

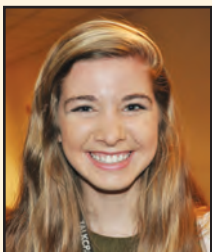


## INSIDE



**Process for electing Gaines as SBC president 'extraordinary, beautiful'**

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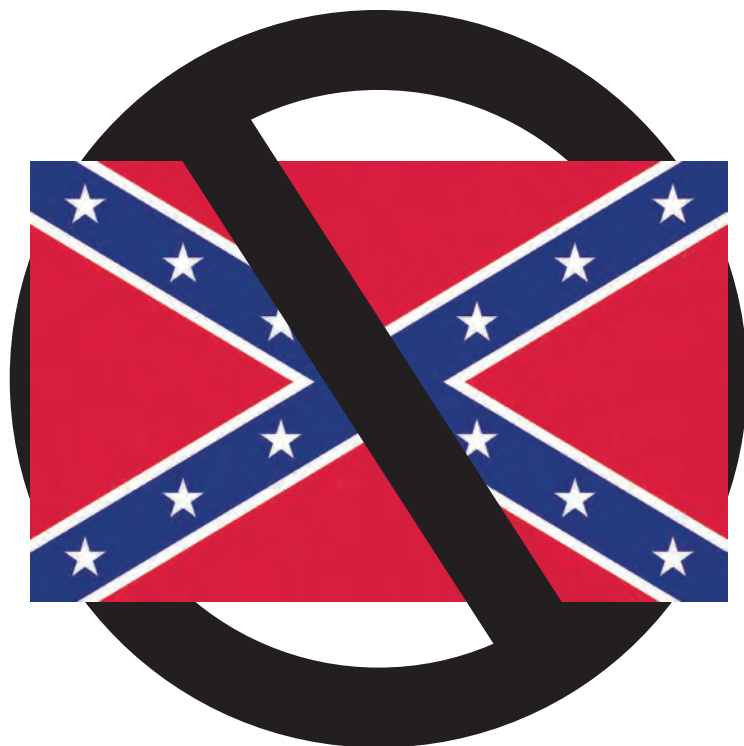
**Alabama Acteen participates in national role**

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**Panel on racial unity urges Baptists to 'Pass the Salt and turn on the Light'**

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## Messengers vote against display of Confederate flag

Messengers to the 2016 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting renounced display of the Confederate battle flag in a historic, overwhelming vote June 14.

The convention adopted a resolution that urged "brothers and sisters in Christ to discontinue the display of the Confederate battle flag as a sign of solidarity of the whole body of Christ, including our African-American brothers and sisters."

The Confederate battle flag resolution was another step in the convention's effort to address its past actions regarding slavery and racism.

The SBC, which was established in 1845 in part in support of slaveholding missionaries, approved a resolution in 1995 repenting of racism and asking for forgiveness from African-American Christians. Alabama Baptist pastor Charles T. Carter spear-

headed that effort as chairman of the Resolutions Committee in 1995.

The convention also has acted in a variety of ways in an attempt to bring about racial reconciliation and involve African-Americans and other minorities in leadership roles in the convention.

### Wording of resolution

The 2016 Resolutions Committee brought a proposal calling for "sensitivity and unity" regarding display of the Confederate battle flag. The committee's proposed wording called for Christians who display the flag "to consider prayerfully whether to limit, or even more so, discontinue its display" because of the "undeniably painful impact of the flag's symbolism on others."

After two messengers spoke against the resolution, former SBC President James Merritt offered an amendment that went beyond the committee's proposed language.

His two-fold amendment deleted a paragraph that said the flag "serves for some not as a symbol of hatred, bigotry, and racism, but as a memorial to their loved ones who died in the Civil War, and an emblem to honor their loved ones' valor."

It also removed language about

## Resolution

### on Sensitivity And Unity Regarding The Confederate Battle Flag

**WHEREAS**, Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Ronnie Floyd has rallied Southern Baptists to "rise up and cry out against racism that still exists in our nation and our churches," recognizing we are in a "desperate hour" that calls us to "replace these evils with the beauty of grace and love"; and

**WHEREAS**, In 1995 the SBC repudiated "historic acts of evil, such as slavery," and committed "to eradicate racism in all its forms from Southern Baptist life and ministry"; and

**WHEREAS**, In more recent resolutions the SBC called "all Christian men and women to pray and labor for the day when our Lord will set all things right and racial prejudice and injustice will be no more" (2014) and expressed continued grief "over the presence of racism and the recent escalation of racial tension in our nation" (2015); and

**WHEREAS**, More than 20 percent (nearly 11,000) of our cooperating Southern Baptist congregations identify as predominately non-Anglo and for the last two years more than 50 percent of Southern Baptist new church plants are predominately non-Anglo; and

**WHEREAS**, We recognize that the Confederate battle flag is used by some and perceived by many as a symbol of hatred, bigotry, and racism, offending millions of people; and

**WHEREAS**, We recognize that, while the removal of the Confederate battle flag from public display is not going to solve the most severe racial tensions that plague our nation and our churches, those professing Christ are called to extend grace and put the consciences

of others ahead of their own interests and actions (1 Cor. 8:9-13, 10:23; Phil. 2:3-4); and

**WHEREAS**, The state of South Carolina, with the support of state Baptist leaders, responded to the tragic slayings on June 17, 2015, of nine precious believers at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston by removing the Confederate battle flag from their Capitol grounds and placing it in preservation at a military museum in Columbia; and

**WHEREAS**, Oklahoma Baptist University recently removed an image of the Confederate battle flag from its campus chapel; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, That the messengers to the SBC meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, June 14-15, 2016, commend the governmental officials of South Carolina, Baptist leaders in that state, and the Oklahoma Baptist University administration for their sensitivity and for fostering unity; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That we acknowledge both the importance of remembering family heritage and sacrifice, as well as the urgency of pursuing a unified body of Christ and racial healing in America; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That we call our brothers and sisters in Christ to discontinue the display of the Confederate battle flag as a sign of solidarity of the whole body of Christ, including our African-American brothers and sisters; and be it finally

**RESOLVED**, That we urge fellow Christians to exercise sensitivity so that nothing brings division or hinders the unity of the body of Christ to be a bold witness to the transforming power of Jesus.

prayerful consideration and called for a halt to displaying the flag.

Merritt, pastor of Cross Pointe Church, Duluth, Georgia, said he offered the amendment not just as a pastor but as the great-great-grandson

of two men who fought in the Confederate Army.

"[N]o one can deny" the Confederate battle flag is "a stumbling block" for many African-Americans to the  
(See 'Decision,' page 13)

# COMMENT

## A Milestone Convention?

**SBC 2016**

What happened during the 159th annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in St. Louis, Missouri, on June 14–15 may mark milestones in the life of the nation's largest Protestant denomination — milestones on Baptists' approach to national social issues and milestones on the internal life of the convention itself.

Perhaps nothing was more dramatic than the overwhelming vote to oppose the display of the Confederate battle flag. The resolution enthusiastically approved by messengers was not couched in temperate language as proposed by the resolutions committee.

Instead the messengers adopted an amendment from the floor that removed references to the historical meaning of the flag to many Southerners and called on Baptists to discontinue the display of the Confederate battle flag. The resolution went beyond calling for the flag to be removed from public property like state capitols. Instead it called for the total cessation of displaying the flag.

For the first time the SBC acknowledged the battle flag is “perceived by many as a symbol of hatred, bigotry and racism offending millions of people.” In other words, the flag's historic tie to slavery is as offensive to some as the Nazi flag is to most who are familiar with World War II.

About 11,000 cooperating SBC churches are primarily non-Anglo. One speaker noted the vote shows Southern Baptists march under no other flag than the Banner of the Cross of Jesus and the grace of God. That declaration is a sea change in attitude and actions for Southern Baptists.

### Discussion on race relations

Judging from what happened on the convention floor it is likely the resolution would have been adopted even if the morning session had not featured a discussion on race relations. No doubt the strong words of National Baptist Convention President Jerry Young calling for the Church of Jesus Christ to live by the standards of her Lord and be salt and light to the world played a part.

But messengers responded enthusiastically to



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

the effort from the floor to strengthen the proposed resolution so there would be no mistake where those participating in this annual meeting stood on this issue.

Another milestone may be the way messengers addressed the issue of homosexuality. There was no change in the convention's opposition to homosexuality's various expressions but a different tone was evident.

After expressing support for traditional Baptist positions related to human sexuality, the messengers added: “We reiterate our love for our neighbors who identify as transgender, seek their good always, welcome them to our churches.”

As if to illustrate that concern the messengers said in a resolution about the deadly shooting in Orlando: “We regard those affected by this tragedy as fellow image-bearers of God and our neighbors.” The Bible teaches God created all men and women in His image, the resolution continued, and pledged “love and compassion to those devastated by this tragedy.”

Southern Baptists have not always been as careful to distinguish between sin and sinner when addressing sexual sins. Sometimes our rhetoric has been harsh, even mean. This time there was an attempt to build bridges over which both sides can walk toward the other.

Baptists wrestled with themselves over concern for refugees and religious liberty. Concern for public safety was acknowledged but messengers added, “We affirm that refugees are people loved by God, made in His image and that Christian love should be extended to them as special objects of God's mercy in a world that has displaced them from their homelands.”

In resolution and in convention debate messengers came down on the side of religious liberty for all, not just for ourselves. This is where Baptists have stood through the centuries. If Caesar has the power to advance or prevent the rights of

one religious group, he holds that power over all.

Again, in this confusing time in our nation's life, it is a milestone to affirm care for the stranger as well as to insist that those with whom we differ enjoy the same rights as we do.

