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Photo by Andrew Lucas

Rend Collective gives a late-night concert during the SPEAK conference July 20–21 at Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery.

‘Gospel-focused’

SPEAK youth conference draws 900, keeps gospel at the center

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Scooter Kellum says there are a lot of things that could define a youth conference.

And he doesn't mind if the state's SPEAK conference offers some of them — like good music, Krispy Kreme donuts and a packed late-night concert.

But most of all, he wants the youth who attend SPEAK every year to see and hear one thing packed into every aspect of the event — the gospel.

“It’s easy to get distracted when you put on a conference and get caught up in trying to entertain,” said Kellum, youth ministry strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM). “Our heartbeat behind what we do, and for this event in particular, is we want to be known for being gospel-focused.”

More than 900 youth, leaders and volunteers attended this year’s SPEAK conference, held July 20–21 at Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery. The theme, Tell Your Story, focused on the power of sharing the gospel through personal testimony.

The first night, Adam Robinson, pastor of Double Oak Community Church, Birmingham, in Shelby Baptist Association, shared the story of

Nicodemus from John 3 and “gave a clear gospel presentation,” Kellum said. At the end, 48 students made decisions to follow Christ.

Personal testimonies

On Saturday, Ismael Pruitt, youth and families pastor at Calvary Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, shared his personal story of adoption and how God saved him.

Cleve Mallory, student pastor at Eastmont, said his students really connected with Pruitt’s message.

“To hear him tell his story that he wasn’t born into a church setting but God rescued him spoke volumes to a lot of my kids,” Mallory said.

In the breakout session that followed, Pruitt taught students how to

craft and share their own story.

Kellum said, “We wanted them to know that the conference is about more than just coming and hearing somebody share their story — we wanted them to know that this is what it looks like, then this is how you do it yourself.”

During the last session of the conference, Shawn Emory, a Christian perception artist, used his gifts to share his story. Born with a severe speech impediment, Emory didn’t speak fluently until he was 16, but God has used his artistic talents to open up avenues for him to share.

Throughout the weekend, spoken-word artist Shantrice Coleman also told her personal story in segments.

(See ‘SPEAK,’ page 5)

To watch the videos from this week’s issue, visit our YouTube channel or use the HP Reveal app on your phone or tablet and hover over the segments marked “AR.”

For more information, visit speak.ymlink.org.

COMMENT

Will Money Trump Morality?

Sarah Silverman is supposed to be a comedian. Her shtick is trying to make abortion funny. At a recent fundraiser for abortion rights she joked with the audience about wanting to eat an aborted fetus.

That is not funny. That is sick.

In a tweet supporting Planned Parenthood, Silverman argued that since abortion is legal in the United States, “it would be insane not to use fetal tissue for science and education.” Critics answered by pointing out the similarity of her reasoning to Nazi Germany where reason led to making lampshades of human skin because gas chambers were legal in that country.

Unfortunately what Silverman promotes in that tweet is seriously advocated by bioethicist and psychiatrist Jacob Appel. In a Huffington Post article he wrote, “If a woman has the fundamental right to terminate a pregnancy, why not the right to use the products of that terminated pregnancy as she sees fit?”

He continued, “Many women would likely use the proceeds of such sales to finance college education or to help raise their children.”

Appel’s words reflect a stark choice facing American society today. Which is more important — money or morality?

Southern heritage

For those of us in the South, that is a serious question. Part of our heritage is a culture that denied the personhood of a whole race of people in order to prop up a dying economic system that benefited the wealthy.

Unfortunately the church of that day in the South sided with money, and that legacy continues to haunt our moral pronouncements.

The question of money or morality is not new and it is one with which we continue to struggle as Appel’s comments demonstrate.

Appel tries to cover up the inhumanity of sell-



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

ing fetal tissue and body parts by tying it to an acceptable cause — a college education. Instead of focusing on the horror of what he endorses, he attempts to focus attention on something else.

It is a classic example of the ends justifying the means. But they do not. You do not make a just, compassionate, humane society by telling women to abort their babies and sell their body parts in order to pay for a college education or raise household expenses.

That is a descent into paganism.

Human life at any stage is not an object that should ever be sold. A Christian worldview declares every life is valuable to God — so valuable that God places His own image in every human being.

The argument about when human life begins is largely over. It is generally agreed by people on both sides of the abortion debate that human life begins at conception.

But people like Silverman, Appel and others continue to deny that human life equals personhood. For them there is some mysterious moment when human life takes on personhood. Is it quickening — when the mother feels life? Is it when the newborn takes its first breath? Is it when the child begins to reason? Different writers promote different criteria.

It is amazing to read articles by so-called ethicists arguing for aborting children “post-birth.” One current ethicist attempts to justify killing children up to three years of age because they have not yet become “persons.”

Many of these same thinkers promote euthanasia and assisted suicide for the disabled and older people with various incapacities.

Human life has lost its value. Resources are being used to support “non-persons,” they argue. It is a clear example of money trumping morality.

Whether we recognize it or not, the Church is in a life-and-death struggle between worldviews that denigrate human life, giving it no inherent value or dignity, and the Christian worldview that values all human life as endowed with the dignity of the image of God.

Philosopher Mortimer Adler describes a time when “groups of superior men (will) be able to justify

their enslavement, exploitation or even genocide of inferior human groups.” This sounds hauntingly familiar to Hitler’s treatment of Jews, the killing fields of Cambodia and the genocide of Hutus against Tutsis in Rwanda.

Set against that is the Christian worldview that fostered the rise of the concept of universal rights derived from the conviction that all human beings are created in the image of God.

One writer asserts, “Christianity is the first universalist ethos.” Christians value all human life.

Again, it is money and all it represents — like privilege, power and pleasure — against the morality of the Christian faith.

Individual choices

Culture, it is said, is a reflection of the individual choices of a people. So what will be our choices? Will we be true to the Christian ethic and embrace the morality of valuing all human life or will we stand by and allow morality to be overcome by selfish forces leading culture back to paganism?

In the end, will money trump morality? ✠



Check out our
new podcast —
TAB News

Debuts on Read
The Alabama Day
Sunday, August 19

www.thealabamabaptist.org



"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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'In the image of God'

Mobile conference encourages Christians to shrink the racial divide

By Rhoda Pickett

Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

More than 1,600 Christians from around the Mobile area gathered in the Mobile Civic Center Theater on July 24 to hear messages stressing relationship and friendship as a way to combat racial strife.

Shrink the Divide — a gathering for racial reconciliation — was sponsored by The Pledge Group, which is made up of Mobile area pastors "to unify the body of Christ and our communities across ethnic and denominational lines, realizing that racism is a heart/sin problem and only the gospel will bring about such unity."

Ed Litton, pastor of Redemption Church, Saraland, was one of the event organizers. "We could not be more excited and satisfied with this event," he said. "Our response from those who want to join us in practical ways of shrinking the divide was overwhelming. It was in every measure a great success."

Keynote speakers Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, and John M. Perkins, a minister, civil rights activist, Bible teacher and author, focused on the gospel and authentic Christianity.

Moore told the crowd "that once you are in the family of God, you are a joint heir with Jesus Christ."

'Even more dangerous'

"If you have really been brought in by this gospel, then that's going to change the way you see things including the way you see yourself in relation to other people," Moore said. "What we are dealing with are three questions that could not be more relevant in the kind of American society that we are in right now that is riddled with division, riddled with racism, riddled with injustice, riddled often with hatred for one another and often infected with a kind of racism and racial animosity that is more subtle than it would have been at other points in American history which means that it is even more dangerous."

Perkins described the situation as a crisis of belief and owning sin.

"Our crisis is in not understanding authentic Christianity," he said. "Sin is a rebellion against God and all sin in the end becomes



Above: Russell Moore focuses on the importance of the gospel in mending the racial divide. **Right:** John M. Perkins, minister and civil rights activist, explains the situation is a 'crisis of belief and owning sin.'

your own. That's a problem. The problem is that we don't own our sin. And so we don't believe. We don't own our sin and so we can't forgive. And even now we use our sin as a weapon. I won't commit to you because you hurt me so bad and you might hurt me again. The problem is a crisis of belief."

During a press conference prior to the event, Perkins said Christians must learn to be intentional in their obedience and that "the wrap around in Scripture is friendship."

"The sin unto death is the sin we don't confess," he said. "The thief on the cross got that. He wasn't baptized. He wasn't a Baptist. He wasn't a Presbyterian. He wasn't an usher. He got that because it was intentional."

Rob Couch, senior pastor of Christ United Methodist Church, Mobile, agreed.

"I really believe that the key to all this is building friendships with people," Couch said. "I think that when we get to know one another we can realize how much we have in common, a lot of these barriers will start to come down."

Litton, also speaking at the press conference, added that understanding the gospel is the solution.

"But the problem is we see a church that is more polarized than the unchurched and that the church holds certain doctrinal beliefs and we're not questioning those, but it's how we apply them," he said. "We've



Photos by D. Ladd Photography

got to return to the basics of seeing another person as made in the image of God which means they have value and worth and that their skin color is in the beauty of what God made them to be and that we are to accept that person and love that person and it doesn't matter if you vote like me, think like me or look like me, but that God placed you here and I honor you because God made you."

