



INSIDE



Messengers pray for leaders during Baptist Campus Ministries emphasis

◆ Page 9



Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief celebrates 'pace-setting' ministry

◆ Page 13



Alabama Baptist ministries change lives through informing, inspiring

◆ Page 15

'Kingdom impact'



LANCE

State Board ministries, Cooperative Program come to life for messengers

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

In a rare but touching moment, Alabama Baptist leader and state missionary Rick Lance found himself overcome with emotion as he thanked the convention for modeling how to handle tragedy.

When Michael Whitt, a 40-year-old pastor in Abbeville, died suddenly in July, he left behind a wife and four children.

"Thank you for helping [Melissa],

for standing in the gap," Lance said, choking back tears during the State Board of Missions (SBOM) report Nov. 12. "This was an unbelievable, unimaginable loss."

Alabama Baptists provided financial resources for Melissa Whitt and were part of the reason a survivor protection benefit made its way to her.

Michael Whitt participated in the Church Retirement Plan, a GuideStone Financial Resources option, and Alabama Baptists contributed

to his fund, just like they do for all participating ministers.

The retirement plan — complete with disability and survivor protection benefits — is one way lives are changed every day with Cooperative Program (CP) dollars.

During an earlier part of the SBOM report, Todd Larson, youth pastor at Calvary Baptist Church, Cottonwood, shared via video another way the CP changes lives.

"We can't afford to go to a lot of camps and conferences, but my kids

could all afford [the Youth Evangelism Conference]," he said, noting the 2013 conference turned out to be a pivotal moment for his youth group. Three of the eight youth attending the conference gave their lives to Christ, he said.

"It is because of the CP that we are able to go to an event like this," Larson said. "We'll be attending every year because of it. It changed our lives."

And the stories continued.

(See 'Reduced,' page 4)



Photo by Neisha Fuson

State convention officers re-elected

John Killian (center), pastor of Maytown Baptist Church, was re-elected president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention during the Nov. 12-13 annual meeting in Huntsville. Also re-elected were first vice president, Travis Coleman (left), pastor of First Baptist Church, Prattville; second vice president, Jim Cooley (right), pastor of First Baptist Church, Haleyville; and statistical and registration secretary, Bobby DuBois, associate executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM). The only officer not re-elected after serving since 1999 as recording secretary was Mary Sue Bennett, who is retiring in January. Elected to the position was Billie Davis, ministry assistant in the SBOM executive office. (TAB)

Coming next week...



HYMNS
of *Thanksgiving*

COMMENT

Celebrating Changing Lives

It has been a long time since an annual meeting of Alabama Baptists devoted as much time to celebrating the missions and ministries made possible by tithes and offerings channeled through the Cooperative Program (CP) as the 2013 meeting. As a result of the nonstop emphasis, messengers and guests attending the 191st annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention left more encouraged about Baptist efforts in Alabama than in a number of years.

Most often, missions is thought of in terms of distant places. International missionaries are the heroes along with church planters in the megacities of this nation. During the Nov. 12–13 meeting at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, attention was primarily focused on lost people in Alabama and ministry opportunities in the Heart of Dixie.

Instead of talking about how CP dollars were spent this past year, what programs were provided or how many people attended, speakers shared how their ministries changed lives.

The stories varied. One told how artifacts held by the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission nurtured a missions consciousness in visitors. Another told of financial support provided for a grieving widow by protection benefits funded by CP and offered to all ministers who choose to participate. Another told of a young child who found loving parents through foster care and how loving parents led that child to a loving heavenly Father.

Speakers told of college students coming to Christ through campus religious programs and how those changed lives are now changing lives of others.

The stories were about the young and old, about those in the cities of our state and in its rural communities. Messengers left uplifted, knowing that the CP is not some meaningless denominational program. It is a lifeline for all Baptists do together, and it is changing lives in Alabama as well as in distant lands.

Giving prominence to giving

So important did the CP emphasis become that the nominating speech to re-elect Maytown Baptist pastor John Killian as president included the fact that Killian led his church to give 10 percent to missions through the CP and that the church had accepted the 1% CP Challenge — increasing CP giving by 1 percent over four years. That information has been missing from many recent nominating speeches.

Messengers even adopted a resolution noting Alabama is the pacesetter among all Southern Baptists in CP giving and calling for all Alabama Baptist churches to “give sacrificially through the Cooperative Program.”

Ministry evangelism was a second theme prevalent in this annual meeting that has been down-



THOUGHTS
By Bob Terry

played in some recent conventions. Speakers told of Christian friends walking through crisis with others, of people going out of their way to love and care for the needs of others.

Preachers stressed the importance of relationships in sharing the gospel. An adopted resolution challenged Alabama Baptist churches to hold a day or season of service for ministry evangelism.

At a related meeting, Jay Wolf, pastor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, called for discipleship based on obedience rather than a discipleship based on knowledge. Too often, he pointed out, discipleship based on knowledge is self-serving when Jesus called His disciples to serve others.

“You go to a Bible study,” he said. “So what? What have you done?”

CP giving and ministry evangelism may not seem related at first glance, but both call us outside ourselves. CP giving calls us to join hands with other Baptists to share the gospel around the world. Ministry evangelism calls us to join the lost and hurting people around us and walk with them toward wholeness — physical wholeness and spiritual wholeness.

The resolutions process seemed as routine as ever. All 13 resolutions presented by the committee were unanimously adopted with only one generating any discussion at all. Still it may be time to consider amending the resolution process. As committee chairman Craig Carlisle observed, cultural changes may make it necessary for the convention to regularly focus the teachings of the Bible on social and moral issues.

At the same time, resolutions can be introduced within hours of the final report coming to the floor. Is it appropriate to require that resolutions be presented early enough to give the committee sufficient time to research an issue and of-

fer a studied reply for messenger consideration?

Because Alabama Baptists are the largest religious body in the state with more than 1 million members, what Alabama Baptists say about social and moral issues is important. Resolutions not only speak to our own constituency, many see them as the reasoned judgment of the denomination speaking to society as a whole.

If an issue is important enough for Alabama Baptists to address and if we know enough about the issue to speak, then it is incumbent that our positions be based on carefully considered study and preparation.

The 2013 resolution on the contraceptive services mandate of the Affordable Care Act provides a good example of what could become a model. The wording was prepared by the Alabama Baptist Christian Life Commission after a year of wrestling with the topic.

Resolutions were not the only thing adopted without discussion. Alabama Baptists unanimously embraced a new method of budgeting. For the

first time, the annual budget includes a category titled Shared Ministries — ministries that benefit both the state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Monies in this category are to be divided equally when calculating the percentage of funds going beyond Alabama to SBC causes.

This new approach means Alabama Baptists now give 48.4 percent of all CP funds to causes beyond the state. That approach was a giant step toward the 50–50 division of CP funds called for by the Great Commission Resurgence plan adopted by the SBC in 2010.

Participation in the 2013 annual meeting remained low

with 825 registered messengers. That was only slightly below 837 registered messengers in 2012 when the convention met in Montgomery. But since participation is always lower when the convention is held at the edges of the state (Huntsville and Mobile) as opposed to meetings in the middle of the state (Birmingham and Montgomery), many called the 825 total an improvement.

Messengers came from 371 churches representing 72 associations compared to 373 churches from 69 associations in 2012.

But it is not the attendance or the resolutions or even the budget that messengers are most likely to remember about the 191st annual session. The most memorable thing will likely be the emphasis on lives changed in Alabama through the missions and ministries made possible by CP giving and that is worth celebrating.

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the young and old,
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CP ... is a lifeline for all
Baptists do together.***



"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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John Killian
president, Alabama Baptist State Convention



KILLIAN

'God's vessel'

'Give it, preach it, live it — for all eternity hangs in the balance,' Killian says

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Friends, the message of Christ is the only hope this world will ever know. Give it, preach it, live it — for all eternity hangs in the balance.

It was a message focused on the eternal, and it was one John Killian delivered passionately during the president's address of the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting Nov. 12 at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville.

Titled "Eternity in an Old Pot," Killian referenced 2 Corinthians 4, where the apostle Paul speaks of the power of the gospel and the lasting nature of salvation that dwells in us.

Killian said "this glorious gospel is the only hope for a darkened sinner." He noted that in the beginning of the chapter, Paul speaks of "our calling to ministry."

'Spiritual wickedness'

"Friends, you and I don't have power to convert," he said. "You and I are up against what Ephesians 6 calls spiritual wickedness in high places. ... But verse 4 clarifies that the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine in hearts that we might believe."

While many are concerned about the social ills of today's culture, "the ultimate answer is not found in social reform, economic development or political upheaval," Killian said. "The answer is in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Citing verses 7-15, Killian said the glorious gospel gives hope to the preacher in times of discouragement.

In verse 8, Paul said he's hard-pressed on every side yet not crushed. "One who carries forth the gospel is going to face opposition ... but that gospel declarer is not utterly defeated," Killian noted. "We live with the promise that we can bear our opposition, as the gospel truth inside of us is eternal. [The] gospel truth is a treasure far more valuable than the troubles of this life are destructive."

When "we come to grips with the fact that we are simply the earthly vessels, the old clay pots, and that which is valuable is the gospel within, then we learn that the thrill of ministry is that we are handling the very gospel of Christ," he said.

Killian pleaded with pastors to take joy in knowing they are impacting eternity as they proclaim God's truth. "Preach [the gospel of Christ] powerfully, with integrity, joyfully, boldly (and) unashamedly, for you are God's vessel to disseminate His eternal message," he said.

Killian added that one can earn a doctorate from seminary and conjugate Greek verbs and process Hebrew idioms, but one's greatest need is to be "engulfed with the awe of the gospel," he declared to rousing applause.

Citing verses 16-18, Killian noted this glorious gospel is all that matters when life ends.

"These last verses ... are an oasis for the preacher," he said. "While the world may oppose us, we don't lose heart because that which we are proclaiming ... will last long after this world ends."

"Friends, when you give out the Word of God, you're giving out the only message that will change darkness to light, change the wicked to righteous, take the unbelieving and give saving faith." ❏



HOPPER



MAY



JACKSON

NEW DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS OFFICERS ELECTED

New officers were elected at the Nov. 11 statewide meeting of associational directors of missions. They are (l to r) Bobby Hopper, Bethel Baptist Association, president; Ken May, Montgomery Baptist Association, president-elect; and Jim Jackson, Elmore Baptist Association, secretary-treasurer.

'Eternal importance'

Lance challenges Baptists to be 'life changers'

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Martha Myers grew up in Alabama, but when a gunman ended her life in Yemen, her body stayed there in the Middle Eastern country. She was buried on the hill next to the hospital where she served for 25 years.

"That indicated something to everyone — that she considered herself to be from Yemen," said Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Myers had given her life there for years before she died, and she's "among the pantheon" of those who have been "life changers" for the kingdom of God, he said.

Alabama is full of life changers, Lance said, and during his report Nov. 12 he encouraged those present at the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting to follow in their footsteps, whether that be through giving, praying or serving.

Life changers "have eternal importance," he said.

Using selected passages in Acts, he explained why Barnabas was a life changer.