Perhaps the most surprising outcome at the recent annual meeting was the way the election for president was resolved. The contest between former Alabama Baptist pastor Steve Gaines and J.D. Greear of North Carolina was described by a *Christianity Today* blog post as a contest between “business as usual” (Gaines) and a fresh, new approach (Greear).

In his nominating speech for Greear, Florida pastor Jimmy Scroggins continued that theme saying Greear's election would signal the passing of the leadership mantle to younger pastors in their 20s, 30s and 40s.

### Majority of all ballots

Still, Gaines topped Greear by 104 votes in a run-off election but a ruling by parliamentarian Barry McCarty prevented Gaines from being declared the winner. McCarty ruled the winner had to have a majority of all ballots cast, even the 108 illegal ballots — wrong or improperly marked ballots. That left Gaines three votes short of victory.

In a private meeting both men offered to withdraw and let the other be SBC president rather than have a third vote that could leave the messengers divided. In the end, Greear insisted that Gaines serve as president. He not only withdrew his name but moved that Gaines be elected by acclamation.

The magnanimous move by both Gaines and Greear electrified the messengers. It modeled unity in the body of Christ. Men with different outlooks and priorities worked together for common good of the whole. The incident was an example of the annual meeting's challenge for Southern Baptists to “Agree, Unite, Pray.”

Again, it is a milestone when unity of the whole body is a more important value than personal prominence of a portion.

Only God knows the future but it is likely the way the election was resolved determined the SBC presidency for the next four years — Gaines this year and next followed by Greear for two years.

God's Word teaches us to prefer one another in humility (Rom. 12:10) and to love one another — even our enemies (Matt. 5:44). This convention marked milestones of loving with words. Now it will be interesting to see how those words are translated into actions and become milestones indeed. ¶

**“In this confusing time in our nation's life, it is a milestone ... to insist that those with whom we differ enjoy the same rights we do.”**

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"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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# Stunned voters

## Greear withdraws before third ballot; Gaines wins SBC presidency

**A** runoff election, the withdrawal of a candidate, confusion of illegal ballots — the presidential election of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting June 14–15 in St. Louis, Missouri, kept participants on the edge of their seats.

In the end, former Alabama Baptist pastor Steve Gaines was elected by acclamation as SBC president after fellow candidate J.D. Greear withdrew his candidacy June 15 in a display of unity.

Greear's withdrawal followed a runoff vote that didn't produce a majority winner June 14. His decision avoided a second runoff and left Gaines elected by acclamation as president of the SBC during the annual meeting.

Greear said he prayed the night before and believed "we need to leave St. Louis united."

"Only in the Southern Baptist Convention could you have a runoff between two people and still not have a winner," Greear jokingly said as he announced his withdrawal from the race and then made the motion for Gaines to be elected by acclamation.

Gaines said he too had decided internally Tuesday night to

withdraw but agreed to serve as president after a conversation with Greear. "There's no way God is not doing something in all of this.

"I just wanted Jesus to be lifted high" and the convention to be united, Gaines said.

Gaines, Greear and New Orleans pastor David Crosby originally were nominated for president.

In the first ballot cast by 5,784 messengers, Crosby received 583 votes or 10.08 percent; Gaines received 2,551 votes, or 44.1 percent of the votes; and Greear received 2,601 votes, or 44.97 percent. None of the candidates received 50 percent or more of the votes, forcing a runoff.

Then in the runoff ballot, with 7,237 messengers registered, 4,824 ballots were cast. Gaines received 2,410 votes or 49.96 percent while Greear received 2,306 votes or 47.80 percent. However, 108 votes were considered illegal because the wrong ballot was used or an indistinguishable mark was made.

Roberts Rules of Order require that the 108 illegal votes be counted to determine a majority. To be declared a winner, Gaines or Greear needed to win 50 percent



Photo by Bill Bangham

(L to r) Outgoing SBC President Ronnie Floyd together with presidential nominee J.D. Greear congratulate president-elect Steve Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, Tennessee, after he is elected president of the SBC by acclamation after Greear withdrew.

plus 1 of ballots cast, or 2,413 or more votes.

Had the second runoff election taken place, it would have been the first time in SBC history that a second ballot for the same two candidates in the presidential election would have been necessary, said chief parliamentarian Barry McCarty.

Edwin Jenkins, interim director of missions for Morgan Baptist Association, said he had never seen anything like the election itself nor the way it was resolved in the 40-plus years he has been

attending SBC annual meetings. "It was beautiful," he said, "the self sacrifice for the sake of everyone involved, for the good of the cause. And they both did it, saying, 'I will allow this to be the way.'"

Randy Pittman of Samford University said, "It was the perfect example of servant leadership. It was extraordinary."

Gaines is the fourth president from Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, Tennessee, following Southern Baptist legends R.G. Lee, Ramsey Pollard and Adrian Rogers. (BP, Jennifer Rash)

### — President's Address —

## 'Now is the time' to pray, give, unite, Floyd says

**S**outhern Baptists must act, akin to Queen Esther on behalf of her people, because "the stakes are high" in the Church and in the world, Ronnie Floyd said June 14 in his presidential address to messengers to the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in St. Louis, Missouri.

"More Christians around the world are being persecuted and killed for their faith than any other time in modern history," said Floyd, pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, who wrapped up two one-year terms as SBC president June 15. "And with the continual and growing threats of ...

persecution, we are seeing one of the most severe refugee crises in our generation.

"Simultaneously, with over 6,000 unreached people groups globally, we as South-

ern Baptists are reducing our missions force by 1,000 missionaries. ... The stakes are high," Floyd said.



FLOYD

Laws protecting traditional marriage have been overturned, government overreach has extended to the restroom and the dignity of human life is being demeaned, Floyd said, yet "these things are not some new morality. They are signs that our nation is on the ragged edge of moral insanity.

"As spiritual leaders, there is not one of us who can sit out in this critical hour," Floyd said. "Now is not the time for churches in America to call timeout and retreat to their land of comfort and sit

around dissecting their theology and the theology of others."

Referring to Esther 4:13–17, Floyd said God sees what people do not see, and God's

faithfulness and providence are present everywhere.

"Providence placed Esther at the right place at the right time to accomplish the purpose of God," Floyd said.

"To every pastor here today and those of you watching online and to every church leader, God has you where you are at the right time to accomplish the purpose of God."

### Ways to respond

Floyd identified five ways Southern Baptists need to respond in the current high-stakes climate — come together, lead, evangelize, give and pray.

"You may have given up on America, but God hasn't. You may have given up on your church, but God hasn't. You may have given up on ministry, but God hasn't. You may have given up on yourself, but God hasn't," he said.

"Our God can do anything, anytime, anywhere with anyone. God can do more in a moment than you could ever do in a lifetime." (BP)

**SBC 2016**

# Convention business

## Messengers adopt increased budget, approve Golden Gate's name change

**M**essengers participating in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, approved a \$189 million Cooperative Program (CP) budget, finalized Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary's name change and honored retiring national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) executive director Wanda Lee.

These and other business items took place during the Executive Committee (EC) report led by EC President Frank S. Page.

The approved 2016-17 CP Allocation Budget of \$189 million is up from \$186.5 million in the current Oct. 1-Sept. 30 fiscal year. The CP budget maintains current allocations of 50.41 percent of receipts to the International Mission Board (IMB) and 22.79 percent to the North American Mission Board (NAMB), for a total of 73.20 percent for missions ministries nationally and internationally. The convention's six seminaries will receive 22.16 percent.

The budget proposal maintains a 1.65 percent allocation to the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), while the SBC Operating Budget will receive 2.99 percent.

Messengers first voted on Golden Gate Seminary's new name — Gateway Seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention — in 2015 and finalized their approval this year, a two-year process required by SBC bylaws.

The seminary closed its main campus in Mill Valley, California, on June 3 to prepare for its 400-mile move south to Ontario, California.

Appreciation was given to Lee, noting her years marked by record missions offering and ministry expansion (see story, page 5).

### 'Our true heroes'

Also presented was the Bivocational Small Church Advisory Council report.

"You'll notice that only five are present," Page said of the council's members, "and the reason is because most of our bivocational pastors are out doing a secular job, and very few can come to our convention. We hope and pray that they will hear how much we appreciate them."



Photo by Van Payne

More than 11,000 messengers and guests gather at America's Center in St. Louis, Missouri, for the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention on June 14. The theme of the 2016 meeting was Awaken America.

The report is "a compilation of several years' work, of recommendations, how to deepen the involvement of our bivocational and smaller membership churches in our convention," Page said.

"By the way, of our 46,498 Southern Baptist churches, over 30,000 are in this category of either smaller membership — probably 35,000 — or bivocational," Page said. "They are our true heroes. They are getting the work done and we praise God for them."

In other business, messengers neither adopted nor debated any motion despite receiving the most since 2010.

Ten of the 22 motions were referred to SBC entities for further study and for a report at the 2017 SBC meeting in Phoenix, Arizona.

Three motions were automatically referred to the appropriate entities:

- ▶ To the EC and all entities: That all entities examine their media policies.

- ▶ To LifeWay: Work with past SBC presidents to publish their memoirs.

- ▶ To the EC: SBC annual meeting reg-

istration materials and badges indicate military service.

Six motions were referred to the EC by messengers:

- ▶ That SBC bylaws be amended to require CP gifts percentage be included in the nomination speech for SBC officers.

- ▶ That the Constitution be amended to declare churches that practice racial discrimination are not in friendly cooperation with the convention.

- ▶ That the Constitution be amended to require cooperating churches to also cooperate with a state convention and local association.

- ▶ That the article referencing faith in the Baptist Faith and Message be studied.

- ▶ That the SBC consider affiliating with the National Association of Evangelicals.

- ▶ That SBC bylaws be amended to require earlier announcement of some nominees from the Committee on Nominations.

Messengers referred to the Committee on Order of Business a motion to allocate more time for the IMB and NAMB reports at SBC annual meetings.

