

INSIDE



Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting focuses on theme, 'Sent ... Here, There and Everywhere'

◆ Page 3



Prayer, trust needed when dealing with personal, church financial issues

◆ Pages 4-5



Practical ways churches, members can say 'thank you' for Pastor Appreciation Month

◆ Page 7



Photo by Doug Rogers

Main: Senior adults participate in the annual Senior Adult Evangelism Conference held at Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, in May 2016. **Right:** Lorena Mayhugh (center) teaches at the Baptist Student Center in Bangkok, Thailand, at age 94.



BP photo

'BACKBONE' of the church

Senior adults valuable segment of church population

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

There may be more millennials than Baby Boomers alive today, but Americans 65 and older remain a strong and vital segment of the U.S. population that no organization, especially churches, should ignore.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that by 2050, the number of Ameri-

cans 65 and older will nearly double, far outpacing the overall population growth. The number of people 85 and older will more than triple. Because of this increased lifespan, churches will likely see a growing need for accommodating the specific needs of adults in the second half of their lives.

"Older adults are the backbone of the church," said Eileen Mitchell, an associate in the office of Sunday School and discipleship at the Alabama Baptist State Board of

Missions who provides leadership to senior adult ministries. "Many older adults have given their ministry lives to a single church. They have served in the nursery, taught children and been in the choir. We need to recognize that these people matter."

Looking at facilities

From a facilities perspective, accessibility is an important part of welcoming older adults. Many accommodations require little money but make

a big difference, Mitchell said.

Signage is a good example. At a recent event, Mitchell said she had to walk up to a door to see the small sign indicating the room number. For those with poor vision — old and young alike — easy-to-read signage feels more inviting. Strong fonts in bulletins, high-contrast screen announcements and large-print literature also are helpful to seniors but benefit those of all ages, Mitchell said.

(See 'Senior,' page 20)

INTRODUCING TAB's new Digital Classroom

covering a variety of topics through a brief weekly instructional video.



See
page 17.

COMMENT

Serving Churches Great and Small

Alabama Baptists are the largest religious group in the state. Sometimes that is said boastfully as if Baptists make up some kind of power bloc. Other times it is said almost apologetically as if we may be many but we are not much.

Statistics provided by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) indicates Alabama Baptists number just under 1 million — 966,062. Resident membership is somewhat smaller — 683,989.

Those figures are down in recent years but still constitute a sizable group. One out of every 7 people in the state is a member of an Alabama Baptist church and lives in the area where that person is a member.

On any given Sunday morning the 3,208 cooperating churches will have 311,840 people gathered for worship. That means the average church, if there were such a thing as an “average” church, would have 213 members and a worship attendance of 97.

Not a reliable picture

However, averages don’t mean much because they do not provide a reliable picture of reality.

Alabama Baptists count some large, strong churches among their members. In fact the top 300 churches in resident membership account for 51 percent of the total. These same churches account for 47 percent of total worship attendance.

If one divides the remaining number of resident members by the remaining churches, the average would be 114 resident members and 57 in average attendance. Still those numbers are high for a large number of churches. Recently I was in one association where about 60 percent of the churches reported membership and attendance below these numbers.

When giving is considered the 300 largest giving churches contribute about 67 percent of Alabama’s total Cooperative Program (CP) receipts. That means the other 2,908 churches contribute about one-third of the CP total.

Unfortunately these numbers don’t tell the whole story either. SBOM statistics indicate 737 churches reported no CP giving for the last year of record. That is 23 percent of the total number of cooperating churches. It is hard to understand



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

how a church that does not cooperate in funding the missions and ministries agreed upon by messengers to the annual state convention meeting can be considered a cooperating church in good standing.

No church has to “buy” its way into membership with Alabama Baptists by giving a set percentage of undesignated income or a fixed dollar amount. Still it seems a church claiming to be a member in good standing with the state and national conventions would give something to underwrite what Baptists have decided to do together.

The beauty of the Cooperative Program is that every gift is important. All are pooled together so everyone who contributes has a part in the missions and ministry done in our state and around the world in Jesus’ name.

Interestingly the 300 largest churches in membership are not necessarily the 300 largest churches in giving. In fact the resident membership of the 300 top churches in giving is about 68,000 fewer than the largest membership churches.

Decisions about CP giving are faced by every congregation regardless of size.

Large membership churches have issues not faced by medium and small membership congregations. They are the prime targets for special projects within and without the denomination.

Increasingly larger membership churches are sought to underwrite special missions projects. These projects are supposed to be above what the church gives through the CP. In some cases, however, these projects have cut into CP giving.

Parachurch representatives seem to line up at the door of large church pastors seeking funding for worthy projects.

The biblical adage “to whom much is given, much is required” causes pastors to try and support as many causes as possible.

Churches of every size face another common issue — the pressure to abandon CP giving and support a particular cause or ministry. Increasingly people want to see tangible results of their giving. Simply contributing to a general fund that benefits all has little heart appeal.

Every church must do what it deems right under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, and the decision of each one is respected. It also is true that the principles undergirding cooperation of all that Baptists do together are weakened when churches decide to support only particular causes and ignore other important ministries.

One must always be concerned about the health of the whole body. Isn’t that what the Bible teaches? It is a perilous time when part of the body is strong and muscular while another part of the body is weak and fragile.

In my seminary days I was taught there are two important parts to the Cooperative Program. The

first part is “cooperative.” That is the way Southern Baptists have chosen to do their work. Cooperation is the key to work in the local church and the association as well as the state and national conventions. By cooperating together we can do more than any church can do alone.

The second part is “program.” Baptists are engaged in Kingdom business around the world. Program describes what Baptists do together. It is our missions and ministries. Program is determined in church business meetings and associational meetings as well as annual state and national conventions.

Program is determined cooperatively by all who chose to participate in the process. In Baptist life program cannot be superimposed on an unwilling body. That is the genius of working together cooperatively.

Determined to serve

The Alabama Baptist State Convention — which includes SBOM and all of its entities and auxiliaries — exemplifies the Cooperative Program. Resources are offered to the church running 15 in worship as well as churches running 1,500. The state convention does not look at CP giving before deciding to serve a church. As long as the church is in good standing with the state convention that church is entitled to the resources available.

Alabama may be a diverse state with churches great and small but Alabama Baptists through their associations and state convention are determined to serve them all. That service is made possible because of the Cooperative Program. ¶



October is Cooperative Program month. For more information, visit alsbom.org/cp/.

TAB

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

"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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SENT ... Here, There and Everywhere

Returning once again to Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery, the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting will take place Nov. 15-16 with the theme "Sent ... Here, There and Everywhere."

"Alabama Baptists are privileged to be back ... at Eastmont Baptist," said Rick Lance, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) executive director. "[The church] has hosted the State Convention and other meetings previously and is superb at doing so."

Three on a String will be the musical guest for the Tuesday evening session and Robert Smith, professor of Christian preaching at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, will bring the message. Other sessions will be led in worship by Mitch Loftin, worship pastor for First Baptist Church, Prattville; Ed Cleveland, associate minister of music for First Baptist Church, Montgomery; and Lance Maddox, worship pastor for Eastmont Baptist. Alabama Singing Men and Women will be featured on Tuesday and Frank Jones of Frank Jones Ministries will be the annual meeting pianist.

Theme interpretation

Two theme interpretation messages will be given during the meeting with one coming from Kevin Blackwell, executive director of Samford's Ministry Training Institute and assistant to the president for church relations. Within Blackwell's message there will be testimonies from Daniel Atkins, Jennifer Foster, Terrence Jones and Blake Newsome.

Ryan Whitley, pastor of CrossPoint Church, Trussville, will provide the second theme interpretation and will include testimonies from Gary Buchanan, Orlando Buck, Charles Carter and Blake Kersey.

Alabama Baptist State Convention
Messenger pre-registration information will be mailed to churches in October. Visit cards.alsbom.org after receiving the mailer to complete the registration process.

Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery



Photo by Doug Rogers

"We hope churches from across the state will send messengers for our annual Alabama Baptist family reunion," Lance said. "There is a great lineup of speakers and worship leaders who will call us to corporate praise during times of inspiration and worship."

The president's sermon by Travis Coleman Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church, Prattville, will be on Tuesday morning and Greg Corbin,

pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, will present the convention sermon on Wednesday morning.

The theme, according to Lance, "reminds us that we are to go into all the world, all the time, at the same time. From the standpoint of missiology, Acts 1:8 is a simultaneous not sequential mandate, and the convention theme reflects that." (Neisha Roberts)

Alabama Hunger Offering used to reach those in need

Hunger remains an issue worldwide and Alabama Baptists are working to eradicate that problem in the state and across the globe through the Alabama Hunger Offering for Global

Hunger Relief. According to Jim Swedenburg, state missionary for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, statistics for June, July and August show that 1,348 lunch bags were

distributed, 5,136 hot meals were provided and 33,326 individuals were given groceries.

There also were 19,629 evangelistic encounters along the way leading to 139 professions of faith in Christ, he said.

"When I look at the stats I'm amazed at how much is being accomplished," Swedenburg said. "People come with a physical need and we're able to meet that need and feed them

spiritually for a lifetime. That's pretty impressive."

With about 795 million people undernourished globally, the effects run rampant, according to globalhungerrelief.com.

Poor nutrition leads to nearly half (45 percent) of deaths in children; 1 out of 6 children in developing countries are underweight; and 66 million primary school-age children attend classes hungry, with 23 million in Africa alone.

In the United States, 1 in 6 people struggle with hunger; 1 in 7 people access food banks to help meet their needs; and 481 million people live in a food-insecure household.

Global Hunger Sunday is set aside to educate Southern Baptists about the ongoing worldwide crisis of starvation, according to alsbom.org.

When a dollar is contributed through the offering, the first 25 percent, unless otherwise designated, will stay in the state to assist churches and associations with food pantries. The remaining amount is sent to the Southern Baptist Convention's Global Hunger Fund where it is divided 80 percent to the International Mission Board for overseas hunger relief and 20 percent to the North American Mission Board for the United States and Canada.

Generous givers

In 2015, Alabama Baptists gave 12 percent of all that was given to the Global Hunger Fund.

As far as what to do on Global Hunger Sunday, Swedenburg said, "Just take an offering. It's that simple. One dollar can provide three meals. ... And though Oct. 9 is the suggested convention date for this offering, we receive hunger offerings all year."

For more information, visit cooperativeprogramresources.org/world-hunger. (Neisha Roberts, Michael Brooks)



Money-back guarantee

'Tithing Challenge' could be way to encourage cheerful, generous giving

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Hesitant givers might find comfort in knowing they could ask for a refund of their offerings during financial hard times, but is a "money-back guarantee" on tithes really a way to encourage cheerful and generous giving?

The "90-day Tithing Challenge" attempts to motivate nontithers to increase their giving by providing a safety net of sorts. Participants in the challenge commit to give at least 10 percent of their income for three months. After three months, givers can ask for their money back — no questions asked — if they are "not convinced of God's faithfulness" at the end of the challenge.

In June, *Christianity Today* reported that hundreds of churches, including nondenominational, Southern Baptist, Lutheran and United Methodist churches, have tried the tithing challenge, based on Malachi 3:10: "'Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.'"

New tither requirement

According to *Christianity Today*, the global, digital Life.Church initiated the challenge in the late 1990s and claims that of the thousands who have participated, fewer than 1 percent have requested a refund.

"The Bible says that when we do this God will bless us, not just materially, but God blesses us in more ways than we can imagine," Life.Church lead pastor Craig Groeschel told the magazine.

In most cases, challenge participants must agree to certain conditions, including that they be new tithers or pledge an amount above their current tithe, and refunds cannot

be given for tithes given prior to the start of the challenge and refunds must be requested within 30 days after the ending date of the challenge.

Alleviate worries

Advocates of the challenge say the money-back guarantee fosters generous giving habits by alleviating some of the financial worries associated with tithing. A 2013 report on church giving found that the most common reasons churchgoing Christians don't tithe is that they can't afford it or they are concerned about debt.

These are real concerns for many families, said Draper Rogers, pastor of young families at Gardendale First Baptist Church in North Jefferson Baptist Association.

"I hear it a lot: 'I want to give, but I'm barely making ends meet. I'm struggling.' Or, 'I hear what the church is saying, but I'm trying to keep my bills paid and food on the table.' The challenge I leave with them is this: If you trust God, if you believe that the same power that rose Jesus from the grave is living inside you, don't you think He can make a way in your finances?"

"I encourage them to take their eyes off their finances and put their eyes on God," Rogers said. "If He has called you to do it, focus on Him and He is going to guide you. He makes a way when there seems to be no way, and times like that build faith that will survive the fire."

Brent Thompson, pastor of Heflin Baptist Church in Cleburne Baptist Association,

shared concerns about churches offering money-back guarantees.