"Everywhere Barnabas went, he changed lives. He's known for changing lives by the way he gave to others," Lance said.

And Alabama Baptists have taken Barnabas' lead, he said — they remain the No. 1 contributor to the Cooperative Program and No. 2 in giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions and

the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions.

"You don't realize it, but when you electronically or physically write out that check you become a life changer by giving to others," Lance said.

Life changers also are known for believing in others, serving others and reaching others, he said. "What if next year and in the coming years we prayed evangelistically in our churches for lost people? We are busy planning for the next Sunday or the next event, but there needs to be time in our churches to pray evangelistically," Lance said.

In 2013 as part of the Praying Across Alabama emphasis, Baptists made prayer a priority by gathering together at courthouses in every county across the state.

"Alabama Baptists gathered in a way that said to communities we are not just people who meet under a steeple — we are a people of prayer who pray for

people," Lance said.

He challenged those present at the annual meeting to share Jesus intentionally with one person each month over the next year.

Lance noted that Billy Graham is an example of a life changer with a passion to share the gospel — a passion Alabama Baptists should strive for.

"Billy Graham wanted to have one last opportunity to preach on the only hope we have, which is in Jesus Christ — the message of the cross," Lance said. "He's poured himself into preaching the simple message of the cross. My prayer is that we, like him, would preach unashamedly the gospel of Jesus Christ." ☞



LANCE

Reduced budget approved for 2014

(continued from page 1)

A missionary shared how CP-funded missions education played a major role in her call, a church planter noted how CP funds are vital for the move he believes God has called him to make and a pastor explained how a nearby dying church is now flourishing thanks to a church revitalization effort funded by the CP.

These and other stories were part of a new style of reporting the work of the CP in Alabama through "life-changing ministries" provided by the SBOM.

"The Kingdom impact of the Cooperative Program is immeasurable this side of eternity," Lance said.

Prior to the report, messengers approved a 2014 CP base budget of \$41 million, which is a \$1 million decrease from the current year (see graphic, this page).

Messengers also approved a 2014 CP state causes budget of \$300,000 and a SBC causes budget of \$400,000.

The new budget formula represents the first step in a multiyear strategy toward an even split between the state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) of CP dollars not in the shared ministries category. The allocation for 2014 is:

- ▶ 46.7 percent to Alabama ministries
- ▶ 43.3 percent to SBC ministries
- ▶ 10 percent to shared ministries
- ▶ Any receipts beyond the base budget

are to be divided 50–50 between Alabama missions causes and SBC missions causes.

Messengers also approved the 2014 special offering goals (see graphic) and the auditor's report for the SBOM for 2012.

Following the SBOM report, two churches were honored for their CP giving.

▶ Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills — highest giving total through the CP with \$790,611.

▶ Pisgah Baptist Church, Selma — highest per capita giver through the CP with \$345.07.

The Troy L. Morrison Leadership Awards also were presented. They went to:

Established work — Kevin Wilburn, pastor of First Baptist Church, Scottsboro, in Tennessee River Baptist Association.

New work — Wayne Cook, pastor of City on a Hill Church, Dodge City, West Cullman Baptist Association.

Bivocational work — Tom Lindsey, pastor of Old Salem Baptist Church, Frisco City, Bethlehem Baptist Association. ☞

ALABAMA BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION 2014 Cooperative Program Budget

(Approved Nov. 12, 2013)

	BASE BUDGET	STATE/SBC CAUSES	TOTAL BUDGET
SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION MINISTRIES	17,735,000	400,000	18,135,000
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS MINISTRIES			
<i>EVANGELISM/DISCIPLESHIP (33 full-time employees)</i>			
Evangelism	109,612	1,413	111,025
Sunday School and Discipleship	315,558	4,069	319,627
Collegiate and Student Ministries	98,837	1,274	100,111
Evangelism/Discipleship Salaries/Housing	1,708,984	26,702	1,735,686
Evangelism/Discipleship Travel/Field Services	168,453	2,172	170,625
<i>LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT (9 full-time employees)</i>			
LeaderCare/Church Administration	174,435	2,218	176,653
Leadership/Church Health	133,885	1,726	135,611
Worship Leadership/Church Music	88,294	1,139	89,433
Leadership Development Salaries/Housing	536,548	5,935	542,483
Leadership Development Travel/Field Services	53,163	686	53,849
<i>MISSIONS MOBILIZATION (14 full-time employees)</i>			
Associational Missions & Church Planting		10,165	10,165
Global Missions	214,485	2,633	217,118
Missions Mobilization Salaries/Housing	143,470	7,131	150,601
Missions Mobilization Travel/Field Services	69,009	890	69,899
<i>MISSIONS SUPPORT (27 full-time employees)</i>			
Executive Director			
A. Director's Office	49,637	640	50,277
B. Disaster relief	987	13	1,000
C. Supplemental Aid	987	13	1,000
D. Strategic Initiatives			
E. Mission:Dignity (Formerly: Adopt an Annuitant)		114	114
F. Partnerships	987	13	1,000
Finance and Facility Services			
Director's Office	435,370	5,936	441,306
Accounting & Human Resources	2,188,767	27,814	2,216,581
Church Compensation Services	14,925	192	15,117
Facility Services	1,454,386	19,164	1,473,550
Cooperative Program and Stewardship Development		1,089	1,089
Communications and Technology Services		3,948	3,948
Missions Support Salaries/Housing	1,046,132	19,257	1,065,389
Missions Support Travel/Field Services	64,382	2,101	66,483
Church Retirement Plan (CHRP)		9,790	9,790
Sub-total for State Board of Missions Ministries	9,071,293	158,237	9,229,530
STATE CONVENTION ENTITY MINISTRIES			
Christian Higher Education Ministries			
A. A. Earl Potts Scholarship	114,555	1,477	116,032
B. Board of Aid to Students	260,462	3,359	263,821
C. Judson College	955,946	12,327	968,273
D. Samford University	4,511,244	58,172	4,569,416
E. University of Mobile	2,449,346	31,584	2,480,930
Other Entities and Commissions Ministries			
A. Children's Homes & Family Ministries	259,965	3,352	263,317
B. Shocco Springs	558,567	7,203	565,770
C. The Alabama Baptist	566,489	7,305	573,794
D. The Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers	190,779	2,460	193,239
E. The Baptist Foundation of Alabama		4,920	4,920
F. The Christian Life Commission	25,087	323	25,410
G. The Education Commission	3,310	43	3,353
H. The Historical Commission	130,969	1,689	132,658
Auxiliaries and Other Ministries			
A. ALCAP	66,988	864	67,852
B. Woman's Missionary Union		6,685	6,685
Sub-total for Convention Entity Ministries	10,093,707	141,763	10,235,470
SHARED MINISTRIES			
North American Missions in Alabama (3.3%)	1,358,244		1,358,244
Cooperative Program Promotion (2.6%)	1,073,694		1,073,694
GuideStone Financial Services (1.9%)	759,185		759,185
GuideStone Mission Dignity (.002%)	8,886		8,886
Woman's Missionary Union (1.3%)	518,434		518,434
The Baptist Foundation of Alabama (.9%)	381,557		381,557
Sub-total for Shared Ministries (10%)	4,100,000		4,100,000
TOTAL STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS MINISTRIES	9,071,293	158,237	9,229,530
TOTAL STATE CONVENTION ENTITY MINISTRIES	10,093,707	141,763	10,235,470
SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION MINISTRIES	17,735,000	400,000	18,135,000
TOTAL SHARED MINISTRIES	4,100,000		4,100,000
TOTAL BASE AND CHALLENGE BUDGET	41,000,000	700,000	41,700,000
SPECIAL OFFERING GOALS			
Lottie Moon Christmas Offering	11,600,000		11,600,000
Annie Armstrong Easter Offering	6,100,000		6,100,000
Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries	2,814,700		2,814,700
World Hunger Offering	800,000		800,000
Disaster Relief Offering	200,000		200,000
TOTAL SPECIAL OFFERING GOALS	21,514,700		21,514,700
TOTAL BUDGET AND SPECIAL OFFERING GOALS	62,514,700		63,214,700



Photo by Doug Rogers

Charles Billingsley, songwriter and worship pastor at Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Va., and a combined choir of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, and the Alabama Singing Men and Singing Women lead worship during the Tuesday night service.

'We're in it for Christ'



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Page challenges attendees to make commitment to missions, ministry together

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

When the tide started receding quickly from Indonesia's Simeulue island in December 2004, its residents were tempted to pick up the mother lode of fish left behind on the beach.

But they knew better.

They'd been told by their parents that some of their ancestors had attempted to cash in on a cache of fish in low tide in 1907 and were swept away by a giant wave when the waters came back.

So they ran for the hills instead.

When "scores of thousands of people" in Indonesia were swept into eternity by the 2004 tsunami, on the island of Simeulue nearly everyone was saved, Frank Page told those present at the Tuesday night gathering of the Nov. 12-13 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting in Huntsville.

"They had never seen a tsunami, but they had been taught from generation to generation what to look for. They paid attention to the lessons of history," said Page, president of the Executive Committee (EC) of the Southern Baptist Convention. "We need to do the same. We have

a marvelous heritage."

Preaching from Hebrews 12:1-3, Page said that being surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses has great power.

"If there's one thing we need to do, it's to not forget the lessons of the past," he said.



PAGE

One of those lessons, Page said, is that we can "do better together than we can do on our own" through the Cooperative Program (CP).

"I want to be a part of a movement of God to plant churches in places that I will only read about," he said. "I want to work with patience with other brothers and sisters and see us join strings together."

Does that mean the CP is perfect? No, Page said.

"But does that mean it's being tweaked across this nation? Yes, it does," he said. "I want you to join me tonight in a commitment to missions and ministry together."

Page said he challenges young pastors not to give "blind commitment" to the CP but to take it apart, study it and put it back

together.

"Take a looksee, and I believe in the end you'll say 'wow.' I believe you'll say it's a race we can run together," he said. Alabama continues to be the No. 1 giver through the CP,

giving almost \$18 million to national causes last year, Page said.

"That's not chump change. That's serious missions money," he said.

And the EC is serious about being partners in God's work, Page said.

"When the money comes through the national office, it never stays more than four days," he said. "We want it to get to the field as fast as possible."

Page said they continue to cut funds used for administration in order to send more to the International Mission Board.

Doing more with less

"We're convinced we can do more with less — that we can be less bureaucratic and do more to win people to Christ," he said. "I want to see every man, woman, boy and girl presented with the gospel."

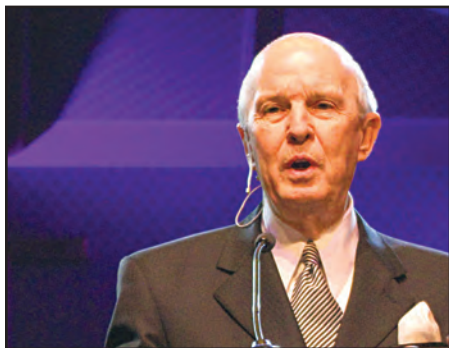
It's not about the denomination or even the church — "we're in it for Christ," he said. "He's the Author and Finisher of our faith."

Let's win this nation and world for Him together, Page said.

