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U.S. Constitution

'Foundational principle'

US Attorney General Sessions issues federal memo reaffirming religious freedom

By Margaret Colson
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions issued a memorandum Oct. 6 outlining 20 principles reaffirming the government's commitment to religious liberty for all.

In the memo, Sessions, an Alabamian, wrote, "Religious liberty is a foundational principle of enduring importance in America, enshrined in our Constitution and other sources of federal law." He instructed all federal agencies to accommodate religious observance and practice "to the greatest extent practicable and permitted by law."

The 25-page memo came in response to President Donald Trump's executive order in May calling on Sessions to provide "guidance interpreting religious liberty protections in federal law."

Mixed response

Many, including Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), hailed the memo for its interpretation of religious freedom. Moore described the memo as "a great development," tweeting that the principles are "right in line" with the First Amendment.

The principles "represent a return

to normalcy," wrote Andrew Walker, ERLC director of policy studies. He emphasized that the principles do not "give preference or privilege to any one religion."

Sen. James Lankford, a Southern Baptist, affirmed the memorandum and "the clarity it provides for a fundamental American right — religious freedom." The Oklahoma Republican noted, "The ability to live out your faith, or have no faith, is an American right."

Others, however, including Maggie Garrett of the Americans United

for Separation of Church and State, warned that the guidelines "serve as a blueprint for using religion to discriminate." She wrote further, "Religious freedom is a fundamental value, but it does not allow religion to be used as an excuse to harm other people."

Americans United Executive Director Barry Lynn, an ordained minister, agreed, describing the memo as a "roadmap for how to discriminate against most anyone, including women, LGBTQ people and religious minorities."

(See 'Baptist,' page 11)



SESSIONS

Coming next week ...

FAITH & FAMILY

Dealing with disappointment

Part 4 of 4 — working to avoid disappointment in relationships

COMMENT

Movement of God in Montreal

It is called “the most unchurched city in North America” — Montreal, in the province of French-speaking Quebec in Canada. The city, located on an island in the Saint Lawrence River, was not always so spiritually dark. And there are signs its present condition may be changing.

Montreal was founded by Roman Catholic Jesuit missionaries 375 years ago this year. The number of churches and seminaries attest to the long, strategic role the city played in the spread of Roman Catholicism in the New World. Mark Twain once said of Montreal, “You couldn’t throw a brick without breaking a church window.”

Not anymore. Today sociologists say the area is mostly secular with only traces of a post-Christian culture. In the 1950s, Catholic and Anglican churches — the two dominant religious faiths — were 85–90 percent full each Sunday. Today many of those churches have been closed or torn down. The remaining function at about 5 percent of capacity or less, observers say. One Anglican church built to accommodate 250 had only three people recently.

Only about 1 percent of Montreal residents attend church regularly, we were told.

A University of Vermont professor called the decline of Christianity in Quebec province the most dramatic religious change since the fall of the Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity.

God is working

That conclusion may be premature. There are signs God is beginning to act in Montreal and Baptist churches are in the middle of what God is doing.

In 2010 statistics indicate an average worship attendance of 1,941 persons in 38 Baptist churches in Montreal. That is, 38 Baptist churches cooperating with the Canadian National Convention of Baptists, a body related to the Southern Baptist Convention. In 2017 the average worship attendance is reported at 6,266. In 2010 Baptist churches in Quebec province baptized 99 new believers. The number reported in 2017 is 460.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

In 2010 there were no new church plants in Montreal. In 2017 there are 12 with two others nearing launch.

On Oct. 1–3 it was my privilege, along with other state paper editors, to visit Montreal and see some of what God is doing firsthand. The trip was arranged by the North American Mission Board (NAMB) which plays a key role in what is happening in this strategic location.

The vision to turn around Montreal’s slip into spiritual darkness did not originate with Baptist churches. The spark came from a nondenominational church called New Life Church. That congregation averages about 4,300 in worship, we were told.

But even that church did not have the resources to match its vision. That is where NAMB entered the picture.

David Pothier was youth pastor at New Life Church. He resigned and with the assistance of NAMB founded La Chapelle, Rosemont, in 2013. A year later Pothier was featured in NAMB’s report to the Southern Baptist Convention where he shared that in one year, La Chapelle had grown from zero to more than 700 in average attendance. Now the church averages about 950 each Sunday in its rented space on the fifth floor of a commercial building.

Pothier’s vision was not to build a great church like New Life. His goal was to plant 50 churches in Montreal in 30 years. That is one church for every major neighborhood. Since then the vision has expanded to planting new churches in every French-speaking nation in the world.

La Chappelle starts each church with a four-member team consisting of a teaching pastor, worship pastor, children’s pastor and administrative pastor. Each person must apprentice at La Chappelle to be trained in the specific approach of that church.

In addition, the church also sends 200 of its members to help start the new work. Two new churches have been started since 2013 and a third is about to be launched.

Not all of Montreal’s church plants are like La Chappelle. Tony Silveira planted Passion Center

in 2014. The church is located in the South Shore area, a reference to being on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River. When local zoning laws prevented establishing a church in a highly visible and highly trafficked area, Silveira formed a family corporation and purchased part of a strip mall. Now he “rents” the space to the church he leads as well as other community groups.

The space seats about 100 people when set up for worship and is filled for each of the two Sunday services, we were told.

Renaissance Church is a more traditional church plant. It was started with the assistance of a Missouri church. When the founding pastor moved to another field, the sponsoring church’s mission pastor, James Copeland, felt called to the Montreal church plant.

Renaissance Church now meets in an elementary school each Sunday. Copeland said the children in the elementary school where the church meets speak 40 different languages and come from 60 countries.

As an outreach ministry, Copeland teaches English in a nearby Muslim mosque using the Bible as the textbook.

Even though Renaissance is numerically small — averaging about 40 in attendance — the church hosts a church planting intern who will begin a new church plant in a few months.

All of this and more are part of Send Montreal, a concentrated effort to plant churches in this geographical area. Send Montreal is a large area stretching from Montreal to Quebec City in the north all the way down to near the U.S. border in the south.

Forming partnerships

NAMB provides limited financial assistance through the Send Montreal program. The major goal is to link established churches in the U.S. with underserved areas like Montreal in order to form ongoing partnerships which can help with financial support, short-term volunteers, prayer support and other helps as opportunities arise.

Currently 143 Southern Baptist churches are part of the Send Montreal effort.

But Montreal is not the only area in Canada where NAMB sponsors a Send City program. Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton and Toronto are all special areas of concentration. And according to information provided by NAMB, each is helping change the spiritual nature of its area.

God does seem to be moving in Montreal and elsewhere in Canada. Surely all of us will want to uphold these efforts in prayer and other ways as the Lord makes possible. ✠

For more information about Send Cities, visit <https://www.namb.net/send-cities>.

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TAB

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

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Deciding to 'thrive' not merely 'survive'

Center Point's Hilldale Baptist Church finds new life through merger

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

The building of Hilldale Baptist Church, Center Point, is pretty big — it seats 700 or 800 people, more or less.

But even so it's not big enough to hold all the memories Amanda Hendricks said she has of the place. She remembers walking down the burgundy-carpeted aisle as a little girl to give her heart to Jesus. She remembers sitting in the office of then-pastor Edwin Jenkins when she questioned whether or not she'd done it for real.

"I remember him talking to me to see if I understood the decision I had made," she said. "He asked me to talk to the small statue of Mickey Mouse on his desk and tell him how you become a Christian."

The little girl suddenly became very articulate in her faith.

"To this day, I like to say that although I'm not sure if Mickey made a decision that day, I for sure witnessed hard," Hendricks joked.

It's seared in her memory — as are dozens of Vacation Bible Schools, worship services and life-changing friendships, she said.

But the building that housed all those memories is now on the market, something sentimental for sure — but Pastor Ron Pate says it's a God thing.

After a long legacy of lives like Hendricks', Hilldale had entered a new season, and that season's reality was an aging congregation and a changing neighborhood, Pate said.

"We did several general church congregational studies over the past few years to see what we could do to better reach our community," he said. Two decades ago, he had been brought on as pastor and tasked with turning Hilldale into a multigenerational church.

They had seen some success with that. But over time, some of their new members of different ethnicities had moved on other churches because they felt they were the only young people there, Pate said. "We decided finally that we could either stay as we were and try to survive a little bit longer, or we could do something."



Photo courtesy of Ron Pate

Hilldale Baptist Church, Center Point, holds its final service in its building Sept. 24.

They opted to do something.

After deliberation, Pate began talking to a few area pastors about the possibility of a merger.

"Several expressed that they would be willing to merge with us," he said.

He thought any of those might be a possibility that God might lead toward. But one day as he was talking to someone about it, a voice popped up.

God is faithful

"Our church might be willing to do that."

It was Jeff Oates, the 30-year-old pastor of nearby Palmerdale Cross Baptist Church, Pinson. Already a merger itself between First Baptist Church, Palmerdale, and Cross Baptist Church, it was small but growing — and young.

"Pastor Ron and I started praying at the end of last year to see what God might want to do in the situation," he said. "We knew there were some things God would have to move or clear

to make it happen, and He did — faithfully."

The two started getting their congregations together a little bit, and "we just loved his people," Oates said. "It wasn't about us growing budgets or numbers but a question of can we be better for the kingdom of the Lord separate or together?"

The resounding answer, he said, was together.

Both churches voted in favor of the merger in mid-August, and on Oct. 1, they had their first service together at Palmerdale Cross, with Oates serving as pastor and Pates serving as executive pastor.

"To have somebody like Pastor Ron on staff is a huge asset for me. They bring a lot of anchoring to our church," Oates said of Pate and the other staff members of Hilldale, all of whom had been there at least two decades. Palmerdale Cross was in need of a worship pastor, and Hilldale had one, as well as a children's minister. And Palmerdale Cross had a youth minister.

"We took some steps of faith, and we've seen God do amazing things," Oates said.

In their first joint business meeting, the new church voted to purchase 13 acres of land next to the church for future expansion — they're bursting at the seams in Palmerdale Cross' current building.

And Pate said the merger has breathed new life into the people from Hilldale.

"Our people are excited about ministry again," he said. "We could've hung on and survived here but we made a choice not to survive but to thrive and help another congregation thrive with us."

