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Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions Executive Director Rick Lance (right) shares part of his report time with Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland for a surprise announcement. Samford is voluntarily asking for its CP allotment from Alabama Baptists to be reduced over the coming years to help with convention budget concerns.

'We want to help'



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Samford to help alleviate CP pain for Alabama Baptists

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

No scripts, no rehearsal — just straight from the heart. That's how Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland addressed Alabama Baptist convention messengers Nov. 11 when Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) Executive Director Rick Lance shared part of his report time with him.

"We come to this meeting every year and we celebrate the great work God is doing. We hear compelling stories about what's happening in individual churches and what's happening with the gifts that come through

the Cooperative Program (CP). We celebrate all of that and we are all grateful for all of it," Westmoreland said. "Then we come to the hard reality that our gifts are not keeping up. It's hard to make the state convention budget every year."

'We all see the needs'

"I see this, you see it as well. ... No one came to me and said, 'You've got to do this' ... but as president of Samford I have to look at the same set of facts you look at as you examine the budget. I see the needs. We all see the needs," he said.

"While all of our ministries across the board have equal value, I have to admit as president of Samford that all of our ministries do not have

equal access to resources," Westmoreland noted. "I can't in good faith look at this picture and leave these meetings year after year and say we got ours so the world's OK. I can't do that."

Westmoreland announced that over the next five to seven years, Samford is voluntarily asking for its CP allotment from Alabama Baptists to be reduced between \$300,000 and \$400,000 a year until it is cut in half — to roughly \$2 million. Samford's current CP designation is \$4,351,231.

"We have more important things to do in Alabama Baptist life than to get to the point where we worry and fight over who gets the [dollars]," he said. "I'm saying ... we want to be a

part of being ahead of all of this and we want to help.

"That is not to say that we do not have our needs," he added. "This is a step of faith that in some measure God will help us replenish that which we are relinquishing. ... In no way am I saying, 'just go on and don't worry about Samford' [saying] 'Samford will be fine.' We will be but it's because I have faith in God that Samford will be fine."

'Committed to this work'

"Dr. Lance, you have friends at Samford University — people who are committed to this work, people who will be committed regardless of the money," Westmoreland said.

(See 'Looking,' page 6)

Alabama Baptist messengers elect 2015 state convention officers

For the first time in 16 years Alabama Baptists had contested elections in all three state convention officer slots. And it was the first time in 12 years there were two nominees for president.

Travis Coleman Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church, Prattville, and outgoing first vice president, earned the president's role with 83.86 percent (478) of the 570 votes cast.

Craig Carlisle, pastor of Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Rainbow City,

near Gadsden, brought in 16.14 percent (92) of the votes.

John Thweatt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pell City, was elected first vice president with

51.05 percent (291) of the 570 votes. Jim Cooley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Birmingham, and outgoing second vice president, garnered 48.95 percent of the votes (279).

Tim Cox, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea, and outgoing State Board of Missions chairman, was elected second vice president with 56.99 percent (326) of the 572 votes. Dusty McLemore, pastor of Lindsay Lane Baptist Church, Athens, received 43.01 percent (246) of the votes.

Coleman said following the election, "I am very humbled to be elected. ... I'm appreciative of the confidence the messengers have placed in me. This election to this office is

(See 'Coleman' page 10)



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Travis Coleman (center) was elected president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention. Also elected were John Thweatt, first vice president (left), and Tim Cox, second vice president.

COMMENT

Reflecting on the Annual Meeting

When people reflect on the 2014 annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) they will likely remember the many good things that happened. They also may remember some lingering questions raised by a few developments during the 192nd annual meeting.

Perhaps the most memorable single moment was Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland's announcement that Samford was voluntarily requesting its portion of the state Cooperative Program (CP) budget be reduced by 50 percent — about \$2 million (see story, page 1).

Much of the reduction — which will be phased in — will go to help Alabama Baptists reach the goal of dividing CP funds equally between state and national causes. The 2015 budget of \$40.5 million is only \$601,280 (1.5 percent) short of that goal. Part of the reduction may also go to other state convention work already strained by the downturn in financial support from cooperating churches.

14 percent drop in CP giving

Alabama Baptist CP giving has dropped from a high of nearly \$45 million in 2007 to an expected \$39 million this year. That is a drop of almost 14 percent. Together with a shrinking percentage of the CP budget for state work, many entities have been left struggling.

That Westmoreland led Samford's trustee executive committee to endorse this self-sacrificing act in order to strengthen other Southern Baptist and Alabama Baptist ministries was an act of statesmanship for Westmoreland and for the trustees.

Another positive memory may be the doctrinal debate around the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M). The motion adopted did not attempt to make all Alabama Baptists theological clones of one another. Instead the statement of faith was adopted as "an expression of our unity in doctrine and practice." The motion did not seek to force agreement by employees or trustees. Rather the BF&M was "recommended ... to all trustees elected by the Alabama Baptist State Convention" (see story, page 3).

While not referenced on the convention floor, the motion had the feel of action recommended by the SBC Executive Committee and approved by the 2014 Southern Baptist Convention which urged churches to have a statement of faith "which closely identifies with the convention's adopted statement of faith."

The action provides guidelines affirming major characteristics of Baptist understandings of the Christian faith. The adopted motion also provides opportunity for individual understandings and differences within the broad guidelines. That position seems in the best tradition of Alabama Baptists who have always been clear



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

about commitment to God through faith in Jesus Christ and on the primacy of God's Word as our only source for faith and practice. At the same time, we have worked together in missions and ministries despite different understandings about how the details of some of those faith commitments work out.

Concern about doctrinal guidelines in Alabama Baptist life is not a new issue. More than a year ago several entity leaders, this writer included, joined together to ask the state convention's Committee on Boards and Commissions to amend their guidelines for nomination to include the statement "Does the person (nominated) affirm support of the doctrines and practices generally accepted by Alabama Baptists as founded on the authority of Scripture."

Even though entity leaders only recommended such persons, we wanted a way to assure Alabama Baptists that those chosen to oversee various ministries share the faith to which Baptists are committed.

That wording was later approved and added to the statement affirming the CP as the preferred means of financial support for sharing the gospel throughout the world. The motion adopted at the recent convention seems consistent with actions already initiated by leaders of Alabama Baptist-related ministries.

Great preaching will be another fond memory. The Tuesday evening service was all inspiration — first through music then through the magnificent preaching of Robert Smith of Samford's Beeson Divinity School.

Defying description

The preaching of Robert Smith defies description. It has to be experienced to grasp the breadth of his knowledge, the depth of his understandings and the heights to which he transports one's spirit. It is no wonder he is not only one of the nation's best teachers of preaching but one of its best practitioners.

Alabama Baptist pastors were not far behind him. Different styles of preaching were demonstrated in the convention sermon and the theme interpretations but each left messengers inspired and challenged.

If there is a lingering question it will be about the election of officers. There is nothing wrong with having contested elections even though this was the first time in 16 years all three offices have been contested in the same convention.

What raises a question is the impression of a drive-in campaign for voting. Attendance this year was 941, only two fewer than the last time the convention met in Birmingham in 2010. What is different is that Wednesday morning 147 messengers registered. In 2010 there were 40. Last year in Huntsville 18 people registered during the final Wednesday morning session.

Alabama Baptists are encouraged to attend whatever portion of the convention they can, even if only the final session. Still it is odd when nearly 15 percent of the total registration turns out for the one session where all of the convention officers are elected.

Every Alabama Baptist elected a messenger by a church has a right to vote but driving in for the final session just to vote is unhealthy. Hopefully every messenger will be concerned enough about Alabama Baptist life to learn about it by attending its sessions, not just showing up to cast a ballot.

Role of convention president

The future role of the convention president in officer elections will also be watched going forward. For the first time in this writer's memory, the president was involved in overt electioneering by posting on Facebook who he was voting for, sending emails urging people to vote for that candidate and even in the hallways telling people to be sure to be in place to vote for a particular person.

Those who know John Killian attribute the actions to an overflow of his normal activity. He is a Republican leader in western Jefferson County and it is hard to talk to John without some election coming up. Still previous convention presidents have focused on staying out of elections during their time in office rather than using the influence of their office to help a particular candidate achieve election.

Whether this year was an anomaly or a new normal will be interesting to watch.

But Killian's concern about elections did not interfere with his presiding. He led the meeting with skill and knowledge. He was supportive of every aspect of Baptist work as he has been during his two years in office. His humor kept people relaxed and the program moving forward. He demonstrated he is both affable and astute.

When the final gavel sounded Alabama Baptists still faced budget problems to solve, ministries to accomplish and a God to serve. And they left better equipped to do them all because of what transpired during the 2014 annual meeting. ❧



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

(ISSN 0738-7741;
USPS 011-080)

© The Alabama Baptist, Inc. is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 1-800-803-5201. Fax: 205-870-8957. **Website:** www.thealabamabaptist.org. **Email:** news@thealabamabaptist.org or circulation@thealabamabaptist.org. Periodicals postage paid at Birmingham, Ala., and at additional mailing offices.

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DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES
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'Because there is a problem in our world'

Messengers approve BF&M 'as an expression of our unity in doctrine and practice'

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 statement of faith has been approved "as an expression of our unity in doctrine and practice" by messengers to the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) annual meeting at Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, Nov. 11-12.

The motion proposed by A.J. Smith, pastor of Bay Springs Baptist Church, Shelby, in Shelby Baptist Association also recommends "the same to all of trustees elected by the Alabama Baptist State Convention."

While the motion stirred hallway and booth-area conversations, it only garnered four comments from the convention floor — two for the motion and two against. The vote was 85 to 90 percent in favor of the motion.

ABSC President John Killian also made an unusual move by being one of the four messengers speaking from the floor in favor of the motion.

'Recommend' to entities

"I'm teetotally for this motion — 100 percent for it," Killian said. As far as what this means for ABSC entities and their board of trustees, he said, "It only says we recommend. This is not getting into the internal affairs of our entities. It just says this is what we believe."

"We are a convention of Southern Baptists. This is what Southern Baptists believe. If we are a convention of Southern Baptists then

we should at least go on record and say this is what we believe."

Ron Madison, pastor of Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville, spoke against the motion.

"I'm grateful for the history and heritage of Alabama Baptists. I'm grateful that over the years of turmoil and strife across the

Southern Baptist Convention, Alabama Baptists have stood above and outside that fray," he said. "We have not needed to affirm formally or request that our entity trustees or anyone else affirm formally anything other than ... our only unassailable source of doctrine and truth and that is the infallible, inerrant word of God."

"I don't know if I'm really speaking against the motion as much as I am asking the question, 'Why do we need something when we have made it all the way through the conflict and division that

has characterized so many of our Deep South state conventions [while] all we've done is come closer and closer together?"

"I don't believe in doing something just to say we've done something," Madison said. "I simply wonder why we need to do this and I'm not convinced that we need to do this."

Smith told messengers, "We already affirm the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 with our Cooperative Program giving and with the buy-

ing of LifeWay literature. We already technically affirm it but let's be clear [by passing this motion]."

Smith said following the vote that the motion will help address "problems with doctrinal understandings in our church."

It also will help as "we face cultural challenges that Christians have not faced since the third century," he said.

"This is about how we are going to address a lost world with the gospel of Christ and do it with one voice. The big task in our century is apologetics, defending the faith."

Noting he used the precise wording he did "to make sure it would be clear of any parliamentary hurdles," Smith said, "I worded this very carefully to protect the liberty of the churches and also to respect the way we do things as Alabama

Baptists and as a convention working with the State Board of Missions.

