

INSIDE



Persecution of Christians continues to rise worldwide

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200th
ANNIVERSARY

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'GO to the lost'

Pastors, laypeople urged to live for sake of gospel at evangelism conference

By Grace Thornton and Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

When the fire alarm went off just as Roc Collins began reading from Acts 1 to start off his message, the shrieking siren and flashing lights brought the final session of this year's State Evangelism Conference to a halt.

But with his signature humor, Collins said, "Well I prayed that the Lord would set us on fire, but I didn't mean like this."

The sirens soon stopped, as the alarm was the result of a curious child, and Collins, who serves as director of evangelism for the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board, got to preaching with a fire that was undeniable.

"What's our business? What are we supposed to be about?" Collins asked the audience composed largely of pastors.

Eternal matters

Followers of Christ aren't supposed to be about temporal things, he said, but they are supposed to be about eternal matters. That requires Christians to be empowered by the Spirit of God, to be His witnesses and to literally go share His message. "Some of us are so full of stuff ...

that we've left no room for the Holy Spirit of God," Collins said. "We can't even get to being a witness until we get some stuff out of the way."

Christians serve a God "who can save from the guttermost to the uttermost," Collins said, but it requires each person to get in motion and go to the lost.

"Alabama Baptists, I came here to tell you to go. Go and keep going until all have heard that Jesus still saves that which was lost."



COLLINS

Collins was the final speaker of the conference, held Jan. 22-23 at Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery. During the two-day event, six speakers urged state Baptists to position their churches to have effective evangelism strategies.

In between messages, Chip Colee, a worship leader based in Birmingham, and Daniel Crews, a Christian vocalist from Florida, led music. Nathan Lyon, youth minister and music ministry associate at First Baptist Church, Birmingham, provided pre-session piano music each day, and contemporary Christian trio Selah sang at the Tuesday night session.

Sammy Gilbreath, state evangelism director, said the conference, which followed the theme "Evangelism Resurgence," was "incredible." He noted the greatest surprise of



Photo by Doug Rogers

Contemporary Christian trio Selah sings during the final session of the State Evangelism Conference on Jan. 23.

the conference was how large the crowd was viewing online this year.

Messages streamed live on Facebook and had more than 1,300 unique viewers watching at least some of the broadcast. "We were excited about having so many people involved, even if they weren't able to be physically present."

Greg Corbin, pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, said that in order to have effective evangelism, churches must have four characteristics — gospel servants doing gospel work sharing the gospel truth and seeing gospel results.

"Every Christian is to be a gospel servant," he said, preaching from 1 Corinthians 3:5-8. "Where my church is and where your church is, there is a field, and we must plant and water, and plant some more and water some more ... then trust God with the harvest."



CORBIN

Terrence Jones, pastor of Strong Tower at Washington Park, Montgomery, said that when Christians unify around that gospel message, amazing things can happen.

Preaching from John 17, Jones said Jesus prayed for His disciples to (See 'Call,' page 6)

Celebrate with us Feb. 6,

SEE PAGE 19 FOR DETAILS.



COMMENT

Are We Losing Religious Liberty?

For years some observers have warned that the day is coming when religious groups in the United States will have to silence their voices about certain moral and ethical issues or be “punished” by governmental entities.

Most people scoffed at that message, believing religious liberty was so thoroughly ingrained in the nation through the U.S. Constitution and in the people through generations of practice that governmental forces would never attempt to force citizens to compromise their “inalienable right” of religious liberty.

More recent developments are causing some thoughtful people to listen more closely to voices predicting the loss of religious liberty. Today the United States seems caught up in a struggle between religious liberty and other competing values.

Current antagonists are sexual ethics and religious liberty. Media outlets have carried an array of stories about bakers, florists, pharmacists, nurses, physicians, hospitals and more. These stories shared the tensions between people trying to live out their religious liberty in the face of national values linked to abortion, gender identity and same-sex “marriage.”

Discouraging signs

Some of these cases are headed for the U.S. Supreme Court for greater clarification. However, signs are not encouraging for those committed to religious liberty as the dominant value.

At the University of Iowa in Iowa City, a student organization called Business Leaders in Christ is in jeopardy of losing its status as an official on-campus organization because it requires leaders to hold biblical beliefs about sexuality.

In accordance with school requirements, the organization is open to everyone, but organizational leaders must affirm the group’s statement of faith which upholds marriage between one man and one woman, adding that “every other sexual relationship beyond this is outside of God’s design and is not in keeping with God’s original plan for humanity.”

That requirement, school administrators concluded, violates the university’s nondiscrimination policy. In recent months, the Business Leaders in Christ organization has been prohibited from reserving campus meeting space, participating in student recruitment fairs, use of university-wide communications services and more.

Interestingly, fraternities and sororities are able to restrict membership based on sex but remain officially recognized even though they are not open to all comers.

The Christian group argues that all groups — whether religious or not — should be allowed to ensure leaders chosen by the group embrace the mission of the organization.

In California, pro-life pregnancy centers are



THOUGHTS
By Bob Terry

fighting a law adopted in 2015 requiring each center to post a pro-abortion message.

A legal challenge to the law titled “Reproductive Freedom, Accountability, Comprehensive Care and Transparency Act” will soon be heard by the U.S. Supreme Court. At least 144 members of Congress from both parties have signed a brief arguing the California law is unconstitutional.

The brief says, in part, “The California law at issue compels pregnancy centers opposed to abortion — and only those opposed to abortion — to comply with burdensome requirements that force these centers to provide nonmedical information that contradicts their core message and moral beliefs.”

Those opposed to the law argue the State of California directly interferes with the work of pro-life pregnancy centers by forcing them to post messages actively opposed to their life-saving efforts. The required notice reads, “California has public programs that provide immediate free or low-cost access to comprehensive family planning services (including all FDA-approved methods of contraception), prenatal care and abortion for eligible women.”

Canadian law

Instances like these cause some observers to worry that what is now taking place in Canada may soon take place in the U.S. There, churches and other Christian groups must affirm support for abortion or lose eligibility to a government program that helps provide more than 70,000 summer jobs annually.

The summer jobs program provides jobs for students in places like summer camps, day cares, drop-in centers and other programs run by church groups and other religious organizations. Canada’s Employment Minister Patty Hajdu now requires that each organization seeking to

participate in the summer jobs grant program check a box stipulating they have a “core mandate” which respects “reproductive rights.”

Unless the box is checked, the application cannot be accepted.

One source argued this stipulation was purposely aimed at groups opposing abortion like the Roman Catholic Church, evangelicals and other religious organizations.

During an interview at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said, “This is a really important right that we have established and there are organizations out there that couch themselves as freedom of speech, freedom of conscience.”

Value of religious liberty

“Of course, you’re more than allowed to have whatever beliefs you like, but when those beliefs lead to actions determined to restrict a woman’s right to control her own body, that’s where I, and I think we, draw the line as a country,” he added.

In this instance it seems clear that the Canadian government has placed abortion as a higher value than religious liberty. The same seems true in the California case and in the Iowa example. Religious liberty loses again.

In light of these and many other cases it should not be surprising that people who value religious liberty are beginning to worry about its role in the future of this nation and the world.

As Christians we believe religious liberty is a God-given right. No one, including government, can stand in the sacred space between the created and the Creator ex-

cept for Jesus Christ, the great High Priest.

Commitment to religious liberty has been part of the foundation of this nation and championed by churches for generations. Is that slipping today? Is the Church silent now about the importance of religious liberty?

When is the last time your church focused on religious liberty as a God-given right and examined its implications for how one lives individually, as well as the overall policies and laws which govern us all?

Religious liberty has always been an inalienable right in this nation. It must always be an inalienable right. That will only happen when the Church champions religious liberty for all and defends it against other competing values. 🇺🇸

“Religious liberty has always been an inalienable right in this nation. It must always be an inalienable right. That will only happen when the Church champions religious liberty for all and defends it against other competing values.”



"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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Increase in persecution

Christians worldwide experience rise in oppression, violence

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

Religious extremism is intensify-
ing globally, leading to increased
persecution of Christians even in
countries where religious freedom
is constitutionally protected.

In 2017 at least 30 countries saw an increase in persecution against followers of Jesus, according to Open Doors USA, an organization that supports persecuted believers in more than 60 countries and reports annually on the most dangerous places in the world to live as a Christian. Open Doors also reported that approximately 215 million Christians experience "high, very high or extreme persecution for following Jesus" and that nearly 1 of every 12 Christians in the world lives where Christianity is illegal, forbidden or punished.

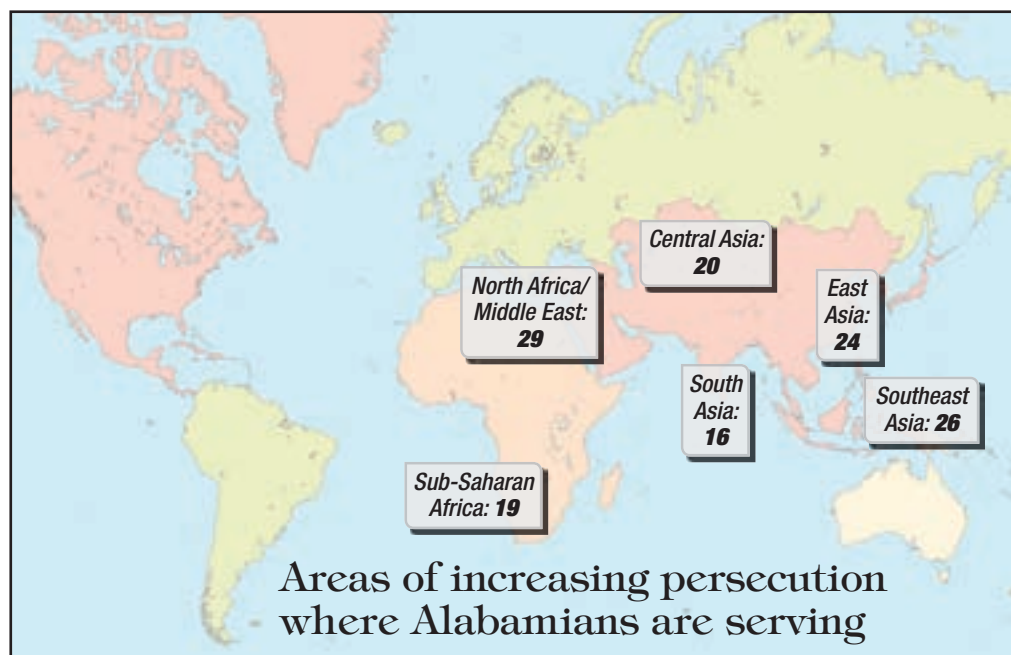
The release of Open Doors' 2018 World Watch List of the top 50 countries where Christian persecution is most severe shows that even in countries where religious freedom is supposed to be constitutionally protected, persecution against minority religions, especially Christianity, is increasing.

Take India, for example — a country whose constitution declares it a secular state — which has moved from No. 15 on Open Doors' World Watch List in 2017 to No. 11 in 2018. Christians there

are facing increasing levels of unrest and instability because of a rise in Indian nationalism and radical Hinduism. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) reports that religious tolerance and religious freedom conditions continue to deteriorate in India as Hindu nationalist groups and their sympathizers use intimidation, harassment and violence against religious minority communities.

World Watch Monitor notes that the violence of these groups is often allowed by local, state and national authorities dominated by the Hindu nationalist political party, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Indian President Narendra Modi also belongs to this party. Efforts to outlaw proselytism and enact so-called "anti-conversion laws" at the national level also are increasing in India. The religious unrest is spilling over into neighboring countries, which led to Nepal appearing on Open Doors' list for the first time this year.

Other countries that made the list, including



freevectormaps.com, graphic by Lauren C. Grim

Nigeria, Azerbaijan and Iraq, also have constitutional protections for religious freedom yet fail to protect members of religious minorities from persecution.

North Korea is ranked first on the 2018 World Watch List for the 16th consecutive

year. The rankings take into account the pressures faced by Christians in five spheres of life (private, family, community, national and church), and levels of religiously motivated violence against believers.