Around 350 friends and former members came back for the final service in Hilldale's building Sept. 24, Pate said. Hendricks, who attended the last service and is now attending Palmerdale Cross with her husband and young son, said the building may have memories, but the legacy goes with the people.

"The building God built — His church where each brick was a person and His Son the Cornerstone — we're still moving," she said. "The building lives." ☛

Upcoming state convention to focus on making disciples

It's almost that time again — the annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) is right around the corner.

Set to take place at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, this year's annual meeting will be Nov. 14-15.

Headlining the Tuesday evening session will be two voices familiar to Alabama Baptists. Musician Kevin Derryberry will lead worship and Rick Burgess, co-host of the syndicated radio program "The Rick and Bubba Show," will speak.

Burgess will speak on the annual meeting theme, "Disciple: Be One. Make One." The theme is based on Christ's admonition to his disciples in Matthew 16:24 that true discipleship involves denying oneself, taking up one's cross and following Him.

Prior to the evening session, Burgess' wife, Sherri, will be the guest speaker for the dinner program beginning at 4:30 p.m. Sherri Burgess is the author of "Bronner: A Journey to Understand," a testimony of healing in her search to

understand God's purpose behind the pain of losing her youngest child.

Other highlights of the annual meeting include a sermon by ABSC President John Thweatt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pell City, in the Tuesday morning session and the convention sermon by Stuart Davidson, pastor of Eastern Shore Baptist

Church, Daphne, in the Wednesday morning session.

Several Huntsville hotels are offering special rates to those participating in the annual meeting. If you have any problems making a reservation at any of the hotels listed at alsbom.org/convention, contact Charleen Hobbs at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 231 or chobbs@alsbom.org. (TAB)

**For more information
about the annual
meeting, including a
list of hotels and a
schedule, visit
alsbom.org/convention.**

Tony Campolo (right), professor emeritus of sociology at Eastern University, tells how he went from advocating traditional biblical marriage to accepting same-sex 'marriage' during a forum at New Orleans Seminary as SarahJane Guidry of the Louisiana Forum for Equality listens.

Civil vs. religious



Photo by Gary D. Myers

New Orleans Seminary hosts debate about marriage, LGBT issues

Advocates from several perspectives on same-sex "marriage" and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) rights discussed the emotionally and politically charged issues, which often pit the Church against the prevailing culture, during a forum at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

The "Rights and Sexuality: Where Individual Freedoms and Civil Rights Meet" event was sponsored by the seminary's Institute for Faith and the Public Square.

Lloyd Harsch, the institute's director, noted, "What we are trying to do with the Institute for Faith and the Public Square is to provide a safe environment for rational conversation on difficult issues where we can listen to each other

and find common ground." A video of the forum is available at www.faith-publicsquare.org/past-events.html.

Tony Campolo, professor emeritus of sociology at Eastern University in St. Davids, Pennsylvania, and SarahJane Guidry, executive director of Louisiana's Forum for Equality, advocated for acceptance of same-sex "marriage" and greater LGBT protections. Craig V. Mitchell, a Christian ethicist and political scientist, and Travis Weber, a lawyer with the Family Research Council, argued for traditional marriage and protections for those who oppose same-sex "marriage" on religious grounds. Forum organizers described the speakers as respectful, modeling civil discussion on matters of deep and passionate disagreement. Mitchell opposed same-sex

"marriage" by articulating the heart of the evangelical argument against the practice — homosexuality is at odds with Scripture. However, Mitchell was clear that the Church must oppose those who would mistreat LGBT individuals.

'Salt and light'

"The Church is supposed to be salt and light," Mitchell said.

"We need to call sin what it is; at the same time we need to show the love of Christ. We need to love the sinner while hating the sin."

Mitchell acknowledged missteps by the Church in its attempts to love the LGBT community while upholding a biblical view of marriage. However, he sees the stance on homosexuality as a sin as the key point of tension between the church and LGBT advocates.

Campolo opposed same-sex "marriage" until two-and-a-half years ago when his view shifted toward acceptance of same-sex "marriage" in part because of his work counseling homosexuals. Campolo acknowledged he could be wrong on homosexuality.

While Campolo and Mitchell disagreed on same-sex "marriage," the two found some common ground on the issue of church-state entanglement in marriage. The state licenses both the couple who is getting married and the clergy member who conducts the service. It is the clergy member, Campolo said, who solemnizes the union. Yet in America, these functions are mingled together.

"If you want to get married in Amsterdam you go down to the city hall and you register and a civil ceremony takes place," Cam-

polo said. "If you want a religious blessing, you then go to the church and the minister or the priest blesses the relationship. Separating the two things solves all the problems."

Mitchell agreed that separating the civil and religious aspects of marriage could relieve some, but not all, of the conflict regarding

"We need to call sin what it is; at the same time we need to show the love of Christ. We need to love the sinner while hating the sin."

**Craig V. Mitchell
Christian ethicist and
political scientist**

same-sex "marriage." Even with the separation of the civil and religious aspects of marriage, he said the Church must still point out sin and call for repentance.

"No one likes to be called a sinner, yet every one of us is," Mitchell said. "It is the job of the Church to remind people."

The tension between the Church and the state was evident throughout the discussion — especially regarding the cases of bakers and wedding photographers.

Weber said the religious freedom laws in the country have not changed but the way the LGBT community responds to those laws is changing. There is a growing conflict between traditional Judeo-Christian beliefs on sexuality and "those who believe in self-centered, individualized sexual autonomy detached from any outside moral framework," Weber said.

'Compelling reason'

Religious freedom laws require a "compelling reason" for the government to deny a religious objection, Weber said. In the cases involving bakers and photographers who refuse commissions for same-sex ceremonies, he sees no compelling reason to deny their religious objection.

"Jack Phillips (Christian baker in Colorado) was happy to provide

items from his bakery to anyone who walks into his shop," Weber said. "He just didn't want to provide a cake for the [same-sex] wedding ceremony."

For Weber, Phillips' refusal should be protected because it is clearly based on his own moral and religious beliefs. The objection did not infringe on the couple's ability to have a cake at their ceremony. Many other bakers were willing to accept the commissions for same-sex ceremonies, Weber said.

"There's no reason to force those who have a conscience objection to being involved in [the ceremony] ... to be implicated against their conscience," Weber said. "The way forward is to recognize the religious rights of these individuals."

Campolo and Guidry argued that concerns for equality in conducting business outweigh the personal convictions of the private business owner. For them, the state and local authority to issue business permits implies that the state grants the privilege of conducting business and can require equal treatment of potential customers.

"That baker is operating with a license that was granted by the state," Campolo said. "The state represents what? All the people. If the privilege of baking cakes is given by all the people, then all the people should have access to the service that is provided."

Guidry also disagreed with Weber on the issue of private businesses. She affirmed the right of clergy members and churches to decide what marriages they choose to solemnize. However, she argued that individual protections do not extend to individual business owners or to elected officials tasked with granting marriage licenses.

Conservative lawmakers in several states have sought new laws to clarify religious freedoms and protect business owners who have moral objections. Guidry called such laws a "license to discriminate" against the LGBT community. (BP)

Shelby Association hosts news anchor



Photo courtesy of Michael Brooks

Birmingham news anchor Brenda Ladun (left) signs a copy of her book, 'Encouraged,' for Pastor Tim Cox of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea. Ladun was guest at the Shelby Baptist Association's pastors' conference Oct. 3 at the Shelby Baptist Medical Center. She told the assembled ministers of her personal struggle with cancer and her ministry to encourage men and women to take care of themselves. 'Early detection is the key to survival from cancer,' she said. An anonymous donor from Siluria Baptist Church, Alabaster, provided copies of Ladun's book for every participant.

Sola Scriptura

{by Scripture alone}

How one man's understanding, convictions led to worldwide reform

By Rob Jackson
Special to The Alabama Baptist

On Oct. 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses on the Wittenberg Castle Church door. Luther's desire was not to break from the Roman Church, yet God used this priest and theologian to set in motion an unstoppable movement in Christianity. His understanding of a gracious God who justifies by faith alone and is revealed in Scripture alone opened the door for the Reformation and birthed Protestantism.

In reality the time was ripe for a Reformation. Europe experienced much death and anxiety during the 15th and 16th centuries. The aftermath of the bubonic plague, which wiped out almost one-third of the European population, was heavy on their hearts. This period was an age of death, anxiety and guilt. It also was a time of corruption in the Church. Without access to the Scriptures, many people were confused and sought to appease God through good works, penance, flagellation, purchasing of relics and so forth. Luther, as a young monk, struggled with this very problem of guilt. He sought to please God, to satisfy God. But how? At times, he would fast until his body was emaciated. In the cold German winter, he would sleep on the stone floor of the monastery without any covering, shaking from the cold. He would confess sin after sin to his superiors. Still, the nagging question remained: "Have I done enough to satisfy God?"

Righteous live by faith

Everything changed when God spoke to Luther as he studied the Scriptures. In particular, the reading of Romans 1 cleared up his confusion and obsessive guilt. It was as if a light went off as he read, "The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith" (Rom 1:17). Luther understood

justification is by faith alone apart from any merits or works. This insight forever altered his theology. Luther's eyes were opened, and his heart was enlightened: "I felt as if I had been born again." He acknowledged that Scripture is the supreme authority in all spiritual matters, a principle known as Sola Scriptura — by Scripture alone.

Teachings askew

Sola Scriptura, although embraced by Augustine and the early Church, was not taught by the Church. Without the foundational role of Scripture, many aspects of the Church's teachings were askew. For example, salvation was seen as from and through the Church with an emphasis on works and merits. Curialism, the teaching that the supreme authority was in the hands of the papacy, was not to be challenged. With this enormous amount of power, some popes sold government and Church positions, promoted their illegitimate children to high positions in the Church and increased in power and wealth.

The masses of people, many who were uneducated, were taught that they needed to keep the Church and their priest happy in order to stay on good terms with God. A poor peasant family, seeking the favor of God, would need to pay for their marriage to be blessed, pay to have their child baptized (so the child would not go to hell if he or she died), pay for blessings on crops, pay to be buried, pay for indulgences and so forth. In fact, private penance for a fee became a part of the sacramental system. Indulgences were

sold with the promise that people suffering in purgatory could be set free. Many people believed they could buy an indulgence to receive forgiveness of sins or even purchase their salvation. Luther considered these practices non-biblical nonsense. Johann Tetzel was one friar that especially incensed Luther with his "hawking" indulgences. Tetzel is reported to have preached, "As soon as a coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs." Luther, especially enraged with the fallacy of indulgences, formally stated his case by posting the 95 Theses.