Jerry Jenkins, senior pastor of Moffett Road Assembly of God, Mobile, said as a younger man, racial segregation caused him to leave Mobile but spiritual intervention compelled him to return.

The death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, led him and other pastors to discuss avoiding a similar incident in Mobile and ultimately his decision to join The Pledge Group.

"We are seeing the racial division come down in my church," he said. "We are integrated."

For more information please go to www.thepledge.us or www.shrinkthedivide.com.



Following the benediction of the Shrink the Divide gathering, Ed Litton (center) and other Mobile pastors celebrate the success of and 'overwhelming' response from the July 24 event.

Right to worship

Religious liberty summit organizers urge global faith leaders to work together

Religious leaders, government officials, rights advocates and members of civil society organizations from around the world gathered in Washington on July 24–26 for the United States’ first-ever conference on religious freedom.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo hosted the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom at the State Department. Organizers said the goal of the conference was to develop “concrete ways” to reduce religious persecution across the globe.

“My own faith is of the greatest importance to me personally,” said Pompeo on the closing day of the conference. “As an American, I’ve been blessed with the right to live out what I believe without fear of persecution or reprisal from my government. I want everyone else to enjoy this blessing too.”

U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback opened the summit July 24 by urging leaders to work together to help the persecuted across the globe.

“We need your faith in action to move the world to not just tolerance of differences — although that’s important — but unfortunately, that bar is just too low,” Brownback said. “We must move to a place where people genuinely care and love one another, no matter our differences. You must help us get there.”

Brownback said the faiths represented among the 350 attendees from 80 countries included Muslims, Jews, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, Baha’is, Yazidis and others.

Experts say roughly three-fourths of the world’s population



RNS photo by Adelle M. Banks

Sam Brownback (at podium on right) U.S. ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom, welcomes leaders to the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom.

faces some restriction on religious freedom.

One of the biggest offenders is North Korea. Pompeo traveled there in early July for meetings on denuclearization, but North Korea’s human rights record is a major concern as well.

Turkey got attention on the final day of the conference after news came that Andrew Brunson, an evangelical Christian pastor originally from North Carolina, was let out of jail there July 25 after 18 months in prison to serve house arrest because of “health problems,” according to Turkey’s official Anadolu news agency.

Brunson faces charges of terrorism and espionage, charges he denies. If convicted, Brunson faces upwards of 15 years in prison.

Speaking at the conference, Vice President Mike Pence called on Turkey, who sent no representatives to the conference, to release Brunson or face consequences.

“If Turkey does not take immediate action to free this innocent man of faith and send him home to America, the United States will impose significant sanctions on Turkey until Pastor Andrew Brunson is free,” Pence said.

Pence also cited the Nicaraguan government of President Daniel

Ortega “virtually waging war on the Catholic Church,” the torture of Tibetan Buddhists in China, forced abortions and the outlawing of the Christian Bible in North Korea and Russia’s imprisonment of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Pence, along with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, listed several new initiatives to continue the goals of the summit, which will become an annual event.

Pence said the U.S. is launching a Genocide Recovery and Persecution Response Program, under which the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development will help victims of persecution.

“America will help the victims of ISIS reclaim their lands, rebuild their lives and replant their roots in their ancient homelands, so that all religions can flourish once again across the Middle East and the ancient world,” he said.

Pompeo also addressed the rebuilding of religious communities in Iraq that have been devastated

by the so-called Islamic State, also known as ISIS.

Pompeo announced other events including a leadership program for those on the “frontlines of religious freedom issues”; a workshop, planned for October, to support private/public partnerships defending religious freedom; and regional conferences to the summit in several countries.

Pence also announced a new International Religious Freedom Fund to assist persecuted religious minorities and asked other nations to join the United States in supporting it.

Both Pence and Pompeo reflected on their own faith as they repeatedly pledged the administration would be committed to the rights of people of all faiths.

He added: “The United States advances religious freedom in our foreign policy because it is not exclusively an American right. It is a God-given universal right bestowed on all of mankind.” (Compiled from RNS reports)



Leon Westerhouse

Longtime music evangelist dies at age 83

Leon Westerhouse grew up in First Baptist, Birmingham, where he was saved at the age of eight and sang in the choir. Westerhouse completed his bachelor of music degree at the University of Alabama in 1959. In 1964 he surrendered to full-time music evangelism. He was ordained in 1979.

In his more than 50-year career, Westerhouse proclaimed Jesus across the United States and abroad. In 2008 he was inducted into the Southern Baptist Evangelists Hall of Faith.

Westerhouse is survived by his wife of 60 years, Patsy; children: Wendy, Wayne and Warren Westerhouse; seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. (TAB)



WESTERHOUSE

Correction

In the July 26 article “God is always on time” about Alice Marie Johnson’s faith journey and time in prison, the president who granted her clemency was mistakenly left out of the article. This sentence has been added to the online version of the article: “(Kim Kardashian) pleaded Johnson’s case in a meeting with President Trump, and he commuted her sentence.”

Think about relevant social issues

By Carolyn Tomlin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Social issues can be defined as problems that influence a large number of people within a group. They may be social or economic, and they don't always refer to an ill to be solved — sometimes they refer to a topic that needs discussing.

Social Issues Sunday — Aug. 5 — is the day Southern Baptists have set aside to discuss those topics in a special way. Many Alabama churches share the same social issues, but some are unique to particular areas.

Social Issues Sunday is Aug. 5.

In his writings Thomas Paine addresses the individual's duty to "allow the same rights to others as we allow to ourselves." Luke 6:31 underscores this — "Do to others as you would have them do to you."

Sunday School teachers and those who work with children and youth have opportunities to teach by encouraging the younger generation to make wise choices.

One idea is to adapt teaching materials to current social problems.

With older students, address issues that might surface and help them think through how they would deal with them.

Examples of questions to ask and ponder:

- ▶ You see a group of kids bullying a student in your school who wears different clothing because of her religion. What would you do?
- ▶ You have an unmarried friend who is pregnant. She is considering an abortion. What would you do?
- ▶ A family from another ethnic group attends your church. No one sits with them or speaks to them after the service. What would you do?
- ▶ You see a friend using drugs. They try to encourage others in the group to participate. What would you do? †

'Choose Him every time'

Teen finds creative ministry through spoken-word poetry

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Five years ago, Shantrice Coleman got talked into going to a youth camp against her better judgment. "I really wasn't for it," she said. "I had been in a church a couple of times, but I didn't really know what it was all about."

Ultimately the idea of a road trip to Tennessee convinced her to say yes, but she instantly regretted it.

"I didn't know that the friend who invited me had invited another friend, and that girl would get jealous if I would hang out with them," Coleman said. "So I ended up just hanging out with all these people I didn't know. I was kind of over it before it even started."

But that whole week, "God was changing my heart," she said.

On the last night, speaker Adam Robinson, pastor of Double Oak Community Church, Birmingham, urged the teens to think of people they could go back home and share their faith with.

"I felt like God was saying to me, 'How can you go home and share My name with these people when you don't know Me yourself?'"

Coleman strode purposefully up to her student pastor and said, "I need to give my life to Christ."

That student pastor was Scooter Kellum, who was serving at the time at First Baptist Church, Kenner, Louisiana, and now serves as youth ministry strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

"You could hear and sense this boldness that she was ready to go live her life for Christ," Kellum said. "She has walked through some very tough times in her life, but from the very moment God got a hold of her, you could sense her boldness."

It was with that same sense of boldness that Coleman walked to the microphone several times during the recent SPEAK conference (see story, page 1) to share her story through spoken-word poetry.

Over the past three years, she's become a staple at the conference. In 2016, the first year the Youth Evangelism Conference tried out the theme of SPEAK, she illustrated that theme through her spoken-word poetry, which was scattered throughout the weekend.

Standing ovation

"The third time she took the stage, the students erupted in applause and she got a standing ovation," Kellum said. "She was 16 at the time, and to hear another teen use her gifts that way and tell them they needed to put their faith in Christ — it really spoke to them."

After that year, the SBOM changed the conference's name to SPEAK officially and



Photo by Andrew Lucas

Spoken-word artist Shantrice Coleman tells her personal story in segments at this year's SPEAK conference July 20–21.

Coleman has continued to do just that.

It's been a platform she never would've imagined she could have.

"A few months after I came to Christ I heard spoken word done at the Louisiana youth evangelism conference. I didn't know

what it was at the time," Coleman said.

But she loved to write and speak, and it wasn't long before several people who knew her well were encouraging her to give spoken word a try.

One of those people was Kellum.

"He just kept asking me and asking me to do it," Coleman said. "Then one day we were at a ministry project out in the community for the weekend and he told me I had the opportunity to share the gospel with a lot of people."

Gospel message

She went home that night, wrote out a piece that explained the gospel message — creation, the fall, redemption and response — and shared it the next day.

It kicked off a new passion for her. "It's been crazy the opportunities and the doors that God has opened," she said.

