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New officers

FBC Pell City's Thweatt elected state convention president

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

John Thweatt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pell City, was unanimously elected president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention during the Nov. 15-16 annual meeting in Montgomery.

Thweatt previously served two one-year terms as state convention first vice president and was unopposed in the election for president.

"I'm excited about the opportunity and want to serve Rick (Lance) and the state missionaries however I can," Thweatt said. "I'm especially excited to be working with them during this transition time to a new building."

Thweatt, who currently serves as chairman of the board of trustees for Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, received his graduate degrees from two of the other Southern Baptist seminaries and was an undergraduate at an Alabama Baptist college.

Reaching younger pastors

He received his master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and his doctor of ministry from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He played football for Samford University in Birmingham for a season before finishing up his undergraduate degree from Jacksonville State University.

Thweatt, who is 50 years old, wants his service to encourage younger pastors.

"I hope to help get more younger pastors involved in the state convention," he said. "Maybe through committee appointments and other ways, we can increase the involvement."

Move toward parity

"I do know the move toward 50-50 with the Southern Baptist Convention (regarding funding) is speaking to the young guys," he said, noting he is glad to see the state convention moving in this direction.

In fact, Thweatt attempted to make a motion about a 50-50 funding formula at the state convention annual meeting in 2010 but the motion was ruled out of order.

It's a fun story to recall and joke about now, he indicated. The important thing is the move toward a parity plan is taking place, he said.

Thweatt began his journey in Alabama Baptist life as a high schooler when his military family moved to northeast Alabama and he became a member of First Baptist Church, Boaz.

He started out in youth ministry at First Baptist Church, Guntersville, before moving into his first pastorate at Beulah Baptist Church, Boaz.

From there he served Highlands Baptist Church, Huntsville, before becoming pastor of First, Pell City, 15 and a half years ago.

Thweatt said he plans to get to know all entities and their boards in his role as president but also wants to protect his time related to his family and church. He and his wife,



Photo by Neisha Roberts

The new officers of the Alabama Baptist State Convention are: president, John Thweatt (center), pastor of FBC Pell City; first vice president, Tim Cox (right), pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea; and second vice president, Buddy Champion (left), pastor of FBC Trussville.

Kim, have four daughters ranging from a 6th grader to a junior in college.

John Killian, pastor of Maytown Baptist Church, nominated Thweatt for the position.

'God's man to lead'

"Certainly Alabama Baptists' work is God's work and to lead God's work we need God's man to lead us," Killian said in his nomination speech.

"I have seen in John Thweatt the characteristics of a man of God," Killian said. "Dr. John Thweatt has proven his loyalty to Baptist doc-

trine and practice in his service ... [and] never compromises biblical truth."

Killian pointed to Paul's description of a man of God in 1 Timothy 6:11 — one who flees evil, pursues righteousness and lives in godliness.

"Paul also describes a man of God as a man of faith ... and a man with love, gentleness and patience," Killian said, noting Thweatt has all these characteristics.

"You know John Thweatt as dignity personified as he presides at the convention," he said. "I know (See 'Additional,' page 7)

HAPPY

THANKSGIVING

"Let them give thanks to the LORD for His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for mankind." Psalm 107:8

COMMENT

Transparency and Trust

One might read all the records of the 193 previous annual meetings of the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) and still not find a time when messengers made a historic business decision with more unanimity than what was experienced in the recent annual meeting.

After 124 years of being headquartered in the state capital of Montgomery and 53 years at the current location, messengers voted to move the ABSC offices to Prattville (see story, page 4). Yet there was no bickering over the recommendation. In fact, there was no discussion and the motion passed without opposition.

Some described the action as “right sizing” the offices since the State Board of Missions (SBOM) staff has been paired from a high of 121 in 1998 when the last addition to the office building was completed to the current 67. State missionaries and support staff no longer need the 87,500 square feet of space provided at the current site. SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance said the proposed new facility of 39,900 square feet will meet all of the needs of the convention and SBOM for the foreseeable future.