In essence, without the authority of Scripture, gullible people would believe any teaching or tradition regardless of its lack of biblical support. Take note — Luther didn't seek to jettison all traditions. Instead, he wanted to elevate Scripture back to its rightful place as the ultimate authority given to the Church and Christian community. Human traditions, according to Luther, must be judged against Scripture and not vice versa. Luther argued, in "Avoiding the Doctrine of Men," that to base the authority of the gospel on the traditions

of the Church is "false and un-Christian." Just as heaven is higher than the earth, Luther stated, so are Scriptures higher than traditions. When traditions or doctrines of men contradict Scripture, the traditions are always wrong; "the one must lie and the other be true." In "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," Luther remarked, "What is asserted without the Scriptures or proven revelation may be held as an opinion, but need not be believed." Luther explained that Scripture alone is the sole authority — "let this be enough," he remarked.

In 1521, Luther appeared before the Emperor at the Diet of Worms and was ordered to recant what he had written. Luther's offense was in defying the pope and the Church by questioning their right to sell indulgences. Furthermore, he was challenging the authority of the pope by demanding all dogmas and doctrines be accountable to

the teachings of Scripture. Luther replied to the demand to rescind, "I cannot and will not recant. Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God." There was no turning back. Luther was risking his life on the sufficiency of God's revelation in Scripture alone. He was, in essence, "standing on the promises of God."

Luther's stance helped restore the principle of Sola Scriptura in the mind of the faith community. Translations of the Bible in the common language coupled with the advent of the printing press spread the truth far and wide. Luther began to see the realization of his dream of everyone having access to Scriptures from "the farm boy at his plow, the milkmaid at her pail, as well as the learned clerics and scholars in the university." Luther, promoting the authority of Scripture in the power of the Holy Spirit, began a monumental awakening which placed the supremacy of the Bible squarely in the middle of this Reformation.

Birth of Protestantism

The Reformation changed the Church and ushered in Protestantism. As we reflect on this watershed moment in the life of the Church, we must ask ourselves the role the Scriptures play in our lives. The Bible is readily available; many of us have multiple copies in our homes. How seriously do we take the Word of God? Do we study it daily? Do we memorize it? Do we share it with others? Are we willing to risk everything, even our lives on the truthfulness of Sola Scriptura? Perhaps we need a renewal in our passion and zeal for the sufficiency of Scripture. Perhaps, like Luther, we need to risk our all as we too cry out, "Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God." Sola Scriptura and the Reformation should remind us to get busy: "Standing on the promises that cannot fail / When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail / By the living Word of God I shall prevail / Standing on the promises of God." May the truthfulness of our gracious God who justifies by faith alone and is revealed in Scripture alone, swing open the door for another revival and awakening in our land!

EDITOR'S NOTE — Rob Jackson is pastor of Central Baptist Church, Decatur. He holds a master of divinity degree and doctor of philosophy from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.



"The Reformation changed the Church and ushered in Protestantism. As we reflect on this watershed moment in the life of the Church, we must ask ourselves the role the Scriptures play in our lives."



Across ALABAMA'S Associations

AUTAUGA

► **White Pond Church, Marbury**, will hold revival services Oct. 22–25, 6:30 nightly. Sammy Gilbreath will speak. Donnie Burns is pastor.

BESSEMER

► **Seventh Street Church, Bessemer**, will celebrate its homecoming and 95th anniversary Oct. 29, 10:30 a.m. Jerry Batson will speak. Lunch will follow the service. Former members and friends of the church are welcome. Sam Davidson is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Landon Byrd** is the new pastor of **Westmont Church, Minor**. He will begin Nov. 1. He previously served as a residence life coordinator at Samford University in Birmingham. He also served at Shades Mountain Church, Vestavia Hills. Byrd holds a bachelor's degree from Mississippi College in Clinton and a master's degree from Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham. He and his wife, Lindsey, have two children.



BYRD

CAHABA

► **Faith Chapel Church, Marion**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 29, 11 a.m. Tom Stacey, director of missions for Cahaba Association, will speak. Lunch will follow the service. The church also will hold revival services Oct. 30–Nov. 1. William Earl Short will speak each night. For more information call 334-872-6396 or 334-683-4316. Lloyd Stockman is pastor.

COFFEE

► **New Hope Church, Brundidge**, will hold revival services Oct. 22–25. Sunday's service will be at 6 p.m. and Monday–Wednesday services will be at 6:30 nightly. Sonny Moore will speak. Johnny Anderson will lead special music. Lanny Shepard is pastor.

COLUMBIA

► Columbia Association will change its name to **Southeast Alabama Baptist Association**, effective Jan. 1, 2018. The change was approved at the associational meeting Oct. 8 at Ridgecrest Church, Dothan. Director of Missions John Thomas said the name will better represent the membership and mission focus of the association.

EAST CULLMAN

► **Hopewell Church, Hanceville**, will celebrate its 175th anniversary Oct. 29, 10 a.m. as part of the church's year-long anniversary celebration "Embracing Our

Heritage, Preparing for the Future." Multiple special guests will speak and former pastors will be in attendance. For more information call 256-352-4713 or visit facebook.com/HopewellHanceville. Layne Howard is interim pastor.

FRANKLIN

► **Terry Buster** is the new pastor of **First Church, Phil Campbell**. He previously served as pastor for churches in Missouri and Oklahoma. He holds a bachelor's degree from Oklahoma University in Shawnee and a master's degree from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He and his wife, Sue, have three children and 15 grandchildren.



BUSTER

MADISON

► **CrossPointe Church, Madison**, will host the women's conference "Redeemed" on Oct. 20–21. Friday's session will be 7–9:30 p.m. and Saturday's session will be 9 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Angela Thomas-Pharr will speak. Cheri Keaggy will perform special music. For reservations visit www.cpcfam.org. John Dees is pastor.

PICKENS

► **Pickens Association** will hold a retirement reception for **Director of Missions Gary Farley** at the associational office in Carrollton on Oct. 28, 1–3:30 p.m. A presentation will take place at 3 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

PLEASANT GROVE

► **Antioch Missionary Church, Brookwood**, will hold a fall festival Oct. 29, 5 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend. Dwight Kizziah is pastor.



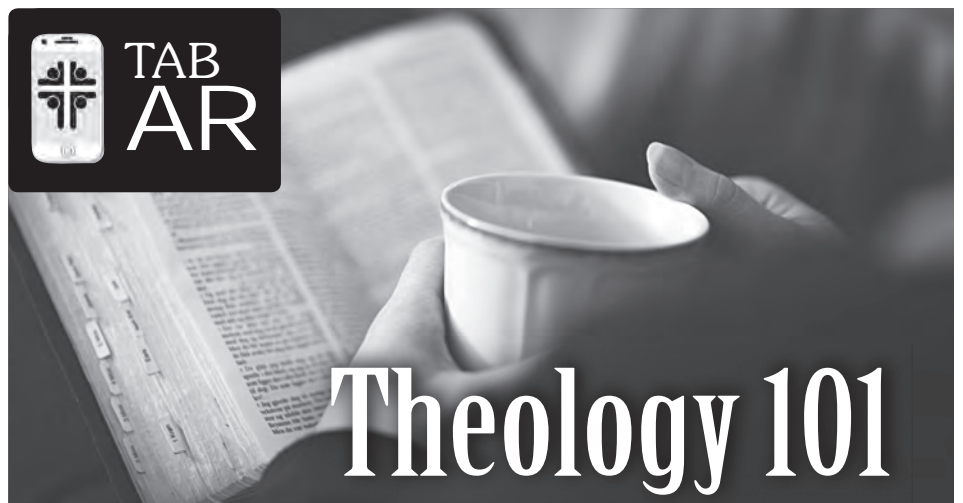
HAMILTON

SHELBY

► **Austin Hamilton** is the new minister of music of **Siluria Church, Alabaster**. He previously served as the music ministry intern at First Church, Huntsville. He holds a bachelor's degree from Berry College in Mount Berry, Georgia, and is currently enrolled in a master's program at Samford University in Birmingham. Michael J. Brooks is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **McEntyre Church, Ashville**, will host The Redemption Trio and The Galileans in concert Oct. 29, 2 p.m. Everyone is welcome. Bobby Winningham is pastor.✠



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Demonology

Jesus and Demons

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

In previous weeks we have gleaned from the Bible that demons are spirit beings or angels that God created. They were originally good, as was all God made. However, they sinned and became evil. We have noted a variety of ways demons are referred to, such as "unclean," "deceiving" and "evil." The time of their rebellion, while not specified, must have been between the time God completed creation and the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve.

Taking seriously the Bible's revelation about demons is not an action reserved for only those who might be superstitious or prone to fancy. Demonology is a subject for serious Christians who wish to be more than conquerors in this present evil world. After all, living godly in an ungodly world is not an easy or simple accomplishment. Jesus often encountered persons whose lives were bound or being destroyed by demons. It is often noted that there is more recorded activity of Satan and demons during Jesus' earthly life and ministry than any other recorded time in human history. God's carefully timed invasion into a fallen world to give final shape to His eternal plan of redemption through Christ seems to have stirred strong and widespread opposition in the spirit world.

Dealing with demons

For example, Jesus was confronted by the devil, being tempted over the span of 40 days in the wilderness (Mark 1:13). Subsequently, during His ministry Jesus dealt with demonic activity in a mute man (Matt. 9:32–33), a Canaanite woman's daughter (Matt. 15:21–28), a man in the synagogue at Capernaum (Mark 1:23–26), two men living in the Gergesene cemetery (Matt. 8:28–33) and a mute lad suffering with seizure-like symptoms (Mark 9:17–26). Among early followers of Jesus was Mary Magdalene out of whom seven demons had been expelled (Luke 8:1–2). Then there was a woman who had been bound by a "spirit of infirmity" for 18 years before

Jesus set her free (Luke 13:10–16). Such are some of the recorded encounters of Jesus with the devil and his angels. In each of these instances, as well as many others, Jesus set individuals free from demonic influence. It has been said that a third of Jesus' healing miracles mention the confronting and overcoming of evil spirits.