Also during the Tuesday night service, convention messengers heard music from Charles Billingsley, songwriter and worship pastor at Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Va., and a combined choir of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, and the Alabama Singing Men and Singing Women. ☞



CATT



VINES



Photos by Neisha Fuson

Alabama evangelist Bob Pitman tells pastors not to feel as though they are 'permanently stuck in a dark place' in life. Pitman spoke at the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, on Nov. 11.

Pastors Conference

Conference speakers urge Alabama Baptist pastors to 'Preach the Word'

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

The simple message of the Bible — preached without apology and coupled with intense prayer — is what's needed for revival, according to speakers at the 2013 Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference.

The conference, held Nov. 11 at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, followed the theme "Preach the Word."

Michael Catt, pastor of Sherwood Baptist Church, Albany, Ga., said he believes the Bible is a "book of revival."

"When I read stories from the Bible, I know we are a long way from revival," Catt said, preaching from the story of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37.

The Bible, he said, contains story after story of the people of God becoming "desperate and sick of themselves until they cry out to God" and receive a "great outpouring of the Spirit of God."

Desperation is key, said Daniel Wilson, pastor of West End Baptist Church, Clanton, who kicked off the morning session.

Black-draped chairs

"What we need is a preacher called out by God, sent down from heaven, filled with the Holy Ghost, lungs made out of leather who will preach the Word and let the chips fall where they may," he said.

Wilson told the story of a pastor who went to preach to a group of prisoners and asked why some of the chapel's chairs were draped in black. The warden told him the chairs were for the men headed to the electric chair. The pastor's sermon would be the last message they heard.

Wilson said pastors should preach as if their congregation always contains black-

draped chairs. "Your sermon may be the last sermon they ever hear," he said. "We have to warn everybody and teach everybody so that we might present everybody perfect in Christ Jesus."

Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, said pastors should teach everybody the story from the first three chapters of Genesis — God as the all-powerful Creator who initiated our redemption from sin.

"If we want to see our baptisms skyrocket, folks, all we have to do is take them the message from Genesis," he said, noting that if pastors were really passionate about the truth of God's power and salvation, "you won't be able to keep your mouth shut."

Dusty McLemore, pastor of Lindsay Lane Baptist Church, Athens, challenged pastors to preach the message with a "hot heart for Jesus."

"Don't abandon the simplicity of the gospel of Jesus Christ, because that's what saves," he said.

The things once called sinful are now commonplace in America, he explained, noting that America is losing hope of ever regaining its former morality and dignity.

"But our hope hasn't changed — it's still in Jesus Christ," McLemore said.

Evangelist Jerry Vines said sin has a high cost, but that even in a culture that has redefined sin, God still offers forgiveness.

"When God forgives sin, praise God — He doesn't rub it in. He blots it out," Vines said. "I'm here to tell you tonight that there is hope for the sinner in the shed blood of Jesus Christ."

There's also hope for pastors who find

themselves mired down in bitterness, said Tim Anderson, pastor of Clements Baptist Church, Athens.

That kind of "obsessive sorrow in our spirit" can make pastors feel that their joy has been stolen, that they "don't sense the freshness we used to feel."

But bitterness does more to the vessel in which it's stored than the object on which it's poured, Anderson said.

"Don't refuse to withhold from someone in your life today [the forgiveness and grace] that Jesus so richly and freely gave you," he said.

The power of 'yet'

And Alabama evangelist Bob Pitman told pastors not to feel as though they are permanently stuck in a dark place.

"Maybe you're going through a dark time in your life — the condition of your pastorate, the failing condition of your health, the eroding condition of your marriage, and you feel like things just can't get any worse," Pitman said.

Pastors can lean on the power of "yet" found in Habakkuk 3:18, he said.

"When things can't get any worse, remember the Person to whom you belong," Pitman said. "He's mighty and will never be put down, and we belong to Him. Remember the provision He has made for you."

Also during the daylong meeting, pastors elected Teman Knight, pastor of Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, as the 2014 vice president.

They also recognized current conference president Fred Lackey, associate pastor of Clements Baptist, and affirmed the 2014 president, Kevin Blackwell, pastor of Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown; president-elect Adam Dooley, pastor

'Hold tightly to the Word ... be open to change,' Foley says

A wave of influence is washing over the aging Baby Boomer generation, whether they want to face it or not.

It's Generation Y — 90 million Americans between the age of 14 and 33, Mark Foley, president of the University of Mobile, shared during the afternoon session of the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference (see story, this page).

"As you ponder the condition of a nation no longer shielded by the hand of God, consider the impact of this coming generation," Foley said. "As the influence of Generation Y has increased, the Baby Boomers still have resisted the influence that's coming upon them."

The Boomers, Foley said, inherited a lot of religious organizations — "well-oiled machines" — and "we expected and assumed that [Generation Y] would simply step into the organizations that we had established."

But Generation Y has looked at those organizations and said, "No, we really don't want to do it that way," Foley said.

As a result, those organizations have declined, and leaders are forced to engage and disciple the biggest generation in history with a pool of declining revenues.

Even so, Foley said he believes "those 90 million men and women are going to lead this nation back to an understanding of Jesus Christ, but they won't do it the way we think they should do it."

In the midst of changing times, leaders should hold tightly to the Word, but in following Jesus they also must be open to change, Foley said.

"If you try to hang on to the ways of doing things that you find comfortable, you will lose it," he said, noting that a rising 90 million beats out an aging 76 million "every time."

If leaders don't do what it takes to disciple Generation Y to follow Christ, "be assured someone will," Foley said. "If it is not Jesus Christ and His Church, it will be the culture." (TAB)



FOLEY

of Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile; and treasurer Mark Smith, pastor of Eastside Baptist Church, Birmingham.

Michael Lewis, executive director for church revitalization and pastoral relations at the North American Mission Board (NAMB), made a monetary presentation to Lackey during the afternoon session. Lewis said the gift was from NAMB as "an investment in pastors."

"We want today to bless you and refresh you," he said. 🙏

Alabama Baptists tapped for service

During the 191st annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, Baptists from across the state were elected to serve on the governing boards of convention-related entities. Also approved by messengers were individuals to serve on the committees of the convention.

The Committee on Boards and Commissions nominates members to serve on the executive committee, the State Board of Missions (SBOM) and convention entities. The Committee on Committees names members to convention committees. The following is a complete list of individuals approved for service during the annual meeting. The list was provided by the SBOM. An asterisk (*) before the name indicates a layperson.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chairperson: John Killian

District: Jimmy E. Jackson, Cade Farris, Derek Staples, Mike King, Johnny Fain, Ronnie Boulware, Greg Pouncey, John Nicholson, John P. Gates, Doug Farris, Tim Cox, *Patti Shoemaker

Members at large: *Sammie Jo Barstow, Chip Starnes, Mike D. McLemore, John A. Nixon Jr., Dennis R. Culbreth, Scott Guffin, Rex D. Kent

Ex officio members: Executive Director, Rick Lance; Chairman of SBOM, Tim Cox; President of convention, John Killian; First Vice President, Travis Coleman; President, Alabama WMU, *Laurelle Stoudenmire

STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

Terms to Expire 2016: Mark Stokes, Autauga; Garnett P. Starnes, Baldwin; Glenn E. Brock, Barbour; Morgan Bailey, Bessemer; Brad Campbell, Bigbee; Mike D. McLemore and Raymond McKenzie, Birmingham; Ronnie Boulware, Butler; Randy Postell, Calhoun; Jeffrey Fuller, Central; David Bankson, Cherokee; Rex D. Kent, Chilton; Jeremy Sorrells, Choc-taw; *Bobby Bailey, Cleburne; Michael Mynatt, Coffee; *Jeanette G. Glover, Columbia; *Faye Brown, Dale; *Debbie Early, DeKalb; *Frank Gingrich, East Cullman; Mike Ingram, Elmore; Sammy Taylor, Franklin; Dee McGuire, Hale; Ronnie Marshall, Judson; Ronald Berry, Lookout Mountain; Michael Stancil, Marion; Richard Pettijohn and Keith Williams, Marshall; Jeff Redmond, Morgan; Sammie Reid and Jason Rodgers, North Jefferson; *Gail Burns and James Sampley,

St. Clair; David Hairston, Sand Mountain; Allan Murphy, Shelby; Larry Cummings and Richard Hall, Tallapoosa; Greg Hart, Tennessee River; Jim O'Neal, Washington; *Richard Gurley, West Cullman

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

Terms to Expire 2014: Mike Shaw, First, Pelham

Terms to Expire 2015: *Rosalie Hunt, First, Guntersville

Terms to Expire 2017: *Jane Bellew, Pleasant Ridge, Hueytown; Larry C. Patterson, Southside, Bay Minette; Bradley M. Rushing, Mount Gilead, Dothan; Eddie Davidson, First, Hamilton

BOARD OF AID

Terms to Expire 2017: Wayne Cunningham, College Park, Mobile; *Richard W. Michael, Lincoln, Lincoln; Michael R. Bedford, College Park, Mobile; Todd Dean, First, Oak Grove

CHILDREN'S HOMES

Terms to Expire 2017: *Leah Snell Stephens, First, Montgomery; *Laura Graham, First, Tuscaloosa; *Phillip A. Padgett, Corinth, Cragford; *Marc Ivey, Valley Grande, Valley Grande

CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION

Terms to Expire 2016: Herbert Brown, Southside, Greenville; Joe Bob Mizzell, Hopewell, Marion

Terms to Expire 2017: *Richard Montgomery, Pleasant Grove, Moulton; Bill Morgan, First, Prattville; Art Burroughs, Fulton Road, Mobile; *Joanne Farmer, Mount Hebron West, Elmore

EDUCATION COMMISSION

Terms to Expire 2017: Barry Cosper, First, Alexander City; *Dianne Morgan, First, Prattville; R. Joseph Triquet Jr., McElwain, Birmingham; Gary Cardwell, Meadowbrook, Gadsden; *Peggie Mizzell, Hopewell, Marion

BAPTIST FOUNDATION

Terms to Expire 2017: *Kay K. Miller, Eastern Hills, Montgomery; *Michael Lytle, Dawson Memorial, Homewood; *Phyllis Boone, Shades Mountain, Birmingham; *Vicki M. Martin, First, Dothan; Scott White, First North Mobile, Saraland

HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Terms to Expire 2017: *Albert F. Killian Sr., First, Opelika; *Tom Allen, Christ Fellowship, Birmingham; Wendell Dutton, Slackland, Leesburg; *Sonja Adams, Heflin, Heflin

RETIREMENT CENTERS

Terms to Expire 2014: Lloyd Stilley, First, Gulf Shores

Terms to Expire 2016: *Talmadge Holbrook, Liberty Hill, Clanton

Terms to Expire 2017: Jim Griffin, Bower Memorial, Evergreen; *Gail May, First, Selma; Ronnie McCarron, Cottage Hill, Mobile; *Dwain Kinard, Eastern Shore, Daphne; *Martine Sharp, Central, Decatur

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

Terms to Expire 2017: *Karon Bowdre, Dawson Memorial, Homewood; *Victor M. Brown, Shades Mountain, Birmingham; *Don H. Kilgore, First, Jasper; *Jerry Newby, Sardis Springs, Athens; *Gary Ray

