storm Nate, blamed for at least 20 deaths in Central America. On Oct. 6, Nate was located just south of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, headed toward the Gulf of Mexico. Hurricane warnings had been issued for the U.S. Gulf Coast from Louisiana to the Florida Panhandle. Nate was expected to make landfall Oct. 8 and move inland across the state of Alabama throughout the day on Sunday into Monday. Heavy rain and flooding was expected. ☼

Those interested in serving with ABDR have one more opportunity for training. Registration is still open for sessions to be held Oct. 19–21 at the Shelby Baptist Association Ministry Center in Columbiana.

Training options include chaplaincy, cleanup and recovery, chainsaw and administration for both new and current volunteers.

More information and registration is available at www.sldr.org.



Progress continues at new SBOM building

Exterior and interior work continue on the new Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions facility in Prattville. The building is scheduled to be occupied by staff in January 2018.

Photos by Doug Rogers

Samford University

samford.edu



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Changing Seasons



Fall season provides opportunities to teach children about God's love, creation

By Carolyn Tomlin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

It's that time of year when the beautiful colors of gold, crimson, burnt orange and russet capture our attention and we are once again reminded that only God could create such a magnificent world.

The fall season provides numerous opportunities to share the love of God with children and grandchildren. God created the world and all that's in it for mankind. Could these activities build stronger bonds within your family? Could less time spent with technology put your family in touch with the world God made?

Memorizing Scripture

As a parent or grandparent, teach your children to memorize Scripture. Each fall activity has a related Bible verse that is easy for elementary children to remember. As you teach, remember to include Scripture in activities. Memory verses learned when young stay with a child throughout life.

► Observe the starry, starry night. With cooler weather, pitch a tent in the backyard and observe the stars. Point out various star formations, such as the Little Dipper and Big Dipper. Use this

opportunity as a time to talk about how God created the heavens and the earth.

Memorize this verse: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).

► Find the perfect leaf. During the day, organize a treasure hunt and ask

children to find the "perfect" fall leaf. Give out paper bags and allow about 20 minutes for the search. After they return, point out that none will be perfect as they may have a blemish, a hole from an insect or a discolored section. Leaves are like people and no one is perfect — only God. But God will help us if we pray and ask Him to guide us.

Memorize this verse: "And God saw all that He had made, and it was very good" (Gen. 1:31).

► Let's take a hike. Having fun as a family builds memories and build strong relationships. Take advantage of warm, sunny days at a nearby park with a wide variety of deciduous trees. Leaves on these trees change colors in the fall and drop their leaves. If you have elementary age children, have a contest to see how many

different varieties of leaves they can find. When you return home, have them research the leaves in a book or online and identify each species. Cut squares of wax paper and place each leaf between two layers. Pressing with a warm iron (adult supervision) seals the paper around the leaves.

Tape to windows and enjoy the sunbeams coming through. Remind children how God planned for families and how much fun you have together.

Memorize this verse: "He has made everything beautiful in his time" (Eccles. 3:11).

► Exercise for health. Pull out the bicycles, tricycles or wagons for pulling small children and enjoy the fall season. Use your senses as you talk about the natural world God made.

Sight — colored leaves, watching the effect of wind on falling leaves, blue sky, clouds

Sound — rustling of dry leaves, wind, rain, bird calls

Touch — moss on tree trunks, morning dew

Taste — fall apples, popcorn, apple cider

Smell — campfires, goldenrod

or other autumn wildflowers

Memorize this verse: "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps. 118:24).

► Prepare healthy fall recipes. Homemade granola is a simple recipe (see recipe, this page) that all the family will enjoy. Plus it's one that children can enjoy mixing together. Granola makes a quick energy snack for camping or while practicing sports. Ingredients consisting of grain, wheat germ, nuts, oil and dried fruit were used in the Bible. We use these same food products today in many recipes.

As you cook, involve children in helping to mix, stir, slice (with a plastic knife) and measure. Watch the child's face as they say, "I made it myself."

Memorize this verse: "A new commandment I give you: love one another" (John 13:34).

Spending time together

Families who spend both quality and quantity time together build strong relationships. Childhood is such a short, brief period of life. As parents and grandparents, make time to teach the love of God to children.✠

**"Memory verses
learned when young
stay with a child
throughout life."**

— GRANOLA SNACK RECIPE —

Ingredients

4 cups quick oats
½ cup dry milk
½ cup honey

¼ cup wheat germ
½ cup vegetable oil
1 cup peanuts

1 cup dried fruit
(raisins or
cranberries)

Instructions

Stir all ingredients (except dried fruit) together in a large mixing bowl. Pour into a 9-by-13-inch baking pan. Bake at 300 degrees for 45 minutes. Stir several times while baking. Add fruit after baking. Cool and place in an air-tight container. Provide small plastic bags ready for quick snacks and sharing with friends.



Photo by Carolyn Tomlin

Decatur's Central Baptist to host North Alabama library conference

Think a library conference is only for librarians? Think again.

The North Alabama Conference for Church Librarians, scheduled for Nov. 4 at Central Baptist Church, Decatur, certainly will cover topics such as starting and maintaining a church library, cataloging a collection and taking care of old books.

But this year's conference will offer so much more, said Eva Nell Hunter, library team leader at Central Baptist.

"We are now the largest church library conference in the Southern Baptist Convention," she said, noting that conference leaders include national and state experts including six national library specialists representing LifeWay Christian Resources.

Variety of sessions

Sessions at this year's conference, whose theme is "Building Blocks for Church Library Ministry," will include every aspect of church library work, as well as sessions for pastors and church staff members, including: "Collecting, preserving and promoting church history," led by Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission; "Disciple making for pastors and church staff members," led by David Francis, director of Sunday School at LifeWay; "Disciple making for church librarians," led by Morlee Maynard, LifeWay church library ministry specialist; and other sessions on topics like upcycling, creative promotions



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

The library at Central Baptist Church, Decatur, has a variety of murals on the walls as well as displays of special items donated by missionaries and retired ministers.

and reading club ideas. Maynard and Francis also will facilitate a roundtable discussion for pastors and librarians, as well as provide luncheon entertainment.

Hunter said topics covered at the conference will be helpful for church librarians, as well as those who assist with tutoring or mentoring, English as a second language classes and other ministries that utilize online and print materials.