Having authority

Not only did Jesus possess authority over demons, He also on occasion delegated such authority to His disciples. Upon the appointment of the Twelve the witness is that "He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out" (Matt. 10:1). Apparently, He did not delegate to them absolute or unconditional authority inasmuch as on one notable occasion the disciples were unable to deal with a demon-possessed boy. Jesus explained their inability on that occasion to be because of the lack of prayer and fasting (Matt. 17:21). This incident served to suggest that some demons possess greater resistance to divine power than others.

Also, there appears to be variations in the wickedness of demons, since Jesus referred to an evil spirit who "goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself" (Matt. 12:45).

The gospel is indeed good news. One aspect of the good news is final victory over demons. Thanks to Jesus we know the end of the story about Satan and demons. In His analogy about sheep and goats Jesus referred to a consignment "into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41).✠

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.



'God moments'

Sandy Gafnea (left) and Robyn Rooks with the St. Clair Baptist Association disaster relief team train on shower/laundry duty.

Ministry of presence big part of disaster relief work

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (ABDR) teams across the state were on alert as Hurricane Nate made landfall Oct. 7 but fortunately the storm brought mostly rain as it passed through Alabama.

That was good news for the state and for ABDR teams, many of whom have been busy serving in the Fort Myers, Florida, area following Hurricane Irma.

Stanley Kilgore, pastor of Center Grove Baptist Church, Cullman, in East Cullman Baptist Association, is one those volunteers. Kilgore joined a team of volunteers from several different associations in Fort Myers in early October. Kilgore said the experience of working with others from across Alabama was different but team members didn't stay "strangers" for long.

'Hands and feet'

Kilgore and fellow pastor Philip Morris, of Chulafinnee Baptist Church, Heflin, in Cleburne Baptist Association, served as chap-

lains, being the "hands and feet of Jesus" in Fort Myers, Morris said.

Kilgore said there were several "God moments" during their service, many that happened as he, Morris and other team members went door to door in the neighborhoods near ABDR's administrative headquarters at McGregor Baptist Church. One was with a woman who had lost a child years ago when a tree fell on her mother's home. When the storm knocked a tree onto her current home, memories from the past returned. She needed someone to share those emotions with and ABDR was there, Kilgore said. That happened time and time again.

"We had opportunities to witness but mostly we were able to pray with people and just listen to

their stories," Kilgore said. "Based on what we heard, we allowed ourselves to be led by the Holy Spirit to see what happened next."

Kilgore said ABDR training emphasizes this "ministry of presence," which may not sound very helpful to those who equate volunteer service with results. However, for those affected by tragedy and disaster, simply knowing someone cares means everything, Kilgore said.

Robyn Rooks, a first-time ABDR volunteer from St. Clair Baptist Association, felt that as

she served. Rooks was trained in September at Valleydale Baptist Church, Birmingham, one of several emergency training sessions held following Hurricane Harvey's landfall in Texas and Louisiana. She traveled to Fort Myers to

"Disaster relief is something all of us can do. It's just a matter of getting the training and then working out your schedule to go."

**Pastor Stanley Kilgore
Center Grove Baptist
Church, Cullman**



Photo courtesy of Robyn Rooks

Sheila Williams trains on shower/laundry disaster relief trailers.



Photo courtesy of Robyn Rooks

complete her training on an ABDR shower and laundry unit set up for volunteers housed at McGregor Baptist. At first Rooks felt underutilized.

"I'm a people person and I like to get out and talk to people," she said. "So I was a little discouraged thinking 'I'm just at the church washing clothes.' But it's amazing how God uses the laundry people too," she said.

Rooks felt God leading her to pray for the volunteers whose clothes she was washing. As load after load went into the washers, some 70-90 loads a day, she prayed.

"I realized that through prayer I was going out with them," she said.

Later Rooks did go into the community and had the opportunity to talk to a young woman at one of the houses where cleanup volunteers were working. Since Rooks is active in Acteens ministry with teens at her church, First Baptist, Ashville, she felt an immediate connection with the girl, who was suffering anxiety after the hurricane's wrath.

'Open your eyes'

Rooks, a widow, also shared a special connection with another volunteer who had recently lost her husband. Seeing how God used her personal experiences to encourage others reinforced a truth she often teaches young people at church.

"You don't really have to worry about whether God's going to use

you," she said. "You just have to open your eyes and pay attention. He will provide opportunities. We just have to be willing and realize He's in all the small things and the big things."

Kilgore said ABDR work in Florida is a good reminder that many more people in Alabama need to be trained in disaster relief.

'Coming together'

"There is a different work for each of us to do," he said, referencing 1 Corinthians 3:8. "It's not a matter of one church doing it or one group doing it, it's a lot of people coming together with one goal in mind — to minister to His community."

Pastors who get trained lead by example, Kilgore said. That was a hard lesson he learned in the aftermath of the April 2011 tornadoes that struck in Cullman and other areas of Alabama.

"I found out during that time that you need credentials before you can enter disaster areas," he said. "There were areas where I had church members but I couldn't get into them because I didn't have the credentials."

Kilgore said he decided then that he would never be caught unprepared by a disaster situation again and he wants to encourage others to be prepared as well.

"Disaster relief is something all of us can do," he said. "It's just a matter of getting the training and then working out your schedule to go."✠

Judge rules federal tax code's ministerial housing allowance unconstitutional

U.S. District Judge Barbara Crabb has ruled that the federal tax code's ministerial housing allowance is unconstitutional for the second time.

IRS 26 U.S. Code § 107(2), passed into law in 1954, states that "a minister's housing allowance (sometimes called a parsonage allowance or a rental allowance) is excludable from gross income for income tax purposes."

The benefit saves ministers an estimated \$800 million annually, according to the latest estimate by the congressional Joint Committee on Taxation.

Crabb wrote in her Oct. 6 ruling, "I adhere to my earlier conclusion that [the minister's housing exclusion] violates the establishment clause because it does not have a secular purpose or effect and because a reasonable observer would view the statute as an endorsement of religion."

Crabb, an appointee from President Jimmy Carter's administra-



123rf.com

tion, first ruled the ministerial housing allowance unconstitutional in 2013. But the Seventh U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago overturned her decision in 2014, ruling the plaintiffs — the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) — did not have standing to bring the case.

No immediate effect

FFRF again is a plaintiff in the current lawsuit, arguing that the IRS has violated the Constitution by refusing to permit its leaders to claim the ministerial housing allowance. This time, Crabb ruled that the organization and its

leaders have satisfied the appeals court's requirements to attain legal standing.

The judge has ordered the parties in the case to submit an additional briefing on the form of a final judgment by the end of October. Crabb's ruling would only apply to pastors in Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana if upheld by the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals.

Since no damages or other remedies have been awarded, there is no immediate effect on ministers who are eligible for the housing exclusion under the current law.

GuideStone Financial Resources advises ministers to consult the organization's annual tax guide at GuideStone.org/taxguide and housing allowance information at GuideStone.org/housingallowance to ensure that they are properly documenting housing allowance as part of a church business action and reporting it appropriately on their income tax returns. (Michael Smith)

Gay coffee shop owner kicks Christians out

A gay coffee shop owner in Seattle recently kicked a group of Christians out of his café, Bedlam Coffee, after learning they had been distributing tracts on the street before taking a break at his shop.

"We had nothing on us, we weren't distributing anything," said Caytie Davis, one of the Christians, according to *The Christian Post*.

She noted that the group had bought coffee and gone upstairs. Before visiting the shop, they had been passing out gospel tracts and pro-life materials in the city, and as they sat, owner Ben Borgman confronted them and shouted, "You have to leave."

One of the Christians asked if Borgman was denying them service, and he responded by asking them if they would be willing to watch him perform a vulgar act on his boyfriend.

In an expletive-laced rant, he told them to leave.

Offensive comments

As the group left, one of the Christians told Borgman that Christ could save him from his lifestyle, and he responded with vulgar and offensive comments about Jesus.

When asked about his comments later, Borgman said they were "out of context" — that he was simply trying to address the group in language they would understand.

The group said they don't wish any harm to come to the owners of Bedlam Coffee, according to *The Post*. But hundreds of thousands of people have viewed the footage of the incident posted online.

This comes at a time when several Christian business owners are being sued by same-sex couples for refusing their business on the grounds of their religious convictions — including one in the same state as Bedlam Coffee.

Barronelle Stutzman, a florist in

Washington State, said she could lose her entire life savings after declining to provide flowers for a gay couple's wedding. The couple sued her in 2013 and she lost and has now appealed to the Supreme Court.

Same freedom

Gay couples have "every right to live the way they believe," said Stutzman, but she asked for Christians to be given the same freedom. (TAB)

in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders, friends

Joseph Alfred 'Al' Yancey

Retired pastor, music minister dies at 82

Joseph Alfred "Al" Yancey, retired pastor and minister of music, died Sept. 13. He was 82.

A resident of Silverhill at the time of his death, Yancey graduated from the Baptist Bible Institute (now The Baptist College of Florida) in Graceville, Florida, in 1972. He also was a National Guard veteran.



YANCEY

He served in numerous churches in Alabama, Florida and Mississippi throughout his ministry in full-time, bivocational and interim roles.

Churches he served in full-time pastoral or minister of music capacities — or both simultaneously — include Mignon Baptist Church, Sylacauga; First Baptist Church, Coffeerville; Daphne Baptist Church; Seminole Baptist Church; First Baptist Church, Summerdale; Spanish Trail Baptist Church, Daphne; and Southside Baptist Church, Monroeville. He

also served as a hospital chaplain and chaplain of sports teams.

Yancey is survived by his wife of 62 years, Nora; three children; four grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren. (TAB)

Nelson E. Bullard

Longtime Alabama pastor dies at 93

Nelson E. Bullard, longtime Alabama Baptist pastor, died Aug. 8. He was 93.

A World War II veteran, he served in the Philippines and Japan. He also served as military police for Gen. Douglas MacArthur.

Bullard served many churches as pastor or interim during his 56 years of ministry, including Trinity Baptist Church; Fayetteville Baptist Church, Sylacauga; First Baptist Church, Double Springs; Siluria Baptist Church, Alabaster; First Baptist Church, Hanceville; Solitude Baptist Church, Albertville; Pine Hill Baptist Church; Shiloh Baptist Church, Sardis; Yellow Bluff Baptist Church, Pine Hill; Pineview Baptist Church, Thomasville; Elam Baptist Church, Arnton; Dixon's Mills Baptist Church; and Rock Creek Baptist Church, Double Springs.