And it wasn't long before Kellum had moved to Alabama and was asking her to come be a part of SPEAK.

"It has been so great to get to be a part of it," she said. "The big thing I wanted to get across this year is that I've been through valleys where things got really bad, and I've had mountaintop experiences, but God chooses to use us despite our brokenness. We just have to choose Him every time." †

SPEAK helps students know their story, understand how to tell others

(continued from page 1)

Coleman (see story, this page) has been a part of SPEAK since 2016.

Another highlight of the conference was a late-night concert by Rend Collective and worship music led by the Ryan John Band.

And during the breakout time, high school seniors were given a special opportunity to hear from a panel of collegiate ministers and meet the Baptist campus ministers at the schools they will attend.

"We really want to train up some young students to not only get plugged into Baptist Campus Ministries, but also use that as an avenue to have some community in the church when they get to college," Kellum said. "They got to actually meet their campus ministers during that time and have prayer with them, which was really cool."

Mike Nuss, director of the SBOM office of collegiate and student ministries, said

SPEAK has grown into "a world class, evangelism-focused event" for Alabama Baptist youth.

"Helping students know their story and understand how to tell that story to others was the singular focus of this year's event," Nuss said. "Adding the elements of training for youth ministers/leaders and connecting high school seniors transitioning to college with our Baptist campus ministers makes this an experience that every church student ministry can benefit from and should take advantage of."

Mallory agreed, saying for him, SPEAK was a great opportunity for churches, regardless of size, to have an amazing conference experience with very little cost and only one night away, rather than a whole week of camp.

"It's a top-notch experience and it gives a major boost to a church's youth ministry," he said. †

The next SPEAK conference is set for July 19-20, 2019, at Eastmont Church and will follow the theme As You Go, Speak.

International Mission Board investigating abuse policies

Former International Mission Board (IMB) missionary and denominational employee Mark Aderholt is only days away from his initial court appearance to face a charge of sexual assault of a child under 17.

And while Aderholt prepares for court, the IMB is in the beginning stages of an independent investigation it launched to evaluate its handling of the alleged abuse.

Aderholt, 46, has been free from jail on \$10,000 bond since his July 3 arrest.

Since his arrest the IMB has had conversations with various authorities, the media and legal representation about the situation because officials were made aware of the allegation in 2007 but did not report it.

The offense allegedly occurred in Arlington, Texas, in 1997 when Aderholt was 25. Officials from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, confirmed Aderholt was a student at the seminary when the crime was allegedly committed.

IMB did not report

Aderholt served with the IMB from 2000 to 2008 and then served at two Arkansas churches and with the South Carolina Baptist Convention as associate executive director after his time with the IMB.

The IMB learned of the allegations in 2007 while Jerry Rankin was president and conducted an internal investigation.

The matter was set to go before the board of trustees, "which, at that time, was the only group with the authority to terminate a member of our missionary personnel," IMB spokesperson Julie McGowan said in mid-July. But Aderholt resigned on his own "before the board could vote on the recommendation from the investigative team."

The IMB has since changed its policies to allow a missionary to be terminated by "staff senior leadership," McGowan said.

The IMB did not report the incident to law enforcement at the time, McGowan said, because the victim, Anne Marie Miller, was not interested in pressing charges.

Miller, diagnosed in 2010 with PTSD resulting from childhood abuse, said she remembers feeling at the time that if the criminal investigation was anything like her two days of interviews with the IMB, she did not think she could handle it.

She added that regardless of her emotional state at the time, the IMB ignored mandatory reporting laws. It is unclear what, if anything, the IMB told Aderholt's future employers.

Current IMB President David Platt announced on July 26 a "thorough, outside, independent examination of IMB's handling of past actions — including this case and any other similar situations."

"In addition, I am commencing a thorough, outside, independent examination of IMB's present policies to ensure that our current commitment to zero tolerance for child abuse, sexual abuse and sexual harassment is completely and consistently enforced across IMB today," he said.

"Further, I am presently in conversations with leaders of other churches and ministries, particularly within the SBC, to establish practical ways we can and must prevent situations like this in the future," Platt stated. "Any attempts to minimize, ignore, cover up or overlook child abuse, sexual abuse or sexual harassment are absolutely intolerable, and we must take action together now to ensure safety and support for every person employed or affected by a church or ministry." (TAB, BNG, BP)

Alabama Baptists affected by IMB data security breach

A data breach at the International Mission Board (IMB) may have exposed personal information of current and former employees, volunteers and applicants.

The IMB began a "comprehensive response" immediately upon discovering the cyber security incident on April 11 and promptly notified law enforcement officials, according to a statement released to Baptist Press on July 16.

IMB officials learned what information had been breached in early June but the letters sent to those affected were not sent out until July 6. That's the day the North Carolina *Biblical Recorder* learned of the letter, contacted the IMB and released the first public information on the breach.

The *Alabama Baptist* reported the story that same day on its website.

The breach involved an "unknown external actor" gaining access to personnel records that contained names, addresses, birth

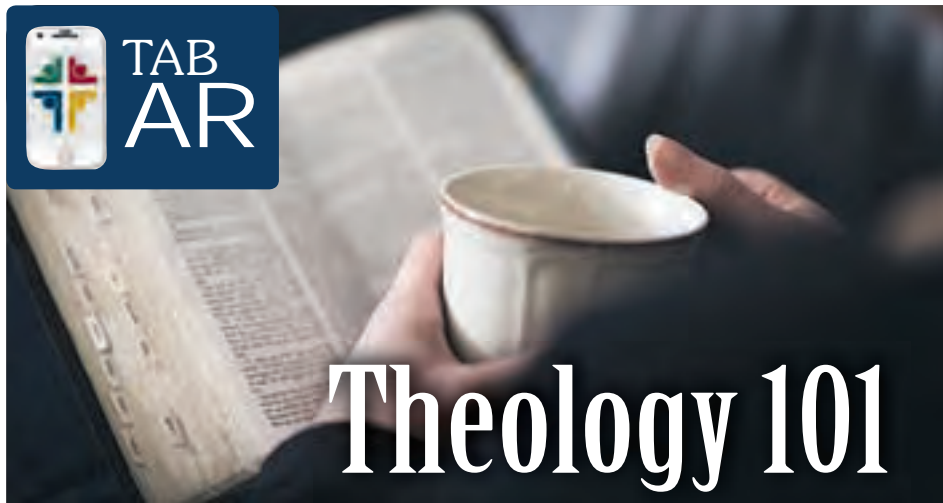
dates, contact information, Social Security numbers and limited health information.

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, sent an e-mail to Alabama Baptist leaders on July 26 to make sure potential victims knew of the data breach and options for action.

In the e-mail, Lance said "many who have served during the past several years on IMB-related trips ... should take note of information in the correspondence they receive from IMB." Current and former IMB employees and job applicants should also take note, he wrote.

The IMB has offered one year of free identity theft protection services from MyIDCare to those whose information has been identified as part of the data breach but the deadline for enrollment is Oct. 5.

The IMB said investigations by law enforcement and independent digital forensic experts are ongoing. (TAB)



TAB
AR

Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The Scriptures

Divine Inspiration

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

The average person would probably agree that the Bible is a special kind of book even if they cannot explain all that makes it special. As Christian believers we give the Bible a special place in our thinking, but we need to be able to give some explanation of what makes it special and different from other books. This week we begin to look at some of the major reasons the Bible is different from other books and therefore quite special to us.

We begin with the conviction that the Bible is an inspired book. However, by inspired, Christians mean more than might commonly be understood as something creative, rare, timely, brilliant or out of the ordinary, such as an inspiring performance by a musician or a flash of inspiration that brings sudden deeper or clearer understanding of a problem's solution. Something more than human insight, brilliance and creativity was at work in the writers of the books of the Bible. That something more was actually Someone more, namely the Spirit of God breathing into and through those human authors to produce writings that are powerful and alive, penetrating and Spirit-authenticated.

The opening sentence in the Baptist Faith and Message statement about the Scriptures begins with the confession, "The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired." This conviction gives expression to 2 Peter 1:20-21: "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." The biblical writers were God's instruments whom He carried along in their production of the sacred writings.

This conviction is repeated and enlarged upon in 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." The term rendered into English by "inspiration" might be literally translated by the expression "God-breathed."

We might summarize these claims by saying that inspiration, as descriptive of the Bible, refers to the supernatural influence or activity of the Holy Spirit upon divinely selected men by which the Spirit, through the vocabularies and personalities of those men, brought forth writings that are trustworthy, truthful and authoritative. Or, in the language of Job 32:8, we might understand "there is a spirit in man and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding."

Truth we can trust

We are able to draw the further conviction that since the Scriptures were God-breathed in their origin and God-breathed when read and received by sincere believers, the Bible remains a treasure house of truth that we can trust, a Holy Book that the Spirit of truth inspired. In a day when many in the world understand truth to be relative or fluid and thus changeable, people need a touchstone of truth that remains the same yesterday, today and forever.