Pearman, Whitesburg, Huntsville; *Rod Steakley, Whitesburg, Huntsville; *Robert Holmes Jr., Sixth Avenue, Birmingham; *Warren Bailey, Hunter Street, Birmingham; Sheri P. McKean, First, Montgomery

JUDSON COLLEGE

Terms to Expire 2017: *Daveta Dozier, Thomasville, Thomasville; *R. Doug Halbrooks, Siloam, Marion; *P. Leigh O'Dell, Gateway, Montgomery; *James H. Sanford, First, Prattville; *Jerry Thomas, First, Tuscaloosa; *Rod P. Wilkin, First, Tuscaloosa; *Neal Isbell, Highland, Florence; *Richard E. Kirkpatrick, Shades Mountain, Birmingham; *Carol O. Crain, South Roebuck, Birmingham

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

Terms to Expire 2017: *Terry Harbin, First North Mobile, Saraland; *James Massey, First, Citronelle; *James West, Spring Hill, Mobile; *Fred Wilson, Lafitte, Saraland; *Jim Holland, York Terrace, Sheffield

SHOCCO SPRINGS

Terms to Expire 2017: *Joy Reeves, First, Trussville; Philip R. Morris, Heflin, Heflin; Glenn Bonds, Providence #2, Clanton; *Deena Weston, Vaughn Forest, Montgomery

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Chairperson 2013–2014:

Michael D. Miller

Chairperson 2014–2015:

Michael Goforth

Terms to Expire 2015: *Mary Lou Herald, Whitesburg, Huntsville; Michael Goforth, Sardis, Boaz; *Debbie Morris, Heflin, Heflin; Matt Haines, Sixth Street, Alexander City; *Wilma Hart, Pleasant Grove, Ozark; Jack E. Fitts, First, Brew-ton; John W. Price, First, Orange Beach; *Traci Spiller, First, Demopolis; *Cindy Lewis, First, Aliceville; Eddie Davidson, First, Hamilton; *Joy England, Maytown, Maytown; *Sheila Gentle, First, Tallassee

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Chairperson 2013–2014: *Rick Gibson, First, Tuscaloosa

Terms to Expire 2016: *Richard LeCroy, Five Points, Northport; *Ray Breeden, Westmeade, Decatur

INSURANCE COMMITTEE

Chairperson 2013–2014:

*Mike Colquett, Monroeville, Monroeville
Terms to Expire 2016: *Rusty Melnick, First, Opelika; *John Vermillion, Taylor Road, Montgomery; *James H. Duren, First, Tuscaloosa

TIME, PLACE, PREACHER

Chairperson 2013–2014: Dusty McLemore, Lindsay Lane, Athens

Terms to Expire 2014: Dusty McLemore, Lindsay Lane, Athens; Daniel Wilson, West End, Clanton; Eddy Garner, Woodmont, Florence; Bo Rice, First, Loxley; Mike Al-lums, James Memorial, Gadsden; Donnie Payne, Forest Lake, Tuscaloosa; Joe Estes, First, Trussville

MEMORIALS COMMITTEE

Chairperson 2013–2014: Harrell Cushing, First, Montgomery

Terms to Expire 2014: Harrell Cushing, First, Montgomery; *Ethel Lemmond, First,

Killian names committees

Two committees, the Credentials Committee and the Tellers Committee, were appointed during the state convention's opening session Nov. 12. The Committee on Committees also was named during the Tuesday sessions.

State convention President John Killian, pastor of Maytown Baptist Church in Bessemer Baptist Association, announced the appointments 30 days prior to the annual meeting in accordance with bylaw requirements, but messengers had to ratify the appointments during the meeting.

The convention Credentials Committee helps with problems regarding registration and seating of messengers.

Serving as chairman of the committee was Randy Makemson, Faith, Vinemont. Serving with him were Terrell Boyd, Lakewood, Huntsville; Scott Delashaw, Donald, Town Creek; Rob Hatfield, Mount Zion, Huntsville; Ann Higgins, Maytown, Maytown; Tim Keenum, Sardis Springs, Athens.

Tellers Committee members helped convention officers tabulate convention votes.

Greg Walker, First, Helena, served as chairman. Other members were David Byrd, Northside, Jasper; Jared Case, Northport, Northport; Steve Grissom, Haven, Madison; Lance Hogan, Corinth Heights, Haleyville; Ray Stonecypher, Piney Grove, Ardmore; Kevin Ward, Salem Springs, Elkmont.

The following also were elected to serve on the Committee on Committees until 2016: Fred Lackey, Clements, Athens, chair; Chris Crain, South Roebuck, Birmingham; Robert Smith, Enon, Moulton. (TAB)

Hartselle; Jerry Lake, First, Tuscaloosa; *Eleanor C. Drake, Uniontown, Uniontown; Joe Whitt, Flatwoods, Tuscaloosa

INTER-BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

Chairperson 2013–2014: Bobby Hopper, Linden, Linden

Terms to Expire 2016: Earl C. Johnson, Christ Community, Huntsville; *Jane Ferguson, First, Montgomery; *Walt Howard, Heritage, Montgomery; D'Linell Finley, Southlawn, Montgomery

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Chairperson 2013–2014: Morgan Bailey, Canaan, Bessemer

Terms to Expire 2016: Henry Cox, Durrant Chapel, Bay Minette; Rusty J. Sowell, Providence, Opelika

RESOLUTIONS

Chairperson 2013–2014: Roger D. Willmore, Deerfoot, Trussville

Terms to Expire 2014: Roger D. Willmore, Deerfoot, Trussville; *Gary McGriff, New Hope #2, Cullman; Edwin Jenkins, First, Athens; *Joanne B. Farmer, Mount Hebron West, Elmore; *Eunie Smith, First, Birmingham; Dennis R. Culbreth, First, Jasper; Steve Loggins, Beechwood, Mount Olive

Time, place, preacher report

The 2014 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting will be held at Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, in Birmingham Baptist Association on Nov. 11–12.

The convention preacher for the 2014 annual meeting will be Tim Cox, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea, in Shelby Baptist Association.

Alternate preacher is Buddy Champion, pastor of First, Trussville.

Messengers voted for Lakeside to also be the site of the 2018 annual meeting, which will take place Nov. 13–14 of that year. (TAB)

'Life-changing institutions'

State Baptist schools share about campuses

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

It was an opportunity to hear from the heart of the leaders in Christian higher education, said Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

In a relaxed Q&A format on stage, Lance spoke with each of the three Alabama Baptist college and university presidents Nov. 12 during the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville.

Lance first spoke with Andrew Westmoreland, president of Samford University in Birmingham, questioning him about what he sees happening at Samford now as well as in the future.

"Dr. Lance, I could answer that question in a lot of different ways, and I could choose to go negative," he said, citing elements like the nation's culture that has gone adrift. Westmoreland said he chooses instead to speak of the positive spirit of Christ on the campuses of Samford, the University of Mobile (UMobile) and Judson College in Marion.

A short video was then shown of Samford football player Jeremy Towns' testimony.

"He came to faith in Christ at Samford University," Westmoreland said after the video presentation, adding Towns has led

dozens of Samford students to Christ. "I can't wait to see the life-changing impact of Jeremy Towns in the decades ahead," he said.

There are "plenty of problems in my business," Westmoreland concluded. "But don't ever forget that these are life-changing institutions."

Next Lance asked Mark Foley, president of UMobile, what he sees in the future of the school.

Foley began by sharing about the passion of once again seeing "this nation under the influence of Jesus Christ." He noted

one way to do that is to invest in young men and women

who are bringing the Word of Christ to the nation.

He added, "What you really invest in is people. What you really invest in is the expansion of the culture of Jesus Christ in believers and through believers ... and the ripple effect goes on and on and on. So thank you for being a part of what we do and for allowing us to do it."

David Potts, president of Judson, was asked by Lance to share about the school and how it's impacting the cause of Christ.



WESTMORELAND



FOLEY



Photos by Neisha Fuson

Judson College student Sau Nam joins David Potts, president of Judson, on stage during the Christian Higher Education reports Nov. 12.

Potts said Judson has been involved in local missions, believing that missions is across the street and around the world. "We call that faith-based service learning," he said. "It's a way in which we engage in tutoring children — helping kids at schools that are underprivileged" and building ramps for senior citizens in the community, he said.

Potts also noted the existing partnership between Judson and Kachin Theological College in Myanmar, a school of about 800 students. He noted that Baptists a great distance from the U.S. are establishing Baptist colleges and contacting Alabama Baptist colleges and universities to partner with them.

Judson student Sau Nam then joined Potts on the stage to share about her experience coming from Kachin College to Judson.

As Judson College is celebrating 175 years, "God is changing my life," she said. "I am grateful for your giving (and

support." She also shared a poem about Ann Judson.

Lance concluded the Christian Higher Education presentation by recognizing Rick Marshall, chairman of the Education Commission, and Bill Goodwin, chairman of the Board of Aid for Students in Church-Related Vocations, for their service. ☛

One business item

Only one motion was brought to the convention floor during the recent annual meeting, but it was ruled out of order.

Paul Hicks, pastor of West Jefferson Baptist Church, Quinton, asked the convention to change the annual meeting from a Tuesday–Wednesday format to a Friday–Saturday format.

Henry Cox, chairman of the Committee on Order of Business, said the motion was not in order because it conflicts with convention bylaws.

"The time and place for every convention is proposed by the committee and then voted on by the convention in session," Cox said. (TAB)

Theme Interpretation

Taking care of each other through CP can impact lives, Smith says



SMITH

In the time since Robert Smith became director of missions for Muscle Shoals Baptist Association, he's seen two devastating tornadoes hit his county.

The first barely missed Smith's house.

But it didn't miss another man's — a veteran who'd survived war and come home, then lost several family members when his house was blown away.

Smith felt unable to help him.

He thought, "Wouldn't it just be great if we could somehow be a life changer for this man who had experienced the ravages of war and then lost his family?"

When Smith got back to his

office and checked the mail, he found a check from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

"If you don't think the Cooperative Program (CP) is important, think again," he said. "We were able to go and help a little bit this young man who had lost everything."

The bottom line of giving to the CP is to see the state and world know Jesus Christ, Smith said during his theme interpretation sermon Nov. 13.

Preaching from 2 Corinthians 12:7–10, he told those present that part of being a life changer is being willing to share Jesus while facing adversity.

"Adversity comes in many different ways and in many times in our lives," Smith said, noting that Alabama has seen "unbelievable devastation" from tornadoes.

Grace of God

But, he said, "we witnessed the marvelous, awesome grace of God in the middle of that adversity."

God changed lives, and Alabama Baptists "shined bright," he said.

The apostle Paul also suffered great adversity for the gospel of Jesus Christ — even a "thorn in the flesh" — yet his attitude never changed, Smith said.

"Paul learned the sufficiency of

Christ, the sufficiency of God's grace," he said. "People can see God in us when we let Jesus shine through our weakness."

God is bigger than "whatever you've got going on in your life," Smith said. God's sovereignty is a great comfort as Christians seek to be life changers in tough situations, he said.