Despite the case made for the decision, the keys to the vote were transparency and trust. The relocation recommendation did not come suddenly. Several years ago SBOM approved the idea of relocating to the Prattville area along the I-65 corridor. That possibility was reported and openly discussed but the idea lay dormant lacking a viable funding plan.

Time to reflect

Earlier this year when the “exchange of keys” was worked out with Baptist Health, information was shared with all board members prior to an Aug. 12 meeting at which the proposal was considered. SBOM members had time to reflect on the proposal and discuss it fully before they approved the recommendation and forwarded it to messengers at the state convention for consideration.

Between Aug. 12 and the Nov. 15 vote the



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

proposal was thoroughly reported and openly discussed. Every aspect of the process was made available for all Alabama Baptists who cared to be informed. No one sprang a last minute idea on members of SBOM or on messengers to the annual meeting.

No tension, opposition

Instead the transparency of the process of approval as well as of the proposal itself resulted in no questions from the messengers and no visible opposition. There was no tension in the auditorium as the motion was presented. Rather it was just another motion from SBOM.

During the Nov. 14 meeting of SBOM, Lance told members the pre-convention gathering was to make sure everything was in place for the annual meeting. New items of business or recommendations to the convention are usually not considered. He said this was to make sure messengers had opportunity to know what was coming from their SBOM before the annual meeting.

That kind of concern for transparency produces trust in one's leaders, and Alabama Baptists trust their leaders because the leaders practice transparency.

Trust and transparency were evident again in the adoption of the 2017 convention budget. Even though the total Cooperative Program (CP) goal of \$40 million is the same as the current year, there were significant changes within the various categories.

Alabama Baptists agreed to continue to pursue the goal of dividing CP receipts 50–50 between state and national causes. To reach that goal leaders originally recommended using a “shared ministry” approach which had the approval of the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Executive Committee (EC). That approach recognizes that certain ministries benefit the SBC and the state convention equally so expenses for those items

can be evenly divided between the two causes.

Using that approach Alabama Baptists achieved the 50–50 division two years ago. However, the approach produced confusion in some quarters and was difficult to explain.

State leaders decided to take a different approach in order for the process to be transparent for all Alabama Baptists. It was agreed to work toward simply dividing all CP receipts evenly between SBC and the state convention. The idea became workable when Samford University agreed to reduce its annual allocation by \$400,000 a year for four years with that money redirected to SBC causes. The 2017 budget is the second year in that approach.

The SBC portion of the \$40 million budget is 48 percent. Lance said it will take two more years to reach the 50–50 goal.

Again messengers adopted the budget without discussion or visible opposition.

Even though the goal of sharing CP receipts evenly between state and national causes has not yet been achieved, Alabama Baptists still give

more to national SBC causes than any other state convention. According to SBC figures, for the last year of record, Alabama Baptists gave \$17,623,899.73 to national CP causes. That was almost \$350,000 more than the second place state convention.

When CP and designated gifts are combined Alabama Baptists led the way again giving \$36,858,762 to SBC causes according to SBC EC reports. That is more than \$1.7 million above the second place state convention.

The International Mission Board (IMB) recently released giving by state conventions to IMB work and when giving

through CP, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and the World Relief offering are combined, Alabama gave more to IMB work than any other state convention — \$22,598,122.

Alabama Baptist culture

Alabama Baptists work together and give together because we do things transparently. Pressure, manipulation, power plays, rush to vote and the like are not a part of Alabama Baptist culture. That is why there is cooperation among the churches, the associations, the entities and every aspect of convention life.

The recent annual meeting was only the latest demonstration that transparency and trust go together and that is the best way for Christian believers to do business.✝

Didn't make it to convention?

If you weren't among the 735 messengers from 335 churches to go to the annual meeting this year, or 1 of the 200 people who watched portions of it live online, then you may be interested in the archive files. To view videos or photos, visit <https://vimeo.com/alsbom> or www.flickr.com/alsbom.