"I did not do this because there is a problem in our convention but because there is a problem in our world — how to speak with one voice," he explained.

"This is not binding on churches," he said. "It is being recommended or suggested to the trustees of entities but it is not binding on entities." ❧



SMITH

Alabama continues to give more to CP than any other state

Alabama Baptists continue to give more money to missions through the Cooperative Program (CP) than any other state Baptist convention.

During the 2013-2014 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) budget year Alabama Baptists gave \$16,981,419.18 through the Cooperative Program (CP) to mission causes outside Alabama, according to information provided by the SBC Executive Committee. That was \$477,289 more than the second largest contributor to SBC causes — Georgia Baptist Convention.

Undesignated receipts

Part of the reason for Alabama Baptists' leadership is the percentage of undesignated receipts given by the churches for mission causes through CP.

Alabama Baptists channeled 7.3 percent of undesignated receipts through CP for the last year of record, according to the Book of Reports. "This is a differential increase of 5 percent over last year's 6.9 percent," the report stated.

At the June 2014 annual meeting SBC leaders reported the national average of undesignated receipts given through CP was 5.5 percent, almost two full percentage points below the Alabama Baptist average.

During the CP giving report to messengers attending the Nov. 11-12 Alabama Baptist State

Convention annual meeting, the pacesetters among Alabama Baptist churches for CP giving were recognized.



WOOD

Jim Swendenburg, director of the office of Cooperative Program and stewardship development of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, recognized:

► Pisgah Baptist Church, Selma — highest giving per capita through the CP with \$320.47.

► College Heights Baptist Church, Glencoe — highest giving through the CP as a percentage of undesignated receipts with 24.4 percent.

► Shades Mountain Baptist

Church, Vestavia Hills — highest giving of total dollars through the CP with \$755,586.

Danny Wood, pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist, shared with convention messengers that what Shades Mountain is doing can be done in every church.

'Very intentional'

"It's not just because we are a large church or have a lot of resources. It is very intentional," he said. "The amount might not be the same but what you do can be the same. We make it a priority ... 20 cents of every dollar goes outside the walls of our church ... with 10 percent going to the Cooperative Program.

"Anyone can do this," he said. "You have to set your mindset and determine if you are going to be missions-minded or not." (TAB)



Robert Smith Jr., professor of Christian preaching at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, preaches a message based on the convention theme SERVE.

Photo by Neisha Fuson

'You have a ministry'

Smith inspires messengers with his interpretation of what it means to be a servant of God

By June Mathews

Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

An enthusiastic crowd gathered for Tuesday night worship at the Alabama Baptist State Convention to hear Robert Smith Jr., professor of Christian preaching at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, bring a lively message based on the convention theme SERVE. (SERVE — Starting new churches, Evangelizing the lost, Revitalizing churches, Volunteering to be on mission, Engaging the culture with the gospel.)

Known for his dynamic style, quick humor and passionate delivery, Smith did not disappoint. Judging from the shouts of "amen" and the frequent spurts of applause resounding throughout the worship center at Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, Smith clearly inspired convention participants with his interpretation of what it means to be a servant of God.

In need of God's Word

Citing Acts 20:17-38 and 1 Timothy 6:3-11, Smith told of Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders at Miletus and his subsequent instructions to Timothy about what the Ephesians needed to hear.

"Paul knew the Ephesian church," Smith said. "He knew their nature. He knew their greatest need was the Word of God."

But Paul also knew that much like our churches today their toughest battles were against false teachers and economic obsessions, Smith said. The apostle knew of people trying to get rich through the minis-

try and in that sense he was a threat to their way of life. Therefore his life was in danger. So because his return would only stir up contention, Paul asked Timothy to stay at Ephesus and address those issues.

Now, as then, those attempting to get rich through the ministry will experience the destruction of their faith, Smith said.

"They are piercing themselves," he said. "Listen to what I tell you today: The ministry is not for profit. We're not prophets for profit. We are not. I'm concerned about the preacher who decides that his ministry is going to be based upon the stipend and not upon the Savior."

Smith strongly warned preachers about accepting opportunities to share the gospel based on the size of the venue or the amount of payment offered.

"Don't ever get to the place where you're too big to preach in a small church," he said. "Don't ever get too big to where you always have to have a fee or a contract to go any place. When people ask me what it would take to get somebody like me (to speak), I say, 'an invitation.'"

The gospel, he pointed out, will work in a small church as well as it will in any cathedral.

Along the same lines Smith also touched on the potential harmful issues associated with treating the church like a business.

"The church is not a business," he declared. "We ought to transact business and do it decently and in order. But we're also to take care of business without being a business. We get arrogant sometimes about the size of our buildings and the number of bodies that are in the buildings and the extent of the budget. But that doesn't impress God."

However, Smith pointed out, a lack of arrogance doesn't always mean smooth sailing in the ministry. Even while Paul was humbly serving, people were plotting against him. But Paul had learned to deal with humiliation by accepting it and moving on.

"God will see you through even when you walk through the valley of humiliation," Smith said. "So stop trying to fight those who plot against

you. It is not your battle; it is the Lord's."

In the meantime Christians must do their part in building and maintaining the church in terms of adding to the fold. While Paul did not start the church at Ephesus, Smith gave the apostle due credit for sustaining it.

"What is needed to sustain a church is the same thing needed to start a church," he said. "We need strong biblical preaching, and it has to come because you have a call on your life."

"My concern is many are well-trained but I wonder how many are called. Preaching

is not something you take up. Preaching is something that takes you up. We need people who know they have been called to preach."

And while revitalizing churches is going to take some tough-to-swallow lessons from the Bible as well as widespread evangelizing of the lost, one other component is critical to success.

The movement of the Spirit

"There are things that aren't going to happen in our churches without the Spirit," Smith said. "It's the Spirit who has freedom. He moves when He wants to move. He does what He wants to do."

Volunteers are important to the cause of the gospel, Smith said, but so is waiting on God to point His people in the right direction. He also noted that one's responsibilities as a Christian apply to every aspect of life.

"In fact there's not one of you here right now who has a job. You don't have a job if you're a Christian; you have a ministry," he said, further noting that no one person should feel indispensable in God's economy. "Stop walking around like you're the only rooster in the barnyard, like you're the only fish in the sea. Stop being infatuated with your own sense of importance. God doesn't need you; He wants to use you."

Smith concluded by encouraging listeners to not only engage culture but to bring it into the church and let it observe what God is doing.

"Why?" he asked. "Because that's what God did when He engaged us. That's where God found us — locked up in culture, the culture of permissiveness and sin." ❧



SMITH



Photo by Neisha Fuson

The five-man singing group Veritas sings during the evening session of the Alabama Baptist Convention annual meeting at Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, on Nov. 11.

Truth found in God's Word

Singing group Veritas performs during Tuesday night session

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

It means truth.

Veritas, a Latin word adopted by the five-man singing group, is more than just a name. It's the axis on which their entire ministry spins.

James Berrian, a member of Veritas, said, "We really wanted a name that would embody the style of music but would also give a clear definition of what we were about."

Andrew Goodwin, tenor for the group, agreed, noting the name referred to "the Truth that is found in God's Word."

Created in 2012 Veritas members categorize themselves as classical contemporary, a genre that is mainly made up of themselves, Goodwin told a laughing congregation at the evening session of the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting held at Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, on Nov. 11.

In just two short years Veritas has garnered so much attention that the group spends more than 220 days on the road as they perform more than 150 concerts a year.

One of the downsides to such a heavy travel schedule is the lack of a church home in group members' respective cities.

Jordan Johnson, an Atlanta resident, jokingly said, "We go to the church of Veritas," adding that the group has had to become their own church in order to compensate for the loss of community a home church normally fills.

Regardless of any downsides the experience with the group is "like a dream come true," Berrian said.

The only Alabama native of the group, Berrian grew up in Phil Campbell attending Hines Memorial Baptist Church, Bear Creek.

Singing in various choirs at Hines Memorial Baptist was the foundation of his current career.

"I didn't have a choir at school so church choir was the only exposure to singing I had," Berrian said. "But God gave me a dream that I wanted to be a singer and use the gift of music [He] had given me for His glory and to do ministry."

And use the gift he has.

At first glance one would expect the 5-foot-9-inch, average build Berrian to have a gentle voice, likely on the softer side. Proving that looks can be deceiving and definitely are in this case, Berrian's rich baritone took the crowd by surprise and filled the sanctuary during the group's hour-long performance.

"I'll bet you didn't expect that sound to come out of this little body, did you?" Berrian quipped with the crowd as he introduced himself.

Four of the five group members, including Berrian, earned degrees from the University of Mobile and have roots in the school's various music programs.

Each of the men brings a different musical background to the group, a variation "which is actually really fun," Berrian said.

'Fusion of artistic excellence'

Veritas' website accurately describes the group's sound as "a fusion of artistic excellence, creative pursuit and a performance that promises to inspire an audience of any distinction" — characteristics that have carried them far since 2012.

Career milestones such as signing with Fair Trade Services record label, earning a shoutout from MercyMe on social media for Veritas' cover of "I Can Only Imagine," performing with Roger Breland's Truth 40th Anniversary Tour and filming Trinity Broadcasting Network's "Praise the Lord" program with Kirk Cameron, have been both surreal and affirming for the five men.

One member of the group was especially excited to meet Cameron.

"I'd been watching 'Growing Pains' for weeks just getting ready for (meeting him)," Johnson said, referring to the late 80s family sitcom where Cameron played teenage son Mike Seaver.

Even more fulfilling than meeting Cameron is the knowledge that Veritas is moving in the direction God desires.

Berrian said, "God has done so much for us in a very short amount of time and His hand of favor has really confirmed the calling He's put on each of us." ❧

13 resolutions

Messengers address variety of issues during convention

- 1. On Orphan Care** — that all Alabama Baptist individuals and churches care for orphans whether it be through foster care, adoption, giving, praying, advocacy, etc.
- 2. On Pay Day Loans in Alabama** — oppose these businesses and urge state legislators to pass legislation to regulate them.
- 3. On Science Curriculum in Alabama Public Schools and Universities** — that religion be presented objectively in science curriculum.
- 4. On Parental Authority Through Local and State Control of Education** — urge the governor and legislative leaders to repeal Common Core Standards.
- 5. On Concerns Related to Illegal Immigration** — encourage elected officials to develop a plan to address illegal immigration and encourage Alabama Baptists to demonstrate love and care for them.
- 6. In Support of the Right of the State of Israel to Exist** — and to pledge to pray for peace in the Middle East.
- 7. In Opposition to Anti-Semitism** — support the right of the Jewish community to fellowship without harassment.
- 8. On Religious Freedom** — that the rights of individuals, businesses, churches, civic organizations, etc., to express religious beliefs in speech and deed be upheld.
- 9. In Support of the Alabama Health Care Rights of Conscience Act** — that would ensure that medical professionals are not forced to participate in procedures that violate their religious views or moral conscience.
- 10. On Prison Reform in Alabama** — to advocate for addressing issues of prisoner abuse, to get involved in ministries in prisons and for at-risk teenagers.
- 11. On Appreciation** — for Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, and for all who contributed to organize the annual meeting.
- 12. On the 125th Anniversary of Alabama Woman's Missionary Union** — commend WMU leaders and encourage all churches to establish "vital WMU organizations."
- 13. On Commendation for CVS Health** — for no longer selling tobacco in any form.

To read the full text, visit www.alsbom.org/resolutions/2014-resolutions/. ❧

Looking to the future

Messengers approve 2015 Cooperative Program budget of \$40.5 million

(continued from page 1)

“We love you and we love Alabama Baptists,” Westmoreland added.