"If you want to change other people's lives, support the CP, support disaster relief, support the people who go out there and get the job done, and God will honor you and bless you for doing it," Smith said. (Grace Thornton)



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Messengers gather around Baptist campus ministers and pray for their work and their campuses around the state.



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Mike Nuss (center), director of the office of collegiate and student ministries for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, shares about Baptist Campus Ministries while campus ministers join him on stage.

'Critical' missions field

State's Baptist Campus Ministries share about facets of ministry, impact on students

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Baptists attending the Nov. 12-13 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting spent about 20 minutes in a class setting on Tuesday — and returned home with homework.

Those attending the "class" learned about Alabama's vast missions field spread out across the state's college campuses and how Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) is working to reach the roughly 300,000 students.

During the last academic year, more than 34,000 students were touched by some area of BCM ministry and about 2,500 were involved in a collegiate missions experience.

And each year, hundreds of Alabama

college students make a profession of faith through the efforts of BCM.

Sixteen Alabama Baptist campus ministers participated in the BCM report.

Gary Brittain, Baptist campus minister for Jacksonville State University, shared how BCM has impacted students and how Baptists' Cooperative Program dollars fuel everything they do.

BCM students and alumni also shared how the ministry has impacted their lives.

'A daily thing'

One college student said, "BCM [has shown] me that serving the Lord and walking with Him is a daily thing."

Cade Farris, pastor of First Baptist Church, Wedowee, and graduate of the University of North Alabama, described how BCM "completely changed his life."

Farris was involved in everything from

Bible studies to missions trips to leadership opportunities. He learned how BCM supports the local church and watched his campus minister pour his life into the students.

"I shared about my dreams, life, ministry ... and had the opportunity to share with other students," Farris said, noting he developed a heart and desire to share his faith with those in his community as well as be focused on those in other countries.

Alabama Baptists also learned about BCM's outreach to Alabama's 8,000 international college students and the growing ministry and impact BCM is having on community colleges, which make up more than one-third of Alabama's colleges.

"Your campus ministers are God-called men and women serving on one of Alabama's most important, critical and difficult missions fields," said Mike Nuss, di-

rector of the office of collegiate and student ministries for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. "They help students transition from high school and living at home to college and the independence that it brings."

Homework assignment

And for their homework, ministers were asked to:

1. Encourage high school seniors in their churches to get involved in BCM when they go to college. Also submit the students' names to the campus ministers, so the campus ministers can be intentional about connecting with the students.

2. Examine how they can intentionally partner with their local BCM group.

3. Pray intently for campus ministers and the ministries that take place at college and university campuses in the state. ❧

'Churchology' panel discusses issues related to health of state convention

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

They want our money but not our voice," the young seminary student said. "I feel like we are not equal members, that we are just tolerated."

Acknowledging he understands the need to spend more time observing and learning than directing at this point, he said it's the amount of time that concerns him. "I don't want to wait around for 25 or 30 years before I can have a voice."

The voice he described relates to leadership in the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC), and his mention of money refers to contributions through the Cooperative Program (CP).

On the other end of the spectrum are convention leaders and pastors who have given their lives to the ministry and feel a bit threatened by the antinism of some of the younger pastors.

One prominent ABSC leader mentors

numerous young pastors and urges them to get involved in convention life but to follow a pattern he used as a young pastor — "shut up, show up, listen up and then speak up."

The amount of time in each of the three categories leading up to having a voice does not have to be years, he said, but it does need to be long enough to gain a thorough understanding.

And so the question facing Alabama Baptists is how to bring the fresh passion and aggressive spirit of the younger pastors and the wisdom and thoughtfulness of the more experienced pastors into a healthy, working relationship.

Dialogue begins

That was the topic of an auxiliary meeting held in connection with the ABSC annual meeting Nov. 12 in Huntsville.

Jason Dees, pastor of Valleydale Church, Birmingham, initiated "a conversation about building healthy churches in Ala-

bama" and brought in three pastors to serve on a panel discussion.

About 75 people stayed late Tuesday night to hear from Jay Wolf, pastor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery; Paul Hunter, pastor of Church of the Valley, Huntsville (a church plant); and Mat Alexander, pastor of First Baptist Church, Gadsden.

Dees moderated the discussion and asked each of the panelists questions such as:

What is the gospel and why are we so passionate about it? What are some things worth dividing over? How does our theology divide the things we believe? What could we do better to help more churches get planted? What is the value of the CP?

In an evaluation of the CP, Wolf said, "The Cooperative Program is the best practice. ... Any honest evaluation, not a maverick mentality, will prove it."

Hunter — who leads his church to give more than 10 percent through the CP —

said that while he believes in it, he does have some questions.

"With \$180-plus million, why aren't we more effective? ... Am I giving to something valid? Are we doing things the right way? Why are our baptisms declining? ... Can we modify, freshen things up?"

Dees said he wished the CP "was functioning with more efficiency and excellence."

Alexander added, "Before you criticize any of these things, you need to learn about them. One place my generation makes mistakes ... is the constant temptation to say, 'If it's old, let's do away with it.'"

Wolf agreed. "The examination has to be authentic," he said.

"Here's what's so crazy about where we are right now with this ... division. A lot is about style, but that is so phony," he said. "At the bottom of it is the gospel. We have to put aside these phony dividing walls and pull back together." ❧

Theme Interpretation



SANDERS

Life changer

Have 'intentional, deliberate, focused, hard pursuit of the most supreme vision of all'

By Julie Payne
The Alabama Baptist

What would it be like if everyone made Jesus Christ their supreme being? ... People would say 'surely God is among you.' ... They would notice a life change in us," said Cecil Sanders, pastor of First Baptist Church, Headland.

Delivering the first of two convention theme interpretations during the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting Nov. 12-13, Sanders focused on vision as a "life changer."

"What goes into our eyes determines the course of our lives," Sanders explained, reading Matthew 6:22-23. "Upon what are we gazing?"

"Some of you this morning are wounded from enemy fire. And you're weary. And you're tired," he said. "Where is your vision today?"

The "most supreme vision ... we could possibly have" isn't adding a new service or the vision of a new campus, he said. The most treasured vision is what Paul mentioned in 2 Corinthians 4: "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ."

"That's our vision, that's our gaze ... the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," Sanders said.

Examples from Scripture illustrating the significance of vision included Moses absorbing the assignment he was given, Joshua looking at the mighty walls of Jericho, and Peter, James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration, Sanders said.

Vision of God's glory

"The walls (of Jericho) came tumbling down, and it started with a vision of the glory of God in the face of Christ. ... [Peter, James and John] see Jesus in a way they've never seen Him before.

"Later as Peter writes to us he says, 'Look, we didn't follow cleverly devised tales ... we are eyewitnesses of His majesty,'" Sanders added.

Peter and the apostles became life changers, he said. "They had seen the glory of God in the face of Christ."

Jesus must be "our supreme gaze," Sanders said. "Could you imagine what it would look like for a pastor to have as his supreme vision ... the Lord Jesus Christ? When he comes (into church) on Sunday morning and stands before

the people of God" he would be aglow with the radiance of his Savior Jesus and he would bring heaven and glory to the worship of God's people.

But this can only happen "if we ourselves are being changed and our eyes are fixed on Christ," Sanders noted.

Being a life changer requires intentional, deliberate, focused, hard pursuit of the most supreme vision of all — the face of Jesus, he said.

If a person desires to have increased influence, increased impact and increased life change through his or her life, then one "must intentionally go deeper with God," Sanders noted.

And in order to go deeper with God, Sanders suggested discipleship leader Richard Blackaby's concept of "spiritual math." First subtract something from life — like a habit, time waster or a sin — that will enable a deeper relationship with God if removed. Then add something to life that also will enable a deeper relationship with Him. By following this formula, "you will have more fruit from your branches and you'll be a life changer," Sanders said.

"Where should we look? To the enemy or to the greatest vision of all — the glory of God in the face of Christ." ■

Want to know God?

Pastor Eric House
First Baptist Church, Hokes Bluff

Scientists will tell you that all life on earth requires light provided by the sun. Plants use photosynthesis to enlarge themselves and store energy from the sun. Animals eat the plants or animals that have eaten plants and are reliant on the sun as well. All life is dependent on the sun.

While most everyone accepts that we must have the sun to have life, many are reluctant to accept the truth that we must have the Son to have eternal life. God teaches us in John 1:9 that Jesus is "the true light, who gives light to everyone." In fact, God's Word clearly teaches in 1 John 5:12, "The one who has the Son has life. The one who doesn't have the Son of God does not have life." My question for you is simple: "Do you have the Son of God, Jesus, in your life?" Notice I didn't ask how often you go to church, how good a person you are or how often you read *The Alabama Baptist*. I'm simply asking if you have a life-changing relationship with Jesus.

Here is another truth: if you have the Son in your life you will know it because He will have changed your life. This shouldn't surprise us. When a plant has the sunlight and nutrients it needs it changes the plant and helps it grow. When we have the Son in our lives it will change us and enable us to grow spiritually. So take a look at your relationship with God. Do you believe Jesus is God's Son and that He died on the cross for your sins? That's good if you do, but remember God's Word also says in James 2:19, "You believe that God is one; you do well. The demons also believe — and they shudder."

Believing is a necessary beginning point, but you must also receive Jesus in your life as your Lord and Savior. John 1:12 tells us, "But to all who did receive Him, He gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in His name." You must have the Son to have eternal life. If you have never received Him into your life as your Lord and Savior, I encourage you to invite Him into your life today. ■

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Convention sermon

'Leaders of change'

Wilburn urges Baptists 'out of the cave'

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Istand before you this morning a concerned pastor." Kevin Wilburn's words opened a convention sermon that capped two and a half days' worth of messages that took Alabama Baptists back to the basics and addressed the nation's moral decline.

"We are in a battle for the soul of the church," said Wilburn, pastor of First Baptist Church, Scottsboro. "When an adoption can cost as much as \$30,000 and an abortion is \$300, something is wrong."

Preaching from 1 Kings 18:36-37, he challenged Alabama Baptists to be decisive and courageous in their commitment and to hold fast to the one true God as Elijah did when he challenged the priests of Baal.

"There is a need for entrepreneurial leadership to stand up and influence the culture that our churches are planted in," Wilburn said.

Southern Baptists' influence appears to be declining, he said, noting that the Southern Baptist Convention is in a 14-year slide in baptisms, with the exception of one year.

"What about your church? Is its influence sliding, its impact on engaging the culture slipping? You can panic or you can pray," Wilburn said.

Sometimes it's possible for Baptists to get so nostalgic that all they are doing is trying to recover something from times past, he said. Instead they should look for new

strength from God, he said.

"God, would You send a fresh wind of renewal in my life? Alabama Baptists, we must rebuild the altar to the Lord. We do not have any power apart from His power to impact this culture," Wilburn said.

He challenged Alabama Baptists to be "leaders of change" rather than "losers of influence."

Churches can focus on so many things from age and race to budgets and music styles, but they "had better focus on Jesus," Wilburn said.

He also challenged state Baptists to reach out to nonbelievers in love.

"The people in our community just want to know some simple things — are you real, and do you care?"

The window of church influence is waning unless Christians do something to turn the tide, Wilburn said.