Lunch will be provided for participants. There is no cost to attend the conference, but reservations by Nov. 1 are appreciated, Hunter said. "Your only expense is transportation," Hunter said.

The conference will begin with registration at 8 a.m. The first general session begins at 8:30. The conference will close at 3:30 p.m. Participants who pre-register will receive a gift bag and all participants will be eligible for door

prizes given throughout the day. A LifeWay bookstore will be available.

To register, contact Hunter in one of the following ways: by telephone, 256-353-5912 (church) or 256-303-7739 (cell); email, enhunter1946@gmail.com or library@cbcdccatur.org; or mail, Central Baptist Church, 2801 Highway 31 S, Decatur, AL 35603. Participants should provide their name, address, telephone number, email address (optional), church and association.

Complete schedule

A complete schedule for the conference including course descriptions is available at the Central Baptist Church library website, <http://cbcd.booksys.net> (click on "Display" then follow conference links). (TAB)

Wall Street Journal ranks Samford top university in state

Samford University in Birmingham is the top-ranked university in Alabama according to new rankings released Sept. 26 by *The Wall Street Journal*.

Samford is ranked 226th out of the 1,054 U.S. universities and colleges that appear in the new student outcome and teaching-focused rankings.

But Samford isn't the only Alabama Baptist school on the list; University of Mobile was listed in the group of schools ranked 601st to 800th.

Other Alabama colleges and universities listed include:

the University of Alabama at Birmingham (243), Tuskegee University (265), Auburn University (273), the University of Alabama (398), Spring Hill College in Mobile (483), Birmingham-Southern College (496), University of South Alabama in Mobile (601-800) and Alabama A&M University in Huntsville (above 800).

Samford President Andrew Westmoreland said, "Rankings are just one measure of a university's effectiveness and reputation, but it is especially rewarding to be so highly ranked in our state and nationally by an organization as prestigious as the *Journal*. Because student engagement

and outcomes are key to these rankings, it affirms the work of our faculty and staff in providing the rigorous academic preparation our students need to be successful in the marketplace."

The *Journal* ranking emphasizes how well a college will prepare students for life after graduation. The *Journal* reports that the national ranking values schools that focus their spending on classroom instruction and rewards both teaching and research excel-



Samford University

lence. To that end, the overall ranking is based on 15 factors across four categories: Forty percent of each school's overall score comes from student outcomes, including a measure of graduate salaries, 30 percent from the school's academic resources, 20 percent from how well it engages its students and 10 percent from the diversity of its students and staff.

Data sources for the rankings include the Times Higher Education U.S. Student Survey of 200,000 current U.S. students and the annual Times Higher Education Academic Reputation Survey, along with public data on areas including completion rates, graduate employment and loan repayments. (Samford, TAB)

TAB editor receives alumni award from Mississippi College

Bob Terry, editor of *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB), has been named as one of the co-recipients of his alma mater's Order of the Golden Arrow award.

A 1965 graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton, Terry will receive the award at the university's homecoming dinner Oct. 20.

The Order of the Golden Arrow is a prestigious honor from the Mississippi College Alumni Association, according to a university press release. The award goes to graduates or friends of the Baptist-affiliated university for their exceptional performance as professionals, and high achievers are recognized for showing career

leadership beyond the ordinary.

Terry has been at the helm of TAB since 1995, leading the Christian newspaper to be named among America's top regional Christian newspapers 11 times over the past 20 years. Prior to TAB, Terry served as editor of the Missouri state Baptist paper *Word & Way* for 20 years.

Terry owes a debt of gratitude to his alma mater, saying it was at Mississippi College that he discovered faculty, staff and administrators who "encouraged me, believed in me and became lifelong friends," he said. Those undergraduate years were "a life-transforming experience." (TAB)



TERRY

Technology workshop held in Philippines



Photo courtesy of Ed Landers

Ed Landers (front row, behind student sitting on floor) teaches a one-week 'Technology Workshop' at Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary in Baguio, Philippines. Landers represented Samford University as director of The Media Center. Mountain Brook Baptist Church donated equipment for the seminary to learn to use new technology in worship and ministry.

Church ANNIVERSARIES

FBC Russellville celebrates 150th anniversary

August 13 was a day to mark the growth and diversity of First Baptist Church, Russellville, over the past 150 years, and it was a day marked by “enthusiastic worship,” according to Lonette Berg.

The Hispanic congregation of First, Russellville, joined its parent church for the 10:30 a.m. service and worshipped in Spanish and in English before hearing a message from Gene Balding, pastor emeritus of First, Russellville, who served as its pastor from 1993 to 2007. Balding based the message on Joshua 4, urging participants to remember both the trials and victories the Lord has brought them through.

Commemorative certificates were presented to the church by Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, and Larry Dover, director of missions for Franklin Baptist Association. Minister of music and senior adults Bert Fowler sang special music for the occasion.

Longtime member Floyd Tirey recognized Charlotte Herston, a member since 1946, and Doris Woodruff, a member since 1940, as being among nine of the longest-tenured church members. Patrick Martin is pastor.



Photo by Lonette Berg

Capshaw Baptist holds centennial celebration

Special music and special guests were the hallmark of the centennial celebration of Capshaw Baptist Church, Harvest, on Aug. 27.

Former worship director Rex Looney joined current worship director Chris Moncrief in leading worship for the morning service. Looney then joined fellow former worship director Mike Clem in leading an old-fashioned singing in the celebratory afternoon service.



Photo courtesy of Capshaw Baptist Church

Former pastor Chip Dean brought the message and commemorative plaques were presented to associate pastor Adam Rice by Joe Teal, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative, and Kevin Ward, director of missions for Limestone Baptist Association.

During the potluck lunch between services, participants were able to view a slideshow of the church's history as well as a special display of framed photos from the past 100 years.

Church member Barbara Porter said with a laugh, “It went great. Many people said, ‘Let’s do this again in 100 years!’”

Mount Joy BC marks 100 years of service

One hundred years ago a church was started in the Curry community. Two acres of land were bought for \$40, and in a 30-by-40 foot building the Lord began to move. All these years later, the Lord has continued to sustain Mount Joy Baptist Church which celebrated its centennial Aug. 27.

