

# THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



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More than 4,000 people gather for Hunter Street Baptist Church's worship service at Samford University's Pete Hanna Center on May 17.

# SPIRIT of UNITY

Photo courtesy of Hunter Street Baptist Church

## Hunter Street Baptist focuses on what makes a 'real church'

By Neisha Roberts  
The Alabama Baptist

It's a common phrase among pastors, church leaders and even members — "The church building is just a building," especially when the building is taken away abruptly in a disaster or destroyed in some form of a crime.

But for Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, the building hasn't been taken away. However, a similar phrase is often heard in and out of the church building.

Pastor Buddy Gray has long been quoted as saying, "Hunter Street Baptist Church is not a building but a people — a people committed to God and to each other."

He began a sermon series in January 2014 based on the book of Acts and concentrated on the qualities of

a "real church." To help flesh out the purposes of a real church, Gray has focused on five emphases over the past 17 months: belong (authentic community), grow (intentional discipleship), serve (humble giving), tell (bold proclamation) and worship (biblical exaltation).

On May 17 the congregation held Celebration Sunday where more than 4,000 church members gathered in one service (instead of the normal three services) at Samford University's Pete Hanna Center.

With the theme "We Are Hunter Street," members gathered for worship, a sermon from Gray, the

Lord's Supper and, after the service, a tailgate lunch.

Prior to Celebration Sunday, Hunter Street began a process of renewing church memberships by passing out and mailing commitment cards.

After each Sunday service baskets were placed in the sanctuary so members could recommit and turn in their cards.

Janelle Hutto, who's been a member for more than three years with her husband, said, "It was a good reminder of what we are committing to and why we are members of the church and why we want to be members of Hunter Street." 🙏

**To view the service and see photos, visit [HunterStreet.org](http://HunterStreet.org).**

## 'Trying to figure out next move' with Boy Scouts

By Jennifer Davis Rash  
The Alabama Baptist

The Boy Scout way and its national leader are now in conflict, said Alabama Baptist pastor A.J. Smith, immediate past president of the Association of Baptists for Scouting (ABS).

"The Scout handbook says, 'The mission of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) is to prepare young people to make ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes by instilling in them the values of the Scout Oath and Scout Law,'" said Smith, pastor of Bay Springs Baptist Church, Shelby.

"But if you look at (BSA President Robert) Gates' speech and look at how he got to where he got, it has to do with what he thinks is ... socially acceptable," Smith said of the May 21 announcement by Gates that BSA should end its ban on gay adult leaders.

"He is kicking the can down the road so someone else has to deal with it, but everything about this undermines the Scout law and practice in my opinion," Smith said.

Gates, a former CIA director and U.S. secretary of defense, told those attending the May 21 session of the BSA annual meeting in Atlanta he is not asking the national board to change the leadership policy immediately. But he said the Scouts must voluntarily accept gay leaders before a court forces them to do so.

Smith said Gates' move was triggered by the April decision of the Greater New York Councils to hire the first openly gay Eagle Scout to work as a camp leader this summer.

According to a copy of (See 'Duty,' page 4)

Coming soon ...

Why discipline of **reading** is **important** for Christians



# COMMENT

THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

## Is There Too Much Inequality?

The information is more complicated than many of us want to deal with. Yet it is important because it impacts the wellbeing of most Americans and of America itself.

Something is amiss when 64 percent of Americans no longer believe the country offers everyone an equal chance to succeed compared to only 33 percent who do. It also is not a good sign when 73 percent of those making \$50,000 or less annually believe the economy is stacked against them. Yet these were the findings of a Bloomberg Poll released in December 2014.

Unfortunately there is support for those conclusions. It can easily be seen in the wages people make.

The Economic Policy Institute reported in 2013 that if the minimum wage of 1968 had just kept pace with inflation, today's minimum wage would be \$10.60 instead of the current \$7.25. Had the minimum wage kept pace with productivity growth since 1968, the minimum wage would be \$18.67.

### Median wage

The nation's median wage is \$16.30, according to the same source, with half of all wages above that amount and half below. Had the median wage kept pace with productivity growth, the median wage would be \$28.42. However, since 1968 productivity has increased about 154 percent and wages have gone up only about 13 percent.

In 2014 the Council of Economic Advisors reported that if the share of income going to the bottom 90 percent of American workers was the same in 2013 as it was in 1973, the median annual household income (adjusted for family size) would be increased by about 18 percent or about \$9,000 higher than it is now.

Another report documented that for the bottom 90 percent, average family income "has been flat since 1980."

What one writer described as the "yawning gap between productivity and wage growth" is a primary reason for the languishing fortune of America's middle class.

At the same time those at the top of the economic pyramid are doing very well. *The Economist* magazine

reported that since 2009, 95 percent of all income gains have flowed up to the top 1 percent. Today, *The Economist* article added, the top 1 percent accrue 20 percent of the nation's pretax income, doubling their 10 percent share from the 1970s.

According to a University of California (UC), Berkley study, the income inequality in the U.S. economy is at a new high. That is worrisome to economists and should be to all.

While some income inequality is unavoidable and necessary in our economic system, too much undermines economic growth.

Bill Gross, co-founder and former co-chief investment officer for Pacific Investment Management Company, observed, "For the past 10, 20, 30 years capital has moved away from labor and toward corporations and investors. I'm not sure capitalism can thrive in a system in which 'labor' has a declining interest in terms of the percentage of the pie. Then ultimately the pie itself can't grow because consumption can't be supported."

*The Economist* article reported that in 2012 the top 5 percent of earners accounted for 38 percent of personal-consumption expenditures compared to 27 percent in 1995. During the same time period consumption by the bottom 80 percent of earners dropped from 47 percent to 39 percent.

When the consumer spending base becomes too narrow the economy falters. Luxury brands like Tiffany & Co. may prosper (their stock value jumped more than 425 percent from the end of the Great Recession through the study) but mainline stores like Walmart do not (Walmart's stock gained just over 60 percent in the same time frame).

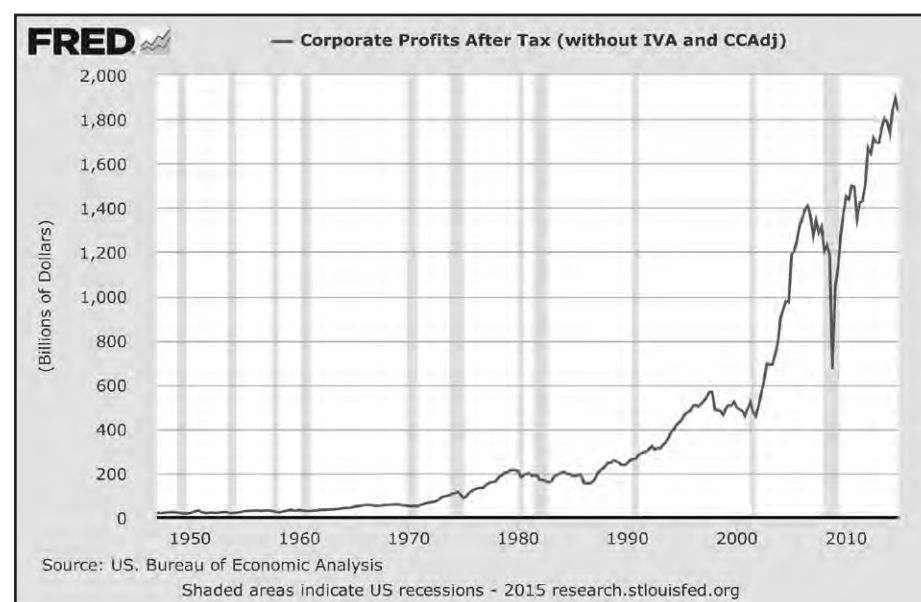
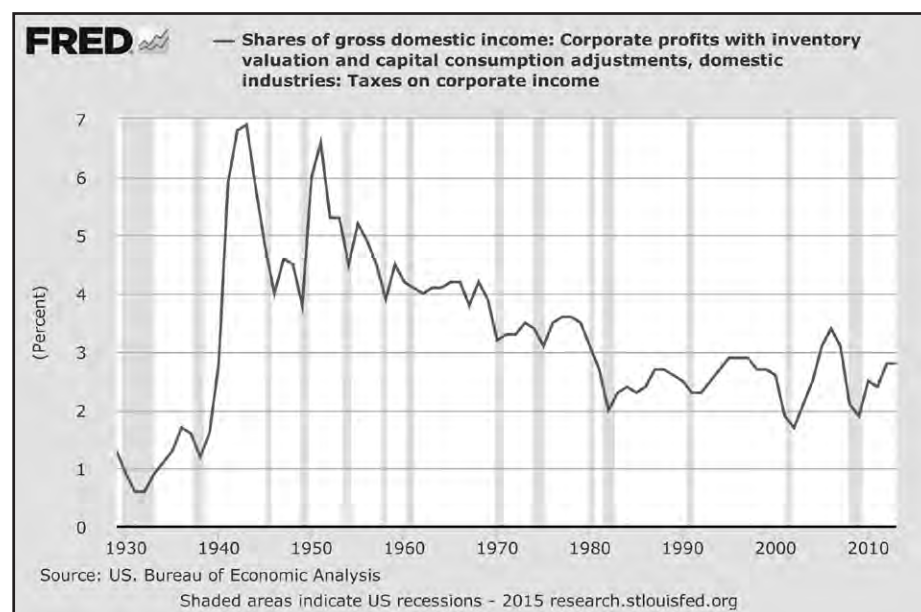
Andrew Berg and Jonathan D. Ostry, researchers with the International Monetary Fund, concluded that "income distribution is more important than open trading arrangements, favorable exchange rates and the quality of the country's political institutions." However, government spends more time debating the latter than the former.

Again the UC Berkley study concluded, "The research shows that the U.S. economy is probably at or

near the point where the negative effects of inequality outweigh the positive effects." If this is true, it is bad for individual Americans and for America itself.

The three graphs below are self-explanatory — wages; taxes and corporate income; and corporate

profits after taxes. Please study them. They help explain what is happening in America that causes middle-class and working people to believe they no longer have a chance to succeed and that the economic cards are stacked against them. 🙏





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

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# Predatory behavior

## Payday loans targeted by ERLC, others in religious coalition

**T**he Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) has helped launch a religious coalition seeking an end to the predatory loan industry.

ERLC joined with other religious organizations May 14 to announce the Faith for Just Lending Coalition at a Capitol Hill news conference.

The diverse alliance that includes Baptists, other evangelical Christians and mainline Protestants seeks to raise awareness about predatory lending and motivate individuals, lenders, churches and the government to help bring an end to the practice.

Alabama Baptists also were represented at the news conference.

Commonly referred to as payday lending, the growing practice often draws poor people especially into a debt trap by charging excessive, and often misleading, interest rates, according to coalition members.

While an interest rate may be presented by a lender as 15 percent, for instance, it actually is only for the two-week period until a person's next payday.

The annual interest rate may be 400 percent or more, making it difficult for the borrower to repay the loan. It requires years for some people to pay off their debts.

### More than 20,000 in US

More than 20,000 payday and car-title loan stores exist in the United States, according to the coalition. Payday lenders also operate online in a country that has a variety of state and local laws regarding the practice.

Coalition members decried the predatory practices of payday loans in introducing their effort.

Predatory payday lending "grinds the faces of the poor into the ground," ERLC President Russell Moore said in a written statement announcing the coalition's formation. "As Christians we are called by Jesus, by the prophets and by the apostles to care for the poor individually and also about the way social and political and corporate structures contribute to the misery of the impoverished."

Barrett Duke, ERLC's vice president for public policy, said



Photo by Doug Carlson

Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program, addresses a news conference announcing a new Faith for Just Lending Coalition to target predatory lending May 14.

at the May 14 news conference, "God is not an economic Darwinist. He does not believe in survival of the fittest when it comes to the treatment of the poor.

