

## INSIDE



**Rash named editor-elect of state Baptist newspaper**

◆ Page 3

**Alabama Baptist State Convention program released with theme 'SENT ... Here, There and Everywhere'**

◆ Page 5



**TAB's Digital Classroom takes a look at lavalier mics this week**

◆ Page 11

A gospel message is shared during the River Region Judgment House, which started in 2012. Since that time nearly 2,000 people have made decisions to follow Christ.



# Prayer is our strategy

## Judgment House brings 2,000 people to Christ

By Grace Thornton  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The crew at the River Region Judgment House was getting ready to shut down for the night when young Annye Bennett walked through the door that day in 2012.

"We were closing up, but we talked about it and got things together so that she could go through," said Brian Gay, minister of missions at First Baptist Church, Montgomery.

Annye's friend, Mary Olivia, was an actor in the judgment house — that's how she got there.

"I had no idea what a judgment

house was, I just knew she worked there, so my dad took me to see her," Annye said.

Groups who walk through the judgment house follow the story of two teenagers killed in an accident who are faced with the fate of judgment and then heaven or hell.

Gay said the point of the production isn't to scare people, even though there may be some scariness involved. It is intended to help people see their need for a Savior and then set

them on the path of discipleship, he said.

That's exactly what happened for Annye, now a ninth grader.

"As I went through it, especially the hell scene, I realized that I really needed to be saved," she said.

### Beyond the event

First, Montgomery, got her plugged in, and she got baptized and began to be discipled in her new faith.

The next year, she was an ac-

tress in the judgment house, and she convinced her two brothers to come.

They both got saved.

And about a month ago, thanks to the family's involvement, her mom became involved in church too and gave her life to Christ.

"It's amazing," Gay said. "There have been so many amazing stories out of this event."

### River Region House

And that's why five years after Annye came — the first year of the River Region Judgment House — the production is still going strong.

"The judgment house concept has been around for more than 30 years, and there used to be one in Montgomery, but they took a break for a while," Gay said. "A few years ago, some guys said, 'Let's restart this in the area.'"

And so they did — with a partnership that's now grown to more than 20 area churches of different denominations.

"It's really cool seeing the whole body of Christ come together for this," Gay said.

Since they reopened in 2012, nearly 2,000 people have made decisions either to follow Christ for the first time or rededicate their life, he said.



Photos by Brian Gay

Actors depict angels in the River Region Judgment House held in Montgomery in October.

About 500 visitors come through on any given night. And from parking and security to set design and registration, it takes a couple hundred volunteers to run the production.

"We also have a prayer room with people constantly praying," Gay said. "Prayer is not part of our strategy — it is our strategy."

The judgment house has been an effective tool to share the gospel (See 'River,' page 13)

# COMMENT

## Characteristics of Church Giving

**M**any Alabama Baptist churches are in the 2017 budget-making process. That makes information recently released by Leadership Network especially timely. The information comes from an analysis of more than \$1.5 billion in personal giving to churches.

Some of the giving patterns documented may seem obvious but perhaps not all.

For example, the study found the new givers provide about 6 percent of annual giving to a church's general fund. Six percent is a respectable increase in year-to-year giving but some may have expected a larger contribution from first-time givers and new members.

### First-time givers

The Leadership Network report points out that just because someone makes a first-time gift to the church that does not mean they will make a second gift. In fact, almost half (45 percent) of first-time givers never make a second financial gift to the church budget.

When first-time givers were tracked forward, analysts found that 52 percent of them dropped out of giving to the church at all during the second year.

So far the idea of trying to grow the church budget through new givers is not encouraging but there is some good news. The 48 percent of first-time givers who continue giving to the church into the second year increase their giving by 64 percent on average.

### Budget-making

When a church is fortunate enough to enlist a new family that practices tithing those averages are blown out of the water. Unfortunately that is relatively rare. Leadership Network found less than 1 percent (0.6 percent) of new giving units (a family) contributed \$10,000 or more to a church budget in a calendar year.

Another strategy often discussed at budget-making time is how to get those who did not give during the past year to become active giv-



THOUGHTS  
By Bob Terry

ers. Again the news is not good. Despite untold attempts, no one has yet discovered a good way of moving someone from the nongiver side to the giver side.

The report stated that only 3 percent of those who did not contribute to the church budget in the current year will make a gift in the coming year.

The percentage of reclaimed givers is low but nothing is reported about their average gifts to the church budget. That means the group cannot be overlooked.

### Changes in members

One area seldom discussed during budget time is the impact of people who will leave the congregation during the coming year.

This is not a reference to people becoming angry and leaving. It only recognizes that churches are impacted by changes in the lives of members.

The report said large churches will lose 10 giving units for every seven gained during a 12-month period. That is a 30 percent loss.

Though the numbers may be different, it is probably true that all churches face a challenge of reaching new givers to replace those who die, become inactive or move away. This should not be overlooked in budget planning.

Inevitably the focus for increased giving to the church budget turns back to currently active members. That is where the bulk of the giving must come, but even there a church faces a challenge.

Only 6 percent of church families give \$10,000 or more to the church in a year's time, Leadership Network found.

The giving of that 6 percent makes up about 41 percent of a church's offerings. It is not exactly the 80-20 rule (80 percent of the work

done by 20 percent of the people) but it is close. A handful of church giving units provide the core of a church's giving.

The report went further. The families that fall into this top category usually grow in giving so that the average giving for all in this category is \$18,842. In today's economy that is generous giving.

### Major financial challenge

But all of these categories combined make up only half of the church's giving — 6 percent from new givers, 41 percent from major givers and whatever amounts reactivated givers contribute.

That is about 50 percent. The church still faces a major financial challenge.

An additional finding provides insight. The study reported that for every \$1 million in gifts to the church budget, it takes 396 giving units to reach that goal.

Doing the math that means the vast majority of giving units (families) give about \$2,525 annually to the church budget.

According to several sources, that is about as much as the average working husband and wife spend for coffee during the course of the year.

### Charitable causes

Another interesting insight: millennials generally view giving to other charitable causes on par with giving to the church. Millennials value direct assistance in their giving and church budgets do not provide that connection, experts say.

Also millennials give about one-third as much to charitable causes as baby boomers. That may reflect that they usually have fewer resources than baby boomers but whatever the reason, it should be considered.

### Challenging task

Taken as a whole the findings of the Leadership Network study indicate churches have a challenging task trying to increase their annual giving. Characteristics of the millennial generation only amplify that task.

Perhaps a starting point is to help people understand the tithe "is the Lord's" (Lev. 27:30). Helping people grasp the principles of biblical stewardship may be the best place to begin. After all the primary reason Christians give to the church is not for a particular need but in obedience and faithfulness to God. ¶

***"Helping people grasp the principles of biblical stewardship may be the best place to begin. After all the primary reason Christians give to the church is not for a particular need but in obedience and faithfulness to God."***

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# 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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# Succession plan in place at TAB

## Rash named editor-elect of state Baptist newspaper

Jennifer Davis Rash has been named editor-elect of the nation's most widely circulated state Baptist newspaper — *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB).

Rash, who began her journey with TAB as a news writer Jan. 1, 1996, has served as executive editor of the publication for the past six years.

She oversees the weekly production of the paper in all its formats — print, digital, social media, etc. She also has been directing the launch of a new website for www.thealabamabaptist.org and blogs at www.rashionalthoughts.com.

Rash has served alongside and been mentored by TAB's editor and president Bob Terry for nearly 21 years. She joined the team five months after Terry became editor. Together they have helped lead the staff to receive more than 200 national and state awards for work in news writing, feature writing, editorial writing, layout, design, investigative reporting and broadcast.

Terry made the announcement of Rash being promoted to editor-elect during the Oct. 7-8 TAB board of directors' meeting in Birmingham.

"In 2010, Jennifer chose *The Alabama Baptist* a second time when she was offered the editorship of the *Arkansas Baptist News* that year and turned it down. It would have made her the first female editor of a major state Baptist paper," Terry said.

"It was a hard decision but Jennifer chose to stay at *The Alabama Baptist*. She was clear. She wanted to be editor of a state Baptist paper. She was also clear in knowing that God called her to serve in Alabama.

"At some point I will finalize my plans for retirement and as I do so, it will be with great appreciation for the action of this board of directors and with great confidence in the future of this ministry," Terry said.

## Selection process

"*The Alabama Baptist* will have superior leadership. The board of directors, acting as a search committee of the whole, could not have done a better job in selecting the next editor and president to lead this ministry."

TAB board chairwoman Amelia Pearson, Ed.D., explained that the board took its action in order to have a succession plan in place. The succession plan would be activated at retirement, resignation, incapacitation or death.

"The goal was for the organization not to be caught in a crisis time without having plans



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Executive editor Jennifer Davis Rash (left) expresses appreciation at being named editor-elect by Editor Bob Terry (right) during the Oct. 7-8 board of directors' meeting in Birmingham.

in place to proceed in an orderly fashion," said Pearson, who is retired after serving as a college faculty member, dean and president across 40 years. "Many businesses have succession plans in place and that was a good model for TAB to follow."

The board affirmed Rash in her quest to be editor six years ago, so she was the obvious choice when it was determined a succession plan should be established whenever and however that transition is triggered, Pearson said.

"Jennifer Rash is an exceptional writer and has demonstrated tremendous capacity as the executive editor," she said.

"We are very fortunate to have someone with Jennifer's skills and talents to name as editor-elect for *The Alabama Baptist*.

"Jennifer has big shoes to fill as Dr. Terry has been a superb editor and provided excellent leadership to the staff and the board of directors for many years," Pearson said.

"She is blessed to be able to work under Dr. Terry's mentorship as she continues learning the various aspects of the paper's top position."

Rash agreed.

"To be able to learn so many life lessons, develop my skillset and grow up in general through the ministry communications channel of *The Alabama Baptist*

has indeed been a blessing and a gift," she said.