Based on the conviction that the Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit in its writing, Christians commonly confess the Bible to be totally true and thus utterly trustworthy. After all, the sacred Scriptures were breathed out by God and received and written down by holy men of old whom God hand-picked.

The breath of God perfumes the words of Scripture, authenticates the truth conveyed by those words and waits to blow upon those who receive that truth in humility and obedience. 🌿

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.



Alabama Baptist STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS



Focus on

1 MISSION

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

news and features about missions and ministries from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions | (800) 264-1225 | alsbom.org

Preparing for a time of great change

It's that time of year again, and it seems to roll around with increasing regularity and speed. High school graduates are packing up, loading up and heading out for the next chapter in life. Students and their parents are preparing by purchasing dorm room essentials (if they are living on campus), attending orientation sessions and making sure the finances are in order.

Psychologists tell us that one of the greatest times of change in a person's life are the six months between high school graduation and Christmas—in other words, the first few

months of their college experience.

Navigating those first few weeks and months of college can be an exhilarating, exciting and often challenging experience.

It is a long-standing truth that the friends, patterns and habits that a student makes in the first three weeks they are on campus may determine (or undermine) their entire college career.

We also know that seven out of 10 high school seniors active in their church youth ministry have little or no spiritual connection while in college.

Other studies tell us that students who are active in campus organizations feel more connected, perform better academically and are generally happier during their college years.

Given those facts, here are some ways parents, youth ministers and pastors can help:

- * Make sure your student connects with Baptist Campus Ministry (BCM) on their campus.
- * Check out bcmlink.org for information on your campus.

- * Make sure your student connects with a local Baptist church during those first weeks on campus.

- * Give your student "permission" to not come home that first weekend on campus and find a

- * Pray for them and enlist others to pray for students on college campuses across Alabama.

- * Pray for campus and church ministers on the college campus mission field.

By Mike Nuss
State Missionary



For more information on BCM, church ministry to college students or helping students

transition to college, please contact State

Missionary Mike Nuss at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 276, or (334) 613-2276, mnuss@alsbom.org

church close to their campus or be a part of a BCM weekend retreat designed to include and welcome them.

ALABAMA BAPTIST
free
order your 2018-2019
RESOURCE DIRECTORY



THIS 16-MONTH CALENDAR (Sept. 2018–Dec. 2019) has State Board of Missions events and emphases already printed with plenty of room for you to add your church's events. It also includes an alphabetical listing of ministries and services along with directories of associational, state and SBC contacts.

Limit 20 copies per church. To order, please call, fax or e-mail your request to Charleen Hobbs at 1.800.264.1225, ext. 231; direct at 334.613.2231; 334.288.2693 (fax); chobbs@alsbom.org; or order online at alsbom.org/rd.

Be sure to include your name, church name, mailing address and number of guides needed up to 20

WHY I BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

The mission of the Southern Baptist Convention is to fulfill the Great Commission (*Matthew 28:18-20*).

The Cooperative Program unified plan of giving has proven to be an excellent way of funding our missions and ministry on a state, national and international level for nearly 100 years.

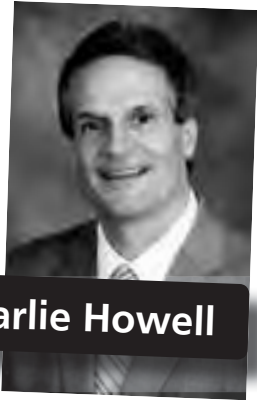
Our International Mission Board and North American Mission Board receive a combined 73 percent of the SBC allotment, demonstrating our commitment to reach people with the Good News of Jesus Christ at home and abroad.

Our six SBC seminaries receive a combined 22 percent of the SBC allotment, supporting the importance of theological education and training for our ministers.

I remember when I started at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1976. My tuition was a mere \$100 per semester. This low cost was due to the financial support our seminaries receive through the Cooperative Program.

Our Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions receives 32.4% of the Cooperative Program money given in our state to support its vital, multifaceted ministry to our Alabama churches.

Charlie Howell



I would encourage all of our churches to give generously and consistently through the Cooperative Program so we can fulfill our Lord's command to make disciples.

– **Charlie Howell**, executive director of missions, Madison Baptist Association



Alabama Church Planter Network Dinner

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 11, SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

CHURCH PLANTERS and wives or anyone interested in planting are invited to this event. Childcare will be provided.

OUR SPEAKER: Kenny Grant was born and raised in Brunswick, Ga. He has served as pastor/planter for churches in both Brunswick and Savannah, Ga., for many years. A former Marine drill instructor, Kenny has a unique style of teaching and preaching.



He communicates the Word of God with insight, clarity, passion and conviction. Often punctuated with humor, his impactful messages always leave his audiences informed, inspired and equipped to apply God's Word to their daily lives.

Currently, Kenny serves as the senior pastor at Calvary Baptist Temple, Savannah. Kenny's teaching ministry has extended to a wide range of groups and events throughout the United States. Kenny's

wife, Shirley, "completes him." They are the parents of four children: Kenetha, Gina, Kenny, Jr., Kameron; and four grandchildren.

SCHEDULE: Registration, 4:30-6 p.m.; dinner, 6-6:30; worship led by Worship Band from New Beginnings Church, 6:30-6:45; inspirational message by Kenny Grant, 6:45-7:15. From 7:15 to 8:30, wives' session will be led by Susan Lovett; planters/pastors will be led by Kenny Grant. Dismissal is at 8:30 p.m. to pick up children from childcare.

ONLINE REGISTRATION: plantalabama.org/dinner

By Lamar Duke
State Missionary



For more information, please contact State Missionary Lamar Duke (lead church planting strategist) at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 332, or (334) 613-2332, lduke@alsbom.org.

GET ACQUAINTED DAY

Thursday, September 6, 10 am - 3:30 pm » 9:30 - 10 – Check-in and refreshments
AT THE STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS FACILITY, 1404 FAIRVIEW AVENUE IN PRATTVILLE
 » Meet your state missionaries » Discover how we can partner together to fulfill the Great Commission » Tour the new SBOM facility » Spouses welcome » Lunch provided »
 Ideal for pastors, church staff, secretaries or associational staff who are new to Alabama, new to their position, or who have never attended a Get Acquainted Day
 Register by calling or emailing Charleen Hobbs, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 231, or (334) 613-2231, chobbs@alsbom.org, or go online to alsbom.org/gad.



Looking for something to do on a hot summer day? Bring your friends and come tour your cool new State Board of Missions office facility! To arrange your group's tour time, please contact Charleen Hobbs at (334) 613-2231 or chobbs@alsbom.org.

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

FEATURING
Dennis Swanberg
"America's
Minister of
Encouragement"

abundant living

Gardendale
First Baptist Church,
316 Mountain Crest Pkwy.

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 16,
9:30-3 PM (DOORS OPEN AT 9)**

For more information, please contact
State Missionary Eileen Mitchell at
1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221,
emitchell@alsbom.org.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE, BIBLE STORY TELLING AND TEACHER TRAINING

Great for those who are teaching locally or abroad

CHOOSE from two dates and two locations

1 AUBURN, Lakeview Baptist Church, 1600 E. Glenn Ave., Friday and Saturday, **August 10-11**, 2018.
REGISTRATION/COSTS: Please contact Pat Wilson at (334) 887-7094, pwilson@lakeviewbaptist.org, or Jerry Ferguson, jferguson@lakeviewbaptist.org, for more information. **Register by August 7.**

- Basic ESL Workshop: Friday, 5-9 p.m., and Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Breakout Sessions for Experienced Volunteers: Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

TOPICS: "How to Share Your Faith with Your Students," "Lesson Plans," "Best Practices," "Teaching the Bible to ESL Learners," "Teaching North American Culture," "Disaster Preparedness"

2 TUSCALOOSA, First Baptist Church, 721 Greensboro Ave., Friday and Saturday, **August 17-18**, 2018.
REGISTRATION/COSTS: Please contact Kristy Myers at (205) 345-7554, kmyers@fbctuscaloosa.org, for more information. **Register by August 14.**

- Basic ESL Workshop: Friday, 1-8 p.m., and Saturday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Breakout Sessions for Experienced Volunteers: Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

TOPICS: "Teaching the Bible to ESL Learners," "Lesson Plans," "English for Missions Trips," "Bible Storytelling," "Music with ESL," "Conversation Cafe"

For other information about literacy missions among Alabama Baptists, please contact State Missionary Kristy Kennedy at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 311, or (334) 613-2311, kkennedy@alsbom.org.

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



Thursday, September 13 • 9 a.m. - Noon
Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Rainbow City
Join other worshipers as we praise God through song, pray to God for revival and prepare our hearts for God's message that day.

Special guests include Mat Alexander, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Gadsden, and Craig Carlisle, director of missions of the Etowah Baptist Association.

You will want to browse the many displays set up by various ministry leaders at the ministry fair. No meals are provided and there is no cost. **Just come!**

For more information, please contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, emitchell@alsbom.org.



The Troy L. Morrison LeaderCare & Church Health Awards will be given to those individuals who have demonstrated evidence of leadership that has advanced the church in four key areas of kingdom growth: spiritual growth, ministry advancement, missions involvement and numerical growth.