During the 11 a.m. service Johnie Sentell, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative, presented a commemorative plaque and pianist Martha Anthony played a special rendition of “His Eye Is on the Sparrow.” Walker Baptist Association Director of Missions David Miller brought the morning message. Drawing from Acts 2:41–47, Miller encouraged participants to look with anticipation to the future to “see what God will do next.”

A historical video also was played and Steve Speer read the organizational minutes for the church. Robert Sparkman is pastor.

Compiled by the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and TAB



Photo courtesy of Carlos Lemus

Elmore and Autauga Baptist associations mobilize new Hispanic ministry leaders at Coosada Baptist Church on Sept. 10. Four were ordained as deacons and two were licensed to preach. Pictured are (l to r, including back row) Mel Johnson, Carlos Lemus, Ray McKenzie, Fernando López, Oscar Rodríguez, Giovany Cano, Agustín Pérez, Delfino Romero, Carlos Contreras, Aquino Tolentino, Yoni Martínez and Sergio Guerra.

Expanding God's kingdom

Thriving Hispanic ministry partnership crosses county lines

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

There are a lot of lines being crossed down in Elmore and Autauga Baptist associations but everyone seems to think that's a really good thing, according to Mel Johnson.

It's bringing everyone together.

Johnson has been director of missions for Autauga Association now for about a year. His counterpart in Elmore Association, Ray McKenzie, has been in the director of missions' chair for about four months.

It's all still new, but two things both men say they are glad they inherited are these — a Hispanic strategist like Carlos Lemus and a thriving Hispanic ministry partnership.

“It's really exciting to be a part of what is happening,” McKenzie said. “I'm an observer and an encourager — Carlos is the guy who does the real work.”

‘An incredible thing’

Through the associations' partnership, which employs Lemus to work for both associations, Hispanic mission churches are cropping up in both associations and members of churches are driving over the county line to help with ministry at other churches.

“It's an incredible thing,” McKenzie said. “They just all work together.”

That can mean anything from Vacation Bible School to special outreach events, or it can mean

joining together to mobilize new leaders like they did Sept. 10. Both associations got together that day at Coosada Baptist Church to celebrate the ordination of six new leaders.

Three men from Thelma Baptist Hispanic Mission, Wetumpka, of Elmore Association and one from First Hispanic Baptist Church of Autauga Association were ordained as deacons. Two men from Pueblo de Dios also were licensed to preach the gospel as leaders of the Hispanic Mission at Coosada Baptist Church.

Working together

“It's been really good for our associations to work together,” Johnson said. “We praise God for these men and their commitment to expand God's kingdom.”

Lemus said the two men who were ordained to preach — Giovany Cano and Delfino Romero — have both had training at the Spanish-language Bible Institute held at First Baptist Church, Indian Springs, on Saturdays.

“This Hispanic work is growing, and it's growing really fast,” Lemus said. “It is to the point that we need more specialized training for new leaders in order to have people taking care of the missions we are opening.”

And as Hispanic believers serve others and continue to be trained at the institute, they are crossing even more lines into other counties and spreading Christ there.

“It's a historic time in this area,” he said. “It's a wonderful thing to watch.” ☛

Support group ministers to soldiers, veterans

By Anna Keller
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

U.S. military personnel experience life differently than civilians — deployments, combat duty and security issues all are part of the profession but come with unique challenges both during and after a soldier's military career. A new group in Enterprise hopes to help soldiers and veterans by providing a safe space to discuss these concerns.

Enterprise Military Support Group held its first meeting Sept. 19 at the Church on Boll Weevil Circle. According to John Granger, director of missions for Coffee Baptist Association and a veteran himself, the initial meeting was well attended, and the participants and group leaders shared positive feedback.

"The spouse of one of the men (who came to the first meeting) texted me ... saying her husband was helped and she was so glad he came," Granger said.

The idea for the group began with Granger and was born from conversations he had with fellow Christians and veterans.

Enlisting help

"I've tried to have close contact with the chaplains' office at nearby Fort Rucker," he said. "We have lots of military retirees in our area and the chaplains and I have discussed the needs of soldiers, veterans and their families for years. The sobering statistics about PTSD issues and soldier/veteran suicide have concerned us all."

Granger enlisted the help of chaplain Dean Bonura, retired chaplain Sonny Moore and minister Fred Fowler (all veterans as well) to start the support group. The group has been in the planning stages for years and is designed to be a space for Granger

and other leaders to reach out in friendship.

"We agreed that this type of support group could be very help-



Unsplash.com

ful to many soldiers and retirees in our area," Moore said. "Having served as post chaplain at Fort Rucker several years ago, I know the value of having someone to come alongside to listen and care."

Importance of listening

Listening is one of the key elements participants can expect from this group, along with connection between those with similar experiences.

"They can expect moral support and can expect that their feelings will be respected," Granger said.

"They can expect that we will talk about how the Lord has helped us and they can expect confidentiality."

This initial support group will last for six weeks and the hope is that the group members will be able to forge friendships during that six-week period that can continue beyond the meetings. A second set of meetings is slated to begin Feb. 20.

"The first meeting was informal yet informative," Moore said. "The best way to publicize this opportunity is by word of mouth and we're doing that."✠

For more information, call Granger at 334-894-6411.

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CHURCH POSITIONS

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

PASTOR

Edgil Grove Baptist Church in Jasper, Alabama, is accepting resumés for a full-time pastor. Send resumés to: edgilgrovebaptistchurch@outlook.com, or mail to: 100 Edgil Grove Rd., Jasper, AL 35503.

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

Kinsey Baptist Church, Dothan, Alabama, is seeking a part-time minister of music/worship leader. We desire a mixture of contemporary and traditional music. Please email your resumé to: melandjohncoch@yahoo.com or mail to: Kinsey Baptist Church, 6745 Walden Dr., Kinsey, AL 36303.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC DIRECTOR

Calvary Heights Baptist Church, Alexander City, Alabama, is receiving applicants for a part-

time, bivocational music director. Deadline for resumés is Oct. 31. Resumés and inquiries may be sent to: CalvaryHeightsBaptist@gmail.com.

STUDENT PASTOR

Hepzibah Baptist Church in Talladega is now receiving resumés for the position of full-time student pastor. If interested please email resumé to: hepbapchurch@bellsouth.net.