"There will come a time when people quit caring what our churches have to say, because we're not building bridges to everyone anymore," he said. It's possible that rather than trying to connect, some Baptists have retreated to the mountains in fear like Elijah did, Wilburn said.

"Alabama Baptists, come out of the cave," he said.

Elijah went into the cave, but God came and called him out because He was not finished with him yet, Wilburn said. "You can call it missional, gospel centered, anything you want to call it, but whatever you do, just go. The great I Am is with you always." ❧



WILBURN

Resolutions

Messengers adopt educational, social resolutions

By Bob Terry
The Alabama Baptist

Two resolutions submitted at the last minute resulted in Alabama Baptists officially entering the debate about the nationwide educational initiative called Common Core State Standards Initiative and the ongoing concern over governmental support of parochial and other nonpublic schools.

In addition, messengers to the Nov. 12-13 annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, adopted resolutions dealing with other social issues including the Affordable Care Act, women's health and safety, child sex abuse and biblical marriage.

Craig Carlisle, pastor of Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Gadsden, and chairman of the resolutions committee, said the Common Core resolution was submitted Nov. 10 after the resolutions committee had completed most of its report. The resolution supporting public and nonpublic schools was presented in the afternoon Nov. 12.

"Most of us on the committee were not fully versed on Common Core," Carlisle explained in an interview following the adoption of the report. He said the committee had to do its research "on the fly."

The committee found no current problems with the educational initiative, he continued, but wanted to lay a foundation of concern in case issues arose in the future.

"We are not endorsing or opposing Common Core," he said. "We are establishing a precedent of concern."

The resolution expresses the fear that "some tenets of Common Core could be utilized to enable the federal government to dictate state curricula." It calls on the state Legislature and the Alabama State Board of Education to "study and evaluate" Common Core and its effects on the educational system.

The resolution also urges the state to establish its own standards and curricula for Alabama public school students.

Protecting nonpublic schools

On Support of Public and Nonpublic Schools is the title of the resolution urging state leaders to "protect the educational autonomy of nonpublic schools." The resolution outlines the parental responsibility for choosing the type of education appropriate for the child, references church schools as a ministry of local churches and affirms support for public and nonpublic schools before asking state leaders to protect nonpublic schools.

The Alabama Baptist Christian Life Commission submitted the resolution opposing the contraceptive services mandate after the issue was referred to them during the 2012 annual meeting. The resolution called the requirement issued by the Department of Health and Human Services as part of the Affordable Care Act a "threat to the free exercise of religion guaranteed in the Bill of Rights."

In addition to calling for withdrawal of the offensive mandate, the resolution commends the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and GuideStone Financial Resources for participating in legal actions to overturn the federal regulation.

Messengers expressed appreciation to the Alabama

Legislature and Gov. Robert Bentley for passing and signing the Women's Health and Safety Act, which requires abortion centers to meet standards similar to those offering emergency health care.

In 2012, messengers adopted a resolution urging the Alabama Legislature to adopt such a bill.

Alabama Baptists were urged to "cooperate fully with law enforcement officials in reporting allegations or accusations of sexual abuse." And messengers urged Alabama Baptists to "support safe and healthy" children's ministries and commended resources made available by the ABSC.

'Critical moral imperative'

The resolution on Biblical Marriage called biblical family relationships "one of the most critical moral imperatives of our time." The resolution declared "the sacred institution of marriage is now under destructive attack throughout our society."

Messengers expressed "enthusiastic support for those policies of public and private organization which aim to strengthen the biblical marriage commitment." Churches and pastors were urged to make premarital and marital counseling a priority and the resources of Pathways Professional Counseling, a ministry of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, were commended.

Carlisle noted that the 13 resolutions proposed by the committee were higher than normal and the number dealing with social issues was higher.

"With the way our culture is going, it may be necessary for messengers to have to deal with more social issues in the years ahead," he said.

In other issues, Baptists:

► Noted the impact of Royal Ambassadors (RA) on more than 2 million boys and commended the many dedicated RA leaders and members;

► Affirmed the Cooperative Program (CP) as a God-given strategy to support and strengthen Southern Baptist efforts to share the gospel throughout the world and gave special commendation to SBC Executive Committee President Frank Page for leading the 1% CP Challenge;

► Called on Alabama Baptists to consider a day or season of service for ministry evangelism. The resolution noted such possibilities as migrant ministries, literacy efforts, refugee resettlement, health care clinics, pregnancy alternatives, post-abortion counseling, respite care and other possibilities;

► Commended University of Mobile retired professor Cecil Taylor who served in a variety of ways including dean of the school of Christian studies, director of in-service guidance and founder/director of the University Missions program;

► Expressed appreciation to Mary Sue Bennett, who is retiring after serving as special assistant to the executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions since 1998;

► Celebrated the ministry of Judson College in Marion on the occasion of its 175th anniversary and commended the school for "keeping faith with her mission of Christian higher education for women";

► Expressed appreciation to Whitesburg Baptist, Madison Baptist Association, convention officers and "all who contributed to the gracious spirit, impact on ministries and missions and overall effectiveness of this annual meeting." ❧

**"We are not endorsing
or opposing
Common Core. We
are establishing a
precedent of concern."**

**Pastor Craig Carlisle
Twelfth Street Baptist
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God at work

Four entities change lives by meeting needs

By Julie Payne
and Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

A 5-year-old boy who entered the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries' (ABCH) foster care program had never had limits set on his behavior. He had never been told no.

"His foster mother had her hands full. ... But she was creative and ... persistent and discovered [the boy] was motivated by the opportunity to earn an allowance," recounted Rod Marshall, president and CEO of ABCH, during the Nov. 13 morning session of the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting.

So the foster mother made a deal with the child, Marshall said. Every day of good behavior she'd give the boy a quarter. He collected \$2.50 and kept it in a jar in his room.

"For him it was like a million dollars," Marshall noted.

One day the foster mother walked by the boy's bedroom and noticed the jar was empty. She asked him what had happened to his allowance. The boy, who had been attending Vacation Bible School (VBS) for the very first time, told her, "I gave it all to the VBS offering."

"I think when God saw that gift, He saw a child who had virtually nothing give everything — and that's a changed life," Marshall said.

Marshall and three other entity heads shared how their ministries are changing lives through meeting people's unique needs during the morning session.

70,000 decisions

Buster Taylor, executive director of Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega, said Shocco has seen 1.4 million people impacted by the conference center in its 65 years of existence.

Almost 70,000 decisions have been made there, he added, and in this year alone Shocco will see about 40,000 people visit

and 1,500 decisions made.

Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers (ABRC) is seeing lives changed too, said Ray Burdeshaw, ABRC president.

The centers help seniors like Ava Kee, who was sleeping in her car until she heard about Knollwood Retirement Center in Roanoke, and Joyce Bigham, who lived in a leaky trailer until she moved to Hutto Tower in Dothan.

"God is truly at work in the retirement centers across the state," he said, noting that "through your gifts through the Cooperative Program we can continue to minister to the senior adults of Alabama."

Candace McIntosh, executive director of Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), said Alabama WMU is "focused on



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Candace McIntosh, executive director of Alabama WMU, tells the story of Janet and others who were 'a changed life who changes lives,' thanks to Alabama Baptists.

encouraging and equipping Alabama Baptists to live a lifestyle of missions."

One such person, she said, is a woman named Janet who went on her first international trip with Alabama WMU nearly 13 years ago.

"Today she is preparing to go on her 15th international missions trip," McIntosh said. "Janet's

Women on Mission leader told me that trip opened her heart to missions, and over these years not only has she gone to the ends of the earth, but she has also served her local community and state."

She's served in local ESL ministry and apartment outreach, McIntosh said. "A changed life changes lives." ❧

Audit, insurance 'in good shape'

We're in good shape" was the report from the audit and insurance committees Nov. 12 to Alabama Baptist State Convention messengers.

Bobby DuBois, statistical secretary for the convention and associate executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said members of the audit committee "take their assignment very seriously."

"We're serious about making sure we use the missions dollars that come from our churches wisely," he said.

The insurance committee also felt like all was well, DuBois reported.

"They had nothing but good things to say about how things were being addressed among the entities" as far as insurance coverage goes, he said. (TAB)



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Mel Johnson, Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief strategist, tells convention messengers that disaster relief is a 'crown jewel' of Baptist ministries. 'This is your ministry,' Johnson said.

'Yellow shirts'

Alabamians celebrate 'pacesetting' disaster relief ministry to hurting

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

A sea of bright yellow filled the aisles and the back wall of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, to the point that messengers to the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting had to crane their necks to see it all.

The "yellow shirts" — from schoolteachers to preachers, stu-

dents to physicians — were all trained disaster relief volunteers.

"We are ready to respond all because of your faithfulness and Cooperative Program (CP) support," said Mel Johnson, Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief strategist. "We are proud to represent you."

The Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief force — one of two featured state ministries during the 2013 annual meeting — is part of a larger force of 90,000 disaster relief volunteers nationwide.



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Rob Mayes, a member of First Baptist Church, Prattville, is one of those volunteers.

He was deployed as a chaplain to Moore, Okla., after an EF5 tornado devastated the city in May.

He found himself on duty at a memorial at Plaza Towers Elementary School, standing alongside the mother and 10-year-old sister of a 9-year-old girl who had died in the tornado.

"I stood quietly (at the memorial) and then I had an opportunity to talk with them," Mayes said.

The memorial was laden with stuffed animals, and the little girl asked her mother, "Mom, what does all of this mean?"

Mayes got down on one knee, face to face with the little girl and explained to her that stuffed animals were a way for children to say "we love you and we care for you."

Shortage of women

The little girl turned to her mother and said, "Mom, we've got to go get a stuffed animal for my little sister."

Vicki Hyde, a disaster relief chaplain and member of Whitesburg Baptist, is another who's had the opportunity to pray with tornado victims and share Christ's love with them.

"We have the great privilege of presenting Jesus Christ to individuals who are hurting," she told messengers during the Nov. 13 presentation. "We have nationally

and internationally recognized credentials that allow us to go into communities that are hurting."

And as a woman, Hyde said, she's uniquely qualified to "walk into the heart of a woman and empathize with her loss and offer her hope in Jesus Christ."

The Alabama Baptist Disaster

Relief team has a "desperate shortage" of women chaplains, Johnson said, urging pastors to encourage qualified women in their churches to become disaster relief volunteers.

Volunteers statewide have spent their time developing various skills and talents for disaster relief, from chaplaincy to IT to chainsaw to child care.

"Everyone is contributing to the cadence of the Great Commission," Johnson said.

Disaster relief, he said, "has been heralded in Southern Baptist life as one of the crown jewels" of our ministries. Volunteers are "ready and prepared to deploy locally, nationally and internationally," Johnson said, noting that Alabama is a "pacesetting state."

Pacesetting states are each given a month to be on alert to be called up first to an international disaster, and Alabama's month is March, he said.

Because Texas Baptists were assigned November, their team is deploying to help in the wake of Typhoon Haiyan, which hit the Philippines on Nov. 8.

"In the crisis, disaster relief volunteers will reach into the lives of people who need a Savior," Johnson said. "As you see these people all over this sanctuary — with a phone call, they showed up. They will dedicate themselves to come help you."