Twelve motions were ruled not in order by the Committee on Order of Business because they sought to direct, rather than request, the work of SBC entities.

One motion was ruled out of order because it was presented in the form of a resolution and seven motions were ruled out of order because they proposed that the convention exercise authority beyond that of the SBC or messengers.

Two of the motions ruled out of order asked the convention to remove from their positions Southern Baptist "officers" and "officials" who support Muslims' right to build mosques in America.

A separate motion asked the SBC to withdraw its amicus brief in a federal lawsuit involving the Islamic Society of Basking Ridge (New Jersey).

The Committee on Order of Business noted they were out of order because ERLC signed onto an amicus brief, not the SBC. IMB also signed the brief.

The discussion over Muslims' right to build mosques in America came up again during the ERLC report.

A messenger asked ERLC President Russell Moore how any Southern Baptist can defend the right to build mosques in light of the fact some Muslims are terrorists.

Moore responded that part of "what it means to be a Baptist is to support soul freedom for everyone." The gospel, not government coercion, is the answer to Islam, he said. (Compiled from BP, TAB articles)

## Alabama Baptists elected to serve

Alabama Baptists were among those elected at the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, on June 14-15, to serve on SBC committees and as board members for SBC entities, boards and seminaries. Those elected are:

Executive Committee — **James W. Averett**, Birmingham (second term).  
Committee on Nominations — **Jay**

**Robertson**, Mobile; and **Bart Blakely**, Trussville.

International Mission Board — **Kenneth J. Burnham**, Oxford (second term); and **Richard L. Richie**, Somerville (second term).

LifeWay Christian Resources — **Clayton K. Speed**, Hartselle.

Southern Seminary — **Edwin J. Hayes**, Cullman (second term). (TAB)



Photo by Dianna L. Cagle

Danny Wood (at podium), pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, leads convention messengers in prayer for the six seminary presidents following their reports at the annual meeting.

# Legacy of missions

## WMU leaders urged to continue 'doing good'

**I**nternational Mission Board (IMB) church planter Sabastian Vazquez couldn't escape the inevitable emotions as he stood before a group of women whose legacy had led to four generations of pastors in his family.

Speaking during the 2016 Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) Missions Celebration and Annual Meeting, Sabastian unsuccessfully fought off tears as he told the story of a new Southern Baptist missionary who a century ago handed a Spanish-language evangelistic tract to an illiterate baker named Angel Vazquez, his great-grandfather.

Angel knew the missionary had given him something very special because of the way in which he gave it to him.

He became a Christian and asked the missionary to teach him how to be a pastor too. His son, grandson and great-grandson, Sabastian, would follow in his footsteps.

"My family is your legacy," said Sabastian, who serves as a church planter among college students in Toronto. "I tell you that story so you know to never give up."

### 'Strength in our union'

In her final report to national WMU, Executive Director Wanda Lee encouraged participants.

"What we do matters because we are shining a light, singing a song for the nations when we do the part God has called us to do," she said.

"You can always trust His promises. ... When I failed, and I did ... His grace sustained my soul where I could get up and try again."

Lee reminded WMU leaders in attendance that "what we do through WMU matters for the Kingdom" and gave three points of advice for the future:

#### 1. "Never lose sight of the needs of the world."

"The spiritual, emotional and physical needs of the people of the world are so much greater than you and I can sometimes imagine. We have within us the resources to resolve many of those needs if we have the collective will to do it," she said.

#### 2. "Never turn your eyes, nor the heart of WMU, inward."

"Resist the temptation of this nation of 'put me first;' rather

but we are to be about missions," she said. "There is strength in our union, strength as we gather around our collective purpose of missions."

Also during the meeting national WMU President Linda Cooper urged the 550 participants of the celebration and all who are involved in WMU to build upon the legacy of the women who had gone before them, such as Annie Armstrong, Fannie E.S. Heck, Hephzibah Jenkins Townsend and Lee.

In other news from the meeting:

- ▶ Mindy Jamison, of Friendship Baptist Center, Des Moines, Iowa, was presented the Dellanna West O'Brien Award for Women's Leadership Development.

- ▶ Tana Hartsell, of Concord, North Carolina, was re-elected as recording secretary of WMU.

- ▶ National Acteens panelists Sarah Golden, of Alabama, (see story, this page) was 1 of 4 panelists who shared testimonies with the national audience and prayed for missionaries with birthdays.

- ▶ Breakout sessions on various topics were available to participants. (Compiled from reporting by Jennifer Davis Rash and Baptist Press)



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Candace McIntosh, executive director of Alabama WMU, leads a breakout session on how to help and encourage returning missionaries.

keep your eyes on what God wants and how He sees the world and where you fit into those plans. If you do, we will grow and have that will to sing a song for the nations," she explained.

### 3. "Never forsake the singular purpose of WMU: missions."

"There are many opportunities all around to do good deeds

## Alabama Acteen on national panel



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Sarah Golden (left), a member of Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery, served on the 2016 National Acteens Panel for national Woman's Missionary Union and participated in the annual meeting in St. Louis, Missouri. Golden's pastor, Rick Marshall (right), encouraged her in her role.



Photo by Jenna Wachsmuth

Carol Causey (right), director for the WMU missions resource center, and Andrea Mullins (left), retired publisher for New Hope Publishers, unveil a photo of WMU Executive Director Wanda Lee at her retirement celebration.

## WMU's Lee honored by WMU, SBC leaders, mission boards

**A**pproximately 150 Southern Baptist leaders, family members and friends from across the country gathered in St. Louis, Missouri, on June 11 to honor Wanda Lee and her leadership of national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) over the past 20 years — 16 as executive director and four as president.

In January, Lee announced her intention to retire.

Frank S. Page said he got to know Lee in 2010 when he assumed his current role as president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Executive Committee.

Page recited Micah 6:8, "What does the Lord require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?"

"I believe Wanda Lee has exhibited that great trio of imperatives from our Lord," Page said. "I believe she has done what is right, what is just. She is merciful and many of you are the recipients of her mercy and ministry in your own life. She is a strategist, an organizational genius, yet is always humble and gives credit to those around her. I am honored to call her my friend and I thank God for her."

### Resolution for Lee

During a resolution of appreciation given to Lee during the SBC annual meeting, Page told messengers, "During Wanda's tenure, over \$3 billion has been given to missions while she was at the helm of WMU," with more than \$2 billion raised for international missions and nearly \$1 billion for North

American missions through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, respectively, in conjunction with the SBC's two mission boards, state conventions and local churches.

### Final report to SBC

In Lee's final report to SBC annual meeting messengers, Lee said, "It is our desire to partner with every Southern Baptist church in discipling preschoolers, children, youth and adults by engaging them in meaningful missions involvement right in their own communities or on the other side of the world; to support those who go to the nations for a lifetime with our praying and giving; and to accept the mandate of the Great Commission in whatever way God calls us."

The North American Mission Board and International Mission Board both donated \$15,000 to the Wanda Lee Joy Fund in her honor. These along with other donations bring the total given to this fund over the past six months to more than \$62,000. The Wanda Lee Joy Fund benefits a solid financial foundation for the operational expenses of national WMU.

Lee told those at the WMU reception, "I believe just as strongly today as I did 16 years ago that WMU is important to the Kingdom. We have the opportunity to make a difference. Our charge first and foremost is to be a light to the nations. There is strength in our union. There is strength in our collective purpose of missions. May our song be a song for the nations." (BP)

SBC 2016

# Deadliest shooting

## Southern Baptists mourn those killed, FBC Orlando hosts prayer service

**S**outhern Baptists gathered in St. Louis, Missouri, for the 2016 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting opened every session by praying for the families affected by the June 12 mass shooting in Orlando. With 49 murdered and 53 injured by 29-year-old Omar Mateen at a gay nightclub, it is the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history.

A resolution also was passed by messengers calling for Baptists to pray for and extend love to “all affected families of those murdered, injured and otherwise harmed, and first responders ... to those devastated by this tragedy.”

Messengers also called for Baptists to donate blood and offer other support.

“We regard those affected by this tragedy as fellow image-bearers of God and our neighbors, and therefore condemn this act of terrorism and others like it and pray for the day when these senseless acts of violence cease,” the resolution reads.

### Reaching out

And while Baptists in St. Louis were praying, Baptists in Orlando were reaching out to the community.

First Baptist Church, Orlando, hosted a community-wide prayer meeting June 14 in cooperation with the Greater Orlando Baptist Association and several pastors across various denominations.

Among those injured was a graduate of First, Orlando’s school, The First Academy, who was employed by the church in a non-

ministry capacity, said Pastor David Uth. Additionally, one of the church’s security officers was a member of the SWAT team that overcame Mateen, Uth said.

“The only one [church member] that we have uncovered is a young man who graduated from our school and also worked in our tech area,” Uth said. “He was there and was shot. He was not injured seriously, but his friend next to him died, and of course the trauma of having to watch his friend die was overwhelming.”

### ‘Stand and shine’

Uth addressed the tragedy from the pulpit the morning of June 12, calling worshippers from his 19,000-member congregation to the altar to pray. “We need to pray this morning, and we need to pray that this be a moment for the body of Christ to stand and to shine the light of the gospel and the hope we have in our God,” he told his congregation. “When the night is darkest, that’s when His light shines the brightest. And when the night’s the darkest is when you can be ... light and salt.”

Orlando is experiencing “unbelievable grief and [is] overwhelmed that this could happen here,” Uth said. “This is one of those news stories that happens other places and it’s overwhelming, the loss of life, the evil and the hatred that would create this moment.”

Confirmed as terrorism by the FBI, according to media reports, the massacre came days before outgoing SBC President Ronnie



Screen capture from WESH Orlando

Thousands attend a June 14 prayer service at First Baptist Church, Orlando, Florida, after the massacre days earlier at a gay nightclub. Names of the 49 murder victims were displayed on the platform. One of the many that were injured at the shooting was a nonministry employee of First, Orlando.