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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The 'why' of Christian missions

By State Convention President Travis Coleman
Pastor, FBC Prattville

In life, asking "why" is important for many reasons.

We are the Alabama Baptist State Convention meeting together. We are 193 years old. We are made up of 75 associations across our state, and we are in a cooperative relationship with the Southern Baptist Convention that is 171 years old. We are in a cooperative relationship with 3,200-plus churches in Alabama. My own church is 178 years old. What do we all have in common? We were all formed for the purpose of missions. It is the glue that holds us together — the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Some of us may have lost our enthusiasm and passion for missions. For the early Church, it was everything to them. As you read the book of Acts and the letters of the New Testament you see a zeal for missions. They were totally consumed by it.

One reason we may have lost our enthusiasm and passion for missions is because we have forgotten the "why." I want to suggest there are three reasons why we should be enthusiastic and passionate about Christian missions.

Reconciliation mission

First, God is on a reconciliation mission. In 2 Corinthians 5:19, Paul writes, "God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ." God had a purpose in creating us but our sin totally disrupted His plan. So God set Himself on a course, on a mission, to do something about it.

In Romans 5:6-11, Paul tells us why God was on mission. Our sin caused us to be "powerless," "ungodly," "sinners" and "enemies." Then Paul weaves into the description of our condition what God did for us. In verse 6, Paul said, "You see, at just the right time ... Christ died for (us)." In verse 8, Paul states, "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this ... Christ died for us." Again in verse 10, Paul says, "We were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son."

God "reconciled" us.

So how did God do it?

Look at 2 Corinthians 5:19 and 21. In verse 19 it says, "God was ... Himself in Christ." In other words, God became man. This is why we celebrate Christmas with such passion. Next the God Man, Jesus, lived a sinless life (v. 21). This qualified Him to be the sacrifice without spot or blemish and fulfilled the demand for a blood sacrifice. Then verse 21 states Jesus was made sin in our place. This means He became our substitute in His death on the cross. He took all the heat, all the fire, all the suffering, all the darkness on Himself during those three hours on the cross. Then He cried, "It is finished."

In Palmyra, Missouri, during the Civil War, 10 men in prison were chosen to die because a fellow prisoner escaped. One of the 10 chosen was William T. Humphrey. He had a wife and several children. Humphrey and his wife pled for mercy from the commander. He relented



Photo by Maggie Walsh

Travis Coleman, outgoing president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, shares his president's address Nov. 15.

and chose Hiram Smith to take Humphrey's place. Smith agreed to the swap because he was a single man. At Smith's grave today there is a monument that reads, "This monument is dedicated to the memory of Hiram Smith. The hero that sleeps beneath the sod here was shot at Palmyra, Oct. 17, 1862, as a substitute for William T. Humphrey, my father."

Tribute

What a tribute from the son to the man who died in his father's place. Praise God for our Savior who took our place on the cross so we could live eternally.

God's mission of reconciliation is for the whole world. Since He is on mission, we are called to be on mission with Him. This leads us to the second reason we are to engage in Christian missions.

God has entrusted us with this reconciliation ministry and message. Paul states 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, "God ... gave us the ministry of reconciliation ... and He has committed to us the message of reconciliation." In Paul's letters he often speaks of this. Paul understood God had put into his hands and into our hands the ministry and message of reconciliation.

A Christian, a church, an association, a state convention or a denomination that is not wrapped up in the ministry and message of reconciliation is missing the purpose and mission of God.

Partnership with God

We need to understand that we are in partnership with God.

In 1 Corinthians 3:9 it says, "For we are laborers (partners) together with God." The context of this passage finds Paul reminding the church at Corinth that the church, Apollos and he himself were all serving God together.

There should be no division between them. So it is with us. We are in partnership with our great God. Just as we are dependent on God, He is dependent upon us. God can't accomplish making a great church, a great association, a great state convention and a great denomination without the body of believers in a commitment of partnership with Him. He has entrusted us with this message and ministry of reconciliation.