"It's teaching people to trust the finite resources of man, not the infinite resources of God," Thompson said. "It's giving through the church, not to the church and sends the message, 'If things don't work out for you, you'll get it back.' That's not really building disciples."

Mature disciples practice biblical stewardship and the way to develop mature disciples is to teach biblical principles, including stewardship, said Bobby DuBois, associate executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

"God owns everything, not just the 10 percent we put in the envelope or offering plate," DuBois said. "We are managers of God's resources, and managers are accountable to the owner." "Our giving honors God by recognizing Him as the source of everything we have," DuBois said. "Our giving also blesses the giver. We are encouraged in knowing that our stewardship of testimony, time, talent and treasure speaks of our devotion to God and our concern for others."

Finally our giving blesses others by supporting church leaders, sending missionaries and strengthening the spread of the gospel by the local church, DuBois said.

Rogers, who has a background in the financial industry, adds that many church members don't understand how churches operate financially. Unlike businesses, churches have no product to sell, so they run on tithes and offerings.

When the church communicates its vision clearly then shows how gifts are used to fulfill the mission, members see the church being what God has called it to be, and their resistance to giving sacrificially fades because they see their dollars making a difference, Rogers said.

For givers the time to decide what to give is not when the collection plate is passed, however.

"Our offering should come off the top when we're setting the budget for the month — here's what I'm going to give to God," Rogers said. "Then everything else is going to work in there. It's the same thing we do for house payments and car payments. Tithes and offering have got to be No. 1. That's the real challenge." ✝

"God owns everything, not just the 10 percent we put in the envelope or offering plate. We are managers of God's resources."

Bobby DuBois
associate executive director
SBOM

Points to ponder regarding offering refunds

► A charitable contribution is a gift and as such, the donor has no legal right to ask for the money back. The church has no obligation to give back contributions that are undesignated, like those given to the general offering.

► If contributions are designated for a specific project such as a building or a missions trip and the project is abandoned, a donor might have legal grounds to request those funds be returned.

► Before refunding any gifts, the

church should notify the donor requesting a refund that there may be tax consequences to the refund, including the need to file an amended tax return to remove a previously claimed deduction.

► In situations where a church offers a refund of gifts or a giver requests their money back, each party should seek legal and financial advice before proceeding.

Source: Richard R. Hammar, *Church Law and Tax Center*, www.churchlawandtax.com

Trust, prayer, planning can help with financial stress

By Howard Dayton
Co-founder, Crown Financial Ministries

Remember, God assures us He will always supply our needs, but He has not promised to supply all of the wants that our society identifies as needs. God may choose to answer in a way we don't want or expect. And His answer could very well be "no" so that we can develop maturity and learn how to rely totally on Him.

There are a variety of reasons that God may not answer the way we expect. Perhaps we may ask with the wrong motives (see James 4:3), or the timing may not be right according to God's will and purpose. Or it may simply be contrary to His overall plan (see Acts 21:13-14).

Here are some steps to follow in order to trust God with the present and the future.

► **Find God's direction for your life.** Most frustrations experienced by Christians come from patterning their lives after someone else's. Instead, through prayer and study, find God's direction for your life.

Trust God

► **Develop a conscious effort to trust God.** Put thoughts, words and commitments into action. Trust God and do not buy on credit or hoard. Wait for God to supply and plan ahead.

► **Develop a long-range viewpoint.** Trust God's biblical directives and guidance, even though you cannot always see the end result or understand why He is doing it that way (see Matt. 6:34).

► **Pray diligently.** Prayer is the key that unlocks God's blessings, power and direction for your life (see 1 Thess. 5:17-18).

Perhaps it's impossible to forecast when economic problems may occur or how to protect our holdings when it happens. But God knows and we can trust His guidance.

As Larry Burkett used to say, "We must decide if we truly believe God is able to supply our needs or if we are just saying we believe it."

We aren't able to control the world economy, but we can allow God to control our lives, and we can live our lives for His glory. That is all God asks of each of us.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Howard Dayton is co-founder of Crown Financial Ministries. This is an excerpt from an article that ran in a 2008 issue of The Alabama Baptist. (BP)

'Common goal'

Economy, stewardship, attendance trends all impact church finances

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

If the statistic that 1 in 5 churches saw their finances decline in 2015 is accurate, there must be a reason for the decline and, hopefully, a solution.

According to a recent LifeWay Research survey, one third of Protestant pastors say their church's giving was under budget in 2015 and about half of pastors say the economy has negatively affected their church.

Although wages increased in 2015, the "financial picture for many churches did not improve," according to Scott McConnell, associate director of LifeWay Research.

In the survey larger churches fared better than smaller churches. About one third of churches with 100 or more people (32 percent) saw their offerings exceed budget expectations. Among churches of less than 100, 1 in 5 (21 percent) had higher than budgeted offerings.

Church offerings

LifeWay Research also asked pastors if offerings at their church increased, remained the same or declined over the past year.

For the most part pastors say giving remained steady. Offerings went up in 4 of 10 churches (41 percent). Three in 10 (29 percent) saw no change. One in 5 (21 percent) saw a decline.

LifeWay's findings echo other reports.

The Giving USA Annual Report on Philanthropy found giving to churches and other religious causes has lagged in recent years. While charitable giving overall increased by 5.4 percent in 2014, according to The Giving Institute, giving to religious causes like churches grew by less than 1 percent.

Falling budgets

When it comes to budgets, a Faith Communities Today report found the median church budget fell from \$150,000 in 2009 to \$125,000 in 2014.

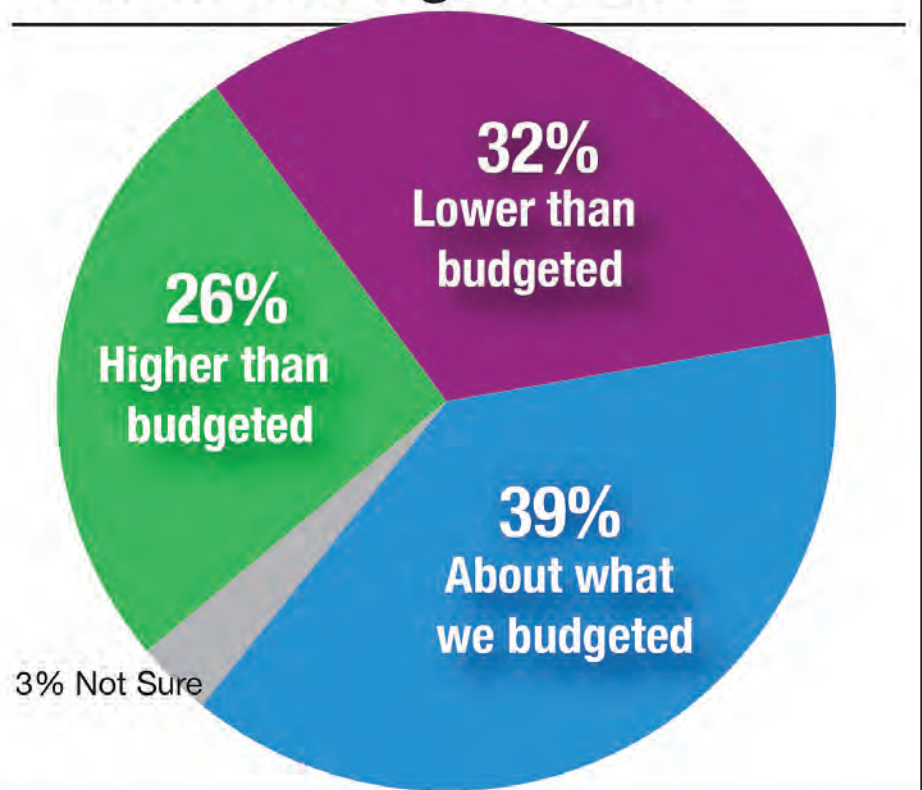
However, the economy is not the sole responsibility for financial woes, McConnell said, noting that many factors affect a church's finances such as attendance trends, spiritual growth and good stewardship.

At First Baptist Church, Tallapoosa, Georgia, just five minutes from the Alabama state line, the renovation of its education building in 2004 and purchase of new property next to the building was approved and the church received a loan for \$350,000.

Jim Carter, a deacon who served on the renovation committee, explained that church members had pledged to pay for the renovation and land and the monthly payment of \$3,500 was well-covered by those pledges. That was until the church was well into renovations and went

Among Protestant Pastors

**At the end of 2015,
church offerings were...**



LifeWay
Biblical Solutions for Life

LifeWayResearch.com

For church financial resources, contact the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' office of LeaderCare and church health at 1-800-264-1225.

"Every committee at church was very in tune with what the most cost-effective way was to do this or that.

We'd all ask ourselves, 'Is this something that we have to have or is this something we want?'"

Ann Smith
financial secretary
First Baptist Church, Tallapoosa, Georgia

through a leadership transition. At that time, Carter said, many of those pledging members left.

"We were put in a place where we could not pay that monthly payment," Carter said.

But thanks to the work of a local Christian banker, whom the church originally signed the loan contract through, the loan was refinanced and repayment was extended, cutting the monthly payment in half and more manageable for the church.

But for years the church members had the debt "hanging over their heads," according to Jim Jackson, chair of deacons.

There came a point when leadership and members were in agreement with a common goal — the debt had to be paid off.

No waste

So how did they do it?

Church leaders emphasized the importance of paying the debt off, set a deadline and put together a strong, committed finance committee, Carter said, and Jackson noted that the "finance committee kept the members well-informed."

According to Ann Smith, who's served as financial secretary for more than three years, the church was careful with each dollar and "not wasteful at all."

"Every committee at church was very in tune with what the most cost-effective way was to do this or that. We'd all ask ourselves, 'Is this something that we have to have or is this something we want?'"

"We had a lot of faithful members that believed in that vision of being debt free and really rallied behind it."

The church held a note burning in 2015

after the last \$30,000 was paid off in a few months time span.

Carter said with a chuckle, "We have never been so glad to see something go up in smoke."

Tight financial situations

For churches in tight financial situations, Jackson said it is wise to "keep a very close account on all moneys and always keep members informed."

Carter also said to pray through financial decisions. He also suggested getting commitment from the congregation to have a common goal; seek out a Christian banker; form a committee that will be wise with day-to-day expenses and one that church members trust.

Beulah Baptist Church, Muscadine, also was pinned under a large church building debt from 1995. The congregation also saw a leadership transition and a decline in church membership, according to Steve Bentley, who has served as church clerk and treasurer for more than 20 years.

When Pastor Bill Brown came on board in 2009 things began to change, Bentley said.

The church grew in size and annual tithes and offerings more than tripled by 2010.

"God blessed us and our offerings helped us pay off our debt," Bentley said. "Our pastor leads us well and is very missions-minded. He encourages giving from the heart."

And now, because the church is debt free, Bentley said, "We're able to give away what we get in through offerings, the Cooperative Program and other local ministries that we support." (BP contributed)

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

Making an eternal impact through shoeboxes

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

Forty-four days, seven hours, 55 minutes and 30 seconds, 29, 28, 27.

At press time there was only a little more than a month and a half left before Samaritan's Purse kicks off National Collection Week for Operation Christmas Child (OCC).

In 2015 more than 11.2 million boxes were donated with more than 8.7 million coming from the United States.

Every year Alabama Baptists participate in the Christmastime shoebox ministry. Some churches even collect and organize shoeboxes of gifts throughout the year, like First Baptist Church, Monroeville; Mount Carmel Baptist Church, West Blocton; and Pisgah Baptist Church, Selma, to name a few.

With a well-organized plan, any Alabama Baptist church or individual can take part in the 2016 OCC effort, which begins Nov. 14.

Samaritan's Purse.org and Pinterest make collecting, packing and sending each shoebox stress-free with thorough instructions and a surplus of creative ideas.

Tips for OCC boxes

Here are some tips from various online sources:

- ▶ Get an empty shoebox to pack and decide on if it will be for a boy or girl.
- ▶ Select a "wow" toy such as a doll, soccer ball and pump or stuffed animal.

▶ Fill the box with other fun toys, hygiene items and school supplies (like toy cars, harmonicas, balls, jump ropes, toothbrushes, bars of soap, combs, pens, pencils, crayons, glitter, glue sticks, erasers, notebooks, back pack).

▶ You also can include items like socks, scarves, bracelets, a small sewing kit, yarn, watercolor paint set, kaleidoscope, binoculars, lip gloss, silly putty, finger puppets, straws, plastic cups, Post-it notes or hacky sacks.

▶ Each box could have a theme, like a sewing box with scissors, fabric, buttons, simple patterns and thread, or a fishing box with items like fishing line, weights, plastic worms and a small fishing net.

▶ Do not include damaged items, chocolate, food, liquids, medications, vitamins, breakable items or war-related items such as toy guns, knives or military figures.