"The Bible speaks clearly about appropriate ethical behavior in business," he said. "[God] didn't oppose financial transactions, but He did, and He does, oppose predatory activities that take advantage of someone, especially the poor."

Messengers to the 2014 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) meeting approved a resolution that denounced predatory payday lending and called on the adoption of government policies to end the practice.

From a biblical standpoint the SBC resolution notes, "All ... predatory behavior conflicts with God's plan for human relationships (Ex. 22:25-27; Lev. 19:35-36, 25:35-37; Neh. 5:1-13; Prov. 11:1)."

Messengers to the Alabama Baptist State Convention in November 2014 also passed a resolution condemning the excessive interest rates charged by payday and title loan companies.

At the May 14 news confer-

ence Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program, said, "The resolution called on state legislators to cap the interest rates at 36 percent, but the voice of the largest denomination of churches in Alabama has thus far been ignored,

**"We cannot sit idly by while some of the poorest among us are preyed on."**

**Barrett Duke**  
**vice president for public policy, ERLC**

not by all the legislators but by some key leaders and committee chairpersons in the Alabama [Legislature]." Alabama permits payday lenders to charge an annual interest rate of more than 450 percent and has more title-lending outlets than any other state, Godfrey explained.

"A bill capping payday loans at 36 percent is currently in the Alabama House and we are encouraging Alabama legislators to take the bill seriously," he said. "We (also) join with others from across the nation in urging Congress to protect people nationwide from loan sharks that prey on people who can least afford these exorbitant interest rates."

Other members of the Faith for Just Lending Coalition are the National Association of Evangelicals; Cooperative Baptist Fellowship; National Baptist Convention

U.S.A. Inc.; National Latino Evangelical Coalition; Center for Public Justice; People Improving Communities through Organizing National Network; and Ecumenical Poverty Initiative.

At its launch, the coalition announced the following principles for just loans:

▶ "Individuals should manage their resources responsibly and conduct their affairs ethically, saving for emergencies and being willing to provide support to others in need.

▶ "Churches should teach and model responsible stewardship, offering help to neighbors in times of crisis.

▶ "Lenders should extend loans at reasonable interest rates based on ability to repay within the original loan period, taking into account the borrower's income and expenses.

▶ "Government should prohibit usury and predatory or deceptive lending practices."

### Building support

Duke said in a written statement for the coalition that since payday lenders often "refuse to operate in a responsible manner, government intervention is crucial. We cannot sit idly by while some of the poorest among us are preyed on by people simply looking for a quick buck with no regard for the devastation they cause in the lives of others." (BP, TAB)

# 'Duty to GOD'

## 'Scouting is nothing less than applied Christianity'

(continued from page 1)

Gates' prepared remarks, he said, "Between internal challenges and potential legal conflicts, the BSA finds itself in an unsustainable position — a position that makes us vulnerable to the possibility the courts simply will order us at some point to change our membership policy. We must all understand that this probably will happen sooner rather than later."

In 2013, BSA voted to approve new membership guidelines stating, "No youth may be denied membership in the Boy Scouts of America on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone." Previously a Boy Scouts policy stated, "Boy Scouts of America believes that homosexual conduct is inconsistent with obligations in the Scout Oath and Scout Law to be morally straight and clean in thought, word and deed."

Initially BSA executive leadership planned to change Scout policies to allow avowed homosexuals to become members and hold leadership positions. But following an outcry from Scouts, their families, sponsoring organizations and the American public, the BSA board took additional time to review the policy and recommended changing only the membership standards.

### Burning bridges

Even with the "compromised" membership change in 2013, BSA leadership burned a lot of bridges and trust, Smith said, noting a group of ABS members had spent two hours the night before Gates' remarks discussing how to rebuild those bridges. "We had no idea [Gates' announcement] was coming."

And while Gates confirmed the ban on gay adult leaders remained as of his May 21 announcement, he also was clear that

the ban will no longer be enforced.

However, he did add that individual councils and districts could choose to enforce the ban if they chose to do so. He also said any new leadership policy put in place should "allow all churches, which sponsor some 70 percent of our Scout units, to establish leadership standards consistent with their faith. We must, at all costs, preserve the religious freedom of our church partners to do this."

But Smith said allowing churches the freedom to choose isn't enough to keep the foundational tenets of BSA.

"BSA has beefed up the duty to God requirements in every aspect of the scouting program," he said. "There is a big push for the duty to God, but my question is, 'How can you keep duty to God front and center — like Robert Gates made a point of in his speech — while opening the door to immorality?' The two don't go together."

Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the scouting movement in the early 1900s, said in his book "Rovering to Success," "Scouting is nothing less than applied Christianity."

Smith said, "When maintaining the program becomes more important than the values the program is supposed to instill, that is a problem."

Today the foundational values of the program are not what matters, he said, noting BSA is losing support in every faith-based group except the Latter-day Saints.

Baptists in Alabama ranked fifth nationally in 2012 in number of chartered groups; as of early 2015, Alabama has dropped to eighth, according to Smith.

"We (members of ABS) are all in a state of shock and disappointment," he said. "We are trying to figure out where we go from here." (BP contributed)



## Alabama church arsonist convicted in 2006 released from prison

The last of three men convicted for church arson attacks in 2006 was released May 20 from the Childersburg Community Based Facility/Community Work Center.

### Burning, burglarizing

Benjamin Moseley pleaded guilty to burning and burglarizing five Bibb County churches in February 2006, and later, setting fire to four more churches in Pickens, Sumter and Greene counties.

Russell DeBusk Jr. (released in 2012) and Matthew Cloyd (released March 20) were the other two men who pleaded guilty and also were convicted. DeBusk was convicted of only the first five arsons.

Moseley requested an early release in 2014 but was denied his request by a judge. His sentence was split between federal and state prisons. He will now remain on federal probation for five years. (TAB)

## Conecuh Association dedicates historical marker



Photo courtesy of Conecuh Baptist Association

On May 3, Conecuh Baptist Association held a dedication ceremony for a new historical marker set in place on the property. The marker is in memory of Alexander Travis, who was instrumental in the constitution of several of the Southern Baptist churches in Conecuh County, as well as others in the surrounding counties and into Florida. Pictured are (l to r) Joey Rodgers, director of missions for Conecuh Association; Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission (ABHC); Eugenia Brown, former director of missions for Conecuh Association (she held the first full-time position) and local historian; and Francis Hamilton, former ABHC representative who first started the process for creating the marker.

# Ministry Tips



## DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED

By Pastor Jesse Reeder  
Moulton Baptist Church

Most of us are aware that ministry is an eternal investment in the lives of others. However, we also desire to see measurable results in the short term. These well-intended desires are often frustrating when

it comes to ministry, especially with youth and children.

Paul said, "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary" (Gal. 6:9). In Paul's day, just like in the present, it is easy to get discouraged doing good when we see little results and society continues

to get worse. The discouragement is compounded when some in the church family fail to see the importance of the investment.

If God has called you to be investing in this ministry, trust that He is somehow using you to accomplish His purpose. I recall an article I read several years ago

in which a middle-aged lady was sharing her testimony about finally surrendering her life to Jesus. Most of the credit went to a dear Christian lady who for many years carried her to church as a child. That's a long time to wait for a harvest. Remember, keep doing good. 🙏

## What's wrong here?

It's dinnertime at the Johnson home. Mom made a beautiful dish and she is so proud of her accomplishment. She quickly snaps a picture, composes just the right caption and posts her recipe to Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest. Throughout the next few days, she will check in every few minutes for comments and likes.

Dad is preparing for his fishing trip this weekend, so he has been scrolling through eBay and Amazon reviews for last-minute equipment he is missing. He forgot to mention this trip to his family, but he did post about it on Facebook.

Middle-school student, Timmy, won't respond to Mom's invitation to dinner because he's too busy playing online video games with his friends.

Teenage daughter, Kelli, is in her room crying as she reads the hurtful things people are saying about her online because of a nasty rumor circulating at school.

Mom and Dad don't know why Kelli's grades are falling or why Timmy got into a fight at school last week.



# How social media is hurting families

Although seen as a benefit, social networking can create great risks for families

By Melissa Carlisle, MAMFC, ALC  
Pathways Professional Counseling

The term "social media" emerged in the mid-1990s and caught fire as people of all ages began to use technology to share content and engage in social networking.

Social media provides us with unimaginable benefits. For instance, Facebook allows us to connect with friends and family that we might otherwise lose touch with. Pinterest allows us to learn new skills, gather resources and discover new self-care activities. Twitter allows us to gain and share information instantaneously. Many would agree that these social platforms and others have done great things for us. However, these great benefits also have created great risks for families.

### Social interaction

Facebook, for example, which reported 936 million active daily users in March 2015, touts its mission as giving "people the power to share" and "stay connected with friends and family." However, a 2013 study by researchers at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Mich., found that an increased use of Facebook predicted a negative effect on well-being over time,

suggesting that Facebook undermines the basic human need for social interaction.

Many researchers have even hypothesized that the ease of rekindling old flames or forming new relationships via Facebook has led to an increase in marital infidelity and divorce. As a therapist, I see couples scrolling through apps on their phones or tablets in the waiting room and then grieving their ability to connect and be intimate while in session. While social networks claim to promote connection, it seems that these applications can work more like "anti-social networks," destroying real connections in a person's everyday life.

Social media also is attacking the well-being of our children. Research continues to show that children are spending more time on electronic devices than ever before, which is inhibiting their ability to recognize emotions. This has huge implications for their emotional well-being and behavior, as well as for their ability to understand important social cues.

Children need personal, one-on-one interaction to learn and grow. What they do not need is for adults in their lives to substitute this personal interaction with tablet, computer or television screens.

While technology has great potential to provide learning and fun for children, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting children's screen time. For children under age two, they recommend zero hours of screen time. For older children, they recommend limiting entertainment screen time to less than two hours per day.

Despite these recommended limits, we know children spend many more than the recommended hours engaging in social media and other screen time activities. The result is often less personal interaction between children and their caregivers.

Children mimic what is modeled for them, including their technology and social media habits. Setting limits on technology use for yourself and your children can increase one-on-one interactions

and create opportunities to build stronger parent-child relationships.

Wondering if you or your family is at risk? Challenge yourself this week. Write down how many times you pop open a social media account. Try to notice when and why you felt the need to do so. Try to notice what other activity is being neglected while the social media activity is happening.

### Look for opportunities

Are you giving up an opportunity to share the gospel in the grocery store line? Are you neglecting a special moment with a child who so desperately needs your attention? Are you creating distance in your relationship with your spouse or pursuing connection with someone who is not your spouse? Do you feel closer to your friends or followers on social media than the real-life people around you? If you find yourself saying yes to these questions, it may be time to disconnect with social media and connect instead with the people in your life.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Melissa Carlisle is a counselor with Pathways Professional Counseling, a ministry of the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries.*



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# Talking about social media

## Parents must talk about social media safe practices early, often as it is an ever-changing technology

By Carrie Brown McWhorter  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Alex's parents didn't realize how much their 15-year-old's use of social media was affecting their family until they had to take her phone away.

"She was on her phone every second, communicating with friends and ignoring the rest of us," said Alex's mom, Beth. "She didn't really have a life except online."

One night Alex posted a Facebook message that brought the police to their door and Beth knew something had to change. She took Alex's phone away completely for a few weeks, then let her have an hour of supervised time each day to check in with her friends. The difference in Alex was almost immediate.

"She sits with us and talks with us just like she did when she was younger," Beth said. "I didn't even realize we had lost her, but I'm so proud of how she's learning to take more responsibility. I just wish I had known earlier what I know now."