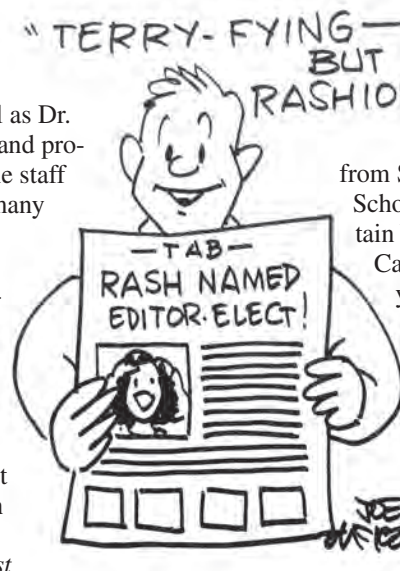
"I will always be indebted to Bob Terry for the investment and confidence placed in me to grow into the person capable of the position," Rash noted. "And to have the unanimous support of TAB's board of directors provides the strength and foundation I need to continue developing into the leader I hope will make them proud."

Along with her responsibilities with TAB, Rash currently serves as vice president for Associated Church Press and is a past president of Baptist Communicators Association. She also serves as an instructor for the online ministry communication certificate through the Ministry Training Institute at Samford University in Birmingham.

Rash is an honors graduate from the University of Alabama with a bachelor of arts in journalism and earned a master's of theological studies from Samford's Beeson Divinity School. She grew up at Mountain View Baptist Church, Phil Campbell, and served two years on the missions field with the International Mission Board after college. She and her husband, Jason, have been married 19 years and are members of NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville. (TAB)



RASH



# 'Depth of 1,000 cuts'

## Shame isolates, destroys community, psychiatrist says

By Grace Thornton  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**N**obody needs a psychiatrist to explain what shame feels like — we all know, said Curt Thompson, a noted psychiatrist and brain science researcher.

"Having shame is like having nausea and never being able to throw up," he said. "At times, it's like that daytime sleepiness that you get in the afternoon, the kind where you can't fight it no matter how hard you try. We live shame. We breathe it. It's a part of us."

And it tells us stories about ourselves, Thompson told a crowd gathered at Pathways Professional Counseling in Birmingham on Sept. 30 for "The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves" conference. *The Alabama Baptist* and Samford University in Birmingham partnered with Pathways to host the conference.

It's a dangerous thing that shame can speak into our lives that way, he said. "It's not just something that makes you feel bad. It's not just something that destroys relationships. It's the primary tool that Satan wields to destroy the universe — and to destroy you."

Sometimes shame happens because of a traumatic, horrendous event. But more often, it's from dozens of small things that happen every day that cause us to tell ourselves we're not good enough, Thompson said. "It's the depth of a thousand cuts."

And it's the harbinger of abandonment, he said. "It says when we think about our relationships, 'I'm not good enough, and therefore you will leave.'"

That's a shock to a system never created to feel that kind of feeling, Thompson said. From the second we take our first breath, our brain is fighting for healthy community. It needs other people, he said.

"Newborns require interaction with other human brains in order for their brains to reach maturity," Thompson said. "It's an embodied, relational process that emerges."

And it's in the secure, vulnerable relationships that babies have with their parents that they explore, develop and learn to create. Their brain's accelerator — the sympathetic system — keeps going until someone hits the brakes.

"It's like driving with a clutch," he said, referring to another researcher's explanation. When children are told "no," and the brain puts on the brakes through the parasympathetic system, it does so safely and without their brain's engine stalling. It learns safe limits the healthy way.

But what happens when there's no clutch — no security of a safe relationship?

### Lingering effect

The brain experiences hurt, which make ruptures, Thompson said — and the lingering effect is shame.

"When these ruptures happen and they are not really repaired, we have to learn to cope with them," he said.

And what typically happens is that the individual chooses to cope with shame alone.

"Shame is isolating," Thompson said. "We're born to create in community with others, and when we have experiences, wounds and traumas, they teach our brain that the desire to connect with others that way is fraught with danger."

And if the clutch isn't used enough times and enough ruptures are created, "our sympathetic drive eventually says, 'Nope, I'm not going there,'" he said.

And we tell ourselves the story again — relationships are too painful to take the risk.

"We have to learn to tell ourselves a different story," Thompson said.

And that story, he said, is that Jesus loves us, redeems us and overcomes the world.

"If that's the story we're living, we're

paying attention to those things," he said. "We starve shame by starving the things that feed it and paying attention to God's story over and over and over again."

What are some practical ways to do that?

### 1. Do a shame inventory.

Thompson said he's given clients the assignment to keep a small piece of paper in their pocket and take it out and put a mark on it every time they think, feel or behave in a way that's related to shame.

"It's just a way to practice recognizing that it happens," he said. "We're well practiced biologically at being ashamed. I have to recognize it and stop doing it in order to start new neural networks."

The first thing that evil is counting on is that we won't pay attention to shame, so we'll never focus on healing it, Thompson said. "We have to interrupt the process of our shame. The repair of real ruptures leads to resilience."

### 2. Increase your neuroplasticity.

Neuroplasticity — basically the brain's capability to reorganize itself — is vital for changing our minds, Thompson said. "The apostle Paul says we need a renewing of our minds, and this is part of that."

Aerobic exercise is one way to loosen your minds to new ways of processing life, he said. Slowing your pace of eating and eating less is another way to be healthier, which in turn means a healthier brain.

Getting enough sleep is vital too, Thompson said — Americans

these days are all too prone to "voluntary insomnia," which increases the risk of Alzheimer's disease.

"Also, try engaging in meaningful novelty, doing something new to stretch your mind," he said. "Paint or learn a language or throw pottery. Focusing your attention on a task you don't already have the skillset

to do enhances neuroplastic change."

Engage in mindfulness practices, like meditation on Scripture. Try investing time in centering prayer — a way to mindfully find the clutch, he said.

"In this, you're trying to harness the attention, the ignition key of the mind," Thompson said. "We use that to try to stimulate the brain and active growth."

And lastly — invest in vulnerable relationships, he said.

"When people have the experience of being known by other people in deep and meaningful ways, it changes the brain," he said. "Shame says, 'The less I need you, the less you can burn me, and I don't have to worry that you're going to ruin my life.' This says something entirely different."

### 3. Build strong community.

Investing in that kind of relationship can help you combat shame when it strikes you in the kind of weak moment that can send you into the rabbit hole, Thompson said.

### 'Designed for community'

"Who is the person you reach out to for help, the person with whom you combat your shame? Your brain was designed for community, and we can build healing communities," he said. "It's going to take time. But it's going to depend on the minds of other people in your life too, people who can remind you that condemnation is not part of the package, people who can have real conversations that provide a clutch."

Anne Lawton, a licensed professional counselor with Pathways, said Thompson reminded participants at the conference that through the death of Jesus Christ, "we are offered victory over shame."

"We can daily look shame in the face and not let it have victory over our day, through Christ's strength," she said. ✝



Unsplash photo

**For more information,  
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# ALABAMA BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION PROGRAM

SENT ... Here, There and Everywhere / Nov. 15–16, 2016 / Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery

## TUESDAY MORNING 8:30–11:50

PIANIST ..... Frank Jones  
 WORSHIP LEADER ..... Mitch Loftin  
 8:30 Pre-session Music .... Alabama Singing Men and Women  
 8:35 Call to Prayer ..... Travis Coleman  
 8:40 Call to Order ..... Travis Coleman  
 GREETINGS  
 Montgomery Baptist Association ..... Neal Hughes  
 Eastmont Baptist Church ..... Mike Northcutt  
 Congregational Music ..... Mitch Loftin  
 8:50 Enrollment of Messengers ..... Billie Davis  
 8:55 Committee on Order of Business ..... James Mercer  
 9:00 Committee Appointments ..... Travis Coleman  
 9:05 Memorial Service ..... Mike Shaw  
 9:15 Alabama Baptist  
 Ministers Benefit Society ..... Mike McLemore  
 9:20 Introduction of Resolutions ..... Gary Cardwell  
 9:25 Congregational Music ..... Mitch Loftin  
 9:30 Miscellaneous Business  
 9:40 RECOGNITIONS  
 Recognition of Former  
 Convention Presidents ..... Rick Lance  
 Recognition of New Pastors and  
 New Church Staff Members ..... Bobby DuBois  
 9:50 Audit and Insurance Committees ..... Bobby DuBois  
 9:55 Special Music ..... Alabama Singing Men and Women  
 10:05 SENT ..... Kevin Blackwell  
 Daniel Atkins, Jennifer Foster, Terrence Jones, Blake  
 Newsom  
 10:30 Cooperative Program Recognitions .... Jim Swedenburg  
**SENT TO TEACH PEOPLE**  
 10:40 Samford University ..... Andrew Westmoreland  
 University of Mobile ..... Tim Smith  
 Judson College ..... David Potts  
 Education Commission ..... D'Linell Finley  
 Board of Aid to Students  
 in Church-Related Vocations ..... Bill Goodwin

11:10 Presentation of Convention President ..... Rick Lance  
 11:15 Special Music ..... Brent Coleman  
 11:20 President's Address ..... Travis Coleman  
 11:50 Benediction ..... Dave Burns

## TUESDAY AFTERNOON 1:30–4:30

PIANIST ..... Frank Jones  
 WORSHIP LEADER ..... Ed Cleveland  
 WORSHIP  
 1:30 Congregational Music ..... Ed Cleveland  
 1:40 Call to Prayer ..... Travis Coleman  
**SENT TO REACH AND DISCIPLE PEOPLE**  
 REPORT OF STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS  
 1:45 Report of Executive Director ..... Rick Lance  
 2:05 State Board of Missions Recommendations  
 2:50 Convention Recognitions  
**SENT TO SERVE PEOPLE**  
 3:00 Alabama Baptist Children's  
 Homes & Family Ministries ..... Rod Marshall  
 Shocco Springs Conference Center ..... Buster Taylor  
 Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers... Ray Burdeshaw  
 Alabama WMU ..... Candace McIntosh  
 COMMITTEE REPORTS  
 3:30 Resolutions Committee ..... Gary Cardwell  
 3:50 Committee on Boards/Commissions ... Dusty McLemore  
 4:00 Committee on Committees ..... Steve Loggins  
 4:10 Committee on Time,  
 Place and Preacher ..... Jerry Henry  
 4:20 Miscellaneous Business  
 4:30 Benediction ..... Carlos Lemus

## TUESDAY EVENING 6:40–8:30

6:40 Pre-session Music ..... Frank Jones  
 6:45 Call to Prayer ..... Travis Coleman  
 6:55 Recognitions ..... Rick Lance

7:00 Music Worship ..... Three on a String  
 7:45 Message ..... Robert Smith Jr.