He held a bachelor's degree from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham and a master's degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Bullard is preceded in death by two children. He is survived by his wife of 73 years, Hazel; two children; seven grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; and two great-great-grandchildren. (Lela Yeargain)

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

October marks 500 years since Luther ignited Protestant Reformation

Martin Luther (1483–1546) ignited the Protestant Reformation 500 years ago this month.

He was born Nov. 10, 1483, to Hans and Margarete Luder in Eisleben, Germany. His father worked in the copper mines.

At age 17 he entered the University of Erfurt, where he graduated with a master's degree.

A dramatic experience in 1505 started him on a path to conversion. Going through a severe thunderstorm, a lightning bolt struck the ground near him.

'I will become a monk'

"Help me, St. Anne," he cried. "I will become a monk!"

Fulfilling his vow, he entered the monastic life. In 1507 he was ordained as a priest. In 1512 he became a doctor of theology at the University of Wittenberg, a position he held until his death.

Although he fasted, flagellated himself and performed other ascetic practices, he found no peace. He was terrified of the wrath of God. However, he gained new insight about salvation while lecturing on the Psalms and the book of Romans in 1513 and 1514. His conversion occurred after studying Romans 1:17: "For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed — a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The just shall live by faith.'" He meditated day and night on this verse and began to understand that the righteous live by faith. "I felt as if I were entirely born again," he wrote, "and had entered paradise itself through the gates that had been flung open."

It was the sale of indulgences that initiated Luther's public battle with the Catholic church. Johann Tetzel, a priest, trav-

eled throughout Germany in 1517 selling indulgences, which were church pardons for sins.

On Oct. 31, 1517, Luther posted his 95 Theses on the door of Wittenberg's Castle Church, disputing the sale of indulgences. Printed copies of the Theses were distributed across Germany as a call to reform the Catholic Church.

Pope Leo X excommunicated Luther on Jan. 3, 1521. Three months later, Luther appeared before Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and was ordered to recant his views. Luther refused and said, "Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me!" Prince Frederick of Saxony became his protector. Luther's friends hid him for 10 months, during which time he translated the New Testament into German.


In 1522 he began a reformation of Ger-

man churches. Most priests were ignorant of the Bible and the way of salvation. In 1529 he published his "Small Catechism," which provided the priests and the people a summary of the main teachings of the Bible.

Statement of beliefs

In 1530, Luther's collaborator, Philip Melancthon, wrote a complete statement of their beliefs. The document, known as the Augsburg Confession, states what Lutherans believe.

During his last 16 years Luther was sick but busy, implementing church and public policy in Germany, teaching university classes, preaching several times a week and writing books, letters and hymns. His most famous hymn is "A Mighty Fortress is Our God." His writings fill more than 50 large volumes in English.

He died Feb. 18, 1546, in Eisleben and was buried in Wittenberg. 



LUTHER



By Joanne Sloan

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

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Exemption to contraception mandate expanded to any employer, insurer

Employers who object to the Affordable Care Act's abortion/contraception mandate on the grounds of their convictions were given a big leg up in their fight for religious freedom Oct. 6.

The Trump administration announced an interim rule that expands the exemption to allow any employer or insurer to stop providing contraceptive services if they have religious or moral convictions against those things.

It would be up to states to decide how companies should make

these determinations. The win for objectors comes after a six-year legal battle.

Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said the exemption is a "crucial achievement in the preservation of religious liberty."

"The government has no business whatsoever forcing citizens to subsidize the destruction of human life and the exploitation of families and communities," Moore said. "A government that can pave over the consciences of

some can steamroll over dissent everywhere."

More than 90 religious non-profits, including GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention and four Baptist universities, challenged the mandate after it was enacted in 2011.

The Supreme Court decided in 2014 that the Affordable Care Act couldn't require employers to offer insurance coverage for certain birth control methods they equate with abortion. The decision applied only to private corporations such as the family-owned companies — including retailer Hobby Lobby — that challenged the law.

The new interim rule will expand this exception.

O.S. Hawkins, GuideStone president, said, "This is indeed good news. ... This new interim final rule ... is not the end of the protracted legal battle endured by far too many ministries throughout our nation. However, it is a significant step in ending the years-long ordeal." (TAB, RNS)

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Not created equal

US Protestants hold differing opinions on moral issues

Protestants in the U.S. may agree on many core theological beliefs but data collected over the past nearly two decades suggests their views on moral issues differ sharply from one denomination to another.

When it comes to abortion, gay and lesbian relations and premarital sex, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists and Lutherans — often referred to as “mainline” denominations — are “distinctly more liberal” than their Baptist, Pentecostal and nondenominational counterparts, according to an analysis of data collected for Gallup’s annual Values and Beliefs surveys, an annual survey conducted each May since 2001.

Largest category

Protestants make up the largest category of religious identification in the U.S. today, about twice the size of those identifying as Catholics, the second-largest religious group. Mainline Protestants make up about 11 percent of the U.S. adult population.



Between 60 and 71 percent of those who identify as members of one of these denominations say premarital sex is morally acceptable. Less than half of those in other denominations agree. A little more than half (56 percent) of those in mainline denominations say gay or lesbian relations are okay, while only a third (36 percent) share that view.

Among Baptist denominations, those identifying as Southern Baptists (about 3 percent of

the overall population) tend to be more conservative than the 9 percent of American adults who identified as Baptist but not Southern Baptist.

Only 17 percent of Southern Baptists surveyed said abortion was “morally acceptable,” whereas 27 percent of “other” Baptists said so. On the issue of gay and lesbian relations, 24 percent of Southern Baptists said they were morally acceptable, while among other Baptists, 34 percent agreed.

Of the eight denominational categories, only those identifying as Pentecostal held more conservative positions regarding abortion, premarital sex and homosexuality than Southern Baptists.

Regarding the death penalty, Pentecostals were the least likely of all the denominations to agree that capital punishment was morally acceptable. Those identifying as “nondenominational” were most likely to agree, followed closely by Southern Baptists,

Presbyterians and Lutherans.

Frank Newport, editor-in-chief of Gallup, acknowledged that current opinions among U.S. Protestants on these issues may be different due to the long time span of the data collection.

Growing acceptance

“Americans as a whole, and Protestants as a group, have become more accepting of gay and lesbian relations and of sex outside of marriage since 2001,” he wrote.

However, Newport noted that denominational opinions generally hold steady over time, even as attitudes on moral issues shift. He added that the analysis confirms major differences within the broad group of U.S. Protestant denominations, who are often lumped together in surveys and polls.

As religion continues to play a role in the nation’s political scene, Newport said differences in opinion on moral issues suggest a “need for caution among those attempting to characterize Americans by their religion.” (TAB)



(augmented reality)

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CHURCH POSITIONS

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.

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.

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.

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Union Baptist Church, Grand Bay, Alabama, seeking a part-time youth minister. Please send resumé to: 5251 Grand Bay Wilmer Rd., Grand Bay, AL 36541.

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RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

Birmingham passes LGBTQ protections

BIRMINGHAM — Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP) leaders say pastors and ministries in Birmingham should be concerned about the recent passage of the first-ever LGBTQ protections by a local municipality in the state of Alabama.

The Birmingham city council passed the nondiscrimination ordinance unanimously following a public hearing Sept. 26. The ordinance covers housing, public accommodations and employment.

Joe Godfrey, ALCAP's executive director, says similar efforts are underway in Montgomery, Huntsville, Muscle Shoals/Florence and Mobile. He believes pressure also will be placed on smaller suburbs/towns to "follow Birmingham's lead."

"While no one in the church would endorse discrimination of any kind, the latitude created by language such as 'real or perceived sexual orientation or gender' allow for aggressive encroachment on personal rights of Christian businessmen and women and religious freedoms in the market place," Godfrey wrote in an Oct. 4 news release. "In addition, portions of the ordinance have direct implications ... on the churches of Birmingham."

For instance, the exemptions for employment for churches would only be applied to pastoral staff, Godfrey said. Also, municipal contracts related to community services must abide by the new ordinance. For more information, go to birminghamcitycouncil.org and click on the "Nondiscrimination Ordinances" release in the "Newsroom" tab. (Michael Smith)

Christians gather to pray for racial healing

WASHINGTON — Thousands of Christians gathered to "take a knee" on the National Mall in Washington on Oct. 9 and pray for God to forgive the nation's racial sins and bring reconciliation.

The event, called Rise Up, brought Christians from every state to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ and ask God for racial healing and an end to gender-based injustices and abortion, according to The Christian Post. As NFL players have been attempting to raise awareness about police violence against African-Americans by taking a knee during the national anthem, Rise Up participants made their own unified statement by taking a knee in prayer.

"Let's show the world what taking a knee really means," one African-American rally leader told the audience, according to the Post. "When we stand up, I want us to stand up in the affirmation that God was heard and healed our land in Jesus name." (TAB)

Pastor embezzles from food program for kids

CHICAGO — A pastor in Chicago has been sentenced to 37 months in prison for defrauding a food program for low-income children, according to The Christian Post.

Robbie Wilkerson, founding pastor of New Birth Christian Center church, admitted he submitted about \$714,000 in false or fraudulent claims to the state board of education, more than \$250,000 above the budgeted cost of the food program.

The church-run program provided meals to low-income students when schools weren't in session. Wilkerson claimed it served 267,000 meals in 2010. In reality, it served fewer than 100,000.

Wilkerson and his wife, Tasha, have been ordered by the court to pay a total of nearly \$481,000 in restitution. His wife also was handed a sentence of 12 months in prison.

Three other church leaders also pleaded guilty to one count each of theft of government funds, according to the Post. (TAB)

Severe poverty in US hits 20-year high

WASHINGTON — The number of Americans living in severe poverty hit its highest point in 20 years in 2016, according to a Pew Research analysis of census data.

This happened even though the overall poverty rate declined and income rose for the second year in a row.