You're invited to nominate recipients in three categories:

- New work (church less than 10 years old)
- Established work (church older than 10 years)

- Bivocational (church where the pastor holds dual employment)

For more information, go online to alsbom.org/leadership and click on Leadership Resources to access award information and download a nomination form. You may also contact Ministry Assistant Debbie Dickey at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 218, or (334) 613-2218, ddickey@alsbom.org. Nominations must be received **by mail** no later than Friday, September 21, 2018.

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

One Great Sunday is no longer a singular event, but a 24/7 training resource. Plan your training/leadership development events using these videos as resources any time of the year.

There will be fresh content in numerous Great Commission Ministries including: 55+ Ministry, Associational Clerks/Secretaries, Bible Drill, Bivocational Minister's Finances, Church and Community, Church Building, Church Clerks/Secretaries, Church Compensation, Church Evaluation, Church Planting, Church Revitalization, Church Tax Requirements, Communications Tips, Cooperative Program, Deaf Ministry, Disaster Relief, Disciple-Making, Discipleship Training, DOM Leadership, Evangelism, Family Ministries, Legal Issues, Literacy, Men's Ministry, Personal Money Management, Protecting Children from Abuse, Royal Ambassadors, Singles Ministry, Social Media, Stewardship, Student Missions, Sunday School, W.M.U., Women's Ministry, Worship Leadership and Youth Ministry.

For more information, please go online to **onegreatsunday.org** or contact State Missionary Daniel Edmonds at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 285, or (334) 613-2285, dedmonds@alsbom.org.

Abide

FAITHFUL LIVING IN EVERY STAGE

An experience for women in their 20s and 30s

"...and they shall abide; for now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth."
Micah 5:4b ASV

featuring

Bible study with author

Katie Orr

experience

time away at WorldSong to connect with God and connect with others as together we find the beauty of abiding in Jesus in the midst of the chaos of everyday life

SEPTEMBER 21-22, 2018
WorldSong Missions Place, Cook Springs
Check in 6-7pm Friday, event starts at 7pm

For more info and cost:
AlabamaWMU.org/abide

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FOR STATE MISSIONS
SEPTEMBER 9-16, 2018

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- DISASTER RELIEF
- CHURCH PLANTING
- PARTNERSHIP MISSIONS
- CHURCH REVITALIZATION

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State Goal:
\$1,000,000



Thursday, **October 18,**
First Baptist Church, Birmingham
Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery

Friday, **October 19,**
First Baptist Church, Opelika
Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne

SENIOR ADULT CHOIR

+ CELEBRATIONS +

Online Registration: alsbom.org/seniorfest

For more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 279, or (334) 613-2279, scleveland@alsbom.org.

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries



Alabama Singing Men Retreat

A gathering time of ministers of music and laymen from Alabama Baptist church choirs to fellowship and learn music to be sung at the annual State Convention meeting and on a spring tour.

For more information about costs and registration, please contact State Missionary Keith Hibbs at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 217, or (334) 613-2217, khibbs@alsbom.org.

Alabama Singing Women Retreat

A gathering time of women from Alabama Baptist church choirs to fellowship and learn music to be sung on an annual tour in November which culminates with a performance with the Alabama Singing Men at the annual State Convention meeting in November.

To obtain an application for membership, please contact Mary Minor at marylminor@bellsouth.net. For other information, please contact Janet Ormond at janetormond@bellsouth.net.

Saturday, August 18 • 9 a.m. - Noon

ONE DAY TRAINING

Choose from two locations:

East Gadsden Baptist Church
First Baptist Church, Troy

This leadership training opportunity is open to all leaders/directors of any WMU age-level group, Women's Ministry or Royal Ambassadors. (This is a great opportunity for those who were unable to attend Equip in July at Shocco Springs.)

For more information, including cost, please contact Kathryn Helms at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 325, or (334) 613-2325, khelms@alsbom.org.

Tuesday, October 23, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. • WorldSong Missions Place, Cook Springs

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Wednesday, October 15

Join us to experience a different culture through food, customs, missionary testimonies and other activities. Held on the beautiful campus of WorldSong, we'll pray together and enjoy other special activities. The Fall Missions Festival for Adults is open to adults of all ages.

For more information, including costs, go online to: AlabamaWMU.org/fmfforadults or please contact Kathryn Helms at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 325, or (334) 613-2325, khelms@alsbom.org.

Fall Missions Festival for Adults

When did you last have a foot-tapping, laughing, singing, good old time? Ready for another one?

That's what happens at Senior Adult Singin's! Come worship and rejoice in song.

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

Tuesday, September 11,
Northbrook Baptist
Church, Cullman

SENIOR ADULT SINGIN'

**FRIDAY AND SATURDAY,
AUGUST 10-11, SHOCCO SPRINGS**

**THEME: ADVANCING CHRIST'S
KINGDOM THROUGH DEACONSHIP**

ALABAMA BAPTIST DEACONS' RETREAT

**THE 61ST ANNUAL RETREAT
FOR ALL MEN AND BOYS**

FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO ONLINE
TO ALABAMADEACONSRETREAT.ORG.

FOR COST INFORMATION AND TO
REGISTER, PLEASE CALL SHOCCO
SPRINGS AT 1-800-280-1105.

FINANCIAL ISSUES CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 14-15, 2018 SHOCCO SPRINGS

Treasurers, financial secretaries, administrators and committee members will find this conference packed with helpful information and answers to your questions.

You will choose the breakout sessions you need the most.

REGISTRATION/COST: Please contact Shocco Springs at 1-800-280-1105, or visit shocco.org. Costs quoted will be per person for conference fees, meals and room.

For other information, please contact State Missionary Lee Wright at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 241, or (334) 613-2241, lwright@alsbom.org.

Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries

THEME: *Do
Everything
in Love.*

"Let all that you
do be done
in love." - 1 Corinthians 16:14



GENERAL CONFERENCE LEADER: Allison Wilks, Prattville
MUSIC/WORSHIP LEADER: Jeremiah & Kirsten Ross, Paducah, Ky.
Make plans now to join us for a time of spiritual, professional and personal growth through worship, study, fellowship and educational breakout sessions.

For more information, go online to alabamabaptistsecretaries.com or check out the Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries Facebook page or please contact Dawn Chapman, AABS President 2018-2019, at (334) 285-4731, dawn@millbrookbaptist.com.

 alabama
association of
baptist secretaries



Auditioned choir consisting of 150-165 children, grades 4-6, from Alabama Baptist children's choirs throughout the state. Must have audition forms and CDs received by **Thursday, November 1, 2018**. Forms and audition sample for preparation are available online at alsbom.org/chc.

Tour Dates: March 1-3, 2019

Locations: Panama City, Fla., and Enterprise, Ala.

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

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

Friday and Saturday, October 12-13

(register by October 11)

or October 19-20

(register by October 11)

WorldSong Missions Place, Cook Springs

For children grades 1-6 and leaders

Fall Missions Festival for Children offers a fun way to expose children in your church to missions here and around the world. Participants will experience another culture through food, customs, crafts and other fun activities led by young adults who have a heart for children and missions. Activities will begin at 5 p.m. Friday and conclude at 3:30 p.m. Saturday.

The cost includes meals, lodging and all programming.

For more information, including costs, go online to: AlabamaWMU.org/fmfforchildren or please contact Shannon Mayes at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 226, or (334) 613-2226, smayes@alsbom.org.





(augmented reality)

Follow these instructions

- 1** Download the HP Reveal app from your app store.
- 2** Tap the [] icon at the bottom of the screen.
- 3** 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.
- 4** Look for *The Alabama Baptist (TAB) augmented reality logo* (example shown above). Hold your device over the logo and watch the paper come to life.
- 5** 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.
- 6** Each week when *TAB* arrives, look for the AR logo and hold your device over the noted articles to watch the video extras.



West Point celebrates centennial after tornado

In March 2018, West Point Baptist Church, Jacksonville, was destroyed by a tornado that ripped through its town just two months before church members planned to celebrate their centennial.

Pleasant Valley Elementary School opened its doors to the congregation after the tragedy, and that's where the church celebrated 100 years of gospel preaching May 20.

West Point, in Calhoun Baptist Association, welcomed former pastor Charles Stone as the guest speaker for the service and the choir performed special music.

The celebration went "really well," said church member Pam Johnson. "We were happy to be together."

Sonja Adams presented the church with a commemorative certificate from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and Pastor Ronny Moore read a congressional letter from Mike Rogers, congressman for the third district. (Jessica Ingram)

Trinity's Mount View celebrates 50th anniversary

Mount View Baptist Church, Trinity, in Muscle Shoals Baptist Association, celebrated an exciting milestone June 3. The church has been ministering to its community for 50 years.

The anniversary was celebrated with special music by the church's choir, featuring a solo by former pastor Billy Burge. Larry Little, the first person baptized at Mount View, was the guest speaker.

The names of charter members of the church were read and those present were recognized. Former pastors Burge, Tommy Bolan and Sam Wallace shared memories from their time at Mount View. Mark Milwee, current pastor of Mount View, led the congregation in a closing prayer.