In North Korea, where more than 50,000 Christians are in prison or labor camps in the country, anything that threatens the communist rule of the Kim family is suppressed quickly and often violently.

However, Muslim extremism in many countries, including Afghanistan, which came in at No. 2 on the World Watch List,

rivals the violence in North Korea. The Open Doors' report said Afghanistan and North Korea nearly tied for the No. 1 spot — a first.

According to the report, "never before have the top two countries been so close in persecution incidents. Both countries are extreme in intolerance and outright persecution of Christian in all six areas of life that Open Doors monitors."

Afghanistan's neighbor, Pakistan, dropped a

spot on the list, from No. 4 to No. 5, though it scored the highest in churches or church buildings being attacked, abductions and forced marriages.

In sub-Saharan Africa ethnic cleansing based on religious affiliation is growing. Terrorism linked to extreme Islamists resulted in a number of countries making the World Watch List in 2018, including Somalia (No. 3), Sudan (No. 4), Nigeria (No. 14) and Kenya (No. 32).

Overall, countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East are all experiencing intensifying persecution against Christians, with the greatest increases in persecution occurring in Egypt, India, Libya, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkey.

Christian women at risk

In many of these countries, Christian women are especially vulnerable. The Open Doors report estimates that every day, six women are raped, sexually harassed or forced into marriage to a Muslim under threat of death because of their Christian faith. Open Doors documented 2,260 such incidences but the numbers are probably much higher since documentation is based on a woman's willingness and freedom to report such an incident.

The overall increase in persecution of Christians through violent means and through laws designed to silence their voice should be a concern for all, according to the 2017 annual report of the USCIRF.

"Religious freedom, at its core, is the right of individuals and communities to manifest their religion or belief and is a basic human right. Protecting that right falls to each and every one of us, requiring people from all countries, political views and faiths to come together to fight religious persecution and work to protect religious freedom for all." ✠

QUICK FACTS

► **The countries where persecution increased the most are Egypt, India, Libya, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Turkey.**

► **Nepal and Azerbaijan are newcomers to the list.**

► **Comoros and Tanzania fell off the list.**

► **Pakistan saw the most violence recorded against Christians.**

► **Islamic extremism remains the global dominant driver of persecution, responsible for initiating oppression and conflict in 35 out of the 50 countries on the list.**

► **Some 22 of the 50 countries on the list are in Asia.**

‘DEMONSTRATION OF God’s faithfulness’

Number of Alabama Baptist churches celebrate bicentennial milestone this year

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

This whole year’s a party at Mulberry Baptist Church, Maplesville — a party that’s two years in the making.

“We’ve got a busy year,” said Sherrell White, who is on three committees related to the church’s yearlong 200th anniversary celebration.

What does that mean exactly? It means an old-fashioned day with buggy rides, three-legged races and pony rides. It means the church sanctuary is getting a facelift. It means fireworks and banquets and historic memorabilia.

And it doesn’t stop there. They’re working on the church grounds too.

In cleaning up the old church cemetery, White and others found some spots they thought might be unmarked graves, so they brought in someone with a ground-penetrating radar to find out.

“We are having markers made for all the graves we found,” White said.

They’re also clearing out a spot at Mulberry Creek for an old-timey baptismal service like the ones the old log cabin church had years ago.

A special time

So why are they doing all this? Because the church has meant a lot to a lot of people for a long time, and the 200-year mark doesn’t come around every day, White said.

It’s a big milestone but Mulberry Baptist isn’t alone — it’s one of 10 Alabama Baptist churches marking 200 years in 2018.

Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, said those churches are having “a wide variety” of events, but whether the celebration is big or small, simple or elaborate, it’s a special time.

“The fact that they have made it to this milestone is a demonstration of God’s faithfulness,” Berg said. “It also shows the faithfulness of the people who have served there for 200 years. Those people have changed over time, but they have all had the same focus — to know the Lord, worship Him and share Him with others.”

Over the years, those churches provided a gathering place for the community. They provided a place of worship. They may have provided a place for burial. They also may have been the local school, Berg said.

“That’s 200 years of life that they’ve had. They took care of neighbors when they were sick and they helped them bury their family,” she said. “They’ve served as an integral part of the life of Alabama.”

And they’ve clung to God through storms, she said. Whether it was a tragedy, a fire, a tornado or something else that impacted them, they stayed focused and continued the ministry and mission for which they were planted.

“And God is no less faithful now than He was to them then, like in World War II when many of the men and women went off to fight or during the Depression when people didn’t have enough to eat,” Berg said.

Because of that they’ve had a long, rich history of ministry, she said.

“Think about all the lives that have been changed as a result of those bicentennial churches,” Berg said. “How many people have found Christ? How many people have been called into the gospel ministry? How many have become missionaries? How many have been called to teach Sunday School or Training Union or open a food bank?”

Morgan Bailey, pastor of Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer, said he definitely sees the faithfulness of former and current members at play in the life of his church.

“One word captures the storied history of Canaan Baptist Church — devoted,” he said. “Those who have gone before us demonstrated an unshakable devotion to Christ,



Photo by Barry Fikes Photography

First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, celebrates its 200th anniversary with a theme of ‘Declaring His Glory’ based on Psalm 96:3 during the week of Jan. 21–28.

His community and His causes. Their faithfulness to God’s kingdom enabled them to traverse the often turbulent tides of 200 years of history while writing their own faith story.”

That’s what Canaan will celebrate this year as it looks toward the anniversary — and that history will urge them to dig deep, Bailey said. This year they’re kicking off a capital campaign to pay down the church’s building debt, hoping to position themselves to be a better light to the community in the years to come.

“The next chapter in Canaan’s storied history will be written boldly when we unite ourselves together in selfless sacrifice,” Bailey said.

Celebrating with sacrifice

Sammie Barstow, a member of First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, said her church also is celebrating with sacrifice — they’re being challenged to give big for missions and Bible translation this year.

“Declaring His Glory” is their bicentennial theme and the celebration started in January with special speakers, presentations from local officials and a reunion choir and orchestra, Barstow said. They also showed video testimonies of members who have been at the church for more than 50 years.

“We have 59 people who have been members for more than 50 years,” Barstow said. “We have five members who have been members for more than 70 years, in-

cluding one lady who has been there for 79 years. It’s just awesome to me to see that consistency.”

The church’s events, which are also the product of two years of planning, will stretch throughout the year. 🌟

The Alabama Baptist Historical Commission offers help for churches planning anniversary celebrations, including planning workshops held at your church. For more information, call Lonette Berg at 205-726-2363.

Celebrating 2 centennials in 1

When the centennial of Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer, rolled around in 1918, World War I had been raging for more than three years. On top of that, an influenza epidemic swept across Jefferson County that year, resulting in thousands of deaths. With all that was going on, the church marking 100 years was barely a blip on members’ radars. Canaan’s 200th anniversary, however, won’t go unnoticed (see story, this page).

CHURCHES CELEBRATING THEIR 200TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2018

- ▶ Bethel Baptist Church, Brent
- ▶ Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer
- ▶ Chestnut Creek Baptist Church, Maplesville
- ▶ Mulberry Baptist Church, Maplesville
- ▶ Belleville Baptist Church, Evergreen
- ▶ Catawba Springs Baptist Church, Brewton
- ▶ Old Town Creek Baptist Church, Moulton
- ▶ Friendship Baptist Church, Danville
- ▶ Shiloh Baptist Church, Sardis
- ▶ First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa

ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Parker retiring after nearly 50 years as pastor

James L. Parker accepted Christ in February 1970 and in as little as 14 months he answered the call of God to preach, and that's exactly what he's done for the past 47 years. He recently retired from Damascus Baptist Church, Hanceville, where he served as pastor for five and half years.

Other churches Parker served as pastor include Baldwin Heights Baptist Church, Cullman; West Point Baptist Church, Cullman; Seventh Street Baptist Church, Bessemer; Central Baptist Church (now Valley Grande Baptist Church), Valley Grande; West Highland Baptist Church, Athens; and Beechwood Baptist Church, Mount Olive. He also served as associate pastor of Union Baptist Church, Lipscomb, and First Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove.

Leading churches isn't his only passion, however. He also has a heart for missions and has served in Guatemala and South Korea. He currently serves as a chaplain with West Cullman Disaster Relief and plans to continue his service into retirement.

As he concludes his tenure as pastor, Parker has some words of advice for those who will come after him: "I would tell any young man in the ministry to stay focused, don't let circumstances distract you from your vision, stay in the Word and stay in tune with Jesus."

Though Parker is retiring from his position as pastor, he is not retiring from ministry. He plans to focus on his family while serving as interim pastor when needed.

Parker holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Parker and his wife, Jennifer, have three children and five grandsons. The couple resides in Bremen. To contact Parker for interim pastorates, supply preaching or teaching, call 256-962-1663. (TAB)

Ballard marks 20 'total' years with York Baptist

Leon Ballard meant to retire. He had served as Alabama Baptist State Convention president in a season when two convention entities were walking through some difficult times. When he left York Baptist Church in 1999 after 17 years as pastor, he was ready for a rest — or so he thought.

But the very next Sunday, a friend who was supposed to preach at Scooba Baptist Church in Mississippi couldn't go and he asked Ballard to fill in for him.

"So I went to Scooba and preached," Ballard said. And for the next nine years, he drove there every Sunday and Wednesday from Meridian, Mississippi, the hometown he moved back to after he retired.

Then in 2008 he became pastor of Grace Fellowship Baptist Church, Meridian.

But in 2014, something sweet happened. He heard York needed a pastor again. The community was shrinking — the grocery store had closed and the hospital was in the process of closing. The five church plants that York Baptist had in its heyday had all disbanded and moved on.

Calling a new pastor had proven difficult.

So in December of that year, Ballard went back.

"The church is facing a lot of things. There are good things, but there have also been difficult things that nobody can control," he said.

So the church has banded together and at the end of 2017 Ballard reached a total of 20 years at the church.

"I so much enjoy being back with the people," he said. "I've loved the people there for a long time." (Grace Thornton)



PARKER



BALLARD

Legislature to take up church security, marriage registration

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

Though some observers predict a quiet session, the Alabama Legislature is moving quickly on a marriage license bill and may consider allowing churches to authorize armed security teams.

Alabama's 2018 legislative session opened Jan. 9, an early start because 2018 is an election year for the governor, statewide offices and all 140 legislative seats.

In her State of the State Address, Gov. Kay Ivey identified education, health care and support for veterans as just a few of the issues facing Alabama this year. But many observers believe the legislature will be hesitant to tackle major legislative changes in an election year.

The Alabama Senate passed SB 13 by a 19-1 vote Jan. 16. The bill introduced by Sen. Greg Albritton, R-District 22, would eliminate the marriage license requirement and establish a legal procedure for two people to enter into a marriage.

Form to replace license

The new procedure would require the judge of probate to accept a form from a couple swearing they are of legal age, are entering the marriage willingly, are not related by blood or adoption and are not already married. The judge would not have to sign the document but would file the form with the state.

The bill also abolishes the requirement of a ceremony of mar-

riage to solemnize the marriage. The cost of submitting the form would be the same as the current marriage license fee.

Albritton has introduced similar legislation several times since the U.S. Supreme Court legalized same sex "marriage" in 2015. A vote on the bill in the Alabama House of Representatives could come soon.

'The only option'

Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP), told supporters by email that SB 13 is "about the only option we have left" to protect the religious freedoms of probate judges and other civil servants "who share our convictions that same-sex 'marriages' go against God's definition of marriage."

Churches and various faith groups may still require a marriage ceremony in order for marriages to be recognized within their own belief system, but the State (if this bill passes the House and is signed by the governor) will no longer be involved in the "marriage business."

Godfrey added that while pastors will no longer be required to sign marriage licenses, churches should consider adopting a certificate of marriage acknowledging the date and location of marriage ceremonies in keeping with a biblical view of the sanctity of marriage.

