



INSIDE



'We've gone long enough' in our own power, SBC President Floyd says

◆ Page 3



Champion addresses how to deal with unexpected answers to prayers

◆ Page 5



Christians gifted with Great Commission, great power, great resources, great challenge

◆ Page 6

Down to business

Alabama Baptists adopt \$40 million budget, move toward parity with SBC

By Grace Thornton
and Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Messengers to the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) annual meeting Nov. 17–18 approved a 2016 Cooperative Program (CP) budget that brought state and national ministry allocations closer to parity. They also adopted a new offering aimed at helping fund in-state Baptist missions work and expanded the role of the State Board of Missions (SBOM) executive committee.

The \$40 million Alabama Baptist CP budget, 53 percent of which is appropriated to state missions and

ministries and 47 percent that is committed to Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) causes, is a \$500,000 reduction from 2015.

The \$500,000 reduction for Alabama Baptist ministries in the 2016 budget recommendation will come from an across-the-board cut of SBOM and convention entities' budgets.

The increase in SBC ministries in the 2016 budget recommendation will come from the allocations for Samford University in Birmingham, The Baptist Foundation of Alabama (TBFA) and SBOM. SBOM also previously absorbed a \$700,000 reduction from the North American Mission Board.



Photo by Neisha Roberts

State convention officers were re-elected for a second term. Pictured are (l to r): John Thweatt, first vice president; Travis Coleman, president; and Tim Cox, second vice president. Not pictured: Bobby DuBois, statistical and registration secretary, and Billie Davis, recording secretary.



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Scott Slayton, pastor of Chelsea Village Baptist Church, Chelsea, asks State Board of Missions (SBOM) officials what criteria will be used to determine when a church is out of fellowship, a new role given to the SBOM executive committee.

The goal in Alabama will be to increase the SBC allocation by 1 percent annually, assuming CP receipts coming into the state office hit the \$40 million-budget mark. Any amount over the budgeted amount will go to SBC until the equitable distribution is met.

Funding ministries

State convention leaders have a goal of parity with SBC and began moving in that direction about five years ago, SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance reported in August.

ABSC is currently at a 45–45–10 split when ministries that are shared between the national and state conventions are considered.

And while shared ministries are supported at all levels of Southern Baptist life, the phrase itself and the concept in general are no longer communicating the allocation of funds clearly, Lance explained.

So going forward, the budget language in Alabama will deal

only with state and national percentages.

State convention ministries include all SBOM ministries, state convention entities — the colleges, *The Alabama Baptist*, Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center, TBFA, etc. — as well as Alabama Woman's Missionary Union and Alabama Citizens Action Program.

National convention ministries include all SBC ministries — International Mission Board, North American Mission Board, the six seminaries, etc. — as well as the SBC Executive Committee, GuideStone Financial Resources and SBC CP Advance.

The new offering — the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering — takes the existing Kathleen Mallory State Mission Offering, which helped fund the ministry (See 'Focus,' page 12)



happy THANKSGIVING

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever.

1 Chronicles 16:34

COMMENT

What a Wonderful Accomplishment

Alabama Baptists came early, stayed late and liked what they found at the 193rd annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention held at Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne.

In one way the meeting was historic. This was the first time in the history of the convention the annual meeting has been held in Baldwin County. The fact that registration was the lowest in more than 65 years had nothing to do with the excellent facilities provided by the host church or the work done by staff and church volunteers to ensure the success of the event. Neither could have been better.

Convention participation

The 748 registered messengers count reflects the nearly two-decade-long downward trend of convention attendance. It also reflects the fact that convention attendance is always lower on the Gulf Coast than in other parts of the state. In 2011, the last time the convention was in Mobile, registration was 763 messengers. In 2007 attendance was 806. Both numbers were the lowest of the four-year rotation between Mobile, Montgomery, Birmingham and Huntsville.

Rotating locations

But rotating the convention to various areas of the state does increase local participation. In 2014, when the annual meeting was held in Birmingham, 10 Baldwin County churches registered messengers. This year the number was 25. Mobile increased from 17 churches in 2014 to 21 churches this year. Most other nearby areas also increased the number of churches participating, according to information provided by statistical and registration secretary Bobby DuBois.

But memories of the 2015 convention will not be about numbers. They will be about what messengers experienced in the course of the three days devoted to Baptist life together.

When the annual Pastors Conference began



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

early Monday morning, Nov. 16, a crowd in the hundreds was already in the auditorium. Greg Pouncey, pastor of First Baptist Church, Tillman's Corner, in Mobile, put together a program that began with a bang and stayed strong through the final speaker.

The strength of the program was reflected in the strong attendance as pastors and others hurried into the auditorium for each session and stayed through the final "amen."

Eighty-seven percent of convention messengers registered by the end of the first session of the annual meeting on the morning of Nov. 17. However, the threat of storms during the final Wednesday morning session did cause some pastors and staff members to leave ahead of the bad weather.

Inspiring sermons

Again the preaching was outstanding. In the course of four sessions, messengers were treated to six wonderful sermons — the President's Address, three theme interpretations, the convention sermon and a special address by Ronnie Floyd, president of the Southern Baptist Convention — together with wonderful music. Anyone who says there is not much inspiration at the state convention must be spending their time in the exhibit area.

Top CP-giving state

The primary reason for an annual meeting is to handle business. Messengers seemed pleased with the direction of Baptist life together in Alabama. Messengers celebrated being the top Cooperative Program giving state among the 42 cooperating state Baptist conventions despite being the seventh state in terms of membership and less wealthy than many other states.

Floyd commended Alabama Baptists for their

sacrificial giving and urged them to find a balance between the need to reach Alabama for Christ and to reach the world for Christ. "We cannot win the world if we lose [our home base]," he declared.

Alabama Baptists not only voted to increase the percentage of funds going to missions and ministries outside the state, they voted to provide financial support to returning international missionaries who call Alabama home.

Alabama Baptist ministries

Messengers celebrated the work of their Baptist colleges — Judson College in Marion, the University of Mobile and Samford University in Birmingham. They rejoiced at the changed lives resulting from the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries. Messengers appreciated care provided for senior adults through three residential facilities. They rejoiced at the improvements at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega.

Through resolutions, the Alabama Citizens Action Program and the Christian Life Commission, Baptists spoke with one voice to moral and cultural issues facing Christians in Alabama and beyond.

Coming together

When the convention was finally adjourned, Alabama Baptists had enjoyed being together. Imagine 748 registered messengers plus hundreds of guests representing 362 churches from 69 different associations who simply enjoyed being together. What a wonderful accomplishment.

Alabama Baptists were one. Bivocational pastors sat beside full-time pastors. Those from churches that meet twice a month sat next to leaders of churches with multiple Sunday morning services. Those dressed in coat and tie fellowshiped with those in jeans and golf shirt. Together we sang Bible choruses and great hymns of the faith.

Reaching out

Differences gave way to purpose as messengers pondered and prayed together about reaching our neighborhoods, our nation and the nations for Christ. That is what an annual meeting of a state convention is supposed to be and that is what happened at the 193rd annual meeting.

To God be the glory. 🙏



Photo by Neisha Roberts
Executive Editor Jennifer Davis Rash of *The Alabama Baptist* delivers the state Baptist paper's report during the Wednesday morning session.

Didn't make it to convention?

Join the 659 people who watched portions online live.

To view archived videos, photos, resolutions, etc., visit abscannualmeeting.org/absc2015.



"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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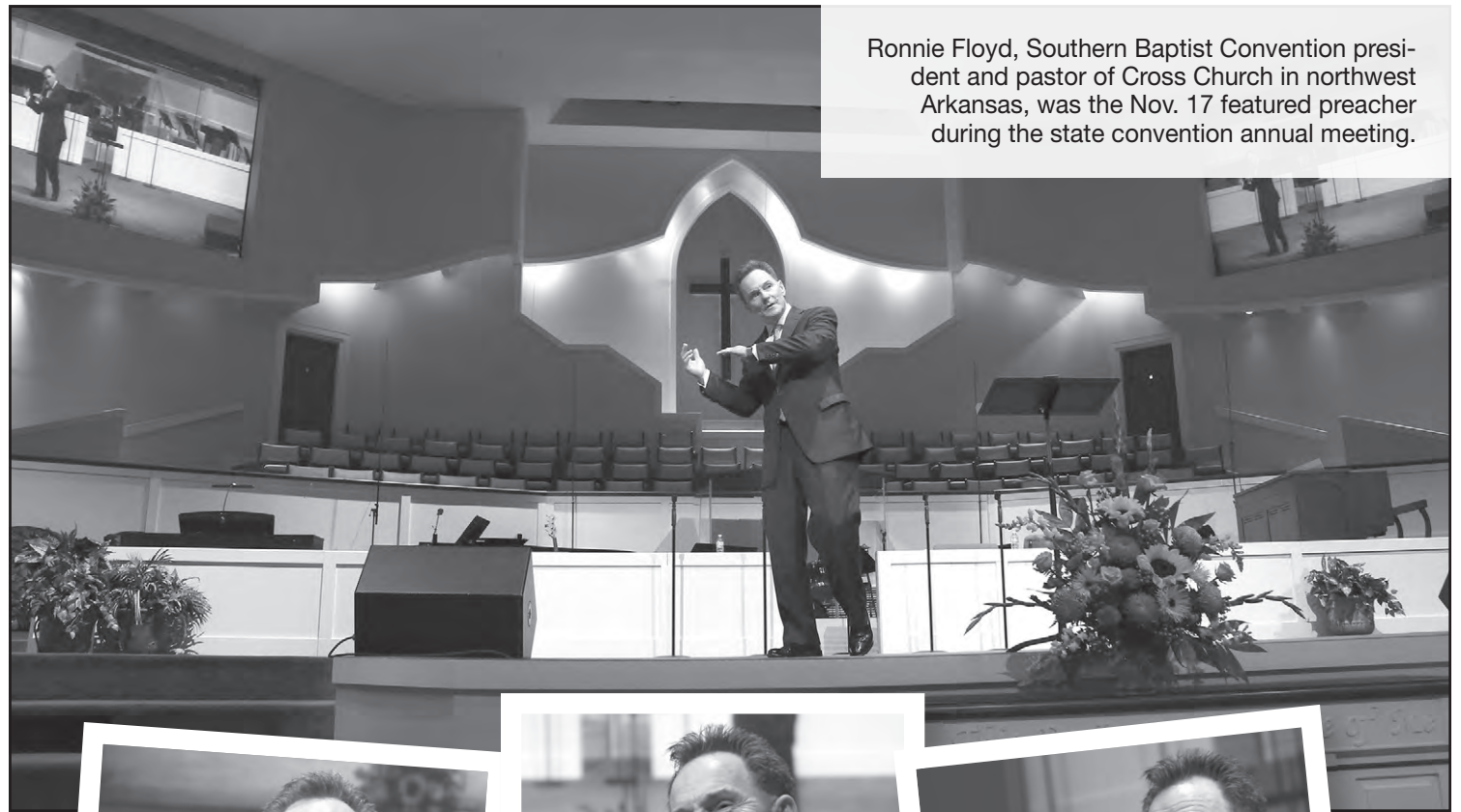
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Ronnie Floyd, Southern Baptist Convention president and pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, was the Nov. 17 featured preacher during the state convention annual meeting.



Photos by Neisha Roberts

Power of God

'We've gone long enough' in our own power, SBC President Floyd says

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

According to Ronnie Floyd, churches in Alabama have one great need — the power of God. But they also have one great struggle, he said — to remember why it's life-or-death important.

"We have too many pastors, too many Christian leaders who are content to live life and do ministry without the power of God," said Floyd, president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas. "We've gone long enough where this world has seen what we can do. It's time the world sees what our God can do instead."