▶ Discover the destination for your box through Follow Your Box online, at samaritan's-purse.org. First donate

\$7 to receive a special label and then Samaritan's Purse will track the box for you.

▶ Pray for the child who will receive your gift.

▶ Include a personal note and photo.

▶ Take your shoebox to a local drop-off location during National Collection Week. Visit samaritan's-purse.org to see a listing of locations.

A sample calendar for collecting items all year could look like this:

March: Craft supplies and toys



Operation Christmas Child photos

April: Hygiene items

May: Boy items

June: Girl items

July: Clothing/accessories

August: School supplies

September: Warm clothing items

October: Candy and toys

Many Alabama Baptist churches also host "packing parties" in the fall as a time to fellowship and pray over all the donated shoeboxes.

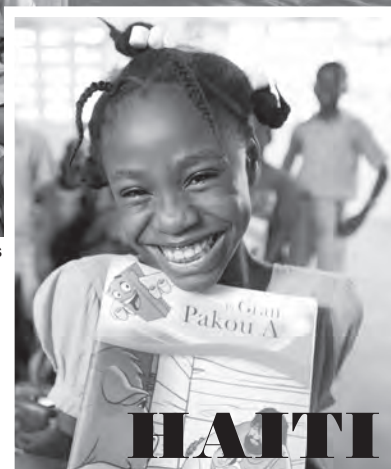
Packing parties

For example Pintlala Baptist Church, Hope Hull, laid out boy or girl tags in the church hall for members to pick up and begin packing a box for. They have a goal of 200 boxes for 2016 and will host "Pack a Box Party" on Nov. 6 at 12:10 p.m.

Beulah Baptist Church, Boaz, also will host a packing party Nov. 13 at 6 p.m.

Elba Baptist Church collected toothbrushes and toothpaste in September and will collect hairbrushes, combs, bows, ribbons and ponytail holders in October.

AMAZON



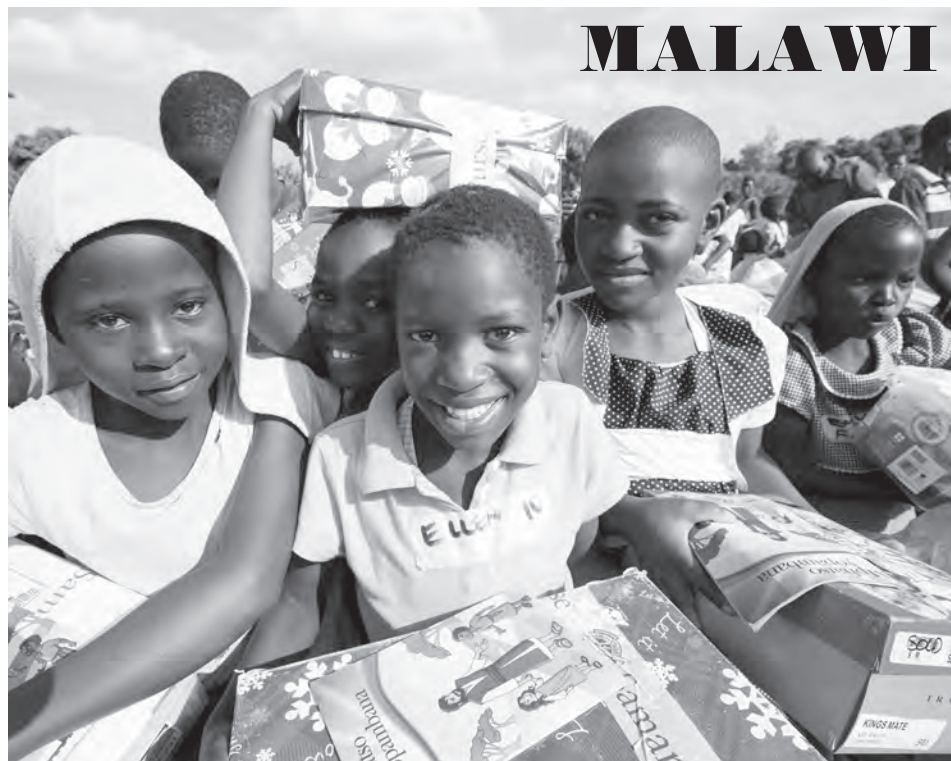
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Church members also have a goal of raising \$1,400 for postage needs.

But beyond sending a fun box filled with toys and items a child may need, OCC shoeboxes have the potential to make an eternal impact.

"As shoeboxes are distributed, local pastors or church leaders present the gospel in a fun way designed for kids while family and friends listen in," according to Samaritan's Purse. "Along with their shoebox gift, children also receive 'The Greatest Gift,' a colorful (written) presentation of the gospel in their own language.

"In the hands of local churches, every gift-filled shoebox is a powerful tool for evangelism and discipleship." ✠



MALAWI

Operation Christmas Child photos



CAMBODIA

Operation Christmas Child, a ministry of Samaritan's Purse, collects shoeboxes filled with toys, school supplies, hygiene items and other necessities from the United States, Australia, Finland, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Japan, New Zealand, Canada, Spain and the U.K. and sends them to more than 150 countries and territories.

*For all you do in Jesus' name ...
may you be blessed today in every way.*

Thank You, pastor

Graphic by Neisha Roberts/Unsplash.com photo

Practical ways churches, members can say 'thank you' during Pastor Appreciation Month

By Denise George
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Pastor Appreciation Month in October gives us as church members some unique opportunities to pause and express our appreciation and gratitude to our pastors. Here are some practical ways to say "thank you" to your pastor and his family this month:

As a congregation:

1. With your pastor's permission, organize a prayer support group that will meet regularly and pray for him, his family and his special ministry visions. Establish a pastoral care team. Select a handful of people from your congregation who will be charged with overseeing the welfare of your pastor and his family. Learn about pastors' retreat programs, pastors' schools and conferences, as well as relaxing getaway locations, and, as a congregation, give your pastor the gift of rest and renewal.

2. Arrange a special Sunday morning service to celebrate your pastor's call to ministry, his unique gifts to serve and the hard work he does for the church.

Shower him with the congregation's handwritten letters or cards of appreciation — notes of gratitude he can read again and again during those times he needs encouragement. Also schedule a time to express special gratitude to his family. Invite his entire family to attend and present his wife with flowers, cards and special tokens of appreciation, including gifts of service.

3. Ask deacons and other appropriate church leaders or committees to review your pastor's salary package and benefits (medical insurance, retirement benefits, housing, etc.). Address and update financial issues that have become inadequate or obsolete.

4. If financially possible, arrange to send your pastor and family on an international missions trip and/or a much-needed vacation. Be generous in giving him time away from constant and heavy church responsibilities.

As an individual church member/family:

5. Thank your pastor (either verbally or with a handwritten note) for his love, concern and care for you, your family

and the congregation. Your purposeful expression of gratitude will encourage him personally and in his ministry. By participating in their own note-writing/drawing, your children will learn to appreciate the sacrifice and hard work of church leaders.

6. Commit (or recommit) yourself to your pastor, to support him, his family, the church staff and the congregation with your prayers. Make him aware of your renewed prayerful commitment. Ask him regularly how you can better pray for him.

7. Show your love for your pastor and his family by giving them occasional gift cards to favorite stores and restaurants, and by including them (cost-free) in your own family recreational outings and vacations.

8. Volunteer to help your pastor accomplish various important tasks in the church. Give him the gift of hands-on help with the numerous details of ministry.

9. Encourage and respect your pastor's times of needed solitude, especially

those hours he sets aside for his personal prayer, Bible study and spiritual growth. Be mindful of what expectations you place on his time and energy and be willing to serve beside him when he needs assistance.

10. Make a sincere effort to personally get to know and befriend your pastor. Invite him to lunch or dinner, seek to encourage his family and show interest and support for his ministry dreams. Gain a better understanding of and appreciation for your pastor — as a church leader, a pastoral shepherd, a husband and father, and as a human being. In doing so, you and your family will become better equipped to minister to him as he responds to God's call and ministers to your congregation, community and world in the name of Jesus Christ.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Denise George (www.denisegorge.org) is the author of 30 books, including "What Pastors Wish Church Members Knew" (Zondervan). She is married to Timothy George, founding dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham. ¶

Ministry Tips

STAY ACTIVE WITH OTHER PASTORS

By Pastor Greg Hyche
Ladonia Baptist Church, Phenix City

The role of a pastor is filled with many eternal rewards and earthly joys. There is no greater joy as a pastor than to lead someone to Christ and to disciple them in the faith.

However, as much as ministry is encouraging, it also can be very emotionally draining.

Associational events

One way to encourage other pastors as they serve is to attend associational and Alabama Baptist State Board of Mis-

sions (SBOM) events and trainings.

A pastor needs ongoing fellowship and training in order to remain effective in ministry.

We need the strength of other pastors and those that have gone before us to sharpen our ministry skills.

Associational leaders and SBOM pro-

vide leadership and educational benefits that can better equip us to be relevant.

The benefits of our attendance and participation on difficult days in ministry may be the only encouragement we have. Be active and pursue connections. ¶



Across ALABAMA'S Associations

To submit news items, email news@thealabamabaptist.org or call 205-870-4720, ext. 112, at least three weeks prior to the event.

BESSEMER

► **Southeast Church, Bessemer**, will host Scrap Iron Quartet and The Campbells in concert Oct. 7 during Southeast Gospel Singing. Doors will open at 6 p.m. for food and fellowship. Door prizes will be offered. A love offering will be taken. Scott Bush is pastor.

BETHLEHEM

► **Bethlehem Association** will celebrate its 200th anniversary Oct. 16 in conjunction with the annual associational meeting at First Church, Monroeville. Church booths will be on display from 2 to 3 p.m. Rick Lance, Rick Barnhart and Lonette Berg, as well as former directors of missions and associational staff, will be in attendance. Former Director of Missions Ladell Blanton will speak. Micah Gandy is pastor. John Marks is director of missions.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Brookwood Church, Mountain Brook**, will hold "Spiritual Resilience" on Oct. 21, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m. as part of Pastoral Care Week. Paul Johnson and Danika Hickman will speak.

Shelby Baptist Medical Center chaplain David Peacock will perform special music. Breakfast and lunch will be provided. For more information call St. Vincent's Hospital chaplain Kim Crawford at 205-939-7699. Jim Barnette is pastor.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Missionary Church, Holly Pond**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 16, 10:30 a.m. The Fishermen from Albertville will perform special music. Lunch will be served following the service. There will not be Sunday School or an evening service. For more information call 256-796-5986 or 256-590-4468. Randy Burtram is pastor.

COFFEE

► **Whitewater Church, Elba**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 9, 10:30 a.m. Fred Mallory will perform special music. Lunch will follow the service. Richard Collier is pastor.

CONECUH

► **Brooklyn Church, Evergreen**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 9, 10:30 a.m. Former pastor Bryan Abel will speak. Neal Craft will perform special

music. Lunch will follow the services. Jack Williamson is pastor.

COLUMBIA

► **Kinsey Church** will celebrate its 125th anniversary Oct. 16. Alan Furr will lead worship. David Starling will speak. Lunch will follow the service. Brad Hardy is pastor.

ETOWAH

► **Nathan Edwards** is the new minister of music at **First Church, Gadsden**. He previously served at Second Church, Memphis, Tennessee, and Shades Crest Church, Hoover. He holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham. He and his wife, Corri, have two children. Mat Alexander is pastor.

SELMA

► **Micah Loggins** is the new worship pastor for **Elkdale Church, Selma**. He previously served as worship



LOGGINS

pastor at First Church, Fairdale, Kentucky. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and a master's degree from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He and his wife, Rachel, have two children. Cory Horton is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

► **Cedar Grove Church, Leeds**, will hold the FAITH Riders Motorcycle Ministry Grand Finale Bike Rally on Oct. 7, 6 p.m. There will be food, gospel singing and great fellowship. For more information call director Ronny Burleson at 205-229-2136 or the church office at 205-699-8446. Billy Abrams is pastor. ► **Zack Davis and his wife, Stormy**, are the new youth directors for **Reeves Grove Church, Ashville**. Johnny Kuykendall is pastor. ► **Aaron Cook** is the new pastor of **Providence Church, Ragland**. He is married to Jessica.