Technology has changed a lot in the last 20 years, but more importantly, the way people interact with technology has changed, according to Tommy McGregor, a Montgomery-based youth ministry consultant and author of "Selfie: A Parent's Guide to Social Media." Another change is the pressure to allow even younger kids to have access to smartphones and social media apps. At some point, every child will say, "My friends all have it," and every parent will have to decide whether to say yes to the latest device or app, McGregor said.

In the early stages, the Internet was a source of information. Users would search using specific keywords and a search engine

would generate a list of online sources. There was no interaction between parties, just an exchange of information, McGregor writes.

However, as more and more people got Internet access, developers began to create ways for users to communicate with each other. Popular social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram emerged and all had a similar mission — to allow users to "connect" and "share" their interests and their ideas online. Facebook was actually developed by college students for college students and initially was open only to those who had school email addresses. When Facebook opened up to everyone, teens started using it less and less, McGregor said.

"When mom, dad, aunt, uncle and the neighbor next door all got on Facebook, kids moved on," McGregor said. "Kids move on to the next thing, claiming it as theirs until they no longer feel like it's theirs."

The ever-changing options are why parents must talk about social media with their children early and often, McGregor said. The conversation usually starts in earnest when your child's friends get a cell phone, but it must continue because of the intense importance technology and social media play in the lives of teens especially.

### Difference in adults and teens

"Adults use Facebook to keep up with college friends and see vacation pictures, but kids and teens view social media as an extension of their community," he said. "The average adult could give up social media and all they would be missing was something to do with their time. That's not the case with teens. For them, it's how they see themselves."

Social media can be a positive experience, according to the website KidsHealth.org. So-

**"As parents it is up to us ... to guide our kids toward safety online."**

**Tommy McGregor**  
youth ministry consultant  
and author



123rf.com

cial media can help them stay connected with friends and family, get involved with a cause or nonprofit they care about, enhance their creativity through sharing of music and art and meet and interact with others who share similar interests.

However, spending too much time on social media can have negative consequences as well. KidsHealth.org reports that "researchers have noted something called 'Facebook depression,' which can come from constantly comparing oneself to others' slickly presented profiles. By seeing how many 'friends' others have and viewing pictures of them having fun, kids may feel worse about themselves or feel they don't measure up to their peers."

Parents want to learn more about social media so they can keep their kids safe online, McGregor said, but they don't use the technology as their kids do. App developers aren't creating apps with parents in mind either.

"Kids have a whole little world on their handheld devices, and app developers make it difficult for mom and dad to find out about it," McGregor said.

The result is that parents often know very little about something that is extremely important to their children, McGregor said. When problems like cyberbullying or sexting arise, parents are often caught unaware and don't know how to help.

One of the reasons McGregor wrote "Selfie" was to provide a tool for parents who want to learn more about Internet safety when it comes to social media. Though the social media world is constantly changing, parents who are aware of the technology and who set limits from the beginning can guide their children through the online world, teaching them responsibility and boundaries early on, McGregor said.

McGregor calls these kinds of limits "non-negotiables."

"For a child just starting out, parents need to set some basic rules that must be followed. The child has to have permission to use or download certain apps. They can't share passwords with their friends. Parents must know passwords. You don't have social media accounts we don't know about," McGregor said.

Setting boundaries is an opportunity for parents to disciple their children and teach them basic biblical principles, like honoring your mother and father, for example.

"If as a parent, I tell you you're not allowed to have a Snapchat account, and you're doing it behind my back, you're not honoring me," McGregor said. "We want our children to get to a place of ownership in their faith, and this is one area where we help them do the things they need to do to grow and mature spiritually."

Simple steps like keeping computers in public areas of the home, avoiding laptops and smartphones in bedrooms and no devices at the dinner table are good starting points, according to KidsHealth.org.

### Learn warning signs

The American Academy of Pediatrics also advises parents to learn the warning signs of trouble, which might include skipping activities, meals and homework for social media; weight loss or gain or a drop in grades. Behavior changes often indicate a problem and parents should be aware of the changes and intervene quickly to avoid dangerous consequences down the road.

"Social media is like a match. When it is lit it can give light to everyone in the room, or it can set fire to the house and burn it to the ground," McGregor writes. "There are some social media platforms that everyone should stay away from, and there are some people who should stay away from social media. As parents it is up to us to know the difference and to guide our kids toward safety online." ❏

**According to the Pew Research Center's "2013 Teens, Social Media, and Privacy study," teens are sharing a lot of very private and personal information on social media, including:**

- ▶ **92 percent** share their real name
- ▶ **82 percent** post their birth date
- ▶ **71 percent** tell the city they live in
- ▶ **71 percent** post the school they attend
- ▶ **84 percent** post their personal interests, such as movies, music or books they like
- ▶ **62 percent** share a relationship status
- ▶ **53 percent** make their email addresses public
- ▶ **20 percent** share their cell phone numbers online
- ▶ **24 percent** post videos of themselves

Source: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/05/21/teens-social-media-and-privacy>

# Hashtag index

The following list of hashtags only includes ones that are unique to teens and may be cause for alarm. A hashtag can be about anything but there are some, like the ones below, that are commonly used for specific purposes.

## Self-harm, suicidal and depression hashtags

#suicidal #broken  
#razors #helpme  
#imnotokay  
#worthless

## Self-image and eating disorders hashtags

#thighgap #hipbones  
#thinspiration #purge  
#anorexia  
#bulimic #mia  
#ana #fakesmile

## Bullying hashtags

#derp — stupid  
#butters — ugly  
#jelly — jealous  
#gokillyourself  
#thot or #thotties — a promiscuous girl  
#yag — you are gay

## Drug/sex hashtags

#chirped — got caught  
#lmirl — let's meet in real life  
#pron — porn

## Popular and common hashtags

#lol — laugh out loud  
#selfie — taking a picture of self  
#turnt — have fun; get rowdy  
#tbh — to be honest  
#smh — shaking my head  
#tbt — Throwback Tuesday/  
Thursday  
#bae — babe  
#mcm — man crush Monday  
#wcw — woman crush  
Wednesday  
#ootd — outfit of the day  
#ratchet — disgusting

Source: Selfie: A Parent's Guide to Social Media (CreateSpace, 2015) by Tommy McGregor

Tommy McGregor is a Montgomery-based author, speaker, youth ministry coach/consultant and founder of TheTransMission, a ministry devoted to guiding high school seniors to a healthy spiritual transition to college. He can be contacted directly at [tommy@thetransmission.org](mailto:tommy@thetransmission.org), as well as on Twitter at @tommymcgregor.

# Effect on relationships

## Challenges of social media especially acute for marriages, families

By **Heath Lambert**

Assistant professor of biblical counseling  
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

**W**e live in a culture pre-occupied with social media. We publish what is on our minds, describe what we had for breakfast, connect

with friends, discover the latest headlines and share pictures of our kids. We do all this instantly from our smart phones.

This is all wonderful. Such interconnectedness has many rich blessings, from strengthening friendships across town to providing prayer and ministry updates from around the globe.

However, we need to be honest that as sinners, we are able to corrupt the good blessing of social media. This reality means that in a fallen world, there will be negatives for every positive in social media. All the many benefits of social media will be met with the unique isolation that comes from turning away from live, in-person relationships to digital ones. There is Internet bullying, gossip, slander, sexting, self-promotion on a grand scale and the opportunity to meet for adultery.

The challenges of social media are particularly acute in the family. I was surprised years

ago when as a pastor, I began to encounter families who had been torn apart by sinful misuses of social media.

The stories were sadly similar. A husband or wife would meet an old flame from high school or college, connect and begin to reminisce about the old days. Before long someone would mention that they never really got over the other person. After this came

complaints about the frustrations in their present life.

At this point it was only a matter of time before they were meeting up and eventually committing adultery together. Some of these marriages were restored after the heartache. Many were not. It would have been much better to avoid the pain in the first place.

Doing so means we need to adopt a fresh perspective on Proverbs 5:8 where a son is instructed by his father to avoid the adulterous woman:

“Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house.”

This verse is relevant whether you are a man or a woman and whether the “door” is a literal one or a page on a popular social media site. We are to avoid situations that could lead to adultery.

With regard to our use of social media, avoiding such situations requires us to pay attention to another passage of Scripture, Ephe-

sians 5:11: “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.”

We can best expose the “unfruitful works of darkness” from social media in two ways. First we must be honest with the Lord and with someone else about our weaknesses. If you struggle for purity in your relationships online, talk to Jesus about it. Ask Him for help. He will draw near to you when you come to Him in faith. After you have talked to Him, share the information with another person who can hold you accountable.

## Pursue openness

Second we should pursue openness rather than secrecy on social media. This might mean that we have shared social media accounts with our spouse, or it might mean that we will allow access to our accounts to anyone who wants to see. At all costs it will mean that we avoid secrecy. Sin loves secrecy because sin loves darkness. We combat sin by exposing the darkness to the light.

Social media is another tool that can be used to honor Jesus Christ and advance the gospel. How terrible it is when we use such a powerful megaphone to bring sin into our lives and destroy our families rather than to communicate for God's grace. We need to ask Jesus for grace to stay away from the adulterer's door and expose the darkness to light. Even, and perhaps especially, when we are online. ☩



LAMBERT

# 10 tips for disconnecting with social media and connecting with real people

1. Fast from social media regularly. Find a span of time each day or each month to delete the apps for a time and replace that time with something meaningful.
2. Create accountability for yourself and your family. Share passwords with your spouse and check in on your kids' accounts.
3. Challenge yourself to spend more time checking in on people around you than you do with those on social media accounts.
4. Find ways to intentionally connect with friends and family in real life, rather than simply liking or commenting on their social media posts.
5. Spend intentional, quality time with the people in your life. Set aside the electronic device and do something you actually “like.” Try to notice how it feels to do this without posting about it.
6. Set up healthy boundaries when interacting with people on social media.
7. Make it fun. While at a social gathering, have everyone place his or her electronic device(s) in a basket. First person to check his or her phone has to buy dinner or load the dishwasher.
8. Try not to let social media be the only way of congratulating someone or encouraging them during a struggle. Don't just comment on their posts. Pick up the phone or go knock on their doors.
9. Remember that conversations are always more clear and meaningful in person. How many of us have misunderstood a text message or email and experienced unnecessary hard feelings?
10. Remember that real friendships grow best in real life.

(Source: Melissa Carlisle)

# Ensuring involvement

## Millennials drift from pro-life action after graduation

**P**olls and surveys indicate millennials hold stronger pro-life stances than previous generations at their age. But as these young adults graduate from college, many drift away from pro-life action. It's a trend pro-life groups are attempting to reverse.

Students for Life of America (SFLA) started a new initiative called Pro-Life Future that targets young adults post-graduation.

"We're bringing young people together who are committed to abolishing abortion in our lifetime," said Brendan O'Morchoe, director of Pro-Life Future.

"We've seen what abortion does ... to our sisters and our friends, and we don't want that part of our world anymore."

### 'Reinforce great work'

The first Pro-Life Future chapter began April 25 in Chicago, and the organization is prepared to begin chapters in other cities including Buffalo, N.Y. The program will engage pro-life leaders who are already trained through SFLA student groups and "reinforce the great pro-life work already happening in our cities," O'Morchoe said.

Since 2006, SFLA has trained about 20,000 youths to lead the

pro-life movement. But once their group affiliations end with college, they've had difficulty connecting with adult pro-life groups, especially if the group is primarily composed of older members.

SFLA President Kristan Hawkins said, "After college graduation, many of these leaders get lost in the busyness of the 'real world,' and they don't know where they fit in, what they should do or how to organize with other pro-lifers. This generation of young pro-lifers needs to feel like they belong or our movement will lose them."

Millennials have played an integral role in the pro-life movement. A 2009 study conducted by political scientists Clyde Wilcox and Patrick Carr shows that adults aged 18 to 29 are more pro-life than adults of the same age were in the 1970s, '80s, and '90s.