Seeing the lost saved

Why? Because we live in a world where billions are still unreached with the gospel, and "sadly and regrettably Satan has convinced us that it's more about the songs we sing and the clothes we wear and the personal liberty that gives us the right to express ourselves in church" than it is about seeing the lost saved, Floyd said.

Alabama Baptists have a daunting task before them, but they struggle to stay focused on the mission, he observed.

"We tend to drift away from the mission of God, and when you drift away from the mission, you drift away from the power of God and the heart of God," Floyd added. It means Christians are drifting away from devoted prayer.

And when that happens revival can't take place, Floyd declared.

All the revivals that happened in Scripture — like in the first few chapters of Acts, including the 3,000 who came to faith in Christ at Pentecost — happened after believers devoted themselves to genuine, desperate prayer, Floyd said.

"We all want a Pentecost but do we want to pray? We all want our churches to grow but do we want to pray?"

When God's people pray He shows up, Floyd told his listeners.

"And when God gets in something He takes it to a brand-new level, and that's because God can do more in a moment than you can ever do in a lifetime," he said.

He challenged Alabama Baptists to pray

for an "unprecedented move of God like we have never seen before."

He also challenged them to pray for urgency "like we have never had before."

"What's the difference between the early Church and the Church today? The early Church had urgency. We don't have urgency," Floyd said.

Sincere relationship with Christ

And Alabama Baptists lack that urgency because they don't believe in lostness anymore, he said, explaining that often people think that if their friends, family and neighbors have some sort of religious affiliation, it means they're okay with God even if they're not really living out a passionate, sincere relationship with Christ.

"And that's not true at all," he said. "Each person you know — they are either lost or they're saved. There's no gray area."

The Church needs a generation that's not okay with drifting away from the power of God, Floyd said.

"The field is the world. And we can do this if we will stay connected to God's power." ☩

Leaving a legacy

State Baptist higher education shaping future leaders

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

People may have heard rumors that Mark Foley has lost his mind, lost his health or lost his passion for Jesus.

But none of those things are true, he said.

Foley, president of the University of Mobile (UMobile), said he's planning to step down soon not because of a bad reason but because of a good one — he wants “bodacious change” for the Baptist university.

“I'm not leaving under coercion or because it's hard — I'm leading change,” Foley said to those present in the Nov. 17 morning session of the convention's annual meeting. “As I look into the future, the future needs a bodacious change by the Church of Jesus Christ. And the best thing I can do is to find the president who will lead into this future.”

Next UMobile president

So Foley confirmed that he was “wrapping up and starting a search” for the next UMobile leader.

“Right now there's a person who has a godly itch and doesn't

know what to do with it, and they're going to find themselves as the president of the University of Mobile,” Foley said. “Pray for that president. And pray for me as I lead this institution into the hands of the next president and work to ensure a safe and healthy transition.”

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, affirmed Foley's leadership and expressed appreciation for his time at the helm of UMobile. And he prayed for Foley, his successor and his fellow state Baptist college presidents.

“As the world has passed a turning point of change, we need leadership like we've never needed it before and guidance like we've never had before,” Lance said. “We need a move of God on our lives like we've never experienced before. I pray we will be found faithful and that those who come behind us will know of that

faithfulness because of the legacy left behind.”

Andrew Westmoreland, president of Samford University in Birmingham, said Samford's leadership is currently praying through how to best leave that kind of legacy. “Samford has been a Great Commission university for 174 years,” Westmoreland said. “Right now we are considering, ‘What are the academic programs that Samford should think about for the next 174 years?’”

Part of that consideration for the future involves the appointment of a new provost, Michael Hardin, who formerly served as dean of the Culverhouse College of Commerce at the University of Alabama.

During his report, Westmoreland introduced Hardin to messengers and affirmed him as God's man to lead Samford academically into the future.

“Pray that Samford would not be a place that does not know what to do with the world,” Westmoreland said. “We have 5,206 students from 46 states and 32 countries that I see every single day. Pray for them. Pray for them to have opportunities and use them well. Even right now, they are all over the world.”

Myanmar partnership

Students from Judson College in Marion are in the same boat and need the same prayers, said Judson President David Potts.

He reminded convention messengers about Judson's partnership with a seminary in Myanmar, “one of the most hostile places in the world today.”

He also shared testimonies from Judson's partnership with the Lovelady Center, a Birmingham-based ministry to women transitioning from incarceration, addiction or an abusive situation.

“There is darkness in this world and at this time but the Light will always shine in the darkness,” Potts said. ☪

**“There is darkness
in this world and
at this time, but
the Light will
always shine in the
darkness.”**

**David Potts
president, Judson College**



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Mark Foley, president of the University of Mobile (center), shares about ways Alabama Baptists can pray for the university, specifically as he transitions out of his role in 2016.



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Resolutions committee members receive an amendment from the floor on a resolution regarding the Alabama Baptist State Convention's opposition to Planned Parenthood.

Planned Parenthood among 6 resolutions passed

Messengers to the 193rd annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) at Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne, left no doubt about their opposition to Planned Parenthood.

In 1 of 6 unanimously approved resolutions the messengers committed to “pray that Planned Parenthood will reverse their inhumane position and practice regarding abortion.”

But that did not go far enough for those attending the annual meeting. John Killian, pastor of Maytown Baptist Church, proposed that Alabama Baptists “resolve that we support efforts to end all public funding of Planned Parenthood.”

Amendment offered

Resolutions Committee members judged the proposed amendment “friendly” and incorporated the wording into the original resolution.

In addition to opposing Planned Parenthood, the resolution called on Alabama Baptists to pray for and show compassion to “those who have been victims of or participants in the abortion industry.”

In other resolutions, messengers:

► Expressed appreciation for University of Mobile (UMobile) President Mark Foley.

Foley, who has announced his retirement after more than 17 years at the helm of UMobile, received a standing ovation from messengers in appreciation for his dedicated guidance of the university. He also

was honored for his emphasis on the core values of faith, learning, conviction, integrity, stewardship and leadership.

► Opposed alcohol sales in Alabama saying that “privatizing liquor sales in Alabama would likely result in stores being open late at night and on Sundays” thus expanding “liquor sales through increased availability.” This increased availability would likely lead to increases in underage drinking, problem drinking and alcoholism, the resolution stated.

► Affirmed appreciation and prayer for International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries, including those returning from overseas service as part of IMB's reduction in force. The resolution also urged Southern Baptist churches to participate in the Week of Prayer and Mission Study “as a way of understanding the importance of praying for missionaries and how the gospel will continue to be shared around the world through IMB.”

► Reiterated support for the historic and constitutional right to exercise religious liberty and committed Alabama Baptists to “teach, preach and practice religious freedom in acts of worship and in freely and publicly expressing deeply held religious convictions.”

► Expressed appreciation for the Alabama Baptists who contributed to the organization of the annual meeting, including Baldwin Baptist Association, host church Eastern Shore Baptist and the 2015 ABSC officers. (TAB)

CONVENTION SERMON

'What is the deal?'

Champion addresses how to handle answers to prayers that are not what we expected

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Really, God? What is the deal? ... I ask and I seek and I knock and nothing happens."

During the convention sermon at the close of the Nov. 17-18 annual meeting, Buddy Champion, pastor of First Baptist Church, Trussville, addressed what to do when God doesn't seem to answer prayers the way one desires.

"Our whole theme (of the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting) has been about prayer," he said, noting the Scripture for his sermon as being Matthew 7:7-12. "'Ask and it will be given to you. Seek and you will find and the door will be opened for you.' It's simple enough. You ask, you seek and you knock and it just happens. It unfolds in our lives.

"But so many times in my life that is just not the way it happens. I ask and I seek and I knock and nothing happens, what I desire does not happen, yet here I am in the middle of this."

James 4:2 says, "You have not because you ask not," Champion noted. "But that's not true. I ask and I think God doesn't answer like I think He needs to answer."

Matthew 17 describes how having the faith of even a mustard seed can move a mountain.

Mark 9 talks about prayer and the book

of James describes anointing people with oil for healing.

"I'll have oil running all over your head and people are still sick," he said.

"What is wrong? Where is the disconnect? It is true to ask, to seek, to knock. None of us question that, but if I ask, what will I receive?"

Noting he doesn't yet know the answer, Champion said he continues to read God's Word.

Matthew 7:9-10 reads: "Which of you if his son asks for bread will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish will give him a snake?"

Gives what is needed

God is a God who does not give stones or snakes but what is needed, Champion noted.

Describing his personal journey of agonizing over his daughter's autoimmune difficulties, he shared a peek into many excruciating nights spent at Children's Hospital in Birmingham not understanding what was happening.

As he cried out to God to help him understand and letting God know he didn't agree with how his daughter was suffering, Champion said God always offered His love as an answer because that love was settled on the cross.

John 15:13-14 says: "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command."



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Buddy Champion, pastor of First Baptist Church, Trussville, shares from Matthew 7 in his presentation of the convention sermon Nov. 18 titled 'Really?'

"He loves us so much," Champion noted. "Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness and he was called God's friend. What a great name. What a great privilege to be called the friend of God and God's friend.

"When the wheels fall off and we are asking God and we are praying and we are trying to be faithful through difficulty, we find a God who wraps His arms around us and loves us," Champion continued.

"In my difficulties and in my struggles I can turn to my Heavenly Father. He loves me and says, 'Buddy, I'm going to carry you through this. I love you.' He gives us exactly what we need, what needs to unfold in your life. Ask and you will receive, but what am I going to find?"

Matthew 7:11 describes the good gifts God will give His children — gifts that will help in times of need and even His all-sufficient gift of grace.

Second Corinthians 12:9 also explains how God's grace is sufficient and how His power is made perfect in weakness.

"Even in those dark days, even in those confusing days, pray for God's grace that will give you power in your weakness."

'If you will be faithful'

And of the door that will be opened, Champion asked, "Where? I need a door."

But in Matthew 7:12, "it's a weird shift on the focus," he said, noting the verse says, "So in everything do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the law and the prophets."

Champion said, "The door will be opened ... for God to use you and to transform you. God wants to use us so that ... our world might see a God that works through them. Let us throw off everything that hinders us ... and let us run this race with perseverance." 🙏

CONVENTION MUSIC

Veritas, combined choirs, soloists lead messengers in 'adoration, praise'

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

Melodic strains and soaring notes sought to remind participants of their need to ask God to "Accept our adoration and praise" at the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting Nov. 17-18 at Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne. The various musical interpretations took the place of the traditional sermon interpretation that marked the other three letters of the convention theme "PRAY," an acronym.

Contemporary classical vocal group Veritas provided special music during the evening session Nov. 17, which was a homecoming of sorts as 4 of the 5 group members are alumni of the University of Mobile (UMobile).

Veritas tenor Jeff Anderson struck a chord on a personal level when he shared about a hard-learned lesson. When he lost his voice for seven months, Anderson never thought he'd be able to sing again.

"I had allowed my platform and my po-



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Veritas, a five-man singing group, provide special music during the Nov. 17 evening session of the annual meeting.

sition to dictate my worth," he explained. "But I learned a valuable lesson — God didn't create me to sing for Him. He created me to worship Him.

"Don't get weary in well-doing," he encouraged. "Don't get so busy that you for-

get how important it is to spend time with Christ ... to be renewed daily."

And daily renewal can occur, in part, through worship.

Keith Hibbs, director of the office of worship leadership and church music of the

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said, "In so many ways [the worship] highlighted the theme and amplified the challenge to pray. Music is such a usable, important facet of church life and convention life and can be used to unite us for worship and communicate a message."

