

Baptist Briefs: Churches burned in Niger

February 19, 2015

At least 68 churches, two of them Baptist, have been burned in the West African country of Niger. Panlieba Tchaliéni, president of the Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches of Niger, reported the church burnings, carried out by Muslim fundamentalist group



Rubble after the fire at Celpa Church in Naimey, Niger, one of 68 churches burned by Boko Haram. (Photo: Serving In Mission) Boko Haram, occurred in the Zinder region and Niamey. Thousands of civilians fled their homes in the southeastern Niger town of Diffa. The area already was under stress, providing refuge to some 150,000 people who crossed the border to escape the violence in northern Nigeria. Niger, which shares much of its southern border with Nigeria, declared a 15-day state of emergency in Diffa after a spate of attacks by Boko Haram. Kojo Amo of Ghana, chairman of the western region of the [All Africa Baptist Fellowship](#), appealed for prayer and support for the Christian church in Niger.

Alabama Baptist church faces ouster from association. A local

association of Southern Baptist churches is poised to expel an Alabama church after a member of the congregation who is an ordained minister received media attention for performing a gay marriage. Representatives of [Madison Baptist Association](#) met Feb. 17 with David Freeman, pastor of [Weatherly Heights Baptist Church in Huntsville, Ala.](#), seeking clarification about his views on homosexuality and same-sex marriage. Freeman, in a statement to church members, described the meeting as “cordial” and respectful, but in the end the leaders said they will recommend to the association’s executive committee that Weatherly Heights be “disfellowshipped” for positions outside beliefs embraced by the 91-church association. Weatherly Heights drew international attention when a minister who performed one of the state’s first legal same-sex marriages was identified in media reports as its minister to the community. Ellin Jimmerson later clarified she was ordained by the church but not a paid member of the staff, and she used the “minister to the community” title with reporters to connect her documentary film *The Second Cooler* to her volunteer advocacy work with immigrants as a member of the church.