In 2012 former NARAL Pro-Choice America president Nancy Keenan stepped down from her position citing an "intensity gap" between pro-life and pro-abortion millennials. The huge youth participation at a Washington March for Life helped initiate Keenan's decision, said Jeanneane Maxon, vice president of external affairs and corporate

counsel for Americans United for Life (AUL).

At the last March for Life, AUL distributed about 6,000 signs with the hashtag #teamlife to a crowd comprised primarily of people under age 30, Maxon observed.

And AUL engages law students in the pro-life movement through about a dozen Advocates for Life chapters at law schools across the country. More students are pro-life "than when I was in law school 15 years ago," Maxon said.

### Lawyers for pro-life

To help keep lawyers connected to the pro-life movement, AUL also started Lawyers for Life in 2012, a project the organization is still developing. Though the market does not offer young lawyers many jobs directly connected to the pro-life movement, Lawyers for Life encourages them to stay involved through opportunities such as serving on a pregnancy center's board or testifying in favor of a pro-life bill.

Engaging people from a young age is key to ensuring their involvement as they grow up, National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) President Carol Tobias said. NRLC has operated Teens for Life for about 30 years and offers oratory and essay contests for students. Local chapters also run groups on college campuses. To keep young adults engaged NRLC has used several social media outlets including Twitter and Instagram.

Tobias has noticed a drop in pro-life involvement after college as young adults' lives change rapidly. "But we find many of them coming back ... after they get settled," she said. "I think we see a lot of these young people keeping their convictions and taking them where they end up." (BP)



### Wetumpka's Blue Ridge Baptist marks 50 years

Blue Ridge Baptist Church, Wetumpka, in Elmore Baptist Association, celebrated 50 years in ministry May 3.

The 11 a.m. service honored Leona "Deetsie" Rogers, one of Blue Ridge Baptist's charter members, and several of the most recent church members by giving them each a flower arrangement. Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented the church with a framed certificate.

Several musical groups performed during the service including Reborn Harmony, a southern gospel group from Elmore County. Pastor John Carney spoke on God's purpose and plan for Blue Ridge.

To conclude the service, balloons containing messages from the church were released outside. Carney said in the past, balloons have reached Georgia with recipients calling the church to thank them for the message inside.

As part of the celebration every wall in the church displayed pictures of the church and its members from the past and present. A hand-painted mural in the children's wing also was completed in time for the celebration.

Lunch followed the service. (Maggie Walsh)

### Montgomery Hill celebrates 175th anniversary

Montgomery Hill Baptist Church, Stockton, celebrated its 175-year anniversary and homecoming May 3 with a joint service beginning at 11 a.m.

"We had many visitors (attend) who were descendants of earlier members," said church member Claudia Campbell.

Pastor Lonnie Byrd preached a sermon on coming home to the approximately 85 participants. John Reid, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative, and a representative from Baldwin Baptist Association each presented a certificate to the church.

There also was a special presentation made by three members, each one symbolizing the past, present and future of the church. Participants enjoyed the "old time music" that featured a banjo and various singers from the church and every person received a church history, Campbell said.

A potluck lunch followed the service. (Maggie Walsh)



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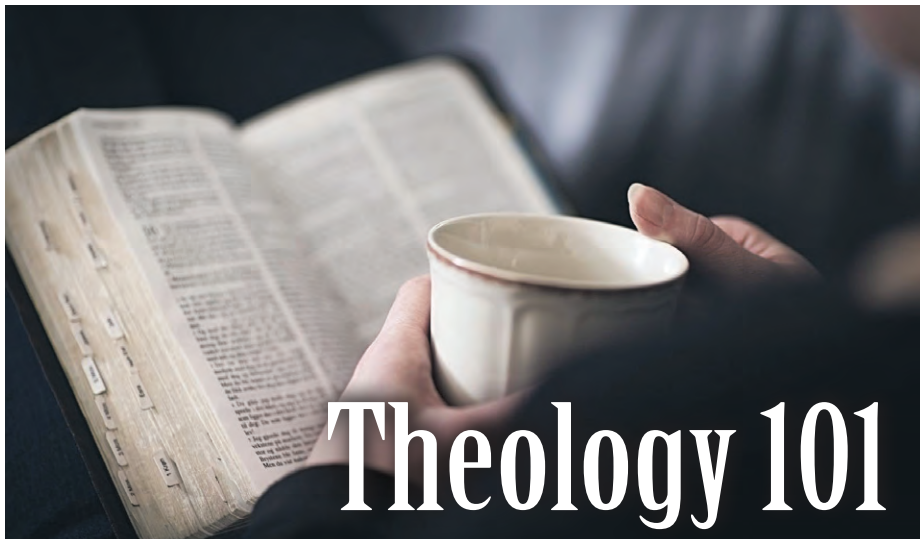
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# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Images of the Church

# The Church as Assembly

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

It is fitting to end a series about images of the Church by considering the term “Church” itself as the most commonly used word for God’s people under the new covenant. As is widely known, the word “Church” translates a Greek term that means “called out ones” (ekklesia). The basic meaning of the word finds expression in the single word assembly, as a way of speaking generally of any group of people singled out from others by virtue of them coming together around some common purpose, interest or identity.

For example when craftsmen in Ephesus took exception to the preaching of Paul, they came together in a riotous crowd. The description of the angry gathering reads, “Some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly (ekklesia) was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together” (Acts 19:32). The uproar ended when the town clerk dismissed the assembly (Acts 19:41). An ordinary, everyday term came to have specialized usage as a way of referring to Christian believers.

### God’s assembly

A quick look at a concordance of an English language Bible reveals the frequency with which “assembly” or “Church” occurs in the New Testament. Jesus used it famously in His response to Peter’s great confession of Him as the Christ and Son of God, “You are Peter and on this rock I will build My Church” (Matt. 16:18). We might say simply that the Church is Christ’s assembly. The opening words of both 1 and 2 Corinthians give the address of both letters as “to the church (assembly) of God that is in Corinth” (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1). Thus we might say of the Church that it is God’s assembly. The Church is both God’s assembly and Christ’s assembly, inasmuch as Jesus declared in prayer to the Father, “All Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine” (John 17:10).

Perchance the most obvious inference we are to make from viewing the

Church as God’s assembly is an emphasis on God’s people having come together in a given place at the same time. We usually refer to such an assembly as a local church. Such a local gathering is in view in the admonition of James 2:2–3 about how to value each person who gathers, “If a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly (ekklesia), and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ while you say to the poor man, ‘You stand over there,’ or ‘Sit down at my feet,’ have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?”

### Higher purposes

While people may often assemble for many causes or motivations, when God’s people assemble it is for higher or heavenly purposes. The Church assembles to worship God, to share the message of the gospel, to engage in ministry, to encourage one another in the Christian pilgrimage, to share Christian instruction and so forth.

The importance of the Church as an assembly is set forth in the exhortation of Hebrews 10:25 that admonishes us that we not forsake “the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some.” Barnabas and Paul set a worthy example when they came to Antioch, where Acts 11:26 reports “that for a whole year they assembled (ekklesia as a verb) with the church (ekklesia) and taught many people.”

Are we so faithful in assembling with the assembly? ☞

*Jerry Batson, retired associate dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and professor at several schools of religion, is pastor of First Baptist Church, McCalla.*



## Across ALABAMA'S Associations

### BIBB

► **Six Mile Church, Brierfield**, will hold a homecoming celebration June 7 with preaching at 10–10:30 a.m. and a singing by The Steeles at 10:30 to noon. Lunch will follow. Shane Cochran is pastor.

### BIRMINGHAM

► **NorthPark Church, Trussville**, will hold VBS on June 1–5 from 8:30 a.m. to noon. For more information email bleonard@northparkbc.org. Bill Wilks is pastor. ► **Christopher Hunsberger**, executive associate pastor of **Dawson Memorial Church, Birmingham**, has resigned to become the new executive director of Radical effective June 1.

Radical is the nonprofit discipleship organization created by David Platt, former pastor of The Church at Brook Hills and president of the International Mission Board. Hunsberger holds a bachelor of science degree in education from Samford University in Birmingham. He previously served as minister of recreation at Dawson and currently serves as chaplain to the Samford baseball team. He and his wife, Jennifer, have two daughters.



HUNSBERGER

### COFFEE

► **County Line Church, Enterprise**, will hold Mega Sports Camp on May 31–June 5, 6–8:30 nightly for children from kindergarten to sixth grade. Children can choose between basketball, baseball, cheerleading, crafts, frisbee and soccer. For transportation call 334-347-6082 or email clbc@clbconthe.net for more information. Danny Wiggins is pastor.

### COVINGTON

► **Lawrence Phipps**, founder and director of It’s Life Ministry, will begin as interim pastor of **Bethany Church, Andalusia**, on May 31. Former pastor of Vaughn Forest Church, Montgomery, Phipps currently serves on the board of directors for *The Alabama Baptist*.

### DEKALB

► **Nathan VanHorn** is the new pastor of **First Church, Fort Payne**. He previously served as pastor of First Church, Folsom, La. He holds a bachelor of arts degree in Christian studies from Mississippi College in Clinton, Miss., and a master of arts degree in biblical studies and a master of theology degree in New Testament and Greek from New Orleans Theological Seminary. He currently is working toward a doctoral degree from New Orleans. His first Sunday was March 8. He



VANHORN

and his wife, Haley, have two children.

### LIMESTONE

► **Sammy Gilbreath** is the new interim pastor of **First Church, Athens**. He is currently the director of the office of evangelism for the Alabama State Board of Missions. He has served as pastor at Highland Church, Florence; First Church, Huntsville; Flint River Church, Hazel Green; and Ridgedale Church, Scottsboro. He also served churches in Mississippi, Kentucky and South Carolina. He and his wife, Carol, have two children. ► **Mays Memorial Church, Toney**, will hold a VBS kick off, “VBS in the Park” on June 14, 4–6 p.m. at John Barnes Park in Ardmore. VBS will be June 15–18, 6–8 p.m. For more information call Carol Harris at 256-206-5199 or visit [www.maysmemorial.org](http://www.maysmemorial.org). Anthony Perry is pastor.

### MADISON

► **Murphy Hill Church, Toney**, will hold its 84th annual homecoming celebration June 7, 10 a.m. Bryan Brooks will be the guest speaker and Alliance Quartet will perform. A covered dish lunch will follow the service. Mike McFarlen is pastor.

### ST. CLAIR

► **Kellie Powell** is the new children’s minister for **Arbor Church, Pell City**. She holds a bachelor’s degree in children’s/preschool ministry with an emphasis in Christian ministry from New Orleans Theological Seminary’s Leavell College. She previously served as the preschool coordinator at Harmony Hill Church, Lufkin, Texas. She and her husband, Jeremy, have one child. Keith Ray is pastor.

### TALLAPOOSA

► **New Life Church, Dadeville**, will hold VBS on May 31, 8:30 a.m.–3 p.m. The theme is “Journey Off the Map” and is open to children from 3 years old to sixth grade. A family cookout will conclude the day’s activities. For more information call Connie Wyche at 205-410-1950 or email [conniewyche1@yahoo.com](mailto:conniewyche1@yahoo.com). Michael Crane is pastor.

### WASHINGTON

► **Pleasant Hill Church, Millry**, will celebrate homecoming June 7. Sunday School will be at 10 a.m. and worship will be at 11. Former pastor Ernest Tucker will speak. Lunch will be served at noon and singing will follow. Ron Pierce is pastor. ☞

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# Historical HIGHLIGHTS

FROM PREVIOUS ISSUES OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



## 50 Years Ago May 1965

Foreign Mission Board appointees: Pastor and Mrs. Wheeler Kidd of Harvest Baptist Church and Pastor and Mrs. W. Mack Burriss of Philadelphia Baptist Church, Tunnel Springs, were among the 15 missionaries appointed by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board during its April meeting. Both the Kidds and the Burrisses will serve as missionaries in Malaysia. Another couple with an Alabama background, Pastor and Mrs. S. Dennis Hale, were appointed by the Foreign Mission Board for service in Spain.