## WEDNESDAY MORNING 8:30–11:10

8:30 Congregational Music ..... Lance Maddox  
 8:35 Call to Prayer ..... Travis Coleman  
 8:40 SENT ..... Ryan Whitley  
 Gary Buchanan, Orlando Buck, Charles Carter, Blake  
 Kersey  
 9:05 Election of Officers  
**SENT TO INFORM AND CHALLENGE PEOPLE**  
 9:15 *The Alabama Baptist* ..... Bob Terry  
 Alabama Baptist  
 Historical Commission ..... Lonette Berg  
 The Baptist Foundation of Alabama ..... Barry Bledsoe  
 Alabama Citizens Action Program ..... Joe Godfrey  
 Christian Life Commission ..... Jim Graham  
 9:45 Resolutions Committee Report ..... Gary Cardwell  
 10:00 Previously Scheduled Business/Election of Officers  
 if needed  
 10:10 Congregational Music ..... Lance Maddox  
 10:20 Introduction of Convention Preacher  
 and Alternate Preacher ..... Travis Coleman  
 Special Music ..... Lakeside Worship Ministry  
 Scripture ..... Stuart Davidson  
 10:30 Convention Sermon ..... Greg Corbin  
 11:00 Introduction of Convention Officers ..... Rick Lance  
 11:10 Benediction, Adjournment ..... Mel Johnson

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# TOGETHER

Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference  
 Monday, November 14  
 Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery

## Election of officers, consideration of proposed resolutions part of upcoming annual meeting

Alabama Baptist messengers participating in the upcoming state convention annual meeting in Montgomery (see schedule, above) will have the opportunity to vote for convention officers and proposed resolutions.

*The Alabama Baptist* has confirmed one nominee for each position. No other nominees were known at press time.

**For president:** John Thweatt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pell City, said if elected he would “look forward to working with Rick Lance and our state missionaries — an incredible group of people.”

John Killian, pastor of Maytown Baptist Church and former state convention president, will nominate Thweatt.

**For first vice president:** Tim Cox, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea, is “thankful to be in a position that I can give back and serve our state convention in any way possible, as a local pastor and as a convention officer.”

Kevin Blackwell, executive

director of Samford University's Ministry Training Institute and assistant to the president for church relations, will nominate Cox.

**For second vice president:** Buddy Champion, pastor of First Baptist Church, Trussville, will be nominated by Teman Knight, pastor of Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery.

Champion said, “It would be an honor to serve ... if that is what God has in store for us in 2017.”

Along with electing new officers, Alabama Baptists will vote on resolutions presented by the Resolutions Committee.

Keith Hinson, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' resource liaison to the committee, noted that resolutions may be submitted to the convention's recording secretary no later than

the adjournment of the Nov. 15 morning session.

“The committee will be working to help the messengers say a helpful word on issues of concern from a biblical worldview,” Hinson said.

“Pray that Alabama Baptists will speak with consensus and conviction regarding moral issues our society is facing.”

Along with potential motions presented by messengers and other miscellaneous business during the two-day meeting, the State Board of Missions as well as the convention's 15 other entities, auxiliaries, commissions and committees will deliver their annual reports to convention messengers.

For more information, call 1-800-264-1225, ext. 231. (TAB)

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Graphic by Kevin Criswell

# Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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

## BESSEMER

► **Seventh Street Church, Bessemer**, will celebrate its 94th homecoming Oct. 30, 10:30 a.m. Former member Wesley Patterson will speak. Lunch will follow the service. Sam Davidson is pastor.

## BIBB

► **First Church, West Blocton**, will celebrate its 128th Founder's Day on Oct. 16, 10:30 a.m. The choir will perform special music. Lunch will follow the service. Matt Pope is pastor.

## BIRMINGHAM

► **First Church, Pleasant Grove**, will host the Gettys in concert Oct. 23, 7 p.m. To reserve tickets visit [gettysmusic.com/tour](http://gettysmusic.com/tour). For more information call the church office at 205-744-2806. Daniel Wilson is pastor. ► **Westmont Church** will hold a student night Nov. 6. Food will be served at 5:30 p.m. and worship will follow at 6:30. Scott

Dawson will speak. Rise Above will perform special music. For more information call the church office at 205-788-6811. Nathan Daniels is pastor.

## CAHABA

► **Faith Chapel Church, Marion**, will celebrate homecoming Oct. 23, 11 a.m. Former pastor Levert Jones will speak. Lunch will follow the service and The Cahaba Falls will perform special music after lunch. Lloyd Stockman is pastor.

## FRIENDSHIP

► **First Church, Oneonta**, will hold revival services Oct. 23-26. Phil Waldrep of Phil Waldrep Ministries will speak Sunday at 10:15 a.m. and 6 p.m. A fellowship meal will be served at 4:30 p.m. Kevin Hamm, pastor of Gardendale First Church, will speak Monday at 7 p.m. Mike Shaw, interim pastor of West End Church, Clanton, will speak Tuesday at 7 p.m. Michael Lewis, pastor of Roswell Street

Church, Marietta, Georgia, will speak Wednesday at 7 p.m. Rick Stone, worship and music pastor at Whitesburg Church, Huntsville, will perform special music. A meal will be served at 5:30 p.m. Monday-Wednesday. Child care will be available. Larry Gipson is pastor.

## MORGAN

► **Ken Blackwood** is the new director of missions for **Morgan Association**. He previously served as an International Mission Board missionary in Venezuela and East Asia. He also served churches in Georgia and Arkansas. He holds a bachelor's and master's degree from Auburn University, a master's degree from Mid-America Seminary in Cordova, Tennessee, and a doctorate from Golden Gate Seminary (now Gateway Seminary) in California. He and his wife, Alison, have three children. Blackwood will begin his position at the close of the Oct. 24 associational annual meeting.



BLACKWOOD

## ST. CLAIR

► **Richard Statham Jr.** is the new pastor of **First Church, Odenville**. He previously served as pastor of Palmerdale Cross Church, Remlap. He also served at Calvary Church, Vernon. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and a master's degree from Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham. He and his wife, Bette, have two children. ► **McEntyre Church, Ashville**, will host The Redemption Trio during its fifth Sunday singing Oct. 30, 2 p.m. Bobby Winningham is pastor.



STATHAM

## WASHINGTON

► **Wagarville Church** will hold the Wagarville Community Fall Festival on Oct. 29, 5-8:30 p.m. at the Wagarville ballfield. There will be hayrides, candy booths, a cake walk, chili cook-off and more. A live concert will feature Pastor Josh Purvis and friends and Spring Hill Drive. ☼



## Flat Rock holds 'big celebration' for 150th

"May we always be a light to lost people and be a church that is pleasing to God." Those were the words Virginia Jones closed with as she read the history of Flat Rock Baptist Church, Dawson, to the crowd present for its 150th anniversary celebration.

The two-day event, held Sept. 10-11, was a "small church, big celebration," according to church leaders. A full house gathered for a singing on Saturday, and on Sunday, Pastor Nick Sharp gave a devotional about how in a church like Flat Rock, people are the bricks and Jesus is the mortar by which they are held together.



Photo courtesy of Lonette Berg

Lonette Berg (left in photo), executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented the church with a certificate to Sharp (right), as did Ken Allen, director of missions for DeKalb Baptist Association.

## Taits Gap centennial service remembers past

Taits Gap Baptist Church, Oneonta, marked its centennial with a celebration service Aug. 21.

It was a time to remember and honor the past, and former pastors James Earl Pate and Glen Elrod were present to share their experiences. The 10 a.m. service also featured a reading of the first business meeting minutes and church founding by Charity Cleveland, as well as a reading of the church history by Randa Prince. Special music for the service was provided by a trio consisting of Eddy Hill, Mike Hill and Carlene Moorer, all members of the Blount Baptist Association church.

Two special presentations were made. Gerald Glenn, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative, presented a plaque to the church, and Annie Ruth Roberts was recognized for being the longest member of Taits Gap Baptist.

A display of historic pictures of Taits Gap also was set up for participants to view. Neal Whited is pastor.

## Providence marks 100 years in Town Creek

The rich history of Providence Baptist Church, Town Creek — led by Pastor Bertis Ray — was on display Aug. 14 as a crowd gathered for its 100th anniversary celebration. David McKelvey, pastor of First Baptist Church, Killen, and grandson of former pastor Paul Lang, spoke during the anniversary service. Jerry Armor, a representative for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a certificate honoring the Muscle Shoals Baptist Association church for its years of service.

For the celebration, the fellowship hall was decorated with old kerosene lanterns, magnolias and old quilts. A PowerPoint presentation displayed a history of the church through photos. And a commemorative bulletin with a brief church history showed photos of the church's pastors and the four buildings Providence has met in over the years. The next-to-last building burned in 1981.

## Friendship Church honors 100-year history

At Friendship Baptist Church, Clanton, on Sept. 11, they had more than one cup overflowing — they had 30. As part of the church's centennial celebration, former pastors, staff and honored guests were presented with 30 original communion cups as special mementos of the occasion.

The Chilton Baptist Association church — led by Pastor Ken Daniel — welcomed former pastors Wilbur Thomas, Alan Johnston and John Will Wyatt as guest speakers, along with Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Mavis Gates, a representative of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a certificate.