Convention messengers responded with a standing ovation and lots of conversation, hugs and handshakes after the afternoon session wrapped.

Lance said, “This is statesman-like servanthood of what it really means to be a partner in ministry.”

He mentioned the last three years of reduced CP funding for Samford as an earlier gesture initiated by the school to help the convention with equitable distribution of CP dollars. That reduction — totaling \$315,000 to date — and the current move will help with budget changes going forward, Lance said.

“As we look to the future, we are having to plan ... with precision to get budget and receipts in alignment,” he said. “Samford’s offer helps with what we voted to do two years ago with equitable distribution with the Southern Baptist Convention but more has to be done.”

2015 CP budget approval

Messengers approved the 2015 CP budget of \$40.5 million with 43.5 percent going to SBC, 46.5 percent going to Alabama Baptists and 10 percent in the shared ministry (between SBC and Alabama Baptists) category.

Any money coming in over the budget will be split 50–50 between SBC and Alabama Baptists.

Messengers also approved five special offering goals:

- *Lottie Moon Christmas Offering* — \$11.6 million
- *Annie Armstrong Easter Offering* — \$6.1 million
- *Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries* — \$2,814,700
- *World Hunger Offering* — \$800,000
- *Disaster Relief Offering* — \$200,000

During the feature presentation of the SBOM report state missionaries gave examples of mis-

sions and ministries related to the convention theme SERVE.

- S — Starting new churches.
- E — Evangelizing the lost.
- R — Revitalizing churches.
- V — Volunteering to be on mission.
- E — Engaging the culture with the gospel.

Alabama Baptists receiving special honors also were recognized.

► Beth Birchfield, a 16-year-old member of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, received the Outstanding Alabama Baptist Missions Volunteer of the Year award.

Reggie Quimby, director of the SBOM office of global missions, presented the award to Birchfield’s parents, Andy and Tanya, because she was on a missions trip to Haiti.

“It’s a tremendous privilege for [us] to be here and receive this for our sweet girl, Beth,” Andy Birchfield said. “She’s not here today because she is doing what she loves, being the hands and feet of Jesus to the people of Jacmel. Tanya and I rejoice in watching our daughter embrace God’s call on her life.”

A full story on Birchfield will be in an upcoming issue of *The Alabama Baptist*.

► Three Alabama Baptist pastors also were honored with the Troy L. Morrison Leadership/Church Health awards.

Mike Jackson, director of the SBOM office of leadership and church health, presented the awards: Established work — Jonathan Reaves, pastor of Tannehill Valley Baptist Church, McCalla, in Bessemer Baptist Association.

Bivocational work — Craig Gaven, pastor of Nanafalia Baptist Church in Bethel Baptist Association.

New work — James L. Jones, pastor of Forest Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, in Mobile Baptist Association.

Messengers also approved the 2013 SBOM audit during the report of the SBOM. ❧



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Mike Jackson (at podium), director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions office of leadership and church health, presents the Troy L. Morrison Leadership/Church Health awards to Jonathan Reaves (right), pastor of Tannehill Valley Baptist Church, McCalla, for established work; Craig Gaven (middle), pastor of Nanafalia Baptist Church for bivocational work; and James L. Jones (left), pastor of Forest Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, for new work.

ALABAMA BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION

2015 Cooperative Program Budget

(Approved Nov. 11, 2014)

	BASE BUDGET
SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION MINISTRIES	17,623,720
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS MINISTRIES	
<i>EVANGELISM/DISCIPLSHIP (34 full-time employees)</i>	
Evangelism	108,275
Sunday School and Discipleship	311,710
Collegiate and Student Ministries	97,632
Evangelism/Discipleship Salaries/Housing	1,679,365
Evangelism/Discipleship Travel/Field Services	166,399
<i>LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT (11 full-time employees)</i>	
LeaderCare/Church Administration	172,308
Leadership/Church Health	132,252
Worship Leadership/Church Music	87,217
Leadership Development Salaries/Housing	530,005
Leadership Development Travel/Field Services	52,515
<i>MISSIONS MOBILIZATION (14 full-time employees)</i>	
Missions Mobilization Salaries/Housing	365,958
Missions Mobilization Travel/Field Services	68,167
<i>MISSIONS SUPPORT (29 full-time employees)</i>	
Executive Director	
A. Director’s Office	25,151
B. Disaster Relief	975
C. Supplemental Aid	975
D. Partnerships	975
Financial and Facility Services	
Director’s Office	430,061
Accounting & Human Resources	2,162,075
Church Compensation Services	14,743
Facility Services	1,436,650
Missions Support Salaries/Housing	956,329
Missions Support Travel/Field Services	160,930
Subtotal for State Board of Missions Ministries	8,960,666
STATE CONVENTION ENTITY MINISTRIES	
<i>Christian Higher Education Ministries</i>	
A. A. Earl Potts Scholarship	113,158
B. Board of Aid to Students	257,286
C. Judson College	948,581
D. Samford University	4,351,231
E. University of Mobile	2,415,183
<i>Other Entities and Commissions Ministries</i>	
A. Children’s Homes & Family Ministries	256,795
B. Shocco Springs	551,755
C. <i>The Alabama Baptist</i>	559,581
D. The Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers	188,452
E. The Christian Life Commission	24,781
F. The Education Commission	3,270
G. The Historical Commission	129,372
<i>Auxiliaries and Other Ministries</i>	
A. ALCAP	66,171
Subtotal for Convention Entity Ministries	9,865,615
SHARED MINISTRIES	
North American Missions in Alabama (3.3%)	1,300,000
Cooperative Program Promotion (2.6%)	1,102,279
GuideStone Financial Services (1.9%)	749,927
GuideStone Mission Dignity (.002%)	8,778
Woman’s Missionary Union (1.3%)	512,112
The Baptist Foundation of Alabama (.9%)	376,904
Subtotal for Shared Ministries (10%)	4,050,000
TOTAL BUDGET	40,500,000

'Speak words of Truth'

'Our Bible is true ... our gospel eternal, our cause will prevail,' Killian declares

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

No surrender" — John Killian, outgoing president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention and pastor of Maytown Baptist Church, passionately proclaimed these words, holding his Bible high in the air.

The messengers, pastors and participants of the 2014 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting were challenged to speak truth to a changing world during Killian's presidential address Nov. 11.

"We are a remnant of believers in a world crosscurrent to our message," he declared. Referencing 2 Timothy 4:1-5, Killian correlated Timothy's struggles with the struggles of every pastor in today's world.

During Timothy's ministry the Church was young and faced much persecution, which made retaining sound doctrine increasingly difficult. Paul encouraged Timothy that "our ultimate evaluation comes before the Lord Jesus Christ," Killian said.

In this life there will be hardships and there will be opposition. However, "as a faithful servant of the Lord, all that matters is your allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ," he said.

Paul goes on to tell Timothy, "Preach the Word." This is just as true today.

A pastor's, lay person's, Christian's "single source for preaching is the Bible, the Word of God," Killian said.

Ambassador for Christ

It's like an ambassador traveling to other countries with a message from the president. When the ambassador speaks the president's message he has the support of his government. But when the ambassador speaks his own opinion the government no longer supports him.

"As long as we speak forth the Word we are on solid ground as we are on the ground that God has ordained," he said.

Any authority Christians have in this life, Killian said, comes from the Word of God, but that power is only potent if the Scriptures remain uncompromised.



John Killian delivers the president's address.

Photo by Neisha Fuson

"When declaring God's very Word we are to speak this Word as the Word stands, even when bringing correction, challenge and argumentation," he said.

Killian used the 1985 film, "The Color Purple," to illustrate his point. The film presents a married couple in the throws of an abusive relationship. One night in the midst of domestic violence, Celia, the wife, held up her hand and said, "'Til you do right by me, everything you think about will crumble." Her words had the power to stop her abusive husband in his tracks.

In the same way Scripture has the power to settle disputes, bridge gaps and eternally save a soul.

"Until we stand clearly and firmly on the authority and complete accuracy of Scripture nothing else will matter," Killian said.

This is not to say that God's Word will al-

ways be warmly received, he said. Paul assures Timothy this is not the case in verses 3 and 4. But despite the flux of seasons in ministry, Killian said, there will always be joy in speaking truth. "Our job is not to make our preaching accepted. Our job is to preach the truth."

'No surrender'

Staying firm to the truth of Scripture will require tenacity, Killian said. However, it is important to remember that pastors facing challenges is not a new trend. Paul wrote words of encouragement to Timothy from a prison cell, but even then he wrote with confidence in God, Killian said.

"Like Paul exhorted to Timothy (we) stand recognizing that our Bible is true, our gospel is eternal and our cause will prevail. No surrender." ❏

DuBois reports insurance, audits of Baptist entities in 'good shape'

Only positive things — that's what Bobby DuBois reported to state convention messengers Nov. 11 in regard to insurance and audits of the various state convention entities.

DuBois, associate executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, noted that in the last few years the insurance committee has evolved so that all six of its members have insurance backgrounds, most of them in property and casualty insurance.

"They ask tough questions of all our entity representatives and all our entity representatives appreciate that time to have the coverage of their entity looked at by people who know what they're looking at," he said. "Our property

and casualty coverage on the campuses of our institutions and all our entities as well as the State Board of Missions are in good shape, and we commend to you those who are monitoring those kinds of services."



DUBOIS

DuBois also reported that when the audit committee members reviewed the numbers, they came away with a deep appreciation for how each entity is caring for its financial resources.

"You can know as Alabama Baptists that those entities are handling your missions dollars well," he said. "They're doing the very best they can at stretching

those dollars ... and taking the gospel from here in Alabama all the way to the ends of the earth." (June Mathews)

Board of Aid thanks Alabama Baptists, CP

It is a pleasure for us to be able to help students prepare for the Lord's work whether they serve here in one of our fine Alabama Baptist churches or on mission around the world," noted the Board of Aid for Students in Church Related Vocations report in the Book of Reports to the Alabama Baptist State Convention. "We are always mindful that the work we do is the result of the generosity of Alabama Baptists and the Cooperative Program."

The Board of Aid serves students at Samford University, Judson College and

the University of Mobile. The board also awards scholarships to students enrolled in the Samford University Extension Division.

Made up of volunteers from across the state, the Board of Aid encourages recommendations from pastors and lay members to ensure that deserving students feeling God's call into the ministry receive support along the way.

Through the Board of Aid, Alabama Baptists awarded scholarships to students totaling \$228,920 for the 2013-14 academic year. (June Mathews)

Judson students, alumnae continue to make impact worldwide

In his report to Alabama State Baptist Convention messengers on Nov. 11, David Potts, president of Judson College, highlighted several Judson students and alumnae who are making an impact around the world.

Citing John 1:29, Potts said Judson women are proclaiming the gospel of Christ just as John the Baptist proclaimed it in the Gospel of John: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

"Such is the heart and mind and soul of Judson College today as we seek to nurture and to train the ambitions and the affection for Christ that students have on our campus to serve and to make a difference," he said. "We thank Alabama Baptists ... for sustaining the idea of Christian higher education, especially for women, and we think we have been sustained by God through Alabama Baptists for such a time as this."

175th anniversary

According to Judson's report in the Book of Reports, Judson College was founded in 1838. To commemorate its 175th anniversary this past year multiple events took place to which alumnae, friends, students, faculty and staff were welcomed.

One such event was the hosting of the Alabama Supreme Court, which held an on-campus session November 2013. Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore presided. Also during the anniversary year the Judson Singers performed at Carnegie Hall in New York.