## 40 Years Ago May 1975

New Chief Executive Officer at BMC: Emmett Johnson, administrator of High Plains Baptist Hospital in Amarillo, Texas, has been appointed president of the Birmingham Baptist Medical Centers (BMC). He will assume his new duties as CEO of the 912-bed health care complex in mid-June.

## 30 Years Ago May 1985

Home Mission Board appointees: Kathy and Joel Thrasher, of Anniston, were among the 74 new home missionaries at the

recent commissioning service of the Home Mission Board. Joel Thrasher is director of Christian social ministries and church development for Calhoun Baptist Association.

## 20 Years Ago May 1995

New Editor at *The Alabama Baptist*: Bobby S. 'Bob' Terry has been elected editor of *The Alabama Baptist* effective Aug. 1. Since 1975, Terry has served as editor of *Word & Way*, the state Baptist news journal of Missouri. The board of directors of *The Alabama Baptist* unanimously elected Terry during its regular annual business session May 26. Terry succeeds Hudson D. Baggett who served as editor from 1966 until his death Nov. 17, 1994. Terry, 52, a native of Decatur, previously served as associate editor of the *Western Recorder* state Baptist newspaper

of Kentucky. He is a 1965 graduate of Mississippi College where he earned a bachelor of arts in history and communications.

## 10 Years Ago May 2005

Alabamian Named to Seminary Post: Danny Forshee, a native of Monroeville, was recently elected to the post of associate professor of evangelism for the newly established Roy Fish School of Evangelism and Missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Forshee taught evangelism at Criswell College, Southwestern Seminary and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., before accepting the new professor position. Forshee earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Mobile and a doctoral degree from Southwestern. ☞

## Former Lakeside youth minister Davis sentenced to 15 years

Mack Allen Davis, former youth minister at Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, was sentenced to 15 years in prison May 15 for the sexual abuse of minors. The sentence charged Davis with two counts of first-degree sexual abuse and one count of first-degree sodomy.

He was accused of molesting two boys over the course of a decade from the late 1970s to the late 1980s in various locations and pled guilty to the

accusations Dec. 1, 2014, in Jefferson County Court.

Davis began serving at Lakeside Baptist in 1977 as minister of youth and recreation and the following summer also was named director of the church's camp.

He retired in 1999 at age 59. His wife also filed for divorce that year.

The 74-year-old still faces charges involving the same victims in Cherokee and St. Clair counties. (TAB)

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### CHURCH POSITIONS

**PASTOR:** Munford Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumés to: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 129, Munford, AL 36268, or email resumés to: mbcpastorsearch@yahoo.com.

**BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR/CHURCH PLANTER:** Bay Side Baptist Church, Lillian (Gulf Shores area), seeking a bivocational pastor/church planter. Send resumés to: P.O. Box 533, Lillian, AL 36549, or email: tbobharris@gmail.com.

**MINISTER OF MUSIC:** Bellevue Baptist Church, Gadsden, accepting resumés for minister of music. Email resumés and hyperlinks to YouTube sites with samples to: secretarybellevue@gmail.com, or mail resumés and DVDs to: 150 Noccaculla Dr., Gadsden, AL 35904.

**SONG LEADER:** East Huntsville Baptist Church is looking for an energetic song leader to lead us in a blend of traditional and contemporary music. We are a small church with no choir. Send resumé or contact Personnel Committee to: easthuntsvilleba@bellsouth.net.

**MINISTER OF MUSIC/WORSHIP LEADER:** Eastside Baptist, Birmingham, is seeking a part-time worship leader for a blended style of worship music. Send resumés to: bfmurphy@bham.rr.com.

**PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC:** Siberton Baptist seeking part-time minister of music. Send resumé to: Don Leverton, 605 Hannah Ave., Attalla, AL 35954 or Siberton Baptist Church, 620 Jones St., Attalla, AL 35954, ATTN: Zac Clay.

**MINISTER OF MUSIC & STUDENTS:** Linden Baptist Church is accepting resumés for the full-time position of minister of music and students. Interested candidates may submit their resumés by email to: scraft@servpro9855.com.

**MINISTER OF MUSIC & YOUTH DIRECTOR:** East Gardendale Baptist Church is accepting resumés for these two bivocational positions. Applicants may submit resumés to: EGBC, 360 Tarrant Rd., Gardendale, AL 35071, ATTN: Cathy Edwards or cathyegbc@att.net.

**PART-TIME AGE GROUP MINISTERS:** North Shelby Baptist Church is seeking three ministers. Preschool minister: Exciting opportunity to plant seeds of the gospel in our youngest members. Middle school minister: Exciting opportunity to nurture students grades 6-8 in their understanding of the gospel. High school minister: Exciting opportunity to prepare students grades 9-12 to take the gospel wherever adulthood takes them. For full descriptions, visit www.northshelbybaptist.org/employment.

**MINISTER OF YOUTH:** East Highland Baptist Church in Hartselle is accepting resumés for a bivocational youth minister through June 12. Send resumés via email to: searchcommitteeehbc@gmail.com.

**DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES:** Lakeside Baptist Church is located in the Hoover area of metro Birmingham, Ala. We are seeking our next director of children's ministries to lead an already vital, growing area of our church to the next level of outreach and ministry. Lakeside averages approximately 700 in total Sunday School attendance with children from multiple area schools. Requirements: provide leadership and oversight to all aspects of the church's ministry for children (grades 1-4) and preteens (grades 5-6) in a multi-staff team environment. Contact Greg Corbin: pastor@lakesidebaptist.com. 205-822-1240.

### OTHER POSITIONS

**CHURCH SECRETARY:** Part-time church secretary needed for up to 16 hours per week. Must have basic computer skills. Send resumés to: rwalker1@centurytel.net, or mail them to: Macedonia Baptist Church, 4127 Rucker Blvd., Enterprise, AL 36330.

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**TRAVEL/VACATION AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE CONDOS:** Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, Ala. Rent direct, Christian family owners. Lowest prices on the beach. Call 205-752-1231, 205-556-0368, 251-752-2366 or www.gulfshorescondos.com.

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## Want to know GOD?

**Pastor Charles Gibbs**  
West Mobile Baptist Church, Mobile

I know I'm going to hell and there's nothing anybody can do about it. And don't ever bring up the subject again." That was my dad's response when I tried to tell him how Jesus had changed my life. Eventually all my siblings would come to Christ and we committed to pray for him.

One morning 29 years later my dad called with severe chest pains. After examining him, our family doctor said, "It's a tumor in his right lung and I'm almost certain it's inoperable, but we won't tell him until the results come back."

The biopsy confirmed his diagnosis and I stayed with him the night we told him, hoping to talk to him about Jesus. He tossed and turned. Early the next morning he said, "I don't think I'm gonna make it this time."

With unusual grace I said, "Poppa, you've always known you were gonna die someday — and when you die you're gonna stand before God." He said, "I know it, son." Then he spoke the words I had waited 29 years to hear, "And I'm ready to do something about it."

From the Bible beside his bed I read Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." I said, "Dad do you understand you're a sinner?" "Oh yes," he replied.

Then Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." I followed up with John 1:12: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become the sons of God." And with Revelation 3:20: "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him."

I said, "Dad, God has a free gift for you — eternal life — and it's in Jesus. You have to receive Jesus in order to have the gift. Right now He's standing at the door knocking, waiting for you to open it. Are you ready?"

He said yes and I led him in a simple prayer of repentance and faith. Thirteen months later he discovered the reality of that day.

Is someone praying for you today? ☞



# Rashional thoughts

By Jennifer Davis Rash  
The Alabama Baptist

Executive editor • jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

## Friends that 'outdo one another'

My dear sweet friend had more on her to-do list than 200 people could accomplish in one week, but she didn't flinch when my situation changed her plans.

She looked into my eyes and saw the 98-mile trek back home was going to be a challenge for me to accomplish on my own. She made a few quick adjustments to her return-trip plan, grabbed my car keys and tucked me safely into the passenger seat.

It was merely one of those crazy headaches I get every once in a while, but it was enough to make a simple hour and a half drive on the interstate seem daunting.

The day before another sweet friend secured a babysitter and hit pause on her routinely hectic day so we could celebrate our May birthdays over lunch. She also stuck around for several hours to help me with an important assignment that was on a tight deadline.

For the past few weeks — really for the past five months — my dear friends at *The Alabama Baptist* have worked extra hours or gone out of their way to help me with so many different personal and professional tasks, projects and assignments.

### 'Love one another'

And then there are friends from church, my neighborhood and beyond who constantly surprise me with an encouraging word, a needed hug or a random act of kindness.

I am so blessed to be surrounded by such a crowd of special friends.

The Word tells us in John 15:12-15: "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

"You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for

all that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you."

Romans 12:10 says, "Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor."

And in Colossian 3:12-14, Paul says: "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

### Doing life together


I sometimes have a hard time accepting help. I'm stubborn like that but I'm learning I really can't walk life's journey on my own. I definitely need the help of friends, and I love doing things for friends as well.

The little things are really fun and something I hope I never forget to do, but it is the helping in times of extreme need that fills my heart.

It is such a special gift for me when I get the privilege of doing something for someone that I know is truly needed and appreciated.

In fact, I had an opportunity like this recently when a friend was in a bind and needed someone to pick her up. It was really a simple request but it was urgent and it was such an honor to get the call asking if I could help.

And a few days before that my husband and I had an opportunity to assist a woman who was going to be stranded for hours had we not stepped in. We ended up having several mutual friends in common and connected on a spiritual level as well.

I could have easily ignored what I was hearing as she talked on the phone near me. She didn't realize I was there and would have never known if I hadn't helped, but I would have known. 

# Rashional Extras...

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on Twitter:

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## 5 practices we need back in our lives

How to reincorporate practices into your life that will give you a new perspective — no matter how busy you are

Excerpt from Paul Perkins' article in *Relevant Magazine* ([www.relevantmagazine.com](http://www.relevantmagazine.com)) on April 23

Life is in a constant state of flux, but here are five things you don't want to change.

### Silence

We live in a noisy world — and it's only getting louder by the day. There's never a moment, it seems, to pause amid the craziness, to take a breath from the rat race, to escape the franticness of life.

With silence comes reflection, contemplation, prayer and relaxation. Silence humbles us, because alone without distractions, we're not puffed up by the false affirmation of busyness. We're forced to confront who we are and the life we're living.

### Purposeful Conversation

As we age we put on masks. We learn to hide the bad and project the good. This results in superficial relationships and shallow conversation.

But here's the thing: We weren't created to live in isolation but to share life together. In fact God's nature is relational and because we're created in His image, we too need relationships. That means taking off the masks and opening our lives to other people. Telling a friend what's really going on below the surface. Asking the hard questions and giving the hard answers.

### Selfless Service

If there's one advancement that defines our generation, it's social media. While the increased connectivity is great, it's also transformed each of us into mini-celebrities. This leaves us in a perpetual state of plotting and planning how to capture another Facebook like, another Instagram heart, another Twitter favorite.

But focused on our social standing is not how God calls us to live. We're called to selflessness and humility, empathy and sacrifice. In short, we're called to think less of ourselves and more of others.

The solution to our culture's me-driven mentality is simple: service — looking to give while gaining nothing in return. And that means no status updates announcing your good deeds to the world.

### Intentional Adventures

Growing up, every day was an adventure. It wasn't just the fun activities that defined that season of life. It was the attitude — the belief that every day was full of wonder and potential. Life was whimsical.

Now that we're adults, though, each day often looks the same. Life itself can feel routine and even boring. But it doesn't have to.