Compiled by the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and TAB

## in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders, friends

## Billy Harris

### Retired Parker Memorial pastor, former prof dies

Billy Harris, retired longtime pastor of Parker Memorial Baptist Church, Anniston, died Oct. 1. He was 77.

An Oxford native, Harris earned his education from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Florida State University in Tallahassee. All the while he was serving as pastor of churches in Alabama, Mississippi and Florida.

From 1968 to 1978, Harris was a professor of religion and philosophy at Samford where he taught preaching, speech and religious education.

He retired from his role as pastor of Parker Memorial Baptist in 2005 after serving there almost 20 years. Prior to that he served as pastor of Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church, Hueytown. For the last eight years he has served as interim pastor for Pleasant Valley Baptist Church, Jacksonville.

Throughout Harris' ministry, he served on the board of directors for *The Alabama Baptist* and on the board of regents for the University of Mobile, as president of the board of governors for Judson College in Marion and as chairman of the committee on boards and commissions for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. He also was selected as one of Samford's "Ministers of the Year" in 1992.

Harris is survived by his wife of 54 years, Phoebe; three children; and seven grandchildren. (TAB)



HARRIS



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## The Person of Christ

# Devout and Disciplined

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

Our study of the Person of Christ is based on the conviction that He was fully and genuinely human, having experienced a real incarnation. The concern in these studies is to consider some of the distinctive perfections of Christ's personality. This week Theology 101 ponders how He was devout and disciplined.

By devout, we mean Christ was fully obedient and devoted to the will of the Father who sent Him. To be devout is to be "sold out" completely to God's will, seeking always His good pleasure. We might summarize the devout quality of Christ's life in such statements as these that follow.

### God's will be done

Christ was deeply devoted to truth and obligations that derive from the love of truth, both believing the truth and embodying it in a way that allowed Him to assert, "I am ... the Truth" (John 14:6). Christ made communing with the Father through prayer a prominent and consistent part of His devotion, on occasion spending a night in prayer, as well as on occasion arising a great while before dawn in order to pray in private (Mark 1:35).

Christ was wholehearted and sincere in the pursuit of the Father's good pleasure and His perfect will, desiring for Himself what He taught His followers to desire by asking in prayer that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

### Obedient to Scripture

Christ was obedient to the demands and commands of the Father's revealed will expressed in His written Word, frequently citing or alluding to God's revealed Word in the Old Testament Scriptures. Such was His familiarity with those Scriptures that He could take a scroll and immediately open it to the place from which He wanted to read (Luke 4:17-19).

By disciplined, we mean Christ practiced certain attitudes and actions with intentionality. He did not live randomly,

but purposefully. For example, Christ participated in the regular practices of worship in local synagogues as well as at the temple, especially on annual Holy Days. The phrase "as His custom was" offers insight into His devotion to synagogue attendance, such as happened when He returned to Nazareth. According to Luke 4:16, "He came to Nazareth where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath Day."

### Intentional solitude

Christ's devotion to the Father and to holy things also showed up in other spiritual disciplines that characterized His life. As noted already, He made the discipline of prayer prominent during His earthly sojourn. Not only so, but living and serving amid the multitudes, Christ sought special times for the discipline of solitude.

Luke 9:10 witnesses to His awareness of the need for special seasons of withdrawal when He took the apostles "and went aside privately into a deserted place." The record of His life in the four Gospels suggests One who lived intentionally.

In reading the Gospels, we do not get the impression that Christ was ever caught simply killing time or using major seasons for doing nothing. He was excellent at redeeming the time.

Such indications of His devoutness and devotion furnish us a backdrop against which to look at ourselves as we ponder the depth and consistency of our devoutness and devotion.✠

*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.*



# Gov. Bentley must take action against illegal gambling, AG Strange says

By Maggie Walsh  
The Alabama Baptist

When he signed his name on Executive Order 24 on Oct. 3, Gov. Robert Bentley created the Alabama Advisory Council on Gaming. He also prompted some questions.

According to the executive order, the council will "assess the current state and local laws on gambling, as well as the taxes generated therefrom, and will evaluate the best practices in other states, including the tax revenue structures and the enabling and implementing regulations and laws." It will then present its findings and recommendations to Bentley, Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh and House Speaker Mac McCutcheon by Jan. 1, 2017.

But what effect will the council have on the current illegal bingo gambling going on at VictoryLand in Macon County and at White Hall and Southern Star casinos in Lowndes County?

### Must step in

Attorney General Luther Strange — who Bentley authorized to enforce gambling laws soon after Bentley came into office in 2011, but since shifted the responsibility to local law enforcement in November 2015 — said that if local law enforcement isn't enforcing the law then Bentley must step in.

"I don't know what the governor's Advisory Council on Gaming will conclude, whether the Legislature will adopt its

recommendations or whether the people of Alabama will approve whatever comes out of the Legislature," Strange said. "But I do know the electronic bingo that is going on today in defiance of state law is illegal. That is absolutely clear."

"The answer to lawlessness is not a new committee. It's action."

Yasamie August, Bentley's press secretary, said the governor formed the advisory council "because the ongoing issue of gambling needs to be solved once and for all in Alabama."

But as far as the Alabama Supreme Court is concerned, electronic bingo gambling has already been solved — it was ruled "illegal" in March.

And while Strange has the authority to investigate the illegal gambling going on, "we're beyond investigation," said Mike Lewis, Strange's communications director.

In a joint letter in September, Strange and Bentley reminded local law enforcement in all counties with constitutional amendments related to bingo gambling of the law. But in Macon and Lowndes counties, the laws are not being enforced (see "Illegal gambling allowed to operate in Alabama" in the Oct. 6 issue).

Strange said, "Through [the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency], the governor commands virtually the entire apparatus of statewide law enforcement. When local officials refuse to enforce the law, when they defy not only the Alabama Supreme Court but his own executive order, he must act."✠

**"The answer to lawlessness is not a new committee."**

**It's action."**

**Attorney General Luther Strange**

## FBC Tillman's Corner dedicates new addition

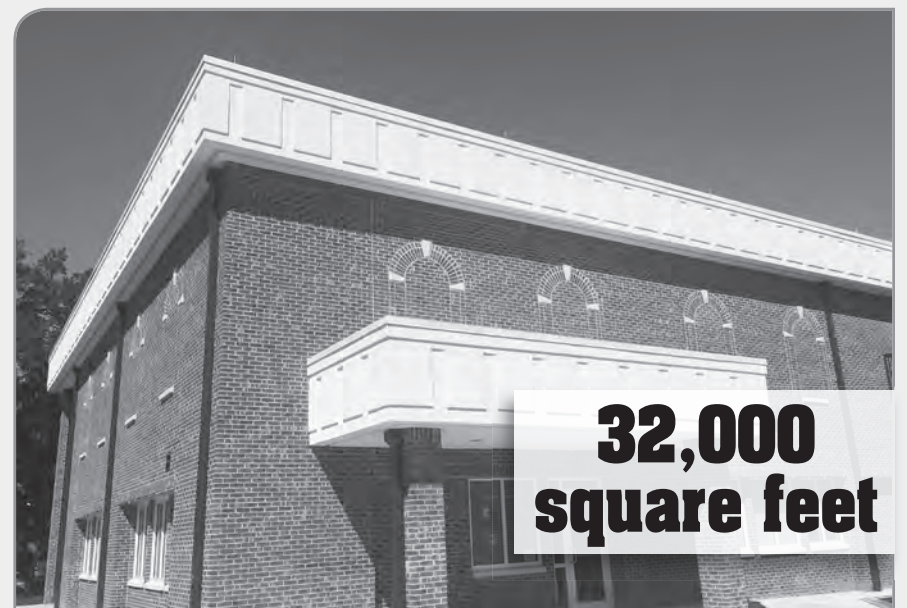


Photo courtesy of FBC Tillman's Corner

First Baptist Church, Tillman's Corner, in Mobile, dedicated its new 32,000-squarefoot addition to its children-student and administration building Oct. 9. The church also recently renovated its sanctuary and is currently expanding its choir room. The dedication service was held at 10:30 a.m. and the new building was named the Sciple Center after its architect, Jim Sciple, who died shortly before the building was completed. Greg Pouncey is pastor.

# Alabama, Tennessee churches partner to serve Louisiana flood survivors

The efforts of five churches from two states made a major difference to one church in Baker, Louisiana.

Faith Baptist Church, Baker, withstood damage to its education space, sanctuary and parsonage after mid-August torrential rains brought with them immense flooding.

Although Pastor Thomas Fletcher now serves in Louisiana, he previously served as a youth ministry intern back in Alabama at Thomasville Baptist Church. His wife, Bethany, also has family that are members of Pineview Baptist Church, Thomasville.

The Thomasville connection, along with the desire to help, led 125 volunteers from Thomasville and other cities to team up to help recover and rebuild the church in Baker, along with three homes in the community.

## Reversing the damage

Pineview Baptist Church, Thomasville; Thomasville Baptist; Pine Hill Baptist Church; Indian Springs Baptist Church, Kingsport, Tennessee; and Grace Baptist Church, Springfield, Tennessee; worked together in mid-September to reverse the damage the flooding had done.

"It was really a God thing how all the details came together," said Pastor Mitch Thrower, who leads Pineview Baptist.

He said a small crew went to serve in Baker in late August doing mostly clean up and recovery, but a larger crew served in mid-September to rebuild.

"The best part of it all is that life change happened in the midst of it all. One of those who went to work gained the greatest gift of all — salvation," Thrower said.

The efforts also were supported by the Tennessee Baptist Convention, Louisiana Baptist



Photo by Mitch Thrower

When the floodwaters rose in Louisiana in mid-August, Faith Baptist Church, Baker, withstood significant damage.



Photo by Mitch Thrower

Faith Baptist Church, Baker, Louisiana, was refinished by five churches from Alabama and Tennessee in mid-September.