Highlights

Other highlights of the past year include:

► In June, Judson received accreditation for the bachelor of social work program from the Council on Social Work Education. As a result Judson is now eligible for advanced standing in master of social work programs.

► In a study conducted by Affordable Colleges Online, Judson received high marks for its affordability, quality and flexibility.

► For the sixth year in a row, Judson was included on the President's Community Service Honor Roll. About 85 percent of Judson students serve and minister in Perry County and around the world.

► Eric Gilchrest, assistant professor and chair of Judson's religious studies department, won a fellowship to present a paper at the 2014 Summer Seminar of Young Scholars in the Baptist Academy at the University of Oxford in Oxford, England. (June Mathews)



Photo by Lauren C. Grim

Main photo: During a conversation-style presentation, Ed Young (standing), pastor of Second Baptist Church, Houston, Texas, asks those in attendance to help him illustrate a typical invitation time at a church service. **Small photo:** James Merritt, pastor of Cross Pointe Church, Duluth, Ga., speaks about the pastor and his relationship with God at the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference at Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, on Nov. 10.



Photo by Lauren C. Grim

Pastors Conference

Pastors encouraged, challenged after hearing practical advice for day-to-day issues

By June Mathews, Maggie Walsh and Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Ed Young, pastor of the 65,000-member Second Baptist Church, Houston, Texas, wrapped up a day of inspiration for Alabama Baptist pastors with a conversation-style presentation complete with a time of Q-and-A related to the pastor and his church.

Seven other pastors developed equally relevant themes related to the life of the pastor during the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference.

Kevin Blackwell, president of the Nov. 10 Pastors Conference held at Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, said he sought to provide a day of encouragement and challenge while also providing practical advice for day-to-day issues.

"My prayer is that your bad burdens will turn into your blessed burdens," he said.

Young addressed the concern of the declining number of people coming to Christ.

"We preach the Word, so why do we not have many people come to Christ?" he asked. "It's not the message, it's the methodology.

"We can have revivals until we are blue in the face, but those who don't know the Lord no longer come to [church services] ... so we have to think about radical stuff."

First, pastors must return to weekly personal evangelism, Young said.

Second, pastors must seek lay leaders who will catch the vision and help cast it to others.

Third, "love kids all the way to Jesus."

"You have to spend more time with those 18 years and down than any others in the church," Young noted. "Take your best staff

and best laity and assign them to those 18 and down. ... We ... major on kids. ... And their mothers and daddies keep coming to Christ. Start where you are and God will take it from there."

James Merritt, pastor of Cross Pointe Church, Duluth, Ga., focused on the pastor and his relationship with God.

Standing before God

"One of these days, we are going to stand before God and no matter what you did or didn't get done, may God stand before us and say, 'You preached the Word.'"

Preaching from 2 Timothy 4, Merritt said, "If you are right with God and filled with the Spirit and doing what you ought to do, you will preach the Word and reach the world."



CROYLE

Preach confidently, compellingly, continuously, convictingly, courageously, constructively and compassionately, he said.

The pastor and his calling was addressed by Danny Lanier, pastor of Northcrest Baptist Church, Meridian, Miss.

Citing Isaiah 49:1-2, Lanier said, "If God has called you, you are an arrow in the hand of God."

In Ute Indian culture, an arrow was traditionally made by the warrior who was going to

use it, he said. A shaft of wood is selected, stripped, sanded and heated until it is straight, ready and usable for its purpose.

God employs a similar process to shape the people He calls as pastors, Lanier noted.

"It leaves us vulnerable, it leaves us transparent and many times it leaves us in a place where we don't want to be," he said. But through that process "we realize we're nothing and He's everything."

Danny Wood, pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, focused on the pastor and his prayer life.

Pointing to Ephesians 6, Wood said prayer is a commandment from God and there are things He will answer in prayer that He wouldn't do otherwise (James 4:2).

"If we wait until we understand everything about prayer and how it works, we'll never pray," he said, noting prayer should be a first response instead of a last resort.

Not only does prayer release Jesus to work, but it also demolishes spiritual strongholds (he described as "a lie we've allowed to distort our faith and our thinking"), noting 2 Corinthians 10:4. Prayer also "acknowledges our dependence on God," Wood said, noting Philippians 4:6-7, and is effective when we are consistent (John 15:7, 1 John 3:22).

"If we want God to show up in our churches we need to be praying," he said. "The whole Christian life is to be characterized by an attitude and a spirit of prayer. ... When you pray you're seeking God's will and you're yielding to it."

The pastor and his preaching was the focus for Herb Reavis Jr., pastor of North Jacksonville Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla. Drawing from 1 Kings 18, he explained that the church desperately needs revival preaching.

Revival preaching expects listeners to make a definite decision, exalts God's majesty and grandeur and exposes the powerlessness of false gods, he said.

"Preaching is not just giving people information," he said. "Preaching is filling people with the spirit of God. ... It's not about telling people what they want to hear — it's about telling people what they need to hear."

Reavis also emphasized the need for revival preparations and for people to rebuild the "altar of humble service."

Addressing the pastor and discouragement, Willy Rice, senior pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Clearwater, Fla., said,

"Most pastors know what it's like to get to that place where you feel like you have given everything you have and it's not enough.

"Some of the greatest men of God, some of those who are most courageous and most bold and most certainly full of the Spirit of

God have still known what it was like to experience times of deep discouragement and perhaps even great depression.

"The burden that many of us in this room carry is the constant pressure we feel for the ministry," he said. "We feel it 24 hours a day."

But in the end pastors can be encouraged that what they do for God matters in terms of eternity and that ultimately His kingdom will prevail, Rice said.

Buddy Champion, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Trussville, focused on the pastor and his character.

Based on the Proverbs 4:23 admonition to "guard your heart," Champion's presentation began with a strong statement of the role character plays in the life of a pastor.

"If you don't have character, nothing else matters," he said. "It doesn't matter how good you can preach, it doesn't matter how big your church is, it doesn't matter how many churches you've planted, it doesn't matter what you give to Lottie Moon. If you don't have character, you are washed up."

The topic of the pastor and his family was addressed by John Croyle, founder and executive director of Big Oak Ranch, a children's home for neglected and abused children.

"God called you and me to have a ripple effect," Croyle said.

"Examine yourself as a father and as a husband, not as a man of God or pastor or leader," Croyle said. "You never sacrifice family at the altar of ministry. Family then ministry. You get that right and God will take care of the rest." ❧



CHAMPION

UMobile challenges students to serve amid 'noise of a confused culture'

God is doing something in higher education in Alabama that He's not doing in other states," said Mark Foley, president of the University of Mobile (UMobile).

And thus he set a tone similar to the written report in the Book of Reports submitted by UMobile to the Alabama State Baptist Convention messengers Nov. 11.

With a strategic goal of "becoming a nationally recognized leader in the revitalization of Christian faith and character in America," UMobile offers online Bible study, extensive opportunities for hands-on missions experience and events such as the Project Serve day of service. Like the convention messengers with the annual meeting's theme, students are challenged to SERVE (Start new churches, Evangelize the lost, Revitalize churches, Volunteer to be on mission, Engage the culture with the gospel) with encouragement and guidance from the university's Christian faculty and staff.

'Go serve somebody'

"If you want to cut through the noise of a confused culture, go serve somebody," Foley said.

Also according to the Book of Reports, UMobile will

launch an online degree program in January 2015, offering people who work full-time while balancing family responsibilities a flexible way to earn a degree. The program also is designed for those starting or transitioning to a career in various ministry areas.

Plans are underway to expand the university's facilities via an agreement to purchase the College Park Baptist Church campus adjacent to the school's campus. The church's educational space will be renovated to provide offices, classrooms and labs for the School of Nursing. Elsewhere on campus, student housing continues to grow and campus beautification projects were accomplished during the summer months.

"We continue to provide a safe and secure campus and have contracted with a professional security firm to expand the number highly trained and armed security officers," the Book of Reports stated.

UMobile is recognized in America's Best Christian Colleges and America's 100 Best College Buys. In terms of talented hires the university recently added platinum record songwriter Jamie Harvill, a 1989 graduate, to its School of Worship Leadership faculty. (June Mathews)



FOLEY

CONVENTION SERMON



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Tim Cox, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea, preaches the closing sermon.

Total surrender

'We must experience daily spiritual transformation,' Cox says

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

What's next?

This was the question Tim Cox, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea, posed to messengers during his convention sermon that concluded the Nov. 11-12 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting.

"We have heard inspiring testimonies, ministry reports and challenges from God's Word. ... We are motivated to improve our serve, but how (do we do that)?"

By living transformed through the power of Jesus Christ, Cox answered.

"If we desire to have a greater influence in our culture with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, then we must experience daily spiritual transformation," he said.

One doesn't live a transformed life by singular acts such as attending extra church activities, memorizing a few more Scripture verses or checking off a religious to-do list, Cox added. Rather it is only through a radical change in one's heart condition that transformation is produced. Spiritual transformation is an internal change, Cox explained, beginning with a new identity in Christ and continuing through a growing relationship of love, trust and obedience.

Today, however, there are fewer growing churches and more declining churches than ever before in Alabama Baptist history, Cox said, referencing statistics provided by LifeWay Research.

"Yet the problem is not in the power of the gospel. The problem is not in the promises of our Savior to fuel the Body of Christ with power. The problem is not the biblical mission and purpose of the Church," Cox declared.

No the problem appears to be the disconnect in "the quality of the professing followers of Christ," he said. The cycle of making disciples who make disciples has faltered.

"How can we make disciples if we do not love people?" Cox asked. "And how can we love people if we do not love God? And how can we love God if we do not follow Jesus?"

Cox pointed to Romans 12:1-2 where the apostle Paul begins to challenge believers to put into practice the stirring preaching they heard in the previous 11 chapters.

In verse 1 Paul said, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God which is your reasonable service."

Christians should strive to daily dedicate themselves, being motivated by the "mercies of God" and presenting — daily surrendering — themselves.

Kneeling on the stage in front of the podium with his arms outstretched, Cox said, "We have to say, 'I'm yours Lord.'"

"The living sacrifice we are to offer to the Lord who died for us is the willingness to surrender to Him all our hopes, plans and everything that is precious to us."

Daily practice

This daily practice of total surrender to the Lord is so difficult to enact because it requires a daily deviation from the influences of the world.

"How do we allow ourselves to be conformed to this world? We do nothing. The option is not whether we will conform; rather the question is whose pattern are we going to conform to? Will our lives follow the pattern of this world or God's pattern?" Cox questioned.

Conforming to the world becomes easier when Christians fall into the entitlement mentality that is a roadblock to service. "We're entitled to serve and lead by serving," Cox said.

Consistently repenting of specific sins day by day is the key to opening the gate that leads to the path of daily deviation.

"Our inner redeemed nature also is to be manifested outwardly in our daily living" by digesting the hard-to-swallow pill that is spiritual transformation.

"The Word of God that gives life changes us and transforms us by the renewing of our minds," Cox said. "When our thoughts change, our desires change and when our actions change, our lives change."

The job of the Christian is to show up, open the Word and let God speak, he said. Spending time in the Word prepares hearts to daily demonstrate the change God can make when He is allowed full access to one's life.

"Dear Alabama Baptists, we must live transformed as we go ye therefore," Cox said. "Do not let evil conquer you but conquer evil by doing good."

"Go let (the world) know God by how we live life." ☞

2015 Pastors Conference officers



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Pastors Conference officers for 2015 were elected during the Nov. 10 event in Birmingham (see story, page 8). They are Greg Pouncey, of Mobile, president (far right); Teman Knight, of Montgomery, president-elect (second from left); Rob Jackson, of Decatur, vice president (second from right); and Bobby Freeman, of Talladega, treasurer.