In the House, Rep. Lynn Greer, R-District 2, and Rep. Connie Rowe, R-District 13, have in-

troduced the Alabama Church Protection Act (HB 34), a bill that would exclude a person from being held criminally liable for using physical force, including deadly force, in self-defense or defense of another person on the premises of a church.

The bill's summary includes language about establishing a security program and authorizing designated members, perhaps trained by the Alabama Peace Officers' Training Commission, to carry firearms. However, the draft of the bill available Jan. 26 made no mention of firearms or security programs. HB 34 was referred to the House Judiciary committee Jan. 9.

Other issues

Two other issues expected to get a hearing in the session include:

► Oversight of child care centers. About half of day cares in Alabama are affiliated with a church and therefore are exempt from state licensing requirements. A bill to tighten requirements passed in the House last year but failed in the Senate. HB 76, sponsored by Rep. Pebbles Warren, D-District 82, is one ALCAP supports, Godfrey said.

"It both protects children and the religious freedoms of churches," he said.

► Ignition interlock devices for those convicted of driving under the influence. Godfrey noted that states that have this law in place have seen a substantial reduction in repeat DUI offenders. 🌈

CHURCH MEMBERS: A quick tip

Communication

Communication is essential in every area of life: marriage, parenting, business, government, sports, medicine and church. Untold problems have been created by a lack of good communication.

Here are a few simple tips for good church communication:

1. The goal in communication is for your intended audience to receive and understand the message. It's not about how you send it. If those to whom you wish to communicate have not received and understood the message, then you have not communicated.

2. Communicate in multiple and creative ways because your receivers have different receptors.

3. Target — don't broadcast to everyone —

those with whom you want to communicate. Don't announce to the congregation a meeting that involves six people.

4. Plan ahead with any communication. Don't wait until the last minute. Avoid handing the pastor an announcement as worship is beginning.

5. Evaluate all forms of communication by getting feedback from the intended audience. Evaluating your perception of how you think you are communicating is of little value.

6. Communicate with the newcomer in mind. That is, don't assume everyone knows everything. Assume no one knows anything.

7. Avoid thinking there is no need to include an announcement in the church bulletin or on the website "because we already announced it." It is impossible to over communicate.

— Chip Warren, ministry leader 🌈

State Evangelism Conference

'Consider Jesus'

Floyd encourages pastors to renew belief in God's plan

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

Arkansas descended on Alabama when Ronnie and Nick Floyd kicked off the opening session of the State Evangelism Conference on Jan. 22.

The father-son duo, both of whom serve Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, took the time to speak specifically to the pastors in the audience.

Ronnie Floyd sought to prepare participants for what God wants to say to them during the conference. "And I want to prepare you for when you go home," he said. This brought him to the story of Job, a man of integrity who feared God and knew real suffering when he lost everything — his possessions, his children, his health and, in a way, his reputation.

And yet in Job 42:2, Job said, "I know that You can do anything and no plan of Yours can be thwarted."

'God has a plan'

Ronnie Floyd said, "What a powerful, powerful statement. Do you believe God can do anything? God has a plan to redeem the world. God has a plan to redeem your community. God has a plan in calling you and leading you to fulfill that plan."

"I want to say to pastors and church lay leaders here ... everything that happens to you and me, it is not necessarily good. But God uses it for His ultimate good."



Photo by Doug Rogers

Every perceived setback in ministry 'may be a setup for your future,' Ronnie Floyd says during the opening session of the State Evangelism Conference on Jan. 22.

"Take heart in everything you might perceive as a setback in your ministry. It may be a setup for your future."

The God who calls the morning into reality, Ronnie Floyd said, is so much bigger than our struggles, so you can lead knowing there's nothing that can hinder God's purpose for your life and your ministry.

"Your entire perspective of yourself and your problem is shaped into a healthy reality because you know God can do anything," he said. "The way you view God will determine how you view everything else in your life. ... If you have a small view of God, you'll be constantly overwhelmed."

"God's purpose will always rise up and God's purpose will always be accomplished. ... Never forget — what God wants to do He will do. We serve a God that is unstoppable. No person, no movement, no generation, no group can stop God from working in your life and in your church and keep you from reaching your community for the gospel of Jesus Christ."

But you can stop yourself from allowing God to move within you, Nick Floyd said. "Where there is no endurance there is no evangelism," he said.

It's because of this knowledge that he too chose to use his time

to prepare participants' hearts, but for what they would hear the following day — messages on evangelism.

Hebrews 12:1-2 are often-quoted verses, especially when talking about evangelism, he said.

"But verse three is our focus here."

Verse 3 says, "Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

"What does it mean to consider Him?" Nick Floyd asked.

We are to consider His endurance and consider what He did not do, he said. Jesus endured much hostility, but He never defends Himself and He doesn't get bitter.

'Healing balm'

"The gospel message is an offensive message, am I right? ... The human heart hates that message, and yet to a human heart ... the gospel can be a healing balm."

In considering Jesus, one finds the secret to succeeding in ministry, Nick Floyd says — "seeking and considering Jesus."

"Too often we consider everything other than Jesus. ... Pastors can pretty easily become mentally weak when we stop considering Him. How can we expect anything different from what Jesus endured?"

Call to share goes out to every Christian

(continued from page 1)
have unity, but not for a superficial purpose — for the sake of the gospel.

Jesus instructed His disciples to love each other so the world would see their love and know they were different. That's why unity is so important, he said.

"What's riding on unity is not warm, fuzzy feelings when we get in the same room together, it's about us being able to share with other people about Jesus and prove to others that He really did walk the earth," he said. "We have an opportunity to convince them simply by loving one another. Wouldn't you want them to know that Jesus loves them?"

And that gospel is an issue of life and death, said John Meador, pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas.

"You can't be rooted on a Bible that says that the gospel is the only way and that Jesus is the only way and live in the middle of people who don't know it and do nothing," Meador said.

Christians have to preach the Word and do the work of an evangelist, he said, preaching from 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

"I love to do the preaching part but I am a recovering nonevangelist," Meador said. "God convicted me that the key person in my church was me, that I was the problem, and if I didn't lead my church it wouldn't be evangelistic."

He challenged pastors to be intentional in leading their churches to active evangelism, training and equipping members to share their faith.

"Pastor, what if you believe that the future of the world depends on the average believer being able to share his faith? What if we began to find a plan to train our people to share Christ? What if the benchmark wasn't how many come but how many go and share?"

Tom Richter, pastor of First Baptist Church, Cullman, said

the call to share goes out to every Christian. And it comes regardless of your past, he said.

"After failing his Lord, Peter had no right to expect to be used of God," Richter said, preaching from John 21. "Neither do you. Neither do I. But He called us nonetheless."

Jesus also called us to go regardless of the cost, Richter said. "Jesus told Peter, 'If you follow Me, it will lead to your crucifixion.'"

It's unlikely that Christians in America will have to die for their faith, but there is always a cost involved, Richter said.

But for those who accept it, the infinite joy of being a part of God's story awaits.

"On Good Friday the wrath of God fell not on Peter but on the sinless, spotless Lamb of God," he said. "The laws of the universe were broken, but they were broken on the back of Jesus Christ."

He rose again on the third day to call us to follow Him, and He is still making us fishers of men."

Kevin Hamm, pastor of Gardendale First Baptist Church, said that Christ redeems us to send us out to those who have no hope.

Renewed truth

That truth was recently renewed in Hamm's heart when the story of the lepers who cried out to Jesus for mercy in Luke 17 "just gripped me."

"Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem," he said. "He had an itinerary. He was headed somewhere. He wasn't just wandering around."

And then the lepers cried out to Jesus, and it said that He saw them, Hamm said.

"I heard God say to me, 'Kevin, you're walking right by people and you never see them.'"

"Along the way, Jesus is always alert to the opportunities, and how many of those do I miss on a daily basis?"



Photo by Doug Rogers

Tom Richter, pastor of FBC Cullman, speaks at the State Evangelism Conference on Jan. 23.

HEART QUESTIONS FOR PASTORS TO ASK THEMSELVES

► *Am I expecting a better situation than Jesus had?*

► *Have I set my eyes on things other than Jesus?*

► *Who's got it better than those of us who preach the Word of Jesus?*

Source: Nick Floyd

State Evangelism Conference

Nick Floyd, lead teaching pastor of Cross Church, Fayetteville, Arkansas, encourages Alabama Baptists to provide millennials what technology cannot — ‘real, lasting friendship and community.’

‘They’re **here** to **reach**’



Photo by Doug Rogers

Nick Floyd shares insights, tips on reaching millennial generation in today's culture

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

About 75 million people between the ages of 18–38 are living their lives in America today, and often the church isn’t sure what to do with them, said Nick Floyd, lead teaching pastor of Cross Church, Fayetteville, Arkansas.

“Millennials have now surpassed the Boomer generation,” said Floyd, himself a millennial at 34. “They’re here to stay, and they’re here to reach. It’s an evangelism issue for the church.”

During a “Reaching Millennials” banquet Jan. 22 to kick off the State Evangelism Conference, Floyd offered three things churches should know about the millennial generation:

1. They don’t always view commitment the way that you do.

There’s no brand loyalty, Floyd said. A 35-year-old millennial might have had four jobs already, and that’s not a bad thing necessarily — it’s just different from previous generations.

But it has implications for churches, he said.

“Just because they grew up in your church doesn’t mean they will come back

there (if they move back to town) or stay there, and just because they were raised Southern Baptist doesn’t mean they will stay Southern Baptist,” Floyd said. “Millennials will not come to your church or stay in your church if they don’t feel you have a mission worth following. If it’s just church as usual, they’re out.”

But if you are out there caring about your community and being the hands and feet of Christ, “they will go to the ends of the earth for that kind of mission,” he said.



FLOYD

2. They have grown up with technology.

Because of that, it’s second nature to them, Floyd said.

“They’re not impressed with what we can do as a church,” he said. It makes it hard to bring in a guest speaker or singer or hold an event, because they can pull up online in 10 seconds something that will be better than we can do in our church.”

But even though they may be very connected electronically, they are lonely personally, he said.

3. They want the truth.

“The millennials I preach to want the hard message of the Bible,” Floyd said. “It’s almost the opposite of what you would expect.”

They often come to the church broken and have come to the end of what the world has to offer and say, “Is there more to this?” They want to know what God has to say — they don’t want the fluff, Floyd said. They want a way out of their shame and their sin.

What the church can do

With those three things in mind, Floyd offered three things the church can do to reach millennials:

1. We can offer relationships.

Millennials may be lonely, but the church can offer real connections, Floyd said.

“I would encourage you to provide what technology cannot,” he said. “We have the opportunity to provide real, lasting friendship and community whereby we can share the gospel and they can find Christ.”

Many millennials come from broken homes and have father issues or mother issues, he said. “They are longing for relationships. What a great opportunity for us to be the Church.”

For example, one couple in Floyd’s church in their 60s is “not flashy” or trendy, but they “love the mess out of our college students, and these kids love them,” he said.

2. We can call them to commitment.

Growing up in broken homes, many of them don’t know how to take simple steps

of commitment, Floyd said. For instance, many delay getting married to the person right in front of them because they are afraid they might miss the next person, who might be better.

“I told a group of them recently, ‘There are two things you need to look for in a husband — does he love Jesus and does he have a job. This is healthy, this is normal — make a commitment to that person,’” Floyd said.

3. We can give them the truth of God’s Word.

They want the truth, and the church has it, Floyd said.

“They want the Word of God, and they will consume it. They will love it,” he said.

But on controversial topics, though they may agree with you on the topic, they may not agree with the tone in which you speak, Floyd said.

Speaking with compassion

“The millennials are firm in convictions but they want firmness in kindness too, so I would encourage us gently together to watch our tone,” he said. “It doesn’t mean you’re compromising. It doesn’t mean you’re changing the Word of God. It just means they want to experience the compassion of Jesus while we’re talking about the difficult things that Jesus said.”

Hundreds join in via livestream

The speakers at this year’s State Evangelism Conference heard lots of “amens” from around the sanctuary as they preached the Word, but there are also a lot of “amens” they didn’t hear — the ones made by those watching the live sermons around the state and nation via a livestream option.