Photo by Jerry Armor

Rhonella Hamilton, the anniversary committee chair, presented the history of the church to the congregation, and Jerry Armor presented the church with a certificate from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

"It felt like a family reunion," Hamilton said. "It was a taste of what heaven will be like." (Jessica Ingram)

FBC Woodstock marks 125 years with homecoming

First Baptist Church, Woodstock, in Bibb Baptist Association, celebrated 125 years June 18. The Alabama Baptist Historical Commission recognized the church with a certificate presented by commissioner Debbie Campbell.

She commended the members for their faithfulness, their witness and their ministry, quoting Matthew 5:14-16. "It has always been a light on the hill," said member Dan Carroll.

"The original church was built on a hill in town near the railroad tracks," Carroll said. "Twenty years ago the church sold that building in town and erected the present building on this site, another hill. Most of the work was done by men of the church."

Members also gave glory to God during the music concert by The Stevens, a southern gospel group from Northport. The congregation rose to their feet together singing "How Great Thou Art."

Associate pastor Greg Findley closed the service by reminding everyone that prayer works. "We are a praying church," he said. "And have been for 125 years."

Evidence of answered prayer is located right across from the main building in the new family life center.

During the homecoming luncheon, members shared how God provided most of the materials for the new building. One member shared that a lady who didn't attend First, Woodstock, drove up one day to the church and said the Lord told her to help support the ministry of First, Woodstock. She wrote the church a check and drove away. This is one of the many ways answered prayer keeps First, Woodstock, moving forward for the Lord and being a "light on the hill." (Debbie Campbell)

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Enon Baptist Church is looking for a pastor. Send resumé to: Mitchell Harrison, 8393 Grissett Bridge Road, Atmore, AL 36502. Phone: 251-862-2527. Email: brian.presley46@yahoo.com.

SENIOR ADULT MINISTER

First Baptist Church, Pelham, is seeking a dynamic, spirit-filled part-time senior adult minister. Send resumé to: 2867 Pelham Parkway, Pelham, AL 35124 or email: pat@fbcpelham.org.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR FOR WORSHIP & MUSIC

Concord Baptist Church, a vibrant and growing church in Anderson, S.C., is seeking an associate pastor for worship and music. This person must have

the calling, gifting, training and heart to lead a large and diverse ministry of worship. We are excited about our future! For a job description and/or to submit a resumé/profile, please contact jjames@concordbaptist.com. Please also visit concordbaptist.com for more information about our congregation.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER

Hopewell Baptist Church, Hanceville, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational music minister. Send your resumé to: Hopewell Baptist Church, ATTN: Ed Hart, P.O. Box 423, Hanceville, AL 35077. eedhart@yahoo.com.

YOUTH PASTOR

Southside Baptist Church, Russellville, Alabama, searching for youth pastor. Send your resumé to: Southside Baptist

Church, ATTN: Joseph Medina, P.O. Box 60, Russellville, AL 35653.

BUSINESS

NEED A NEW CHURCH SIGN?

Reliable Sign Services — a Christian operated, full service, lighted sign company located in Pelham, Alabama, for 23 years — is ready to help you expand your church sign ministry. From digital message boards to traditional signs, Reliable Signs will design, fabricate and install statewide. www.reliableesigns.com. 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955.

ELROD MOBILITY — GREAT PRICES

Stair-lifts, walk-in tubs, lift-chairs and lightweight take-apart scooters. Saving people a lot of money on walk-in tubs, stair-lifts

and showers. Our lift-chairs and scooters are near internet pricing. A+ rating with BBB. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658.

TRAVEL/VACATION

LOG CABIN RENTAL

Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to www.paradisevista.net to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE CONDOS

Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, Alabama. Rent direct from Christian family owners. Lowest prices on the beach for over 25 years! Call Donna 251-656-4935, Eddie 205-556-0368, Don 251-752-2366 or www.gulfshorescondos.com.

You can help youth in foster care **SUCCEED**

As children and youth from across Alabama are starting school, Stephan's school days are over. He recently graduated from Samford University's McWhorter School of Pharmacy and is now using his skills and knowledge to help others through his residency in Pittsburgh.

However, like so many of the children you support at your Alabama Baptist Children's Homes, the early years of Stephan's life were incredibly difficult, and at age 11, he was removed from his home and placed with one of our foster families.

God had a plan for Stephan's life, and your support made that new life possible.

When Stephan met his foster family, he realized what it was like to have loving parents. His foster parents treated him like he was one of their own and shared with Stephan how much God loved him. God honored their faithfulness. At age 12, Stephan accepted Christ as his Savior.

Like the miracle of the loaves and fishes, God took the gifts from Alabama Baptists and performed a miracle in Stephan's life. While his foster parents loved him like a son, they wanted Stephan to be their son. With your help, his foster parents were able to adopt Stephan.

Stephan is thankful for the difference Baptist churches across Alabama have made in his life. He has loving parents, a career that allows him to serve others, and, most of all, he has Jesus. You, too, can help Stephan and other youth in our care by supporting ABCH. Your donation can help in several ways, from purchasing school supplies, supporting tutoring services for students, to providing for college expenses.



Recent graduate and child formerly in care, Stephan Scott



DONATE TODAY BY CALLING (888) 720-8805 OR VISIT ALABAMACHILD.ORG/SCHOOL. YOU CAN ALSO MAKE A GIFT FROM YOUR MOBILE DEVICE BY TEXTING @ABCH #SCHOOL TO THE NUMBER 52014.



Alabama Baptist
CHILDREN'S HOMES
& Family Ministries

alabamachild.org // (888) 720-8805 //   

GRACE gifts

Memorials are listed below (the name of the deceased is bolded).

Andrews, Evelyn, Ozark: Rusty Andrews
Andrews, Lomax, Ozark: Rusty Andrews
Blackwood, Clarice, Fairhope: Faye & Wayne Parker
Blakney, Lucille, Gordo: Pat Richardson
Bowen, Mary, Fayette: Julia M. Lollar
Cleveland, Mel T., Birmingham: Mr. & Mrs. J. Wray Pearce
Dobson, Robert J. "Bob", Vestavia: Mr. & Mrs. J. Wray Pearce
Duke, Rhee, Gallion: Providence BC of Gallion
Duncan, James Robert, Jr., Pleasant Grove BC of Salem
Durbin, Jettie, Clanton: Janice & Randal Chandler
Dunkle, David S., Birmingham: Mr. & Mrs. J. Wray Pearce
Durbin, Jimmy, Clanton: Janice & Randal Chandler
Foxhall, Minnie Gray, Gallion: Providence BC of Gallion

Franks, Zac, Birmingham: Marjorie Kay Nix, Mr. & Mrs. J. Wray Pearce
Ivey, Wayne, California: Faye & Wayne Parker
Long, Rufus, County Line BC of Pine Hill, Sue Maness
Luketic, Michael, Birmingham: Mr. & Mrs. J. Wray Pearce
McGraw, Desree, Fayette: Pat Richardson
McLemore, Dr. Mike, Birmingham: Mr. & Mrs. J. Wray Pearce
Maness, Stan, Arlington: County Line BC of Pine Hill
Mason, Alatha Greene, Birmingham: Mr. & Mrs. James Evans
Parker, Jimmy, Jackson: Wayne & Faye Parker
Patton, Sue, Hueytown: Concord BC of Bessemer
Payne, Margaret, Bessemer: Concord BC of Bessemer
Quinney, Maggie, Gallion: Providence BC of Gallion
Riley, Ralph H., Andalusia: Dorothy Norris Manning
Sehon, John, Birmingham: Mr. & Mrs. J. Wray Pearce
Slaughter, Charlotte Lyles, Bay Minette: Faye & Wayne Parker
Tracey, Clara, Gadsden: Zoe Benefield & Angela Sims
Wade, Kalenna Ann, Locust Fork: Fred & Patricia Hollis

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Across ALABAMA'S Associations

ALABAMA CRENSHAW

► **First Church, Luverne**, will hold its Awesome August revival services every Monday at 7 nightly. Rick Evans, Randy Harville, Allen Stephenson and Ronnie Boulware will be the guest speakers. Clay Crum is pastor.

BARBOUR

► **Pleasant Hill Church, Eufaula**, will hold a homecoming service Aug. 5 at 11 a.m. with Jessie James. The church also will hold revival Aug. 5–8 at 6:30 nightly with William Lewis. Clyde Hancock is pastor.

COOSA RIVER

► **Sylavon Church, Sylacauga**, will hold a homecoming service Aug. 5 at 10 a.m. Clearvision will be the featured singers for the day with lunch at noon. The church also will hold a revival Aug. 6–8 at 6 nightly with guest evangelist John Whetstone. Billy Williams is pastor.

CONECUH

► **Cedar Creek, Castleberry**, will hold its 152nd homecoming service Aug. 5 at 11 a.m. with guest speaker C.L. Langford.

Lunch and an afternoon singing lead by Mick Gamby will follow the service. The church also will hold revival Aug. 6–8 at 7 nightly with Mick Gamby, Danny Ellis and Steven Dresen. Casey Jones is pastor.