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A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

The Beatitudes series — Matthew 5:3-12

'Blessed are the insulted ... persecuted' (v. 11-12)

There is an old quote that goes something like this, "Education is what you get when you read the fine print. Experience is what you get from not reading the fine print." When Jesus called His disciples, there was no fear for what might lie ahead in the fine print.

Jesus did not hesitate to inform His disciples early on what lay ahead for them. There was no panacea communicated to them. The followers of Jesus were fully informed that there would be suffering and sadness.

Please remember that the Sermon on the Mount was preached to the disciples ... the multitudes were only witnesses. As each of these "witnesses" came to know Christ as Savior, the words were personal.

In verses 11-12, Jesus says, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." This statement no doubt caused a moment of quiet reflection for His followers. Suffering? Why suffering? If you are God, should we not just seize what is yours and take it? Is that not what is always done by a conquering victor?

Called to suffer

We forget sometimes that we are called by Jesus not to surge and succeed but to die. Of the 318 delegates attending the Nicene Council, an important church meeting in the 4th century A.D., fewer than 12 had not lost an eye or lost a hand or did not limp on a leg lamed by torture for their Christian faith. Yes we are called to suffer.

Each of the Beatitudes encapsulates two phrases: the condition and the result. I want to dwell on this final Beatitude as elucidated by Jesus in verses 11 and 12. The condition is mistreatment, suffering, torture and possibly martyrdom. The result is a great reward in heaven. At this juncture many of you may want to renegotiate the terms of your Christian life.

In the oldest book of the Bible we are



By Jerry W. Light Sr.

Jerry W. Light Sr. is pastor of First Baptist Church, Selma. He is a graduate of Mercer University in Macon, Georgia; New

Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary; and Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham. He currently serves on the board of governors of Judson College in Marion.

He and his wife, Suzanne, have been married 28 years and have three adult children and one grandson.

told of an ancient man who was named Job. God said that Job was a good man and a holy man. One day Satan challenged his holiness before God. God allowed Satan to test Job. And thus the testing begins and continues for 41 chapters.

As a Christian this book terrifies me. The only two things that Satan could not do to Job were to take away his life or his relationship with God. Systematically everything was stripped away.

Now Job had three friends — if you choose to call them that. These men understood life but they certainly didn't understand God.

They were "experts." I have always understood that an expert is someone who can tell you more about something than you care to hear. We know that Bildad, Zophar and Eliphaz did not understand God and His nature because it is stated plainly in Job 42:7. Through all of Job's suffering these three friends tried to blame Job. They picked apart his life, like some friends are known to do.

Speaking truth

Yet Job had a fourth friend. He was not a contemporary like Bildad, Zophar and Eliphaz. Elihu was younger yet more knowledgeable of the ways and the nature of God. When Elihu finished speaking the truth to Job, Job said nothing. Only after

God spoke (in Chapters 38-41) did Job say, "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee" (42:5). When God Himself came to Job, when He spoke and made Himself known to Job, Job understood God. His eyes were opened.

God illuminated the differences between Himself and Job. He also warned Job not to be deceived by the five senses. God cannot be put under man's microscope and examined. You will never come up with irrefutable evidence about God through human abilities. Through the crucible of suffering, as you shed your human desires and fleshly goals, you will see God and understand Him.

God's reality

Job gained a new sense of God's reality. It is more than intellectual or speculative knowledge. It is the knowledge of the heart. He tasted. He saw. And the result was a broken and changed man. The man that we witness in the latter portion of Job 42 is so very different than the man that Satan was jealous of in Job 1.

We are not to be surprised if people in the world hate Christians (1 John 3:13). Matthew Henry wrote, "Whom Christ blesses, the world curses. The heirs of heaven have never been the darlings of this world, since the old enmity was put between the seed of woman and of the serpent. Why did Cain hate Abel? Because Abel's works were righteous."

Unwavering faith

One cannot wander through facts and randomly choose truth from them. There must be a system. Job learned that the system was simple, certainly not as complicated as his friends Bildad, Zophar and Eliphaz had postulated.

But the system is not a system at all. It is a posture, a position of unwavering faith in God and His Word. I have always admired the way James, the brother of Jesus, began his brief letter to believers. He said, "Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds." †

LETTERS

(continued from page 2)

background regarding the biblical sojourner.

James K. Hoffmeier, Old Testament scholar at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, tells us that the Hebrew language has three terms to describe a foreigner ("ger," "zar," "nekhar"). He notes that some Bibles incorrectly render them all as "foreigner."

The terms "zar" and "nekhar" refer to people passing through a foreign land or sojourners. The term "ger" and its verb forms refer to those who live in another land with permission of the host. Hoffmeier says, "The law is clear that 'ger' is not to be oppressed but to receive equal justice and have access to the social support systems of ancient Israel." He then notes that "the law does not extend to the 'zar' and 'nekhar' such benefits and services. From this I conclude that 'ger' was viewed as a legal alien."

Hoffmeier also says, "The mistake of some well-meaning Christians is to apply the biblical laws for the 'ger' to illegal aliens in America even though they do not fit the biblical legal and social definition."

If we extend these biblical principles to our modern society, shouldn't we conclude that those aliens who are here legally are to be treated like regular citizens? Of course. But shouldn't those who have broken our laws and come here illegally be treated as law-breakers and not be given "access to the social support systems" of this country?

Vic Payne
Auburn, Ala.

'OUTSTANDING'

I often find myself at odds with the positions of Editor Bob Terry but his "In the Midst of Hurricanes" editorial in the Sept. 14th issue of *TAB* was an outstanding article and should be commended.

Max Till
Repton, Ala. †



According to the Jan. 30, 1850, issue of *The Alabama Baptist*, trustees of The Judson Female Institute reported sufficient resources to pay for the construction of a new brick kitchen for the school. The number of students completing the last year was given as 145. Already enrolled for the coming year were 116, the same number as the previous year at the time. Trustees added, "Each year the Institute is becoming more extensively known and more highly appreciated."

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

CAMPUS News

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

Samford Professor Will Chair Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama

Samford University history professor Carlos Alemán has been chosen to serve as chair of the Birmingham-based Hispanic Interest Coalition of Alabama (¡HICA!), a nonprofit organization dedicated to the social, civic and economic integration of Hispanic families in the state.