Preserving history

Historical Commission stresses importance of microfilming records

One of the topics of our SERVE convention theme this year is 'Starting new churches,'" said Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission (ABHC).

"The history of Alabama Baptists is a story of starting new churches. After all at one time all of our churches were new church starts."

To illustrate how the ABHC can support churches, Berg took Alabama Baptist State Convention messengers back to 1914 when 14 people gathered in Butler County to start the church now known as Ebenezer East Baptist Church. Showing a microfilm copy of the first min-

utes of Ebenezer East onscreen, Berg said viewing those minutes today would not have been possible without one of the services of the ABHC.

When Ebenezer East began preparations to celebrate the church's 100th anniversary, she explained, its early records were missing. The records were stored in a safe but the safe had been stolen.

Though it was later found, some of the records it contained were missing. But fortunately a former church member recalled going with his grandmother to have the church's records micro-

filmed when he was a child. "We checked with the Special Collections Department of the Samford University library in Birmingham and sure enough the

earliest records of Ebenezer East were there, safely preserved on microfilm," Berg said.

Steps to preserve history

She encouraged messengers to take steps to preserve their churches' history, whether by having records microfilmed or by donating historical items to the repository maintained at Samford

for Alabama Baptist materials.

In 2013 more than 94,000 pages of Alabama Baptist history were preserved through this ministry.

She also said the ABHC offers free tours of the repository and the surrounding campus and invited messengers to visit Samford and see some of the treasures of Alabama Baptist history. (June Mathews)



BERG

Convention-college liaison still strong

Since 1979 the Education Commission of the Alabama Baptist State Convention has been serving as an advocate and advisory group for Christian higher education among Alabama Baptists as well as a liaison among the three Alabama Baptist schools: Samford University, the University of Mobile and Judson College.

The Book of Reports for the state convention annual meet-

ing noted the commissioners and presidents or representatives of the three institutions meet three times annually to discuss items of mutual concern and interest including themes of financial status, academic issues and student life.

"A great spirit of cooperation exists between the commissioners and the presidents of the three institutions," the report said. (June Mathews)

Coleman is humbled, thankful

(continued from page 1) also a testimony to the three churches I have served: First Baptist Church, Gulf Breeze, Fla. (associate pastor); Hillcrest Baptist Church, Enterprise, (pastor) and First Baptist Church, Prattville, (pastor). ... I am where I am because of a faithful God, great churches who allowed me to serve and a loving wife and family. Much of who I am

is due to our Alabama Baptist Convention and Southern Baptist family. I will be a cheerleader for the Cooperative Program and look forward to working with John Thweatt ... Tim Cox and our executive director Dr. Rick Lance."

Also reelected as recording secretary and statistical/registration secretary were Billie Davis and Bobby DuBois, respectively. (TAB)



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CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR: Byne Memorial Baptist Church, Albany, Ga., is receiving resumés for the position of senior pastor. Pastoral experience and SBC seminary preferred. Byne is a Southern Baptist church holding to "traditional Baptist" Biblical views. Please submit resumés to: Donna Pinson, church administrator, 2832 Ledo Road, Albany, GA 31707, or dpinson@byne.org.

PASTOR: Rehobeth Baptist Church is accepting resumés for a full-time pastor. Submit resumés electronically, dfoster@gmail.com or to: 4444 South State Hwy 605, Rehobeth, AL 36301.

PASTOR: Rainsville First Baptist is seeking a full-time senior pastor. Send resumés to: P.O. Box 585, Rainsville, AL 35986, email: firstbaptist@farmer-stel.com.

MINISTER OF EDUCATION & FAMILY: North Shelby Baptist Church, on Hwy. 280, suburban Birmingham, is accepting resumés for this full-time position. North Shelby is a traditional Southern Baptist church, 21 years old, beautiful facilities, ready to grow.

Details about the position are at www.northshelbybaptist.org.

WORSHIP LEADER: Enon Baptist Church of Montevallo, Ala., is seeking a bivocational worship leader to lead blended worship. Please send resumés to: Music Committee, 4994 Co Rd 18, Montevallo, AL 35115, or to: lyns336@bellsouth.net.

PART-TIME WORSHIP LEADER: East Side Baptist Church in Cullman, Ala., is receiving resumés until Dec. 1 for a part-time worship leader. Email resumés to: kenallen2@bellsouth.net.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER: Community Baptist Church, Maylene, Ala. (Alabaster area), is seeking a bivocational music minister. Resumés to: cbcsearchcommittee@gmail.com.

INTERIM MUSIC/WORSHIP LEADER: Resumés should be sent to: Greensboro Baptist Church, ATTN: Music/Youth Search Committee, 908 Main Street, Greensboro, AL 36744, or email to: greensboro@bellsouth.net.

CHILDREN'S MINISTER: Springfield Baptist Church, 30 miles north of Nashville, is seeking a full-time

children's minister. Requirements include a Southern Baptist background, a seminary degree (preferred) and two years of children's ministry experience. This position will include programming and coordinating of all children's activities on Sundays and Wednesdays for ages birth through 6th grade. Please send resumés to: bethbohler05@gmail.com by Nov. 24.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS: The Winston Baptist Association in NW Alabama is currently accepting resumés for the position of director of missions. Acceptable candidates must have a history of involvement in associational missions and support for the Southern Baptist Convention. Resumés can be sent to: DOM Search Committee, P.O. Box 246, Double Springs, AL 35553.

PART-TIME PIANIST: East Side Baptist Church in Cullman, Ala., is receiving resumés until Dec. 1 for a part-time pianist. Email resumés to: kenallen2@bellsouth.net.

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Want to know GOD?

By Pastor Charles Freeman
Hillwood Baptist Church, Huntsville

Several years ago I went through the FAITH evangelism training in Montgomery. It was a great conference and we all learned a wonderful method of sharing our faith. We had to memorize an outline and the scriptures that went along with the outline. The last night of the conference was the night they were going to divide us into teams and send us out to share our faith.

My team was assigned an apartment complex in Montgomery. We had no formal assignments; we were just supposed to knock on doors or try to start up a conversation with someone if we saw them in the parking lot. If you have never done witnessing like this it can be a little intimidating, if you know what I mean. We ran into some people who were moving. There was a young man in his early 20s who was part of the moving crew. I asked this young man if he had a minute, that I would like to talk with him about something. He obliged me and said that he did.

If you have been through FAITH training you know that one of the opening questions leading into the presentation is about what that person thinks it takes to go to heaven when they die. This is the question that I asked this young man.

He began to tell me what it took for a person to go to heaven. He was right on target with everything he said. I was impressed with his understanding of the plan of salvation. When he finished I asked him if he had ever done that, if he had ever accepted Christ as his Savior. It surprised me when he answered "no."

Here was a young man who had all the knowledge in the world about how to become a Christian yet he had never personally made that decision.

Many people in our day and time have all the right answers when it comes to Christ yet they have not made the decision to accept Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. Let's pray that people will not only know the plan of salvation but that they will accept God's plan for their salvation. 🙏

Alabama Baptists tapped for service

During the 192nd 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: Travis Coleman
District: Jimmy E. Jackson, Craig Carlisle, Derek L. Staples, Michael E. King, Johnny Fain, Ronnie Boulware, Chip Starnes, John Nicholson, Dennis R. Culbreth, Doug Farris, Tim Cox, *Patti Shoemaker

Members at large: *Rebecca C. Head, Carl Williams, Mike D. McLemore, Morgan Bailey, Scott Guffin, Rex D. Kent, Cade Farris

Ex officio members: SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance, Chairman of SBOM Chip Starnes, State Convention President Travis Coleman, First Vice President John Thweatt, President of Alabama WMU *Laurelle Stoudenmire

STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

Terms to Expire 2017: *Wynette Cox, Autauga; John W. Price, Baldwin; Kevin Blackwell, Bessemer; Carl Williams, Bethel; Mark McCullough, Bethlehem; *Jim McLendon, Birmingham; John Nicholson, Cahaba; Alan Craig, Carey; Eddy Garner, Colbert-Lauderdale; Johnny Fain and Jerry Grandstaff, Columbia; *Rodger Carroll, Conecuh; Danny Courson and Keith Wrenn, Coosa River; *Dawn Carnley, Covington; Jim Hill, Dale; Zach Richards, DeKalb; *Jane Ellen Wood, East Liberty; Britt Green, Elmore; Chase Clower, Escambia; *Ramzi Malek, Friendship; Daniel J. Hughes, Limestone; Jimmy E. Jackson, Madison; *Kelly Jones, Derrall Marshall, Royce L. DuBose and *Beth Gardner, Mobile; Andy

Hepburn and Rick Evans, Montgomery; Scotty Hogan, Morgan; *Vicki Maddox, Mud Creek; Jesse Reeder, Muscle Shoals; Glenn B. Sandifer, Pickens; Ralph Henderson and Junior White, Russell; Chris Wilson; Sulphur Springs; Jimmy Garner, James Nichols and Herb Thomas, Tuscaloosa; Dennis R. Culbreth and David Miller, Walker

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

Terms to Expire 2018: Mike Shaw, First, Pelham; *Jim Oakley, Centreville, Centreville; Rick Patrick, First, Sylacauga; *Arthur J. Williams, First, Jasper

BOARD OF AID

Terms to Expire 2018: Jay M. Jerrell, Faith Family Fellowship, Spanish Fort; Hunter D. Johnson, Eastaboga, Eastaboga; Randy Johnson, Friendship, Bon Secour; *Karen Cottrell, First, Brewton

CHILDREN'S HOMES

Terms to Expire 2015: *Paul Huckeba, Hunter Street, Hoover

Terms to Expire 2018: *Charolette Hamby, Dawson, Birmingham; Jim Tate, Memphis, Dothan; *Winston Wilks Jr., Henagar, Henagar; *Ray Hammock, Spring Hill, Mobile

CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION

Terms to Expire 2018: Edwin Hayes, First, Cullman; Otis H. Corbitt, Westview, Opp; Dan Ireland, Green Valley, Birmingham; John F. Screws, Second, Fort Payne; Matthew W. Smith, First, Enterprise; Darryl Wood, First, Vincent

EDUCATION COMMISSION

Terms to Expire 2018: *Cynthia P. Hicks, Concord, Newville; *Mary Sue Bennett, First, Tuscaloosa; *R.L. Guffin, First, Tuscaloosa; Dennis R. Jones, First, Talladega; Harrell R. Cushing, First, Montgomery

BAPTIST FOUNDATION

Terms to Expire 2018: *Forrest S. Latta, Spring Hill, Mobile; *William T. Coplin, Jr., First, Demopolis; *Clifford L. Eubanks, First, Troy; Chuck Ashley, First, Montgomery; *David Puckett, First, Pelham

HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Terms to Expire 2017: *Calvin Milford, First, Lafayette

Terms to Expire 2018: Joe Teal, First, Athens; *Ellen Dewberry, First, Eufaula; *Laura Leavell, Siloam, Marion; *Dalton Campbell, Olive Branch, Evergreen

RETIREMENT CENTERS

Terms to Expire 2016: *W. Forrest Hatfield, Elkdale, Selma

Terms to Expire 2018: *Sharon S. Kirksey, First, Spanish Fort; Bill Carr, First, Bay Minette; *Regina Washburn, Greensboro, Greensboro; Lloyd Stille, First, Gulf Shores; *Ed Short, First, Andalusia