Convention, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and the North American Mission Board, according to a press release from Grace Baptist.

Grace Baptist titled their part of the effort "Operation James 222," referencing the passage James 2:22 and the "biblical principle of living out one's Christian faith through tangible acts of mercy and love." (TAB)



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# Theological confusion

## Study shows US Christians 'lack understanding' of faith

**T**wo-thirds of Americans believe God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism and Islam, according to LifeWay Research's 2016 State of American Theology Study.

However, only 48 percent of Americans with evangelical Christian beliefs share the belief that God accepts all worship.

Although the percentage drops below the halfway mark for evangelicals, it's still a troubling statistic, according to Steve King, pastor of First Baptist Church, Alexander City.

"The held belief that God receives the worship of all religions reveals a lack of understanding the fundamental difference of Christianity from all other worldviews," King said.

### 'Basic distinction'

"All other religions are roads going up the mountain to get to God. Christianity is the exact opposite — it's God coming down the mountain to come to us," he continued. "So the notion that Christianity can be classified with all other religions sadly reveals a failure on our part to teach this most basic and elementary distinction that makes Christianity totally impossible to be placed in the same box with other world religions."

In addition to this lack of understanding, the study also suggests Americans as a whole hold seemingly contradicting beliefs.

For instance 7 in 10 Americans said there's only one true God who is expressed as the Christian Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), the survey found.

Among those beliefs, 6 in 10 Americans said "heaven is a place where all people will ultimately be reunited with their loved ones," indicating that everyone goes to heaven. But on a separate question, 54 percent of Americans said "only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God's free gift of eternal salvation."

And nearly two-thirds of Americans said Jesus is God, the report said. But then more than half said Jesus was a creature created by God.

Jay Robertson, assistant professor of Christian ministries at the University of Mobile and pastor for preaching and vision at Crawford Baptist Church, Mobile, said, "These statistics reveal a crisis in American Christianity."

"Many people who go to church do not participate in small group discipleship and are not growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. ... Many who attend services have little to no knowledge of ba-

sic Christian doctrines," he said. Additional findings include:

► Americans are split on whether the Bible is literally true. Nearly half of Americans (44 percent) answered "like all sacred writings, (it) contains helpful accounts of ancient myths but is not literally true," while about the same number (45 percent) disagreed. Evangelicals were less likely (17 percent) to agree with that and most likely (95 percent) to say it is "100 percent accurate in all it teaches."

► Forty-four percent of Americans agreed modern science discredits the claims of Christianity,

while 40 percent disagreed.

► Less than half of Americans (40 percent) believe hell is an "eternal place of judgment where God sends all people who do not personally trust in Jesus Christ." Evangelicals were more likely (84 percent) to believe in hell as a place of judgment.

### Addressing the trend

► Americans also disagree about issues of homosexuality, gender and abortion. About the same number of Americans said Bible verses that seem to condemn homosexual behavior do (44 percent) and don't (42 percent) apply today. That gap widens when it comes to gender identity: 38 percent agreed it is "a matter of choice," while half disagree. On abortion: 49 percent said it is a sin while 40 percent said it is not.

So how can pastors address the trend of theological confusion? Through intentional discipleship, King said.

"Going forward, it will require an intentional effort and a heightened emphasis in the future on the teaching of Christian apologetics," he said.

Robertson agreed, saying, "I am hopeful for the future as there seems to be a renewed emphasis on disciple making in many churches."

At the end of the day, King said, "the good news" for church leaders "is that truth is on our side." (RNS, Maggie Walsh)



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*The Alabama Baptist (TAB)* is partnering with Kevin Blackwell, executive director of MTI, to provide the certificate. The certificate consists of four courses in communication — written, verbal, digital/social and interpersonal.

TAB's Jennifer Davis Rash teaches the written communication course, which just wrapped up for the 2016-2017 school year.

Bryan D. Gill, associate director of Samford's office of professional studies, will teach the verbal communication course that begins Oct. 25. Gill has a bachelor of arts in

communication from Auburn University, a master of divinity from Samford's Beeson Divinity School and is working on his doctor of ministry degree from Gateway Seminary in California. He also worked for TAB while studying at Beeson.

The final two courses will be taught by TAB's Carrie Brown McWhorter, a 25-year veteran communicator.

The current course — verbal communication — is designed to introduce students to a variety of skills, situations and delivery methods that are useful in ministry settings. Students will learn how to write and deliver all types of speeches; improve their ability to speak in front of groups; share on podcasts and/or radio spots; and know how to appropriately gauge the length of their speech based on the situation, audience and content.

To register, visit [samford.edu/go/mti](http://samford.edu/go/mti) or call 205-726-4055. (TAB)

## ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

### Mount Zion pastor marks 50 years in ministry

Sammie Reid knew at age 21 that God was calling him to be a pastor, and it's a calling he has been faithful to for 50 years.

Reid has served Mount Zion Baptist Church, Warrior, for the past 31 years and was honored Oct. 2 with the church naming its new children's building after him and his late wife, Shirley.

He also has served as pastor of Gethsemane Baptist Church, Hayden; Mount View Baptist Church, Hayden; and Zola Baptist Church, Warrior.

Reid holds a bachelor of ministry degree, master of divinity degree and doctor of ministry degree from Luther Rice Seminary in Lithonia, Georgia.

Additionally, he served 19 years with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and three years as a trustee for the North American Missions Board.

"If I had 10 lives to live I would want to live all of them as a pastor of a local Baptist church," he said. "And I would prefer to serve in an Alabama Baptist convention church."

Reid has two sons, six grandchildren and one great-grandchild. (TAB)



REID



(augmented reality)

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#### BIVOCATIONAL/FULL-TIME PASTOR

Providence Baptist Church, Rockford, Alabama, is searching for a pastor. Please send resumé to John Harris at 8973 US-HWY 231, Rockford, AL 35136 or email at [laurah2465@charter.net](mailto:laurah2465@charter.net).

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

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

#### PART-TIME PASTOR

Hill Spring Baptist Church, 335 Eliza Jordan Rd., Mobile, AL. Seeking part-time pastor; will give consideration to full-time pastor. Church website: [hillspringbaptist.org](http://hillspringbaptist.org). Send resumé to [bobwal-dropjr@yahoo.com](mailto:bobwal-dropjr@yahoo.com).

#### BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC

Ashby Baptist Church in Brierfield, AL, is seeking a bivocational minister of music. Please send resumé to: [smljope@gmail.com](mailto:smljope@gmail.com). For more information, call 205-665-5449.

#### BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH PASTOR

East McFarland Baptist Church is

in search of a bivocational youth pastor. Interested parties please send resumé to 6007 McFarland Blvd. E., Tuscaloosa, AL 35405. No phone calls please.

#### 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](mailto: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](mailto:youth-searchteam@southsidebaptist.com) or mail: Southside Baptist Attn: Youth Search, P.O. Box 684, Princeton, KY 42445.

#### STUDENT MINISTER

Union Hill Baptist, Oneonta, is seeking a full-time student minister (grades 1-12) for a growing fellowship with two Sunday morning services. Experience should include leadership in evangelism, missions, small group ministry and discipleship for children and youth. Please submit resumes to: 2919 Co. Hwy. 39, Oneonta, Alabama

35121. 205-274-9232. [bbar-nett@otelco.net](mailto:bbar-nett@otelco.net).

#### 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](mailto:CalvaryHeightsBaptist@gmail.com).

#### CHILDCARE POSITIONS

North Shelby Baptist Church is looking for two paid childcare positions for Sunday nights, Wednesday nights and special events. Please contact Julie Donovan at [Julie@northshelbybaptist.org](mailto:Julie@northshelbybaptist.org) for more information.

#### NURSERY WORKERS

East McFarland Baptist Church is in search of hourly paid nursery workers for Sunday worship services and special events. Interested parties please send resumé to ATTN: Nursery Worker, EMBC, 6007 McFarland Blvd. E., Tuscaloosa, AL 35405, or email to [embcoffice@comcast.net](mailto:embcoffice@comcast.net). No phone calls please.

#### SECRETARY

Secretary position at Hepzibah Baptist Church, McCalla, AL. 3 days a week M, W & TH, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Email inquiries and resumes to [hbcsecretary1@bell-south.net](mailto:hbcsecretary1@bell-south.net).

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# Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

## Bettye Minyard



MINYARD

*McEntyre Baptist Church, Ashville  
St. Clair Baptist Association*

**FAVORITE VERSE:** Romans 8:38–39

**FAVORITE HYMN:** “Because He Lives”

**HOBBIES:** Reading and playing music

**FAMILY STATUS:** Married 58 years to husband, Jesse; sons, Mike and Kyle and the late Mark; daughters,

Amy and Beth; eight grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren

*Bettye Minyard, 75, of Rainbow City, has played the piano or organ in churches for 61 years. She also is a substitute Sunday School teacher, helps with Vacation Bible School and visits people for the church with her husband. Nine years ago she organized her church's choir and continues to lead it. She also selects music for worship services. About her music ministry, she said, “I love it and thank God every day that He gave me what little ability I have.” In addition, she served thousands of children in the 19 years she worked in the lunchroom of John S. Jones Elementary School in Rainbow City.*

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

A: My granddaddy, Louie Calhoun, was a minister and served in churches in St. Clair, Etowah and Blount counties. My grandmother, Annie Mae Calhoun, was a godly woman. They had a lot of influence on my life. I was saved during a revival at Gum Springs Baptist Church, Ashville. I was 12 years old. I was very blessed to be raised up in a good Christian home. My mother and father, Louise and Warner Davis, were very good Christians.

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

A: I began to take music lessons in third grade. The pianist at Gum Springs Baptist would

let me play on Sunday nights to get experience. I thank God for the privilege of serving Him through music.

**Q: What does your ministry work demand?**

A: First of all, I don't feel like it's a demand. It's a joy to be able to serve God through music. I try to be dedicated and committed to it. If there is any praise, it would go to God and not me. He works through me.