Second, our message of reconciliation is unashamedly evangelistic. We proclaim Jesus Christ is God's Son. He is God's only way of salvation and reconciliation. We urge all people to repent of sin, believe on Him and make a personal commitment to Him.

Broken world

We live in a broken world. We see brokenness in marriages, in families and in nations. People are filled with anger and greed. Immorality prevails. We stand and we proclaim, "Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). Every meeting, every activity, every message, every function, every program and every ministry of the church, association, state convention and denomination should focus on this ultimate declaration and demonstration of the Good News in Jesus Christ.

Our world needs the ministry of reconciliation. We need to give the "cup of cold water" to meet the needs of hurting and disadvantaged people of our world. I applaud our churches for their vast ministries that touch the lives of our needy world.

But in order to have the message of reconciliation and the mission of reconciliation we must have money.

Our partnership with God means we must give financially to support the message and ministry. It takes money and it starts in the local church when our people have a good understanding of biblical stewardship. As our members give and are led to see beyond their local ministries, then they can participate in a cooperative way with other like-minded congregations. That is the genius of our Cooperative Program.

We are in partnership with God, but we also are in partnership as a TEAM (Together Everyone Accomplishes More). This is why the Southern Baptist Convention, Alabama Baptist State Convention, local associations and churches have been so strong. We have taken Paul's words seriously.

There is one more reason why we are involved in Christian missions. God has commissioned us to be His ambassadors.

Did you know Jesus was an ambassador? In John 3, He speaks to Nicodemus. In John 4, He speaks to the Samaritan woman. At the end of that same chapter He heals the son of a Gentile nobleman. An ambassador is a witness, a spokesperson for a sovereign. For Jesus, it was His heavenly Father.

Paul was an ambassador and he says we are ambassadors as well. We are to exert our influence and the power of the gospel. We have been duly authorized. Let us not disappoint our sovereign God. ☞

'Anticipate the future'

Relocation, \$40 million budget approved

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Approving the relocation of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' (SBOM) office and a flat \$40 million Cooperative Program (CP) budget for 2017 topped business items addressed by messengers during the state convention annual meeting Nov. 15–16. Messengers also approved the 2015 SBOM audit and 2017 goals for the convention's five special offerings.

In what is being described as an "exchange of keys" with Baptist Health, the SBOM office will move from Montgomery to Prattville over the course of the next year.

The proposal for the relocation includes Baptist Health taking possession of the current SBOM facility, located at the corner of Narrow Lane Road and East South Boulevard in Montgomery — immediately next door to Baptist Medical Center South, which is in need of expansion.

SBOM leaders have been reviewing ways to move the Baptist Building to the Prattville area for almost a decade.

State convention messengers approved the first steps toward that end in 2007 and several ideas have been considered through the years.

As recent discussions developed, it was learned that Baptist Health owned acreage

facing Alabama Highway 14, just off Interstate 65 exit 181 in Prattville.

SBOM and Baptist Health officials agreed that Baptist Health would construct a building to SBOM specifications on a little under four acres of the land.

Once construction of the new SBOM facility is complete, the two Baptist organizations would essentially exchange keys and the complete relocation — which should be finished by Jan. 1, 2018 — would happen without any indebtedness.

During the August SBOM board meeting, Bobby DuBois, SBOM's chief financial officer and associate executive director, said, "Since 2008 the SBOM has been debt-free and is committed to remaining as such for the future."

'Geographic center'

SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance said at the same meeting, "The proposal would position missions personnel and resources closer to the geographic center of the state. This would provide more accessibility for Alabama Baptists to utilize their State Board of Missions facility as a Great Commission Ministries Resource Center."

The size of the new building would be 39,900 square feet versus the present Baptist Building's 87,500 square feet.

DuBois said in August, "This is in line with the right-sizing of our staff that has



Artist rendering courtesy of SBOM

The newly approved State Board of Missions building in Prattville will be located off exit 181 on Interstate 65 and should be finished in 2018.

been underway since the arrival in 1998 of Dr. Lance as our executive director. After Dr. Lance joined the staff, our full-time employee count was 121. Today we have 67 full-time employees."