Floyd’s already scheduled special prayer service for spiritual awakening and other concerns.

“Our hearts are broken for the people of Orlando,” Floyd said.

“May America rise up and pray for the families of the victims and the entire city. Our Southern Baptist family will do so from across the world as well as from our convention.

“In these perilous times in America,” he said, “we are reminded again of our great need for Jesus Christ and for spiritual awakening in America.”

### Respond in compassion

Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission President Russell Moore responded with compassion.

“Christian, your gay or lesbian neighbor is probably really scared right now. Whatever our genuine disagreements, let’s love and pray,” he tweeted Sunday morning. But in a subsequent blog post at russellmoore.com, he questioned America’s ability to mourn as a unified nation.

“What I wonder is whether the country still has the capacity to grieve together in moments of national crisis,” he said, noting the tragedy had “turned into an excuse for social media wars over everything from gun control to presidential politics.”

“Our national divisions increasingly make it difficult for us not just to work together, but even to pause and weep together,” Moore wrote.

“We become more concerned about protecting ourselves from one another’s political pronouncements than we do with mourning with those who mourn.”

Moore also called Southern Baptists to prayer. “We don’t have to agree on the meaning of marriage and sexuality to love one another and to see the murderous sin of terrorism,” Moore wrote. “Let’s also pray for our leaders who have challenging decisions to make in the midst of crisis. ... Let’s call for governing authorities to do their primary duty of keeping its people safe from evildoers.”

Frank S. Page, president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee, expressed similar sentiments.

“We may have disagreements, even substantive disagreements about theology and lifestyle, but this violence is horrific, reprehensible and should be condemned by all,” he said. “Southern Baptists join with our nation in shock and horror at the shooting of so many persons in Orlando, Florida. Our prayers go out to the families.”

The gunman was a resident of St. Lucie County, Florida, and worked as a security guard. (BP, TAB)

## Resolutions passed on support for Israel; screening of, care for refugees

**T**wo of the 12 resolutions approved by messengers garnered debate at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

The most intense remarks came during debate over the resolution rejecting display of the Confederate flag (see story, page 1).

The resolution supporting Israel’s right to exist as a free state and encouraging renewed prayer for peace in and salvation of Israel also sparked a few comments.

Jamal Bishara, pastor of First Arabic Baptist Church, Phoenix, Arizona, said, “This is not a stand the SBC wants to make. It isolates us and enters us into the political arena. We are a spiritual

entity to bring peace into the world.”

Bishara described the conflict between Israel and Palestinians and said that while he is not opposed to Israel there are Arab Christians among the Palestinians as well.

“Palestinians have the right to live peaceably in their lands,” he said, noting that the resolution would isolate Arab people.

Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, spoke in favor of the resolution.

“Israel is the only effort of a democracy in the Middle East. We need to support Israel,” he said. “We are the recipient of Is-

rael’s promises for sure.

“As the Church of God has prospered for Israel, we should do our best to pray for Israel. This is not a political position but that we should pray for Israel.”

The resolution was overwhelmingly adopted by messengers.

### Other resolutions:

► Called for prayer for and pledged support to those affected by the June 12 killings in Orlando (see story, this page).

► Called on the government to enact strict security in screening refugees and for Southern Baptists to compassionately minister to and share the gospel with them.

► Affirmed Southern Baptists’

commitment to biblical sexuality and urged the protection of religious free exercise.

► Encouraged faithful proclamation of the gospel by churches and intentional evangelism by individual Southern Baptists locally, nationally and globally.

► Declared “unrelenting opposition” to efforts by military leaders and the Obama administration “to increase the likelihood that women will be placed in harm’s way” along with voicing support for service members and their families.

► Urged participation in voting and prayer for God to provide “spiritual, moral, ethical and cultural renewal.”

► Encouraged churches to consider increasing ministries to Alzheimer’s and dementia patients and their family caregivers.

► Called for pastors to support freedom of the press and journalists to practice that freedom responsibly.

► Affirmed “In God We Trust” as the national motto and encouraged its public display.

► Expressed gratitude to God as well as Southern Baptists in the St. Louis area and all others who helped with this year’s meeting.

The Resolutions Committee chose not to act on six resolutions submitted by messengers to the convention. (TAB)

— **Convention Sermon** —

# Racial reconciliation



## Gospel in action required, SBC panel says

Racial reconciliation rests at the doorsteps of the church and can only be achieved through the gospel in action. This concept was discussed by a diverse panel of Baptist pastors during a trailblazing moment June 14 on the opening morning of the 2016 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in St. Louis, Missouri.

Outgoing SBC President Ronnie Floyd convened the panel at 10:52 a.m., historically including National Baptist Convention USA President Jerry Young. The two have collaborated for months to put talk into action and actually achieve racial reconciliation in a racially troubled America.

“Being together here at this significant moment in America where racial disunity is occurring and few are speaking into this discussion, it is our responsibility as the Church of Jesus Christ to resound the power of the gospel and the unconditional love of Christ for all people into this conversation,” Floyd said in introducing the nine-member panel including African-American, Hispanic, Anglo, American Indian and Asian pastors of varying ages.

“It is our responsibility to have this historic conversation today for our present and for our future,” Floyd said of the panel, titled “A National Conversation on Racism in America.” (BP)



*“Somebody needs to pass the Salt and turn on the Light. ... The problem in America is ... contaminated salt, concealed light, whereby we do not express the love of Christ nor extend His light.”*

**Jerry Young**  
president, National Baptist Convention USA

*“Only the gospel can change hearts. Only the gospel can eliminate racism.”*

**Marshall Blalock**  
pastor, First Baptist Church, Charleston, South Carolina



*“What was present (after the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri,) was an infection, a historical, a societal infection that was exposed by an incident. ... The infection just didn’t stop at the doorstep of the culture, but that infection was also in the church and needed to be exposed.”*

**Kenny Petty**  
pastor, The Gate Church, St. Louis, Missouri

*“You cannot educate away racism because you cannot educate away sin. Sin is the problem. Racism is just another sin.”*

**David Um**  
Chaplain, Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
Pastor, Antioch Baptist Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts



## ‘There’s life in this tent,’ ‘soul of convention at stake’

Ted Traylor challenged Southern Baptists to move forward in cooperation and unity for the sake of the gospel — reflecting the preceding historic moment when Steve Gaines became Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) president with gracious consent from fellow nominee J.D. Greear.

Traylor, in the annual convention sermon June 15 in St. Louis, Missouri, drew from Psalm 133 to poignantly repeat the words of the psalmist David in the first verse of the passage: “How good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity.”

Traylor, pastor of Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola, Florida, said the appeal for unity was first sounded in the SBC preamble written in 1845, which used three words to describe the organization of the denomination — “eliciting,” “combining” and “directing” for one effort, the sake of the proclamation of the gospel.

### ‘Reason we exist’

“The reason we exist — one reason — is to take the gospel to the world,” Traylor said.

But Traylor admitted “we have issues.”

Referencing comments from outgoing SBC President Ronnie Floyd, Traylor said, “What once was the battle for the Bible has

become a battle with one another. The very soul of the convention is at stake.”

He quoted Southern Baptist David Dockery, president of Trinity International University in Deerfield, Illinois: “Southern Baptists need a new spirit of mutual respect. We need to move from con-



**TRAYLOR**

trovery and confusion to a new consensus and renewed commitment to cooperation.”

Traylor said, “Dr. Dockery has got it right. We need to move to Psalm 133 — ‘How good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity.’”

There is room in the tent for all Baptists,

Traylor said, as long as doctrine is uncompromised. “There is no real unity existing where disagreement is not allowed,” he said. “There’s life in this tent.”

Traylor identified three truths found in Psalm 133:

► Unity is released, much like oil poured upon the head or the Mississippi River and its tributaries. “We have to release our resources, going to the oceans of the world.”

► Unity is refreshing, like the dew of God falling on His people, or as seen in one brother in prayer for another.

► Unity is rewarded. “God commands the blessings of life when we are one.” (BP)

## Messenger registration tops 7,000 at SBC annual meeting in St. Louis

The Southern Baptist Convention’s (SBC) annual meeting drew 7,321 messengers to St. Louis, Missouri, on June 14–15 from the nation’s 46,000-plus Southern Baptist churches.

The unofficial total is 35 percent above 2015’s 5,407 messengers in Columbus, Ohio.

When registered guests, exhibitors and others are included, the count of those at the 2016 SBC annual meeting rose to 11,581.

SBC registration secretary Jim Wells said the results were higher than his pre-meeting estimate.

“I thought we’d have between 6,000 and 7,000,” he said. “7,321 is very good. The location being very accessible and the election year made a difference.”

Missouri churches turned out in force in St. Louis, the first time

the SBC annual meeting has met in their state since 2002. Their 877 messengers dwarfed their 2015 total of 182 in Columbus and represented the largest single contingent of messengers.

### 371 Alabamians

Alabama registered 371 messengers, up from 226 in Columbus.

The 2017 convention will be held June 13–14 in Phoenix, Arizona. The 2018 convention will be in Dallas and the 2019 in Birmingham. (BP)



**SBC 2016**

# Community building

## NAMB rebrands 'mercy' ministries under Send Relief, launches during Crossover events

**A**s a primary partner in the launch of the North American Mission Board's (NAMB) Send Relief initiative, a metro St. Louis church reintroduced itself June 11 to a couple thousand of its neighbors on a day that coincided with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting evangelism effort, Crossover St. Louis.

"One of our primary goals was to tell the community, 'We are here for you,'" said Joe Costephens, pastor of First Baptist Church, Ferguson, Missouri. "We wanted to show that we care and want to serve our local neighborhood. To see this day, with the launch of Send Relief ... with volunteers from churches from Kentucky, Tennessee, Florida, Texas and Missouri — it was incredible."