Other individuals and groups that also participated in the musical message of "accept our adoration and praise" included Alabama Singing Men; Alabama Singing Women; pianist Frank Jones; Ronnie McCarter, senior adult minister at Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile; Anna Sailors, member of First Baptist Church, Montgomery; UMobile student Collin Clardy; and the Eastern Shore Baptist choir.

From timeless favorites such as "Come Thou Fount" to Hillsong UNITED's "Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)," participants accepted the challenge to adore and praise the Lord.

"We designed the music program ... to reflect different types of music we hear in Alabama churches ... from hymns to worship songs," Hibbs said. 🙏

'Great things' God has given



TAB
augmented
reality

Christians gifted with Great Commission, great power, great resources, great challenge

By State Convention President Travis Coleman
Pastor, FBC Prattville

Fanny Crosby wrote in a hymn a century ago, "To God be the glory, great things He hath done." She ends the chorus with "O come to the Father, thro' Jesus the Son, and give Him the glory, great things He hath done."

This morning I want to identify four "great things" God has given to His children and specifically apply them to Alabama Baptists.

God has given us the Great Commission

A pastor friend, David Dykes, shared in a sermon the story of Coca-Cola. The discoverer of the soft drink was John Pemberton, a pharmacist in Atlanta in 1886. Coke was not marketed overseas very much until the 1970s. It was then that the company set a goal to make it available to everyone in our world.

A survey a few years ago reveals how close they are to their goal. "Ninety-seven percent of the world's population has heard of Coca-Cola, 72 percent of the world's population have seen the Coca-Cola logo and 51 percent of the world's population have tasted a Coke. Every day there are 1.6 billion servings of Coke," Dykes said. "If Jesus had given the Great Commission to the Coca-Cola Company, the gospel would have already been presented to every person on earth. But He didn't give the Great Commission to Coca-Cola or Apple or McDonald's. He gave it to us."

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus commissioned the disciples before His ascension. He essentially was launching them into ministry. He gave them their marching orders. Jesus also was looking forward to us as well. His Great Commission to the disciples 2,000 years ago is our Great Commission. Let's take a close look at these two verses.

In verse 19 it says, "Therefore go." This phrase is best translated, "As you go" or "as you are going." As you are going to work or school or shopping or vacationing, etc., Jesus commands us to do three specific things.

First Jesus said to "make disciples of all nations." A disciple is a follower. We are to share our faith with the lost and give them an opportunity to follow Jesus. It is to be a lifestyle, as easy as talking to people about our families, our work, our passions and favorite sports team.

Second Jesus said, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit." Why baptism? It is a symbol of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Our baptism identifies us with Christ and is a public witness of our salvation and obedience to Christ.

Third Jesus said, "and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." In other words we are to disciple new converts. Just as Jesus taught His disciples, we teach. Those who are taught are in turn to make disciples and teach them.

Note the closing phrase of this Great Commission. Jesus gave a promise. He said, "And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age." This is a reminder from our Lord we are not alone. Jesus is with us as we go into all the world to make disciples, to baptize disciples and to teach disciples to obey all His commandments.

This is the universal, fundamental mandate of all individuals, churches and denomination work.

God has given us great power

In Matthew 28:18, Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me." Jesus knew the disciples would feel ill-prepared and totally inadequate to go to

all nations and make disciples. Well, Jesus does have "all authority." So what did He do? He promised to give them power for this task.

In Acts 1:8, He promised, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." Ten days later the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost. The church was birthed and from that time to now the Holy Spirit has come to reside with every believer at the moment of their spiritual new birth.

You have Almighty God's Spirit in you bearing witness that Jesus is your Savior and Lord but also empowering you for service. You have His presence in you. You have His promise He'll always be in you. You have His power. God has given you Great Power.

God has given us great resources

There are two specific great resources I want to address. The first is great human resources. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:27, "You are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it." Earlier in this chapter Paul spoke about the importance of each part of the body functioning correctly. Everyone has an important part to play. Everyone is to serve.

Why do we serve? One reason is because Jesus did. Matthew 20:28 says, "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve." Another reason is serving demonstrates love (Gal. 5:13-14). A third reason is God made us to serve. Peter notes this in 1 Peter 4:10. God gifted us to serve others. Paul reminds us in Ephesians 2:10, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

During this year as your president I have attended numerous board meetings and committee meetings. I have seen the great resource God has given to Alabama Baptists in the way of human resources. I've seen our entity leaders for years. We are blessed to have gifted and committed men and women in leadership. This year I was able to see and meet the men and women that make up the boards and the staffs responsible for ministry. It has been awesome to see them in action. They are committed to their part of Kingdom ministries. I noted their passion and enthusiasm to serve. I noted their spiritual gifts and vocational skills being used. I noted how their life experiences help to give perspective to their board meetings and decisions. I noted the various personalities and leadership styles. Our God has given us great human resources to serve Alabama Baptists.

In Nehemiah 3 we read a list of workers rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem. There is a total of 38 names and 42 work groups. Every section of the wall was covered. A wide range of people worked together side by side to accomplish one task — to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. Scripture said they had a mind to

work. There was a dependence on each other.

This is an appropriate description of what we are doing as Alabama Baptists. From all corners of our great state we have come with a single-minded purpose ... to cooperate together. We can accomplish more together than we can alone. We have a Great Commission and great power to do it.

God also has given us great financial resources. I want to thank Alabama Baptists for your faithful financial support of the Cooperative Program (CP). It was 96 years ago that Baptists inaugurated the "\$75 Million Campaign."

It was a fundraising effort to raise money for state conventions and Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) causes and distribute the monies in a fair and equitable way. While falling short of the goal over a five-year period, the success of Baptists cooperating birthed CP in 1925. Now 90 years old, millions of dollars have been raised to support Kingdom causes.

Alabama Baptists, you have led the way in recent years. Nearly 1 dollar out of 10 given through CP comes from Alabama. Plus we are leaders in Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong special offerings. God has given us great financial resources.

I believe in CP. Much of who I am is because of the benefits I received through

the Florida Baptist Convention, Alabama Baptist State Convention and our SBC family.

We, like Nehemiah's rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem, are united for Kingdom building. We have a calling to fulfill the Great Commission. It takes human resources but it takes financial resources as well.

Alabama Baptists, I challenge you to do more. We can do better.

God has given us a great challenge

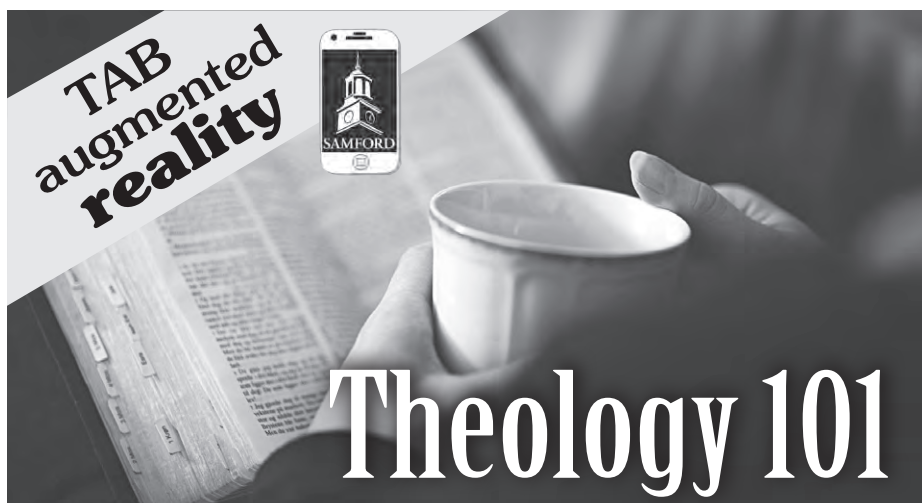
In John 9:4, Jesus said, "As long as it is day, we must do the works of Him who sent Me. Night is coming, when no one can work."

Let me challenge you with Jesus' admonition. We must work and serve our God now. Ephesians 5:16 says we are to redeem the time or make the most of every opportunity God gives to us. Time is growing short.

Not only is there an urgency of time, Paul encourages us in Galatians 6:9, "Do not grow weary in doing good." I know these are difficult times. We have moved from the Post Christian Era to an Anti-Christian Era. Is persecution next in our country? Church attendance is in decline. Church members are not as loyal or faithful as one time. Yet we know God is on the throne reigning on high. He is still in control. He is still Faithful and True. He is still raising up young leaders in the Church. Alabama Baptists, let's hold to the Bible. Let's covenant to pray like we never have before. Let's trust the Holy Spirit as it "blows where it will." 🙏



Photo by Neisha Roberts



BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Name Above Every Name**Son of David**By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Two weeks ago we noted that the term “Christ” pointed to Jesus as the Anointed One or Messiah. In so doing, we considered that this title technically referred to Jesus as the perfect fulfillment of the anointed offices in Israel, particularly that of king. The prophetic hope grew in Israel for another king like David who had ruled in the golden age of Israel. To think of Jesus as the Son of David is to be reminded of God’s faithfulness to His promises. What He promised centuries beforehand came to pass.

The opening verse of the New Testament terms Jesus “the son of David” (Matt. 1:1). When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would become the mother of the Messiah, the angel promised concerning Jesus, “The Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father, David” (Luke 1:32). When Peter preached in the fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost he referred to King David, saying, “God had sworn with an oath to him that He would set one of [David’s] descendants on His throne” (Acts 2:30).

‘Have mercy’

Additional New Testament passages refer to Jesus as the Son of David. For example, Matthew 9:27–30 tells of two blind men who followed after Jesus while crying aloud, “Have mercy on us, Son of David.” Luke 18:35–43 records that Jesus approached Jerusalem by passing through Jericho where a blind man along the roadway repeatedly cried out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me” (vv. 38–39). Even while He was outside of Galilee in the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, a Canaanite mother cried out for Jesus to help her daughter, addressing Him, “O Lord, Son of David” (Matt. 15:22).

Much later the apostle Paul, in a message on a missionary journey, referred to David when he declared, “Of this man’s offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as He prom-

ised (Acts 13:23). The last chapter of Revelation records this word from the glorified Christ: “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the Root and the Descendant of David, the bright Morning Star” (Rev. 22:16).

Attached to the title “Son of David” are several theological strands that help form a full-orbed Christology, or doctrine of Christ. Being seen as a descendant of David attests to the real humanity of Christ. Such is the meaning of the opening words in Romans, which say of Jesus, “Who was descended from David according to the flesh” (Rom. 1:3). His human ancestry serves to remind us of Jesus’ identification with those whom He came to save.

Messianic hope

Inasmuch as the coming of Christ as the ideal King was the fulfillment of messianic hope, we are reminded that He came as more than a human descendant of David. The Son of David also was the Son of God. On His divine side as the Son of God, He came as a person of power and supernatural accomplishment. Such was shown in healing human infirmities in the cases of those who called out to Him as the Son of David.

Furthermore as the long-awaited descendant of David, Jesus came to establish not a renewed earthly Kingdom but an eternal Kingdom over which He continues to rule until one day every knee will bow to Him and every tongue confess that He is King of kings and Lord of lords. ☪

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.

**Guffin illustrates ‘pardon us for our sin’ during theme interpretation**By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

The sermon’s tone was not condemning. Instead Scott Guffin urged Alabama Baptists to open their hearts by shifting their focus inward and asking God to “pardon us for our sin.” The topic was the first letter of the theme of the annual meeting, “PRAY,” and was the first of four theme interpretations of the Nov. 17–18 annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention held at Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne.

With soft-spoken humility and sincerity, Guffin, pastor of Liberty Park Baptist Church, Birmingham, paired lessons from Psalm 51:1–9 with biblical truths for participants to hold fast to in their daily striving for Christlikeness.