WASHINGTON

► **Wagarville Church** will celebrate homecoming and its 69th anniversary Oct. 16, 10:30 a.m. Pastor Josh Purvis will speak. The Chestangs will perform special music. Lunch will follow the service. ☼

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Ken Knight



*First Baptist Church, Pell City
St. Clair Baptist Association*

FAVORITE VERSE: John 3:16

FAVORITE HYMN: "How Great Thou Art"

HOBBIES: Being busy in ministry or work every day all day long

KNIGHT

FAMILY STATUS: Married to Kay; married 48 years to Evey until her death in 2008; sons, Dale, Ken Jr. and Jeffrey; daughters, Debbie, Stacey, Kimberly and Amanda; six grandchildren, one deceased; five great-grandchildren

In the 33 years Ken Knight has worked for Waffle House, he has helped build 50 of them and remodel 400. But what has greatly defined his life is being part of 37 missions trips in 14 countries in 14 years and seeing more than 10,000 people receive Jesus Christ as their Savior. Knight, 72, of Pell City, is always on mission. "It's a way of life," said the Navy veteran. "That's what I do." He works with several local ministries and serves as a trustee for Tom Cox World Ministries, a missions advisory committee member and as a deacon and disaster relief chaplain. He also supports some children in Uganda and India.

Q: What influences in your life pointed you to Christ at the beginning of your faith journey?

A: We always went to church and Sunday School. When I was almost 15, my dad helped someone who had been witnessing to him to wire a church. When (my dad) got saved, the whole family got saved. When I was 15, I met Evey at a youth rally and she kept me straight the rest of my life. On our 38th anniversary, Evey and I spent three months helping remodel that church.

Q: When and how were you led into your ministry work?

A: It all started with an article in *The Alabama Baptist* about Camp Carabobo in Venezuela. I started with (the local) Love

Your Neighbor Ministries after hearing a CNN report that 65,000 people in the U.S. did not know where their next meal would come from.

Q: What does your ministry work demand?

A: Deacons meetings every month, trips to Arkansas to help plan missions for Tom Cox World Ministries, meeting needs locally through Love Your Neighbor Ministries.

Q: What do you get from your ministry work?

A: I get to watch God work. It's amazing to see how you can go out and put in a bathtub for somebody or fix a leak in their roof and tell them about Jesus Christ and see it change their life. When you watch the Spirit working, it's just an amazing thing. It keeps me excited.

Q: How do you see yourself involved in this in the future?

A: I plan to go [to India] every year. I plan to keep on keeping on.

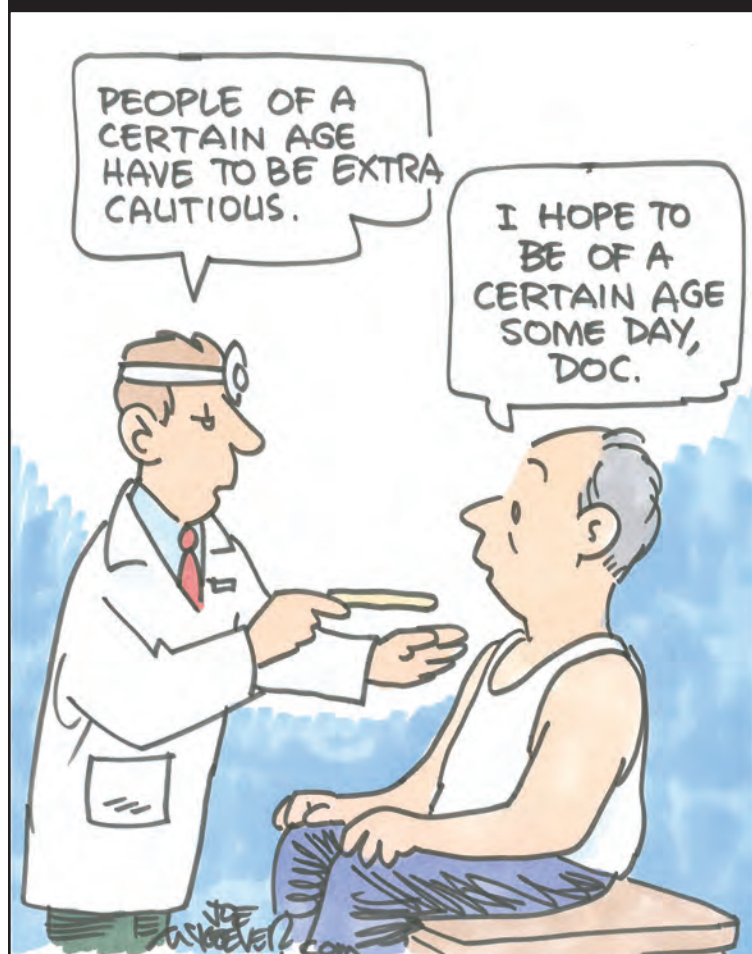
Q: What difference will this ministry work make for you in the future?

A: It keeps me excited. It keeps me alive, I think. I see so many people younger than me who think when their job is over, their life is over. This gives me purpose. It is more exciting than anything else I can imagine doing.

Q: What difference has Jesus Christ made in your life?

A: All the difference there is. Totally. Absolutely. Everything. I wouldn't know any other way to live. ☼

REFLECTIONS



If you know of a person who should be featured as "Someone You Should Know," send his or her name, a contact number and the reason you think he or she should be featured to: Someone You Should Know, c/o The Alabama Baptist, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209 or news@thealabamabaptist.org.

Alabama Baptist Convention **State Board of Missions**Focus
on

ONE MISSION

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

*news and features about missions and ministries from the Alabama Baptist
State Board of Missions | (800) 264-1224 | alsbom.org*

THE MINISTRY OF APPRECIATION

"Pastor, I just want you to know that I love and appreciate you." This elderly lady was smiling as she made this declaration.

She was holding a favorite dessert dish as she expressed this statement. "I hope you like chocolate pie," she said. I told her that I like almost anything chocolate.

Was her chocolate pie the best I have ever

eaten? Truthfully, no, it wasn't. But the fact that the pie was a gift from a grateful heart made it very tasty indeed.

This little lady was one of the many "ministers of appreciation" who have crossed my path. Like all pastors, I needed to hear those affirming words of appreciation from time to time.

October is Minister Appreciation Month. This will be the ideal occasion for you to practice the ministry of appreciation with the ministers at your

By Rick Lance
State Missionary

church. Take time to write an encouraging note or provide

some tangible gift for them as individuals. This will help them in more ways than you ever know.

The writer of Hebrews declares, "Remember your leaders, who spoke the Word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (Hebrews 13:7, NIV). Remember to appreciate your ministers as they labor for Christ. It may make them better at what God called them to do.

For ideas on how to celebrate Minister Appreciation Month, please contact Ministry Assistant



Linda Hicks at lhicks@alsbom.org or **1-800-264-1225, ext. 263**.

Book reviews and other writings by State Missionary Rick Lance may be found on his blog at RickLance.com

Connect with Rick Lance online by visiting [facebook.com/rlance](https://www.facebook.com/rlance) or twitter.com/ricklance.

John 17:18, 20:21

COOPERATIVE

October is Cooperative Program Month

For ideas to help you celebrate the Cooperative Program in your church, visit CooperativeProgramResources.org.

M



ISLAM:

Monday, November 7, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Baptist Building, 2001 E. South Blvd., Montgomery

Islam is often reported to be the fastest growing religion in the world. Its impact is being felt in every corner of America. Paul and Harriet Lawrence, who spent 30 years living and working in the Middle East, will share basic information about Islam and how we as Christians can respond. Topics included are: the historical roots and spiritual foundation of Islam, common misunderstandings that Muslims have about Christianity and how to respond, the Islamic world in the 21st century, basics of Islamic culture, and questions that Americans frequently ask about Islam.

Cost: \$10 per person (includes lunch)

Registration: Register before November 3 by contacting Ministry Assistant Barbara Hope, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 238, or (334) 613-2238, bhope@alsbom.org, or register online at A18C.org/Islam.

For other information, please call State Missionary Scotty Goldman at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 387, or (334) 613-2387, sgoldman@alsbom.org.

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

NORTH ALABAMA CHURCH LIBRARY CONFERENCE

November 5, 2016

Central Baptist Church
2801 Hwy 31 S., Decatur

READ. WHITE & BLUE

This is the 16th annual training event for North Alabama librarians and others who wish to attend. There is no cost to attend, but registration is necessary. Conferences will cover all areas of library work plus church history, card making for ministry, and training in both Concourse and Atrium. Lunch will be provided at which time an author will be guest speaker.

REGISTRATION BEGINS at 8 a.m., followed by general session at 8:25 a.m. and conclusion by 3:30 p.m. There will be a book swap and lots of free items.

ONLINE INFO: alsbom.org/churchlibrary

TO REGISTER OR FOR OTHER INFORMATION, please contact Eva Nell Hunter at (church) (256) 353-5912, (cell) (256) 303-7739, eva_hunter@att.net or library@cbcdecatur.org.

WHY I BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM IS A MIGHTY TOOL USED BY GOD TO EMPOWER THE WITNESS OF BAPTISTS IN ALABAMA AND AROUND THE WORLD.

The CP provides the opportunity for even the smallest church to be a part of fulfilling the Great Commission of our Lord. I have been on mission in Romania for many years and have met IMB missionaries who receive resources provided through our CP giving. I have also met missionaries in Romania that



were not Southern Baptist, who had to leave the field and come back to the states each year to raise their support. I am thankful to be part of a church and state convention that gives generously through the Cooperative Program, so the Gospel can be taken to the whole world!

— **Ron Horton**, pastor, New Prospect Baptist Church, Haleyville



HORTON

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONEPROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANYMINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

Alabama Church Planting Basics, Thursday-Saturday, October 27-29, 2016, at Colbert-Lauderdale Association Office, 3901 Hatch Blvd., Sheffield: The "nuts and bolts" or ABCs of what it takes to plant a church from the planter and the core group/leadership/launch team's perspective.

CHURCH PLANTER ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

We encourage every planter to attend and bring as many of his team as possible. When the participants walk away, they will have in hand the structure on which to hang their vision, values, focus group, strategy, etc.

This training has proven to be helpful to established church pastors as well. Sessions will begin at noon Thursday and conclude at 4:30 p.m. Saturday. The cost for the three-day training is \$25 (\$100 for non-Alabama Baptist churches). Registration is required.

Alabama Church Planter Network Dinner, Sunday, November 13, 2016, Eastern Hills Baptist Church, 3604 Pleasant Ridge Rd., Montgomery:

By Lamar Duke
State Missionary



LAST CALL

Church planters and wives or anyone interested in church planting are invited to this event. Speaker Jeff Christopherson has a passion to see a Kingdom-centered church planting movement happen in North America. He has seen firsthand what can happen when a church gives itself away through rapid multiplication. Jeff serves as vice president of the North American Mission Board for the Send Network. He is author of *Kingdom Matrix: Designing a Church for the Kingdom of God* and *Kingdom First: Starting Churches That Shape Movements*. Jeff and his wife, Laura, live in Alpharetta, Ga., and have two children.

The first 200 planters/pastors who register will receive a copy of *Kingdom First*, Jeff's latest book.



Jeff Christopherson

Full schedule as follows: 4:30 p.m., registration and fellowship time; 6 p.m., dinner; 6:30 p.m., worship led by Ingrid Brown; 6:45 p.m., inspirational message by Jeff Christopherson; 7:15 p.m., wives session, Susan Lovett, and planters session, Jeff Christopherson; 8:30 p.m., adjourn and pick up children.

The cost is \$25 per couple or \$15 per person.

To register or for more information about these events, please visit plantalabama.org/events.

Church planting is supported by Alabama Baptists' generous gifts through the Cooperative Program and to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering.

For more information about church planting among Alabama Baptists, please contact State Missionary Lamar Duke, lead church planting strategist, at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 332, or (334) 613-2332, lduke@alsbom.org.

SENT HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE

2016 **Alabama Baptist State Convention**
Annual Meeting

November 15-16 at Eastmont Baptist Church,
4505 Atlanta Highway, Montgomery, AL 36109



MUSIC
Three on a String

TUESDAY EVENING

SPEAKER

Robert Smith

*professor of Christian preaching,
Beeson Divinity School*



CONVENTION SERMON



Greg Corbin
*pastor, Lakeside
Baptist Church,
Birmingham
Wednesday morning*

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS **Travis Coleman, Jr.**

*president, Alabama Baptist State Convention,
pastor, First Baptist Church, Prattville
Tuesday morning*



THEME INTERPRETATIONS

Kevin Blackwell (*with testimonies by Daniel Atkins, Jennifer Foster, Terrence Jones and Blake Newsome*) and **Ryan Whitley** (*with testimonies by Gary Buchanan, Orlando Buck, Charles Carter and Blake Kersey*)

HOTEL GUIDE The following hotels have offered special rates to those attending the State Convention Annual Meeting. Remember to ask for the Alabama Baptist State Convention rate when you call. Rates listed do not include taxes. This information is provided as a service and is not intended to be a recommendation of any kind. If you have problems making a reservation or securing the posted rate is at any of these hotels, please contact Charleen Hobbs at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 231, or chobbs@alsbom.org.