ALEMÁN

Alemán said ¡HICA! helps thousands of people in the community by providing referrals and services such as helping clients register for nationalization programs, providing educational services and helping entrepreneurial clients secure microloans to start businesses.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

University of Mobile Joins International Group: University of Mobile (UM) has been accepted as a member of the International

Association of Baptist Colleges and Universities (IABCU).

UM President Dr. Timothy L. Smith said IABCU membership will enhance the Baptist university's Great Commission focus by strengthening the university's partnership with sister institutions and providing increased opportunities to collaborate.

Textile Artist, Homeless Advocate Hebbard to Deliver First Honors Lecture: Bethany Bear Hebbard, a textile artist and advocate for the poor and homeless, will deliver the first University of Mobile (UM) Honors Lecture on Oct. 19. Hebbard will focus on her work at Community First! Village, a master-planned community for the chronically homeless in Austin, Texas. Previously she was assistant professor of English and director of the Honors Program at UM.



HEBBARD

Hebbard will speak at 5 p.m. in Weaver Auditorium on the UM campus. The public is invited.

Grantham Named VP for Advancement: University of Mobile announced the appointment of

Travis Grantham as vice president for advancement. He will lead the university's fundraising and alumni departments.

Grantham has more than 30 years of experience working with nonprofit organizations, most recently as director of hospital development for University of South Alabama. He is a member of East Pointe Baptist Church, Spanish Fort.



GRANTHAM

JUDSON COLLEGE

Pell City Pastor Speaks at Judson College: John Thweatt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pell City, and president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, spoke at Judson College's chapel service Oct. 3 in Marion.

Thweatt preached from Ephesians 2:14-16, asking students, "What is your calling?"

At press time, other chapel service speakers for October included: Teresa Pugh (Oct. 10), April Franklin (Oct. 17) and Frances Ford (Oct. 24).✝



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Outreach, relationship-building key to reaching young people, Rimskyi says

(continued from page 1)

began to envision how far-reaching the results could be for the young people of Ukraine.

But, as Rimskyi said, “there were many giants in the way.” Obtaining visas was a challenge but Alabama Congressman Robert Aderholt wrote letters to the U.S. embassy in Ukraine, as did Sam Day, then director of missions for Tuscaloosa Baptist Association. When the Ukrainian group went to the embassy for interviews, “We were treated like VIPs,” Rimskyi said. The visas were granted.

With that taken care of, perhaps the biggest challenge was language. It would not be possible to find or hire enough Russian translators in Tuscaloosa, so it was imperative that the Ukrainians have adequate language skills. A few of the young people knew some basic English but others knew none. They spent significant time being tutored in English then working as a group to improve.

Two years later, the group arrived with great enthusiasm and an overwhelming desire to learn all they could during their visit.

Recruiting youth pastors

Travis Seagle, minister of students/education for Coaling Baptist Church and student ministry consultant for Tuscaloosa Association, recruited youth pastors from several churches to work with the visitors. Seagle developed a schedule for the Ukrainians to rotate in teams of two among the churches, shadowing



Photo courtesy of Slavik Rimskyi

Jim and Rosalind Holloman (standing, middle) have been forming and maintaining relationships with Ukrainian ministers and laypeople since their first missions trip to the country in 1999.

various local youth pastors.

They attended worship services in sanctuaries and in youth groups, discussed outreach methods with the pastors, participated in panel discussions and observed and participated in Bible studies.

Developing relationships

Lily Tsveklava was impressed by learning about the many ways the local youth pastors use activities such as sports to involve young people and draw them into church. “I liked seeing how they do ministry in so many different ways,” Tsveklava said. “And I realize how important it is to develop relationships and let others know that you care about them as you are inviting them to church.”

Vitalii Krohmal echoed that observation, saying he learned an important lesson from Jerry Tyson, youth pastor at Bellview Baptist Church, McCalla — “love ’em like crazy and build strong relationships.”

One thing that impressed Krohmal was the extent of the preparation he observed among the local pastors. He also was in awe of the number of books and the extent of print resources

available to the pastors. He was ecstatic that he was given 15 new books to take home to help him prepare studies for the youth of his church. “I was honored that they presented some of their books to me,” he said.

One principle they all agreed on is that they must take the church “beyond the walls of the church,” Rimskyi said. Only 4 percent of Ukrainians are Protestant, so the challenge is great. Learning about outreach in the community through sports and other relationship-building activities will be the key to reaching young people, Rimskyi said.

Welcoming spirit

Once nonbelievers come to church, it’s important that they feel loved and accepted, he said. “When Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union, people exhibited a strict Russian mentality of keeping things to themselves, not socializing, being close, not open, not transparent. Even people in church did this,” he said. “So we must work on having a welcoming, kind, loving spirit. This is changing in all Ukraine but first it is changing in our churches.”

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Exodus 25:1-9; 31:1-6

The Offering (25:1-7)

Israel was redeemed from Egypt for the purpose of serving God in a faithful relationship to Him. Then God called Moses into His presence atop Mount Sinai to give him instructions for building a tabernacle so that the Lord may dwell with His people (Ex. 24). First things first — the materials must be gathered. So God commands the people to pool their resources and offer them up as an offering for His purposes. Of course, the Lord does not need their offerings. After all, whatever they give to God, the Creator of all things, is already His. While He does not need their offering, he certainly desires their offering. God would only take from those who were “willing to give” (Ex. 25:2). Those who willingly gave an offering would not only participate in the immediate blessing of building a tabernacle that housed the presence of God’s glory but they also would foreshadow the work of Christ and His Church (Heb. 8:5-6). Likewise, we ought to give “not reluctantly or out of compulsion, since God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). Offering is an opportunity for worship. Do you give for any other reason than for cheerful thanksgiving to the giver of life, salvation and joy?

The Purpose (25:8-9)

God is very clear to Moses; there is no wiggle room for deviation from the blueprint. The tabernacle was to be constructed exactly to plan. An ark, topped with a mercy seat nestled between two gold cherubim, would house the tablets of the law. A golden lampstand, modeled after an almond tree in bloom, would be constructed as a solid piece. From furniture to priestly garb, every last element of the tabernacle is described in precise detail. These rules, like the laws,

reflected God’s perfection, orderliness and holiness. The tabernacle itself highlights this point. The structure was split between the Holy Place, where the priests could enter often, and the Most Holy Place, where only the High Priest could enter annually before God’s presence atop the mercy seat. It is clear that center of worship is not the tabernacle nor the ritual but God Himself so that He would receive the glory. Time and again we see the works and covenants of God are for His glory. Thankfully, the works and covenants of God also are for the good of His people. Through the mediating sacrifice of the Lord Jesus and His empty tomb, we can enjoy God’s presence as a people called out from slavery of our sin and into the freedom of Christ’s righteousness.