Just as David cried out to God in verses 1–3, “we need to confront our own sin,” Guffin said. He challenged listeners not to avoid the sin by covering up, justifying, ignoring or comparing them with one another.

Instead focus on the truth that “it’s only in the light of God’s holiness that I understand the depth of my own sinfulness,” Guffin said.

Understanding must come before a believer can confess his or her sins, a les-

son that is often difficult to enact in one’s own life, Guffin noted. In verses 3–4, David acknowledged his sins and outwardly confessed them to God.

“God promises to answer our sincere and repentant confession with His complete and utter forgiveness,” Guffin declared.

“So why is it that we don’t make a big deal about God’s forgiveness? ... I have come to feel that we cease to be impressed with everything, even the grace and forgiveness of God.

“It’s only in the light of the richness of Christ’s sacrifice that I can grasp the amazing worth of God’s forgiveness,” he said.

After understanding and confessing one’s sins, believers must communicate God’s forgiveness to others.

“Every transgressor who is out there needs to know God’s ways,” Guffin said. “It’s our job to tell it.

“Let’s don’t ever lose sight that we are in the midst of a world that is lost and dying,” he urged. “God’s people who are called by His name need to humble themselves and pray and seek His face and turn from our wicked ways. Then you will hear from Him.”

Guffin closed with a prayer asking God to “forgive our sin, heal our land and pardon us for our sin.” ☪



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Scott Guffin, pastor of Liberty Park Baptist Church, Birmingham, illustrates the convention theme.

Established, bivocational, new works honored

Photo by Neisha Roberts

James Preachers (left), bivocational pastor of Mount Carmel Baptist Church, Coffee Springs, and director of missions for Sardis Baptist Association, is awarded the Troy L. Morrison Leadership Award for bivocational work by Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions’ Mike Jackson. Other award recipients are John Brock Jr. (back, left), pastor of Highland Baptist Church, Florence, for established work and Jeff Mann (not present), pastor of Willow Street Baptist Church, Scottsboro, for new work.

'Clear the stage'

Pastors Conference looks at clearing way for revival, evangelism, purity, grace

By Maggie Walsh
and Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Greg Pouncey may have meant for the Pastors Conference to "clear the stage" for what matters.

But what he got was two altars full.

The event began and ended with pastors, evangelists and other leaders spilling into the aisles and hitting their knees, asking God to make room for Himself in their hearts and ministries.

"If you came to get a good sermon to preach on Sunday, it's not going to work," Pouncey, conference president and pastor of First Baptist Church, Tillman's Corner, in Mobile, told the crowd Nov. 16. "This conference wasn't designed for that.

"This conference was designed to help you clear the stage of your church, your life, your family and make room for the presence of God."

Ted Traylor, pastor of Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola, Florida, kicked off the morning session by urging participants to do exactly that, leading them to the altar for the first time."

'Cry out to God'

"God is able," Traylor passionately exclaimed. "Cry out to God to do a fresh work in your life today."

Drawing from Jude 1:24-25, Traylor encouraged leaders to act now and give God all glory, majesty, dominion and authority in order to place God center stage of their lives, ministries and hearts.



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Greg Pouncey, Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference president and pastor of First Baptist Church, Tillman's Corner, in Mobile, welcomes guests to the evening session.

He challenged them to "cry out to the Lord," and men flooded the altar on their knees with hands stretched out to one another.

It was a good place for them to start, said Ed Stetzer, executive director of LifeWay Research, who challenged them next to clear out all the idols in their lives.

The Holy Spirit may have changed our hearts, but He didn't end our bent to chase after idols, he said.

"Our hearts are idol factories," Stetzer said. "Maybe it's a fear of failure over trust and obedience. Maybe it's putting personal

performance ahead of devotion. Maybe our identity is caught up in the attendance of our church."

No matter where the wrongly ordered desires stem from, "the affection we need from Jesus is what has to replace that idol of the heart," he said.

Once the stage is cleared of ministry idols, evangelism can take place, said Alan Floyd, pastor of Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile.

"The essence of following Jesus is to fish," he said.

Floyd spoke on clearing the stage for evangelism and used the

analogy of a fisherman found in Matthew 4:19: "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men."

He pointed out that God doesn't call one to be a catcher of fish, only to cast the line.

"There is nothing that our Lord calls us to do that He doesn't empower and equip us to do," Floyd said, and that takes all the anxiety out of soulwinning.

What's your fish story?

He encouraged participants to remember to tell their "fish story," their personal testimony, and reminded them that "you

cannot catch unless you cast."

"If we aren't fishing, are we really following?" Floyd challenged participants. "Alabama Baptists, let's go fishing."

Jason Allen urged participants to clear the stage to make room for the gospel. Centering on Paul's heart for the lost, Allen said Romans 10 provides Christians with two much-needed reminders.

Simple message

"We must remember the lostness of the sinner ... (and) we must recover the simplicity of the message," said Allen, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. "Our people need again and again and again a simple gospel message (that comes from) belief in the innermost being."

Allen then outlined for participants that a cleared stage is one that recovers the lostness of man, the simplicity of the message and the necessity of the messenger.

"Sometimes the best gospel encounters find you. Sometimes the best gospel encounters are begging for you to find them," he said in closing.

But before you can share, you have to clear the way for God's grace to make you whole yourself, said evangelist Len Turner.

Turner, a prominent Baptist pastor in Savannah, Georgia, was rising through the ranks of convention leadership when he reached an emotional breaking point and resigned from his church, he told conference participants.

His ministry was all about pride, he said, but after he got

Pastors' wives hear about transformational trials

Life is a journey similar to an oyster's experience with a grain of sand. Layer by layer, an irritant of sorts can become a beautiful pearl. That was the message Cheryl Rice of Calvary Baptist Church, Clearwater, Florida, told about 60 women attending the Pastors' Wives Dinner on Nov. 16.

"It may not be smooth sailing or a walk in the park but it will be good and it will be abundant," said Rice, wife of Calvary Baptist Pastor Willy Rice, who was one of several preachers at the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference (see story above).

The Pastors' Wives Dinner was organized by Cathy Pouncey and a team of women from First Baptist Church, Tillman's Corner, in Mobile. Pouncey's husband, Greg, served as president of the Pastors Conference.

Abundant life

Cheryl Rice — a Samford University graduate, high school English teacher, mother and grandmother — developed her presentation from John 10:10 and the dinner's theme "Sailing to Abundant Life."

"An abundant life with Christ does not come smoothly," she

said. "We are willing to face whatever risks may come because the destination — an abundant life — is worth it."

Rice encouraged participants to remember that abundance is not found in how much a person accomplishes but in experiencing God in His fullness.

"It is in the midst of all of life's challenges where we learn the truth of who we are and the truth of who He is ... if we are willing to watch and learn, if we are willing to be observant and teachable," she said. "Like the oyster we must accept without resentment the presence of dif-

ficulties in our lives. We must work with our sovereign Lord to accomplish His will through it all.

"Then with our pearl in hand and increased knowledge of Him in our heart, we look back and realize that that is the abundant life with Christ," Rice said.

"God is still searching, not for perfect people but for individuals who are passionate about Him and committed to His calling," she said. "People willing to choose the long road of obedience and have a passion to obey God through their weaknesses to His glory." (Jennifer Davis Rash)



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Cheryl Rice of Calvary Baptist Church, Clearwater, Florida, was the featured speaker for pastors' wives Nov. 16.



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Pastors Conference officers for 2016 are (l to r): Daven Watkins, vice president (nominated and elected Nov. 16); Rob Jackson, president-elect; Teman Knight, president; Bobby Freeman, treasurer.

help and God restored him, “I have nothing to prove now — I just have Someone to please.”

Turner challenged pastors to reach out and let someone know if they need help. And he challenged them to — above all — seek God more than anything else and give up everything that gets in the way.

“Don’t ever sacrifice being intimate with Him for inspiration from Him,” Turner said.

“Don’t sacrifice the best on the altar of the good.”

Authentic revival

John Avant, pastor of First Baptist Church, Concord, in Knoxville, Tennessee, sought to encourage listeners with “what God can do” when one clears the stage for revival in their own lives and in their church.

To experience authentic revival, Avant urged, one must humble themselves.

“I believe that the great missing key to revival in my life, church, community ... is humility,” he said. “If we want to experience revival, we have to give God what we want.”

Avant defined humility as being daily consumed by Christ, called to others and crucified to self. Drawing on several passages including Micah 6:8, he emphasized that once you experience a revival movement, you cannot settle for “business as usual” at churches anymore.

“When revival really happens it changes everything. It doesn’t just come and go away,” Avant said. “What God wants to do is lead you to be a pastor who walks humbly with your God and lead your church toward a biblical view that is honoring and glorifying to God.”

God also wants you to catch the vision, said Willy Rice, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Clearwater, Florida.

“Until revival happens in the heart of a pastor, it will never happen in the heart of the church,” Rice said.

Pastors need to clear their “stage” for the sake of vision

and leadership, he said. “You are one vision away from a changed ministry and a changed life.”

God gave Peter a vision in Acts that led him to change the Church. “But before God could change the Church, He had to change Peter,” Rice said. “Until we are willing to meet with God on the rooftop like Peter and experience a fresh touch of God it won’t happen in the church.”

If God has called you to do something, the calling of God trumps your comfort, Rice said.

Don Wilton, pastor of First Baptist Church, Spartanburg, South Carolina, agreed.

Referencing Revelation 2:18–29 where Jesus both commended and condemned the church at Thyatira, Wilton concluded the conference by entreating participants to clear the stage for purity — and to do whatever it takes to make that happen.

The believers of Thyatira faced a difficult decision — compromise their beliefs or face a loss of income. Amid their struggle, Jesus commended them for their love, faith, service and perseverance, Wilton said, and condemned them for inviting Jezebel, an unbiblical prophetess, into the church and adopting her ways.

Internal compromise

It all came down to an internal compromise for the church, he said, a struggle Christians understand all too well.

Getting personal with participants, Wilton said, “I’m sensing a hunger and a thirst for God to clear the stage. ... I don’t want to pastor to people with a heart that hasn’t been cleared by God. I want God to clear my stage.”

Then Wilton concluded the conference just as it began — with a heartfelt altar call that prompted dozens of participants to fall on their knees before the Lord, crying out for a transformed heart, a rejuvenated ministry, a cleared stage.

“Maybe tonight we need to ask God to clear the stage so that only He gets the glory.”

It’s time to pause for praise, pondering, prayer, Lance says

Alabama Baptist messengers attending the Nov. 17 afternoon session of the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting took a moment to praise, ponder and pray.

During his report to convention messengers, Rick Lance, executive director of the State Board of Missions, asked messengers to “pause and praise” that church planting efforts are increasing and church revitalization efforts are expanding.

“I really believe we can’t win the world without winning Alabama,” Lance said. “We celebrate the church planters and those in revitalization.”

He also pointed to the praiseworthy efforts of disaster relief and global missions work.

“We never know when we are going to be called out ... to give a cup of cold water in Jesus’ name,” he said.

‘Welcome mat here’

And as several International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries begin their transition off the field as part of the recent voluntary retirement incentive program offered because of IMB budget issues, “there will be a welcome mat here in Alabama,” Lance said.

“We want to make sure these



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions Executive Director Rick Lance shares during the annual meeting Nov. 17.

individuals come back to a place they once called home and make it home again. For the children, we will do our best to make it their home as well,” he said.

“Pause and praise the Lord for what He has done, what He is doing and what He is going to do through Alabama Baptist life.

“Let’s pause and ponder,” Lance said.