**Q: What do you get from your ministry work?**

A: The joy and just working with the choir like I do; they're so willing to learn and they do just an outstanding job.

**Q: How do family members support you?**

A: Oh, they do. My husband is right there with me. He is someone I can count on. One of my daughters-in-law is in the choir and helps me a lot with arrangements when we are trying to get them together.

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

A: I just hope and pray that God allows me the ability and strength to carry on. Music is such a love of mine and it is my way of sharing ... what God has done in my life.

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

A: Oh, He's made all the difference in my life. ... There's nothing like a personal relationship with Jesus. ☞

*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.*

# Prepared for Hurricane Matthew

## Alabama Baptist DR volunteers ready to serve

By Neisha Roberts  
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Baptists once again put on their yellow shirts — this time to assist residents who withstood Hurricane Matthew in early October.

By Oct. 4 officials in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina had declared states of emergency in anticipation of the powerful storm, which remained a Category 3 as it began to pass near the east coast Oct. 7.

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (DR) volunteers were in touch with ministry partners in Haiti and the eastern U.S. about “when and where volunteers and other resources will be most effective,” according to sbdr.org.

At press time, volunteers were scheduled to deploy to Florida on Oct. 9 along with a feeding unit, shower trailers, administration teams, skid-steer equipment and chaplains.

### Sending teams

Dan Wiggins, a team leader for chaplaincy ministry for Alabama Baptist DR and director of missions for Pleasant Grove Baptist Association, told *The Alabama Baptist* at press time that about 50 volunteers were set to deploy.

Specific relief details and locations had not been determined at

press time as DR leadership was staging and preparing for where the storm would hit, according to Mark Wakefield, disaster relief and chaplaincy ministry strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

“The uncertainty is just part of doing disaster relief,” Wakefield said. “It takes a lot of flexibility and willingness to adapt to get the job done.”

Two Florida Baptist feeding units were set up at Lake Yale Baptist Conference Center in Leesburg, Florida, for rapid response. And Florida Baptist DR officials requested that partners in Mississippi and Texas be on standby as well.

Baptist Global Response (BGR), the International Mission Board's relief partner, is working to help hurricane survivors in Cuba. The country lacks nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), resources and trained personnel so it will be a place of primary focus. BGR will initially work through four life-saving sectors (or emergency-type needs) — water, sanitation and hygiene; food security; shelter and

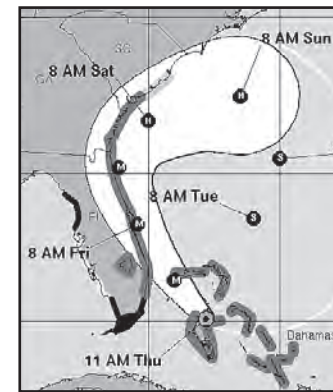
nonfood items; and health.

Haiti took a direct hit from the hurricane Oct. 4 but is supplied with NGOs and ministries that have been there since the 2010 earthquake and were able to deploy immediately. Haiti “is not a priority at this point for Baptist Global Response although we will be doing small projects with local personnel,” according to Pat Melancon, managing director of BGR's disaster

response and training. The greatest need “is for funding that will enable us to effectively and efficiently address the situation,” Melancon said.

Rick Lance, SBOM executive director, said any contribution made through sbdr.org/donate “will be used entirely to help people impacted by Hurricane Matthew. ... It is Alabama Baptists' faithfulness through Cooperative Program giving that allows this 100 percent commitment.”

To give mail a check for “Hurricane Matthew Relief” to SBOM, P.O. Box 11870, Montgomery, AL 36111, or visit sbdr.org/donate. ☞



Oct. 6 screengrab from weather.gov

**TAB**  
THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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**Interested in learning a few tricks on using lavalier mics? See page 10's AR information or TAB's digital edition to watch the instructional video above provided by Land Tech Video.**

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- Blackmon, Willie Mae**, Bay Minette: Durant Chapel BC of Bay Minette
- Bridges, William T.**: County Line BC of Pine Hill
- Brown, Ronald (Ronnie)**, Eight Mile: Durant Chapel BC of Bay Minette
- Clary, Thomas**, Linden: Providence BC of Gallion
- Dailey, Margaret Till**, Camden: Awin BC of Pine Apple
- Edwards, Robin N.**, Birmingham: Wilma Edwards & Family
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- Griffin, Justin**, Birmingham: Dr. & Mrs. James T. Griffin
- Hicks, Kirvin**, Grove Hill: Ladies II of Forest Avenue BC of Jackson, Geneva Taylor
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- Windham, James**, Andalusia: Ottis & Betty Reynolds

Honors are listed below (the name of the honoree is bolded).

- Adams, Frank A.**, Millry: Sarah A. Gibson
- Carpenter, Virginia A.**, Millry: Sarah A. Gibson
- Strickland, Ann A.**, Saraland: Sarah A. Gibson

## THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who made a Grace Gift to Alabama Baptist Children's Homes. To learn more about Grace Gifts or how to make one, visit [alabamachild.org/give](http://alabamachild.org/give) or call 205.982.1112.



Alabama Baptist  
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# KNOW

what to do in case of  
suspected  
concussion.

A concussion is an injury caused by a blow to the head in which the brain moves rapidly and may collide with the inside of the skull. Even a minor fall or collision may be of concern, so be alert to symptoms such as headaches, unsteadiness, confusion or other types of abnormal behavior. Any athlete with a suspected concussion:

- Should be IMMEDIATELY REMOVED FROM PLAY/ACTIVITY
- Should be evaluated right away by a doctor/healthcare professional
- Should not be left alone
- Should not drive a motor vehicle



Children's  
of Alabama

[www.ChildrensAL.org/concussion](http://www.ChildrensAL.org/concussion)

In case of medical emergency, call 911 or go directly to your local ER



## River Region Judgment House 'amazing ministry,' leader says

(continued from page 1)  
with neighbors like Annys, he said. "Bottom line, it's about seeing lives changed and lost people come to Christ."

In 2015 one man who was driving by saw the sign and decided to stop by with his kid, Gay said.

"He got saved, ended up joining the church and got baptized," he said. "And then when the pastor went out to visit him and follow up, he met the man's brother, and his brother received Christ too."

A week later, that brother passed away.

### Hearing the gospel

"Just because that man came to the Judgment House, his brother heard the gospel. And that's just one story of the hundreds and hundreds who come through the judgment house," Gay said.

It really works, he said.

"It's not just a flash in the pan where people raise their hands. We're doing our very best to follow up with people and make sure they get plugged in and become real disciples of Christ," Gay said. "It's an amazing ministry that has seen amazing fruit."

Reed DePace, pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Montgomery, said his church has chosen to partner with First, Montgomery, and other churches to put on the Judgment House because it builds up the body of Christ in the church and community.

### Taking the next step

"It's a phenomenal ministry," he said. "It encourages the people in our church to share the gospel, and it presents that message in a very clear way for the community."

At the end of the Judgment House walk through, every visitor who raises his or her hand and asks to learn more, that's an easy witnessing opportunity, DePace said. "This event is a good way to get back to the basics — the reality of judgment, the reality of hell and the reality of Jesus as the solution."

The River Region Judgment House will be open 6–9 p.m. Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays beginning Oct. 12. Starting Oct. 26, it will run every night through Oct. 31.

It is located at 4003 Eastern Boulevard in Montgomery.

For more information or to register a group, visit [www.judgmenthouse.org](http://www.judgmenthouse.org).

## VOICE YOUR OPINION

**SPEAK UP** on issues in the Baptist world by writing a letter to the editor of *The Alabama Baptist*.

### Remember to:

- Include your name and address
- Focus on issues, not people
- Be as concise as possible

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 16

Explore the Bible

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

EQUIPPED TO LIVE

1 Peter 4:1-11

Living for God (1-4)

As Christ suffered when He was in the world, so Jesus' followers should expect to encounter opposition and hardship in the world as well. "Arm yourselves with the same way of thinking" means we need to know what we believe and why we believe it and be willing to suffer for it. As the mind of Christ is formed in us, we experience transformation. Although believers will never be totally free from sin in this life, when believers endure suffering for the sake of Christ they show that their purpose in life is not to live for their own pleasures but according to the will of God and for His pleasure.

Because of what Christ has done for us and in us, we no longer serve sin as our master. We do not spend our days overcome by desires as we once did. The lives of unbelievers have not fundamentally changed from the first century to the 21st century. But believers have been fundamentally changed by the grace of God at work in them. Christ not only resides in the believer; He also presides. He transforms believers into His image. Jesus loves us too much to leave us the way we were when He saved us.

Being new in Christ means daily walking away from the old life of sin and daily walking in the new life we have in Him. Everything that is true about us positionally in Christ, God is working out in our lives practically.

Answering for the Gospel (5-6)

Unbelievers, convicted by the God-wrought changes in your life, may react negatively toward you. They may be puzzled and then outraged when followers of Jesus do not participate in their sins with them. But unbelievers do not have the last

word. They will give an account and face God's judgment.

Even death does not have the last word for Jesus' followers. The phrase "the gospel was preached even to those who are dead" does not mean God offers people a second chance after death. It is best understood to mean Christians who had the gospel preached to them while they were alive but who have since died. Even though believers will experience physical death, believers who have died "live in the spirit the way God does." That is, they live in heaven now with Christ, but they will live as well at the resurrection when Christ returns.

Redeem the Time (7-11)

"The end of all things is at hand" does not mean Peter was expecting Christ to return in a few weeks. It means that all the major events in God's plan of redemption — culminating in the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost — had already occurred. Jesus can return at any time. It was "at hand" in Peter's day, and it still is today. But the imminent arrival of the end is not a call to sit down and wait for Jesus to appear.

The imminent return of Christ ought to motivate Jesus' followers to glorify God in everything they do. Jesus' return should create within us a sense of urgency that should characterize every aspect of our lives. In light of Christ's return, believers need to use good judgment and stay calm in a spirit of prayer. Don't lose your head and act irrationally. Think clearly and pray about everything.