A new facility would likely have fewer maintenance issues and lower utility costs, DuBois added.

Lance told convention messengers Nov. 15 that the value of the proposed building and acreage is in line with the appraised value — \$7.6 million — of the current Baptist Building.

"We need to anticipate the future and this is one good way to do that," he said.

And while Alabama Baptists giving through the CP may be a little shy of the \$40 million budgeted amount for 2016, Lance noted SBOM is projected to end the year under budget.

Messengers unanimously approved the 2017 budget to remain the same but with a change in the breakdown.

The percentages for 2017 are 52 percent (\$20,808,238) for Alabama Baptist causes and 48 percent (\$19,191,762) for Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) causes. The percentage for 2016 was 53/47.

The 1 percent adjustment remains in line with Alabama Baptists' "parity plan" publicized in 2015, Lance explained at the August meeting.

'Parity' with SBC

In November 2015, Lance told convention messengers meeting in Daphne, "We are moving more and more to the point of parity by 2020 with the SBC."

Since 2012, Alabama Baptists have adopted budgets that increase the SBC allocation by an average of 1 percent annually and plan to continue until parity with SBC is reached.

All allocations proposed for 2017 remain the same for state convention entities and SBOM's ministry efforts with the exception of Samford University in Birmingham. The largest of the three Alabama Baptist schools will give up \$400,000 of CP funding. This is the second of four years of this plan, with that money going toward the parity.

And all gifts coming in above the \$40 million goal will be allocated equally between SBC and Alabama Baptist State Convention ministries.

During the SBOM meeting Nov. 14,

board members heard a report that a loan from SBOM to Good Shepherd Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, had been forgiven.

Good Shepherd Baptist was a church plant more than 20 years ago, said state missionary Rick Barnhart. Through CP giving Alabama Baptists assisted the church in several ways including a land grant to assist it in purchasing property and mobile chapels for approximately 10 years, he explained.

In 2006 the church received a low interest loan to assist it in the building of its first unit. The church has struggled in the last five years with a change in the restructuring of its previous loan from the North American Mission Board. The SBOM has chosen to assist this church that has been faithful in its CP and associational giving by forgiving the balance of its \$50,000 loan which is \$20,032.47, Barnhart said.

'Pacesetters in giving'

In presenting the 2017 special offering goals of \$22,200,000 to convention messengers Nov. 15, Craig Carlisle, pastor of Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Rainbow City, near Gadsden, said, "Alabama Baptists are pacesetters in missions giving, CP giving and supporting missions across the nation, state and world."

The approved special offering goals are:
Lottie Moon Christmas Offering — \$11,600,000

Annie Armstrong Easter Offering — \$6,100,000

Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries — \$2,700,000

Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering — \$1,000,000

Alabama Baptist World Hunger Offering — \$800,000

Also during the SBOM report, state missionary Mike Jackson presented three pastors with the Troy L. Morrison Leadership/Church Health Award (see photo, this page). And state missionary Scotty Goldman presented Jerry Sims, a member of Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville, as Missions Volunteer of the Year (see story, page 8).

Immediately following the annual meeting Morgan Bailey was elected SBOM chairman and Mike Goforth was elected vice chairman. Bailey is pastor of Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer. Goforth is pastor of Sardis Baptist Church, Boaz. ☼

Troy L. Morrison Leadership honorees



Photo by Neisha Roberts

The Troy L. Morrison Leadership/Church Health Award went to Steve Walters (left), pastor of The Church at Pike Road in Montgomery Baptist Association, for new work; Orlando Buck (center), pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Ariton, in Barbour Baptist Association, for bivocational work; and James Watkins (right), pastor of First Baptist Church, Leroy, in Washington Baptist Association, for established work.