“We are moving more and more to the point of parity by 2020 with the Southern Baptist Convention,” he said. At the

same time, “we cannot reach the world if we are not doing our business and making sure we are not losing our state. It is important that we do not lose the passion for reaching those in the nations and also in our neighborhoods.”

Along with praising and pondering, Lance urged messengers to “pause and pray.”

‘Hunger for God’

“Pray that we have a hunger for God, Lance said, pointing to Psalm 42. “We need to pray for a hunger for God like we’ve never prayed before.”

Also pray for hope in God, he said. Hope is the trust in God’s perfect timing. You are hoping in God and God alone, not in a political party, not in Congress but in God.

“The promises of God are just like events that happened in the past,” Lance said. “God keeps His word and we can hope in Him.”

“And let’s pray that we hear from God,” he said.

“We pray even in moments when we are downcast. Maybe in those moments we are most hungry, we can hope in God,” Lance said. “We are never beyond hoping in God. If we listen we can hear from Him.” (Jennifer Davis Rash)

TAB Talks interviews SBC President Floyd during debut



Photo by Neisha Roberts

During the Alabama Baptist State Convention on Nov. 17–18, *The Alabama Baptist* debuted TAB Talks, a live-interview setting with ministry leaders throughout the state and nation. Here Bob Terry, the paper’s editor, talks with Southern Baptist Convention President Ronnie Floyd about the denomination’s future. TAB Talks also interviewed Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program; Traylor Lovvorn of Undone Redone; Kevin Blackwell of Samford University in Birmingham; and others. Look for the interviews as an augmented reality feature in upcoming issues.

Dale Huff, director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' office of LeaderCare and church administration, offers the final theme interpretation at the ABSC annual meeting.

God's yoke



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Believers are responsible to God, to each other, Huff says

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

Now have the secret to success," Dale Huff told participants during the final theme interpretation sermon of the Nov. 17-18 annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention. "And that is to please God."

Huff, retiring director of the office of LeaderCare and church administration for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, tackled the final letter in the acrostic "PRAY," the theme of the 193rd annual meeting. The "Y," he said, was for "yoke," a term representing service and sacrifice.

"What does it mean to be yoked

to someone else?" Huff questioned. "This means we, God's people, are responsible to Him."

But the yoke that Huff referenced is not one heavy and burdensome. Instead it is an invitation to service.

Discipline, surrender

Matthew 11:28-30 says, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and lean on Me. ... For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Huff described a yoke as representing discipline and surrender, which frees Christians to wholeheartedly serve God, obey

His command and be available for His ministry.

"God's yoke is well-fitted and customized to your collar size," Huff said.

As Christians "the task, the yoke, the ministry" belongs to God, Huff emphasized, reiterating our responsibility to God.

Christians also are responsible to each other, Huff added. A yoke is made for two after all, he said, a design that "connotes partnering and connection."

A yoke also requires cooperation, a condition that emphasizes a program that Huff fervently believes in — the Cooperative Program (CP).

"I am a CP Baptist because I

am ... yoked to my fellow Baptists."

CP, the Southern Baptist Convention's network of giving, directly yokes Alabama Baptists to one another, "binding us together in these blessed bonds of Christian love," Huff said.

"A Cooperative Program is a much better option than an uncooperative program."

'Be steadfast'

Quoting 1 Corinthians 15:58 in heartfelt prayer, Huff concluded by encouraging participants, "Therefore be steadfast, immovable always in the work of the Lord, knowing that the labor of the Lord is not in vain." ❧

Want to know GOD?

By Pastor George Robinson
East Heflin Baptist Church

In 1963, Andy Williams recorded and sang a song that has become a staple of the Christmas season called "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year." I am sure those who don't know Christ have their reasons for this season being the most wonderful time of the year, but to a Christian it has an entirely different meaning.

You see, Isaiah 9:6 tells us the reason for this is that "a Son is given." One of the first Bible verses I remember learning was John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It was many years later when I came to realize the true meaning of Isaiah 9:6. John 3:16 explains the gift of the Son and why this verse is the most wonderful verse.

First the wonderful God who showed us His wonderful love, "For God so loved the world." God loves us in spite of who we are and where we have been. He understood that all of us would sin and because of that He gave us this gift, "His only begotten Son."

What a wonderful gift God gave us by giving his Son who died on the cross for us. Isaiah 9:6 also calls His Son "wonderful." The most important part of John 3:16, however, is that wonderful offer which God makes to every one of us, "that whosoever believeth in Him." To believe in Him we must repent of our sins, receive this wonderful Son, as the Son of God and as Savior, as the sacrifice for our sins. When you do that you see the wonderful escape God provided for all in this verse. Because of what Jesus did on the cross, no one has to face the penalty for our sins, which is one of eternal separation from God and eternal punishment.

Finally this verse provides for us a wonderful future, "everlasting life." Wouldn't it be great to truly make this the most wonderful time of the year? Won't you pray to receive Christ today and receive the wonderful gift? ❧

TAB* CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Chappell Hill Baptist Church located in rural Choctaw County is accepting resumés for a full-time pastor. Please email your resumé to: dwgiles58@gmail.com.

MINISTER OF MUSIC & EDUCATION

First Baptist Church of Mount Olive is seeking a minister of music and education to lead a growing congregation in blended worship and discipleship programs. Bachelor's required and two to five years experience preferred. Send resumés to: Stephanie@fbcmo.org.

MUSIC & WORSHIP PASTOR

Full-time music and worship pastor at First Baptist Church of Murray, Kentucky. Contact Rhonda Roberts at First Baptist Church, 203 South 4th Street, Murray, KY 42071.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC

Raleigh Avenue Baptist Church in Homewood is seeking a

part-time music minister. Send resumés to: RABC, ATTN: Personnel Committee, 309 Raleigh Ave., Homewood, AL 35209 or jeantowry@rabc.org.

STUDENT MINISTER

New church plant in Oneonta, Alabama, seeking a part-time director of student ministry. To apply please send resumé, current picture and three references to: matt@redeemeroneonta.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

MINISTRY EVANGELISM CATALYST

Shelby Baptist Association, Columbiana, Alabama, is seeking a person to serve full time as ministry evangelism catalyst. This person will administer existing ministries and work with congregations to initiate ministry evangelism. Resumés may be sent by email to: sba.ministry.vacancy@gmail.com. They also may be sent to the attention of Dr. Hugh Richardson, P.O. Box 888, Columbiana, AL 35051. General requirements and a job description may be found at www.shelbybaptist.org.

org. Please submit by Nov. 30.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

First Baptist Carbon Hill seeking part-time administrative assistant. QuickBooks, Word, Publisher experience a plus. Submit resumés to: FBCCH, P.O. Box 369, Carbon Hill, AL 35549, or email to: fbcch@bellsouth.net. All mailed resumés must be postmarked by Dec. 1.

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Alabama Baptists tapped for service

During the 193rd annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, Baptists from across the state were elected to serve on the governing boards of convention-related entities. Also approved by messengers were individuals to serve on the committees of the convention.

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

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chairperson: Travis Coleman Jr.

District: Jimmy E. Jackson, Craig Carlisle, Keith Wrenn, Larry Cummings, Johnny Fain, Ronnie Boulware, Chip Starnes, John Nicholson, James Nichols, Eddy Garner, Morgan Bailey, Rex Kent

Members at large: *Rebecca C. Head, Carl Williams, Mike McLemore, Mike Goforth, Rick Evans, Jimmy Garner, Scotty Hogan, *Kelly Jones

Ex-officio members: SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance, Chairman of SBOM Chip Starnes, State Convention President Travis Coleman Jr., First Vice President John Thweatt, President of Alabama WMU *Anna Speir

STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

Terms to Expire 2018: *Roger Humphreys, Alabama-Crenshaw; *Joe Fowler, Bibb; David Awrey, Buddy Champion, *Judith Cooley, Chris Crain and Ronald Pate, Birmingham; *Danny Alldredge, Blount; *Kyle Curington, Bullock-Centennial; W. Mack Amis Jr., *Ben Character and Scott Smith, Calhoun; W. Ernest Fike, Chilton; *Teresa Lacewell, Coffee; Gregg Woodard and *Pam Wright, Colbert-Lauderdale; Robert F. Crawford, East Cullman; Robert Heard, Escambia; Earl Mitchell and Craig Carlisle, Etowah; Scott Davis, Fayette; Bruce Spivey, Geneva; Matthew Fancher, Lamar; Ray Stonecypher, Limestone; Steve Grissom and Terry Herald, Madison; Mack Morris, Mobile;

Time, place, preacher report

The 2016 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting will be held in Montgomery at Eastmont Baptist Church on Nov. 15-16.

The convention preacher for the 2016 annual meeting will be Greg Corbin, pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham.

Alternate preacher is Stuart Davidson, pastor of Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne.

Messengers voted for the 2020 annual meeting to take place Nov. 17-18 at Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery. (TAB)

Tem Knight, Montgomery; *Ruby Smith, Pine Barren; *Elaine Bricken, Pleasant Grove; *Judy Conaway, Randolph; *Sue Bhatti, Salem Troy; *Carol Johnson, Sardis; Clarke Skelton, Selma; Darryl Wood, Shelby; Ben Nobles and Rusty Sowell, Tuskegee Lee; Earnie Burfitt, Walker; Josh Pendergrass, West Cullman; Ronald Horton, Winston

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

Terms to Expire 2019: *Rosalie Hall Hunt, First, Guntersville; *Amelia Reid Pearson, First, Alexander City; Lawrence H. Phipps, Vaughn Forest, Montgomery; *Jana Wyatt, Westview, Opp

BOARD OF AID

Terms to Expire 2019: William E. Goodwin III, Lincoln, Lincoln; Benjamin Dyer, Bayou Sara, Saraland

CHILDREN'S HOMES

Terms to Expire 2019: *Paul Huckeba, Hunter Street, Hoover; *Allan Neill, Woodmont, Florence; *Terry Wilhite, First, Cullman; *Kelly McMurry, First, Trussville

CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION

Terms to Expire 2019: Michael J. Brooks, Siluria, Shelby; Herbert Brown, Southside, Greenville; Jim Graham, Coosada, Coosada; John H. Killian, Maytown, Maytown

EDUCATION COMMISSION

Terms to Expire 2019: *Mitzi L. Holladay, Benton, Benton; Bobby E. Hopper, Linden, Linden; Philip Morris, Chulafinnee, Heflin; Dennis E. Trimble, Southside, Cullman

BAPTIST FOUNDATION

Terms to Expire 2017: *W. Thomas Gaither, First, Eufaula
Terms to Expire 2019: *Doyle J. Powell, First, Montgomery; *Janet Teer, Northport, Northport; *Lawson Swearingen, First, Fairhope; *Reyn Norman, First, Montgomery; *Spencer Knight, First, Prattville

HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Terms to Expire 2019: *Jerry Armor, Pleasant Grove, Moulton; *Angie Cooper, First, Tuscaloosa; *Gerald Glenn, First, Trussville; *Jerrol Hare, Thomasville, Thomasville

RETIREMENT CENTERS

Terms to Expire 2019: *Paul Edward Burkett, First, Montgomery; *Barry Carroll, Heritage, Montgomery; *Debbie Fain, First, Dothan; *Bobby R. Cook, First, Clanton; *Jim McKinney, First, Roanoke

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

Terms to Expire 2019: *John Bell, Shades Mountain, Birmingham; *David R. Belcher, Shades Mountain, Birmingham; *Andrew B. Cundiff, Dawson Memorial, Birmingham; *Mike Dunn, First, Montgomery; *Tom Houser, First, Huntsville; *Tom Lamberth, First, Alexander City; *Timothy Vines, Shades Mountain, Birmingham; *Charles W. Lancaster, MeadowBrook, Gadsden; *Rhonda Witcher, First, Jasper