Even if you're in a cubicle, caring for children or answering phones, the attitude that defined your youth is still accessible. It's simply a matter of living with intention and making the most of every moment. Choose joy, adventure and whimsy. There's time every day to do something fun — even if only for a moment.

### Mutual Encouragement

As a kid I played a lot of sports. Although I enjoyed the competition, I mostly loved being on a team and working toward a larger purpose. In that context every teammate becomes a cheerleader. There's nothing quite like the energy created by mutual encouragement. It lifts spirits and helps everyone perform at their highest level.

As we grow older we tend to become critics of one another rather than cheerleaders. It's us versus the world.

This is only a matter of perception though. It's just as easy to conclude that we're all in this together. Our success in life depends upon the success of others. It's time to begin encouraging those around us — family, friends, even co-workers. God calls us to "spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Heb. 10:24).

<http://www.relevantmagazine.com/life/5-practices-we-need-back-our-lives>

Contact me at:

jrash@  
thealabamabaptist.  
org

"The challenge of all the different roles you play is not that you don't have enough hours in the day. The challenge of all these roles is that during the hours you choose to work you have too many different things going on at any one time to focus properly on each of them. Your time isn't stretched; your attention is."

**Marcus Buckingham**  
"Find Your Strongest Life: What the Happiest and Most Successful Women Do Differently"

"[Through Scripture] God frequently and emphatically condemns business people who take advantage of their workers, particularly through exploitive compensation."

**Tim Weinholt**  
[www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/may-web-only/why-overpaying-workers-makes-biblical-and-business-sense.html?start=1](http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/may-web-only/why-overpaying-workers-makes-biblical-and-business-sense.html?start=1)

# 'Beginning of everything'

## Samford closes 173rd year with 1,000 graduates in 7 commencement ceremonies

**M**arching to the majestic strains of "Pomp and Circumstance," hundreds of Samford University seniors processed into Wright Center in Birmingham on May 14-16 for six commencement ceremonies marking the close of the university's 173rd year. About 1,000 seniors received degrees during the programs as smiling parents, family members and friends looked on. The seventh commencement ceremony was held a week earlier for Beeson Divinity School students.

Speakers touched on a variety of themes ranging from health care to the definition of a Cumberland lawyer, the influence of Christian educators, the making of family films and the planting of trees.

Bradley J. Creed, Samford provost and executive vice president speaking at the Howard College of Arts and Sciences commencement, took his theme from Samford President Andrew Westmoreland's quote, "We sit in the shade of trees we did not plant."

### 'We are all beneficiaries'

Creed said, "We are all beneficiaries of the contributions, generosity and support of someone besides us."

"Great people plant shade trees that they'll never sit under. ... It's time to do something productive that will bless others, even if you don't get credit for it or reap the benefits."

Lucinda Maine, executive vice president and CEO of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, told McWhorter School of Pharmacy graduates that the rapidly changing health care landscape means pharmacists today will have even more of an impact on patient care in the future. She told them they must be "smart and bold and passionate and entrepreneurial."

Nena Sanders, Samford College of Health Sciences vice provost, said health sciences graduates are uniquely prepared to combine their faith, skills and knowledge to positively impact the lives of individuals and communities.

"You will create a life rich in opportunity and fulfillment knowing you make a

difference in the life of each person you touch," she said.

Micheal Flaherty, president of Walden Media, told seniors in the School of the Arts and Orlean Bullard Beeson School of Education, "You've chosen a career that will have more impact than any other."

Flaherty's company is known for the development of family films and literature including "The Chronicles of Narnia," "Charlotte's Web" and "Bridge to Terabithia."

William Stevens, retired CEO of Motion Industries and chair of the Samford board of trustees, told Brock School of Business graduates they would do well to follow the words of Samford's motto, "For God, For Learning, Forever."

Woodrow Hartzog, associate professor of law at Samford's Cumberland School of Law, told the law seniors that Cumberland lawyers are relentless.

They know life outside the law, they take

themselves "just seriously enough," they are loyal and they are in the people business.

These traits "make us who we are," said Hartzog, also a Cumberland graduate.

### 'Set an example'

Travis Coleman, pastor of First Baptist Church, Prattville, and president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, urged Beeson graduates to go forth and "set an example for a lifetime."

Speaking during Beeson commencement in Hodges Chapel on May 6, he said, "Set an example in your public life. Be a pattern for your congregation."

He told the young ministers that practice leads to improvement and added that he still goes to his church each Saturday to practice his sermon.

Also as part of commencement weekend, Samford seniors, faculty and administrators gathered May 15 for a prayer breakfast that focused on faith, scholarships and friendship.

Westmoreland told the seniors, "Don't think for one minute that this is the end of anything. It is the beginning of everything. We want you to do well."

He urged them to continue their association "with each other and with this place." (Samford)



Photo by Caroline Summers  
**Travis Coleman**

## Training Opportunities for



**July 9**, Marriott Capitol Hill, Prattville  
**July 16**, Hotel Capstone, Tuscaloosa  
**July 30**, Siloam Baptist Church, Marion  
**August 20**, First Baptist Church, Satsuma  
**August 27**, The Shoals RTJ Golf Course, Muscle Shoals

**September 10**, Highland Oaks RTJ Golf Course, Dothan  
**September 24**, Silver Lakes RTJ Golf Course, Gadsden  
**October 22**, Guntersville State Park Lodge, Guntersville  
**January 7, 2016**, Samford University, Birmingham

**Each session will begin at 1 p.m. and end at 7 p.m. and will feature:**

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Alabama Baptist Convention  
State Board of Missions

This event is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

# 'Patience' is key

## First deaf M.Div. student graduates from Beeson

**G**raduation for Samford University's Beeson Divinity School on May 7 was especially meaningful for Bruce Persons, who became the first deaf person to earn a master of divinity degree from Beeson in the school's 27-year history.

Persons, who has been deaf since early childhood, graduated not only with a diploma and the Bible that Beeson graduates traditionally receive, but with the deep respect of Beeson faculty, staff and students.

Prior to commencement Persons received the school's Distinguished Student Award in recognition of outstanding and holistic achievement in scholarship, Christian spirituality and ministry involvement.

He was chosen by unanimous vote of the faculty, said Beeson officials, because of "how well he encompasses all that we hope to see in our graduating students. His deafness has not hindered [his] pursuit of excellence in the slightest."

Persons, who hails from Maryland, served as Beeson's 2014-15 student body president. Although his immediate career plans are fluid, he knows his calling.

"I am called by God to preach the gospel and minister to the deaf and hard of hearing community — the fourth largest unreached people group in the world. Only 2 to 4 percent of this population know Christ as their personal Lord and Savior," said Persons, who hopes to minister in a church with a deaf congregation or train and equip ministers of the deaf "to make disciples of all nations."

He pursued his Beeson studies with the assistance of a devoted group of interpreters for the deaf. He said together they found some classes — such as Greek, Hebrew and history and doctrine — more difficult than others because of the often unfamiliar theological and linguistic terminologies.

"It was always challenging for me to find ways to bridge communication gaps between me and my hearing peers and professors,



Photo by Caroline Summers  
Beeson Divinity School's Dean Timothy George (right) helps congratulate the school's first deaf graduate Bruce Persons.

but I was always able to find ways to overcome our communication barriers through written and electronic means," Persons said.

"Deaf people already have the tools they need to communicate with other people who do not know sign language, and they really appreciate it when hearing people are willing to use the tools they have to communicate with us," he noted. The tools he refers to include paper and pen, email, texts and communication via other devices.

Persons identified one word, patience, as the key to overcoming barriers and situations that could have been problematic.

"People respond to this trait very well and you will get more accomplished when you are patient toward others at all times. When someone is patient, he or she is more inclined to demonstrate kindness toward other people and treat others in a more favorable manner," he said.

"Patience will help you accomplish more not only in your ministry, but also in life."

Persons lost his hearing at a young age from meningitis. Growing up in a hearing household, he attended a deaf school that advocates a bilingual education utilizing American Sign Language and the English language.

Later he was often the only

deaf student in hearing colleges. Because he lived in both hearing and deaf worlds, Persons said he is comfortable living and interacting with people in both cultures.

### God's calling

He was 15 when God "lovingly got ahold of me," Persons writes on his website: [www.brucepersons.com](http://www.brucepersons.com). Called to full-time Christian ministry during his senior year in high school, he has served deaf people in various functions and roles ever since. He preached his first sermon at age 19.

Persons attended a community college before earning a bachelor's degree in management from Hood College in Frederick, Md. He enrolled at Beeson after working for almost two years as an employment specialist at Maryland School for the Deaf. (Samford)

**"I am called by God to preach the gospel and minister to the deaf and hard of hearing community."**

**Bruce Persons, graduate Beeson Divinity School**



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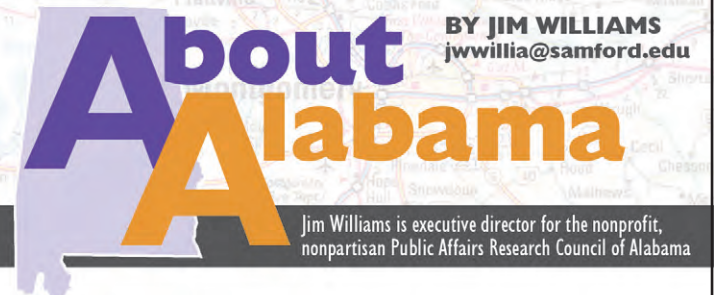
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## The Best Bet for Resolving Alabama's Budget Crisis

**F**or several months, the governor has been pointing out that the state's General Fund (GF) does not produce enough revenue from continuing sources to cover the costs of the services it finances. As a result there isn't enough money to provide adequately for courts, corrections, health care for the poor and elderly, mental health and other non-education services.

GF revenues in 2016 are expected to fall \$290 million short of the current spending level and another \$140 million is needed to cover requirements for corrections and Medicaid that are considered unavoidable. The governor has proposed tax increases. This has caused quite a stir and some in the Legislature have put forth gambling revenues as a solution. But we need to take a deep breath and consider Alabama's existing tax situation.

We collect the nation's lowest state and local taxes in relation to population. Adding enough tax revenue to resolve the current budget crisis would pull Alabama up to the level of South Carolina, which ranks 49th. If we spread the burden of providing adequate services among taxpayers — where it belongs — then the cost to each of us will be modest.

For example Alabama's property taxes are the lowest in the United States on a per-capita basis. A 6.5-mill tax increase (one mill is equivalent

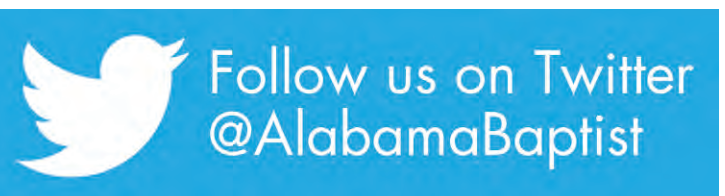
to one-tenth of a cent) would raise \$330 million in new revenue, based on data for 2014. This would cost the owner of a \$150,000 homestead \$72 a year, and the payment would be deductible on state and federal income taxes. All of the revenue would go to provide stable funding for the services financed by the GF.

### Compared to others

This appears attractive when compared to the experience of two neighboring states with gambling options of comparable size. South Carolina's lottery raised \$326 million for state coffers in 2014, but it took almost \$1.3 billion in lottery ticket sales (\$261 per capita) to produce that result. The state spends \$7 million a year on advertising to encourage people to play.

In Mississippi casino gambling taxes raised \$345 million in 2008, but by 2014 the revenue had fallen to \$248 million, a drop of \$97 million (28 percent), evidently caused by a saturated gambling market.