ALABAMA BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION

2017 Cooperative Program Budget

(Approved Nov. 16, 2016)

BASE BUDGET

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION MINISTRIES	
SBC Executive Committee	18,392,424
SBC GuideStone	799,338
Subtotal for SBC Ministries	19,191,762
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS MINISTRIES	
<i>EVANGELISM/DISCIPLESHIP (34 full-time employees)</i>	
Evangelism	106,938
Sunday School and Discipleship	307,862
Collegiate and Student Ministries	96,427
Evangelism/Discipleship Salaries/Housing	1,640,839
Evangelism/Discipleship Travel/Field Services	164,345
<i>LEADERSHIP RESOURCE (11 full-time employees)</i>	
LeaderCare/Church Health	315,866
Worship Leadership/Church Music	86,140
Leadership Development Salaries/Housing	523,462
Leadership Development Travel/Field Services	51,867
<i>MISSIONS MOBILIZATION (14 full-time employees)</i>	
Associational Missions & Church Planting	756,652
Global Missions	211,869
Missions Mobilization Salaries/Housing	679,485
Missions Mobilization Travel/Field Services	67,325
<i>MISSIONS SUPPORT (29 full-time employees)</i>	
Executive Director	
A. Director's Office	48,427
B. Disaster Relief	1,000
C. Supplemental Aid	1,000
D. Strategic Initiatives	
D. Partnerships	1,000
Financial/Facility Services	
Director's Office	424,752
Accounting & Human Resources	2,135,383
Church Compensation Services	14,561
Facility Services	1,418,914
Cooperative Program & Stewardship Development	32,390
Communications & Technology Services	323,090
Missions Support Salaries/Housing	1,604,124
Missions Support Travel/Field Services	158,943
Subtotal for State Board of Missions Ministries	11,172,660
STATE CONVENTION ENTITY MINISTRIES	
<i>Christian Higher Education Ministries</i>	
A. A. Earl Potts Scholarship	111,761
B. Board of Aid to Students	254,110
C. Judson College	936,870
D. Samford University	3,551,231
E. University of Mobile	2,385,366
<i>Other Entities and Commissions Ministries</i>	
A. Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries	253,625
B. Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center	544,943
C. The Alabama Baptist	552,673
D. The Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers	186,125
E. The Baptist Foundation of Alabama	132,251
F. The Christian Life Commission	24,475
G. The Education Commission	3,230
H. The Alabama Baptist Historical Commission	127,775
<i>Auxiliaries and Other Ministries</i>	
A. ALCAP	65,354
B. Alabama Woman's Missionary Union	505,790
Subtotal for Convention Entity Ministries	9,635,578
TOTAL BASE BUDGET	40,000,000
SPECIAL OFFERING GOALS	
Lottie Moon Christmas Offering	11,600,000
Annie Armstrong Easter Offering	6,100,000
Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries	2,700,000
Alabama Baptist World Hunger Offering	800,000
Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering	1,000,000
Total for Special Offering Goals	22,200,000
GRAND TOTAL COOPERATIVE PROGRAM BUDGET AND SPECIAL OFFERING GOALS	62,200,000

Big undertaking

Lance tells messengers to keep pushing forward

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

In 1803, Thomas Jefferson made a real estate purchase — the Louisiana Purchase,” said Rick Lance in his report to convention messengers as executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

“Right after that Jefferson decided he wanted someone to look at what he bought, so he sent Lewis and Clark on a mission,” he said. “It was a mission not only to explore his land, but to go beyond that to the West Coast to see what is out there.”

Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark on a mission, Lance said, much like Jesus sends each of us. After all, Lewis and Clark had vague maps but they didn't know what the future held. In the same way, believers may know the next step to take, but they can't see the whole picture.

Every generation since the 12 disciples — who were a “ragtag group” — have been “overwhelmed and overcome by the massive mandate to be sent here, there and everywhere,” Lance said. And rightfully so, as it's a big undertaking with eternal effects, which is why Lance said it's important to start with the “here.”

“The Bible Belt is becoming increasingly more like the rest of the U.S. ... We cannot abandon the ‘here’ part of being sent,” he urged.