HOST HOTEL:

Drury Inn & Suites

1124 Eastern Blvd, 36117 (I-85, exit 6)

334-273-1101

Free hot breakfast (Belgian waffles, scrambled eggs, biscuits & gravy, sausage and more); free hot food and cold beverages daily, 5:30-7 p.m., and soda/popcorn in lobby daily, 3-10 p.m.; free Wi-Fi

☞ **Rate: \$109** (king or 2 queens)

Reservations: 1-800-325-0720 or visit druryhotels.com

☞ **Rate Code:** Group # 2268369

Deadline: Wednesday, October 12, 2016

I-85, exit 1, or I-65, exit 172 (Downtown)

Doubletree by Hilton, Downtown Montgomery

120 Madison Avenue, 36104

334-245-2320

Free parking, breakfast and Wi-Fi

☞ **Rate:** \$109 ☞ **Rate Code:** ABC **Deadline:** October 14, 2016

Hampton Inn, Downtown

100 Commerce Street, 36104

334-265-1010

Free breakfast, parking fee waived ☞ **Rate:** \$109 (king or 2 queens), \$119 (king or 2 queens studio suite) ☞

Rate Code: SMB

☞ **Deadline:** Wednesday, October 26, 2016

For complete information about the convention, including an interactive hotel guide, please visit alsbom.org/convention.

I-85, exit 4

Hilton Garden Inn Montgomery East

1600 Interstate Park Drive, 36109

334-272-2225

Breakfast cooked to order (\$10.95) and free parking ☞

Rate: \$104 ☞ **Rate Code:** ASB

Homewood Suites by Hilton

1800 Interstate Park Drive, 36109

334-272-3010

Full hot breakfast buffet, parking and Wi-Fi, kitchens and sleeper sofas in every suite, pet friendly (fee applies) ☞

Rate: \$109

☞ **Rate code:** ABC

☞ **Deadline:** Tuesday, November 1, 2016

I-85, exit 6 (East Blvd.)

Holiday Inn Express

5135 Carmichael Road, 36106

334-270-9199

Rate: \$99, includes breakfast buffet ☞ **Rate code:**

ASB ☞ **Reservations:** 855-914-1442

I-85, exits 9 and 11 (EastChase)

Hampton Inn & Suites - EastChase

7651 EastChase Parkway, 36117

334-277-1818

Free hot breakfast buffet, parking, Wi-Fi, mini refrigerator and microwave in every room

☞ **Rate:** \$109 (king or 2 queens), \$119 (king studio suite) ☞ **Rate Code:** CHXABC or use ALABAMA STATE BAPTIST CONVENTION

Holiday Inn Express - EastChase

9250 Boyd Cooper Parkway, 36117

334-271-5516

Free hot breakfast, high-speed internet access and self-parking ☞ **Rate:** \$109

☞ **Rate Code:** BSC ☞ **Reservation Link:**

<http://bit.ly/BSCHIE2016>

Deadline: Sunday, October 30, 2016

Staybridge Suites - EastChase

7800 EastChase Parkway, 36117

334-277-9383

Free breakfast buffet (7 days a week), free full dinner (M-TH nights 5:30-7:30 p.m.), parking and Internet

☞ **Rate:** \$119 ☞ **Rate Code:** Ask for Baptist State Convention

I-65, exit 164 (Hope Hull)

Fairfield Inn and Suites Montgomery Airport South

7560 Mobile Highway, 36106

334-281-6882, ext. 702 (Debbie Bozeman)

Breakfast included, free parking and Wi-Fi

☞ **Rate:** \$89 ☞ **Rate Code:** Ask for Baptist State Convention

Hampton Inn, Airport South

60 Wasden Road, 36043

334-280-9592

Free breakfast, Wi-Fi and parking

☞ **Rate:** \$94 ☞ **Rate Code:** Ask for Baptist State Convention



WEEK OF PRAYER

UPDATES ON WEEK OF
PRAYER STORIES

(to read the original
stories, visit
Myers-Mallory.org)

UPDATE:

ALABAMA WMU

Lisa has been thriving at her job for more than a year and enjoys giving back through ministering to others at church. Maggie and Julia are still serving the Lord in their separate churches and investing in the next generation.

DISASTER RELIEF

In August Doug returned to Louisiana twice — both times to Baton Rouge — to assist with flood relief efforts. He served with a Baldwin Association mudout team then a week later with a Baldwin Association feeding team.

CHURCH PLANTING

Essential Church began services in a new location in downtown Huntsville August 7 and now offers two Sunday morning services. They're planning their next outreach event at a food truck rally October 21.

CHURCH REVITALIZATION

Fairview Heights Northside Baptist Church reported a higher total membership last year than any other time in the last decade. They continue their journey toward revitalized church health.

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP MISSIONS

First Baptist Holly Pond is one of more than 100 churches that have adopted one of our 400 missionaries from or connected with Alabama. A team went to visit their partner missionary this summer, and the Lord used them mightily.



Myers-Mallory
State Missions Offering

STATE GOAL: \$750,000

REMEMBER, GIFTS TO
THE MYERS-MALLORY
STATE MISSIONS OFFERING
ARE RECEIVED THROUGHOUT
THE YEAR.



Fall Senior Adult Retreat

October 10-12, 2016, Shocco Springs

If you need a getaway in Alabama, you don't have to travel far to find a beautiful woodland setting to do just that! Fall is a great time to come to Shocco Springs. If your ideal escape from the everyday includes drawing closer to God through Bible study and worship, please consider the *Fall Senior Adult Retreat*.

This is a great occasion to spend time with friends and meet new ones. In addition to gorgeous scenery, good teaching, uplifting music and encouraging worship, there's always fun, food, games and entertainment.

Start planning now.

It all begins with lunch on Monday and ends with lunch on Wednesday.
The cost per person will depend upon choice of lodging.

COST/RESERVATIONS: 1-800-280-1105 or go online to shocco.org

ONLINE INFO: alsbom.org/senioradultretreat

For other information, please contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, emitchell@alsbom.org.

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries



CHRISTMAS BACKPACKS

for Mississippi River Ministry

Share a gift of LOVE and
the GOSPEL with a child in need this CHRISTMAS.

*Mississippi River Ministry works with compassion
ministry sites and church plants in 8 states.*

*Alabama Baptists are challenged to provide at least
5,000 backpacks, bringing the Gospel to many
who have never heard.*



Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions

2016 COLLECTION DATES: OCTOBER 29 - NOVEMBER 5

For more information and collection sites: AlabamaWMU.org/backpacks

800.264.1225 ext. 223 or cakers@alsbom.org

alabama association of baptist secretaries conference

AABS 55th Annual Conference

Sunday – Wednesday, March 5-8, 2017
Shocco Springs

Theme: Blessed to be a Blessing

Scripture: *And I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.*

~**Genesis 12:2b (ESV)**

General Conference Leader:

April Pearson

Worship Leaders: Todd Holcomb & Anthony Lindsey

Website: alabamabaptistsecretaries.com

Facebook page: Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries

Make plans now to join us for a time of spiritual, professional and personal growth through worship, study, fellowship and educational breakout sessions.

For more information, please contact AABS President Sonya Burtis at (256) 796-5346.

STINGLE FOCUS CONFERENCE

Thursday through Saturday,
February 2-4, 2017

Gardendale First Baptist Church

Cost: \$99 per person

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions is partnering with Gardendale First Baptist Church, Table for One Ministries and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary to bring Single Focus Conference to Alabama. This three-day conference is targeted to pastors, ministry leaders and students who are interested in single adult ministry in their local churches.

Phillip Nation, director of content development at LifeWay Christian Resources, will be the main speaker, and there will be several breakout sessions to discuss equipping leaders to reach single adults.

For more information about this event and singles ministries among Alabama Baptists, please contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, emitchell@alsbom.org.



FLASHPOINT

DISCIPLE-MAKING CONFERENCE

LIMITED SEATING REGISTER NOW

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY, BIRMINGHAM

FLASHPOINT Disciple-Making Conference is coming to Wright Center at Samford University, 800 Lakeshore Dr., Birmingham, on Friday and Saturday, **01 • 13-14 • 2017**

FLASHPOINT is a meeting for people who are interested in making disciples Jesus-style! Best practices, tools and resources will be offered by some veteran disciple-makers including Robby Gallaty, senior pastor, Longhollow Baptist Church, Hendersonville, Tenn.; Craig Etheredge, lead pastor, First Baptist Church, Colleyville, Texas; Ken Adams, pastor, Crossroads Church, Newnan, Ga.; and David Fedele, children's pastor, First Baptist Church, Colleyville, Texas. These are just some of the leaders who will be leading sessions at FlashPoint in Birmingham.

"IT TRULY IS MORE THAN JUST A CONFERENCE—IT IS A MOVEMENT OF DISCIPLE MAKING THAT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO TRANSFORM OUR CULTURE."
KEVIN BLACKWELL,
SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

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Illegal gambling allowed to operate in Alabama

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

Electronic bingo machines were ruled “illegal” under state law by the Alabama Supreme Court in March. So why are there still electronic bingo machines in Macon and Lowndes counties?

That is the question of the hour. The VictoryLand-bingo saga has been going on for so many years that some Alabamians don’t even blink when yet another news story surfaces.

For instance most recently Gov. Robert Bentley and Attorney General Luther Strange sent a letter to sheriffs and district attorneys in Macon and Lowndes counties reminding them of their duty

to enforce the state’s gambling laws and set a Sept. 30 deadline for submitting a plan of action.

Bentley and Strange also sent letters to officials in all counties with constitutional amendments related to bingo gambling. While electronic bingo machines were still being operated in Greene County in 2015 (as shown in the above photo), the letter to officials there did not indicate wrongdoing.

The Alabama Baptist could not confirm by press time when or how the gambling operations were shut down in Greene County, if they were.

But district attorneys E. Paul Jones of Macon County and Charlotte Tesmer of Lowndes County as well as Lowndes County Sheriff Big John Williams had responded to the letter at press time, according to Yasamie August, Bentley’s press secretary.

Pass-the-plate basis

Their responses indicate a continuing of what has been a pass-the-plate routine of law enforcement.

Tesmer claimed a conflict of interest prohibited her from pursuing action against electronic bingo operations in Lowndes County. At the same time, Williams said budget constraints are the halting factor

to his taking action, adding that he would fulfill his duty when he receives a court order — which Tesmer says she cannot provide. So in Lowndes County there’s a stalemate.

Birmingham lawyer Eric Johnston said, “The next step would be enforcement from the state level like from the attorney general with the governor giving him support to do what he needs to do,” explaining that

Strange would need to investigate VictoryLand and then Bentley would have to supply the police manpower to support Strange in enforcing the law.

“The state has to close it down,” Johnston said.

Jones’ response echoed Williams’ saying the

money just isn’t there for him to consider raiding VictoryLand.

Jones has been the most outspoken about his role in this situation, saying to multiple news sources his duties “do not include the investigation of crimes,” only “the prosecution of crimes.”

Therefore the investigation of VictoryLand is solely on the shoulders of Macon County Sheriff Andre Brunson, who had not responded at press time.

Jones closed his response to Strange and Bentley by saying, “Under the circumstances, I am curious as to what action the two of you would expect me to take?”

The enforcement of gambling laws has been an issue ever since Bentley took office in January 2011. His first action was to dismantle former Gov. Bob Riley’s Task Force On Illegal Gambling and “fully support” Strange’s authority to lead the fight against illegal gambling. Then Bentley moved the responsibility from Strange to local law enforcement in 2015.

Thus it comes down to district attorneys and sheriffs. But at VictoryLand in Macon County and White Hall and Southern Star casinos in Lowndes County, the laws are not being enforced. 



TAB photo

ESV Bible word changes raise questions; Crossway reverses ‘permanent’ decision

The reportedly fastest-growing Bible translation — the English Standard Version (ESV) — made headlines recently when 52 words were changed.

Debate erupted specifically with a tweak made to the wording in Genesis 3:16. It was changed from: “Your desire shall be *for* your husband, *and* he shall rule over you” to “Your desire shall be *contrary to* your husband, *but* he shall rule over you,” according to *Christianity Today*.

The same words were changed in Genesis 4:7 in reference to sin. Other word changes were more slight in nature and the editing affected 29 verses in all.

When the update was released by the ESV oversight committee in August, Crossway — the Bible’s

publisher — also announced that the 2016 edition of the ESV Bible would be the “permanent text.”

“Beginning in the summer of 2016, the text of the ESV Bible will remain unchanged in all future editions printed and published by Crossway — in much the same way that the King James Version (KJV) has remained unchanged ever since the final KJV text was established almost 250 years ago (in 1769),” Crossway announced, according to Baptist News Global.

‘A mistake’

While not commenting on the questions about the Genesis word change, Crossway has since reversed its “no changes” decision.

Lane T. Dennis, president and CEO of Crossway, said, “We desired for there to be a stable and

standard text that would serve the reading, memorizing, preaching and liturgical needs of Christians worldwide from one generation to another.