The Leaders (31:1-6)

True to God’s character, He does not simply command Israel to obey Him without also giving them the tools and power needed for their obedience. God selects Bezalel and Oholiab to equip them for the work ahead. God gives them wisdom, understanding, artistic abilities and above all else the Holy Spirit (Ex. 31:3). God had a plan for Israel’s obedience, a plan that included empowering them to obey.

We are no different. As the apostle Paul said, “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do” (Eph. 2:10). Like Israel, God calls us to obey Him and equips us to meet that call. Our works are God’s works through us. He gives each of us various talents and gifts to accomplish His will. Perhaps you do not know what your talents and gifts are. Ask the Lord in prayer and ask those who know you best. We are stewards of the talents and gifts that God gives us (1 Pet. 4:10). Let us glorify the Lord with gifts so that one day He may turn to us and say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21). †

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

CALEB: UNWAVERING FAITH Numbers 13:26-30; 14:6-10, 21-24

Traveling south from the northern reaches of the land of Israel, down toward Jerusalem and Beer Sheva, a subtle but irresistible change is evident in the land. The green trees and fields of the North gradually give way to browner hues. Stubborn shrubs begin to huddle around dry stream beds until the land finally gives up and becomes stark and seemingly endless wilderness. The biblical authors and the characters whose lives they narrate regularly return to these deserted settings. Abraham and his sons spend their years in the wilderness. David hides here from Saul. Elijah returns to here when he is on the run from Jezebel. Even Jesus begins His ministry with 40 days and nights in this barren place.

For each of these characters, time spent in the wilderness served the same purpose. It was here they could get away from the din of city life and in the silence of the desert train their ears to hear God’s voice. Here these figures would learn that trust was more important than skill or wealth. It was here they would develop a tough-as-nails faith, the kind of desert faith that would survive the tough times that lay ahead.

The wilderness experience was especially important for the Israelites who had followed Moses out of Egypt. Here, in a land with little water and less food, the people of Israel would have to learn to trust in God’s sufficiency. Unfortunately, this test would prove too much for the nation. When finally given the chance to leave the wilderness and enter the promised land, only two would rise to meet the challenge: Caleb and Joshua.

Trust God more than your circumstances. (13:26-30)

As the Israelites approached the land of Canaan, Moses chose 12 spies, one from each of Israel’s tribes, to venture into the

land and get a sense of the challenges they were about to face. The spies were in unison when they reported back that the land was lush and fertile. They also were in unison when they reported that the land was inhabited by powerful people. Where the group lost its unanimity was in their response to these two facts. For nearly all of the spies, the size and strength of the enemies they would face proved too much for them. Defying God’s command, they insisted they simply could not take the land. It was here that Caleb’s unwavering faith was particularly evident. Though his eyes had seen the great struggles the people would have to endure, he challenged the people, urging them to obey God’s command and go take the land.

Trust God to continually be with you. (14:6-10)

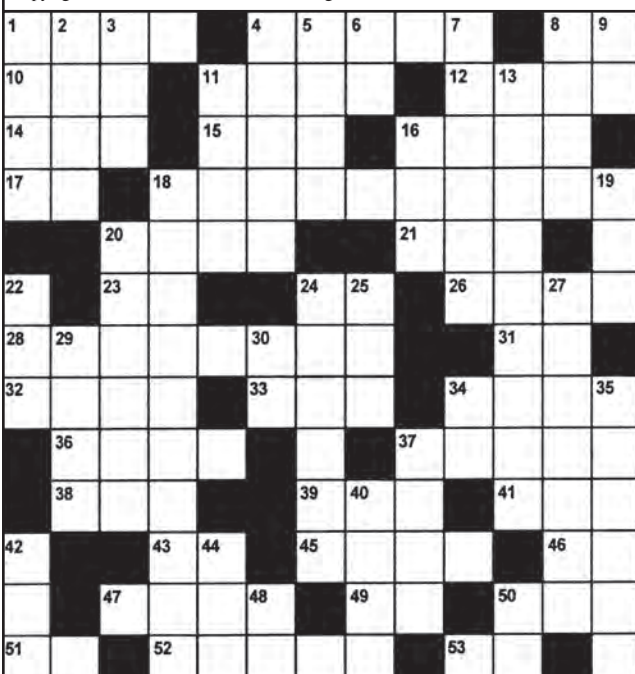
Sadly the Israelites were more inclined to listen to the spies who doubted than to those who believed. Even as the whole nation stood against them Caleb and Joshua still insisted that they could, indeed must, follow God’s command to enter the land. With a combination of courage in their convictions and confidence in their God, they argued, “If the Lord is pleased with us, He will bring us into this land and give it to us.”

Trust God to be faithful. (14:21-24)

The Israelites remained unpersuaded by Caleb’s words, leading to one of the great tragedies of the nation’s history. Though this generation had experienced the exodus from Egypt, they would not continue on to enter the promised land. All was not lost for the nation, though. Because of their steadfast trust and confidence in God’s care, Caleb and Joshua would live on to lead the nation through the conquest and lay claim to the land God had promised them. Having learned the lessons of faith in the wilderness, these two went on to see God bring His promise to completion. †

Christian Crossword

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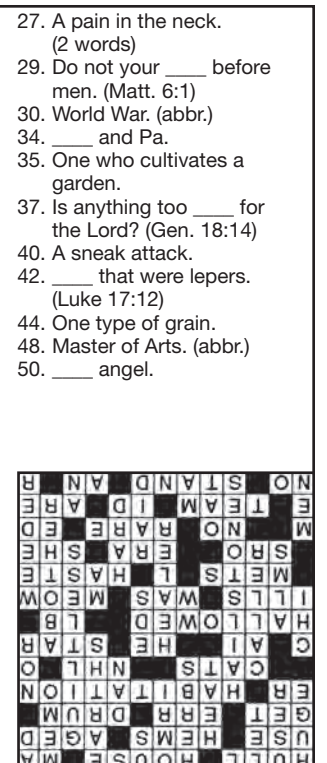
Across