By streaming gavel to gavel coverage on Ustream provided by host church Eastmont Baptist, Montgomery, organizers were able to allow more than 200 people

to join in. That included the staff of *The Alabama Baptist*, who reported on the entire conference from Birmingham thanks to this technology.

Over on Facebook, even larger numbers watched different messages, expanding the reach to more than 1,800 additional people who may have never been able to participate otherwise.

These Facebook viewers were an enthusiastic bunch and engaged with the videos 614 times in total. In order to “engage” with a video,

the viewers had to either leave a comment, share a video or hit a button to “react” to a video.

Doug Rogers, director of communications and technology services for the State Board of Missions, said, “Options like livestreaming and Facebook Live provide an exciting and viable means for hundreds of people who can’t attend something like the Evangelism Conference to still benefit from the preaching and teaching that takes place.” (TAB)



Photo by Doug Rogers

Barry Prestage (front) and Josh Spivey (back) volunteer their time and expertise to ensure the conference runs smoothly.

Across ALABAMA'S Associations

BIRMINGHAM

► **Buddy Gray, pastor of Hunter Street Church, Hoover**, has been named to the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission's (ERLC) 2018 Leadership Council. He is the only Alabama Baptist serving on the 75-member council. Council members receive training from ERLC through events and conference calls. They provide counsel to commission staff and sometimes write for ERLC's website.

ST. CLAIR

► **Craig Gilley** is the new pastor of **Happy Home Church, Leeds**. He previously served as pastor of Hughes Memorial Church, Moody. He also served at Immanuel Church, Mount Pleasant Church and Macedonia No. 1 Church, all in Moody. Gilley holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master's degree from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Bridget, have two children.



GILLEY

COFFEE

► **Ino Church, Kinston**, will host a Never Alone Widow's Meeting on Feb. 5, 6:30 p.m. The meeting is for widows of

any age and will be a time of fellowship, entertainment, inspiration and food. For more information or to register call Coffee Association's office at 334-894-6411. Garry Winstead is pastor.

GENEVA

► **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will hold its monthly 39er's CLUB on Feb. 13, 11 a.m. James "Red" Coleman of Cross Over Ministry in Opp will speak. If you are a regular attendee, contact your table host by Feb. 6 if you need to cancel. If you have not been to a 39er's CLUB meeting call the church office at 334-684-9617 for reservations. Steve Wegmann is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Taylor Road Church, Montgomery**, surpassed its Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal of \$30,000. Daniel Atkins is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Big Sandy Church and Valley View Church, both in Tuscaloosa**, will host Night to Shine on Feb. 9 at Shelton State Community College in Tuscaloosa. Night to Shine is sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation and is held in more than 500 churches simultaneously around the world. For more information about the Shelton State event visit www.nighttoshinebama.org. Terry Lolley is pastor of Big Sandy and Billy Joy is pastor of Valley View. ☠

Gambling raid in Fultondale

Jefferson County sheriff's detectives seized 34 illegal gambling machines, cash and gambling records in a Jan. 24 raid in north Jefferson County.

A news release issued by the sheriff's office said the detectives executed a search warrant at an address in the 1600 block of K.C. Dement Road, Fultondale.

The raid came after a two-week investigation that began after the department received a tip about illegal gambling going on at the address.

Helpful community

In recorded comments, Jefferson County Sheriff Mike Hale said the community is helpful when it comes to revealing gambling operations.

"Folks in the area — they know what's going on. ... Sometimes folks that live in the community can stand it no further. They want great things for the communities," Hale said.

The investigation into the operation is ongoing, according to the sheriff's department.

When completed the case will be presented to the Jefferson County District Attorney's Office for prosecution. Arrests are expected. (TAB)



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

What's New?

A New Day of Worship

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

The Old Covenant had numerous special days. Most were seasonal or annual. However, one special day was weekly — the weekly Sabbath.

With roots in the account of creation when God rested on the seventh day, the seventh day each week became the appointed day for rest and worship. This was expressly captured in the commandments of the Old Covenant, when the fourth of the Ten Commandments stipulated, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8). After the elaboration about working on the other six days, the ending exhortation about the Sabbath further stipulated, "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Ex. 20:11).

While faithfulness in Sabbath observance fluctuated over the centuries, the seventh day came to have a central place in Jewish life. The religious elite sought to safeguard the Sabbath by meticulously listing activities that should be avoided in order not to profane this holy day.

When Jesus came, He came into a setting in which Sabbath observance had become entrenched. Such were the prohibitions attached to Sabbath activities that Jesus was compelled to declare: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

The entrenched requirements and prohibitions had become such that Jesus said it was as if God created humans in order for the Sabbath to have its adherents, when in fact God set apart the Sabbath for the benefit of those whom He made in His image and likeness. Jesus followed His corrective declaration about the Sabbath being the servant of the people and not the people the servants of the Sabbath with this significant claim: "Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28).

Although being Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus made it His custom to honor Sabbath observance by attending weekly synagogue services, a practice attested

in Luke 4:16, "So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day." In fulfilling completely the Old Covenant law, Jesus made Sabbath observance a cornerstone of His weekly activities.

With all this in mind, we recall that Jesus came to establish a new covenant. Whereas the basic old covenant commands were etched in stone, the new covenant requirements were written on human hearts.

When His followers began to reflect on Christ's death and resurrection, they found their hearts leading them to honor the resurrection on the first day of the week. Gradually, the hearts of Christians migrated away from the Sabbath requirement of the Old Covenant to the glad celebration of Resurrection Sunday as the weekly occasion for worship, rest and reflection on the event that occupied the central place in the New Covenant — the death, burial and resurrection of the Promised Messiah.

Gathering to worship

Within that first generation of Christian believers, the Holy Spirit seemed to write on their hearts the importance of celebrating the resurrection of Jesus by meeting for worship on the first day of each week. Hence, we read in Acts 20:7 of these followers of Christ gathering on the new day for worship. In a similar way, 1 Corinthians 16:2 speaks of the weekly gathering of believers on the first day of the week. The New Covenant, with its requirements being a matter of the heart, introduced a new day for community worship, one clearly celebrated by the apostles and early church. ☠

Jerry Batson is a retired Alabama Baptist pastor who also has served as associate dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and professor of several schools of religion during his career.



A remembrance of early Alabama Baptist leader Hosea Holcombe was printed in the Dec. 23, 1873, issue of *The Alabama Baptist*. Holcombe was described as a "full six feet high; rounded shoulder and a little stooping; of swarthy complexion which gradually became suffused with red as he proceeded in discourse. His ardor rose by uniform steps to a high pitch but was never attended by any sudden bursts of emotion." The writer said, "I have seen him when on the great doctrines of sovereignty and grace ... hold large assemblies chained to his lips for two hours." Holcombe settled in Jefferson County in 1820 and "was the most active spirit in originating the state convention," the article said.

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

Focus
on

ONE MISSION

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news and features about missions and ministries from the Alabama Baptist
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WORDS OF THANKS FOR A POSITIVE TRANSITION

THE MOVE TO PRATTVILLE IS NOW COMPLETE. AS SUCH, WORDS OF THANKS ARE IN ORDER:

Thanks, first and foremost, to our Lord Who has given all Christians a mandate to serve Him through Great Commission Ministries. Your State Board of Missions staff is grateful for the opportunity to do so through serving God by serving Alabama Baptists. We will continue to do so from our new resource center in Prattville.



THANKS to those who came before us in Alabama Baptist life through support of the Cooperative Program, which provided the former State Board facility in Montgomery where your state missionaries were based since 1963. Without the equity and existing ministry infrastructure of the previous facility, this move would not have been possible in a debt-free fashion. The former facility was built with gifts through the Cooperative Program, which made our "key swap" possible with Baptist Health.

THANKS to the State Board of Missions, Executive Committee and subcommittees that helped develop and affirm the plan and details to achieve the key swap with Baptist Health. Thanks, too of course, to messengers to the 2016 meeting of the

Alabama Baptist State Convention who voted to approve this proposal for our relocation to a more energy-efficient, size-appropriate facility more centrally located in our state along the I-65 corridor.

THANKS to Baptist Health of Montgomery for their willingness and agreement to embrace and implement this innovative paradigm that is resulting in laudable ministry benefits for their organization and, of course, for your State Board of Missions.

THANKS to the State Board of Missions staff — your state missionaries and ministry support personnel — for a Herculean effort

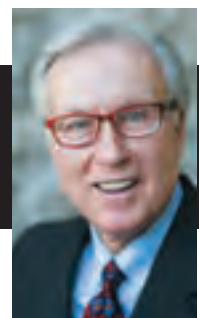
and assistance in accomplishing an on-time, successful move to the Prattville facility. We're likewise grateful for our ministry partners of Alabama Woman's Missionary Union and Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers who will continue to share a facility with us in Prattville as in Montgomery.

A SPECIAL WORD OF THANKS

is due to my associate executive director, Bobby DuBois, who has run point in so many ways in the negotiations with Baptist Health leading to the historic agreement for a key swap. Bobby handled countless logistics and oversaw efforts and coordination of the transition from Montgomery to Prattville. I am grateful for his ongoing shouldering of so many responsibilities in his role as a state missionary and, notably now, for his tireless hands-on leadership related to the relocation.

THANKS to the many of you, Alabama Baptists, who have prayed for us and sent messages

of encouragement regarding the relocation process, especially during the past several months. Your prayer support, I believe, has been answered affirmatively by our Lord in granting us a relatively smooth-moving process. One of the



By Rick Lance
State Missionary

many graces we have appreciated in terms of answered prayer during moving week is that the rain

was consistently far less than was forecasted by meteorologists, and the weather was temperate for almost all of the crucial days of the move.

THANK YOU, Alabama Baptists, for your ongoing support of missions through the Cooperative Program. The CP is the lifeblood for the missional circulatory system of Southern Baptists. It enables any local church to meet the Acts 1:8 mandate to go into all the world, all the time, at the same time. Indeed,

continued on page 10

continued from page 9

the Acts 1:8 command of our Lord is simultaneous, not sequential.

AS YOUR state missionaries look forward to God's future for Alabama Baptists, Southern Baptists and especially for state missions ministry efforts, we ask for your continued prayer support.

WE LOOK FORWARD to announcing soon events that will be held here at the new facility, including open houses and scheduled tours. Please watch the pages of this "FOCUS on One Mission" publication each month along with other communications from your State Board, including social media and direct mail.

IN THE MEANTIME, if your state missionaries may assist your Alabama Baptist church or association, please contact us. All email addresses and phone numbers remain the same.

For more information, please go online to alsbom.org or call 1-800-264-1225.

 1 Corinthians 4:1-2

WHY I BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

The following stories are the most recent examples of why I support the

Cooperative Program.

Recently, a young lady in our church accepted the call to serve in missions. Following her decision, she has enrolled at Boyce College with intention to pursue missionary training at Southern Seminary. The cost of her education is minimized because of the



David Bankson

Cooperative Program.

Therefore, the Cooperative Program is helping

someone fulfill her calling, who may not otherwise have the means to do so. In addition, the **Cooperative Program** has

provided finances and

personnel to help

our Cherokee Baptist Association provide ministry enhancement conferences. These conferences are a

blessing to the churches in our association, and they would not be possible without the help of Alabama Baptists and the **Cooperative Program**. For those reasons, I am grateful for the Cooperative Program and fully supportive of it! — **David Bankson**, pastor, *Slackland Baptist Church (Cherokee Association)*



alsbom.org/cp

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DEAF

Total of 54,000 in Alabama. 1-2% are Christ-followers (and only 200 are active in Alabama Baptist churches).

MIXTECO

3,000-5,000 have been identified in Central Alabama. (The Mixteco are the largest unreached people group in the Americas.)

Over **2 MILLION** of the 4.86 million people in Alabama do not attend anyone's church.

Why Church Planting in Alabama?

29% of Alabama's population is **BLACK**, but only 72 out of 3,200 Alabama Baptist churches are Black (that's 2.25%).