JUDSON COLLEGE

Terms to Expire 2019: *Joan Vignes Newman, First, Enterprise; Henry H. Cox, Durant Chapel, Bay Minette; *Roger Bruce Fuller, Pine Flat, Selma; *Robin Hall, First, Cullman; Gregg S. Morrison, Shades Mountain, Birmingham; *Lenora Pate, Dawson Memorial, Birmingham; *Arthur Britton, First, Montgomery

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

Terms to Expire 2019: *Gabi Constantine, First, Satsuma; *Daphne P. Fonde, First, Fairhope; *Deborah R. Nelson, First, North Mobile; *Will Phillips, First, North Mobile; *Robert M. Seaborn Jr., First, Fairhope; *Talmay Owen Vickers Jr., Springhill, Mobile

SHOCCO SPRINGS

Terms to Expire 2019: J. Scott Prater, First, Weaver; *Bobby Austin, First, Athens; Cory Horton, Elkdale, Selma; *H. Byron Phillips Jr., First, Oxford

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Chairperson 2015-2016:
Dusty McLemore

Chairperson 2016-2017:
Greg Pouncey

Terms to Expire 2016: *Whitney Alexander, First, Gadsden; Randy Hagan, Eastaboga, Eastaboga; Adam Brewer, Glory Fellowship, Jasper

Terms to Expire 2017: *Patricia McGriff, New Hope #2, Cullman; Jamey Pruett, Gilliam Springs, Arab; *Tracy Brown, Golden Springs, Anniston; Mark Gainey, Lake Martin, Dadeville; *Mandy Norman, Bush Memorial, Troy; Otis Corbitt, Westview, Opp; Greg Pouncey, First, Tillman's Corner; *Tammie Thomas, Pineview, Brent; *Eddy McKnight, Alberta, Tuscaloosa; Scott Delashaw, Mount Hebron, Spruce Pine; *Beth Slayton, Chelsea Village, Chelsea; *Jodi McDade, Rockford, Rockford

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Chairperson 2015-2016: *Richard LeCroy, Five Points, Tuscaloosa

Terms to Expire 2018: Chris Duncan, Ridgecrest, Trussville; *Melissa Sahagun, First, Trussville

INSURANCE COMMITTEE

Chairperson 2015-2016:

*Rusty Melnick, First, Opelika

Terms to Expire 2018: *Reyn Norman, First, Montgomery; *Skip Roberts, Farmstead, Jasper

TIME, PLACE, PREACHER

Chairperson 2015-2016:

Jerry M. Henry, First, Fairhope

Terms to Expire 2016: Jerry M. Henry, First, Fairhope; Paul D. McGuire, III, Greensboro, Greensboro; Jason Edwin Dees, Valleydale, Hoover; Bruce C. Williams, Goodman, Enterprise; Zac Reno, First, Arley; Josh Price, Bethel, Fort Deposit; Steve King, Ozark, Ozark

MEMORIALS COMMITTEE

Chairperson 2015-2016: Mike Shaw, First, Pelham

Terms to Expire 2016: Mike Shaw,

Coleman names committees

Two committees, the Credentials Committee and the Tellers Committee, were appointed during the state convention's opening session Nov. 17. The Committee on Committees also was named during the Tuesday sessions.

State Convention President Travis Coleman Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church, Prattville, announced the appointments 30 days prior to the annual meeting in accordance with bylaw requirements, but messengers had to ratify the appointments during the meeting.

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

Serving as chairman of the committee was Wade Rials, Thorington Road, Montgomery. Serving with him were Harvey L. Earls, Bethel, Robertsdale; Tim Gold, First, Pell City; Richard D. Harvey, Eastwood, Bay Minette; Paul Matthews, Jubilee, Daphne; Josh Price, Bethel, Fort Deposit; Benjamin Stubblefield, First, Jackson.

Tellers Committee members helped convention officers tabulate convention votes.

Danny Wiggins, County Line, Enterprise, served as chairman. Other members were Ben Chandler, First, Ashville; Jim Collins, Evergreen, Evergreen; Charles K. Gibbs, West Mobile, Mobile; Franklin L. Kirksey, First, Spanish Fort; Allan Lawhorn, Stapleton, Stapleton; Keith Tankersley, Carolina, Andalusia.

The following also were elected to serve on the Committee on Committees until 2018: Rick Marshall, Eastern Hills, Montgomery, chair in 2018; John Nicholson, Siloam, Marion; Rusty Sowell, Providence, Opelika. (TAB)

First, Pelham; Jack Collins, Northside, Cullman; Bobby Erwin, First, Trussville; Dave Burns, First, Prattville; *Judy Wise, First, Dothan

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Chairperson 2015-2016: James W. Mercer, Hollinger's Island, Mobile

Terms to Expire 2018: Derek Gentle, First, Tallassee; Ryan F. Whitley, CrossPoint, Trussville

RESOLUTIONS

Chairperson 2015-2016:

Gary Cardwell, MeadowBrook, Gadsden

Terms to Expire 2016: Gary Cardwell, MeadowBrook, Gadsden; Jesse A. Reeder, Moulton, Moulton; Matthew W. Smith, First, Enterprise; Benjamin S. Stubblefield, First, Jackson; Matt Simmons, Henderson, Troy; *Melissa C. Bowen, First, Prattville, *Sarah K. Harris, Hunter Street, Hoover

Alabama Baptist messengers and ministry leaders pray over the state's church planters during a special prayer emphasis at the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting.

Focus on prayer

Convention business session intermingled with prayer

(continued from page 1)
of Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) and expands it to include other aspects of Alabama Baptist work.

"The offering will be an effort to foster annual financial support for Alabama WMU, disaster relief, missions partnerships and church planting and church revitalization ministries," said Mike McLemore, executive director of missions of Birmingham Baptist Association, who presented the recommendation to convention messengers.

The expansion also allows for a new namesake — Martha Myers, an Alabama missionary doctor who was killed by an extremist in Yemen in 2002.

She joins the legacy of namesake Selma native Kathleen Mallory, who served as leader of Alabama Woman's Mission-

ary Union (WMU) from 1909 to 1912 and then head of national WMU for 36 years (1912–1948).

"It's a legacy that honestly inspires Alabama Baptists decades later to live devotedly and pray intentionally and give sacrificially," said Candace McIntosh, executive director of Alabama WMU.

Another way Alabama Baptists voted to redirect their missions money was to stop resourcing new mobile chapels for disaster relief and church planting purposes starting Jan. 1.

The growing expense of new mobile chapels became cost prohibitive, said Rex Kent, pastor of First Baptist Church, Jemison, who presented the recommendation. So instead of purchasing new chapels, SBOM will instead provide monthly stipends for disaster-affected congregations and new



STARNES



Photo by Neisha Roberts

church plants to rent nearby facilities.

The recommendations related to the executive committee authorized its members to serve as representatives of the convention in declaring when a church is no longer in like-minded fellowship and friendly with the convention and as the bylaws review committee of the state convention.

Messengers also passed the following recommendations:

- ▶ That convention messengers agree with the decision of Madison Baptist Association to disfellowship Weatherly Heights Baptist Church, Huntsville, and consider them no longer in friendly cooperation with ABSC.

- ▶ To approve the printed 2014 SBOM audit prepared by Jackson Thornton & Co. PC.

In other news, messengers

voted to set the following special offering goals for 2016:

- ▶ Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, \$12 million
- ▶ Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, \$6.1 million
- ▶ Children's Homes and Family Ministries, \$2,814,700
- ▶ World Hunger Offering, \$800,000
- ▶ Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering, \$750,000

Leadership awards

During the SBOM report, three pastors were presented with the Troy L. Morrison Leadership/Church Health Award (see story, page 7).

Two missions volunteers also were honored and will be featured in upcoming issues of *The Alabama Baptist*.

In an earlier presentation, Jim

Swedenburg presented the convention's top three Cooperative Program-giving churches:

- Largest amount given per resident member — Benton Baptist Church in Selma Baptist Association — \$414.20 per person. Lee Tate is pastor.

- Highest percentage of undesignated receipts — Poplar Springs Baptist Church, Webb, in Columbia Baptist Association — 26.4 percent. Jeff Ross is interim pastor.

- Largest amount given overall — Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, in Birmingham Baptist Association — \$760,800. Danny Wood is pastor.

Immediately following the annual meeting Chip Starnes was re-elected SBOM chairman and Morgan Bailey was re-elected vice chairman. ☪



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Hartford minister recipient of music award

It was such a shock and honor, Bruce Spivey said, when he was awarded the 2015 Alabama Singing Men's (ASM) Paul Stewart Excellence in Music Ministry Award during the ASM and Alabama Singing Women banquet Nov. 16, held at First Baptist Church, Fairhope.

Spivey, associate pastor of music and adults at Hartford Baptist Church, has served at the Geneva Baptist Association church for more than 30 years, previously serving as the church's music and youth minister before transitioning to adult ministry in 2004. Spivey entered into full-time

ministry in 1974 and has served another church in Alabama and a church in Bogalusa, Louisiana, during his ministry.

He holds a bachelor's degree from Troy State University (now Troy University) and a master's degree in religious education from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Spivey has previously served as ASM president.

Spivey and his wife, Carol, have one son and two grandchildren. (TAB)



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
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TAB augmented reality

Follow these instructions

- 1** Download the **Aurasma** app from your app store.
- 2** Choose the **"ALBaptist"** profile under channel and tap "Follow." You will only have to do this one time. (Any ALBaptist options will allow you to follow *The Alabama Baptist*.)
- 3** Tap the  icon at the bottom of the screen.
- 4** You will see **pulsating dots**, which indicate the app is searching for a target. Once it finds a target the dots will turn to a bull's-eye. The bull's-eye will remain until the augmented reality image loads.
- 5** Hold your device over a page or image in *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) marked as augmented reality and watch the paper come to life.
- 6** If the image is slow to load at any point, then it may be your data speed or Wi-Fi strength. Change locations and try again.
- 7** Each week when **TAB** arrives, open the app and hold your device over the augmented reality articles.

To 'renew a right spirit' — repent, pastor says

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

For a pastor who admittedly loves using points in his messages, Stuart Davidson shared only one during his theme interpretation sermon at the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) annual meeting — repent.

Davidson, pastor of Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne, where the annual meeting was held, illustrated the "R" in the meeting's theme "PRAY" — "Renew a right spirit within us."

In Psalm 51, David had been confronted by Nathan about his adulterous acts with Bathsheba. It's not until verse 10 that David repents of his sin and asks God to create in him a pure heart and to renew a steadfast spirit.

Davidson too was fleeing repentance in his own life just a few years ago, he said.

In 2009 he said the Lord was speaking to him through Scripture but at every command Davidson would say "no."

"When the call came to me to care for those whom no one else cares about or to be a father to the fatherless, I said no every time," Davidson said, speaking specifically about the call to adopt a child.

It wasn't until 2012 that the

"seed and a burden for people who had never heard the gospel was planted in me." A couple at his church at the time, First Baptist Church, Montgomery, traveled to Moldova to adopt a little girl.

"When they brought her home the Lord did something inside of me," Davidson said. "I knew God was calling me to do what they did, to follow their example (and adopt), and even though every time I saw them I felt confronted by this call, time and time again I said no."

When Davidson was called as pastor of Eastern Shore Baptist the call to be a "father to the fatherless" stuck with him — but he still did not obey.

'Make a call'

At the 2012 ABSC annual meeting Davidson felt the Lord asking him to make a decision.