“We have become convinced that this decision was a mistake,” he said. “We apologize ... and we want to explain what we now believe to be the way forward. Our desire above all is to do what is right before the Lord.”

Most reports indicate the ESV is the third most popular Bible translation in the United States. The KJV continues to hold the top spot and the New International Version ranks second.

The ESV was first printed in 2001. Two professors at Samford University’s Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham are part of the oversight committee. (TAB)

Alabama Baptist schools named in *WSJ* ranking

Samford University in Birmingham is the top-ranked university in Alabama, according to new rankings released Sept. 28 by *The Wall Street Journal* and Times Higher Education.

Samford is ranked No. 218 out of the 1,061 U.S. universities and colleges that appear in the new student outcome and teaching-focused rankings. And the University of Mobile also was listed, but not individually ranked.

The ranking is based on 15 factors across four categories: 40 percent of each school’s overall score comes from student outcomes, including how they fare after leaving campus; 30 percent from the school’s resources; 20 percent from how well it engages its students; and 10 percent from the learning environment.

Samford scored highest in student engagement, based on those survey results.

“Rankings are just one measure of a university’s effectiveness and reputation, but it is especially rewarding to be so highly ranked in our state and nationally by an organization as prestigious as *The Wall Street Journal*,” said Samford President Andrew Westmoreland.

Times Higher Education is a global higher education data and analysis business with headquarters in London. (Samford)

Interested in learning a few tricks for shooting video footage? See page 18’s AR information or TAB’s digital edition to watch the instructional video above provided by Land Tech Video.

Graphic by Kevin Criswell

'Sorrow and Triumph'

International Days of Prayer for Persecuted Church marks 20 years

The International Days of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP) was started because there was "a great need of prayer for the increasing persecution being suffered at the time by our brothers and sisters in Christ," according to idop.org.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of IDOP and Alabama Baptists have another opportunity to pray for believers around the world through IDOP on Nov. 6 and 13 with the theme "Sorrow and Triumph."

According to some sources,

persecution is something more than 100 million Christians face daily. IDOP serves as a platform to "highlight their stories and advocate against the plight."

Godfrey Yogarajah, executive director of the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission, said on idop.

org, "We believe that God uses the prayers of His people to strengthen and deliver suffering saints. Based on Scripture, we also are convinced that though sorrow may be the present reality for those suffering for Christ, tri-

umph is their ultimate reward."

According to *Christianity Today*, believers across the world face worship restrictions, public humiliation and social isolation, facing violence and sometimes death.

100 million Christians

The Alabama Baptist frequently features stories of Christians enduring persecution in the name of Christ in the Persecuted Church column.

According to the 2016 World Watch List (countries where it is most dangerous and difficult to be a Christian), the 10 most dangerous places include North Korea, Iraq, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Iran and Libya. Yemen, Egypt, Myanmar, Kenya, Turkey, Indonesia and Jordan also made the list.

To participate in IDOP, visit idop.org for church resources, videos and articles about the persecuted Church. (TAB)



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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Immanuel Baptist Church in Lawrenceburg, TN, is accepting resumes for a full-time pastor. The candidate selected will have 5 years senior pastor experience, seminary training, expository preaching style and be able to attract and appeal to all age groups. We currently have an elderly congregation and no other ministerial staff. We have underused, debt-free, excellent facilities and a good location. Candidates with the above qualifications can email resumes to immanuel38464@bellsouth.net. Our website is myimmanuel.net. Please include current sermons on websites or send DVDs to the church office, Attn: search committee.

BIVOCATIONAL/FULL-TIME PASTOR

Providence Baptist Church, Rockford, Alabama, is searching for a pastor. Please send resumes to John Harris at 8973 US-HWY 231, Rockford, AL 35136 or email at laurah2465@charter.net.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Johntown Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a bivocational

pastor. Send resume to: Pastor Search Committee, Johntown Baptist Church, 5201 Vance Rd, West Blocton, AL 35184.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Bayside Baptist Church in Lillian, AL, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resume to: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 533, Lillian, AL 36549 or tbobharris@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC

Ashby Baptist Church in Brierfield, AL, is seeking a bivocational minister of music. Please send resume to: smljope@gmail.com. For more information, call 205-603-3114.

PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER

Central Baptist Church, Wetumpka, AL, is seeking a part-time, Sundays, music minister to lead choir, rehearse and plan music ministry. Presently Sundays only, \$12,000. Contact Pastor Gary Merkel, 239-233-0341, chatwithpastorg@gmail.com.

PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER

Maytown Baptist Church is searching for a part-time youth minister. Please send resumes to

gboyd@maytownbaptist.org.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF YOUTH

Fairview Baptist Church is receiving applications for a part-time minister of youth. Resumes and inquiries may be sent to: 600 River Road, Valley, AL 36854 or to fairviewbaptistch@gmail.com.

YOUTH/CHILDREN'S MINISTER

Southside Baptist Church, Princeton, KY, is accepting resumes for a full-time youth/children's minister. Bachelor's degree, seminary training and experience is preferred. Email: youth-searchteam@southsidebaptist.com or mail: Southside Baptist Attn: Youth Search, P.O. Box 684, Princeton, KY 42445.

TWO POSITIONS

Calvary Heights Baptist Church, Alexander City, AL, is receiving applicants for a part-time, bivocational minister of youth and bivocational music director. Resumes and inquiries may be sent to: CalvaryHeightsBaptist@gmail.com.

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- 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.

TAB
AR

Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The Person of Christ

Self-giving and Serving

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

Christ took self-giving to its ultimate expression when He gave Himself as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Both in His life and in His death, Christ coupled service to others with His own self-giving. He declared: "Even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Galatians 1:4 puts His self-giving simply: He "gave Himself for our sins."

Must be personal

The apostle Paul made this truth personal, referring to Christ as the Son of God, "who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). For each of us as for the apostle, the truth of Christ's self-giving on the cross must not be simply part of our theological confession about the doctrine of Christ but must be made personal. We must personally be able to confess by faith, "He gave Himself for me."

What is true in an individual sense also is true in the corporate sense, as expressed in Ephesians 5:25, "Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for her." Our presence as individual Christians and the presence of our church can be traced back to our self-giving Savior on a Roman cross.

Christ's self-giving ultimately demonstrated at the cross was foreshadowed throughout His life by His servant attitude. Isaiah 53 anticipated One who would come as a Servant, not as an ordinary servant but as a Suffering Servant. Philippians 2:7 looks back on the Servant who came as One who "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant and coming in the likeness of men."

'He who serves'

On an occasion when His disciples were arguing about who among them should be considered the greatest, Christ declared, "He who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves." He then followed with the declara-

tion, "I am among you as the One who serves" (Luke 22:26-27).

Later He demonstrated in action what He declared with words when at the Last Supper He laid aside His robe, took a basin of water and washed the feet of the disciples, a courtesy normally performed by a household servant. Possessing the very heart of a servant, Christ characteristically saw to the needs of others. He gave others His time and His energy, as well as His love and compassion before ultimately giving His life as the ransom for the world's sins.

While living out to perfection the ideal of service and self-giving, Christ left us an example to be followed. He put it this way on the occasion of sending out His disciples, "A disciple is not above his teacher nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master" (Matt. 10:24-25). The attitude of songwriter Charles H. Gabriel befits all of us who would be followers of Christ when he wrote, "More like the Master I would ever be."

Marked contrast

Self-giving is a quality of living that stands in marked contrast to the all too common attitude of self-serving that manifests itself in today's world. Christ's entire earthly life was a rebuke to human self-centeredness. His life on earth was lived out under the principle of others-centeredness, declaring as His guiding principle, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Matt. 20:28). ✠

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.



Youth Choir Festival 2016 hosts 'largest gathering of choir members'

By Doug Rogers
Special to The Alabama Baptist

More than 700 middle and high school students from 17 churches representing 11 associations participated in the annual Youth Choir Festival held Sept. 25 at First Baptist Church, Montgomery.

According to Keith Hibbs, director of the office of worship leadership and church music for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), it was the "largest gathering of student choir members in the state convention's history."

The time of worship featured four anthems from the combined choirs, one ensemble performance and a focus on youth choirs serving in missions. Students also led in Scripture reading and prayer.

The event was coordinated by Ed Cleveland, associate minister of music at First, Montgomery, and sponsored by SBOM. ✠



Photos by Doug Rogers

West End Baptist dedicates new sanctuary



Photo by Brandon Sumrall

West End Baptist Church, Clanton, recently dedicated its new sanctuary and celebrated its 67th anniversary and homecoming Sept. 25. Original pews from the first sanctuary, built in 1954, were refinished and used in the balcony. Interim pastor Mike Shaw spoke during the celebration service and a plaque, constructed from pieces of mahogany from some of the original pews by member Sam Hayes, was presented to the church.

Senior adult church ministries will look different, according to leaders

(continued from page 1)

The same is true of handrails, ramps and well-maintained sidewalks, Mitchell said.

"Senior adults may have mobility issues, but so do those who have knee surgery, hip replacement or other injuries," she said. "We can't just assume that everyone who needs to get to the platform or into our buildings will always be healthy enough to get from point A to point B."

Another simple accommodation is to move Sunday School classes for seniors closer to the sanctuary, with parking close by as well. Mitchell also recommends that churches utilize greeters to help older adults navigate sidewalks, steps or uneven ground while carrying their Bibles, handbags and other items.

"Even a person in relatively good health sometimes needs a hand," Mitchell said. "It's great to have youth on the greeter team too because it allows multiple generations to get to know one another."

Facility accommodations are just part of creating an environment that addresses the needs of older adults, however. Ministries to seniors have the opportunity to engage an older population with programs that provide spiritual, educational, social and service enrichment.

First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, in Calhoun Baptist Association, has an active senior adult ministry that meets several times a month. Each program is different in order to meet different needs and interests, said Eloise Crossley, who coordinates the Keenagers ministry with her husband, Bob.

Once a month the group meets for lunch and a program. A book club also meets monthly. Weekly game days, local missions, retreats and leisure trips happen throughout the year. Not everyone participates in everything, but the variety of programs gives everyone an opportunity to be involved, Eloise Crossley said.

Active minds, bodies

"The main thing is to help senior adults stay connected to their church," she said. "We love them and want to meet their needs beyond worship and life groups by helping them keep their minds active and their bodies active."

That's not to say every senior adult ministry looks the same, since even the term "senior" may bring different images to mind. While 55 may be considered the young end of the generation, most 55-year-olds are still working.

PROGRAM IDEAS for senior adults

- ▶ Course in retirement planning
- ▶ Hands-on home maintenance instruction
- ▶ Study of governmental programs available to seniors
- ▶ Driver's safety course
- ▶ Classes on estate planning, wills and protective services
- ▶ Nutrition and cooking classes
- ▶ Retreat for the newly widowed
- ▶ Game parties or tournaments
- ▶ Mentoring young adults in family budget planning
- ▶ Teaching teens basic sewing skills (buttons, hems, etc.)

Source: Carrie Brown McWhorter

Some still have children at home. Others are caring for their parents.

At First, Jacksonville, the "Fabulous 50ish" group concentrates on those who are not yet ready to be "seniors" but are seeking social relationships and missions opportunities with church friends outside of Sunday programs.

That kind of social contact is an important element of ministry to older adults as they transition from their work and child-rearing years to being empty nesters and then retirees, Mitchell said. Pastors do well to not only remember the contributions senior adults have made but to realize they still have contributions to make in the life of the church.

"I try to remind every pastor I meet to get to know their senior adults," she said. "If you spend

time with them, they will become your biggest cheerleaders. Take a bus trip with them. Visit with them. Connection goes a long way in building ministry."

In a world that often values youth, senior adult ministry is an opportunity to show the world

what it means to value people of all ages, according to Amy Hanson, author of "Baby Boomers and Beyond: Tapping the Ministry Talents and Passions of Adults Over 50."

"The church has a moment in

time, right now, to create a new paradigm for aging. A biblical, God-honoring view of aging," Hanson writes. "We can communicate that God has a purpose and a specific role for everyone to play, regardless of age."

**"The main thing is
to help senior adults
stay connected to
their church."**

**Eloise Crossley
Keenagers ministry
FBC Jacksonville**



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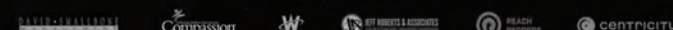
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Robert Wayne Vickery

High Hope Baptist assistant pastor dies

Robert Wayne Vickery, assistant pastor and worship leader for High Hope Baptist Church, Auburn, died Sept. 7. He was 71.

Vickery served in the Alabama National Guard for more than 20 years.

He also sang in the Crossroads Quartet for more than 20 years and used his love of music to lead churches in worship. He served as minister of music and youth at Center Baptist Church, LaFayette, and worship leader at Cowboy Church of Lee County, Waverly.