The day included the public launch of Send Relief's mobile medical and dental

clinics, a block party hosted at the church and another debut event, the Home Fire Campaign, an initiative with the American Red Cross and the Ferguson Fire Department to install smoke detectors in homes.

Preliminary numbers were still being reported at press time, but at least 200 gospel presentations were made that day with at least 20 professions of faith in Christ from reports of the more than 250 volunteers.

### 'Cooperative nature'

David Melber, vice president for Send Relief, said, "I am incredibly thankful and humbled by what we experienced today. ... The cooperative nature of the SBC and spirit of the volunteers to meet physical needs and help share the gospel brought true hope to the community."

Meanwhile volunteers reported more than 556 professions of faith during Crossover events throughout metro St. Louis.



Photo by John Swain

Volunteers serve local residents June 11 in the North American Mission Board's Send Relief mobile dental clinic. First Baptist Church, Ferguson, Missouri, hosted the official launch of Send Relief.

One man who made a decision for Christ had been considering suicide just a few days earlier, according to Eloy Rodriguez, a longtime Crossover volunteer, who serves as Hispanic pastor of Idlewild Baptist Church, Lutz, Florida.

Rodriguez said his team knocked on the door of the man's house and asked if they could pray with him. As they were preparing to pray, the man opened up about his struggles.

"Last Sunday he closed his eyes while driving," said Rodriguez. "He was willing to have whatever happen to him — suicide

basically. Then he opened his eyes, he was in the other lane, but there was no one else there. He pulled over and just cried ... because he realized he could have killed someone else."

Rodriguez then prayed with the man to receive Christ.

That was 1 of more than 50 gospel conversations that took place through Sterling Baptist Church, Fairview Heights, Illinois, during the week leading up to its June 11 outreach efforts. Sterling Baptist also hosted a block party, a zip line and a soccer tournament. (BP)

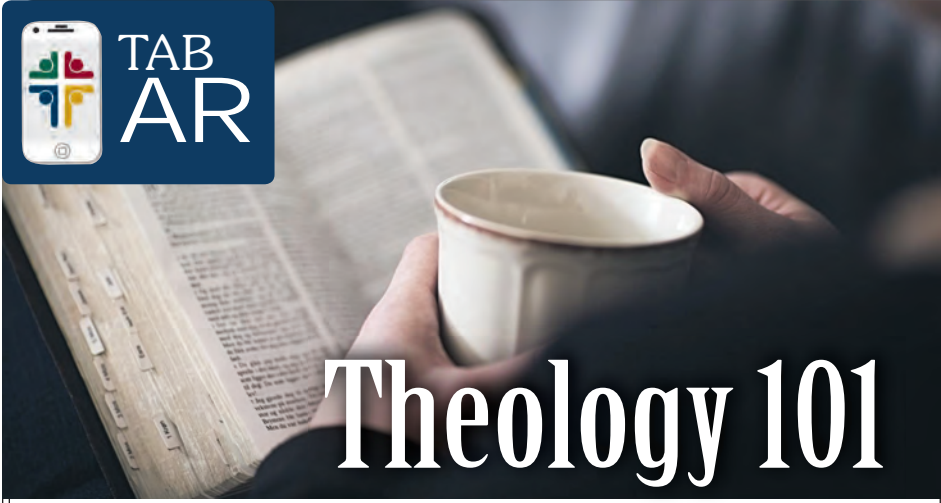
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# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Last Things

# Second Coming

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

A treasured promise for Christians is found in Philippians 1:6: “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” We commonly and correctly understand that this promise reaches beyond time and earthly life to find its fulfillment. This fulfillment awaits the return of Christ. Just as He came the first time to initiate redemption, He promised to come a second time to complete what began in conversion. Heaven’s message delivered by two angels at His ascension promised Christ’s Second Coming: “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). Although differing on some of the details, Christians hold to the promise that Christ will come again.

As to the nature of Christ’s Second Coming, Titus 2:13 refers to it as “the blessed hope” of Christians. That same passage terms it a “glorious appearing.” Jesus spoke of this blessed and glorious event in Matthew 24:30 by saying that human eyes will “see the Son of Man coming with power and great glory.” Our description of the nature of Christ’s Second Coming must include such words as “blessed,” “glorious” and “powerful.”

As to our attitudes toward the Second Coming, the Bible sets forth several commendable ones. In the language of 1 Corinthians 1:7, our attitude should be one of “eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Or again, the idea in 2 Timothy 4:8 is that when He comes we be found having “loved His appearing.” In addition to loving and eagerly awaiting it, Titus 2:11–13 sets forth the attitudes of “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts” while living “soberly, righteously and godly in the present age.”

As to the time of Christ’s Second Coming, He taught that no human knows or can know when it will occur. In fact Jesus asserted that only the Father in

heaven has such knowledge (Matt. 24:36). In spite of differences among us in some of the details related to the Second Coming, Baptists have gathered around the doctrinal statement found in the Baptist Faith & Message: “God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness.”

### Only God knows

That God alone knows the time for Christ’s return serves a very useful purpose. It means every generation of Christians is compelled to live in expectancy, seeking to be found of Him in saving faith, righteous living and faithful service. We all live under the possibility, “What if it were today?” Although the time appointed for the Second Coming is not disclosed to us, Jesus did leave us with certain signs that would point to the nearness of His coming. He spoke of seven such signs in Matthew 24:3–14 — the appearance of many false Messiahs; the occurrence of wars and rumors of wars; a plurality of famines in the earth; frequent and scattered earthquakes; the departure of many from the faith; a diminishing of love with an accompanying increase of wickedness; and the worldwide proclamation of the gospel as a testimony to the nations. Jesus gave a word of hope in Luke 21:28 when He said, “Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads for your redemption draws near.”

*Jerry Batson is a retired Alabama Baptist pastor who also has served as associate dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and professor of several schools of religion during his career.*



# Pastors Conference speakers urge listeners to ‘fulfill your ministry’

The 2016 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Pastors Conference focused on the exposition of 2 Timothy 4 with the theme “Live This!” on June 12–13.

Ten speakers discussed the issues of suffering, endurance, the gospel, cross-cultural ministry, evangelism and urged pastors to “do the work of an evangelist and fulfill your ministry.” The conference preceded the SBC annual meeting in St. Louis, Missouri.

Noah Oldham, pastor of August Gate Church, St. Louis, opened the conference by examining how ministers of the gospel should endure suffering for the glory of God.

“Suffering goes hand-in-hand with our call, and God is calling us to embrace it for His glory and our joy,” said Oldham, who also serves as North American Mission Board’s Send St. Louis coordinator.

Oldham discovered the painful reality of this truth in 2007, when he followed God’s call on his life to plant churches. But this new calling from God also brought a “year from hell.” Oldham ended up in the hospital because of a heart condition caused by stress.

### ‘Complete failure’

“I felt like a complete failure,” he added, “until I realized it was God who was tearing me apart so that He could put me back together. It wasn’t a year from hell. It was a year straight from heaven.”

Following Jesus, living out God’s call, is worth the pain that will inevitably come, he said. “Don’t give in to fear,” Oldham said, “but by the power of God, because of your calling, for the sake of the gospel, endure suffering.”

Jack Graham, pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church, Plano, Texas, urged participants to fulfill their ministry calling, to be faithful, to be fruitful in their efforts and to finish well. The way to accomplish these tasks is to “do the work of an evangelist,” Graham said.

Basing his message from 2 Timothy 4:5–8, Graham said, “Pastors and people in ministry are called to ... keep showing up and being faithful,” emphasizing that pastors set the tone for the evangelistic climate of their churches.

A call for revival was Greg Laurie’s message, saying believers want to see an awakening in America but revival must first start in the church.

Laurie, pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship, Riverside, California, said, “God is giving our country some wake-up calls. But it is not going to be solved by politicians.

“We point our fingers to D.C., and to Hollywood, but the breakdown is in God’s house,” he said, telling pastors that he was praying for “stunning spiritual awakening.”

Other speakers included James MacDonald, pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel, Rolling Meadows, Illinois; David Platt, president of the International Mission Board; Byron McWilliams, pastor of First Baptist Church, Odessa, Texas; Ed Stetzer, newly appointed executive director of the Billy Graham Center for Evangelism in Wheaton, Illinois; Jimmy Scroggins, pastor of Family Church, West Palm Beach, Florida; Derwin Gray, pastor of Transformation Church, Charlotte, North Carolina; and Johnny Hunt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Georgia.

Dave Miller, of Iowa, is president of the 2017 Pastors Conference. (BP)



Laurie

# ‘Call to Prayer’ unites messengers



Photo by Adam Covington

Southern Baptists pray together during the National Call to Prayer for Spiritual Leadership, Revived Churches and Nationwide and Global Awakening on June 14 in St. Louis, Missouri.

Thousands of messengers and guests filled the convention hall, praying in groups and alone. Countless others watched online and on TV.

Ed Litton, pastor of Redemption Church, Mobile, was one of several pastors leading prayers.

Jerry Young, president of the National Baptist Convention USA, said during the time of prayer for racial reconciliation that the wall of racism “is already down,” referring to earlier experiences at the meeting (see pages 1, 7). (Compiled by TAB staff)

**SBC 2016**

# 'Cooperative unity'

## IMB, NAMB share goal of reaching nations in SBC report

In their reports to Southern Baptist Convention messengers June 15, both missions sending organization leaders said their goal is to get the gospel to all people.

According to International Mission Board (IMB) President David Platt, that goal has been in place at IMB for more than 170 years.

Budgeting processes recently led IMB to reduce its missionary force by 20 percent.