DEKALB

► **DeKalb Association** will hold its third annual Sunday School Leadership Conference on Aug. 5, 3–7 p.m. at Nazareth Church, Rainsville, with Allan Taylor as the keynote speaker. Ken Allen is director of missions.

GENEVA

► **First Church, Geneva**, will hold revival services Aug. 4 at 6 p.m. and Aug. 5 at 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. with Brooks Braswell. John Wilson will lead a children's service. Edwin Scott is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **Corinth Church, Trussville**, will hold a homecoming service Aug. 5 at 11 a.m. Sunday School will begin at 10 a.m. A covered-dish lunch will be served at noon. A singing with Surrendered will begin at 1 p.m. Glenn Pender is pastor. ✠

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For August 5

Explore the Bible By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D.
Dean, Office for Global Engagement, University of Mobile

Bible Studies for Life By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh, Ph.D.
Chair and Armstrong Professor of Religion, Samford University

AVERTED
2 Samuel 20:1-2, 14-21

Civil war is seldom civil. While political and ideological pundits utilize public and social media for their own agendas, they drive the masses closer and closer to the brink of cultural and ethnic civil war. Activists advocate using whatever means necessary to communicate their message. Machiavelli's "ends justifies the means" comes to mind at this point.

In this week's chapter we read the continuing record of rebellion, dissension and murder among the men of Israel. Jealousy in the ranks split allegiances between the armies of Judah and Israel. Israelite warriors perceived David's trust in the troops of Judah as favoritism. After all, 10 tribes fought for David when Judah sided with Absalom and they spoke first about restoring David to power. Trouble was brewing again and more men were going to die.

Division (1-2)

The narrator characterizes Sheba as a wicked man from the tribe of Benjamin. Sheba first drew attention to himself by sounding a shofar. He publicly announced that Israel was rejecting David as their king and called for the troops to abandon David and go home. Division ruled in Israel again.

Churches face similar problems of division. Like the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:10-11; 11:18), congregations today face divisions over personality, authority, theology and church policy. Dissatisfied members fail to rejoice and find contentment in the provisions of God (Phil. 4). Failure to accentuate the glory of God and the gospel of Christ often leads to ecstatic emotionalism, entertainment-driven consumerism or empty ritualism.

Civil War (14-16)

It was the worst of times; it was the worst

of times. Here we have civil war within a civil war. Sheba rebelled against King David, so David sent troops to pursue him. Amasa called the men of Judah back into active duty. He took too long so Joab and his brother Abishai led David's troops in pursuit of Sheba. Along the way Joab met and murdered Amasa.

Joab and his men followed Sheba to the city of Abel. The troops built a ramp to breach the city. They also used a battering ram to break through the city gate. A wise woman of the city would negotiate a peace settlement with Joab.

Wisdom Conquers (17-21)

This brave woman confronted Joab, citing Israelite history and the heritage of Abel as reasons for the army to avoid destroying the city. Joab proposed that if the citizens were to hand over Sheba as an act of good faith, the army would withdraw from the city. Wisdom served the inhabitants well, as they executed Sheba and delivered his head to Joab. One man's death saved the city.

To some degree this negotiation calls to mind an earlier agreement struck between Israel and the Philistines. On that occasion they agreed that lives would be spared if a battle were to be fought between Goliath and an Israelite (1 Sam. 17:8-9). One man's death saved an army.

"It is to your advantage that one man should die for the people rather than the whole nation perish" (John 11:50). Caiaphas offered this counsel to the Jewish authorities prior to the arrest, trials and crucifixion of our Lord Jesus. While he was speaking of the political advantage that would come from silencing Jesus, he spoke prophetically: "He did not say this on his own ... he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and ... to unite the scattered children of God" (John 11:51-52).

One Savior's death and resurrection saves all believers.✠

PERSIST
Nehemiah 4:1-3, 6-9, 14-18

In the New Testament, Paul often speaks about the Christian life as involving spiritual warfare, in which we discover opposition to God's purposes coming from not only those who are not believers but even those who are part of the church.

This is exactly what Nehemiah discovered as he attempted to rebuild the walls of the city and bring God's purposes to their fulfillment.

God's work ignites opposition. (1-3)

This chapter identifies external and internal threats to the building project and how Nehemiah carefully addresses these challenges.

The first threat is that of Sanballat and Tobiah. They try to undermine the confidence and commitment of God's people by ridiculing what they are trying to do. Their anger is expressed through mockery and sarcasm. Sanballat calls God's people "feeble Jews." They mock their faith in God with a derisory comment about prayer. The question they ask can be translated "Will they leave everything to God?" They make a reference to the stones they are using, the very ones that still show the soot marks from the destruction of 587 BCE and the fire damage inflicted by the Babylonians.

Laughter can bring healing, but it can also be a dangerous weapon in the hands of the enemy. The outcome is that the team is demoralized and the work is hampered.

Opposition brings us to the place of prayer. (6-9)

It shouldn't surprise us that the immediate response of Nehemiah is to turn to God in prayer. In one of the most helpful books on prayer that I have ever read, Os-

car Hallesby says that the foundation of prayer is helplessness "for it is only when we are helpless that we open our hearts to Jesus and let Him help us in our distress, according to His grace and mercy."

Prayer doesn't need to be a beautiful soliloquy in which we know exactly what to say and use all the right action verbs in our sentences. Prayer is simply turning to God and casting all our cares upon Him, knowing that He cares for us.

Nehemiah's prayer is urgent and expresses exactly how he feels.

Nehemiah follows prayer with action. The threats and sarcastic humor have no impact on his attitude towards the work God has called him to accomplish.

Kathleen Kenyon's archaeological excavation on these walls revealed that they were 9 feet thick. Nehemiah strenuously committed himself to God's plans. When further threats came to disrupt this activity, Nehemiah once again prayed and posted a sentry day and night. Prayer did not mean that careful action was not needed. There was a realism about his prayer life. Notice that they prayed with confidence, not to a distant God, but to "our God."

Opposition leads us to be vigilant. (14-18)

These verses combine a sense of confidence that God is with them and a vigilance that they need to be careful. He carefully looks things over and then makes a decision. Half the people will work and the other half of the people will stand guard. He isn't putting his trust in his own resources because he reminds the people that God is with them, great and awesome. He encourages the people of God to remind themselves who it is they are working for.

God will not go back on His word. He keeps His promises.

We can trust in Him.✠

Christian Crossword

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Across

1. Brotherly _____. (2 Pet. 1:7)
8. Cuts of meat.
9. Grace and ____ be multiplied. (2 Pet. 1:2)
13. Through the ____ of him that hath called us. (2 Pet. 1:3)
16. Charged particle.
17. Jupiter's moon.
18. Overdose. (abbr.)
19. Explosive.
21. Eschew evil, and do _____. (1 Pet. 3:11)
23. Exclamation.
24. ____ and peace be multiplied. (2 Pet. 1:2)
27. Evil plan.
29. South America. (abbr.)
30. That ye might be partakers of the ____ nature. (2 Pet. 1:4)
32. If these things be ____ you. (2 Pet. 1:8)
33. This is my beloved _____. (2 Pet. 1:17)
34. Poem.
35. Family group.
37. Greek letter.

38. Manuscript. (abbr.)

39. And to knowledge _____. (2 Pet. 1:6)
41. Puerto Rico. (abbr.)
42. Old style. (abbr.)
43. Thou shalt make the ____ of the tabernacle. (Ex. 27:9)
46. Our ____ Jesus Christ.
50. Add to your faith _____. (2 Pet. 1:5)
51. ____, I am with you always. (Matt. 28:20)
52. Tin. (symbol)
53. ____ God gave unto them. (Acts 11:17 ASV; 2 words)
54. His divine ____ hath given unto us. (2 Pet. 1:3)

Down

2. Labor organization. (abbr.)
3. Beloved, ____ are we the sons of God. (1 John 3:2)
4. Besides this, giving all ____, add to your faith virtue. (2 Pet. 1:5)
5. Direction.

6. Apocryphal book

- Esdras. (abbr.)
7. Went quickly.
11. Convict. (abbr.)
12. For so an ____ shall be. (2 Pet. 1:11)
13. Into the everlasting _____. (2 Pet. 1:11)
14. That ____ prophecy of the scripture. (2 Pet. 1:20)
15. All things that pertain unto life and _____. (2 Pet. 1:3)
20. Doth also now ____ us. (1 Pet. 3:21)
22. Out of print. (abbr.)
23. I fell ____ his feet as dead. (Rev. 1:17)
25. Eliminates.
26. The number 101 in Roman numerals.
28. With him ____ the sacred mountain. (2 Pet. 1:18 NIV)
29. For ____ an entrance shall be. (2 Pet. 1:11)
31. Tree.
33. He was purged from his old ____s. (2 Pet. 1:9)
36. Military address.