101 PEOPLE GROUPS

Identified in Alabama

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193,000 in Alabama

ASIANS

75,000 in Alabama

How Will We Plant Churches in Alabama?

- Praying Luke 10:2 is our Recruitment Strategy
- Application/Assessment – See plantalabama.org
- Training • Coaching

To learn more about the process, contact Lamar Duke at 334-613-2332 or mobile 334-235-4202, lduke@alsbom.org.



The 2018 Spring Senior Adult Retreat April 9-11 at Shocco Springs is new and refreshed. Come and play, laugh, relax and, most importantly, worship the Lord together with friends old and new! Hear inspirational messages from Hal Habecker from Finishing Well Ministries, Dallas, Texas. You will not want to miss Darrell Jennings and his light painting! Darrell serves as minister of music at Coosada Baptist Church (*Elmore Association*).

There will also be many different sessions led by knowledgeable speakers on topics that will especially relate to senior adults' lives.

To register, please call 1-800-280-1105 or go online to shocco.org. For other information, please contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, emitchell@alsbom.org.

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2018 SENIOR ADULT SINGIN'

THREE DATES IN THREE PARTS OF ALABAMA:

Tuesday, March 13, First Baptist Church, 109 S. Strawberry Ave., Demopolis
 Thursday, March 15, Lakewood Baptist Church, 4011 Lakewood Dr., Phenix City
 Tuesday, September 11, Northbrook Baptist Church, 3691 Alabama Highway 157 N.E., Cullman

If you have never been to a Senior Adult Singin' with Frank Jones, you definitely should pick one of the three offered in 2018, and make your plans to come and bring friends. If you have been before, you will need no convincing. Frank will lead us to worship God with hymns and songs. You will praise God, sing and maybe leave with a smile on your face. The Singin's begin at 10 a.m. and end with lunch. The cost is \$10 per person, and that includes lunch! You also have an option to attend the Singin' without lunch, and pay \$5 per person.

To register, go online to www.alsbom.org/senioradultsingin. For other information, please contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, emitchell@alsbom.org.

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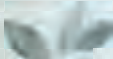
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Worship with
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JOHNSON**
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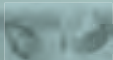
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Moving worship



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#renew218

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"So you also are
complete through
your union with
Christ, who is the
head over every ruler
and authority."

Col 2:10 (NLT)



MARCH 2-3, 2018

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MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

REGISTRATION DEADLINE:
FEBRUARY 16, 2018

\$35 PER PERSON
INCLUDES REGISTRATION,
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Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries 56th Annual Conference

March 11-14, 2018
Shocco Springs

Scripture: *I am the Lord your God who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go. ~ ISAIAH 48:17*

General Conference Leader:
Melanie Hill, First Baptist Church, Dothan

Music/Worship Leader: Kevin Cobb, West Mobile Baptist Church, Mobile

Make plans now to join us for a time of spiritual, professional and personal growth through worship, study, fellowship and educational breakout sessions.

Please check out our website:

alabamabaptistsecretaries.com

Facebook page: Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries

For more information, please contact Lisa Daniels, 2017-18 AABS President, at (334) 699-1595 or ldanielsbca@gmail.com



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in the Way
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More info: alabamabaptistsecretaries.com

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2018 REGIONAL AND STATE BIBLE DRILLS



THEME: MARVEL IN HIS WORD, PHILIPPIANS 4:13
REGIONAL BIBLE DRILL SCHEDULE

Required Online Registration: alsbom.org/bibledrill

Regional Drills Registration Deadline: Monday, April 16, 2018

April 19

East Highland Baptist Church, Hartselle
Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Dothan

April 22

Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham
Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery

April 23

Spring Hill Baptist Church, Mobile
First Baptist Church, Livingston

April 24

Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Alexandria

STATE BIBLE DRILL AND SPEAKERS TOURNAMENT

Saturday, April 28, 2018

Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery

Registration: 12:20 p.m.

Drill: 1 p.m.

Watch for more information to come about these Bible Drill events. Visit alsbom.org/bibledrill to find resources, event dates and other information. If you need more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Julie Smith at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 255, or (334) 613-2255, jsmith@alsbom.org.

Summer Camp Opportunities

2018 MISSIONS ADVENTURE CAMP

WorldSong's Missions Adventure Camp (MAC) is an overnight camp that focuses on the adventure of living on mission with God. Nestled at the base of beautiful Bald Mountain, WorldSong offers campers time away from the distractions of everyday life where they can connect with God in the midst of His creation. MAC features Bible study, time with missionaries, adventure recreation including ropes courses and ziplines, canoeing, archery, outdoor cooking, arts and crafts, hiking, overnight tent-camping and so much more!

June

7-9	Mom & Me (one-night or two-night option) - NEW
11-15	MAC for Girls
11-15	MAC for Teen Girls
18-22	MAC for Girls
18-22	MAC for Teen Girls
25-29	MAC for Girls

July

2-4	Family MAC - NEW
5-7	Mini MAC for Girls and Boys
5-7	Mini MAC for Teen Girls - NEW
9-13	MAC for Girls and Boys
16-20	MAC for Girls and Boys
23-27	MAC for Boys - NEW
23-27	MAC for Teen Boys - NEW
27-28	Lad & Dad - NEW

For girls and boys completing grades K-12 (Alabama Baptist Boys Adventure Camp now with expanded options at WorldSong).

REGISTRATION OPENS MONDAY, APRIL 2, 2018.

For more information or to register, visit WorldSongRetreat.com or call 1-800-264-1225, ext. 223, or (334) 613-2223.

MIX MusiCamp@Shocco! Monday - Friday, July 16 - 20 Shocco Springs

For grades 3-5, 6, 7-10. EARLY BIRD DEADLINE: Monday, March 5. Cost (best rate!): \$300 per person with \$80 per person deposit at registration. If

being at music camp isn't enough, here are a few more things we'll be doing: Hiking Trails • Putt-Putt Golf • Basketball • Volleyball • Pedal Boats •

Horseshoes • Octaball • Disc Golf • Poly Pong • Fishing • Ropes Course • Paintball • Pedal Cars • Swimming!



Register online and get

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

super summer ALABAMA

focuses on two major themes: Leadership and Discipleship. Students who participate will be challenged to deepen their faith and stand out as the leader God wants them to be.

July 9-13 Samford University, Birmingham

\$250 before April 9
\$280 after April 9



The camp is open to any student in the state

of Alabama who has completed the 8th-12th grade and exemplifies solid spiritual leadership in his or her church. For more information or to register, visit supersummeral.org or contact Debbie Adams at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 275, or (334) 613-2275, or dadams@alsbom.org.

SOUTH ALABAMA CHURCH LIBRARY WORKSHOP

**THEME:
REACH FOR THE
FUTURE**

SATURDAY, MARCH 3,
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,
302 N. MAIN STREET, ENTERPRISE

This is a library training event. Classes will be offered in all areas of library work. Anyone who is involved in any type of library work is invited (church, Christian school, public school or private school, even public library). The information provided will help your library grow. Registration check-in will begin at 8:30 a.m.

The cost of this event is \$5. To register or for other information, please contact Anne Edwards at (334) 347-7877 or aee1948@yahoo.com. Please provide your name, phone number and email address when registering.

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONEPROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANYMINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

Upcoming Worship & Music Leadership Enrichment Events

**Children's Choir Summit
Friday and Saturday
• July 13-14 • Shocco
Springs**

**children's choir
summit**

Early Bird Deadline for Best Price: Monday, March 5.
Cost: \$115 per person (3-4 people per room, includes three meals), \$20 per person deposit at registration. This is the training event that you've been looking for to

send your Children's Choir Leaders. Experience the fun of teaching music to any age of preschooler or child. Discover new ways to make choir or music time a favorite for kids. Watch the love for worship come alive. Mingle with others in similar situations. Learn to use games and toys to add more excitement in your music time, plus more hands-on learning and fun in children's choirs. Great conference for your daycare workers and can be used for CEU credits. Cost includes interactive sessions

from top-notch clinicians, breakout times to interact with choir workers just like you. Pine Lake music vendor will be available to purchase whatever needs you might have in your choir, and so much more. Register online and get more info at alsbom.org/children-summit or please contact Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 279, or (334) 613-2279, scleveland@alsbom.org.

onevoice

**OneVoice
Friday through Sunday
• April 27-29**

OneVoice is a group of auditioned singers and instrumentalists who are in grades 7-12 and actively participate in their local church's youth music ministry. This year's tour will include a concert at First Baptist Church, Jemison. Lodging will be at Shocco Springs. The cost of the tour is \$225 and includes lodging, meals, local transportation, music and shirt. Students must provide their own transportation to Shocco on Friday and home from First Baptist Church, Jemison, on Sunday after the 11 a.m.

worship service.

For audition requirements and other information, go online to alsbom.org/one-voice or contact Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 279, or (334) 613-2279, scleveland@alsbom.org.



**SpringRing Handbell
Workshop 2018 •
Saturday • April 21 •
Eastmont Baptist Church,
Montgomery**

SpringRing is a handbell gathering workshop. We meet, greet and ring together with handbell favorites of the groups participating. Each leader of the group (can appoint a leader) will conduct the piece that you choose for the whole group. We will learn new music, perfect it together and then end our day with a Worship Ring Celebration. Register online and get more info at www.alsbom.org/springring or please contact Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 279, or (334) 613-2279, scleveland@alsbom.org.



We've Moved!

Different address, same mission

The new **Alabama Baptist STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS** office facility opened in Prattville on January 15.

It is located 1.5 miles west of I-65, exit 181, on the corner of Fairview Avenue (Highway 14) and Jasmine Trail.

OUR NEW ADDRESSES:

1404 Fairview Avenue, Prattville, AL 36066
P.O. Box 681970, Prattville, AL 36068-1970

OUR PHONE NUMBERS AND STAFF EXTENSIONS HAVE NOT CHANGED:

Toll-free: 1-800-264-1225
Local: (334) 288-2460
Direct: (334) 613-2 + extension



Watch *The Alabama Baptist*, social media and other communications outlets for information about future tours and open houses.

Transitional Pastor Training

Monday-Wednesday
April 23-25,
Alabama Baptist
State Board of Missions
1404 Fairview Ave.,
Prattville

MONDAY, 1-9 P.M.;
TUESDAY, 9 A.M.-4:30 P.M.;
WEDNESDAY, 9 A.M.-NOON

Special Guest: Dan Garland

Cost: \$100 (includes dinner on Monday, lunch and dinner on Tuesday)

This event is for Pastors/DOMs who are interested in working with churches during a transitional period to provide wise counsel and experienced leadership through the stages of transition between the end of one pastor's ministry and the beginning of another's.

To register, go online to alsbom.org/tpt2018. For other information, please contact State Missionary Mike Jackson at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 210, or (334) 613-2210, mjackson@alsbom.org.



LeaderCare
+ Church Health

Teaching children to LOVE

Feeling secure in God's love, learning to treat others with respect provides advantage in life

By Carolyn Tomlin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

During the month of February, our thoughts turn to ways to express love. And with the climate that children grow up in today, they need that love more than ever.

A wise mother once said, "Children need Christian parents to love and guide them. When a child is hurt emotionally or physically, some youngsters have no one to turn to. Adults can seek the help of a friend or counselor. Children do not have these resources. They hurt. And they often hurt alone."

When children know God loves them, they know how to love others and they have self-respect. They mature into children with a healthy self-concept and later into caring adults.

Love is one of the most powerful emotions. Parents are the first and best teacher.

One of the most important lessons that parents can teach their children is that God loves them unconditionally. He is forgiving, compassionate and generous in His love.

What can parents do to instill this truth? They can establish a Christ-centered home, make prayer a priority with their family, apply the Bible to daily living and attend church together.

Fighting against bullying

When children are secure in that love, it makes its way into their relationships with others.

In recent years, bullying has become common. When a child is the victim of a bully, this mental and physical abuse can disrupt a child's education and social life. Their emotional wellbeing is at risk. A recent report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics states that bullying occurs on a daily or weekly basis in 23 percent of public schools in the United States.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT LOVE?