"I praise God for churches, associations, state conventions, the WMU and other entities who have rallied around these retirees and others, helping them redeploy into meaningful ministry across North America," Platt said. "During a time in which I know the adversary has wanted and worked to divide Southern Baptists, you as a convention have come together in a powerful

display of cooperative unity."

Platt praised God for Southern Baptists' commitment to stand beside IMB, evidenced by increased giving to the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions. Platt projected that IMB will be operating with a balanced budget for 2017, with the stage set for a healthy financial future (see story, page 11).

The missions force that remains on the field has the potential to grow to thousands more in the days to come.

### Church planting

For the North American Mission Board (NAMB), reaching people for Christ involves, in part, planting churches, according to NAMB President Kevin Ezell.

"Since 2011, NAMB has directed an increasing amount of

its resources to church planting," Ezell said.

Looking at church planting's impact on baptism rates, Ezell said church plants "baptize 1 person for every 14 members, compared to 1 for 52 in existing churches."

### Total baptisms

Ezell shared several examples of areas where churches planted since 2010 contributed a signifi-

cant percentage of total baptisms from their states in 2015.

In Vermont it was 83 percent; in the Baptist Convention of New England, which includes six states, it was 39 percent; and in Canada it was 53 percent.

"Southern Baptists, church plants reach people for Christ and the more we plant, the more baptisms we will see," Ezell said. (BP, TAB)

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### MISCELLANEOUS

#### DONATIONS FOR CHURCH PLANT

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(augmented reality)

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**Lineville's Concord Baptist marks 175 years**

The 175-year anniversary celebration of Concord Baptist Church, Lineville, was a day that was marked by a "good crowd" having "good fellowship," according to Carey Baptist Association Director of Missions Bruce Willis.

During the May 15 service, Concord Baptist Pastor Mark Kytan brought a message and read a history of the church. An offertory piano solo was played by Jimmy Owen and Willis made historical presentations on behalf of Carey Association and the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. A painting of the church was presented by artist Hattie Mitchell during the service.

Following a fellowship lunch, participants gathered for an afternoon singing with God's Mercy, a quartet from Wadley.

**Mount Carmel commemorates 175th anniversary**

In a service marked by memories, Mount Carmel Baptist Church, Union Springs, celebrated its 175th anniversary June 5.

During the morning service, Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a certificate to the church. Former pastors Robbins Sims and Curtis Rich, who is now director of missions for Bullock-Centennial Baptist Association, shared their memories of Mount Carmel Baptist.

Special music was performed by the choir, which sang an original song about the church, and Matt Pugh. First Baptist Church, Montgomery, member Douglass McElvy was the guest speaker, sharing from Romans 4:17. Gil Barrow is pastor.

*Compiled by the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and TAB*

# 'Standing strong'

## IMB's Platt hopeful for sending 'thousands more missionaries'

For more than 170 years, God has blessed the International Mission Board (IMB) for the spread of the gospel among the nations — and by God's grace IMB is "standing strong," IMB President David Platt reported to Southern Baptist Convention messengers June 15.

"I am confident that not every one of [those years] has been easy," Platt said. "But that's the beauty of Proverbs 3:5-6. As Southern Baptists have trusted in God, as Southern Baptists have acknowledged Him year after year, God has made our paths straight for the spread of His glory among the nations."

**Current missions force**

Platt recounted IMB's financial situation that led to his decision to reduce missions personnel. The result was about a 20 percent reduction in missionaries and staff.

But thousands of missionaries and seasoned leaders with thousands of years of collective experience remain on the field, he

said. This missions force maintains IMB as the largest missions organization of its kind in the world, with potential for the force to grow to thousands more in the days to come.

"Now some might say, 'You just said goodbye to hundreds of missionaries for financial reasons; what's the IMB's strategy for sending thousands more in their place?'" Platt said. "In the months ahead we are going to be talking with you across this convention of churches about creating more pathways for more people with the Spirit of God to go to more places with the gospel of God."

With Lottie Moon Christmas Offering gifts increasing and the cost of sending a missionary being about \$50,000, "then we can send a couple of hundred more missionaries," Platt said. "That's the kind of thinking we must avoid. Our goal as a group of 40,000 churches

is not just to send a couple of hundred more missionaries. We want to send thousands more missionaries, and the potential for doing that is real if we'll create the pathways for that to happen.



**PLATT**

"Let me be crystal clear: the IMB is still going to send full-time, fully funded career missionaries just like we've always sent," he said. "They are the priceless, precious, critical core of our missions force."

Those career missionaries will be surrounded with professionals, students, retirees and others who show that global mission "is not just for a select few people in the Church, but for multitudes of Spirit-filled men and women across the Church," he said.

"God, give us a vision of thousands more people going from all of our churches through all kinds of pathways for Your glory ... all over the world," he implored. (BP)

## Alabama Doctor Helps Visually Impaired To See

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*Grandchildren as viewed by a person with Macular Degeneration.*

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*Same scene of Grandchildren as viewed through telescope glasses.*

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## BESSEMER

► **Shady Grove Church, Bessemer**, will celebrate homecoming June 26, 11 a.m. Heavens Song will perform special music. A lunch will follow. Patrick Buckner is pastor. ► **Maytown Church** will hold "Americanism Celebration" on July 3, 9 a.m. Chief Justice Roy Moore will speak. John Killian is pastor.

## COFFEE

► **Open Door Church, Enterprise**, will hold a gospel singing June 25, 6 p.m. Walt Wilson and local groups will perform. For more information call the church office at 334-347-4983. John McCrummen is pastor.

## COLUMBIA

► **Mount Enon Church, Dothan**, will celebrate its 128th anniversary and homecoming July 10. Sunday School is at 9 a.m. and worship is at 10 a.m. A covered dish lunch will follow. Donald Moore will speak. Jerry Hood is pastor.

## RUSSELL

► **Emmanuel Church, Phenix City**, will hold VBS on July 9. For more information call the church at 334-298-4728. Alan Griffith is pastor. ► **Crawford Road Church, Phenix City**, will hold VBS on July 20-25. For more information call the church at 334-298-4289. Marvin Minton is pastor.

## SARDIS

► **Mount Carmel Church, Coffee Springs**, will celebrate homecoming July 10. Pastor James Preachers will speak. Lunch will follow. Mount Carmel also will hold revival services July 11-13, 7 nightly. Mark Ward will speak.

## TUSCALOOSA

► **Circlewood Church, Tuscaloosa**, will host the Tuscaloosa Faith Art event "Bible Stories from the Heart" on July 16, 10 a.m.-noon. The event is for adults of all ages. For more information email [eatonles@gmail.com](mailto:eatonles@gmail.com). Herb Thomas is pastor.

## TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Liberty Church, Opelika**, will celebrate homecoming July 17. Sunday School is at 10 a.m. and worship is at 11 a.m. Lunch will follow. Liberty Church also will hold revival services July 18-20, 6:30 nightly. Scott Roney will speak. Frank Chappell is pastor. ✝

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**SBC 2016**

# Decision on flag 'matter of spiritual conviction'

(continued from page 1)  
witness of Southern Baptists, Merritt told messengers.

In a comment that produced a partial standing ovation, he said, "[A]ll the Confederate flags in the world are not worth one soul of any race."

Calling it "a seminal moment

in our convention," Merritt said, "This is not a matter of political correctness. It is a matter of spiritual conviction and biblical compassion.

"We have a golden opportunity to say to every person of every race, ethnicity and nationality that Southern Baptists are not a people

of any flag. We march under the banner of the cross of Jesus and the grace of God.

"Today we can say loudly and clearly to a world filled with racial strife and division that Southern Baptists are not in the business of building barriers and burning bridges," he said. "We're about building bridges and tearing down barriers."

Alan Cross, of Montgomery and a former Alabama Baptist pastor, said, "It was the most wonderful surprise, a complete denuncia-

tion of the flag because of what it represents and because of the Southern symbol that it is to African-American brothers and sisters in Christ."

## Differing views

Not all Southern Baptists are as excited about the move as Merritt and Cross, however.

Prior to Merritt offering his proposed amendment, John Killian, pastor of Maytown Baptist Church, urged messengers not to approve the resolution.

"When you get home on the grassroots level, this is going to be a horribly divisive issue," he said. "In the name of unity and racial reconciliation, don't pass this resolution."

Resolutions Committee chairman Stephen Rummage "respectfully disagreed" with Killian's comments from the platform.

"We are talking about one particular symbol that is used by some and perceived by many as a symbol of racism and that causes great harm," Rummage said. "We acknowledge there are those who do not use it with those intentions ... but we call for people prayerfully to limit or discontinue use of that symbol."

When introducing the resolution, Rummage asked messengers to "pass this unanimously and with urgency ... for the sake of our witness for Jesus Christ and for the sake of showing His love of all people."

The original resolution was submitted by Dwight McKissic, an African-American and pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church, Arlington, Texas, but was reworked before being submitted to messengers.

## 'Tempered language'

Rummage said during a press conference on all resolutions passed by messengers (see story, page 6), "[T]he language was tempered from the original submitted resolution.

"The resolution that we crafted was one based on what we believed Southern Baptists would be amenable to, that they would vote a strong yes to," he said. "The reason for tempering the language in the way that we did was that we wanted to achieve as broad a consensus as possible.

"When Dr. Merritt presented his amendment to that and we heard the response as he was presenting his amendment, then we wanted to see what the convention would say," Rummage added. "Once we heard, it was so overwhelmingly clear, at least to me, the convention wanted to say what we said but say it more strongly.

"I was elated to see us make the type of statement that we did," he said. "I'm thankful to Dr. Merritt for bringing the word and the way he did."