Planning, and no small amount of wisdom and courage, will be required to resolve the state budget crisis in a way that is in the long-term interest of all Alabamians, but isn't that why we pay our public servants? The best bet for balancing Alabama's budget lies in moving toward a fair, balanced and adequate system of broad-based taxes. ☐



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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 31

## Explore the Bible By Robert Olsen, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries, University of Mobile

### A PURE PEOPLE Malachi 3:1-7, 3:16-4:2

#### God's Messenger (3:1-5)

The Israelites asked at the end of Chapter 2 where the God of justice was and God answers them in Chapter 3. God affirmed that He would receive His due when His messenger would come to the temple — a messenger who was none other than John the Baptist. Verse 1 refers to the first coming of Christ but verses 2-6 address His second coming. This section begins by asking, "Who can endure the day of His coming?" because the second coming brings judgment. The only ones who can withstand the judgment of Christ are those who have accepted Christ as their Savior. Christ's death on the cross is a substitutionary atonement in which His death is in place of ours. His perfect sacrifice satisfies God's demand for our perfection and it is only through belief in Christ we can be saved from God's wrath (Acts 4:12; John 14:6).

#### God's Unchangeable Character (3:6-7)

The Bible is full of people who turned away from God. We all do it every time we sin. It would seem that God needs to destroy the entire population of the world because of our depravity and due to His righteousness. However, the message of the Bible is one of mercy and grace as well as God's justice and wrath.

God always offers us salvation. We can always be forgiven of our sins. In fact as you read the Old Testament you see God calling out for His people to return to Him. Just like the father in the story of the prodigal son longs for his son's return, God longs for us to return to Him. So when God warns us of coming judgment we can be spared by returning to Him. God does not change. None of us are good enough to come to God but the good news is He saves us because we cannot save ourselves. We also can be certain that all of the promises in the Bible will come true because God is unchangeable, but this includes all the judg-

ments He promises as well. This should encourage us to choose to cling to God instead of to our own selfish desires.

#### God's Record (3:16-18)

Some who heard Malachi's prophecy repented and wrote down a scroll of remembrance. One of the ways we can remember God's faithfulness is by recounting past times when He has answered our prayers or when He has comforted us in the midst of a sorrowful time. If we only look at our current circumstances it is easy for us to become fearful or dismayed when things are going bad. Many people question God and His goodness when they face trials. But if we remember God's goodness to us in the midst of bad times we can hold fast to His promises for us now and in the future.

This group that repented from their sins and turned to God are representatives of God's remnant who are recounted throughout the Bible. There are always a few that remain faithful to God and these should be models for us to follow. In a culture that increasingly despises God it is important to remain steadfast in our faith and continue to serve God no matter the cost.

#### Hope for the Faithful (4:1-2)

Those who remain faithful to God will be spared the judgment on the day of the Lord. This again refers to the second coming of the Lord. When Jesus returns there will be universal judgment and those who have rejected God and have despised His truth will face an eternal separation from God while those who have remained faithful will be taken up to be with the Lord for eternity.

This should spur us on and give us confidence that even when we face hard times, God has not forgotten us and we can look forward to a time of peace and joy for eternity when He returns. We should live in a way that shows we are thankful for the provisions God has given us in our salvation. This should be reflected in our lives so the world can see the joy we have in serving the one true God. ☞

## Bible Studies for Life By Michael K. Wilson, M.R.E. Director, Resource Center for Pastoral Excellence, Samford University

### STICK WITH ACCEPTANCE Romans 14:1-4, 13-19

The memory is still fresh in my mind after 20 years. We had young children and our evening mealtime mayhem was interrupted by the doorbell. Though the practice was beginning to fade, many churches still made visits to prospects without calling in advance. I was greeted by a young man who told me he was visiting in the neighborhood, inviting people to his church. He did not live in our neighborhood but I knew about his church. I did not tell him I was a minister at a church half a mile down the road from his.

He asked the usual questions including if I died that night, did I know for sure I would go to heaven. I told him I had that assurance, as I too was a Christian. He asked what church I attended. When I told him, his comment to me was, "You really don't want to be going to that church. They don't believe the Bible."

His comment bothered me, as this certainly was not my experience of the good folk at our church. Plus who was he to decide whether or not our church believed the Bible? He did not attend our church. And why would another Christian use that approach to draw others to his or her church?

My dark side came out. I told him his description of our church was news to me and I really should know about something like that because I was one of the ministers at the church. As I recall, he did not have much more to say.

This Sunday's lesson addresses the challenge of getting along with others who think differently from us. Paul has wise counsel to offer that can make a difference in our relationships.

#### Acceptance means we can accept a person whose opinions differ from ours. (1-4)

The Roman Church was a mix of both Jewish and Gentile cultures. The religious

practices of Jews included regulations regarding food. Gentile converts typically had few qualms about the kinds of food that were permissible to eat. This created tension between Jewish believers who still observed dietary restrictions, especially about meat. One reason was that much of the meat was likely left over from pagan sacrifices. The tension was between the old religion of Judaism and the new religion of Christianity — living by the Law or by grace. Whose practice of faith was right and whose was wrong?

Things have not changed much over the centuries. This tension remains in the Church among sincere followers of Christ who think differently about important matters. Paul made it clear to the Roman Christians that doing the will of Christ trumped any tradition or long-standing religious practices.

#### Acceptance means we do nothing to cause the other person to stumble. (13-15)

Saint Augustine is attributed with the words, "In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, grace; in all things, love." The Christian life means living in community with others with a focus not on one's own will but on the will of Christ. What sincere follower of Christ does not understand the example He set by "emptying Himself" for the sake of others?

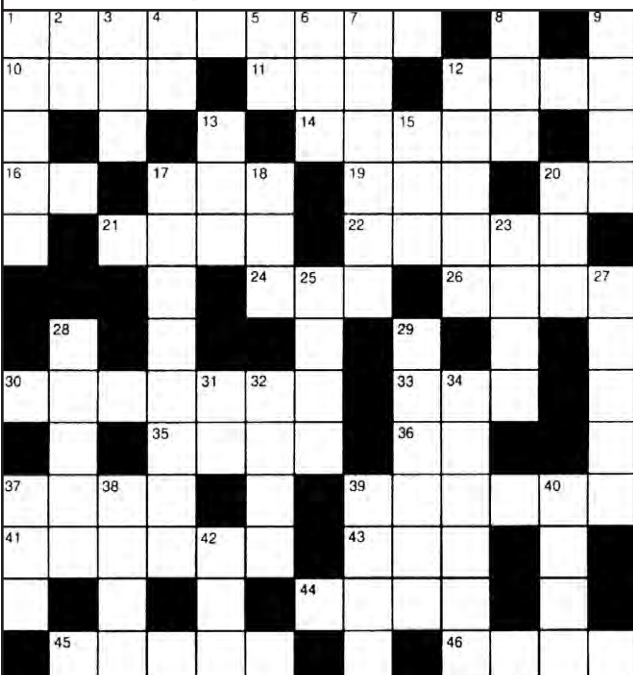
Jesus' life was lived in consideration of others. Should we not also be mindful of others and how our words and deeds help or hurt their faith? The will of Christ is that we love one another. "Stop passing judgment on one another" (v. 13).

#### Acceptance means we do that which builds up the other person. (16-19)

Being right is such a little thing. Anyone who has been in an argument knows "winning" is not always a satisfying outcome. If being right means we do not demonstrate love, we are wrong and have failed to do the will of Christ. ☞

## Christian Crossword

By Martha Wall Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



### Across

- \_\_\_ rather than choice gold. (Prov. 8:10)
- John's place of exile. (Rev. 1:9)
- In addition.
- Supplicate.
- Divine radiance.
- Leave.
- Earthen vessel.
502. (Roman numeral)
- Like.
- Entice.
- Church official. (Titus 1:6)
- Lair. (Ps. 10:9)
- Shade trees.
- Treasured jewel. (Ex. 28:18)
- Consumed.
- Adam's grandson. (Gen. 4:26)
- Thus.
- At once. (Mark 1:30)
- Embalming ingredient. (John 19:40)

- Sew.
- Snake-like fish.
- God answered by \_\_\_. (1 Kings 18:24)
- Beauty's wondrous exchange. (Isa. 61:3)
- Hemispherical structure.
- Solomon, and others.
- Opposite direction. (abbr.)
- Ancient.
- \_\_\_ are not of the night. (1 Thess. 5:5)
- And. (Latin)
- Derogatory name. (Ps. 22:16)
- \_\_\_ bell. (Ex. 28:34)
- Expression of dismay.
- The \_\_\_ of the Lord run to and fro. (2 Chron. 16:9)
- \_\_\_ goeth before destruction. (Prov. 16:18)
- Clay's problem. (Jer. 18:4)
- Medium for anointing. (Ex. 25:6)
- The ungodly ... scorneth \_\_\_. (Prov. 19:28)
- Though they be \_\_\_ like crimson. (Isa. 1:18)
- His \_\_\_ brought salvation. (Isa. 59:16)
- Otherwise.
- Extremities.
- Contained evidence of theft. (Gen. 44:12)
- Goliath, for one.
- Precious stone. (Ex. 28:20)
- Over and in contact. (Gen. 6:13-14)
- Early shipbuilder. (Gen. 6:13-14)
- Labored hard.
- Generous invitation. (Matt. 7:7)
- Canola and corn.

- High elevation. (Gen. 14:6)
- An oasis. (Ex. 15:27)
- A signal.



# Testimony of mercy

## Singer/songwriter Maher wants audiences to encounter Jesus

By Leann Callaway  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

With the songs on his latest album, “Saints and Sinners,” singer/songwriter Matt Maher hopes to bring awareness and awakening in the midst of daily struggles.

“The hope of this record is that people would have an experience of encountering Jesus in the parts of their humanity that they didn’t think God would be in — mainly their disappointments, doubts and struggles,” Maher said.

“All the songs were inspired by different quotes, sermons and hymns that have played a significant role throughout history. These songs were based on great leaders who God raised up to speak out in times of struggle and adversity.

“As a Christian I do believe that ultimately the cross has overcome all obstacles including racial inequality and the wound that has left on American culture. The hope is that people would be inspired to be an instrument of peace and to seek Jesus first and foremost.”

### Chart-topping music

Maher is currently touring across the country to promote the new album which debuted at No. 2 on Billboard’s Christian Chart. The album’s current single, “Because He Lives (Amen),” recently garnered the No. 1 spot on Billboard’s National Christian Audience Chart and landed in the top 5 at radio.

Through his music Maher desires to help people find restoration, reconciliation and redemption through a relationship with Christ.

“When you can remember

**“I can’t measure my life to the standard of the world, but I have to measure it by the standard of the cross.”**

**Matt Maher, singer/songwriter**

how far off you were when God found you, your own conversion stands as a testimony to God and His mercy but it also gives you a way to relate to other people,” Maher said.

“What I’m trying to do through music is explain the basics of faith and make it simple for people to understand why they need Christ as their Savior,” he said.

For Maher ministering to college students and young adults is especially important because of his own life experiences during those years.

“When I was 20 years old, my parents were going through a divorce and ... for the first time I had people my age who were welcoming me into church and helping me to realize the importance of having a relationship with Jesus.

“The most important lesson I learned during my college years is that I can’t measure my life to the standard of the world, but I have to measure it by the standard of the cross,” Maher noted.

His songwriting has garnered many awards and achievements, including multiple Grammy nominations.

“I love writing and singing songs that connect people to God,” Maher said. “I hope people are encouraged and challenged to put their faith into action by being the hands and feet of Jesus.

“There’s no greater sound than hearing worshippers singing praises to God. When a song engages an entire room of people, it has the ability to pull everybody together in a way that nothing else does. That is my favorite thing to experience because God is in the midst of it all.”



Photo courtesy of the University of Mobile

University of Mobile students lead the campus worship during the live recording of the album ‘My Savior My King,’ produced by the university’s record label, 8Eighth Records.