The word "love" is mentioned numerous times throughout the Bible. Here are a few references:

- ▶ John 3:16
- ▶ John 15:13
- ▶ Matt. 5:43-45
- ▶ 1 Cor. 13:4-8
- ▶ Mark 12:30-31
- ▶ John 13:34-35
- ▶ Rom. 13:8
- ▶ 1 Pet. 4:8
- ▶ Prov. 17:17
- ▶ Eph. 4:2



Unsplash.com

This increase is due in part to technology and communication. The Internet, cellphones and social media are often used as an outlet where kids can have anonymity online and become cyberbullies. Mature adults can usually ignore bullying, but for children and youth this is a real problem with serious consequences.

What can parents do to prevent their child from being a bully? You can model for your children how to treat all people with respect. You also can avoid using demeaning language in the home and keep lines of communication open between parent and child. Pray for your children and let them hear you pray. And when needed, seek professional help.

It's important for children to feel loved so that they don't feel the need to put others down to feel validated.

But it's also important for your children to feel secure in God's love when other children bully them.

Working to prevent suicide

Suicide is on the increase. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that from 1999 to 2015 more than 1,300 U.S. children ages 5 to 12 took their own lives.

For some parents whose children have taken their own lives, there is no explanation. For others there were relationship problems, arguments with family and friends and boyfriend/girlfriend issues among older children. More children under 13 who

kill themselves are boys; overall, however, girls attempt suicide more frequently. The number of children ages 5 to 12 hospitalized for suicidal thoughts or actions has doubled over the past decade.

What can parents do to help? Recognize warning signs, identify risk factors, promote protective factors, talk to your kids and seek mental health services, if needed.†

Valentine cookie recipe

The heart-shaped valentine is a symbol of love. Young children can make this simple Valentine cookie to share with family and friends.

INGREDIENTS

- One box cake mix
- 2 eggs (beaten)
- 1 stick margarine, melted
- M&M candies
- 2 round pans, 8-inch
- Wax paper

DIRECTIONS

Melt margarine. Combine it with beaten eggs and cake mix in a large mixing bowl. Line pans with wax paper. Divide dough into baking pans. Using a toothpick, outline a large heart on the unbaked dough. Fill this line with M&Ms. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes. Carefully remove Valentine cookie onto paper towels until cool. Cut or break into pieces to share with family or friends.



Photo by Carolyn Tomlin

Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

SBC, others added to Pressler lawsuit

HOUSTON — The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has been added as a co-defendant in a lawsuit accusing retired Texas state judge Paul Pressler of sexual abuse.

A Jan. 12 amendment to a suit originally filed last October claims the SBC, among other defendants, had a “duty to exercise reasonable care so as to control” Pressler, who helped engineer a strategy to turn the Southern Baptist Convention back to its theologically conservative roots in the late 20th century.

Pressler denies the allegations by plaintiff Gareld Duane Rollins, who claimed Pressler sexually abused him repeatedly between the late 1970s, when Rollins was 14, and 2004. Rollins’ petition alleges he was enrolled in a young adult Bible study which Pressler led at First Baptist Church, Houston, and later served as Pressler’s office assistant.

Pressler, 87, was a justice on the Court of Appeals of Texas, 14th District, and a member of the Texas Legislature. He also served Southern Baptists in various volunteer capacities.

Other defendants in the lawsuit — all of whom have denied Rol-

lins’ allegations that they facilitated and concealed the abuse — include Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; its president Paige Patterson; Pressler’s wife, Nancy; First, Houston; Pressler’s former law partner Jared Woodfill; and the Woodfill Law Firm.

Pressler filed a Dec. 21 motion asking for the dismissal of Rollins’ suit because the statute of limitations has expired on its claims of abuse, the last of which allegedly occurred more than a decade ago. A hearing on that motion is scheduled for Feb. 23. (BP)

Black church leader event to mark 25 years

RIDGECREST, N.C. — The Black Church Leadership and Family Conference celebrates its 25th year July 16–20 at Ridgecrest Conference Center in Ridgecrest, North Carolina.

The conference theme “Still Turning Things Around,” is based on Isaiah 45:22–25 and is also the focus of the fall 2018 YOU Bible study curriculum, LifeWay’s urban and multicultural series. This year marks the curriculum’s 10th anniversary, said Mark Croston, national director of Black Church Partnerships for LifeWay Christian Resources. (BP)

Disciple-making boot camp



Photos by Jennifer Davis Rash

Bill Wilks (left) — pastor of NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, and D-Life author — shares disciple-making tips during the Central Alabama D-Life Boot Camp at Samford University in Birmingham on Jan. 20. The event was co-sponsored by Samford’s Ministry Training Institute, Birmingham Association, TAB and Life Bible Study. Rondie Wilks (above, front) shares a fun moment with participants prior to leading a live demonstration of a D-Life session. The South Alabama D-Life Boot Camp will be Feb. 24 at University of Mobile (UM) and is co-sponsored by UM, Mobile Association, TAB and Life Bible Study. For more information, visit www.livethedlife.com.

Messianic Jews in Israel target of accusations

After opposition shut down a meeting center for Messianic Jews in southern Israel in 2017, worshippers there are again being targeted since the center reopened, sources said.

Ultra-Orthodox Jews protested the presence of the center in Dimona, Israel, on Jan. 23 and threatened some worshippers, according to advocacy group Middle East Concern.

Protests on May 4, 2017, by ultra-Orthodox Jews forced a temporary closure of the center where Messianic Jews meet for conversation, coffee and tea. The protesters also damaged property of the center’s leaders, one of them told Messianic news outlet Kehila News Israel. Those incidents, however, led to dialogue with locals and at least six opportunities to explain to a rabbi why they believe Jesus is the Messiah, one leader said. (MS)

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D-Life
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What if you could successfully equip everyone in your ministry for a lifestyle of disciple-making. This is the purpose of D-Life. D-Life is an organic, simple and intentional process for equipping all believers for a lifestyle of making and multiplying disciples.

The Alabama Baptist, Life Bible Study and several others are sponsoring a D-Life Boot Camp training opportunity for Alabama Baptists:

South Alabama D-Life Boot Camp
February 24, 9 a.m.–2 p.m., University of Mobile

To register or for more details, visit www.livethedlife.com or contact Bill Wilks at 205-228-0030.



YOU'RE INVITED TO CELEBRATE

175 years of *The Alabama Baptist.*

Birthday Party February 6, 2018

Judson College
Marion, AL

A day of historic tours, prayer, lunch, worship and more for \$15 per person in advance or \$20 per person at the door.

*Pre-registration
deadline is Feb. 1.*

Symposium March 2, 2018

Samford University
Birmingham, AL
*Regions Room on the top floor
of Cooney Hall.*

**"The Alabama Baptist:
Examining its Impact."** Scholarly papers on the paper's contribution to journalism, theological controversy, life in Alabama and the need for the paper's continued ministry.

— For more information or to register —

Call or email
1-800-803-5201, ext. 100
lharrison@thealabamabaptist.org

Bolivian president revokes restrictions on religious activity

Bolivia's President Evo Morales announced in a Jan. 21 tweet that his government will "repeal the penal code" that was approved Dec. 15 that many Christians feared would restrict their activities.

Morales said he had decided to revoke the law to "avoid confusion," but he also used the opportunity to accuse the opposition of "conspiring" and "destabilizing the country with misinformation and lies." Morales' tweets were reported by Evangelical Focus, a media initiative of the Spanish Evangelical Alliance.

New laws promised

In an English translation of his tweets, Evangelical Focus quoted Morales as saying, "The

national government will never approve laws against the Bolivian people."

A socialist who is the country's first indigenous president, Morales said his government will enact a new penal code quickly and will listen to all sectors of the country to create the new laws.

Churches in Bolivia issued a call to prayer and fasting for Jan. 21 in the wake of the new restrictions.

Of greatest concern was the wording of Article 88.1, which called for penalties of 7 to 12 years in jail for "whoever recruits, transports, deprives of freedom or hosts people with the aim of recruiting them to take part in armed conflicts or religious or worship organizations."

The National Association of Evangelicals in Bolivia (AN-DEB) issued a public declaration, stating that the new penal code was "imprecise, ambiguous,

badly written, contradictory and its punitive power can constitute state abuse."

"We express our most resolute rejection of the inclusion of our ministerial activities in the list of possible conducts that go against the law," they added.

Morales said the revised national penal code was an effort to rid

Bolivia of laws put into place by former dictator and president Hugo Banzer. Morales confirmed his plans to change the law in a television interview Jan. 22, the 12th anniversary of his becoming Bolivia's president. (TAB)

"We express our most resolute rejection of the inclusion of our ministerial activities in the list of possible conducts that go against the law."

**National Association
of Evangelicals in Bolivia**



Samford University
Center for Faith and Health

The Center for Faith and Health works to establish relationships here at home and around the world to facilitate opportunities for students within the College of Health Sciences at Samford University to live out their Christian faith through compassionate care and service to others.

One way the center lives out this mission is by partnering with churches and their short-term mission teams. Jenny Dong, a third-year student with Samford's McWhorter School of Pharmacy, has had the opportunity to travel to Uganda and India through mission trips led by Gardendale First Baptist Church in Gardendale, Alabama.

"I had not met any of my teammates from Gardendale First Baptist before these trips, but both times, we just bonded immediately," Jenny said. "I chose to come to Samford because I was seeking a calling in my life to become a pharmacist, and traveling to Uganda and India was everything. I'm a student, and I still have so much to learn, but it was an honor to see these accomplished people putting their lives on hold to serve others with a greater purpose."

The Center of Faith and Health is continually looking for church partners who will help our students answer the missional call of using the gifts God has given to serve others.

To learn how you can be a partner,
go to samford.edu/go/faithandhealth.



"I'm a student, and I still have so much to learn, but it was an honor to see these accomplished people putting their lives on hold to serve others with a greater purpose."

—Jenny Dong

Beeson names new theological librarian

Stefana Dan Laing has been named the new assistant professor of divinity and theological librarian for Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham. She begins Aug. 1.



LAING

Laing, a Southern Baptist, will teach in the area of spiritual formation, manage the library and coordinate the school's Women's Theological Colloquium.

"We're delighted to welcome Stefana Dan Laing as Beeson's newest faculty member," Dean Timothy George said. "She is a superb scholar and teacher who brings special expertise in spiritual formation and early church history. With deep roots in the

Romanian Baptist heritage and a heart for missions, she will strengthen our commitment to prepare God-called men and women for the service of the church."

Laing comes to Beeson from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's J. Dalton Havard School for Theological Studies in Houston. She also has taught at Houston Graduate School of Theology and Houston Baptist University. (Beeson)

My JESUS Story

By Jenni Ingram
Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

Expectations can motivate you, excite you or paralyze you. Dreaming big is never a bad thing but if you let those dreams become an idol for you, that is bad. Further, if you prepare your dreams outside of God's will, you'd better be prepared for a letdown.

I have frequently heard the saying, "If you want to hear God laugh, tell Him your plans." How can you know God's will for your life? It's really very simple. Note that I said "simple," not "easy." Try these steps as a guideline:

- ▶ Repent from your sins (Acts 2:38)
- ▶ Accept Jesus' free gift of salvation (Acts 4:12)
- ▶ Attend a Bible-teaching church (Col. 1:24)
- ▶ Foster a relationship with Him by

daily praise, repentance, supplication, study and prayer

▶ Ask for His will, guidance and plan.

Remember this promise from Matthew 21:21-22: "Jesus replied, 'Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.'"

I personally have had many expectations and dreams in my life. God has graciously granted me several of them but many He has refused. I have come up against seemingly impenetrable barriers, I have had many crises of faith and I have had days when I just didn't feel as if God still loved me. I have come to realize that these were all tactics of the enemy and were lies. I was reminded that Satan has already been defeated and Jesus has won the complete victory on our behalf. Don't believe the lies from our mortal enemy. Lean on Jesus. 🌈

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

Huffman Baptist is accepting resumés for full-time senior pastor. Please send resumés to: tebaggett@yahoo.com or hard copy to: 1324 Bardswood Terrace, Birmingham, AL 35235.