Stay fervent in love for one another. The word fervent means "strained." We should stretch our love for one another to the limit. Believers also should be hospitable toward one another. Love opens the door of your heart and your home. As we expect Jesus to return, we should keep busy serving one another for the glory of God. ✠

Bible Studies for Life

By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Religion, Samford University

UNSTOPPABLE MISSION

Acts 1:4-8, 12-14

When we turn to the book of Acts, we are actually turning to the second book of a two-part series. Volume 1 is the Gospel of Luke. The Acts of the Apostles is Volume 2. Although the Gospel of John interrupts this series in the canonical ordering of the New Testament books, we have to transcend this interruption and read Luke and Acts together if we want to understand Luke's message in its entirety.

Nowhere is this more true than in Luke's emphasis on reaching out to the nations. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus' ministry is focused almost exclusively on Israel (cf. Matt. 10:6; 15:24). Matthew does record Jesus' famous "Great Commission," but this commission comes only at the very end of his Gospel (Matt. 28:18-20). In Luke's Gospel, there is a much stronger and much earlier emphasis on sending the message of Jesus out to the rest of the world.

In the very first sermon Jesus delivers in Luke, He uses Elijah's helping the widow in Zarephath and Elisha's healing Naaman the Syrian as examples of reaching out to Gentiles. In Luke 9 we find Jesus preaching to a Samaritan village and in Luke 10, Jesus casts a Samaritan as the good man in His famous parable.

Even Luke's genealogy of Jesus seems to emphasize Jesus' availability to Gentiles. Whereas Matthew only traces Jesus' genealogy back to Abraham, the father of the Hebrews, Luke traces His lineage all the way back to Adam, the father of all people (Luke 3). This emphasis on reaching out to the nations comes into even greater focus as we turn from Luke to Acts.

Jesus has promised to empower us with the Holy Spirit. (4-5)

Although Jesus' commission to reach out to the nations lies just around the

corner, as the book of Acts opens, Jesus and His disciples are still in Jerusalem. The reason for this is that the disciples are not yet ready to take on the task ahead of them.

To be sure, they have heard the message of Jesus. What they lack is the empowering of the Holy Spirit. At one of His last meals with them, Jesus instructs the disciples to stay in Jerusalem until the Spirit comes upon them and gives them the power they need to weather the difficult storms ahead.

The Spirit empowers us to be His witnesses locally and globally. (6-8)

In His many sermons and lessons, Jesus often taught His followers about His coming kingdom. Having witnessed Jesus' resurrection, the disciples naturally wondered if this was the moment when that kingdom would come. Jesus' response was to tell the disciples that another job had to be completed first. That job was to take His message to the world as a whole: "You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

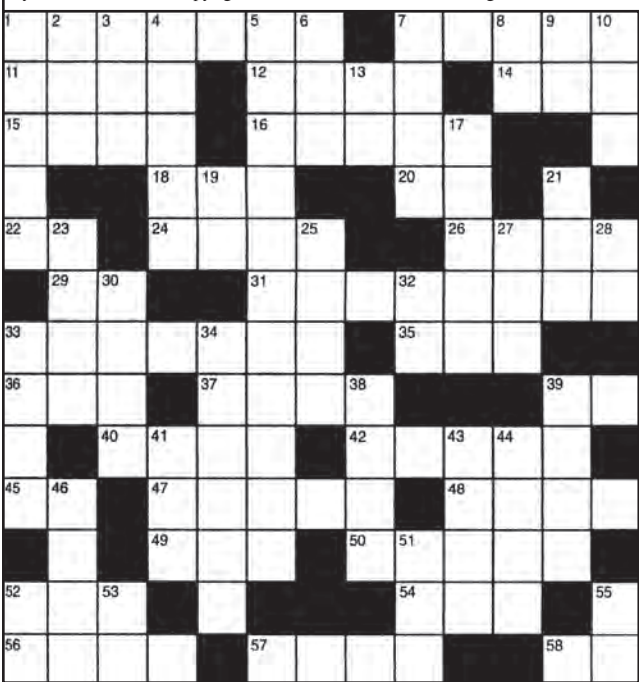
This is just what the disciples do in the rest of Acts, preaching in Jerusalem in Chapters 2-7, to the Samaritans in Chapter 8 and to the Gentiles in Chapter 10. As the book presses on, so do the disciples, taking the gospel farther and farther into the rest of the world.

Prayer unites believers in our focus on Christ and His mission. (12-14)

Although Jesus left the disciples as He ascended to heaven, their continued reliance on Him is evident in their next actions. Walking down from the Mount of Olives and back to Jerusalem, the disciples return to the upper room that had been their headquarters. Here, they join with one another in the act that would sustain them through all the days ahead: they pray. ✠

Christian Crossword

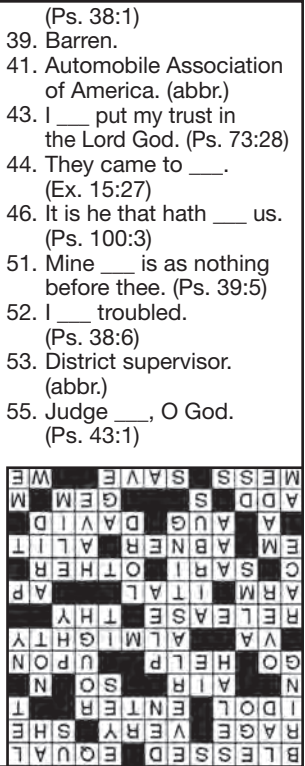
By Helen Walter Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. \_\_\_\_ is the man. (Ps. 1:1)
7. Of the same quantity.
11. Why do the heathen \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 2:1)
12. They shall deceive the \_\_\_\_ elect. (Matt. 24:24)
14. \_\_\_\_ brought forth her firstborn son. (Luke 2:7)
15. Object of worship.
16. \_\_\_\_ into his gates with thanksgiving. (Ps. 100:4)
18. A bird of the \_\_\_\_\_. (Eccles. 10:20)
20. The ungodly are not \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 1:4)
22. Why \_\_\_\_ I mourning? (Ps. 43:2)
24. He is our \_\_\_\_ and our shield. (Ps. 33:20)
26. Make thy face to shine \_\_\_\_ thy servant. (Ps. 31:16)
29. Veterans' Administration. (abbr.)
31. Under the shadow of the \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 91:1)
33. Let go.
35. \_\_\_\_ word is a lamp

- unto my feet. (Ps. 119:105)
36. Thy right hand, and thine \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 44:3)
37. Italic. (abbr.)
39. Associated Press. (abbr.)
40. Indian garment.
42. Thou shalt have none \_\_\_\_ gods before me. (Deut. 5:7)
45. Printer's measure.
47. Commander of Saul's army. (1 Sam. 17:55)
48. Came down.
49. August. (abbr.)
50. Psalm writer.
52. Total.
54. Precious stone.
56. Army \_\_\_\_ hall.
57. Arise, O Lord; \_\_\_\_ me. (Ps. 3:7)
58. \_\_\_\_ are his people. (Ps. 100:3)
4. Hebrew word in some Psalms.
5. His mercy is \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 100:5)
6. Animal home.
7. Our \_\_\_\_ wait upon the Lord. (Ps. 123:2)
8. ... the glory which shall be revealed in \_\_\_\_\_. (Rom. 8:18)
9. Word of contentment.
10. \_\_\_\_ God arise. (Ps. 68:1)
13. Route. (abbr.)
17. Not smooth.
19. That is.
21. The ungodly shall \_\_\_\_ stand. (Ps. 1:5)
23. Above.
25. \_\_\_\_ bargain.
27. Physician. (abbr.)
28. New York. (abbr.)
30. Do not your \_\_\_\_ before men. (Matt. 6:1)
32. \_\_\_\_ is a good thing to give thanks. (Ps. 92:1)
33. Rejoiceth as a strong man to run a \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 19:5)
34. A large plane.
38. O \_\_\_\_, rebuke me not.
- Down
1. They shall still \_\_\_\_ forth fruit. (Ps. 92:14)
2. Young boy.
3. Id, \_\_\_\_, superego.



# WHAT ARE YOU READING?



123rf.com

## Alabama Baptists share about what they are currently reading

### SHERYL YOUNG

*Dogwood Grove Baptist Church, Montevallo*

**“Cold Case Christianity” by J. Warner Wallace**

As a Christian since 1987, I’ve heard endless attempts by skeptics and atheists to refute the four Gospel writers’ evidence of Christ’s ministry and resurrection. But this book can really make someone take another look.

J. Warner Wallace is a well-known Los Angeles homicide detective, often called into courtrooms to give evidence of a crime. He also was an atheist. He decided once and for all to use his expert detective skills to prove that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were either lying or imagining things. But as he used his expertise, he found more and more evidence that their accounts are true and gave his life to Christ.

In his book he employs the main tactics that detectives use to prove their case against a suspect and to prove whether witnesses are telling the truth. With historical and forensic facts that back up the Word of God, Wallace dispels secular statements like, “If the gospel were true, all four writers would have said exactly the same thing.”

But this isn’t a snoozer full of statistics for theologians. It’s entertaining, eye-catching and the information is memorable for anyone from 12 to 90 (there’s also a kids’ version). Wallace’s style of writing is so engaging and down to earth that this is an “I can’t put it down” adventure in Christian apologetics, with the additional use of cute sketches that illustrate the same kind of evidence he points to in a courtroom.

### NEISHA ROBERTS

*The Alabama Baptist*

**“Becoming Your Best” by Ronald W. Richardson**

When life is difficult and “everyone” seems to be upset with and disapproving of you and it feels like no one wants to be around you, it can be a tough pill to swallow to realize that those ideas may not be true at all. Those fears and feelings of “I’m not good enough” could in fact be your brain telling you falsities through the shroud of anxiety. And according to Ronald W. Richardson, to be human is to be anxious, so it’s something everyone deals with in one way or another.