# ‘Authentic worship’

## UMobile’s 8Eighth Records releases live worship album

A new live worship album titled “My Savior My King” Live Worship from the University of Mobile (UMobile) was released May 19 through UMobile’s 8Eighth Records label.

“‘My Savior My King’ is an exciting new live worship recording from UMobile Worship,” said Jeff Quimby, 8Eighth Records general manager and director of A&R (artist & repertoire). “This sophomore release features six powerful new original worship songs written by UMobile students and creative arrangements of several worship favorites.”

The album was recorded in March on the university’s campus during the weekly True Spin campus worship. It is the second live worship album produced by UMobile’s record label featuring worship led by students who are the next generation of worship leaders and musicians.

“It’s a great atmosphere to capture authentic worship from the students,” Quimby said.

The project represents the heart and momentum of the worship culture at UMobile, he added.

Andrew Cunningham, a worship leadership major at UMobile, said, “The worship recording was a powerful night in God’s presence.”

### ‘A true testament’

Worship leadership major and musician Ben Butler said, “The songs are a true testament of how God is working and moving in the lives of the students on the campus at the University of Mobile.”

Quimby produced and mixed the record and engineer Jeremy Harford recorded it live.

Students majoring in worship leadership led the worship event. They were freshman Abbie George and seniors Cunningham, Ryan Jackson, Shannon Pinkston and Nick Hardeman.

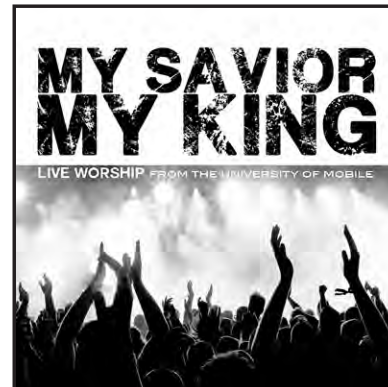
Musicians were: acoustic guitar, Cunningham and Jackson; electric guitar, Kyle Hamlin and Austin Taylor; piano & keys, Daniel Moore; bass, Ben Butler; and drums & loops, Quimby.

Members of the worship choir were: Blake Walker, Christina Jones, Kayla Patterson, Seth Brasher, Benjamin Butler, Kyle Hamlin, Ashley Walters, Violet Abrueo, Kristie Reddoch, Ashton Lewis, Ashton Gibbs, Victoria Creamer, Zac Wood, Jaron Wohlwend, Elijah Gibson, Caleb Birkhimer, Rebecca Wynne, Melissa Beaulieu and Nathan Dodd.

The album includes “You Make Me Brave,” featuring Pinkston; “Brighter Light,” featuring and written by Cunningham; “One You’re Fighting For,” featuring and written by Jackson; “Incomparable,” featuring Cunningham and George, written by Garrett Romine; “You Are Holy,” featuring Pinkston and written by Walker and Caleb Bell; “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” featuring Jackson and George; “Forever,” featuring George and Hardeman; and “My Savior My King,” featuring and written by Jackson.

8Eighth Records is part of the UMobile Center for Performing Arts/School of Music and School of Worship Leadership.

Along with its music publishing arm, 8Eighth Records includes the state-of-the-art Fisher-Brewer Recording Studio that provides a hands-on learning laboratory for university students to record and produce CDs in the same type of professional environment they will encounter in their music careers. (UMobile)



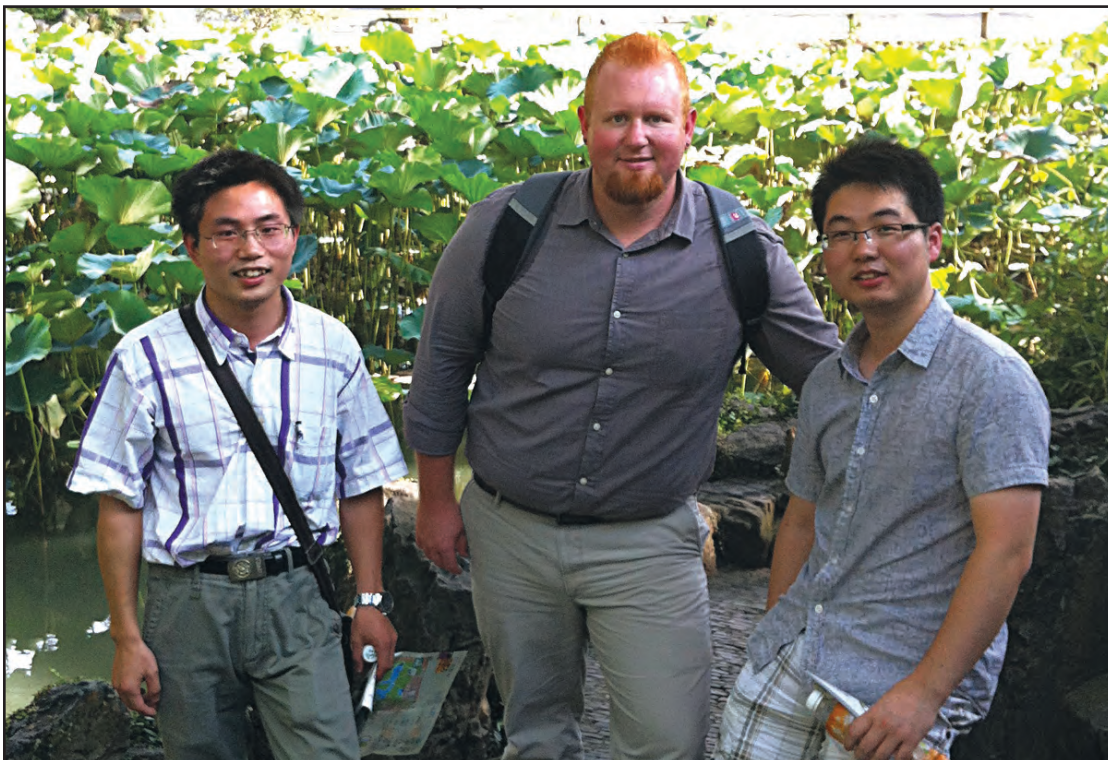


Photo courtesy of Village Church at Midlothian

The missions mindset that Steve Gentry (center) instilled in his church plant, Village Church at Midlothian, Va., in 2009 continues today through joining with area churches on long-term missions partnerships in East Asia and Peru.

# Partnering together

## No church too small to do global missions, pastor says

**A**fter starting a church, the last thing on most pastors' minds would be how that church could immediately have a hand in starting more, especially great distances away.

But when church planter Steve Gentry worked with the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia and the North American Mission Board in 2009 to start Village Church at Midlothian, he led the Richmond-suburb church to form a missions partnership with a Southern Baptist couple serving in East Asia within the church's first year of existence.

Within that first year, the congregation numbered 12, then grew to 36. Getting involved in international missions when they had yet to establish themselves locally might have seemed out of order, but to Gentry, who grew up in Midlothian, that set the tone for the growth and reach of the congregation which now numbers 300 and includes two overseas missions partnerships, the other with Southern Baptist missionaries in Peru.

"Whatever you want the DNA of your church to be, you have to start from Day 1," Gentry said. The church finding its place in God's story meant finding ways to reach the world, not only the community, with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### Feeling limited

But how could a small church just starting out do that? Small churches can feel limited by their circumstances as to how much they can do or how far they can reach, Gentry said. But that doesn't have to be the case, especially with Southern Baptist congregations, he said.

Partner with other churches to do missions, Gentry advises smaller churches. Village Church

partners with Parkway Baptist Church, Moseley, Va., to send missions teams to Peru.

"Even as a church plant, we can have missions efforts all over the world," Gentry said. "Because we get together as Southern Baptist churches to cooperate, we're able to fund long-term efforts that lead to long-term churches."

### 'Give tangibly'

"It's exciting for our people (at church) to be a part of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering as well as giving through the Cooperative Program because we're able to give tangibly toward something that's going on all over the world, where missionaries are on the ground through what we're giving. They're full time, able to start churches, able to form relationships, able to get the gospel to people who otherwise wouldn't be able to have it."

A staggering difference the missions teams have encountered is the sheer number of people contained within the same land area as their county in Virginia. "Rather than the 400,000 people we have here, there are 6 million people in the same amount of land that we encompass," Gentry said.

Because of the challenge of reaching so many people with the gospel, the church has decided that "rather than just taking missions trips, we want to be a part of seeing God plant churches," he said. "So we don't want to just take one trip to an area and then go somewhere else. Instead we want to commit to a specific area so that over the years we can partner with the same people and see churches planted.

"Without that type of relationship, we would just simply be having to do guess work as to what God is doing there, but we get updates frequently and we're able to communicate often with them so that we can continue to prepare and focus on what God wants to do next in East Asia." (BP)



## World of RELIGION

Compiled from Wire Services

### New saints highlight Palestine's beleaguered Christians

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis bestowed sainthood on two Palestinian nuns May 17, a move that's been seen as giving hope to the conflict-wracked Middle East and shining the spotlight on the plight of Christians in the region.

Sisters Maria Baouardy and Mary Alphonsine Danil Ghattas were canonized by the pontiff along with two other 19th-century nuns, Sister Jeanne Emilie de Villeneuve, from France, and Italian Sister Maria Cristina dell'Immacolata.

The canonizations were described by the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, Fouad Twal, as a "sign of hope" for the region.

"The canonization of these two Palestinian saints is a spiritual high point for the inhabitants of the Holy Land," he told Vatican Insider, an online news service of Italian newspaper *La Stampa*.

"The fact that Mariam (Maria) and Marie (Mary) Alphonsine, the first modern Palestinian saints, are both Arabs is a sign of hope for Palestine, for the entire Holy Land and the Middle East: holiness is always possible, even in a war-torn region. May a generation of saints follow them."

Twal traveled to the Vatican for the canonizations and invited Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to the ceremony.

In his Easter address, the pope said, "We pray for peace for all the peoples of the Holy Land. May the culture of encounter grow between Israelis and Palestinians and the peace process be resumed, in order to end years of suffering and division."

Twal had no doubt that the sainthoods would have a positive impact on the entire region.

"I am sure that it will rekindle the hope of our faithful in the Middle East ... especially in these difficult times that Christians are experiencing there," he said. (RNS)

### World Vision suspends operations in South Sudan state

JUBA, South Sudan — Amid killings, rapes and abductions, the international evangelical humanitarian agency World Vision indefinitely suspended its operations in South Sudan's Unity State over the escalating conflict.

Multiple other aid agencies, including Doctors Without Borders, have taken similar actions.

On May 13 gunmen torched towns in some of the heaviest fighting in the 17-month-long conflict in the predominantly Christian country.

World Vision partnered with the United Nations to distribute shelter materials and other emergency relief supplies, including food, water and sanitation services and mosquito nets. In addition the organization's nutrition programs target children under age 5.

Samar Abboud, World Vision's acting national director, said aid workers could no longer work in Unity State under the circumstances.

"We estimate that more than 10,000 children under 5 face malnutrition and nearly 300,000 throughout Unity State are left in need of aid," Abboud said.

Africa's newest nation descended into chaos in December 2013 after a dispute in the ruling party, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement.

Since then, fighting between President Salva Kiir's government forces and rebels loyal to former Vice President Riek Machar has left more than 1.5 million people displaced. Unity State is Machar's home state. (RNS)

### Catholic church ministers to Italy's migrant influx

CATANIA, Italy — In a time when Italy's immigration centers are long since full, the Catholic church is stepping up to minister to the estimated 34,000 migrants that have arrived in the country in 2015 through a center set up by Caritas, an international Catholic charity.

First opened in 2007 to offer food and advice to people living in extreme poverty, the center has welcomed an increasing number of migrants from war-torn African countries.

All those who pass through the center are offered breakfast and dinner by a small army of Caritas volunteers. The Catania center also seeks to create Pope Francis' desire of "a church for the poor" by holding Catholic services. (RNS)