The official poverty rate was 12.7 percent in 2016, a number representing 40.6 million people. That number was down, but the percentage of the poor in extreme poverty — 45.6 percent — was up from 39.5 percent 10 years ago. (TAB)

Baptist attorney concerned that memo over-simplifies complex issue

(continued from page 1)

A Baptist attorney specializing in church-state issues also expressed concern. Holly Hollman, general counsel and associate executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, wrote, "In large part, the guidance restates much settled law, though with a decided tilt toward concerns of free exercise, giving short shrift to the government's duty to avoid 'no establishment' concerns. In a couple of areas, the guidance will exacerbate controversy. The guidance treats complicated legal issues ... in an overly simplistic way."

Summary of memo

Sessions' memo states:

▶ The freedom of religion is a fundamental right of paramount importance, expressly protected by federal law.

▶ The free exercise of religion includes the right to act or abstain from action in accordance with one's religious beliefs.

▶ The freedom of religion extends to persons and organizations.

▶ Americans do not give up their freedom of religion by participating in the marketplace, partaking of the public square or

interacting with government.

▶ Religious employers are entitled to employ only persons whose beliefs and conduct are consistent with the employers' religious precepts.

▶ Government may not:

• Restrict acts or abstentions because of the beliefs they display.

• Target individuals or entities for special disabilities based on their religion.

• Target religious individuals or entities through discrim-

inatory enforcement of neutral, generally applicable laws.

• Officially favor or disfavor particular religious groups.

• Interfere with the autonomy of a religious organization.

• As a general matter, condition receipt of a federal grant or contract on the effective relinquishment of a religious organization's hiring exemptions or attributes of its religious character.

Also, six principles in the memo

focus on the application of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) of 1993. The RFRA requires the government to have a compelling interest and use the narrowest possible means in burdening a person's religious exercise.

The guidance also sets forth two principles related to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, stating that Title VII prohibits religious discrimination and that religious protections in Title VII extend

to "discrimination on the basis of religious observance or practice as well as belief."

One additional principle emphasizes that the Clinton Guidelines on Religious Exercise and Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace, issued in 1997, "provide useful examples for private employers of reasonable accommodations for religious observance and practice in the workplace." ¶

To read the memo in its entirety, go to https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1001891/download?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery.

FBC Montgomery hosts annual State Youth Choir Festival



Photo by Doug Rogers

More than 500 middle and high school students from 15 churches representing 11 associations participated in the annual State Youth Choir Festival held Sept. 24 at FBC Montgomery. The time of worship featured four anthems from the combined choirs, one combined ensemble performance, a focus on students on mission and a challenge to students from FBC Montgomery Pastor Jay Wolf. Students also led in Scripture readings and prayer. The event was sponsored by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) and coordinated by Ed Cleveland, minister of music at FBC Montgomery. More than a dozen music leaders from around the state provided assistance with section rehearsals and a praise band. Keith Hibbs, director of the office of worship leadership and church music for SBOM, said, "It's exciting to see not only all the music education that's going on across the state, but even more significantly the discipleship that's taking place in our student choirs."

Boy Scouts will admit girls, allow them to earn highest rank

By Michael Smith
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) board of directors unanimously decided Oct. 11 to welcome girls into its iconic Cub Scout program and to deliver a Scouting program for older girls that will enable them to earn the highest rank of Eagle Scout.

“This decision is true to the BSA’s mission and core values outlined in the Scout Oath and Law. The values of scouting — trustworthy, loyal, helpful, kind, brave and reverent, for example — are important for both young men and women,” said Michael Surbaugh, BSA’s chief scout executive, in an Oct. 11 news release. “We believe it is critical to evolve how our programs meet



the needs of families interested in positive and lifelong experiences for their children. We strive to bring what our organization does best — developing character and leadership for young people — to as many families and youth as possible as we help shape the next generation of leaders.”

Starting in the 2018 program year, families can choose to sign up their sons and daughters for Cub Scouts. Existing packs may choose to establish a new girl pack, establish a pack that consists of girl dens and boy dens or remain an all-boy pack. Cub Scout dens will be single-gender — all boys or all girls. Using the same curriculum as the Boy Scouts program, the organization also will provide a program

for older girls, which will be announced in 2018 and projected to be available in 2019, that will enable them to earn the Eagle Scout rank.

Although known for its iconic programs for boys, BSA has offered co-ed programs since 1971 through Exploring and the Venturing program, which will celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2018. The STEM Scout pilot program also is available for boys and girls.

Gender identity

Earlier this year, BSA announced it would accept transgender members, no longer basing eligibility for its programs on a child’s birth certificate but on the gender identity designated in applying for acceptance.

In 2013, BSA voted to permit openly homosexual scouts, and in 2015, it approved the inclusion of openly gay and bisexual adults as unit leaders and employees.✝

Trail Life to remain ‘gender-appropriate’

The leader of a national outdoor adventure program aiming to help develop men of character has reassured member families and supporters that it will remain a place “where boys can be boys.”

Trail Life USA CEO Mark Hancock made the pledge in the wake of the announcement by the Boys Scouts of America that it will begin admitting girls next year.

Trail Life USA’s Christian-based leadership and development program will continue to serve boys and young men exclusively, Hancock said.

“As gender blurring only increases, it is more important than ever that someone provides a safe environment where boys can be boys, and where their natural talents and tendencies can be affirmed, encouraged and developed by men who can offer a positive role model,” he said in an Oct. 11 news release.

Founded in 2013, Trail Life USA has almost 30,000 members in almost 750 troops across 48 states, including 24 in Alabama.

Ignoring the essential differences between boys and girls does

both sexes a disservice, Hancock said.

“Increasingly, however, it seems that boys are being singled out and told that their natural traits and characteristics are somehow wrong or need to be corrected,” he said. “We believe that, properly encouraged and nurtured by good role models, what makes a boy a boy is good, for the individual and for society.

“I can assure that we have no intention of following the lead of the Boys Scouts of America.” (TAB)

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THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

According to the Aug. 7, 1850, issue of *The Alabama Baptist*, Daniel Giddens, missionary for Bethlehem Baptist Association, gave his first report after four months on the job. He reported traveling 1,082 miles, preaching 63 sermons, visiting 187 families, baptizing three and receiving two others for baptism. “I have been delighted,” he wrote, “to see the old man of 70 and the youth of 16 bending together at the altar of prayer.”

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UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Cohorn celebrates 60 years in ministry

Although James Wallis Cohorn serves as pastor of First Baptist Church, Ohatchee, he's actually retired — sort of. Cohorn retired from full-time ministry in 1998 but continued supply preaching, teaching Sunday School and singing in the choir. Gradually that steady stream of service grew to serving as interim pastor of several churches for the next 16 or so years before he once again served full-time as a pastor — for First Baptist, Ohatchee.

This year marks Cohorn's 60th anniversary in ministry.

Cohorn's ministry began in 1957 when he accepted the call God put on his life and preached his first sermon at Leatherwood Baptist Church, Anniston. From there, he served as pastor of the following churches: East Centre Baptist Church, Centre; Fort Bayou Baptist Church, Ocean Springs, Mississippi; Wagarville Baptist Church, Anniston; James Memorial Baptist Church, Gadsden; West Point Baptist Church, Jacksonville; Blue Mountain Baptist Church, Anniston; Blue Springs Baptist Church, Oxford; and Oak Grove Baptist Church, Glencoe.

In local and state denominational life, Cohorn has served as moderator of Calhoun Baptist Association, on the advisory committee of Jacksonville State University's Baptist Campus Ministries and on the board of directors for the Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers.

Cohorn holds a bachelor's degree from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham and a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He is married to Evelyn. (Maggie Walsh)

McCarthy leads South Carolina foundation

Nathan R. McCarthy, former senior investment officer for the Baptist Foundation of Alabama (TBFA), is the new president and CEO of the Baptist Foundation of South Carolina. McCarthy began his official duties Aug. 28.

While with TBFA, McCarthy managed an investment portfolio

of more than \$240 million. Prior to that he served as an aeronautical/manufacturing engineer for Lockheed Martin and a financial adviser for Merrill Lynch, according to the *South Carolina Baptist Courier*.

McCarthy succeeds recently retired president Barry Edwards as the foundation's eighth president.

"Nathan's unique experience in engineering and investments lend well to understanding the processes and investment needs of a foundation ministry," said past foundation board member and search committee chairman Tom Cothran.

McCarthy said, "This foundation has a great history and reputation, and God's hand is on this team. The Holy Spirit is going to lead this team as we continue to reach, teach and touch Christ's church through our mission. ... I'm looking forward to working with this team in making a strong impact to unleash generosity within the churches of South Carolina."

A Georgia native, McCarthy graduated from Southern Polytechnic State University (now Kennesaw State University) in Georgia with a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering. He is currently pursuing a master of divinity de-

gree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

McCarthy and his wife, Caron, have four children. (Maggie Walsh)

Rick Marshall retires after 45-year ministry

When he was 15 years old, Rick Marshall knew God was calling him into ministry.

"There was no dramatic moment of call," Marshall said, "but rather a growing sense during my early teen years at every worship service that God had a plan for my life in ministry."

With that knowledge firmly rooted in his mind, Marshall was ordained into pastoral ministry at his home church, First Baptist, Dothan, in 1971. Since then, he has faithfully served as pastor of four churches — a 45-year ministry that he is retiring from Oct. 31.

Marshall, who has served as pastor of Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery, since 1994,

urged his congregation in his final sermon Sept. 24 to look to the future with determination.

"You must not neglect the urgency of evangelism. It is your responsibility to leverage every opportunity to open the door for people to find Christ," he said.

"We will never turn our world upside down for Christ and make a difference for eternity with people in this community and in this city by living the lowest common denominator for Christ."

Other churches Marshall has served prior to Eastern Hills Baptist include First Baptist Church, Clanton; Mountain View Baptist Church, Huntsville; and Comer Memorial Baptist Church, Alexander City.

At Marshall's recognition service Sept. 24, State Board of Missions Executive Director Rick Lance called him "a great statesman for Southern Baptists" and Montgomery Baptist Association Director of Missions Neal Hughes said Marshall was "one of our greatest champions for Montgomery Baptist missions." Marshall is currently budget chairman for the association.

Marshall said, "If I had it to do all over again, I would gladly give my life in the gospel ministry."