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

Terms to Expire 2018: *William J. Stevens, Dawson, Birmingham; *James R. Jackson, Beulah, Sterrett; *Alan Register, Dawson, Birmingham; *Albert P. Brewer, Mountain Brook, Birmingham; *Ronnie

Watkins, MeadowBrook, Gadsden; *Theodore Jackson, First, Montgomery; *Beth Thorne Stukes, First, Jasper; Jay Wolf, First, Montgomery; Joseph C. Godfrey, Shades Mountain, Birmingham

JUDSON COLLEGE

Terms to Expire 2018: David Byrd, Northside, Jasper; *Judith K. Favor, Hayneville, Hayneville; *Leigh Hayes Wiatt, First, Montgomery; *Patricia Blackmon Compton, First, Montgomery; Ed Cruce, Fairfield Highlands, Midfield; *Anne Williamson Shumaker, First, Centre; *Frances Hamilton, First, Montgomery

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

Terms to Expire 2018: *Kenny Harris, Farmstead, Jasper; *Tommy Robinson, First, Gulf Shores

SHOCCO SPRINGS

Terms to Expire 2018: *Ricky Barber, First, Talladega; *Stacey Gunn, Carrville, Talladega; *Mack Ferguson, Hepzibah, Talladega; Barry Holcomb, Divine, Russellville

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Chairperson 2014–2015:

Michael Goforth

Chairperson 2015–2016:

Dusty McLemore

Terms to Expire 2016: Dusty McLemore, Lindsay Lane, Athens; *Candi Stewart, Dwight, Gadsden; Sam Tate, Central, Talladega; *Kathy King, First, Opelika; *Carol Brock, Parkview, Eufaula; Ray Jones, Ridgecrest, Dothan; *Audrey B. Jackson, First, Frisco City; *Jerry Reeves, First, LeRoy; Tom Stacey, Fairview, Selma; Dennis Culbreth, First, Jasper; *Kelly Underwood, Highland, Florence; Greg Corbin, Lakeside, Birmingham; Daniel Wilson, West End, Clanton

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Chairperson 2014–2015: *Melissa Sahagun, First, Trussville

Terms to Expire 2017: *James A. Knight, Shades Mountain, Birmingham; *Ben F. Kelley Jr., First, Montgomery

INSURANCE COMMITTEE

Chairperson 2014–2015:

*Mike Colquett,

First, Monroeville

Terms to Expire 2017: *Lisa Patterson, First, Montgomery

TIME, PLACE, PREACHER

Chairperson 2014–2015:

Mark McCullough, First, Frisco City
Terms to Expire 2015: Mark McCullough, First, Frisco City; Larry Felkins, First, Clanton; Stacy Stafford, Southside, Dothan; Michael Cassity, Jackson Way, Huntsville; Keith Gambill, McGehee Road, Montgomery; Randy Gunter, MeadowBrook, Gadsden; John Brock, Highland, Florence

MEMORIALS COMMITTEE

Chairperson 2014–2015: Wayne Scott, First, Trussville

Terms to Expire 2015: Wayne Scott, First, Trussville; *Mary Sue Bennett, First, Tuscaloosa; Bob Gross, First, Dothan; Ed Rush, First, Demopolis; Tom Cleveland, Dawson, Birmingham

Killian names committees

Two committees, the Credentials Committee and the Tellers Committee, were appointed during the state convention's opening session Nov. 11. 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 *Patricia McGriff, New Hope #2, Cullman. Serving with her were *Griffin Gullledge, Val-leydale, Birmingham; Joshua Evans, Hopewell, Pinson; Mark Seals, Union, Grove Hill; Jason Leight, Tannahill Valley, McCalla; Christopher Jones, Meadow Brook, Birmingham; Matt Simmons, Henderson, Troy.

Tellers Committee members helped convention officers tabulate convention votes.

Johnny Grimes II, Hunter Street, Birmingham, served as chairman. Other members were *Justin Massey, Canaan, Bessemer; Todd Wilson, Grace Covenant, Vestavia Hills; Eric Brasher, Pleasant Site, Sterrett; Ben Stubblefield, First, Jackson; Joshua Price, Bethel, Fort Deposit; Nathan Daniels, Westmont, Birmingham.

The following also were elected to serve on the Committee on Committees until 2017: Steven W. Loggins, Beechwood, Mount Olive, chair in 2017; Paul S. Hicks, West Jefferson, Quinton; Scott Slayton, Chelsea Village, Chelsea. (TAB)

INTER-BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

Chairperson to be elected at a later date.

Terms to Expire 2016: Bill Morgan, First Church, Prattville

Terms to Expire 2017: Dale Wood, First, Lafayette; Bill King, Providence, Opelika

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Chairperson 2014–2015: James W. Mercer, Hollinger's Island, Mobile
Terms to Expire 2017: James W. Mercer, Hollinger's Island, Mobile; Rob Jackson, Central, Decatur

RESOLUTIONS

Chairperson 2014–2015:

James R. Sampley, First, Ashville
Terms to Expire 2015: James R. Sampley, First, Ashville; Adam Brewer, Glory Fellowship, Jasper; Joshua M. Pendergrass, Bethany, Crane Hill; Kevin C. Wilburn, First, Cullman; Ricky Plummer, Bethel, Dothan; Jim Graham, Coosada, Coosada; *Jennifer Foster, Heritage, Montgomery

Time, place, preacher report

The 2015 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting will be held in Mobile at Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne, Nov. 17–18.

The convention preacher for the 2015 annual meeting will be Buddy Champion, pastor of First Baptist Church, Trussville.

Alternate preacher is Henry Cox, pastor of Durant Chapel Baptist Church, Bay Minette.

Messengers voted for the 2019 annual meeting to take place Nov. 12–13 of that year with the location to be announced. (TAB)

Theme *interpretations*

Invite people to enter narrow gate, Watkins says

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

Jesus is brilliant." His impromptu sermons throughout Scripture were "nothing short of magnificent," Daven Watkins told messengers attending the Wednesday session of the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting.

In the second of two theme interpretation sermons for the annual meeting, Watkins, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove, preached with no notes and a delivery that engaged the audience and set off echoes of "amens" throughout his time on the stage.

He expounded on the two verses of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 7:13-14) where Jesus describes life as two roads. "Jesus has been preaching not to impart information or even incite inspiration but rather to seek transformation in the hearts and lives of His listeners."

Jesus' method of always prompting a decision transmits a clear message to pastors, Watkins said — the "call to issue the invitation of Christ."

"Jesus shows us that while both roads claim to lead to Heaven only one road truly delivers on the promise," he said. "One of the purposes of preaching is to invite and implore a few more weary travelers to change lanes and follow Christ through the narrow gate along the narrow road that leads to eternal life."



WATKINS

Understanding Jesus' invitation to "enter through the narrow gate" is not only about entering but also about the specific "narrow gate," Watkins said.

"In other words 'y'all must enter' but you must enter on His terms for we are nothing more than spiritual beggars broken over our sin," he said, adopting an exaggerated Southern drawl for the word "y'all."

Jesus is clear in stating there is one gate and it is through Him.

"Either we believe that Jesus is the Christ or He is a con; either He is Lord or He is a liar; either He is for real or a fake because clearly He claims to be God and He consistently claims to be the only guide into glory and the only escort into eternity.

"As we follow Christ we struggle with the evil ways of the world, fight against our sinful flesh and agonize over sin, self and Satan," Watkins said. "There is a constant battle in the life of the believer for we strive for holiness and we strain to put childish ways behind us."

But throughout the battle Christians must fight over and over again, he emphasized, because God is greater than any opposition in the world.

"I serve a risen Savior and He is in the world today and I know that He is living whatever men may say," he said, continuing through the rest of the first verse and chorus of the hymn "I Serve a Risen Savior."

'We have the only serum'

"It is with a heavy heart and a narrow mind (by the world's standards) that I realize that people are dying and going to Hell every second of every day and we have the only serum for salvation," Watkins said. "Oh may God help us to have such a case of can't-help-its so that we cannot help to speak about what we have seen and heard for we have seen too much to be silent and we have heard too much to be quiet." ❧

Norris challenges Baptists to love through service

By Hannah Muñoz
Intern, The Alabama Baptist

We must pick up the basin and the towel and serve one another," said Randy Norris, pastor of The Station Church, Hoover.

Preaching during the Tuesday afternoon session of the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting Nov. 11-12, Norris built his SERVE theme interpretation on the foundation of loving others through service.

Love your neighbor

"To love our neighbor we must serve our neighbor," he said. "Jesus knew that a profession of love without a demonstration of love is empty."

In Matthew 22 the Pharisee asked Jesus which of the commandments is greatest, Norris said. "Jesus replied with the greatest commandment immediately followed by the second greatest commandment, to love your neighbor as yourself.

"The key to all of these (SERVE) endeavors is having a love for God that isn't just upward, but also outward," Norris said, noting John confirmed this in 1 John 3:18 when he wrote, "Little children let us not love

with word or speech but with truth and action."

Norris said, "This is what we as Alabama Baptists, and even as followers of Jesus Christ, need to be doing. (Jesus) called us to be up front doing the serving."

One of the problems facing the Church is hearing Jesus' voice and accepting it as a command, he said. "If we're listening to all the other voices we're never going to serve the way Jesus wants us to serve."

Pointing to Jesus' perfect example of service when He washed the feet of His disciples,

Norris said He laid aside His position as God to do what God sent Him to do.

Jesus also was practical in His service, Norris said. The disciples needed their feet to be washed because they walked all day in the desert. But only Jesus was willing to do the "dirty work."

Just before leading the congregation in singing "This Little Light of Mine," Norris said, "Jesus wants the light of the gospel to go from here. But that light first has to shine bright right here in Alabama." ❧



NORRIS

Children's Homes protects, nurtures, restores children

When families or parents are unwilling or unable to show up for the children in our state, who will show up?"

As Rod Marshall, Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH) president and CEO, posed this question to annual meeting messengers Nov. 12, dozens of foster parents and ABCH representatives stood up all around the sanctuary and answered, "I will show up." Those intentionally placed foster families went to stand at the foot of the podium to be prayed over by John Killian, outgoing president of the Alabama Baptist Convention.

Marshall said, "We strive to provide excellent care ... and we believe the way we care for (the children and mothers) shows the way we would care for Jesus."

The goal of ABCH is to take children from hard places; to protect, nurture and restore them; and to introduce

them to "the Author of hope."

In 2013 ABCH provided counseling with a Christian perspective to 2,970 individuals; placed 261 children in Christian foster homes; housed 164 children in one of their campuses or group homes; provided shelter for 105 homeless mothers and their children; and sent 16 young adults to higher education, providing services to a total of 3,748 individuals.

At the meeting Marshall shared a story about Jenny, a 10-year-old resident in an ABCH group home. For her birthday her house mother made her a cake and Jenny only took a small piece because she wanted to save some for her parents' visit the following day. Her parents never showed up.

Because almost 24 percent of ABCH's 2013 income came from gifts, offerings and Co-operative Program funding, Marshall thanked Alabama Baptists for being there for Jenny when she needed it the most. (Maggie Walsh)



MARSHALL

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With everything getting more complex with our church sound systems, video projection, lighting control and video production, many of our customers are overwhelmed with trying to keep up with training their operators. Volunteers are very important to making the church services and special productions go well but they don't always have time of their own to study how to best operate the media equipment.

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Living with a Reverse Mortgage

By Jimmy Dixon

"What is it like to have a reverse mortgage?" Max and Carolyn Youngblood (a retired pastor and wife) have answered:

"Carolyn and I took out a reverse mortgage a little over two years ago after reading Jimmy Dixon's article in *The Alabama Baptist*. Jimmy came to our home and he was most knowledgeable, kind and patient — a true Christian gentleman.