SENIOR PASTOR

Hillview Baptist Church is seeking a senior pastor. Resumé may be mailed to: Hillview Baptist Church, 800 Heflin Avenue East, Birmingham, AL 35214, or email: hillviewbaptist.hbc@gmail.com. Current interim pastor: Dr. George King.

INTERIM MUSIC MINISTER

FBC Hamilton is accepting resumés for a part-time interim music minister. We worship with multiple instruments, choir, praise teams and a blend of contemporary and traditional music. Flexible schedule and mileage paid in addition to compensation. Send resumé and letter of introduction to personnel committee at michaelpatrickmcclung@gmail.com.

PART-TIME MUSIC DIRECTOR

Montevallo First Baptist Church, Montevallo, Alabama, is seeking a part-time minister of music. They will give leadership in planning and leading of our worship services in an energetic blended style of worship. Their primary

additional responsibility will be to lead the choir ministry and choir rehearsals. Interested persons should send a resumé to: Montevallo First Baptist Church at P.O. Box 46, Montevallo, AL 35115, or email address: drtstutton@bellsouth.net.

PRESCHOOL & CHILDREN'S PASTOR

The First Baptist Church of Mauldin, S.C., is seeking a full-time preschool and children's pastor. Send resumés to: First Baptist Mauldin, 150 South Main Street, Mauldin, SC 29662 or email: wleonard@fbcmauldin.org. For more information, visit www.fbcmauldin.org to view the job profile and job description.

BIVOCATIONAL/PART-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTER

Wooley Springs Baptist Church is located in North Limestone County. Inquiries can call 256-423-3494 or email resumés to: tony@wooleysprings.com.

OTHER POSITIONS

ASSISTANT/ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Samford University's Christian Ministry program, which will launch in fall 2018, invites applicants interested in serving in a Christian university environment to apply for the position of assistant/associate professor of Christian ministry. This full-

time position will begin August 2018; rank, tenure and salary are negotiable. This professor will teach courses in disciple making, evangelism and missions, and will perform additional duties as assigned. Qualified candidates will hold a doctorate in missions, evangelism or related fields or may hold a doctorate in another area with extensive experience in the aforementioned fields. Candidates should have practical experience in areas of disciple making, evangelism and missions, as well as some post-secondary teaching experience. For more information, please visit Samford's faculty employment opportunities page at www.samford.edu and click on the "Assistant or Associate Professor of Christian Ministry" link under School of the Arts.

FULL-TIME YOUTH/ MISSIONS POSITION

Tuscaloosa Youth For Christ seeks leader to join their team in our mission to unchurched teenagers. We seek a strong leader, with calling to youth evangelism, bachelor's degree and two years plus youth ministry experience. Send resumé to: campuslife@tuscaloosayfc.com. For more information, go to www.tuscaloosayfc.com.

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(augmented reality)

Follow these instructions

- 1** Download the Aurasma app from your app store.
- 2** Choose the "ALBaptist" profile under channel and tap "Follow." You will only have to do this one time. (Any ALBaptist options will allow you to follow *The Alabama Baptist*.)
- 3** Tap the [] icon at the bottom of the screen.
- 4** You will see pulsating dots, which indicate the app is searching for a target. Once it finds a target the dots will turn to a bull's-eye. The bull's-eye will remain until the augmented reality image loads.
- 5** Hold your device over a page or image in *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) marked as augmented reality and watch the paper come to life.
- 6** If the image is slow to load at any point, then it may be your data speed or Wi-Fi strength. Change locations and try again.
- 7** Each week when TAB arrives, open the app and hold your device over the augmented reality articles.

'Missions is a lifestyle'

Weekend event encourages Alabama Baptist students to be ready to 'testify'

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

Some 130 students and their leaders from various churches in the state gathered at WorldSong Missions Place on Jan. 19–20 for Student Missions Weekend 2018.

The two-day event, sponsored by Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), followed the theme of "Testify," based on 1 Peter 3:15.

Bible study leader Will Spivey, a former pastor in Montgomery who is now a student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, opened his time on Friday night by quoting several passages of Scripture. He urged students to memorize what God's Word says, suggesting they place printed Scripture in places they spend a lot of time, including the bathroom, a comment that brought laughter from the crowd.

He also emphasized the necessity of being prepared to explain "what you believe" because "we never know when God will use us



Photo by Catherine Griffith

Students prepare invitation bags for New Beginnings Fellowship, a church plant in Trussville, during Student Missions Weekend 2018 at WorldSong Missions Place on Jan. 19–20.

to speak for Him." Readiness is key, he said.

"Pray for opportunities, expect them and be ready for them. You may not have (that) opportunity again," Spivey told the students.

During the final worship session

on Saturday, Spivey left students with several tips for sharing the gospel with others. Listening was at the top of the list.

"We need to talk to people and hear their stories," Spivey said.

Spivey encouraged students to

not give up when friends and family members refused to respond to the gospel.

"Don't be disheartened if they don't respond the first time," he said.

Be persistent

Jen, a former missionary to North Africa/Middle East who is now in seminary, shared her own story of persistence. She told of her confusion after committing to serve internationally, only to be told she couldn't go to her first choice. Though God closed that door, another opened, and as her time overseas extended, Jen found a passion for counseling that she didn't know she had.

As students headed out for their morning of service on Saturday, Jen reminded them that whatever situation they face, "Christ has given you all you need."

That proved to be true at the two missions sites chosen for this year's program, both churches in St. Clair Baptist Association. Several students assisted Eden West

Side Baptist Church, Pell City, by clearing a trail. Other students visited church widows and did some light housekeeping.

Several groups served with New Beginnings Fellowship, a church plant in Trussville. Students and leaders stuffed more than 1,000 visitor bags with an invitation to church and information about becoming a Christian. Once the bags were ready, teams went to several nearby neighborhoods to deliver them and talk to people about New Beginnings.

'Different sides'

Kaley Stephens, WorldSong missions strategist for Alabama WMU and director of the event, said she hoped students left with a clear vision that missions happens every day, not just for a specific time.

"We tried to really show them different sides of missions," she said. "I hope they all left a little more aware that missions is a lifestyle and not just something you do on spring break." ✝

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 4

Explore the Bible

By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

DELIVERED
Acts 20:22–35

Acts is the unfolding story of the people of God, filled with the Spirit of God, engaging in the mission of God. As Jesus’ followers, filled with the Spirit of God, we are to share the gospel with lost people. In these verses Paul met with the Ephesian elders for the last time and taught them that sharing the gospel is worth the sacrifice and effort.

His Commitment (22–24)

Paul had an exceptionally strong sense of compulsion that he was to go quickly to Jerusalem even though the Holy Spirit was clear that much pain awaited him there. These are challenging verses for us. We often interpret God’s plan for us as the easy path, involving a bigger paycheck, a better neighborhood or an easier life. Yet Paul knew he was headed to afflictions and chains and that the Lord was constraining him to go. We probably need a whole new theology of God’s will.

Paul’s assessment was that none of the threats ultimately concerned him as much as the completion of his mission. Paul said in light of Christ and the course He had given him, he did not count his life as precious. When it comes to counting our lives as more precious to us than Christ, we need to repent and smash the idols.

Paul was wholeheartedly committed to testifying to the gospel of the grace of God. He was willing to endure hardship to advance the gospel. Just as Jesus suffered to secure our salvation, Paul was willing to suffer to spread the glorious gospel of God’s amazing grace.

His Concern (25–31)

Paul told the Ephesian elders (pastors) that he was innocent of the blood of all because he did not shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God to the people

in Ephesus. He had comprehensively and consistently taught them about the kingdom of God.

He exhorted the elders to pay careful attention to themselves. The elders must pursue holiness in their own lives before they are able to shepherd God’s sheep. The elders must guard their own spiritual and moral purity before caring for others.

Paul also exhorted the elders to pay careful attention to the flock. He warned them of both external and internal threats that would jeopardize the gospel ministry of the church. The Middle Eastern shepherd had to protect his sheep from wolves. Elders must protect the church from theological wolves. Paul challenged the elders to be vigilant in guarding the good deposit of sound doctrine.

His Commendation (32–35)

Paul commended the Ephesian elders to God and to the Word of His grace. Paul’s commendation highlights the Word of God, centrally a message of grace, which grants Jesus’ followers a share in the heavenly inheritance. He reminded these leaders of the power of the gospel, which saves the lost and builds up believers.

His commendation also highlighted the fact that God Himself is the ultimate watchman. God is the faithful protector of His church. Paul was reminding the elders that they do not shepherd alone. Jesus is with them (Heb. 13:5) and Jesus will build His church (Matt. 16:18). God’s promises, God’s presence and God’s powerful gospel bring much needed comfort and encouragement to pastors who feel the incredible weight of shepherding the flock of God.

These are Paul’s final words to the Ephesian elders. A person’s final words are intended to be lasting words. As you prayerfully apply the truths of the Scripture in your life, answer this question honestly: Am I living for what really matters? 🌟

Bible Studies for Life

By Jim Barnette, Ph.D.
Samford University and Brookwood Baptist Church, Mountain Brook

I AM A MINISTER
2 Corinthians 3:4–12

All Christians are ministers of a New Covenant. This truth leads Paul into a comparison between the “old” ministry of Moses and the new ministry through Christ. Moses’ was a ministry of “glory” — a glory symbolized by the radiance of his face. The glory of that ministry is inferior, however, since it was the ministry of the covenant of the letter that leads to condemnation and death. In contrast, the ministry of the Spirit reveals righteousness and offers life.

We can serve with confidence
because God has given us all we
need to serve. (4–6)

How did Paul reply to his critics who accused him of being conceited? He asserts that the source of his confidence is the reality that “our adequacy is from God.” What sounded like self-confidence is actually God-confidence. As in Philippians 4:13, Paul declares the he is able to do all things “through Christ” (v. 4). Paul had confidence not because of what he could do for God but because of what God could do for him.

The term for “ministers” or “servants” does not refer to ordained ministers of a church. The term includes all who have been redeemed by Christ and called for service in His name. The old “written covenant” (Ex. 24) demanded a standard impossible for humans to reach without help. But the New Covenant inaugurated by Jesus offers humanity the spiritual ability to keep it (see 1 Cor. 11:25). Instead of laws written on tablets of stone, the laws are written on the heart. Instead of being an external form to follow, the laws of God written on the heart are an internal force that motivates the believer to a life of commitment.

We serve God by presenting His
righteousness to others. (7–10)

Paul acknowledges the glory of the Old Covenant. Harkening back to Moses receiving the Ten Commandments from God, Paul notes the radiance of God’s presence on Moses’ face. Indeed, Moses’ face shone so brightly that he had to cover it with a veil. However, Paul cites two limitations of that glory.

First the Old Covenant was limited in its power. The law had no power in and of itself to create life; indeed, Paul calls the ministry of the Old Covenant a “ministry of death.” Second the Old Covenant was limited in its permanence. Just as the brightness of Moses’ face faded so the law is revealed for its impermanence.

At first Moses wore the veil so the people would not be blinded by God’s glory. Later he wore the veil so people would not see that the glory had faded from his face (2 Cor. 3:13). By contrast the New Covenant is powerful, both in its effect and in its eternal glory. The glory of the Old Covenant then is eclipsed by the glory of the New — as the brightness of a single candle is overwhelmed by the brightness of the very sun.

The sure hope we have in Christ
emboldens us to minister. (11–12)

Like Paul, we can be bold in proclaiming the gospel, for the gospel of Christ will never pass away. In the verses following, Paul makes further use of the allegory of the veil over Moses’ face. Paul declares the veil that covered the Israelite leader was covering the minds of the Jews.