He was active in missions throughout Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association and was a part of the Master Builders Carpenter Team, disaster relief team and Eight Days of Hope, a nonprofit disaster recovery organization.

Vickery most recently served as a blue hat Tuskegee Lee Disaster Relief team leader in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Brenda. He is survived by two children, five grandchildren and one great-grandchild. (TAB)



VICKERY

Students across Alabama 'cry out' in prayer during annual SYATP

Parents and students wake up a little earlier to gather around the flagpole of Snow Rogers Elementary School in Gardendale and pray during See You at the Pole on Sept. 28. This year's theme was 'We Cry Out.'



Photo by Linda Harrison



Photo by Wanda Bergeron

Students lead prayers and read Scripture for the second year of See You at the Pole at Riverchase Elementary School in Hoover on Sept. 28. Nearly 80 children and parents gathered for the event.

Pastor Sunil Jessy (second from left), of First Assembly of God, Muscle Shoals, shares about the power of prayer in his life and encourages the more than 90 Muscle Shoals High School students and parents to take advantage of their freedom to assemble, something he says is not allowed in some countries.

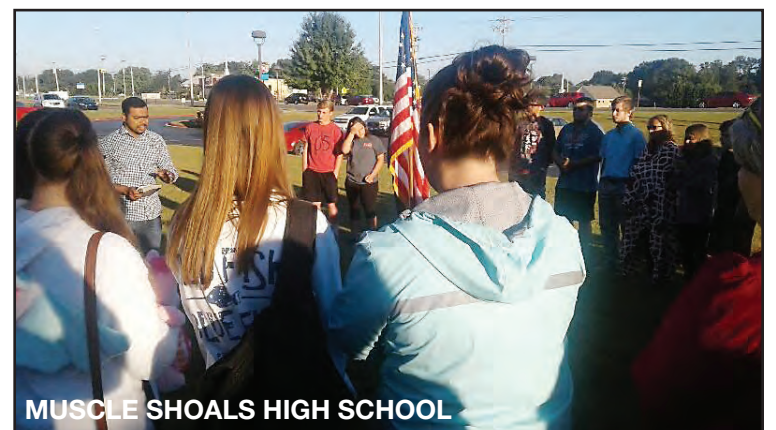


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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 9

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

ALWAYS READY
1 Peter 3:13–22

Ready to Defend (13–17)

Jesus followers are to endure hardship, knowing they will receive a future reward. Christ suffered at His death but was raised from the dead and has triumphed over all demonic powers. Christians are urged to give themselves wholly to God, being willing to suffer and do what is right. The expectation of the end times should motivate Jesus followers to live in a way that pleases God and works to advance His kingdom.

Peter's question in verse 13 is easily answered. A lot of people can hurt you if you live for Christ. All throughout biblical and Church history, believers have been persecuted for following Christ faithfully. You can check out persecution.com and read about Christians currently facing persecution. Although many people can criticize, attack and persecute Christians today, no one will be able to harm Jesus followers on the day of judgment. On that day, God will reward them for their faithfulness.

Even in the midst of suffering, Jesus followers have hope. And we need to be ready to give people a reason for the hope that is within us. In order to do this, we must know what we believe and why we believe it. Apologetics is knowing what you believe, why you believe it and being able to explain it to others.

Can you explain the basic truths of Christianity? What do you believe? Why do you believe it? "Well, my pastor said it." That answer is not sufficient. Every believer needs to know what he or she believes and be able to unpack those precious truths to others with gentleness and respect. If Christians keep a good conscience, any accusations against them will prove groundless and their accusers will be put to shame.

ers to suffer for doing good. Jesus followers have met Someone worth losing everything for (Matt. 13:44). We must always remember that God's will may not be the safest place, but it's always the best place.

Point to Christ's Work (18–20a)

Substitutionary atonement is clearly emphasized as Jesus, the Righteous One, suffered and died in place of the unrighteous in order to bring us to God. Hallelujah, what a Savior. Believers should not become intimidated in suffering but continue to honor Christ as Lord because the suffering of Christ also was the means by which He was exalted. Just as suffering was the pathway to exaltation for Christ, so also suffering is the prelude to glory for believers. The emphasis on Christ's victory reminds Jesus followers that the troubles of the present time are temporary and that victory is sure because Christ has triumphed over evil powers.

Christ was put to death in His body but He was made alive by the Holy Spirit. Verses 19–20 have numerous interpretations. The majority view is that the text describes Christ's proclamation of victory and judgment over the demonic spirits after His death and resurrection. The point of the verses is not that Christ descended into hell, but that He is victorious over evil powers.

Display Your Faith (20b–22)

A comparison is made between salvation in the ark and baptism. The outward act of baptism does not save, for Peter writes: “not as removal of dirt from the body,” meaning that the passing of water over the body does not cleanse anyone. Baptism saves you because it represents inward faith grounded in the death and resurrection of Jesus, as evidenced by one’s appeal to God for the forgiveness of one’s sins. Baptism is a visual representation of the fact that Christians are clothed with Christ, in union with Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. ✠

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

ONE GREAT TASK

2 Timothy 2:1–10

For those of us who consider ourselves history buffs, there is something special about traveling to an old city like Boston. Walking the Freedom Trail and seeing sights that date back to the 1700s and even 1600s is a special treat. It is interesting to see how our perspective on these “old” sights can change when we take a trip across the pond. In a place like London, buildings from the 1700s are a dime a dozen. What truly astounds are the castles and towers that date back centuries earlier, to a time nearly a millennium ago. And yet these monuments from a thousand years ago seem positively modern compared to those you find when you visit the land of the Bible. Run your hand along a wall in the Holy Land, and you are as likely as not to touch stones hewn by a workman two, three, even four thousand years ago. You can pass through arches built by Crusaders, sing in churches founded by Constantine, walk through a tunnel built by King Hezekiah, see a city gate from before the time of Abraham.

What is fascinating about these sights (and others) is they belong to traditions that remain living and vibrant even after all these many centuries. Although Constantine has been dead for nearly 1,700 years, the worship of God continues day after day after day in many of the churches he founded. How can it be that these churches have managed to survive all these years? In a word: "tradition." Whatever doctrinal disagreements we might have with them, the Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Copts, Armenians and Ethiopians who inhabit these churches have shown an extraordinary commitment to passing along the traditions they received from those who went before them.

**Share the message of Christ
with others. (1-2)**

Tradition is a term that has often gotten a bad rap in Protestant circles. Rightly concerned that tradition not take precedence over Scripture, some have tried to reject the idea of tradition altogether. This is an attempt that appears to run contrary to the Bible itself, though. The apostle Paul himself insisted on the importance of tradition in his second letter to his disciple, Timothy. He urged Timothy, “The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (v. 2). Paul told Timothy the message of Jesus. Timothy was then to tell reliable people who were then to tell others. Paul was commanding Timothy to be a link in the chain of tradition that would pass the message of Jesus from one generation to the next.

Persevere in sharing the message of Christ. (3–7)

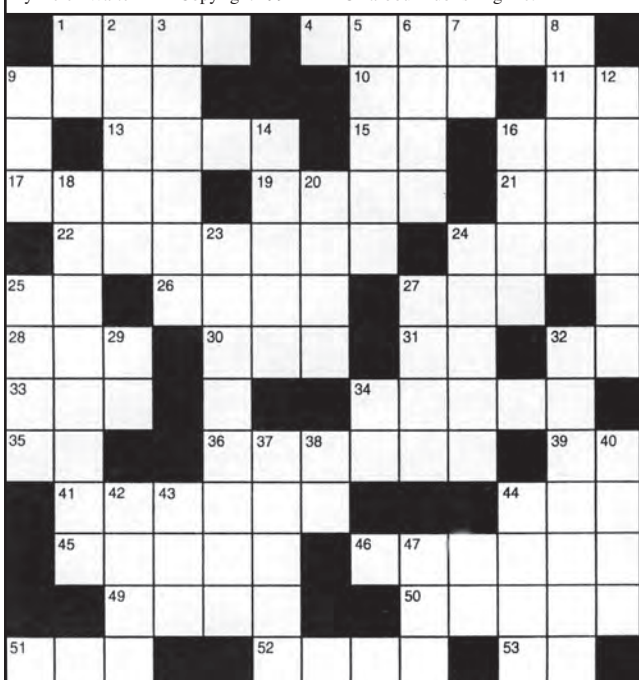
Paul knew sharing the message of Jesus would come at a cost. To proclaim the risen Jesus would bring opposition, and that opposition would sooner or later turn into persecution. Paul does not tell Timothy to try to avoid this persecution. On the contrary, he urges him to follow his own example and join him in suffering for Jesus. Like a soldier who leaves behind civilian affairs or an athlete who foregoes distractions, Paul tells Timothy to press on in sharing about Jesus.

Keep your focus on the message of Christ. (8–10)

Paul was convinced in his heart of hearts that the message of Jesus Christ, “raised from the dead, descended from David,” was the answer to all the longings of the human heart. He urges his disciple Timothy to endure whatever was necessary to make sure that message, that tradition, was passed on to generations yet to come. †

Christian Crossword

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Across

1. Ark builder.
4. The ark rested ... upon the mountains of ____.
(Gen. 8:4)
9. How long ____ ye between two opinions?
(1 Kings 18:21)
10. Creative work.
11. I ____ the Lord thy God.
(Deut. 5:6)
13. A bit of news or information.
15. And ____ came to pass.
(Gen. 8:13)
16. Also known as. (abbr.)
17. He sent forth a ____.
(Gen. 8:8)
19. Possesses.
21. Metropolitan. (abbr.)
22. One hundred years.
24. Confined.
25. South Carolina. (abbr.)
26. For a good man some would even ____ to die
(Rom. 5:7)
27. A metal container.
28. A son of Noah.
(Gen. 5:32)
30. Hotel.

31. Out of print. (abbr.)
32. Junior. (abbr.)
33. Eastern Standard Time.
(abbr.)
34. A musical play.
35. Michigan. (abbr.)
36. Wood that the ark was
made of.
39. Pronoun. (abbr.)
41. Medicine acting as a
sedative.
44. ____ is more precious
than rubies. (Prov. 3:15)
45. Under _____. (below)
46. Hannah's son.
49. He shall be like a ____
planted by the rivers
(Ps. 1:3)
50. And the flood was ____
days upon the earth.
(Gen. 7:17)
51. Fuel.
52. Bring up, raise.
53. Sound expressing
doubt or surprise.

Down

1. North America. (abbr.)
2. In her mouth was an
leaf.

- (Gen. 8:11)
3. ____ unto me, and hear me. (Ps. 55:2)
5. Save for a ____ day.
6. ____ and crafts.
7. Route. (abbr.)
8. Thine iniquity is ____ away. (Isa. 6:7)
9. Possessed.
12. ____-of-fact.
14. Blessed are they that _____. (Matt. 5:4)
16. These things saith the _____. (Rev. 3:14)
18. There is none ____ of stumbling in him. (1 John 2:10)
20. Small songbird.
23. Drive too closely.
24. Used to write on.
25. Son of Noah.
27. Deal with problems.
29. Mountain. (abbr.)
32. Son of Noah.
34. Exclamation.
37. Different in nature or kind.
38. Physical education. (abbr.)
40. Depend.

42. Domesticated animals.
43. Let God be true, but every man a liar _____.
(Rom. 3:4)
44. Make your calling and election _____.
(2 Pet. 1:10)
47. Africa. (abbr.)



WHAT ARE YOU READING?



Alabama Baptists share about what they are currently reading

WANDA BERGERON

The Alabama Baptist

"Good to Great" by Jim Collins

This was the last book I had to read before giving my senior project at Highlands College in Birmingham. It started out a little slow, maybe because I was so tired and sleepy the night I began reading it. However, once I got into the book and started seeing all of the research and time that went into bringing the true facts and data out and that it was not just the opinion of one author, I kind of perked up.

The research was compiled over five years of data, stock returns and comparisons of several companies such as General Electric, Coca-Cola, Intel and Merck that had moved from "good" to "great" and maintained it over 15 years. The histories of these companies were compared to several companies that failed to move from "good" to "great" (28 companies in all).

The results were really pretty simple: disciplined people, disciplined thought and disciplined action.

The phrase "disciplined people" pertains to both leadership as well as employees. The leaders of the excelling companies displayed a compelling modesty combined with a passionate drive to do whatever it takes to make the company great. Another surprise was that these leaders weren't all too concerned with a grand vision and strategy that needed to be executed right away. Instead they focused on getting the right people first. A big lesson to take away from this section is that babysitting people, old-fashioned ruthless discipline and micro-management are no way to achieve greatness in a company.

Disciplined thought is achieved in two steps. The first step is confronting the brutal facts, yet never losing faith. The second step is simplicity. Keep the vision simple and make sure everyone on your team understands the vision at all times.