We decided to apply because we had a mortgage that was a struggle to pay each month. Plus there were some improvements that we wanted to make to our home.

Since we closed on our reverse mortgage, life is better because we no longer have any monthly payments



Max and Carolyn

and our home looks so much better.

Each month we receive informative statements from the lender. We are pleased that we have a reverse mortgage and we highly recommend Jimmy to you."

Remember, like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our great state helping seniors improve the quality of their

lives. He is Bible study director and an active deacon at Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown.

For a free brochure, quote or DVD, contact him directly at 205-567-4800 or jdixon@mcgowinking.com.



Jimmy Dixon

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Samford serves 'Christ through serving others'

In his Nov. 11 report to Alabama Baptist State Convention messengers, Andrew Westmoreland, president of Samford University, confirmed negotiations to acquire the 28 acres of Southern Progress property adjacent to the school's Homewood campus were underway. Plans call for the College of Health Sciences to be located in two of the three office buildings currently located on the additional parcel, a move that will allow Samford to serve more students going into the health professions.

"Isn't it nice to know that those young men and women also have a heart for Christ?" he asked, noting that the students will be "serving Christ through serving others."

Samford's written report to the convention in the Book of Reports stated the university offers 149 undergraduate majors, minors and concentrations as well as 50 graduate or professional degree programs.

The written report also said Samford achieved the following in 2013-14:

- ▶ Invested more than \$4.4 million of Cooperative Program receipts from Alabama Baptists into a total of \$35.5 million in student scholarships.
- ▶ Enrolled a record 4,833 students.
- ▶ Ranked third in the South

for undergraduate teaching and for Regional Universities by *U.S. News & World Report*.

▶ Gained recognition by Kiplinger's as one of the 100 best values in four-year universities. Also received recognition for affordable value in *USA Today*, *Princeton Review* and *Forbes*.

Expanded curriculum

▶ Expanded the curriculum with new fields of study and organized the College of Health Sciences, which includes four schools: the Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing, the McWhorter School of Pharmacy, the School of Health Professions and the School of Public Health.

▶ Engaged hundreds of students in local and global missions endeavors involving Alabama, nine other states and around 40 foreign nations.

▶ Hosted two major events

related to the Alabama Baptist Convention: the Youth Evangelism Conference and a Church Planting Training Conference.

▶ Changed the Samford Extension name to Ministry Training Institute and expanded its course offerings and certification programs, which are now offered in more than 20 sites in Alabama associations and churches. Classes also are being offered to inmates in seven Alabama prisons.

▶ Recorded gifts and pledges to "A Campaign for Samford" of \$202 million from more than 18,000 supporters, exceeding its goal. This campaign will conclude at the end of 2014.

▶ Claimed Southern Conference (SoCon) championships in football and in men's and women's track and field. The university also placed 162 athletes on the SoCon academic honor roll this past year. (June Mathews)

Thanks to MasterSound

(<http://mastersoundmedia.com>) for providing

The Alabama Baptist with audio clips from the Pastors Conference and Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting.

Excerpts from these clips are included in our digital edition and we want everyone to have access, so we are opening the digital edition of the Nov. 20 issue — which has full coverage of the annual meeting — to everyone in a special one-time offer.

Email news@thealabamabaptist.org to receive the login link and password.



Theology 101
will be back
next week.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For November 23

Explore the Bible By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

A NEW KIND OF COMMUNITY Hebrews 12:18-24

In verses 18-24 the writer of Hebrews contrasts where his people have come from with where they are and where they are going. The contrast is between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion — the Old and New Covenants, terror and joy, distance and closeness.

From a Terrifying Encounter (18-21)

The reference to a mountain that can be touched points us to the giving of the law at Sinai. The Israelites and their animals were forbidden to touch Mount Sinai. The descriptions of fire, darkness, gloom and tempest portrayed the giving of the law so as to affect the senses of sight and sound. The awesome details inspired reverence.

The sound of the trumpet conveyed an authoritative command not to be ignored. The voice speaking words proved terrifying to the hearers. The communications which the people could receive filled their hearts with fear (Deut. 5:23-27).

God communicated a moving reminder of the unworthiness of the people by prohibiting their approach to the mountain. Any human or animal that touched the mountain would die. The glory of the experience thoroughly awed the people so that they could not bear what was commanded.

The separation of God from His people under the law stands in contrast with His approachableness under the gospel. Christians are commanded to draw near to the throne of grace with confidence (Heb. 4:16). The consequences of rejecting a gospel which offers such privileges will be even more fearful than the effects of rejecting the law.

The experience of Israel at Mount Sinai shows how great and fearful the Mosaic covenant was in the hearts of the people. Moses' quote, "I tremble with fear," is based on Deuteronomy 9:19. Moses had feared God might destroy Israel after their worship of the golden calf. The writer of

Hebrews may intend this allusion to warn against similar idolatry.

To a Festive Gathering (22-24)

The greatness of the New Covenant exceeds the Old Covenant revelation at Sinai, so it is all the more important to accept the New Covenant. Verse 22 begins the description of the superior spiritual approach available to believers. The name Mount Sinai, where Israel received the law, does not appear in verses 18-21.

Believers meet with God at Mount Zion, which is identified as the city of the living God and as the heavenly Jerusalem. This description draws on extensive Old Testament imagery of a new heavenly Zion/Jerusalem to say that Christians have access in the invisible, spiritual realm into the heavenly Jerusalem and therefore participate in worship with innumerable angels and the great assembly of those who have died in faith and are already in God's presence. At the moment of salvation Christians become members of a community of those who can worship the living God and receive from Him grace for daily needs.

In verse 23 we see the assembly (church) of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven. Jesus is the firstborn par excellence and by virtue of our union with Him we are firstborn. All the rights of the inheritance go to the firstborn, to us who are fellow heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). As firstborn our names are written in heaven along with the firstborn already there.

God is described as everyone's Judge. As the all-knowing God, He will carry out judgment one day in accord with His nature and in conformity to His truth. This truth should cause us to come before God with both awe and delight. The spirits of the righteous made perfect are the saints of the Old and New Covenants, here portrayed as holy and perfect. This was the goal of Christ's work.

The spiritual life presently enjoyed by believers is all because of Jesus and His blood that was shed for the forgiveness of our sins. Hallelujah, what a Savior. 🙌

Bible Studies for Life By James Barnette, Ph.D. Samford University and Brookwood Baptist Church

OVERCOME AN EARTHLY MINDSET Genesis 50:15-21

Joseph's brothers still feared retribution for their past actions against him. (15-17)

Jacob had been a powerful unifying influence on his sons and his death could have been the signal for a rapid disintegration of the family. There is no clear record that at this point Joseph's brothers had asked for forgiveness. The brothers express apprehension about how Joseph will treat them now that their father has died. Will Joseph now unleash his long-restrained resentment? Even though Joseph has already offered words of assurance on this score (Gen. 45:1-15) the brothers do not know if the assurances will hold.

This is the only passage in which Jacob gives a clear indication that he knows what the brothers did to Joseph. When, where and how Jacob learned of their abandonment of their brother is not clear. What is important is that the patriarch is aware of the terrible and tragic act inflicted on one of his sons and at the hands of his other sons.

Joseph's brothers displayed a fearful submission before Joseph. Joseph displayed a humble submission before God. (18-19)

In fearful capitulation the brothers come to Joseph, fall down before him and declare, "We are your servants." The verb "fall down" brings this moment into relation with Joseph's dreams in chapter 37, where the sheaves of grain and the stars bow down before him. Now Joseph's dreams of old have come to fruition. For the brothers, the good news is that they are bowing to the brother who is now prepared to forgive them for past wrongs.

Joseph's question, "Am I in the place of God?" does not of course deny that he had the power of life or death. His point is that when God had shown so clearly his loving and saving purposes could he, Joseph, hinder them by any attack on his brothers? In

ways that his brothers still do not see Joseph recognizes how the Lord has worked in and through all of his trials and travails. Indeed out of the challenging circumstances he has thrived and saved the lives of many. Now it is Joseph's desire and duty to provide for the whole family, putting away the sins of the past.

Joseph has the right perspective; he had an awareness of God's involvement in all he experienced. (20-21)

It is important to note Joseph does not minimize the seriousness of his brothers' sins. Although their intentions were evil, the brothers are assured that their actions have been drawn into God's larger purposes for goodness and these purposes have prevailed.

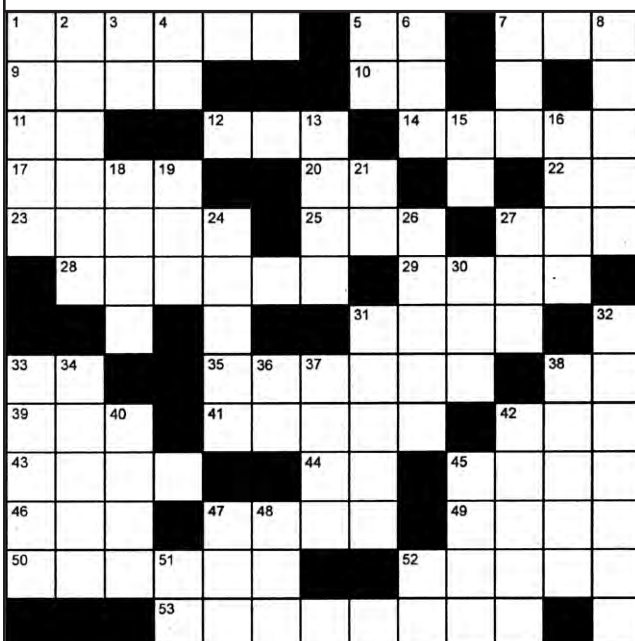
The God who created the world and called it good is about life and its preservation in and through all things. By clearly naming the brothers' actions as evil — something not done in chapter 45:3-9 — Joseph makes the matter public. His positive action has their behaviors in clear view and the brothers now know the evil they have done is no longer counted against them.

Joseph comforts his brothers and speaks kindly to them. He assures them he will provide for them with special attention to the children and hence their future. This involves not mere words but practical aid. Interestingly the brothers do not respond. However, verses 24-25 assume a positive response. One cannot help but suppose they are struck silent by the grace being shown to them. Might we be similarly struck when we consider Christ's grace toward us?