"I had all the trappings of a holy, godly, obedient person but the problem was I was being disobedient and I was not repentant about it," he said.

He said he heard the Lord asking him, "Are you going to be obedient or not? Stop deceiving yourself thinking you're being

obedient and playing a game in front of your church. Make a call."

Davidson said he was broken on the drive home and repented, called his wife and the couple soon began the long process of international adoption.

About a year in, the adoption agency called them and told them about a little boy in China, ready for adoption.



DAVIDSON

"His parents had abandoned him. He weighed less than a pound. They left him in a box on the side of the road and by some miracle a Chinese police officer found him and took him to the hospital where they kept him for only 30 minutes before sending him to an orphanage to be cared for in his last days."

But God had different plans. "My wife and I traveled a great distance at a great cost and we found him. He didn't earn it. He didn't ask for it. But we came, we took him home, gave him a

new family, a new purpose, a new name, a new future for his life.

"As sad and brutal of a story as that is, that is where each and every one of us is without Jesus Christ."

Lost. In a box. On the side of the road.

Ripple effect

"But there is a Father who lives a great distance away who at a great price purchased me and purchased you. He came, He got us, He brought us home, He gave us a new life. So repent. ... We think repentance is here in this moment and only has to deal with (ourselves) but the reality is that repentance has a ripple effect, just like disobedience has a ripple effect."

Davidson said as he repented and obeyed God's call he became a better husband and a better father to his other two sons along with his son, Jett, from China.

"How many of us are making all the right calls but still disobeying? The ripple effect of obedience is immeasurable and God can use it to set captives free." ❏

'Careful attention' to audit, insurance

As part of the ongoing oversight of Alabama Baptist entities, the Alabama Baptist State Convention reviews each entity's audit and insurance protection in place.


Bobby DuBois, associate executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, reported for both the audit committee and insurance committee during the recent annual meeting in Daphne.

The audit committee reported


receiving an audit prepared by a certified public accountant from each entity and reported no irregularities from its reviews.

Each audit was provided in the convention Book of Reports distributed to registered messengers.

The insurance committee reported reviewing each entity's insurance coverage and commended them "for their careful attention to the protection of their operations." (TAB)



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— Pastor Ron Pate
Hilldale Baptist Church, Center Point

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New DOM officers elected



Photo by Debbie Campbell

New director of missions officers are (l to r): president, Otis Corbitt of Covington Baptist Association; president-elect, Eddy Garner of Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association; treasurer, Jim Jackson of Elmore Baptist Association; and treasurer-elect, Barry Cospser (not pictured) of Bessemer Baptist Association.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For November 29

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

GOD PROVIDES Genesis 24:1-17

The Assignment (1-9)

For Abraham, Sarah's death was a reminder of his own advanced age and his responsibility to make sure that his 40-something son, Isaac, would marry well and produce heirs. The matter was so important to Abraham that he summoned his chief servant to make a vow in which his servant was asked to place his hand under Abraham's thigh, near the patriarch's powers of procreation, formalizing the purpose and the importance of his mission. The highly personal formalizing of this oath suggests that for Abraham the fulfillment of the vow was as important as life itself.

Abraham insisted that Isaac's wife must not be a Canaanite. He made his chief servant swear that he would get a wife for Isaac from Mesopotamia, some 520 miles away. Noah's oracle, Cursed be Canaan (9:25), was being lived out by the present Canaanite depravities that would curse them for generations to come. There could be no mixing of Abraham's offspring with these cursed people. And Abraham would not allow Isaac to be taken out of the land because his very presence in Canaan was a living declaration that one day the land would belong to his descendants.

Abraham's first recorded words in Scripture had expressed his doubts to God when he said, "You have given me no offspring" (15:3). But here his last recorded words declared unwavering faith in God as he said, "He will send His angel before you and you shall take a wife for my son there" (24:7). There will be no miracle in this story. There will be no sun standing still, no dry path through the middle of a mighty river. God will, however, bring about the acquiring of Isaac's bride through the normal events of life. Chapter 24 highlights the importance of God's providence in our lives. God is actively involved in our lives too.

The Prayer (10-14)

Verse 10 encompasses 520 miles and around a month of travel time for a caravan. The sizable caravan was no doubt to make an impression on Isaac's future wife and her family. The servant traveled north and then east to the city of Nahor. As the sun was setting, at the time the women came out to draw water, the servant directed the camels to kneel near the town well.

With his camels positioned, his very first action was a humble prayer for guidance. The unnamed servant is the first person described in Scripture as asking for divine guidance at a critical moment. It is interesting to note that the servant did not ask God for a miracle or a revelation in order to pinpoint the correct woman to select to be Isaac's wife. Rather he sought guidance in the ordinary events of life. He prayed that the rational criteria of suitability that he had determined might be in accordance with God's will and be effective.

The criterion was demanding. The future bride must say: "Drink and I will water your camels." But it is not extraordinary or miraculous to the context. This was not a fleece (Judges 6:36-40). The servant did not ask for the normal effects of nature to be suspended. A woman who would volunteer to do this would be kind, generous and industrious. The faithful servant relied completely upon God for guidance.

The Answer (15-17)

It is safe to assume that Rebekah had left her house before the servant had begun to pray. This providential meeting was orchestrated by God. Rebekah volunteered to water the servant's 10 camels. That was amazing. A camel typically would drink about 25 gallons of water while ancient water jars only held about three gallons. That means Rebekah worked hard for around two hours watering those 10 camels. The servant watched with amazement as the Lord prospered his journey to find a wife for his master's son. 🙏

Bible Studies for Life By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Religion, Samford University

WHEN OPPOSITION STRIKES Acts 4:23-31

In the first chapters of the book of Acts we meet a group of disciples nearly unrecognizable from those we encounter in the Gospels. In the Gospels the disciples stand out almost as models of how not to be a follower of Jesus. Mark's Gospel especially highlights the disciples' near-constant failure to understand who Jesus was or to live out His teachings in their own lives. They are flummoxed by His parables (Mark 4:13) and unable to do the works He has commissioned them to do (9:18). They jockey for position to see which one of them is the greatest (9:34; 10:37-38). They respond with hard hearts even after miracles like Jesus' walking on the sea (6:48-52). In the garden they sleep when Jesus asks them to pray (14:37, 40), flee when He is arrested (v. 50) and eventually deny that they ever knew Him (vv. 66-72). At one point Jesus expresses exasperation with them, asking, "How long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?" (9:19).

What a difference seeing the resurrected Jesus and receiving the Holy Spirit made in the disciples' lives. In the wake of the Spirit's arrival in Acts 2 we see Peter as a person completely transformed. In the Gospels, Peter matched each step forward with two steps back. He steps out onto the waters with Jesus but then waivers and begins to sink (Matt. 14:29-31). He rightly identifies Jesus as the Messiah but then promptly begins to rebuke Jesus for suggesting He would soon die on the cross (Matt. 16:22). He boldly defends Jesus from arrest (John 18:10) but then flees and denies he ever knew Him (John 18:15-27). However, in Acts he emerges as the leader of the disciples, delivering a powerful sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), serving as the instrument through whom Gentiles first

come to faith (Acts 10) and with James determining how Gentiles ought to live out their new lives as Christians (Acts 15).

One of Peter's boldest acts was one he undertook with his fellow disciple John in Acts 3-4. When a lame man asked Peter and John for alms as they walked to the temple, Peter replied that they had no money to give the man but they could do something instead. "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth," Peter commanded, "stand up and walk." As the amazed crowd looked on Peter began to preach boldly about the risen Jesus in whose name he had healed the lame man.

Place your confidence in the sovereign God. (23-28)

The Sadducees and temple officials were apparently quite displeased by the attention Peter and John's actions had garnered. After locking them in prison for a night the officials brought out the two disciples to question them concerning their actions. With a boldness he was famous for and an eloquence he was not, Peter explained that it was through the crucified and resurrected Jesus that they had performed their miracle.

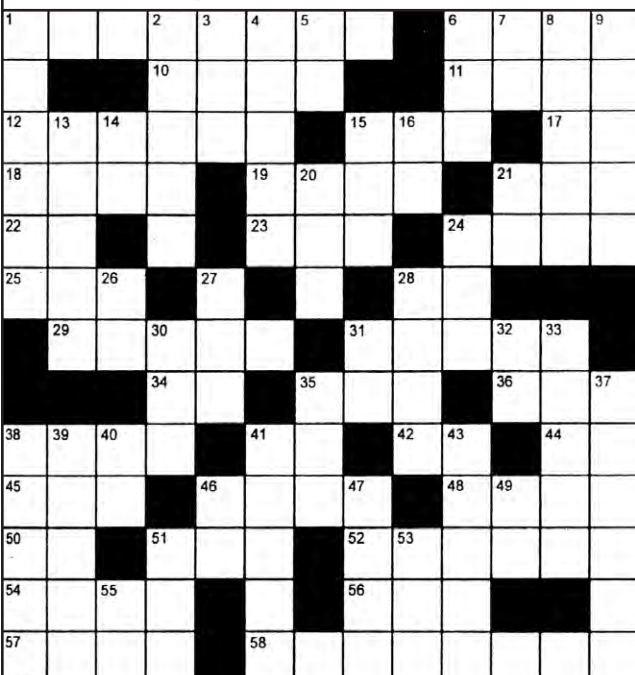
At hearing this, the officials demanded that Peter and the disciples desist altogether from speaking or teaching in Jesus' name. However, Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you or to Him? You be the judges. As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (19-20).

Ask God for boldness. (29-31)

Upon their release Peter and John went back to the other believers and reported what had happened. What followed was a powerful moment of prayer for the congregation. There they implored God to give them the boldness to continue speaking out in Jesus' name. Transformed by the resurrection and empowered by the Spirit, they set a fire which continues to burn brightly even to this day. 🙏

Christian Crossword

By Janet Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. That he might ___ us alive. (Deut. 6:24)
6. Pitcher.
10. ___, which was the son of Seth. (Luke 3:38)
11. River in Bolivia.
12. Property agency.
15. O. T. book. (abbr.)
17. Naval vessel designation.
18. Canadian Indian.
19. Where is ___ thy brother? (Gen. 4:9)
21. Till he should pay all that was ___ unto him. (Matt. 18:34)
22. Comes after em.
23. Celtic sea god.
24. Right to property.
25. Fr. article.
28. Yes. (Spanish)
29. A word appearing 73 times in Psalms.
31. Woman's title.
34. They could not enter ___ because of unbelief. (Heb. 3:19)
35. Minister's title.
36. Missing in Action.
38. Top of the head.
41. Academic degree.

Down

42. Printer's measure.
44. Symbol for element tellurium.
45. Japanese sash.
46. Became captain over a ___. (1 Kings 11:24)
48. Put him to an ___ shame. (Heb. 6:6)
50. Northwest state. (abbr.)
51. The prince of the power of the ___. (Eph. 2:2)
52. Now therefore ___ thyself what word I shall bring. (1 Chron. 21:12)
54. Full of ___, murder, debate. (Rom. 1:29)
56. As the loving hind and pleasant ___. (Prov. 5:19)
57. Sendeth ___ on the just and on the unjust. (Matt. 5:45)
58. Solomon reigned over all ___. (1 Kings 4:21)
4. If ye fulfill the ___ law. (James 2:8)
5. Competing against.
6. Wane.
7. Us.
8. Let him seek peace, and ___ it. (1 Pet. 3:11)
9. If ye then be ___ with Christ. (Col. 3:1)
13. Sea eagles.
14. ___, ___, I, O, U.
15. Possessive pronoun.
16. ___ Haig.
20. Egyptian pleasure god.
21. Double. (prefix)
24. Top.
26. Compass point.
27. ___ shall be a serpent by the way. (Gen. 49:17)
28. Can faith ___ him? (James 2:14)
30. Eternal life, which God, that can not ___. (Titus 1:2)
31. Northeast state.
32. I ___ Alpha and Omega. (Rev. 1:8)
33. A poor widow threw in two ___. (Mark 12:42)
35. His father saw him ... and ___ and fell on his neck. (Luke 16:20)

37. He found a certain man named ___. (Acts 9:33)
38. Ye shall receive ___. (Acts 1:8)
39. Are not ___ and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better? (2 Kings 5:12)
40. Musical note.
41. And Deborah said unto ___, Up; for this is the day. (Judg. 4:14)
43. All the city was ___ about them. (Ruth 1:19)
46. Occurring in intervals of two.
47. Mend socks.
49. Greek "P"
51. ___ Rand.
53. Beware of ___s. (Phil. 3:2)
55. Roman numeral 6.