Through a video presentation, the voices

of person after person thanked Alabama Baptists for showing up in their darkest moments.

One woman, through tears, said, "Somebody was here with me. I wasn't here by myself, and I knew that everything was going to be OK."

Another man asked if Alabama Baptist teams working in New Jersey could "leave Jesus here" in a place where churches were closing down "left and right."

Another told the story of a 93-year-old storm victim who knelt and gave his life to Christ on his front porch as volunteers cleaned out his home.

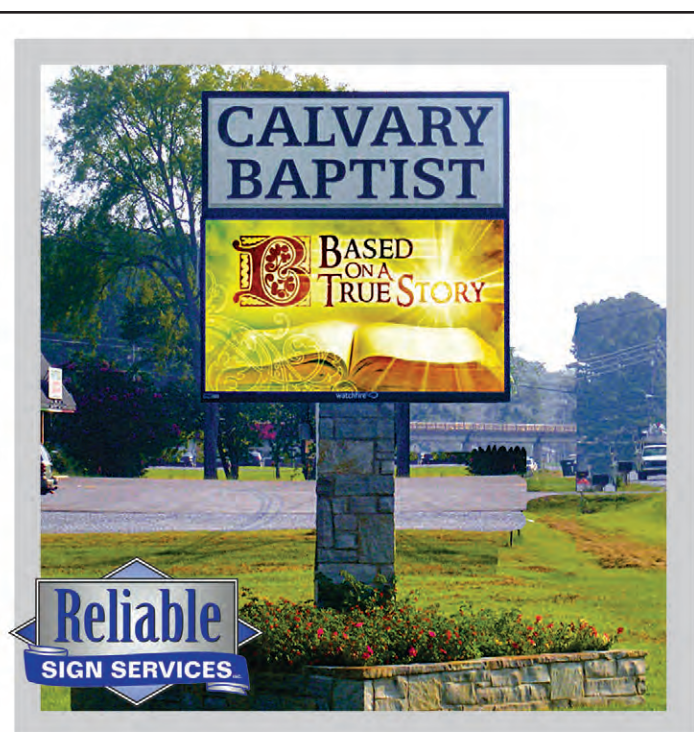
Johnson thanked Alabama Baptists for their support of disaster relief through the CP.

"This is your ministry," he said. "Thank you for the ministry you make possible as a convention of churches." ❧



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Chaplain Vicki Hyde explains how she is able to empathize with women experiencing loss.



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For November 24

Explore the Bible

By Jay T. Robertson

Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

DEALING WITH DEATH?
John 11:21-27, 33-44

The Savior's Promise (21-27)

Four grief filled days have passed. Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, has slipped from time to eternity.

And now four days later, Jesus arrives in Bethany. Jewish belief, not the Bible mind you, taught that the soul of the deceased person hovers over the body for the first three days, hoping to re-enter it. But once it sees decomposition begin to take place, it departs. At that point death is irreversible until the resurrection.

When Martha heard that Jesus was getting near, she went and met Him on the way. "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died." Martha's words are not a rebuke, as if she were saying that Jesus should have been there. Rather they are words of grief and of faith. Martha is confident that if Jesus had been present while her brother lay ill, Jesus would have healed him. Martha is not only persuaded that her brother would not have died had Jesus been present, but even now in her bereavement, she has not lost her confidence in Jesus. She still recognizes the special intimacy Jesus enjoys with His Father.

Jesus responds that Lazarus will rise again. Martha understands Jesus' word of comfort that on the "last day" her brother will be resurrected. She believes that death will not have the last word and that on the "last day" Lazarus will be restored to bodily life. Of course, Jesus is promising more immediate resurrection for Lazarus.

Jesus said to Martha, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" Jesus does not merely say that He will bring about the resurrection or that He will be the cause of the resurrection (both of which are true) but something much stronger. Jesus declares "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Resurrection from the dead and genuine eternal life in fellowship with God are so closely tied to Jesus that they are embodied in Him and can be found only in relationship to Him.

Therefore "believes in Me" implies personal trust in Jesus. Genuine belief in Jesus brings people into Jesus, that is, they experience union with Jesus. The power to live the Christian life is derived from one's union with Jesus and is supercharged with one's daily communion with Jesus. The one who "lives and believes" refers to people who have spiritual life now, and they ultimately triumph over death.

The Savior's Personal Concern (33-37)

Mary goes out to Jesus and falls at His feet weeping. Jesus is moved with profound sorrow at the death of His friend and at the grief that His other friends had suffered. Jesus is genuinely concerned for His friends. His sorrow also is intermixed with anger at the evil of death and also with a deep sense of awe at the power of God that was about to flow through Him to triumph over death.

Jesus joins His friends' heartfelt sorrow, but He also knows that resurrection and joy will soon follow. Jesus' example shows that heartfelt mourning in the face of death does not indicate a lack of faith but honest sorrow at the reality of suffering and death.

The Savior's Power (38-44)

Jesus commands the people to move the stone that sealed the tomb. The resurrection of Lazarus is a revelatory act, the manifestation of the glory of God in Jesus Christ. Jesus prays publicly to Father God. The prayer assumes that Jesus has already asked for Lazarus' life and that all He must do is to thank His Father for the answer. The public nature of the prayer seeks to draw His hearers into the intimacy of Jesus' own relationship with the Father and it demonstrates that Jesus does nothing on His own. Jesus demonstrates that He is the Messiah and that He has power to deliver from death.

Bible Studies for Life

By James Riley Strange

Associate Professor of Religion, Samford University

THANK YOU, LORD
Psalm 100:1-5

Every generation of believers has to be taught, and then reminded often, to give thanks to God.

This can cause problems when we don't want to claim that the good things of our lives are signs of God's special favor, for then it seems logical that bad things, whether in other people's lives or our own, are signs of God's displeasure or at least of God's indifference.

Before tackling the issue of how to thank God for the good without assigning blame for the bad, it will help to review three reasons why we forget to thank God at all.

1. We think we deserve the good that happens to us. Billboards tell us that we deserve money if we have been in an accident. The world's most popular fast food chain used to sing that we deserve a break today. Nothing could send a stronger message of entitlement.
2. We think our possessions and money belong to us, by virtue of our hard work or some other transaction, and they are ours to do with as we please. The truth is, during the course of our earthly lives we own nothing, we only borrow it. God has already given us what is of infinite value, and not for anything we did.
3. We think that all good things — jobs, family, money, friendships, health, security, life itself — are permanent. They are not. In fact, they could all be gone tomorrow.

It also will help to take a look at one of the Bible's Psalms of Thanksgiving. In the verses of Psalm 100, look for examples of "parallelism," in which two lines of poetry reinforce one another by stating similar ideas. Every verse except for 1 contains an example.

Verse 1

The psalmist instructs the very earth to give thanks to God. Many psalms give thanks to God for God's deeds, and the first

deed was creation itself. Verse 3 picks up on the idea.

Verse 2

Verse 2 uses the metaphor of king for God, as does verse 4.

The reference to God's "presence" here, and the references to "gates" and "courts" in verse 4, is probably an allusion to the temple. It gives us a clue that the congregation might have sung the psalm as a hymn in temple worship. The Hebrew title of the Book of Psalms is simply "Hymns" (*Te-hillim*). This reminds us that it is important for God's people to thank God in worship together. Corporate thanksgiving helps us to take our minds off ourselves and to remember that God has many children.

Verse 3

Verse 3 continues the metaphor of creation. One of God's greatest gifts is life itself. We certainly did not earn the right to be born, just as the earth did not deserve to be spoken into existence.

The metaphor of God as shepherd in the second half of the verse tells us that God does not merely create and send us on our way but abides with us continually to guide us — if we submit to being guided, that is.

Verses 4-5

Verse 4 is the first that mentions thanking God.

The second half of verse 4 through verse 5 is very similar to the openings of other psalms of thanksgiving (see 106:1; 107:1; 118:1, 29; 136:1; see also 2 Chron. 5:13; 7:3, 6; 20:21; Ezra 3:10-11).

How then do we thank God for the good without making the three mistakes mentioned above? There also are three corrections:

1. We thank God for the temporary, unmerited good things in our lives, including life itself.
2. We admit that as much as we cherish them they are not ours to keep.
3. We confess that, in the end, all we need is God.

Thanks be to God.

Christian Crossword

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Across

1. Touched the ____ (Matt. 9:20)

4. I know in ____ (1 Cor. 13:12)

8. Sendeth ____ on the just. (Matt. 5:45)

12. The serpent beguiled ____ (2 Cor. 11:3)

13. ____ despised his birthright. (Gen. 25:34)

14. Woe to them that are at ____ in Zion. (Amos 6:1)

15. ____ as a sheep to the slaughter. (Acts 8:32)

16. I will give you ____ (Matt. 11:28)

17. As the Lord ____ (Josh. 11:9)

18. I ____ toward the mark. (Phil. 3:14)

20. Now abideth faith, ____ and charity. (1 Cor. 13:13)

22. Your life is ____ with Christ in God. (Col. 3:3)

24. This is the ____ of John. (John 1:19)

28. They called for Jesus' death.

31. All things ____ possible. (Mark 9:23)

33. Where Joshua and all Israel stoned Achan. (Josh. 7:24-25)

34. A tenth of an ephah. (Ex. 16:36)

36. Verily I say unto ____.

38. Say ye unto your brethren ____ (Hos. 2:1)

39. Moses' brother. (Ex. 4:14)

41. National Security Council. (abbr.)

43. Labor Day month. (abbr.)

44. How Samuel's sons were influenced. (1 Sam. 8:3)

46. ____ hath not seen. (1 Cor. 2:9)

48. Ahab served ____ a little. (2 Kings 10:18)

50. If thy ____ eye offend thee. (Matt. 5:29)

54. Run with patience the ____ (Heb. 12:1)

57. I am the true ____ (John 15:1)

59. Japanese drama.

60. The 12th month. (Esther 3:7)

61. Seared with a hot ____ (1 Tim. 4:2)

62. Solomon's navy brought him this animal. (1 Kings 10:22)

63. The son of ____ (Mark 6:3)

64. ____ any of you. (1 Cor. 6:1)

65. Were there not ____ cleansed? (Luke 17:17)

Down

1. ____ thou mine unbelief. (Mark 9:24)

2. Sing of the mercies of the Lord for ____ (Ps. 89:1)

3. Darius' nationality. (Dan. 11:1)

4. Cyrus king of ____ (2 Chron. 36:23)

5. Indicates an enzyme.

6. Be not ____ with thy mouth. (Eccles. 5:2)

7. Private instructor.

8. Isaac's wife. (Rom. 9:10)

9. Auto club.

10. Independent School District. (abbr.)

11. Indicates maiden name.

19. Be quiet.

21. Green vegetable.

23. O ye ____ bones. (Ezek. 37:4)

25. Electrical units.

26. Bear witness also at ____ (Acts 23:11)

27. To shed drops.

28. Ruth left this country. (Ruth 1:22)

29. One of the sons of Eliphaz. (Gen. 36:11)

30. One of the sons of Zophah. (1 Chron. 7:36)

32. Long time.

35. Thought it not ____ to be equal with God. (Phil. 2:6)

37. Them which despitefully ____ you. (Matt. 5:44)

40. National Education Association. (abbr.)

42. They found a man of ____ (Matt. 27:32)

45. Jesse's youngest son. (1 Sam. 17:14)

47. East Indies. (abbr.)

49. Italian money.

51. Which strain at a ____ (Matt. 23:24)

52. The ____ of glory. (Col. 1:27)

53. ____ that which is in part shall be done away. (1 Cor. 13:10)

54. Abraham went and took the ____ (Gen. 22:13)

55. American Dental Association. (abbr.)

56. Automobile.

58. Neither cold ____ hot. (Rev. 3:16)

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Photo by Neisha Fuson

Jennifer Taylor (left), archivist for Samford University's Special Collections, displays a foot-binding shoe that was used during the time Lizzie Hearn served in China. Taylor was part of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission report.