Messengers approved both the amendment and the amended resolution by wide margins. (BP, TAB)



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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For June 26

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

### KING? 1 Samuel 8:1-22

#### A King Demanded (1-5)

Samuel had done an exemplary job of judging Israel. Yet his years were now catching up with him. He had become old. So he appointed his sons, Joel and Abijah, as judges over Israel. Samuel's sons were not like him — they were wicked men, preferring corruption and forsaking justice.

Seeing what was taking place, Israel's leaders approach Samuel, saying, "You have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways." The leaders then request that Samuel appoint a king to rule over them.

This is not a noble request. Their real motivation is to be like the surrounding nations. Had God not called Israel to be different from their pagan neighbors? Was God not their true King?

#### Rejection Declared and Rebellion Determined (6-22)

Although Samuel views this request as a rejection of his leadership, it is actually a rejection of God, their true King. God is the one who delivered Israel from Egypt, led them through the wilderness, brought them into the land and fought battles on their behalf.

Thus, He is the one who had been delivering and leading His people, as a king is supposed to do. In spite of this, the people fail to trust God, their true Ruler.

Even so, the Scriptures promise that Israel will have a king (Gen. 17:6; Num. 24:7, 17).

Deuteronomy 17:14 says that "when you [Israel] come into the land the Lord your God is giving you ... you will say, 'Let us set a king over us as the nations that are around us.' You may appoint a king over you whom the Lord your God

will choose." The fault, then, does not lie in the people's petition for a king, but in that they do not ask God for a king through whom He will exercise His power and authority (see also Deut. 17:4). Instead, they petition Samuel to appoint a king over them "like the nations," that is, a "worldly" king (vv. 5, 19-20).

As their ancestors before them, Israel trusts in someone other than God's anointed and, consequently, someone other than God Himself (see also Ex. 32). God will permit Samuel to grant them their "worldly" kingship, but it will come with harsh "worldly" implications (vv. 8-22).

Despite their disobedience, God would one day send His promised anointed King, Jesus Christ (2 Sam. 7; Ps. 2).

Unlike the wicked kings of Israel and Judah, Jesus' kingdom is one of peace, righteousness and equity, the kind we see a brief glimpse of in the reigns of David and Solomon.

One day He will return to judge His enemies and consummate His kingdom on the earth (Rev. 20-22). There will never again be an oppressive, unrighteous ruler — for the true King of kings will be seated on His throne forever.

During this political season, we must realize that our hope is not in a president or elected official.

Christians should not be identified by their affiliation with a certain political party — whether Republican or Democrat. God's people should be recognized by their hope in Jesus.

Although we do our best to select qualified officials, our elected representatives will fail us. Count on it. But Jesus will never let us down.

Place your hope in Him, the true King, not the next president. Look to Him with eager longing, anticipating that He is the only one who will make things right. †

## Bible Studies for Life By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh, Ph.D. Professor of Religion, Samford University

### TRANSFORMED IN MY PLANS Matthew 6:25-34

Anxiety is probably one of the most common of everyday experiences, sometimes characterized by a passing wave of worry which disappears like a white cloud on a summer's day.

But it also is often associated with panic attacks, palpitations of the heart and a strong desire to escape and run away from the terrors of trouble. Medical experts reckon that approximately 10 percent of adults may be suffering in this way at any one time.

#### Trust in God's care. (25-30)

For Jesus the issue of worry was related to a lack of confidence and trust in God's provision for His people. The Father who feeds the birds of the air and ensures that there is sufficient food for them to eat is someone we can trust to provide for our daily needs.

The Lord's Prayer does not promise us that He will meet our "wants" but only our "daily bread."

The grass in the field will turn green each spring and summer. God will provide food to eat and clothes to wear. It may not be caviar or Louis Vuitton purses but there will be enough to live on. Failure to believe this is characterized by Jesus as "little faith."

#### Trust in God's knowledge. (31-32)

The contrast to such an attitude is the thinking of the unbeliever — which can so easily affect the thinking of the child of God — to crave material things within this world.

In the 1980s the Swedish pop group ABBA sang about "Money, money, money, it's a rich man's world."

Sadly, we often focus on the "things of this world" to bring us contentment and happiness and forget the one thing that

really matters — trusting God and finding contentment in His loving presence and provision for our lives.

Contentment is not easy. In Philippians 4, Paul speaks of "learning the secret of contentment" (v. 12).

Where I grew up, when the church notices were given at the end of the service telling us what the activities of the church in the week would be, the person giving them always said, "God willing."

This phrase shaped our thinking, and we were convinced that God was in control of all we were and all we had. It helped us to be content, whatever the circumstances of our lives.

#### Trust in God's provision. (33-34)

Jesus encourages, as well as challenges, us to strive first for the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Many Christians make their own more private modifications of this principle to try to evade the challenge of Jesus' words. To seek God's kingdom and His righteousness is to take the Sermon on the Mount seriously and seek, by the grace of God and the strength of the Holy Spirit, to live it out in our daily lives.

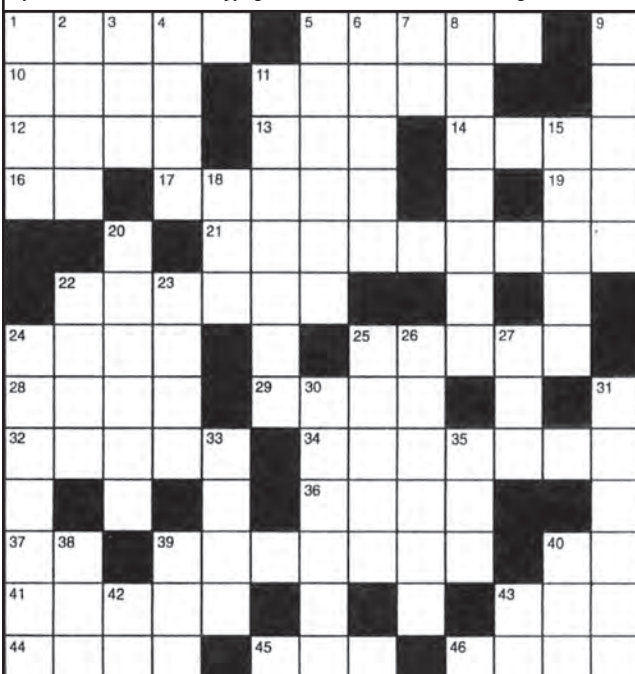
The life of discipleship is not easy but it is made possible by Jesus. He expressed a holiness which was earthed in daily living. His holiness was grounded in a life that was visible, and it was integrated with His faith and vision as the Son of God incarnate.

He isn't speaking about a sinless life because we often fail. He is looking, however, for a life of integrity.

A life of integrity calls us to commit ourselves to reflect the holiness of God in the ordinary behavior of our everyday lives. This applies to when we are visible to our fellow human beings and when we are seen by God alone. †

## Christian Crossword

By Glen G. Luscher Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



### Across

- But ye shall receive \_\_\_\_\_. (Acts 1:8)
- A son of Midian. (Gen. 25:4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ the voice of the Lord. (Deut. 27:10)
- We shall not all \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Cor. 15:51)
- The Word was \_\_\_\_\_ flesh. (John 1:14)
- My sins are not \_\_\_\_\_ from thee. (Ps. 69:5)
- Son of Enoch. (Gen. 4:18)
- Plural (abbr.).
- Adina was his son. (1 Chron. 11:42)
- Whosoever shall \_\_\_\_\_ the will of God. (Mark 3:35)
- Imitation.
- Great-grandson of Asher. (1 Chron. 7:32)
- Ruth's husband.
- To gather.
- Capital of Italy.
- Father of Salathiel. (Luke 3:27)
- An adversary.
- Under the \_\_\_\_\_ they were

### Down

- The \_\_\_\_\_ of her strength shall cease. (Ezek. 30:18)
- A son of Joktan. (Gen. 10:28)
- With this ring, I thee \_\_\_\_\_. (Luke 10:23)
- Type of palm.
- He is faithful and just \_\_\_\_\_ forgive us. (1 John 1:9)
- He \_\_\_\_\_ him, and said to him. (2 Kings 10:15)
- He saith among the trumpets, \_\_\_\_\_. (Job 39:25)
- Shechem's father. (Gen. 34:2)
- Bartimaeus ... \_\_\_\_\_ by the highway. (Mark 10:46)
- Ephraim's grandson. (Num. 26:35-36)
- Bring thee a \_\_\_\_\_ heifer. (Num. 19:2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ on this side, and \_\_\_\_\_ on that side. (Josh. 8:22; one word)

- Name of Shedeur's son. (Num. 7:30)
- A lever operated by the foot.
- \_\_\_\_\_ shall save his people. (Matt. 1:21)
- Ye are our \_\_\_\_\_. (2 Cor. 3:2)
- Son of Hillel. (Judg. 12:13)
- Son of Harim. (Ezra 10:31)
- Women \_\_\_\_\_ themselves in modest apparel. (1 Tim. 2:9)
- She touched the \_\_\_\_\_ of his garment (Matt. 9:20)
- Son of Mahli. (1 Chron. 6:46)
- For it is \_\_\_\_\_ cut off. (Ps. 90:10)
- David's older brother. (1 Chron. 2:15)
- Neither left they any to \_\_\_\_\_. (Josh. 11:14)
- And all her \_\_\_\_\_ men were bound. (Nahum 3:10)
- A covered coach.
- Who gave himself a ransom for \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Tim. 2:6)
- His seed shall \_\_\_\_\_ for ever. (Ps. 89:36)
- In his \_\_\_\_\_ shall stand up a vile person. (Dan. 11:21)
- Two days, or a month, or a \_\_\_\_\_. (Num. 9:22)
- Short for Theodore.
- A paddle.
- Thou art my beloved \_\_\_\_\_. (Luke 3:22)
- Noah's son. (Gen. 5:32)
- Another name for mother.
- His sickness was \_\_\_\_\_ sore. (1 Kings 17:17)



# TOP 10

*downloaded songs from iTunes*

## CHRISTIAN & GOSPEL



**1. Trust In You**  
By Lauren Daigle  
(How Can It Be)



**2. Good Good Father**  
By Chris Tomlin  
(Good Good Father)



**3. Eye of the Storm**  
By Ryan Stevenson  
(feat. GabeReal)  
(Fresh Start)



**4. In Christ Alone**  
By Sarah Reeves  
(Acoustic Worship Covers  
Vol. 1)



**5. Move (Keep Walkin\')**  
By tobyMac  
(This Is Not A Test)



**6. Priceless**  
By for KING & COUNTRY  
(Run Wild. Live Free. Love  
Strong.)



**7. Necessary**  
By Dennis Reed & Gap  
(Water Walker)



**8. Tell Your Heart to Beat Again**  
By Danny Gokey  
(Hope In Front Of Me)



**9. Slow Down**  
By Nichole Nordeman  
(The Unmaking)



**10. Breathe**  
By Jonny Diaz  
(Everything Is Changing)

Source: [popvortex.com](http://popvortex.com) at press time



Modern hymn writer Kristyn Getty leads worship during the National Call to Prayer for Spiritual Leadership, Revived Churches and Nationwide and Global Awakening on June 14.