Marshall and his wife, Judy, plan to remain members of Eastern Hills. In retirement, Marshall is open to teaching and preaching as the Lord leads. The couple has three children and seven grandchildren. (Maggie Walsh)



MARSHALL



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 22

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

REBELLION Exodus 32:1-6, 11-14

Rebellion (1-4)

Another 40 days, another failed attempt by Israel to be faithful to God. First, after about 40 days from when Israel escaped slavery, the people began to grumble against the Lord. They distrusted God, fearing that He led them out of slavery just to starve them. Now after Moses spent 40 days atop Mount Sinai with the Lord, the people began to grumble again (Ex. 24:18; 32:1). This time, however, they take their distrust to a new level. Instead of questioning God, they replaced God. They built gods and rejected the God whose image they bore. God had just established His relationship with Israel on His terms; however, Israel decided to redefine the relationship. How quickly the people forgot everything the Lord had done for them in the past few months. Their bodies were freed from Egypt but their hearts were re-fastened to the shackles of slavery to sin. Rebellion against God is the surest way to insult His redemption. We must resist the temptation to replace God with powerless gods and idols that cannot save.

Sin Committed (5-6)

Sin often leads us to corrupt good gifts from God. Festival celebrations are not bad. In fact, God commanded Israel to “celebrate a festival in [His] honor” (Ex. 23:14). But this celebration came with one important rule: “You must not invoke the names of other gods; they must not be heard on your lips” (Ex. 23:13). In other words the festival celebration would be good because the focus was on God. Israel had a festival but celebrated an idol. Here is where Israel foolishly sinned. They took what God meant for good, the festival, and turned it into bad, idolatry. Worse yet, when Israel failed to focus on God, their behavior changed to

reflect the kind of things that pleased their new gods, like wild partying and debauchery. We, too, are often guilty of the same. Like Israel, we can foolishly corrupt good gifts from God by using them to celebrate other gods. We take God’s good gift of time and celebrate the god of laziness. We take God’s good gift of our talents and celebrate the god of selfish pride. We take God’s good gift of money and celebrate the god of materialism. Sadly, even though this celebration may cause temporary happiness — surely the Israelites were happy in the moment — it robs us of eternal joy. The good news is that while sin leads to corruption, God offers us the greatest gift, salvation through His Son, which leads to the celebration of the fullness of life (Rom. 6:23).

Appeal for Grace (11-14)

This description of God’s reaction to Israel’s blatant disregard for His mercy and grace is very believable. After all, how would you feel if you rescued someone from a burning building only to watch them snub you as they heaped lavish praise and thanksgiving on the arsonist? God’s anger is believable. What’s unbelievable is God’s mercy. Imagine the scene: Moses appealed to God for mercy against the backdrop of impious and insulting festivities that could be heard throughout the valley. Moses interceded for the people despite Israel’s sin; unbelievably, God showed mercy despite Israel’s sin. Why? Not because Israel deserved another chance. Certainly not because Israel was worthy of God’s mercy. No, God showed Israel mercy despite their sin because He makes and keeps His promises. The promise God kept that day is ultimately fulfilled in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20). Like Israel, we too deserve judgment. Like Israel, we too have a mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. By faith, despite our sin, we can be declared righteous and “have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). †

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

SOLOMON: UNFAILING WISDOM 1 Kings 3:3-14; 4:29-34

Few characters present such a cautionary tale as Solomon. Famed for his wisdom, Solomon expanded the wealth, power and territory of Israel beyond even the accomplishments of his father, David. Along the way, though, he sowed seeds of trouble and dissension whose harvest his descendants would reap for generations to come.

Pray for wisdom and discernment. (3:3-9)

The dynamics of David’s family made Solomon an unlikely candidate to succeed his father to the throne. A number of older and more powerful brothers had better claims to kingship and unlike Solomon they were not the product of a scandalous marriage like the one between David and the Canaanite woman, Bathsheba. After his affair with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband, though, David’s family began to spiral out of control. His oldest son, Amnon, raped his half-sister, Tamar, and was killed by her brother, Absalom, for doing so. Absalom himself launched a full-scale civil war against his father, David, but was killed in the process. Solomon’s hands were not entirely clean in the matter either as he murdered his brother, Adonijah, when he suspected him of making a play for the throne. Solomon solidified his claim to kingship, but he did so at a tumultuous time and with very little experience for ruling.

It was at this time, though, that the author of the Book of Kings tells us Solomon found the most important ally for his rule. At a place called Gibeon, God himself appeared to Solomon in a dream and offered to give the young king whatever he would ask for. Perhaps recognizing his own youth and inexperience, Solomon is said to have asked not for wealth or power but for wisdom to govern God’s people well.

God give us wisdom. (3:10-14)

The text tells us that Solomon’s request was one that greatly pleased the God who had offered to grant it. God promised Solomon that He would give him “a wise and discerning mind,” so that “no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you.” And as an added reward, God would add to this gift the great riches and honor Solomon had not asked for before.

Solomon’s peculiar wisdom was immediately evident as he solved the inscrutable case of two women who had laid claim to the same child. In an order that remains famous to this day, Solomon commanded that the child be cut in two and given half to one woman and half to the other. The real mother, of course, immediately begged the king not to do this and told the other woman she could take the child if it would save his life. The whole nation is said to have marveled at the king’s clever strategy for figuring out which woman was telling the truth and which was lying.

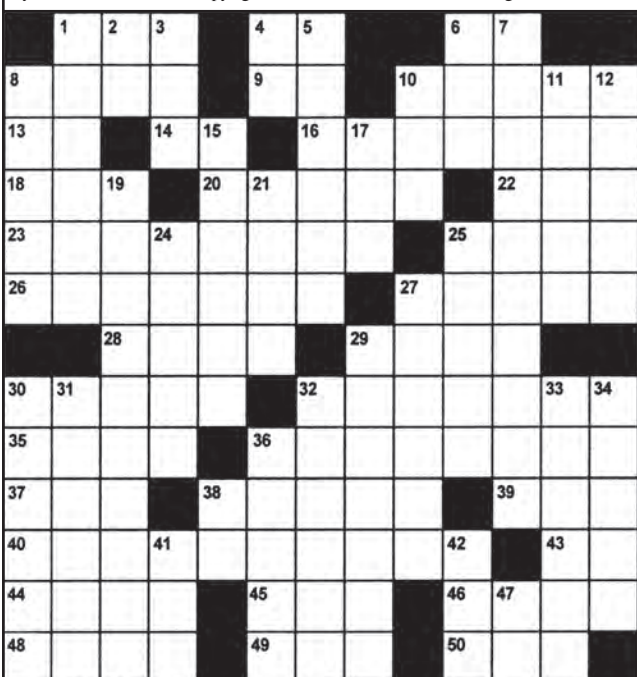
Others benefit when we share God’s wisdom. (4:29-34)

Scripture tells us Solomon’s wisdom was legendary well beyond the borders of Israel. Even foreign kings would come to marvel at this sage renowned for his proverbs, songs and observations of the natural world.

Sadly while Solomon’s great wisdom endured, the humility that first led him to ask for that wisdom did not. In time Solomon grew more tyrannical and less attentive to the needs of his people, with the result that his kingdom would split in two almost immediately upon his death. Wisdom alone was insufficient for Solomon to be a truly successful king. What he needed even more than wisdom was a humble heart that would pair wisdom with devotion to the God who had provided it to him in the first place. †

Christian Crossword

By Diana Rowland Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- Central Intelligence Agency. (abbr.)
- every one. (Isa. 55:1)
- Greet them that _____. (Rom. 16:11)
- The ____ shall overflow. (Joel 2:24)
- _____ children, then heirs. (Rom. 8:17)
- Great, terrific.
- _____ I am the apostle. (Rom. 11:13)
- Wretched man that I ____! (Rom. 11:13)
- _____ Shemaiah; _____, and Rephael. (1 Chron. 26:7; 2 words)
- _____ servant of the church. (Rom. 16:1)
- Bare _____ son ... _____. (Gen. 38:4)
- Nickname for Ronald.
- _____, and iron, _____ lead, _____ the midst. (Ezek. 22:18; 3 words)
- Shall come to _____. (Rom. 9:26)
- _____; _____ he smelleth ... _____ the captains. (Job 39:25)
- _____, and Hushim, _____ sons of Aher. (1 Chron. 7:12)
- Joram went over to _____.

Down

- Iron, _____, and calamus. (Ezek. 27:19)
- But what saith _____? (Rom. 10:8)
- _____ did that which was
- Cappadocia, _____. (1 Pet. 1:1)
- _____ of his Son. (Rom. 8:29)
- _____ toward ... valley of _____. (Josh. 15:7; 2 words)
- The _____ of thine head. (Ezek. 24:17)
- Jesus ... saying _____, _____. (Mark 15:34; 2 words)
- And _____ it up. (Rev. 10:10)
- Said the king to _____. (2 Sam. 20:4)
- Lyric poem of strong feeling.
- _____: the same is _____ father. (Gen. 19:38)
- Long Island. (abbr.)
- _____ God, _____ me up on high. (Ps. 69:29)
- Pouring in _____. (Luke 10:34)
- Have _____ among the pots. (Ps. 68:13)
- Shall _____ to reign. (Rom. 15:12)
- The _____ were not smitten. (Ex. 9:32)
- When he had found a young _____. (John 12:14)

right. (1 Kings 15:11)

- Hello.
- _____ God: _____ them which fell ... _____ thou continue. (Rom. 11:22)
- _____ the children of the promise are counted. (Rom. 9:8)
- _____, we heard of it at _____. (Ps. 132:6; 2 words, reversed)
- Your _____ is spoken of. (Rom. 1:8)
- The image of his _____. (Rom. 8:29)
- Adam, Sheth, _____. (1 Chron. 1:1)
- Wash, _____, and dry.
- _____, so that he _____. (Ex. 21:12)
- _____ is in his hand. (Luke 3:17)
- _____ ringleader of the sect of the _____. (Acts 24:5)
- Smell.
- _____ old man ... child of his old _____. (Gen. 44:20)
- Bought with a _____. (1 Cor. 6:20)
- _____ the son of Amoz. (Isa. 1:1)
- Called to be an _____. (Rom. 1:1)
- As _____ live ... as _____ is

among the mountains.