“Becoming Your Best” is straightforward but thought provoking and discusses the ideas of emotional maturity, self-awareness, anxiety, communication and more all in respect to relationships.

A bit of a unique twist, but one that I really like, is that Richardson weaves lessons from characters found in Jane Austen books into “Becoming Your Best.” So far he’s mentioned characters from “Pride and Prejudice,” “Persuasion,” “Emma,” “Sense and Sensibility” and “Mansfield Park.”

If you’re looking to improve your self-awareness, as well as your relationships, I’d highly recommend “Becoming Your Best.” And don’t worry, you don’t have to like Austen or even have read any of her books to enjoy Richardson’s work. ☘

**Tell us what you’re reading. Email [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org).**

RamCorps’ new album ‘The Movement’ includes solo work, group vocals, rapping and even yelling, said Kenn Hughes, the group’s director.



Photo courtesy of the University of Mobile

# ‘Boldly proclaim’

## New RamCorps album aims to be ‘magnet’

RamCorps’ new album, “The Movement,” is more than a collection of great music, said Kenn Hughes, associate professor of music and director of instrumental studies at the University of Mobile (UM) and director of RamCorps, a 30-member Christ-centered high impact visual brass and percussion ensemble comprised of UM students.

“RamCorps set out to record an album to create a new sound in contemporary Christian music, to develop student musicians into professional artists, and to be musically and culturally relevant,” Hughes said.

“‘The Movement’ is sharing the gospel using music as a magnet to attract a variety of people from all walks of life. This album demonstrates the energy and passion of RamCorps to boldly proclaim the love of God.”

Hughes said the album is a compilation of selected Christian titles of contemporary music mirroring the style of groups like Bonerama, New Birth Brass Band, New Orleans Night Crawlers, The Soul Rebels, Trombone Shorty and Youngblood Brass Band.

The high-energy group released “The Movement” with a free launch party Sept. 19.

Musical elements in the album include solo work, group vocals, rapping and even yelling to take full advantage of these gifted and energetic college students, Hughes said.

“The way this group of students gets to express their love for Christ using music is unlike any other and affords us opportunities that are most unique,” he said. “We’re hopeful that these arrangements and the experience that we gained as performers

will bring people to their feet in our live concerts.”

RamCorps collaborated with professional musicians in Nashville who wrote material for the album and worked in the studio with students. The recording was done over the course of five days in April and May.

RamCorps also recorded a few fan favorites, including “The Movement” and “Brooklyn” by Young Blood Brass Band, plus a new single by RamCorps member Michael Jolly, “Just in Time.”

The group performs more than 120 concerts each year in churches, schools and public venues across Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, Arkansas, South Carolina and North Carolina.

RamCorps has traveled internationally on musical missions trips to areas such as Jamaica, the Bahamas, the Turks and Caicos Islands and in Sochi, Russia, during the Olympics.

As Compassion Music Artist Ambassadors, they are

recognized among artists such as Michael W. Smith, Amy Grant and Phil Keaggy who partner with the child advocacy ministry Compassion International. Through Compassion International, RamCorps sponsors Henriette, a girl from Africa.

### Additional performances

RamCorps will perform along with other Christian artists on the 2017 K-Love Cruise aboard the MSC Divina, which will port in the Bahamas and in the Dominican Republic. Among the performers are Steven Curtis Chapman, Matt Maher, Natalie Grant, and UM alumni Big Daddy Weave, among others.

For information about “The Movement,” visit [www.umobile.edu](http://www.umobile.edu). (UM)



# Representing Christ

## Red Wings pitcher strives to grow closer to God

By Bill Sorrell  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When Jake Reed is in hot water on the mound, his mind speeds like a fastball to his favorite place.

"If I am out there struggling, I think about being back at home and being in the ocean. It just reminds you of how small you are and how insignificant you are in this world," said Reed, a right-handed pitcher for the Rochester Red Wings, the Triple-A affiliate of the Minnesota Twins.

Growing up in San Diego and surfing since he was 7, Reed connects the practice-makes-perfect theme of baseball with surfing and correlates baseball with faith.

"The platform that sports in general gives us Christian athletes is pretty great. The fan base for professional baseball is through the roof, especially in the big leagues. Constantly being out there in front of all the people and representing something bigger than yourself is awesome.

"The opportunity to play with so many different guys and maybe changing a few of their lives and bringing them to Christ is very important to me. I know I am here for a reason."

Reed was promoted to the Red Wings, which plays in the International League, from Chattanooga, the Twins' Double-A team in the Southern League. He had a 1-1 record with a 1.69 ERA and eight strike outs in Rochester in nine games. He played 41 games in Chattanooga and was 3-3 with a 3.90 ERA and 64 strikeouts.

### Strengthening relationships

Growing up in La Mesa, California, Reed was a 2011 graduate of Helix High School. He was baptized when he was young and now attends The Rock Church, San Diego.

While he has always believed in God, 2015 was the first time things "started clicking for me," Reed said. "I started doing some digging and each day I was getting closer to God."

A member of Fellowship of Christian Athletes at the University of Oregon in Eugene, where he was drafted in the fifth round (140th overall) by the Twins in 2014, Reed was involved in a group called CrossTraining led by chaplain Tony Overstake.

"He is one of the guys who shaped my faith as well," Reed said.

"There have been a few key people in my life



Jake Reed

Photo by Katie Ihrig/courtesy of the Rochester Red Wings

that have helped shaped my faith in a great way," he said. "For me it's been a mix of God putting certain people that have pointed me in that direction. There have been situations in my life that I have figured I can't handle them on my own and I need God's help."

Last season was one of those times for Reed.

"I had a rough season. You get to the point where you can't handle things by yourself anymore and I think it was God showing me, 'Hey man, you have done it up to this point by yourself and it is not going to work like that anymore and you are going to need Me to get through those things.'"

Through it all Reed is maturing in his faith and relationship with God. "Jesus is the ultimate role model. The picture of Him and the description of Him in the Bible is everything that I want to be as a man, as a father, as a teammate, as a friend. That is the one person that we should look up to most.

"I am trying to get to that point and obviously I will never be perfect but the closer I can get to the point, the better."

As in baseball, Reed has goals as a Christian.

"I try to get into Scripture as much as I can. That helps a lot," he said. He reads the Bible an hour daily.

"It seems like God has been pointing me in the right direction of what to read, things that I am struggling with, and He has been putting things on my plate that have helped me through some situations.

"Hopefully I will have a family one day and get to raise my kids the way God intended for it to be and be with one woman the rest of my life.

"Without God there is no way to fully love somebody. A relationship with Him is going to make every relationship with somebody else that much stronger." 🌿

## PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



### Muslims convicted in murders of Christians

ISTANBUL, Turkey — Authorities in Turkey recently arrested five Muslim nationalists convicted and sentenced to life in prison for the torture and murder of three Christians in south-east Turkey in 2007. The advocacy group Middle East Concern (MEC) confirmed the news Sept. 30.

"Citing fears that the perpetrators may flee Turkey, the prosecutor, Burhanettin Olgun, requested their arrest, and on the evening of Sept. 29 they were arrested," according to a MEC press statement.

The Malatya First Heavy Penal Court on Sept. 28 found Salih Gurler, Cuma Ozdemir, Abuzer Yildirim, Hamit Ceker and Emre Gunaydin guilty on three counts each of premeditated murder and sentenced them all to life in prison without the possibility of parole. Despite the conviction and sentencing, all five had walked out of court free men while their case awaited higher legal review, infuriating Turkish Christians.

On April 18, 2007, in the office of the Zirve Publishing House in Malatya in southeastern Turkey, the five men killed Ugur Yüksel and Necati Aydin, both Turkish converts from Islam, and Tilmann Geske, a German national.

Police arrested the five men almost immediately after the crime was reported. (MS)

### Christians persecuted for possessing literature

URGENCH, Uzbekistan — A Baptist from Urgench in the northwestern Khorezm Region of Uzbekistan has been punished for a second time within a year for having Christian books at home, which state officials regard as "illegal." As this was a second punishment, Stanislav Kim was convicted under the Criminal Code, receiving a two-year corrective labor sentence.

Kim was the latest in a line of Christians being persecuted for their faith. A Presbyterian Christian in the capital of Tashkent was fined in May for having religious literature at home. A criminal trial against him began in September.

In Surkhandarya Region four Baptists were punished for religious literature confiscated during an illegal house search. Two Bibles, as well as other books and discs, were ordered destroyed. Officials claimed Baptists are banned in the region because they do not have state registration.

In Zarafshan a Baptist pastor and his wife were fined for Bibles and Baptist songbooks seized from their home.

Police and National Security Service secret police officers often seize such literature when they raid individuals' homes. Following administrative or criminal prosecutions, courts frequently order that such literature be destroyed. (F18)

### Ugandan woman beaten for attending church

BUDAKA, Uganda — A Muslim in Uganda beat his wife unconscious for attending a church service Sept. 18, sources said.

Hussein Kasolo had recently married Fatuma Baluka, the 21-year-old daughter of an Islamic leader in a predominantly Muslim village, undisclosed for security reasons, in Eastern Uganda's Budaka District.

"When I arrived home, my husband shouted at me as an 'infidel,' and then and there started hitting me with a metallic object," Baluka said. "I fell down, only to find myself in a hospital bed."

Neighbors said they arrived and rescued Baluka, who was bleeding from head and leg injuries as her husband continued to hit her. They took her to a Budaka District hospital, where she remained until Sept. 22.

She had visited the undisclosed church with a female friend. The church pastor, whose name also is withheld for security reasons, said she became a Christian during that service and is being disciplined.

Baluka has taken refuge at an undisclosed site, he said, adding that she needs prayer for emotional and physical healing. (MS)

***"The platform that sports in general gives us Christian athletes is pretty great. ... I know I am here for a reason."***

**Jake Reed**  
Rochester Red Wings