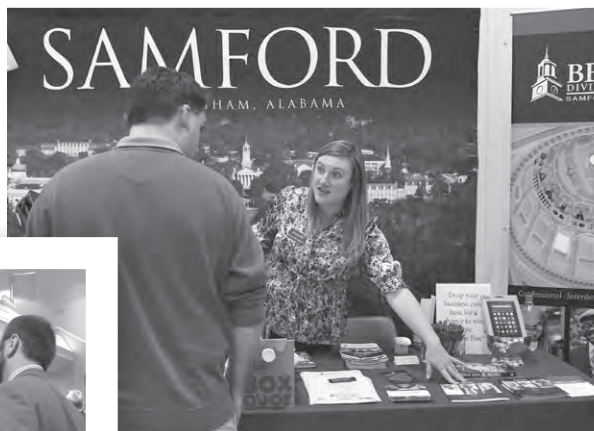
Life at convention

PHOTOS BY NEISHA ROBERTS



Photo by Debbie Campbell

Charles Autry (right), pastor of Christian Way Baptist Church, Camden, and his wife, Cheryl, at the African-American Pastors Dinner.



Post-session fellowship

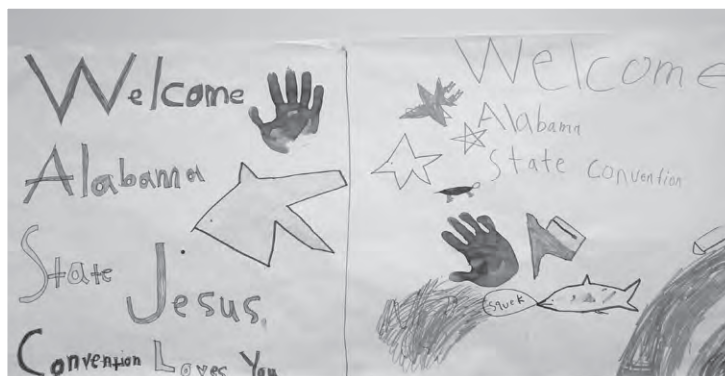


Lauren McCaghren (right), senior director of alumni programs and annual giving at Samford University, speaks with a visitor in the exhibit hall at Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne.

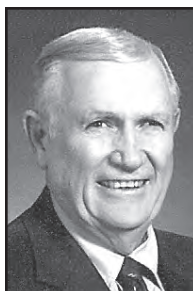
Disaster Relief booth in exhibit hall



The Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries celebrates its upcoming 125th birthday with cupcakes and singing 'Happy Birthday.'



Welcome messages from the children of Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne.

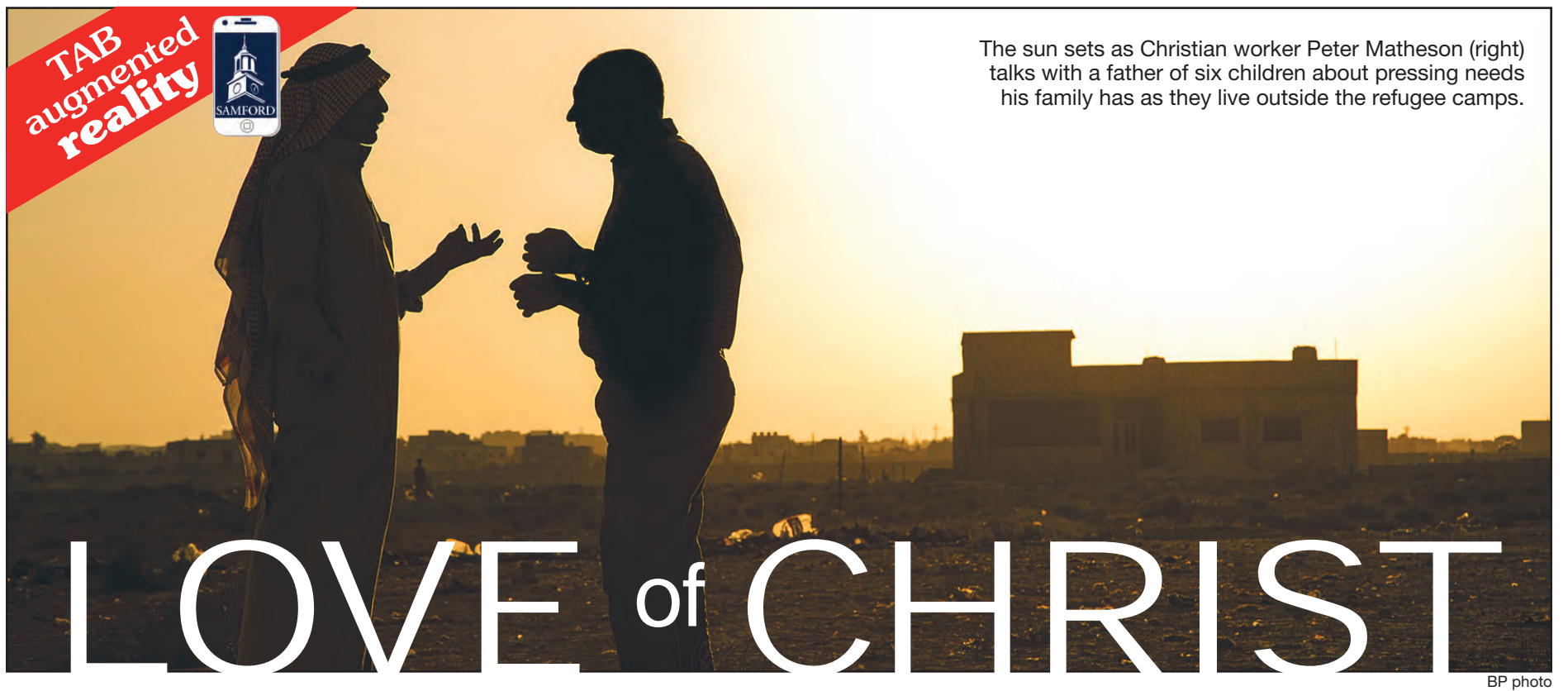


Leon Champion
Associate pastor, Hillspring Baptist Church, Mobile

"This year's convention was one of the most powerful and impacting that we have had. A great Pastors Conference prepared the way for a great convention and great presentations of our ministries across Alabama. The powerful message of Ronnie Floyd must hold center stage. Only with the power of God in our churches and in us can the spiritual awakening come that will save America."

"What a great God we serve. The Alabama Baptist State Convention meeting echoes again how great (it is that) we are able to accomplish so much cooperatively working together."

Charles Teague
Pastor of journey ministry, Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer



BP photo

Christian workers bring light of hope to Syrian refugees in midst of darkness

Christian worker Peter Matheson works tirelessly to bring refugees God's shining hope. But the heart-wrenching situation takes a great toll on the many he serves and on him personally as he ministers in the midst of tremendous suffering.

It's hard to imagine anything but a continued descending darkness closing in on Syrian and Iraqi refugees, victims of a rebellion being fought against the Syrian regime and brutality caused by Islamic State (ISIS) and other Islamic extremists.

"The hardest thing in this ministry is just sitting down and listening to their hurts," Matheson said about spending time with refugees. "They come, they arrive with little children just with the clothes on their back, because

back in Syria their homes are destroyed, their businesses are destroyed ... women have been raped ... real torture goes on among men and young men in Syria."

While images and reports of beheadings, cruelty and pure evil continue to shadow refugees — numbering in the millions — from any light of hope, Matheson is there to tell them about a loving God who cares deeply for all who are fleeing violence and that only He can push back the descending darkness.

Providing necessities

Through the support of Southern Baptists, Matheson and other workers are able to distribute boxes of food and other critical necessities provided through gifts to Global Hunger Relief along the Syrian border.

"We are able, through the Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, to focus 100 percent on the ministry that God has given us as workers ... as laborers in the field," Matheson said. "We're able to give all of our attention to people who are hurting by ministering to their physical, emotional and, most importantly, their spiritual needs."

U.S. churches also are playing a direct role in ministering to refugee needs alongside Matheson. A medical team from Mandarin Baptist Church, Los Angeles, came to see the work firsthand and to help.

Nurse Katherine Lee recognized that their physical presence to provide medical assistance is important, but the ongoing presence that Matheson provides is key to lasting hope. Matheson's physical presence to listen and give comfort to the refugees, as well as to offer help and hope makes a real difference in their lives, she said.

"Giving to the International Mission Board is just one of the ways we can help," Lee said. "It is very important to support ... the local workers here. Without funding they ... cannot stay here and build relationships ... and they cannot provide for their physical needs. They cannot provide for food or medicine or diapers or milk."

As more and more Syrians flee the violence Matheson hopes he can help the refugees out of at least one aspect of the darkness in which they've been living.

"My aim is to move them from one level of understanding to

The sun sets as Christian worker Peter Matheson (right) talks with a father of six children about pressing needs his family has as they live outside the refugee camps.

another, building into their lives one brick of truth after one brick of truth until by God's grace (and) the Spirit of God working in their lives," Matheson said.

Seizing this moment is critical, said Paul Tu, pastor of Mandarin Church. "God is working definitely in this area in such

a mysterious way, way beyond our understanding but yet God is working ... we must join God at His work and then take advantage of it ... and respond to it quickly."

Medical doctor Stephanie Lim added, "We as churches in the United States, we're really blessed with a lot of resources that God has given us, and He has called us to help others who are in need as well. And there's a lot of local churches here who are meeting the demands, the needs of the Syrian refugees who cannot help themselves. They just have no resources and the resources are being depleted because the need is so great. So as Christians we are called, and we are responsible to help."

Support from home

With overwhelming challenges in the midst of constant need it would be easy for Matheson to feel alone. But he is sustained emotionally and spiritually as well as financially by knowing

that believers back home in the U.S. haven't forgotten him and share the resolve to bring Light where there is darkness.

"From the bottom of my heart, I thank Southern Baptists for giving through the Cooperative Program and to the Lottie Moon Christmas [Offering] to keep us

as workers ... on the field."

He added, "Yes it's hard (but) we're able to minister to their physical needs, showing the love of Christ in a practical way to these people and thus opening an opportunity for them to listen."

Matheson is providing tangible hope in what appears to be a hopeless place.

"My friend here asked me why we are doing all of this," Matheson said after he had explained to a refugee father and his family why the group from California had come.

Matheson told him there are 46,000 Southern Baptist churches with approximately 16 million people to lift "your group, all the refugees and the people back in Syria, before the Father."

Matheson said the man responded that if this many are going to lift them before the Father it gives him hope.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons. (BP)



BP photo

Roughly 9 million Syrians have fled their homes since the outbreak of civil war in 2011. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, more than 3 million have fled to Syria's immediate neighbors: Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. There are 6.5 million people internally displaced within Syria.