37. Ma's mate.

39. Be established in the present _____. (2 Pet. 1:12)
40. I ____ you ... to go and bear fruit. (John 15:16 NIV)
41. Sea ____.
43. Cost, insurance and freight. (abbr.)
44. Regret.
45. Likened unto ____ virgins. (Matt. 25:1)
47. European mountain.
48. ____ doo, African sorcery.
49. Royal Naval Reserve. (abbr.)
50. The number 6 in Roman numerals.



MUSIC

WHAT ARE YOU READING?



123rf.com

Alabama Baptists share about what they are currently reading

BEAU K. BREWER

Ph.D. candidate in evangelism, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas

Fuel the Fire: Lessons from the History of Southern Baptist Evangelism by Charles S. Kelley Jr.

Dr. Kelley has been an authority on the history of Southern Baptist evangelism since he published “How Did They Do It? The Story of Southern Baptist Evangelism” in 1993. Kelley’s latest monograph draws further conclusions on the state of Southern Baptist evangelism and demonstrates the great need to rekindle the evangelistic fires of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Our pulse for evangelism is low but still beating. The time to reverse this decline is now. In doing so, the SBC will fulfill the Great Commission. My prayer is that Southern Baptists would read and join this conversation about our decline and act before it’s too late.

This is a splendid work — a must read for every Southern Baptist. ✝

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

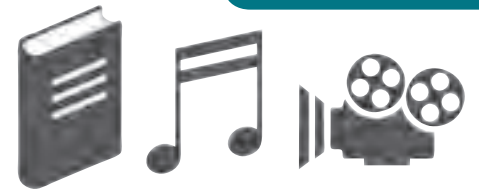


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Media reviews



Alisa Turner

Miracle or Not New One, 2018

There’s something about Alisa Turner’s vibe — her look, the ever-so-slight huskiness to her voice, even her enunciation — that whispers indie ingénue. Which is a good thing, because it actually pairs well with the sound she achieved on “Miracle or Not.” Turner’s beautiful, 13-song full-length debut (which includes the five songs from her 2017 self-titled EP) is a beautiful, honest worship album that should find steady radio rotation. It also happens to include the supporting efforts of some of modern praise and worship’s heavy hitters, including Leslie Jordan of All Sons and Daughters, Stu G (formerly of Delirious?), and Dustin Smith.



films and television shows. They’ve been covered by mainstream artists and topped Billboard dance charts. And the 11 on her latest effort are some of her best. At times haunting but always uplifting, “Beautifully Broken” is synth-tinged pop blessed with creative arrangements and Plumb’s simultaneously powerful and delicate voice. The third track, “Crazy About You,” deserves every kudo coming to it.



Eufaula

Between the Hills Independent, 2018

Thank the Lord 86 people ponied up the \$10,000 it took to produce Texas-based singer-songwriter Jordan Whitmire’s debut side project (as Eufaula, her middle name) last year on Indigogo, because “Between the Hills” is fantastic. Beautiful, twangy, slow-strummed country ballads better suited for the porch than the pickup. She says the 10 songs are inspired by the Psalms. That would be an understatement. Half of the lyrics seem lifted directly from David, and the other half might as well be. It works. It’s spiritual. It’s really well done. Here’s hoping for more. ✝



Mark and Sarah Tillman

Morning Sun, Rising Tide Integrity Music, 2018

It took five years, but husband and wife North Carolina worship leaders Mark and Sarah Tillman have crafted a beautiful follow up to their 2013 debut. And by crafted, I mean crafted. “Morning Sun, Rising Tide” isn’t just pretty, it’s original — a breath of hip, creative fresh air for praise and worship. The instrumentation may be unorthodox for the genre — is orchestral folk a thing? — but the message is as orthodox as it comes. Here’s the opening for the fantastic second track: “You laid your body down / Where earth and dust could see. / You broke your skin apart / Like bread for us to eat. / You walked up to your end / Wearing the burden of man. / Into your death you sang / ‘This grave won’t hold my name.’”



Plumb

Beautifully Broken Curb, 2018

Plumb has released eight albums in 21 years. Her songs have been recorded by Michelle Branch and Mandy Moore. They’ve been heard in feature

Meet the reviewer

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



news@thealabamabaptist.org

Is there an album you would like considered for review?

Email a link to news@thealabamabaptist.org or mail a CD to: TAB, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.



IMB photo

Thanks to Southern Baptists' gifts through the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, believers can live and work among Deaf peoples. This man is taking his turn to sign in the conversation among his friends. Living and working among Deaf peoples enables believers to join God in making disciples and multiplying churches among unreached peoples and places for His glory.

Light of Christ

Love shines amid hopelessness as good news reaches Deaf

The imam placed his copy of the Quran carefully on the table and called the men at the memorial service to attention. He opened the book, lifted his hands toward heaven and began to chant in honor of the man who had died.

The deaf men in the room copied the stance but remained silent, as they couldn't hear the verbal entreaty. At least the men were able to see the ceremony; the deaf women in the next room covered their heads and wondered what was happening.

One thing was certain, the dead man's soul was in danger. Allah does as he will and no Muslim is ever certain whether he will accept their works and obedience.

"Maybe Allah will accept this," the men said to one another. "Maybe."

IMB worker David Gregory felt overwhelmed by the sense of hopelessness in the room.

Even his friend Tamar, a man who is Muslim by birth but pays no heed to his religion under normal circumstances, was nodding his head in agreement and adding to the commentary. "Allah," he muttered seriously, "Allah."

'I pray for you'

After the service the mood lightened with a memorial meal. David and Tamar talked with the group of men over tea.

"If we keep giving him tea, one day he'll be Muslim like us," Tamar joked.

"No, but I pray for you to become a Christian and follow Jesus," David said.

"Me? You pray for me?" Tamar asked.

When David assured Tamar that he regularly prays for him, he was stunned. He just sat there speechless.

David and his wife Kelly met Tamar and his wife Nadia more than a year ago.

Kelly and Nadia are good friends now, but Tamar always has kept his distance and never shown interest in David or his faith — until now.

"Prior to this, I had all of three conversations with Tamar, all of them superficial," David said.

But now Tamar is eager to spend time with David. Some of the deaf men planned a trip recently and Tamar agreed to go only if David was going to be there.

David and Kelly are in awe of how God is working even through the hopelessness of the memorial service and the casual banter over tea. And they are praying that Tamar will continue to respond to their friendship and prayers.

"Pray for Tamar and his wife. Pray for them to see the light of Christ in our lives, our words and our love for them," David said. (IMB)

For more information on International Mission Board Deaf ministries, go to IMB.org/deaf.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names have been changed.



Hindu extremists suspected in arsons

SEEKANANKUPPAM, India — Three church buildings were set ablaze in six weeks in southern India, the most attacks against Christians this year, sources said.

A church building in southern India's Tamil Nadu state was burned after Christians refused to donate to an annual Hindu festival, they said. Members of Kingdom of God Church were on their way home after an evening service June 11 in Seekanankuppam when the fire began.

In Thiruvannamalai, an Advent Christian Church building was set on fire May 5 by arsonists who ran away when neighbors spotted them, Pastor Govrathnam Anbarasan said. The church was holding Vacation Bible School the same week but had finished for the day before the fire was set.



Nehemiah Christie, director of legislations and regulations of the Synod of Pentecostal Churches in Tamil Nadu, said Tamil Nadu was previously known for upholding secularism and unity, but violent trends against Christians are increasing, especially in remote areas where churches have roofs of tar paper or coconut leaves that burn easily.

India ranked 11th on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2018 World Watch List of countries where Christians experience the most persecution. (MS)

Sudan returns closed church building

KHARTOUM, Sudan — Authorities have handed back a church building they had padlocked four years ago, according to Christian leaders in Khartoum.

A Sudanese church leader involved in the return of the Khartoum Christian Center building, owned by the Sudan Pentecostal Church, told Morning Star News that officials returned the building to them in June. Government officials had closed the church, which had served as a worship venue for 20 years, in August 2014. The closure was said to be temporary but church members feared the government would sell it. Church leaders say Sudan has designated at least 25 church buildings for destruction in its campaign to rid the country of Christianity. The government gave no reason for returning the property to the church.

Because of its treatment of Christians and other human rights violations, Sudan has been designated a Country of Particular Concern by the U.S. State Department since 1999.

Sudan ranked fourth on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2018 World Watch List of countries where Christians face most persecution. (MS)

Authorities in Algeria close churches

RIKI, Algeria — A worship building was closed in Bejaia Province on July 11, the seventh closure in Algeria since November.

The church of about 60 people, which began meeting at its building in Riki on Aug. 11, 2017, had not been able to affiliate with the Protestant Church of Algeria because the Ministry of Interior recently ordered the once legally recognized association to freeze all new applications for membership, said Esaid Benamara, pastor of the Riki church.

Church leaders suspect lack of registration was the pretext for the closure. Though the Algerian constitution's Article 42 guarantees freedom of belief, opinion and worship, it is virtually impossible to register a church in Algeria under current restrictions, Christian leaders said.

Three church buildings previously closed, all in Oran Province about 250 miles west of Algiers, were allowed to reopen in June.

Algeria ranked 42nd on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2018 World Watch List of the countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)