1. Outer covering of a fruit or seed.
4. Thou and all thy _____ shall be saved. (Acts 11:14)
8. Mom.
10. A vessel ... meet for the master’s _____. (2 Tim. 2:21)
11. Made upon the _____ of the robe. (Ex. 39:24)
12. That the _____ men be sober, grave, temperate. (Titus 2:2)
14. _____ thee hence, Satan. (Matt. 4:10)
15. To make a mistake.
16. Ear _____.
17. Suffix used to make a comparative word.
18. Let his _____ be desolate. (Acts 1:20)
20. Felines.
21. National Hockey League. (abbr.)
23. The men went up and viewed _____. (Josh. 7:2)
24. There is none other but _____. (Mark 12:32)
26. We have seen his _____ in the east. (Matt. 2:2)
28. _____ be thy name. (Matt. 6:9)

31. Pound. (abbr.)
32. Woes, troubles.
33. Behold, it _____ very good. (Gen. 1:31)
34. Sound a cat makes.
36. New York City baseball team.
37. _____ thee, escape thither. (Gen. 19:22)
38. Standing Room Only. (abbr.)
39. A period of time.
41. _____ hath washed my feet with tears. (Luke 7:44)
43. Negative.
45. It is a _____ thing that the king requireth. (Dan. 2:11)
46. Children of Gad called the altar _____.
47. A group of people working together for a common goal.
49. _____, ego, superego.
50. That they may be one, as we _____. (John 17:11)
51. Your children ... received _____ correction. (Jer. 2:30)
52. My covenant shall _____ fast with him. (Ps. 89:28)
53. _____ angel of the Lord.

Down

1. Very big.
2. One who uses.
3. _____ me not to wander from thy commandments. (Ps. 119:10)
4. Ye tithe ... all manner of _____. (Luke 11:42)
5. Athaliah, daughter of _____. (2 Kings 8:26)
6. We.
7. Belonging to our planet.
8. Note sent as a reminder.
9. Anno Domini. (abbr.)
11. _____ the furnace. (Dan. 3:19)
13. Ye would not have condemned the _____. (Matt. 12:7)
16. _____ is a lion’s whelp. (Deut. 33:22)
18. I will rain ... great _____. (Ezek. 38:22)
19. Neither/_____.
20. One who calls.
22. 22nd letter of Greek alphabet.
24. I will not be an _____. (Isa. 3:7)
25. Eddie, Teddy, Edward.



MUSIC

WHAT ARE YOU READING?



123rt.com

Alabama Baptists share about what they are currently reading

PASTOR CHRIS D. BERRY
Bremen, Ala.

“Beside Still Waters: Words of Comfort for the Soul” by Charles H. Spurgeon and “The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization” by Patrick J. Buchanan

Charles H. Spurgeon’s “Beside Still Waters” is a book I read over and over. It contains excerpts of his sermons from Genesis to Revelation. Spurgeon was a master of communicating biblical truth to people’s needs. His messages are timeless and travel through generations to minister to those who are hurting. Every preacher should have a copy and keep it in his library.

Another good read is “The Death of the West” by Patrick Buchanan. Buchanan was a presidential candidate in the Republican Party. He is conservative and writes with a boldness needed. He is a seasoned politician and author. †

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. You may also mail your information to: 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.



Media reviews

Derek Minor

Your Soul Must Fly
Reflection Music Group, 2017

Critically acclaimed Christian hip-hop artist and Grammy-winning producer Derek Minor likes to stay busy, so the four-EP series he plans to roll out over the next several months is pretty much just par for the course.

“Your Soul Must Fly” is the first installment.

Despite the Candy Land-esque cover art, there’s a haunting urgency to the 23-minute record that pairs well with Minor’s chip-on-my-shoulder swagger (“Get up on my level” he intones on “Level”). Minor admittedly listens to a lot of Drake and strains of “Started from the Bottom” occasionally rise to the top in the title track, which is a good thing.

Lyrical speaking, “Your Soul Must Fly” sticks to the theme of rising above the world through the strength of God (if Minor didn’t want to be an astronaut growing up, I’d be surprised). I’m looking forward to the rest.



Matthew West

All In
Sparrow, 2017

Matthew West is a storyteller of rare ability, unafraid to get deeply personal. But on the poppy and passionate “All In,” his seventh studio album, he goes, well, all in.

Take, for example, “The Sound of a Life Changing,” which documents with almost diary-level detail West’s decision to serve the Lord as a musician (which he made

during a 1997 Steven Curtis Chapman concert). Then there’s “Becoming Me,” which isn’t just about his 11-year-old daughter Lulu — she actually sings on it, too. And it works.

So do the other 13 songs, which, while retaining the signature sound that has earned West critical acclaim in both contemporary Christian music and mainstream musical circles, occasionally veer into uncharted electronic waters. That’s another good thing.

Lyrical, the album is largely an embrace of grace, like in the driving, up-tempo “Amen,” which may be the most memorable song on the record: “I want the whole world / To know that I’m a new man now, / And it’s only by God’s grace / I’m standing here today.”



Jamie Grace

’91
Independent, 2017

It’s easy to imagine that catching the ear of Michael Bublé and going viral for being called on stage by none other than Adele — yes, that Adele — could go to the head of a rising contemporary Christian music pop star. But recent close encounters with mainstream superstars haven’t watered down Jamie Grace’s gospel message.

Even songs on “’91” (the year she was born) about, say, club scene romance (“Party Like a Princess”), draw on biblical truths: “When I walked into the party / Everybody just stopped / Even the DJ wasn’t ready / To see me without a boy who isn’t ready / To be a king / So tell me why would I be chasing him / To be his queen? / Don’t you know who my Daddy

is? / Don’t you know what my Daddy did? / Don’t you know who my Daddy is? / He paid it all / I’m the belle of this ball / So I’m gonna / Party like a princess.”

The record is the first independent effort for the 2012 Dove Awards New Artist of the Year since leaving Gotee Records in 2016 — Grace was discovered on YouTube by Gotee head TobyMac — and there isn’t a bad track on it. They’re laid back. They’re catchy.