Whenever the Old Testament is read, a veil lies over the minds (literally “hearts”) of the hearers, so that they do not understand what the Scriptures mean (see Rom. 11:7–8). The veil can only be removed by Christ; He is the true revelation of the meaning of the Old Testament. 🌟

Christian Crossword

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Across

1. Garden of ____.

5. Wander.

8. He is of ____; ask him. (John 9:21)

11. And the ____ and the morning were the first day. (Gen 1:5)

12. The first man.

13. The first woman.

14. Pare.

16. Doctor. (abbr.)

17. Director. (abbr.)

19. Grass.

21. This ____ in remembrance of me. (Luke 22:19)

23. Lands surrounded by water.

26. Make broader.

28. Day and night shall not _____. (Gen 8:22)

29. Chicago transportation.

31. What hast thou ____? (Gen. 4:10)

32. Spelling. (abbr.)

33. Ye shall not eat of every ____ of the garden? (Gen. 3:1)

35. Old Testament. (abbr.)

36. Naomi’s daughter-in-law. (Ruth 1:4)

37. Relatives.

40. Son of Adam and Eve.

41. ____ shall not eat of it. (Gen. 3:3)

42. Let ____ make man. (Gen. 1:26)

44. Hear the word of God and ____ it. (Luke 8:21)

45. Vase.

47. Naked.

48. Either/_____.

49. I will make of thee a ____ nation. (Gen. 12:2)

52. To be in poor health.

54. And it was _____. (Gen. 1:7)

56. Deed.

57. North Atlantic Treaty Organization. (abbr.)

60. ____ thou not the oppressor. (Prov. 3:31)

61. As of fire, and it sat upon ____ of them. (Acts 2:3)

62. Thou shalt ____ eat of it. (Gen 2:17)

Down

2. Plan.

3. Be ye lift up, ye ____ doors. (Ps. 24:7)

4. Compass direction.

5. Rend.

6. And they shall be ____ flesh. (Gen. 2:24)

7. That in the ____ to come. (Eph. 2:7)

8. Total.

9. And the Lord God planted a _____. (Gen 2:8)

10. Printer’s measure.

13. Decree.

15. Both ____ and high. (Ps. 49:2)

18. Love ____ another. (John 15:17)

20. And I ____ eat. (Gen. 3:12)

22. There is none good but _____. (Matt. 19:17)

24. Child shall play on the hole of the _____. (Isa. 11:8)

25. The ____ beguiled me. (Gen. 3:13)

27. Pier.

30. Meadow.

33. ____ me, and know my thoughts. (Ps. 139:23)

34. Lefthanded judge. (Judg. 3:15)

35. Paddle.

38. An ____ is nothing. (1 Cor. 8:4)

39. They have no rest day ____ night. (Rev. 14:11)

40. ____ is the ground for thy sake. (Gen. 3:17)

43. The ____ of the scornful. (Ps. 1:1)

46. Recreation. (abbr.)

50. Beam.

51. I took the little book ... and ____ it up. (Rev. 10:10)

53. Electrically charged atom.

55. Upon.

57. North Carolina. (abbr.)

58. Exclamation.

59. ____ was very good. (Gen. 1:31)



Media reviews

BOOKS

Then I Will Hope for You

Angela Hatch. Madison, Ala.: Angela Hatch. 2018. 180 pp. (Paperback).

Angela Hatch's first book was a winner. It was the story of a family in Guatemala whose lives were changed by the gift of a home built by Casas por Cristo. This second one, if anything, is even better.

"Then I Will Hope for You," like its predecessor, is the fictionalized story of a poor family. This is the family of 10-year-old Domiku, whose family is already living on the edge of disaster in Haiti before the earthquake

in 2010. The book tells of the family's struggles to survive the devastation and hopelessness that



washes around them during and after the earthquake and Compassion International's role in bringing the gospel message along with practical, life-saving help to Domiku and his family.

It is a well-told story and an engaging read. I think what I like

best about Hatch's writing is her restraint. She does not overwhelm the reader with documentary-style pleas for help but instead lets the simple story stand for itself. In the end, "Then I Will Hope for You" achieves its goal: to acquaint the reader with people who are in dire situations and the organizations that are on the front lines meeting needs in the name of Christ.

Hatch is active in her church and missions work in Madison.

Preaching with Storytelling

Jackson Day. Self-Published by Jack Day. 230 pp. (Paperback).

Sharing the gospel through storytelling is a concept I have found captivating for many years. After all, who doesn't love a good story told by an enthusiastic teller? I can clearly remember the Bible stories told by my Sunday School teacher when I was in primary class — and I'll bet many of you can too.

While the technique is frequently used on the missions field to reach verbal learners, it is increasingly being used in other settings, regardless of whether the hearer is literate or not. In "Preaching with Storytelling," Jackson Day advocates the use of storytelling to enhance sermons and has written this book as a "how-to."



The book is carefully presented with the steps and concepts broken down for the reader. As I was reading the first chapter, I was thinking a concrete example would be helpful. Turning the page, I found — guess what? — an example! Now this is a writer who cares deeply about communicating with his readers.

As icing on the cake, appendices include a list of all of the stories of the Bible in chronological order, a list of all of the miracles in the Old and New Testaments, and a compilation of Jesus' own stories, or parables. Pure gold!

Day is from Enterprise. He and his wife, Doris, (think about her name for a minute) spent more than 30 years serving as missionaries to Brazil and they now consult and train others in storytelling techniques.

How to Reach More People

Jerry Wilkins. New York: Page Publishing, 2017. 179 pp. (Paperback).

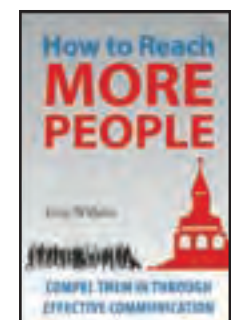
I have lost count of the number of books Jerry Wilkins, retired director of missions for Tuscaloosa Association, has written but they just seem to keep coming. They also seem to be getting better and better. One of the things I like about his books is that they tend to be practical, offering useful advice. "How to Reach More People" is no exception.

Wilkins recognizes that only the Holy Spirit can draw people but he points out that we are commanded to plant seeds and water them. After several chapters of

By Martine Bates Fairbanks, Ed.D.

University professor and retired principal

laying out the argument for building a comprehensive communication strategy, the book gives tips and ideas on how to do the planting and watering, mainly through effective communication — not just through sound preaching and



teaching, which are givens (I hope!) but through outreach to those inside and outside the church.

One of my favorite chapters is on the use

of technology — the Internet, websites and cellphones. Wilkins reminds the reader that a lost generation can be found on social media, where many spend a great deal of time. He goes so far as to suggest that pastors would do well to spend as much time on the Internet reaching out to people as they do delivering their Sunday sermon.

Even if your church is doing a good job of communication, there are bound to be some helpful ideas here you haven't thought about yet. It is not too often that I say buy a book but if you are in charge of communication for your church, you should buy this book. 🙌

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An overflow crowd at the Grand Mosque in Moscow gathers outside during Friday prayers. The mosque holds more than 10,000 worshippers but still is bursting at the seams with the city's growing Muslim population. IMB photo

Miraculous move of God

Influx of immigrants leads to growth of Islam in Moscow

Argun is tough. He and his friend Carlos, a businessman who moved to Russia to share Christ with Muslims, spend many nights at a martial arts club in Moscow.

And when they do, Argun doesn't lose very often. When he first met Carlos, Argun was closed to the gospel, even hostile. He associated Christians with the Russian army, the ones who bombed his childhood home in Chechnya. But ever since Argun moved to Moscow, his friendship with Carlos has softened his heart. He's reading the Bible, asking questions about Jesus and trying to make sense of how real Christianity stacks up to the Muslim faith he grew up with. And that, Carlos says, is huge.

Where Argun is from, Islam is part of the fabric of life. Muslim groups are indigenous to the North Caucasus region of Russia, a mountainous area between the Black and Caspian seas. Chechens live there, but also Circassians, Ingush, Dargin, Avar and Lezghis and 45 to 50 subsets of people, all with their own dialects. It's a modern-day Babel — geographers once labeled the region "the mountain of languages."

Hard to reach

To say the people there are hard to reach would be an understatement.

The plethora of languages and the lack of local believers have made Scripture translation difficult. Many of the Caucasus people live and work in virtual isolation in their villages. It's a lifestyle that has

preserved the unique and varied cultures for centuries but it also has kept them from hearing the name of Jesus.

But the tide is shifting — these days, many of them are moving into Russia's megacities looking for work, reminding Russia of the historic presence of Islam within its borders. Moscow now has more Muslims than any other European city. Its newly reopened Grand Mosque can hold 10,000 worshippers.

It's a miraculous move of God to shift them into the city and allow such unprecedented access, according to Elizabeth, a Christian worker among Muslims in Moscow. "God says, 'If you can't go to them, I'll bring them to you,'" she said. "There's no better time to be in the former Soviet Union. God is moving Muslims right under our noses."

And like Argun, many are open to friendships with Christians and, over time and through relationships, learning about who Jesus really is. "I think he's really questioning,"

Carlos said of Argun. Those kinds of questions are what he, Elizabeth and others serving in Russia hope and pray for daily.

Pray for God to continue to draw Muslims in Russia to faith in Christ and that they would have dreams and visions of Jesus coupled with a desire to read the Bible. Pray also for Christians to feel called to develop friendships with Muslims so they would have the opportunity to share the gospel with them.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons. (WMU's Missions Mosaic, IMB)

**"There's no better
time to be in the
former Soviet Union.
God is moving
Muslims right under
our noses."**

**Elizabeth
Christian worker**

RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

US withholds UN funds for Palestinian refugees

WASHINGTON — The State Department announced Jan. 16 the U.S. will withhold \$65 million from a \$125 million package for humanitarian aid for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees.

The agency, founded in 1949, provides humanitarian services in the fields of education, health care and social and relief services to more than 5 million Palestinian refugees in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said in January that the White House wanted to defund UNRWA outright.

That came after the Palestinian Authority said President Donald Trump's plan to move the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem disqualifies America as an unbiased mediator for Mideast peace.

Trump reacted on Twitter, noting Jan. 2 "we pay the Palestinians hundreds of millions of dollars a year and get no appreciation or respect."

"With the Palestinians no longer willing to talk peace, why should we make any of these massive future payments to them," the tweet continued.

State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert declined to say if the Jan. 16 announcement was connected to the president's tweet but said the aid reduction "is not aimed at punishing anyone." (BNG)

Brownback appointed to religious freedom post

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate narrowly confirmed Kansas' Republican Gov. Sam Brownback as ambassador at large for international religious freedom. The 50-49 vote Jan. 24 required Vice President Mike Pence in his role as president of the Senate to break a tie, with all Democrats opposed and two Republicans absent.

In his new position, Brownback will lead the Office of International Religious Freedom, whose mission is to promote religious freedom as a "core objective of U.S. foreign policy," according to the website of the U.S. State Department. The duties of the department include monitoring religious persecution and discrimination worldwide, developing programs to promote religious freedom and identifying and denouncing regimes that are severe persecutors on the basis of religious belief.

A former U.S. senator, Brownback faced opposition from LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) groups for rescinding a 2007 Kansas executive order giving state employees protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation or sexual identity.

The most recent ambassador was Rabbi David Saperstein, appointed by former President Barack Obama in 2014 and the only non-Christian who has held the position since it was created in 1998 during the administration of President Bill Clinton. (TAB)

Adoption, foster care common in churches

NASHVILLE — Protestant churches in the U.S. seem to be taking the Bible's call to orphan care seriously, according to a LifeWay Research study released Jan. 24.

About 4 in 10 Protestant churchgoers say their congregation has been involved with adoption or foster care in the past year. Seventeen percent say someone from their church has adopted a child from the U.S. in the past year. Fifteen percent say someone from their church has adopted a child from another country.

Thirty-seven percent of people who attend large churches know someone who has provided foster care while only 20 percent of those who attend a smaller church do.

Still church leaders in general don't talk much about adoption, according to the survey. About half (45 percent) of those surveyed say their church has had no involvement with or conversation about foster care and adoption, despite the fact that since the early 2000s, many Protestant churches have commemorated "Orphan Sunday" in November to draw attention to the plight of orphans and kids in foster care around the world. (BP)