The theme of goodness in Genesis comes full circle here. In Genesis 1, God created everything "very good." Though humanity corrupted that original goodness, God has been working to restore that goodness through our tainted lives and history. Though we continue to commit evil, God is working it toward the good and ultimately toward the great goodness that awaits us at the end of life and history. 🙌

Christian Crossword

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Across

- By their ___ ye shall know them. (Matt. 7:20)
- Jesus loves ___.
- Lean ___ unto thine own understanding. (Prov. 3:5)
- Bad grammar.
- ___ are of God, little children. (1 John 4:4)
- Intensive Care. (abbr.)
- The beginning and the ___. (Rev. 21:6)
- A little ___ than the angels. (Heb. 2:7)
- I will never leave ___. (Heb. 13:5)
- Each. (abbr.)
- Delaware. (abbr.)
- I am meek and lowly in ___. (Matt. 11:29)
- American Medical Association. (abbr.)
- Let thy words be ___. (Eccles. 5:2)
- Opposite of "brave."
- Unto us a child is ___. (Isa. 9:6)
- The head of the ___,

the church. (Col. 1:18)

- Postscript.
- Opposite of "depart."
- ___ be it.
- A hot cereal, ___ meal.
- ___ him, and let him go. (John 11:44)
- A bicycle's handle ___.
- A little bird.
- Missouri. (abbr.)
- Leave these out of your diet.
- Cause thine ___ to hear. (Ps. 10:17)
- A has ___.
- A continent.
- One who works in a belfry.
- Jesus saith unto her, give Me to ___. (John 4:7)
- ___ evil with good. (Rom. 12:21)

Down

- The just shall live by ___. (Gal. 3:11)
- I will give thee hidden ___. (Isa. 45:3)
- United Nations. (abbr.)
- ___ is finished.
- The Lord is ___ shepherd. (Ps. 23:1)
- Moray ___.
- If any man be in Christ, he is a ___ creature. (2 Cor. 5:17)
- ___ stones at him. (2 Sam. 16:13)
- Was ___, and is alive again. (Luke 15:24)
- Ohio. (abbr.)
- God sent him forth from the garden of ___. (Gen. 3:23)
- Charity ... toward ___ other. (2 Thes. 1:3)
- Period of time in history.
- I ___ the way. (John 14:6)
- The ___ of your faith. (1 Pet. 1:7)
- Every perfect gift is from ___. (James 1:17)
- To cook in a skillet.
- Musical poem.
- Buffalo.
- He will not fail thee, neither ___ thee. (Deut. 31:8)

- All ___ is given unto Me. (Matt. 28:18)
- Abram took ___ his wife. (Gen. 12:5)
- Rule out. (abbr.)
- All Jews to depart from ___. (Acts 18:2)
- Silk and ___.
- Sea bird.
- Famous musician, Count ___.
- Old MacDonald had one.
- Nickname for Beverly.
- Before. (poetic)
- ___ ye and teach all nations. (Matt. 28:19)
- ___ all to the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10:31)



State Baptist paper provides common base of information

WEEK after week the state Baptist paper is making a difference among Alabama Baptists and in the state," said Bob Terry, editor of *The Alabama Baptist*.

Reminding messengers to the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting that every volunteer organization needs a reliable source of information to help its people work together he declared, "For unless we have a common view, we all go our separate ways."

Since 1843 *The Alabama Baptist* has been informing and inspiring readers with reports about what God is doing at home and around the world. For more than 170 years the paper has been teaching the Bible and contending for what Baptists



TERRY

believe. The paper has helped connect Baptists not only to one another but to the ministries they support worldwide.

This past year *The Alabama Baptist* was chosen the best Christian newspaper in America by Evangelical Press Association and Religion Communicators Council. It has been voted one of the top two Christian newspapers in each of the past 12 years.

In addition to its print edition, the paper also offers a digital edition as well as up-to-the-minute reports via email and social media.

"*The Alabama Baptist* is about promoting all that we do together, encouraging us in the word of God and causing our discipleship to be expressed in the public square," Terry said.

Giving to missions

He went on to say studies done in Alabama and elsewhere demonstrate that as a rule, churches that provide the state Baptist paper to their people give more to missions and to the Cooperative Program than churches that don't. Subscribing churches also give more to special missions offerings and participate more in Baptist life than nonsubscribing churches.

"While we can't prove it, I believe they pray more too," Terry said. "Baptists support with their pocket-books, their person and their prayers what they care about. And they can't care about it until they know about it.

"*The Alabama Baptist* has the privilege, as well as the responsibility, to provide that common base of information that helps us work together as the people of God." (June Mathews)

Biblical stewardship

TBFA reminds messengers to be good stewards of what God has given us

God is the owner of all things, including that which He entrusted to us on Earth.

As Christians we are called to be good stewards of what He has given us — even after we pass away.

In his Nov. 12 report to the messengers of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, Barry Bledsoe, president of The Baptist Foundation of Alabama (TBFA), noted that most believers have overlooked the concept of estate planning in connection with biblical stewardship.

"Most Alabama Baptists don't even have a will," he said. "And most people I've encountered that have wills don't really understand every decision they've made and often have not made meaningful, informed decisions. Even fewer than that have considered that what they do with their assets when they die is the largest act of stewardship they'll ever undertake."

Christ-centered services

According to the Book of Reports, TBFA serves its members by providing access to Christ-centered comprehensive estate planning services.

With its assistance a number of churches have launched estate stewardship ministries through which professionals help church members work through the estate



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Barry Bledsoe, president of The Baptist Foundation of Alabama, tells messengers most believers have overlooked the concept of estate planning in connection with biblical stewardship at the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting.

planning process in a way that most effectively provides for their families and their faith.

"We are a service ministry and we're really passionate about this area of estate

stewardship," Bledsoe told convention messengers. "Our number one priority at The Baptist Foundation of Alabama is to serve Alabama Baptists to the best of our abilities." (June Mathews)

Retirement Centers meet needs of senior adults in Christian environment

Humble gratitude — this is the best way to describe the demeanor of Ray Burdeshaw as he thanked messengers at the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting Nov. 12 for their faithful giving through the Cooperative Program (CP).

Because of CP gifts an elderly gentleman recently found Christ after becoming a resident of one of the Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers, Burdeshaw told messengers. The man's daughter had been seeking the best option for him and spotted one of the centers while driving around looking for a place for him to live. She was compelled to check with one of the three



BURDESHAW

Baptist-sponsored retirement centers and is now a volunteer at the facility.

Formed to meet the needs of senior adults in a caring, Christian environment the Retirement Centers "desire to minister to the whole person ... both physically and spiritually," said Burdeshaw, acting president of the Retirement Centers.

At each of the three locations, managers of the Retirement Centers seek to make residents feel like family and minister to

them through Vacation Bible Schools, Bible studies, preaching services, computer classes, exercise classes and additional fun activities throughout the year.

"It is our desire that we give opportunity for our residents to come to know the

Lord as their personal Savior," Burdeshaw said.

At the present time centers are in Montgomery, Dothan and Roanoke, with plans to develop a fourth center in Fairhope in the future. (Maggie Walsh)



New SBOM officers elected

Photo by Maggie Walsh

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) elected new officers during its Nov. 12 meeting. They are: Chip Starnes (right), pastor of FBC Bay Minette, chairman; Dennis Culbreth (left), pastor of FBC Jasper, vice chairman; and Billie Davis (center) of SBOM, secretary.

'We've stayed the course'

Alabama WMU celebrates 125th birthday, looks forward to future

November 11 was an auspicious day for Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU). That was the day Alabama WMU celebrated its 125th birthday.

"I believe that the key to our strength as an organization has been that we've stayed the course," said Executive Director Candace McIntosh in her Nov. 12 report to the Alabama Baptist State Convention. "Alabama Woman's Missionary Union was born 125 years ago for the sole purpose of supporting missions and we have stayed true to the heart of who we are, our desire to see the Great Commission fulfilled."

'Carry their light'

A year-long celebration of the milestone kicked off on the campus of Shocco Springs Conference Center in July, where participants were challenged to "carry their light into a dark world," according to the Book of Reports.

To achieve that end Alabama WMU utilizes modern means including social media and other technology, McIntosh said. But to her the most effective way to guide others on their missions journey is "leading by example and bringing others along with me."

This past year attendance was up at Alabama WMU events and WorldSong camp at Cook Springs hosted several retreats and other events. The Summer Mission Camp alone was attended by 616 campers



Photo by Neisha Fuson

Alabama Woman's Missionary Union Executive Director Candace McIntosh shares with messengers at the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

and 19 decisions were made for Christ. Other events included Complete, a gathering for girls in grades 7-12, and a Ministers' Wives Luncheon with Alabama First Lady Dianne Bentley.

But in order for Alabama WMU's course to be properly sustained Alabama Baptists have a responsibility to the gen-

erations to come to educate them in terms of missions — giving them the kind of understanding that leads to action, McIntosh said.

"I'm excited about this generation," she said. "I believe in what is yet to come and may we be found faithful." (June Mathews)

Christian Life Comm. addresses social ills

The Christian Life Commission (CLC) meets twice yearly to serve as a voice for moral and ethical concerns among Alabama Baptists. State Missionaries Rick Lance and Keith Hinson work with the CLC and facilitate the quarterly publication of the Christian Life Report.

Moral challenges

CLC chairman Jim Graham wrote in the Book of Reports that in 2014 "America faces unprecedented moral challenges as well as long-standing societal ills and problems."

The CLC stands in favor of traditional marriage, for the sanctity of human life from conception until natural death, in opposition to religious persecution at home and abroad and against the expansion of alcohol and gambling in Alabama and across the nation. (June Mathews)

Shocco consistently provides Christian environment for spiritual transformation

Shocco Springs' mission is to serve through the ministry of Christian hospitality," said Buster Taylor, executive director of Shocco Springs Conference Center in Talladega.

In his presentation to the Alabama State Baptist Convention on Nov. 12, Taylor related that throughout its 66 years of ministry Shocco has consistently provided a distinctly Christian environment for spiritual transformation and renewal by maintaining an atmosphere that is positive, encouraging and Christ-centered.

Shocco Springs, he said, achieves its mission through seven key offerings: conferences, retreats, camps, training, team-building, adventure and missions. Each one represents a different experience in a slightly different environment, with each event tailored to meet the unique goal and vision of the group leader.

According to the Book of Reports, Shocco Springs hosted 21,004 guests this past summer along with 1,135 of those individuals making decisions for Christ. The

camp expanded its offerings in 2014 with two new events, the Together at the Springs marriage conference and the Super Summer Alabama leadership camp for students. Both events will be returning to Shocco in 2015. In August staff members were able

to offer the "Shocco experience" in Jacmel, Haiti, where they facilitated a camp for 30 children.

"We are overwhelmed with joy as we look back over all that God has used Shocco Springs to accomplish this year and over years past," the report stated.

"The fingerprints of Alabama Baptists are all over Shocco and can be seen on each and every life impacted, both physically and spiritually, through our ministry together.

"Because of your investment through the Cooperative Program, hundreds of thousands of people have heard the name of Christ proclaimed through events at Shocco Springs," the report said. "It is with great anticipation that we look to what the future holds for our ministry." (June Mathews)



TAYLOR

ALCAP keeps Alabama Baptists informed about moral issues

We are your missionaries to the state Legislature," said Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP), in his Nov. 12 report to the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

ALCAP serves by speaking out on the issues of concern to Christians including family and pro-life issues as well as issues involving alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs and gambling, he said.

"Another way we serve is by

keeping you informed about what's going on in Montgomery," he said. "You can go to our website, alcap.com and sign up for our email alerts."



GODFREY

In the Book of Reports,

Godfrey noted

during the 2014 Regular Session of the Alabama House of Representatives ALCAP monitored 129 bills dealing with moral issues. Half of those bills dealt with the expansion of alcohol, most of which involved local Sunday alcohol or draft beer sales. Six pro-life bills were introduced, two of which passed and were signed into law by Gov. Robert Bentley.

Each week the Legislature is in session, ALCAP hosts a Legislative Prayer Breakfast to facilitate and encourage prayer among Alabama's state representatives. On a local level ALCAP assists municipalities and counties in fighting against alcohol expansion within their communities.

Today's culture

ALCAP also offers resources to help churches engage the culture in which they exist.

"If you're dealing with a particular moral issue you should be able to find something on our website that might help you in illustrating your point," Godfrey said. "You also will find ways you can get involved in serving and in reaching your community for Christ."

With its partner program, American Character Builders, ALCAP provides material that can be taken into schools and used to help educate children on character issues. Biblical aspects are introduced in follow-up programs in churches.

On May 18, 2014, ALCAP presented the second ALCAP/Dan Ireland Salt & Light Award to Randy Johnson, pastor of Friendship Baptist Church, Bon Secour, "for his efforts to impact our culture for Christ." (June Mathews)