The closest thing to a complaint you could get would be to say that a few may be derivative; echoes of Miley Cyrus and maybe even a little Rihanna are aplenty (and guess what year Taylor Swift, whose last album is titled “1989,” was born). That doesn’t stop them from sounding good. And hey, Ecclesiastes 1:9 is a biblical truth, too. †



Meet the reviewer

Jeremy Henderson reviews music for The Alabama Baptist. He is co-host of Rich and Jeremy in the Mornings on Wings 94.3 FM, editor of The War Eagle Reader.



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LOGOS



Photo by Fredrick Nzwilli

A section of coaches of a Kenyan train that takes commuters between Ruiru and Nairobi City, shown at Mutindwa crossing point in east Nairobi on Sept. 28, is seeing increased religious activity.

Transforming lives

Commuter train to Nairobi becomes 'church'

This commuter train takes its passengers to work, but the preacher aboard hopes it also will take them to God.

Starting in the suburb of Ruiru, about 19 miles north of Nairobi, the train for the past five years has informally hosted a growing number of self-styled pastors and a makeshift, moving congregation eager to hear the gospel.

At least two coaches turn into "churches" each day, with Christians singing, dancing and clapping as they prepare for a short sermon during the one-hour journey.

Jane Wanjiru, who frequently joins in the worship and occasionally preaches on the train, said many of her fellow passengers may otherwise not find time to pray or attend church.

"In this case, the train fellowship becomes a good alternative," she said.

As the train picks up passengers in both middle-class neighborhoods and slums, the congregation swells. And by the time it stops at the capital's Central Railway Station, scores have been touched by Christ or healed, the train preachers say.

Unpaid calling

Nine pastors minister to the moving flock, many of whom are out of work and looking for employment. Other passengers work as civil servants, traders or casual laborers.

The pastors — who hold down other jobs and for whom the train ministry is an unpaid calling — carefully choose sermons that relate to the struggles of many of their passengers, who suffer poverty, exhaustion and stress, and often have trouble paying the 40-cent fare.

Together the pastors try to schedule their preaching so that they're not all preaching on the same train at the same time, to reach the maximum number of commuters.

"Many have been helped to manage their prob-

lems. We have prayed for the sick. We have also prayed for the unemployed. Some returned to say they have seen a breakthrough," said Pastor Michael Mbogo, 41, who started preaching on the train five years ago.

The train preachers decided that they would not have an offering aboard so as not to further burden the many commuters already struggling to earn a living wage.

Opening doors

Benson Ndolo, an accountant who has preached frequently on the train, said his Christian life has been transformed on the tracks. "It has opened doors for me and I am a better person here and at work," he said.

Julius Dzolo, an office clerk, said the sermons help him cope with stress. "The preaching helps me relax," he said. "If I had picked a grudge at work, after the sermon, I am able to forgive much easier."

When Mbogo preaches on the train, he said he is paying God back for saving his life. Five years ago, an accident left him in a coma for two weeks and a wheelchair for six months.

"I made a decision that I will serve him through preaching," said Mbogo, who along with his fellow preachers also has taken the ministry beyond the train, bringing food and other supplies to a children's home three times a year.

Before the accident, Mbogo often used the train to get to his work at a Nairobi hotel, where he is a photographer. He had then seen poor commuters riding on the train roof to avoid paying the fare and then die or suffer serious injuries after falling from their dangerous seats.

"I believed my preaching on the coach would help these people," he said. "At first, I feared the authorities would kick me out, but when people started joining the worship, they also accepted it."

(RNS)



World of RELIGION
Compiled from Wire Services

Witch doctors sacrifice children in Uganda

KATABI, Uganda — Jackline Mukisa sobbed as she described how her 8-year-old son was found in a nearby swamp in February without teeth, lips, ears and genitals.

"My innocent son died a painful death," said Mukisa, 28. "How could somebody intend to murder my son?"

A motorcyclist offered John Lubega a lift as he walked back from school, according to fellow students who saw him last. His remains suggest he was slowly killed as part of a human sacrifice ritual performed by witch doctors, apparently to appease the spirits, said Mukisa, who filed a police report.

No arrest has been made so far.

In this landlocked country whose diverse landscape includes the snow-capped Ruwenzori Mountains and immense Lake Victoria, many believe sacrificial rituals can bring quick wealth and health.

Among those rituals human sacrifice, especially of children, occurs frequently despite the government's efforts to stop it.

Seven children and two adults were sacrificed in 2016, said Moses Binoga, a police officer who heads Uganda's Anti-Human Sacrifice and Trafficking Task Force. Seven children and six adults were sacrificed in 2015.

But experts said the number could be much higher.

Times are tough in Uganda and people are looking to sacrifices to improve their fortunes. The worst drought in over half a century has hit parts of East Africa, leaving more than 11 million people in this landlocked nation facing food insecurity and 1.6 million on the brink of famine, according to the Ugandan government.

"There is no food due to the ongoing drought, and some believe that this has been brought by ancestral spirits," said Joel Mugoya, a traditional healer. "So there is a high desire for people to conduct sacrifices so that they come out of this problem."

Recently, Uganda police arrested 44 suspects in Katabi, a town 24 miles from the capital, Kampala, in connection with a spate of killings of children and women. Half of the suspects have been charged in court, including two alleged masterminds.

Church leaders are teaming up with police to end the brutal practice.

Pastor Peter Sewakiryanga, who heads Kyampisi Childcare Ministries, a Christian organization that fights child sacrifice in Uganda, said children disappear in the country every week. They are often found dead or alive with missing body parts.

Other countries in Africa reported to be practicing child sacrifice include Tanzania, Nigeria, Swaziland, Liberia, Botswana, South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe. (RNS)

Pastor banned from club over marriage views

COTTESLOE, Australia — An Australian tennis legend who is now a Pentecostal pastor has been kicked out of her local tennis club after expressing traditional views of marriage, according to The Christian Post.

Margaret Court, who had her membership to Cottesloe Tennis Club cut, called it a "sad" situation.

"You don't have the freedom of speech today to really defend yourself," she said. "It's a sad day for our nation when it comes to that."

As Australia has approached a national vote on gay "marriage," Court has criticized society's push to support it.

Club President Ian Hutton reportedly said Court's views on gay "marriage" were a factor when they considered whether or not to renew her club membership. (TAB)



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