Photo by Adam Covington

## The Gettys encourage Great Commission at SBC

Modern hymn writers and Irish recording artists Kristyn and Keith Getty joined the choir from outgoing Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Ronnie Floyd's Cross Church in northwest Arkansas to lead worship during the SBC annual meeting June 14-15 in St. Louis, Missouri. They participated in the National Call to Prayer for Spiritual Leadership, Revived Churches and Nationwide and Global Awakening, a major focus of Floyd's presidency.

The Gettys also performed their new hymn, "For the Cause," at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary's (SEBTS) alumni luncheon on June 15, along with their hit, "In Christ Alone."

"For the Cause" — which is on their newest album, "Facing a Task Unfinished" — was dedicated to SEBTS and its president, Danny Akin. It will now serve as the official hymn for SEBTS and The College at Southeastern in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

Keith Getty said the message of "For the Cause" ties perfectly with the whole album's focus on global missions and, in turn, the mission and focus of SEBTS.

"We're so excited to be involved with helping train the leaders of the next generation ... and are particularly excited about Southeastern's missional and global view," he said.

"The song is a very natural connection to Southeastern. ... It's about fulfilling the Great Commission and that's what Southeastern is all about."

Each participant received a copy of the seminary's new hymn during the luncheon.

"Facing a Task Unfinished" was released June 17. The album focuses on congregational singing and missions that was inspired by the original 1931 hymn of the same name — a song that urgently calls Christians to be witnesses around the world. (Compiled by Dianna Cagle, SEBTS, TAB)



**Left:** The Gettys perform their new hymn, 'For the Cause,' at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary's alumni luncheon June 15.

**Below:** Keith Getty backs Kristyn up with the piano.

Photos courtesy of SEBTS



# 'Life is a gift'

## Southern Baptists honor Pearl Harbor survivor

**W**orld War II veteran Bill McAnany, 1 of 2,000 living survivors of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, was introduced to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) as messengers honored America and recognized military veterans June 14 at the SBC's annual meeting in St. Louis, Missouri. Calling it an "awesome privilege," outgoing SBC President Ronnie Floyd observed that a memory of WWII disappears from American culture every three minutes as those who fought in the global conflict pass into eternity.

"We must take every opportunity to honor our veterans of the greatest generation while they are still among us," Floyd said.

This December, the United States will commemorate the 75th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese navy, Floyd noted. Recalling that the attack killed 2,403 Americans and wounded 1,178 others, he noted, "Pearl Harbor is a constant reminder that our freedom, purchased by the blood of American patriots, should never be taken for granted."

Floyd recounted McAnany's story — that he joined the Navy in 1938 and was assigned to the USS Solace, a 400-bed hospital ship that was present at Pearl Harbor for the fateful events of Dec. 7, 1941.

Providing emergency medical care to the injured and dying and recovering bodies from the

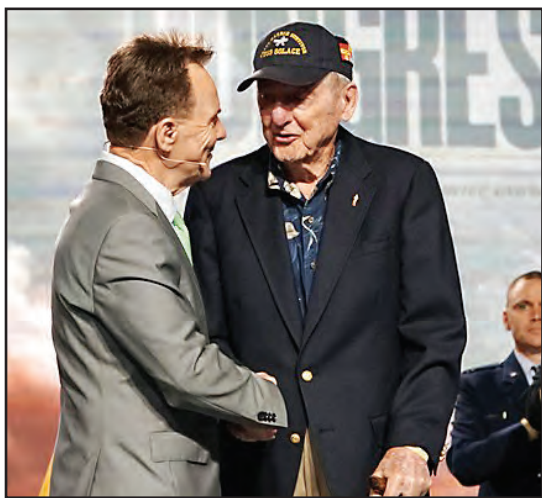


Photo by Adam Covington

Ronnie Floyd (left), outgoing SBC president, honors U.S. Navy veteran Bill McAnany (right), 1 of 2,000 living survivors of Pearl Harbor.

oil-stained waters of Pearl Harbor changed McAnany's view on life forever, Floyd said.

Quoting McAnany, of Wood River, Illinois, Floyd said, "You quickly realize that life is a gift not meant to be wasted."

### First military chaplains

Floyd also recognized the 75th anniversary of the first military chaplains endorsed by the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and its predecessor, the Home Mission Board.

Doug Carver, NAMB's executive director of chaplaincy, called military chaplaincy "truly a front-line ministry that is vital to the extension of the local church and the advancement of the gospel."

Carver recounted that 75 years ago as America was on the verge of global war, messengers at the 1941 SBC in Birmingham "firmly

agreed that there was no greater soul-winning opportunity facing Southern Baptists than the thousands of young men pouring into the military training camps around the country."

In June 1941 the Home Mission Board commissioned the first chaplains and appointed Alfred Carpenter, pastor of First Baptist Church, Blytheville, Arkansas, to lead the effort.

"Carpenter believed that every chaplain was a missionary in uniform, an evangelist at large called to share the gospel

where few missionaries could go," Carver said. From 1941 to 1945, Southern Baptist chaplains recorded 299,342 professions of faith, accounting for 82 percent of those reported by the Home Mission Board during that period.

"Today, 75 years later, Southern Baptist chaplains continue to carry the gospel into places where the church cannot go," Carver said, listing armed forces, correctional facilities, health care settings, the public safety arena, disaster relief sites and corporate environments as examples.

In recognizing all WWII veterans and other military veterans present at the SBC gathering in St. Louis, Floyd led SBC messengers in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Following the pledge, the choir and singers of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas sang "The Star-Spangled Banner." (BP)

## RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

### School asks sheriff to stop child from passing out Bible verses

LOS ANGELES — In exchange for recently handing out Bible verses at his school in Los Angeles, a young boy in return got the police called on him because such actions were "offensive."

The Desert Rose Elementary student handed out Bible verses in the form of short notes while standing on the sidewalk outside the school during lunch, according to news reports.

When a first-grade teacher saw one of the notes, the teacher rebuked the boy and called his parents. But the boy continued to hand out the notes given to him by his mother, Christian Zavala.

Later that day a Los Angeles deputy sheriff went to the family's home to inform the parents that the school had filed a report against the 7-year-old child, according to The Christian Post.

The Liberty Counsel, a nonprofit litigation organization that specializes in defending religious freedom, sent a letter to the Palmdale School District to inform the administration of the correct interpretation of the clause establishing separation of church and state, arguing that pupils have the right to exercise freedom of speech through printed materials, The Post reported.

"Therefore, it was improper to ban student religious discussion during lunchtime. The district cannot suppress and censor this discussion, or the one-page notes consisting of Bible stories and verses placed by [the child's] mother in [his] lunch for his own personal enjoyment and edification; which he voluntarily chose to share with his little friends during non-instructional time; which interested classmates were free to accept or refuse, at their own discretion," the letter stated. (TAB)

### ACLU leader resigns over transgender bathrooms directive

WASHINGTON — American Civil Liberties Union's (ACLU) Georgia head Maya Dillard Smith recently resigned from her position over the group's support of President Barack Obama's transgender bathroom directive.

"If our goal is to advance the rights of equality of transgender folk, how do we do that and advance the rights of all people?" Smith asked.

In an interview in May, President Obama said the directive was necessary to protect the dignity of transgendered individuals.

"We're talking about kids, and anybody who's been in school ... I think should realize that kids who are sometimes in the minority — kids who have a different sexual orientation or are transgender — are subject to a lot of bullying, potentially they are vulnerable," Obama said.

The national ACLU has stated that it fully supports the directive. Prior to Smith's resignation, her daughters shared a bathroom with three transgender individuals.

"My kids were visibly frightened. I was scared. And I was ill-prepared to answer (my daughters') questions," Smith said. (TAB)

## Ministry Tips



### COMPROMISE IN THE CHURCH

By Pastor Charles Potts  
High Pine Baptist Church, Roanoke

Should we compromise to meet the needs of the church? Like it or not, we live in a world full of compromise. Some are willing to compromise on certain subjects that affect the everyday operation of the church. Some

examples of accepted compromise would be to come together as a church body to change the color of the fellowship hall walls. Another example would be when it is time to order new song books, will we order the same as we already have or will we change to another book? As Southern Baptists, we vote and the majority usually wins out.

Now let's look at something that should not be subject to compromise: God's Word. The Holy Bible is an area where we should never compromise. The Word of God is being compromised in some of today's churches and I believe God is not pleased with that. If the Bible speaks against a certain subject, then we also should be against it.

"For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth (God's Word), there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (Heb. 10:26).

Let us all stay with God's Word and when "that day" comes, we will have no regrets. †