Disciplined action is a natural result of the previous two areas. With disciplined people and disciplined thought, a culture of discipline develops where people have simultaneous freedom and responsibility. They don't need to be micro-managed because they are willing to do whatever it takes with a high degree of self-discipline. They believe in what they do.

Even though this is a business book written by a professor at Stanford University in California, it taught me simple steps to use in all areas of my life to achieve greatness. In short, make sure your team loves the vision as much as you do and everyone achieves greatness. #

Tell us what you are reading, a quick summary of what it is about and your response to it so far. Email news@thealabamabaptist.org or send us a message on Facebook. You may also mail your information to 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.

'Great joy'

Michael W. Smith returns to gospel roots

By Leann Callaway
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

By combining songs that are rooted in a firm foundation of faith with a desire to influence future generations, Michael W. Smith's album "Hymns II, Shine On Us" is designed to bring new life to old hymns.

The album, exclusively available at Cracker Barrel Old Country Store locations and online, features a blend of traditional and modern worship songs along with symphonic arrangements.

"I released my first hymns project two years ago and the response was overwhelming," Smith said.

"When Cracker Barrel came back and asked if I wanted to do another hymns record, I was really excited about the opportunity.

"This record is a little different from the first one. On the first record almost all the songs were older hymns and it was a little bit of a simpler production. This record is a mixture of half old songs and half new songs. It was a great joy to do work on a hymns project again, and I couldn't be happier with the way the album turned out.

"I hope that every song on the album is going to be special for someone and connects with them. Music is the most powerful thing in the world. It still blows my mind that a three-and-a-half minute song can change somebody's life. Someone can be in deep depression, but when they hear a certain song, everything starts to shift and gives them hope. It changes the atmosphere. It's the power of the song."

'Grateful' for the meaning

"There are some great lyrics in these old hymns, and I am so grateful for what the lyrics of these hymns mean and how they shape our faith."

Throughout his musical journey spanning more than three decades, Smith continues to be amazed and humbled at how God continues to guide and direct while providing opportunities to share the gospel in various settings.

"Whether I am hanging out with presidents ... or

orphans, each platform provides a chance to share Christ's love in a unique way," Smith said. "I'm very grateful for these opportunities and the chance to share about a message that has changed my life."

Committed to Christ

Through the years, Smith has amassed an impressive catalog of achievements including an American Music Award, three Grammy Awards and 45 Dove Awards from the Gospel Music Association.

Despite the accolades and achievements, Smith remains committed to shining the spotlight on Christ and delivering powerful messages about grace, love and redemption through his songs.

In addition to his music, Smith desires to create platforms that would reach and help those in need. In his hometown of Nashville he established Rocketown which serves as a safe place for young people to enjoy music and artists to be discovered. Smith also raises awareness for a variety of missions organizations, including Compassion International and Samaritan's Purse.

In December, Smith will help promote and support Operation Christmas Child (see page 6) while touring across the country performing festive holiday



Michael W. Smith

Photo courtesy of MWS Group

songs and traditional carols with a full symphony orchestra alongside fellow Grammy Award-winning recording artist Amy Grant and Jordan Smith, season nine winner of NBC's reality singing competition "The Voice."

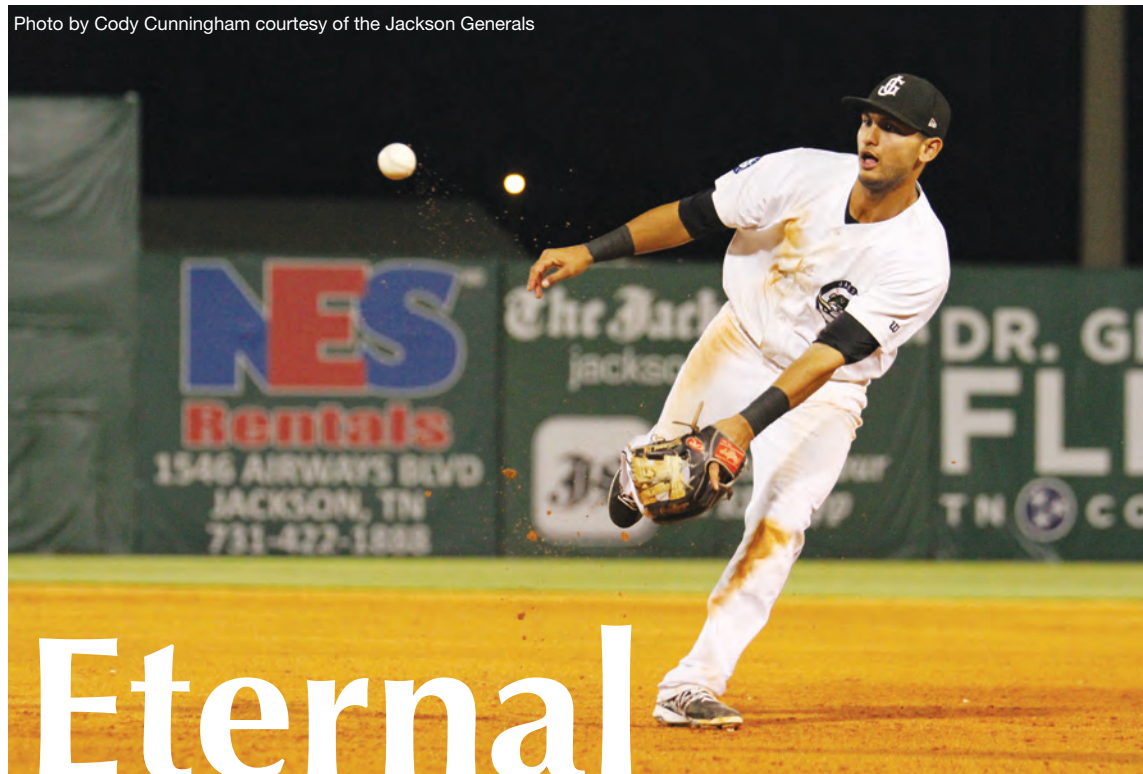
"We are living in challenging and chaotic times, when so many people are going through trials and adversities," Michael W. Smith said. "Through my songs, I want to remind people that God's hand is still upon them.

"Songwriting is typically inspired by life experiences and walking with people who are struggling. When I turn on the news and see all these horrific things going on, it often leaves me wondering if I will be able to put these emotions into words. It really takes spending time in prayer and asking God to give me the right words to minister to people who are hurting and struggling." #

"Music is the most powerful thing in the world. It still blows my mind that a three-and-a-half minute song can change somebody's life."

Michael W. Smith, Dove Award-winning artist

Photo by Cody Cunningham courtesy of the Jackson Generals



Tim Lopes

Eternal purpose

God, not baseball is ultimate goal, Tim Lopes says

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

While Tim Lopes wants to play in the big leagues, his ultimate goal is bigger than the majors.

“Ultimately it is to get to the Lord and see His face and hear those words, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant,’” said Lopes, an all-star second baseman for the Jackson Generals.

Drafted by Seattle in the sixth round of the 2012 Major League Draft out of Edison High School in Huntington Beach, California, Lopes was 16 when he became a Christian.

“I was living like every other 16 year-old,” said Lopes, now 22. He was a junior in high school.

“I wanted to do what I wanted to do. I didn’t know or care what God had to say about my life. I wanted the grip on my life.”

When he went to church one Easter, he heard a question that changed his life.

Pastor Dudley Rutherford of Shepherd Church, Porter Ranch, California, asked, “If you die tomorrow, do you know where you are going to go?”

“That question really scared me and I didn’t know (the answer). I always lived my life as if, ‘Of course I am going to heaven. I feel like I am a good person,’ but I started to realize that I never made the decision to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. It changed my life. God changed my life,” said Lopes, who was raised in a Christian home by “the best (parents) you could ever ask for” — Jack and Angelica Lopes.

Not ‘just a lifestyle’

Tim Lopes said, “My biggest role model is my dad. He has been the biggest part of my life, the way he has lived his life. He has influenced me in how I want to live my life and what type of father I want to be. Obviously my mom, two grandmothers, my brother, my whole family have such a big impact and influence on my life.”

His high school baseball coach Gary Young began to lead him through Bible studies and baptized him.

The day Tim Lopes was baptized, he said, was “the day when I said, ‘This is not a joke anymore. This

isn’t just a lifestyle, it is a decision that is going to affect my eternity.’ I have never felt so free. I made that decision and ever since then it’s been a journey. There are a lot of ups and downs but my life has absolutely changed for the better.”

His brother, Christian Lopes, a second baseman with the New Hampshire Fisher Cats, a Double-A affiliate of Toronto in the Eastern League, was baptized with him. “My brother is my best friend. We talk every day,” said Tim Lopes. Jack Lopes played baseball at Grossmont College in El Cajon, California.

Daily thanks

Tim Lopes said he thanks God daily for the talent to play baseball.

He was 1 of 3 Generals selected to the Southern League’s Postseason All-Star team.

“It means a lot and is a great honor to be named an all-star. God has been so good. Knowing that He has a plan every day for my life is comforting,” said Tim Lopes, who called it an honor to play for the USA national team when he was 16.

This season he had a .284 batting average — seventh in the league — with 74 runs, 145 hits and 49 RBIs.

Darren Brown, Generals manager and Southern League Postseason Awards Manager of the Year, said, “[Tim Lopes] has put together a solid offensive year. He is a threat on the bases. It’s been nice to see. He has his head in the right place. He is headed in the right direction.”

Tim Lopes said he gets his direction by reading his Bible daily to learn more about Christ.

“Jesus is my Savior. We all know what He did on the cross. Jesus is my friend,” he said. “Jesus is my Father and He died for me to forgive my sins because I couldn’t pay that debt. I see God’s grace as a free gift that I didn’t deserve, that I did nothing for. I am so thankful for it. I believe God’s purpose for me is to worship Him and trust Him in my everyday life.

“Once you put your faith in Jesus, everything else takes care of itself. You naturally grow with Him and your life starts to change.”

RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

Alabama chief justice suspended from role

MONTGOMERY — Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore was suspended for the rest of his term after the Alabama Court of Judiciary passed the ruling Sept. 30.

According to the court, Moore defied federal court rulings on same-sex “marriage” and was found guilty on six charges, including interfering with legal processes and violating legal ethics by instructing the state’s probate judges to ignore the federal ruling to legalize same-sex “marriage.”

Since Moore’s term does not end until 2019, Gov. Robert Bentley will name a replacement, according to news reports.

To remove Moore from his office, a unanimous ruling was required by the nine-member Alabama Judicial Inquiry Commission.

Moore was previously temporarily suspended over ethics charges from the Southern Poverty Law Center. He also was removed from his role as chief justice in 2003 after defying another federal court order relating to the display of the Ten Commandments at the Alabama Judicial Building. (TAB)

Wheelchair-bound pastor kills retired pastor

CHICAGO — A Bible-related argument turned deadly in the wee hours of Sept. 5 when a 67-year-old wheelchair-bound pastor shot dead an 80-year-old retired pastor in the senior home where they both lived.

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Allen Smith and Ted Merchant were on the back patio of the Senior Suites at Rainbow Beach discussing Bible verses when Merchant pulled out a gun and killed Smith.

Smith, a former Baptist minister, was a graduate of Yale Divinity School and had recently retired from First Baptist Church, East Chicago, and moved into the assisted living home in 2015.

He and his alleged killer regularly discussed the Bible there, according to the *Tribune*.

Merchant, who ran a church at the senior home, was arrested three blocks from the scene after fleeing in his motorized wheelchair. (TAB)

Episcopal Church membership still declining

DETROIT — The Episcopal Church logged another massive decline in 2015, losing more than 37,000 members, according to numbers released in mid-September by the Episcopal Church Office of Research.

In 2015 the mainline denomination stood at about 1.77 million members in its domestic dioceses, a nearly 20 percent decline from the 2.2 million it claimed a decade ago. Over the past 10 years, worship attendance dropped by 25.7 percent.

Like other denominations, the Episcopal Church has seen a general decline in recent years, but one factor getting credit for the losses is the Church’s increasingly liberal theology — for instance, its growing support of gay “marriage” and homosexual lifestyles.

The statistics were released as the Church’s House of Bishops wrapped up its recent meeting in Detroit. (TAB)

New fundraising site created for Christians

BOSTON — A recently developed Christian crowdfunding site is now up and running, allowing Christians to support one another through fundraising efforts.

GiveSendGo.com is a free platform where Christians can raise money for missions trips, ministries, nonprofits, medical expenses or other needs.

According to co-founder Jacob Wells, the site works as a way for Christians to support one another. Individuals and organizations also pray over the fundraising campaigns.

Each fundraiser can be created for long- or short-term needs on the site.

Unlike most crowdfunding sites, GiveSendGo.com takes no percentage of the money raised but does accept donations. (TAB)