- (Jer. 46:18)
- Threw n two _____ Verily _____ say. (Mark 12:42, 43)
- Banks of _____ ... near where _____ ... was afraid. (Dan. 8:16, 17)
- Slang for lots and lots.
- Barley and the _____. (Isa. 28:25)
- Sons of _____ the father of Sychem. (Acts 7:16)
- I _____ THAT I AM. (Ex. 3:14)
- _____ the sacrifices of the dead. (Ps. 106:28)
- God of Beth-_____ ... vowedst _____ vow. (Gen. 31:13)
- There _____ no power but of God. (Rom. 13:1)





Media reviews

MOVIES/TV

Also streaming this month

Amazon Prime

► **Fight for Space (G, 2016).** Experts discuss the past and future of space exploration and explain the benefits it brings the United States. Documentary. Oct. 18.

► **Priceless (PG-13, 2016).** A man in need of a job agrees to drive a truck cross-country no-questions-asked, only to discover the cargo includes two women. It's a faith-based film that spotlights human trafficking and some violence. Rated PG-13 for mature thematic material involving human trafficking and some violence. Oct. 29.

Hulu

► **March of the Penguins (G, 2005).** Emperor penguins risk their lives to protect their eggs and then their young in frigid Antarctica. One of the best nature documentaries ever made, as it shows God's creation in all its glory. Narrated by Morgan Freeman. Oct. 1.

► **Love Finds You in Valentine (Unrated, 2016).** A California woman inherits a Nebraska ranch with the intent to sell it but falls in love with the area (and perhaps a cowboy, too) after she visits. Originally aired on the inspirational UPTV

channel. Unrated. Oct. 1.

► **Priceless (PG-13, 2016).** Oct. 29.

► **Other notables:** Tiny House Hunters: Seasons 1–2 (Oct. 1); Property Brothers: Season 5 (Oct. 1); America's Funniest Home Videos: Season 28 (Oct. 9).

Netflix

► **Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (PG, 2005).** A young boy named Charlie wins a chocolate factory tour led by the unusual Willy Wonka (Johnny Depp). Based on a book by Roald Dahl. Rated PG for quirky situations, action and mild language. Oct. 1.

► **Smurfs: The Lost Village (PG, 2017).** Smurfette (Demi Lovato), Brainy, Clumsy and Hefty set out to find a village of previously unknown Smurfs. The first half is pretty good. The second half? Not so much. Rated PG for some mild action and rude humor. Oct. 20.

► **Meet the Robinsons (G, 2007).** An intelligent 12-year-old orphan boy seeks to build a machine to learn more about his birth mom. A heart-warming story of finding a forever family. Oct. 23. †



March of the Penguins

Thought-provoking 'Arrival' tops October streaming

By Michael Foust
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Some movies can be summarized without divulging the major themes. "Arrival" (PG-13, 2016) — which begins streaming Oct. 28 on Hulu and Amazon Prime — is not one of those films. It's the most thought-provoking alien invasion movie you've ever seen and perhaps the best one, too, despite not having a single laser shot, gun battle or abduction.

So if you prefer watching your movies without knowing even minor spoilers, then stop reading right now. But if you want to be convinced why you should watch "Arrival," then stay put.

Got it? You've been warned! "Arrival" tells the story of translator Louise Banks (Amy Adams), who is one of the top linguistic experts in the world and whose knowledge is needed when gigantic, egg-shaped spacecraft touch down worldwide. On paper, Banks' task is seemingly simple: communicate with the aliens and learn why they have come to Earth.

Communication

But in reality, her job is impossible. That's because the aliens and humans have no common frame of reference. How do you communicate with a creature who has lived its entire life in another galaxy? Our language sounds like, well, English. Their language sounds like a combina-



Photos courtesy of Michael Foust

tion of dolphin sounds and organ music.

Banks, though, isn't the only linguist on the job.

Language experts worldwide are trying to communicate and when several of them decide that the aliens are trying to say "weapon," panic ensues. Banks argues that the aliens instead were trying to say "tool," but can she convince everyone before a cosmic war ensues?

"Arrival" is based on the 1998 novel "Story of Your Life" by Ted Chiang and the film will challenge what you think about cultural and language barriers. The lessons go much deeper than that though.

At its core, "Arrival" is a movie about the blessings and trials of life, as it urges us to emphasize the former rather than the latter. It also poses a mind-bending question: Would you (and could you) live your life with joy if you knew what trials lay ahead. And is a life capped by a tragic death

worth the pain? "Arrival" is not faith-based but its view of life approaches that of a heavenly perspective. It also includes a pro-life message.

Mostly clean

By Hollywood standards, "Arrival" is a mostly clean movie, with no sexuality and about four coarse words (f-word, b---rd, h-ll, OMG).

I've watched "Arrival" only once, but I'm eagerly anticipating watching it again. †

Meet the reviewer

Michael Foust covers the intersection of faith and entertainment as a writer and podcast host for Heirloom Audio. He also is the husband of an amazing wife and the father of four small children.

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Traffic moves slowly along Interstate 4 in Florida on Sept. 9 as people evacuated before the arrival of Hurricane Irma.

Being prepared

Readiness is essential for both bad weather, eternity

By **Boyd Deal**
Special to The Alabama Baptist

On Sept. 10, Hurricane Irma came ashore in south Florida and made the path from south to north throughout the Southeast. On Sept. 11 the remaining effects from Irma entered Alabama and it produced tropical storm winds and heavy rain for much of Alabama. And then on Oct. 8, Hurricane Nate threatened the coast of the state with more tropical storm and/or tropical depression force winds and rain reaching throughout the state.

What if people had not been prepared? What if people had not evacuated out of the path of the hurricanes? What if people had not done things in advance to protect their homes and personal items? What if people had not bought supplies in case they lost power or in case the roads became impassable?

What could have happened

Hindsight is always 20/20 and it is easy to see what could have happened if people had not prepared for Hurricane Irma in advance. All of the major TV networks were focused on the storm and the damage it was leaving in its path. Everyone affected by the storm was talking about it. That was their primary focus as it left a trail of destruction.

Preparing for weather situations like Hurricane Irma is very important. However, doesn't it make even more sense to prepare for eternity? What keeps people from being prepared for eternity?

Could it be that they are waiting for their life to "get right"? If that is God's intended plan, then there was no reason for Jesus to die on the cross for our sins.

Eternity with Christ

The fact is, no one can do anything by themselves to ensure eternity with Christ. Could it be people think they have plenty of time? Having eternity with Christ is free and easy if you will just ask; thus, everyone thinks they can do it tomorrow, next week or next year.

Unfortunately, I attend a lot of funerals and I can tell you that you do not know when your time will come. Therefore, you need to ask God now to forgive you of your sins if you want to have eternal life with Him.

Are you a born-again Christian? If so, praise the Lord. If not, what are you waiting for?

In preparation for Hurricane Irma, I saw people buying gas, generators, food, water and other essentials as if they were desperate. I do not know what it will be like when the rapture occurs but I can only imagine people will panic and be much more desperate than what we have seen over the past several weeks. I am thankful I will be called up to heaven and I will not have to experience what will take place in the last days.

Be prepared.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Boyd Deal serves as a deacon at Ariton Baptist Church in Dale Baptist Association and is the area 8 organization director for the Alabama Farmers Federation. ☛



DEAL



US Commission calls for Brunson's release

IZMIR, Turkey — On the one-year anniversary of American Pastor Andrew Brunson's imprisonment in Turkey, a bipartisan U.S. commission criticized Turkish officials and called for Brunson's immediate release.

"The government of Turkey has fabricated charges against Pastor Brunson, largely based on purported 'secret testimony,'" said Kristina Arriaga, vice chairwoman of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, in a statement Oct. 7 after visiting Brunson in Kiriklar Prison in Izmir, Turkey. "He should be released immediately."

Brunson, who is from Black Mountain, North Carolina, has ministered to Christians in Turkey for 23 years. In 2016, Turkish officials accused Brunson of trying to overthrow its government and constitution, charges Brunson has denied. If convicted, Brunson could be sentenced to life in prison.

Arriaga visited Brunson with Sandra Jolley, also a vice chairwoman of the commission. Prior to their visit, only Brunson's lawyer, relatives and U.S. embassy officials had seen him.

"He lives in a world of psychic and physical dislocation," Jolley said in the statement. "Despite a public veneer of a legal process, the truth is Pastor Brunson has had no due process, no true information about the charges against him, unreliable court dates and no idea when he ever again will see his children or his country."

During the visit Brunson thanked "everyone who is advocating and praying for me," according to the commission's statement. "Knowing that I am not forgotten is important to me." (TAB)

Australian Anglicans work to fight gay 'marriage'

SYDNEY — Glenn Davies, archbishop of the Anglican Church in Sydney, announced during the 51st Synod of the Diocese of Sydney on Oct. 9, that \$1 million was being pulled from the Diocesan Endowment to fight gay "marriage."

"We find ourselves being moved in a more libertarian direction under the influence of those who want to abandon the mores of the past," he said in his address. "Yet at the same time these permissive forces who espouse the virtue of tolerance are seeking to impose restrictions upon those who wish to maintain the values on which our nation has been founded."

"The stakes are high and the cost is high," Davies said. "Yet the cause is just and it is a consequence of our discipleship to uphold the gift of marriage as God has designed it — a creation ordinance for all people. By so doing, the wisdom of God is made manifest."

"I believe marriage, traditionally understood as a union of one man and one woman, is a positive good for our society. ... I consider the consequences of removing gender from the marriage construct will have irreparable consequences for our society, for our freedom of speech, our freedom of conscience and freedom of religion." (TAB)

Bodies of beheaded Christians found in Libya

TRIPOLI, Libya — A mass grave containing the bodies of the 21 Coptic Christians beheaded by the Islamic State (IS) group in 2015 was found recently, Libya's interior ministry has said.

The Christians were kidnapped by IS and marched to the beach in orange jumpsuits and asked to kneel before members of the IS terror group beheaded them. A video of the executions was released on the internet.

The wife of one of the victims said her husband "kept the faith and was martyred in the name of Christ. His faith was very strong. I'm proud of him. He has lifted our heads up and honored us and all the Christians."

The grave, 280 miles east of Libya's capital of Tripoli, was found after an IS prisoner made a confession to Libyan authorities, according to The Christian Post.

The remains have been transferred to a forensics lab for testing.

A court in Egypt sentenced seven people to death in September over links to IS and the beheadings. (TAB)