'Sowing the seed of God's Word'

Alabama ministries change lives through informing, inspiring state Baptists

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

The shoes were tiny, 3 or 4 inches long, about the size you'd expect for a doll or a small child.

The crowd noticeably reacted when Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission (ABHC), said the shoes were intended for adult women.

"In China, the smaller the foot, the higher the social status," she said, telling the story of T.O. and Lizzie Hearn, Alabama Baptist medical missionaries to China in the days of foot binding.

T.O. Hearn was the doctor who put ailing missionary Lottie Moon on the boat to go back to America — a trip she died before completing.

Lizzie Hearn was known for something different.

"She was active in the anti-foot-binding ministry in China," Berg said. "Back then, 3 to 4 inches was the ideal foot for a woman, and foot binding started when the little girls were 5 or 6 years old."

The practice often caused infection and sometimes the little girls died. Lizzie Hearn was a champion for their cause, Berg said, and like other missionaries she helped

the Chinese with both social and spiritual needs.

Lizzie Hearn's story is one of many told during the ABHC's historical tour at Samford University in Birmingham.

"It's important for Alabama Baptists to preserve our written materials and our stories, because God uses our stories," she said. "They inspire us, encourage us and motivate us to change our lives and better fulfill the plan God has for us."

Berg was one of five Alabama Baptist entity heads who shared how their ministries change lives through informing people for ministry.

Bob Terry, editor of *The Alabama Baptist*, said the state Baptist newspaper has been a trusted voice for information for 170 years.

Christian perspective

The paper provides resources for networking, information about persecuted Christians, ideas for ministry and local and world news from a Christian perspective.

"That reputation has made the paper a welcome friend in the home of Alabama Baptists," Terry said, noting that *The Alabama Baptist* seeks to equip Christians in their walk with Christ and Christian ministry.

And Barry Bledsoe, president of The

Baptist Foundation of Alabama (TBFA), said TBFA seeks to inform state Baptists on how to keep that ministry going.

"Every life-changing ministry you've heard about this week at the convention takes economic fuel to do its work and ministry assignment," Bledsoe said.

Estate planning can provide that fuel, and the best place to teach estate planning is in the local church, he said. Most gifts to ministry are given from cash assets, but only .09 percent of people's possessions are in their cash — most are in their estates, he said.

"We explain to believers this act of stewardship (estate planning) so that they can take care of both family and faith," he said. "We encourage them to think about missions, benevolence, orphan ministry, scholarships — things outside the operating budget of the church, things that have a direct impact in changing lives."

Collectively Alabama Baptists have "an unbelievable opportunity to fund life-changing ministries ... if we will just take advantage of it," Bledsoe said.

One of those ministries is Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP), "Alabama's moral compass."

"We are your missionaries to the Alabama state Legislature," said Joe Godfrey, ALCAP executive director. "We are not

planting churches, but we are sowing the seed of God's Word as we speak out on issues."

ALCAP serves as an unofficial chaplaincy ministry at the Statehouse, as well as providing a voice on moral issues as they come up in the Legislature.

Reaching the community

And through American Character Builders, its educational program for schools, ALCAP informs students about alcohol, drugs, bullying and other issues.

"American Character Builders allows us to get into the schools and then invite students and parents back to our churches for a follow up," Godfrey said. "At that point, we can present the gospel. Our material can be used to get into the public schools in your community to touch lives for Christ."

Kenny Hatcher, chairperson of the Christian Life Commission, thanked Alabama Baptists for their stance on moral issues, such as world hunger and abortion.

"As we have gone through this vast cultural shift in our nation, the tendency of churches has been to shift with that," Hatcher said. "May I simply say thank you, Alabama Baptists, for your giving — 'in as much as you have done it to the least of these, you have done it unto Me.'" ❧

Cartoonist Joe McKeever is big 'draw' at *The Alabama Baptist* booth

By Martine Bates Sharp
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

With a sheet of paper, markers and a smile, Joe McKeever set up a table at *The Alabama Baptist* newspaper's booth during the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting.

For a day and a half, lines formed at *The Alabama Baptist* booth as the Christian cartoonist drew sketches of everyone who wanted one — and it seemed everyone wanted one.

But even with all of the interest, no one had to wait long. Turning out an estimated 30–35 drawings per hour, McKeever was able to keep the line moving and accommodate everyone who dropped by the booth for the line drawings. McKeever is famous for.

Engaging in conversation

Some were repeats — a 9-year-old boy who had had his picture done a year earlier, and a couple who had been drawn separately but now wanted to be drawn together.

As the artist drew, he cracked jokes and engaged in conversation with his subjects, declaring to one subject, "You're better looking than that," and to the next one, "You're not." Later, "I did a good job on this one. I may keep it and sell it on eBay."

McKeever has a system for drawing faces. "If you're go-

ing to be fast, you have to. I always start with the left eye, unless the person is wearing glasses. Then I start with two ovals and look for where the eye is within the oval." The shape of the face comes only after the features are drawn.

"Bald heads are hard to draw. When a person has hair, you can feather it in. With a bald person, you only have one chance to get it right," he pointed out.

Drawing a person's face in about a minute and a half, McKeever says he can't worry about making mistakes. "You can't be a perfectionist. You make a mistake — too bad." He quipped, "My wife is a perfectionist. I say, if it's worth doing, it's worth doing poorly. It's my concession to humanity."

As a child, McKeever was encouraged by his father, who would sit down in a chair after work and ask the 8-year-old to draw him. "He would fall asleep, then wake up and say, 'Let's see what you've got.'"

Now McKeever encourages and inspires others. While McKeever was drawing, Rick Williams, pastor of Eutaw Baptist Church in Bigbee Baptist Association, pulled up a

chair in front of the artist and proceeded to draw him on a styrofoam cup. Producing a credible likeness, Williams said McKeever had inspired him to work on his drawing.

The constant drawing takes a toll. McKeever finds himself mentally and physically exhausted at the end of a day of drawing and is only able to keep up the pace because of an exercise routine that he faithfully follows. "I walk every day, holding a water bottle in one hand and flexing the other. Every little while, I switch hands."

Seventy-three-year-old McKeever was born in Nauvoo, lived in Birmingham for several years and has been a resident of New Orleans for the past 20-plus years. He served for more than 35 years as pastor of various churches in the Southeast, then spent five years as director of missions in metro New Orleans.

"Retired" since 2009, he remains busy illustrating books, writing articles for his blog, turning out a cartoon a day for Baptist Press, preaching revivals and holding assemblies in schools — and delighting people by drawing their portraits. ❧



McKEEVER

Spiritual regeneration

First-time attendee shares experience at state convention annual meeting

By Rick Sharp
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When I was asked to record some of my impressions from attending my first Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting, I thought, "Grab some pamphlets, grab some trinkets, grab some candy and doughnuts (biggie), sit through some business updates and listen to some really good Southern Baptist preaching. Sure, I can do that." And so I did.

I tell you honestly, the annual meeting is so much more.

'Powerful, convicting'

Held at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, the 2013 annual meeting was a tour de force of spiritual regeneration. As expected, the preaching was amazing — powerful, convicting, uplifting, motivating — the kind of preaching that seems almost a lost art in today's environment of expository teaching. Don't get me wrong; I love expository preaching. But sometimes it's good to see the pastor — red-faced and pounding on the pulpit — reminding us in no uncertain terms of what God expects of us. It's the stuff I grew up on and in Huntsville, I saw and heard some of the best.

How was the music? I'm glad you asked. As a musician, member of the contemporary praise and worship band at Central Baptist Church, Decatur, and music reviewer for *The Alabama Baptist*, I have some pretty specific ideas about today's

church music. Tuesday night's service — with the combined choirs of the Alabama Singing Men, Alabama Singing Women, Whitesburg Baptist Choir and led by Charles Billingsley — was some of the best praise and worship music I've ever heard. Contemporary? Blended? Traditional? I honestly don't know.

What I do know is that the entire sanctuary was brought to the throne of the Almighty God in true worship. I'm pretty sure there was no dissension among the congregants as to whether it was too loud, too contemporary, too traditional, too ... whatever. It was pure worship and I found myself, tears streaming down my face, praising my Eternal God for His magnificence and His glory. Looking around I wasn't the only one. Even I could have preached after that.

The business updates, surprisingly, were another high point for me. Dedicated, godly and highly skilled men and women took on the task of updating the rank and file on the goings-on of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and convention entities, and I for one thought they all did an outstanding job. As a fairly new Baptist, I knew about the various ministries supported by the Cooperative Program. But this

was my first opportunity to hear firsthand from the dedicated men and women leading those ministries, how those programs are impacting our world, our country, our state and our localities. All Baptists should attend this annual meeting and come away,

as I did, with an enhanced understanding of what we do and why we do it.

Oh yeah. Trinkets, doughnuts, candy, pamphlets. I think I was caught, maybe more than once, slipping into the exhibit hall to filch a piece (or two) of candy, maybe a doughnut and coffee, and spend a little time talking with the people manning the booths. Even here, or maybe especially here, a lot of good information was available about the work of the various ministries supported by the Alabama Baptist State Convention. Good

information, good conversation and good candy and trinkets. What's not to love?

As a first-time convention attendee, let me encourage — no, implore — you to make every effort to attend the annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention. You'll come away better informed, better equipped and topped off with a renewed zeal for what Alabama Baptists are doing to change a lost world. ☮



Polly Ireland, wife of retired ALCAP executive director Dan Ireland, prays during the memorial service.



An annual meeting messenger visits with Joe Godfrey at the Alabama Citizens Action Program booth set up at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville.



Annual meeting messengers sign up for door prizes at *The Alabama Baptist* booth.



John Killian congratulates Mary Sue Bennett (left), who serves as special assistant to Rick Lance, executive director of the SBOM, on her upcoming retirement.



Frank Jones, of Frank Jones Ministries in Birmingham, accompanies the combined choirs of the Alabama Singing Men, Alabama Singing Women and Whitesburg Baptist's choir Nov. 12.



Former state convention presidents were honored during the meeting. Those present were pictured in order in which they served, most recent to earliest (l to r): Mike Shaw, Jimmy Jackson, Henry Cox, Joe Godfrey, Mike McLemore, Buddy Gray, Charles T. Carter, Fred Lackey, Harper Shannon and Dan Ireland.