And Alabama Baptists are striving to be faithful to this mandate, specifically in their giving. Lance noted Alabama was the No. 1 state in Cooperative Program giving to

the Southern Baptist Convention, with the next state convention more than \$1 million behind it. And giving to the inaugural Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering has exceeded its 2016 goal of \$750,000, nearing \$800,000. These two facts are reasons to celebrate, Lance said.

‘World of difference’

“Thank you for your giving through the Cooperative Program and to special offerings,” he told messengers. “You have made

a world of difference and you are making a world of difference in a world where a difference needs to be made.”

Zeroing in on the business side of his report, Lance said SBOM is looking toward its future with anticipation. SBOM will be moving to a new, 39,900-square-foot facility in Prattville by Jan. 1, 2018, a location that will “become a Great Commission Ministries Resource Center,” for Alabama Baptist churches (see story, page 4).

While all these things are a cause for rejoicing, Lance urged mes-

sengers to continue pushing forward to fulfill their sending mission.

“Today, more than ever before, may we understand here and afresh that we were sent to go by God.

“Until we're called home or until Jesus Christ comes again, let's look forward to the finish line because the Lord has sent us not just to start [the race], but to finish,” he said.

Lance concluded his report as the a cappella strains of the old hymn “So Send I You” echoed throughout the sanctuary: “As the Father sent Me, so send I you.”



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, delivers his report to messengers Nov. 15.

“Until we're called home or until Jesus Christ comes again, let's look forward to the finish line because the Lord has sent us not just to start [the race], but to finish.”

Rick Lance
SBOM executive director

HIGHER EDUCATION

D'Linell Finley (with microphone), Education Commission board member, leads a prayer over Judson College President David Potts (seated, left), University of Mobile President Timothy L. Smith (seated, center) and Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland (seated, right). Rick Lance (standing, left), SBOM executive director, and Bill Goodwin (standing, right), chairman of the Board of Aid for Students in Church Related Vocations, join Finley in the prayer over the college leaders.



Photo by Neisha Roberts

The presidents of each of Alabama's three Baptist institutions of higher learning shared with messengers how they are a part of God's sending mission through education during the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting Nov. 15 at Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery.

Legacy of 'going'

Judson College has a legacy of "going," said David Potts, president of the 178-year-old women's college in Marion.

It's a legacy that has roots in the very letters of the university name, called "Judson" after Ann Hasseltine Judson, who was the first American woman to serve as a foreign missionary. Then the legacy continued throughout the 19th century as Judson sent one-fourth of Protestant missionaries to China during that time, Potts said.

"And the first and 100th mis-

sionaries to Japan were Judson people," he added.

"And you should also know that Judson continues to be involved in heeding the fire of our Savior," he said.

Meeting needs

"An overwhelming percentage of our women are Baptist young women and they have the opportunity to apply what they are learning ... in a community that is among the poorest in the U.S."

In the past year Judson women have met the physical needs of

their neighbors in Perry County where the college is located; served as camp staff members at World-Song Missions Place in Cook Springs; led summer camps for inner city children in Memphis, Tennessee; ministered to trafficked women in Louisville, Kentucky; served alongside church planters in Montana and Florida; carried out missions projects in Indianapolis, Indiana; built relationships with internationals in New York City; and shared the gospel in China.

The number of women who did these things weren't the classic 10:90 ratio that is often seen in Baptist life, where 10 percent of

the people do 90 percent of the work.



POTTS

Instead, more than 80 percent of Judson students voluntarily participate in community service or missions projects.

And that legacy will only continue as "a lifetime of future service awaits them," Judson's report reads.

But the only way Judson can send its young women

out into the community and the world is through the cooperation and support of Alabama Baptist churches, Potts emphasized.

'Faithful to sending'

"We are grateful for the faithfulness of Alabama Baptists [in giving through the Cooperative Program] so we in turn can be faithful to the sending. The power of God that raised Christ from the dead resides in each of you," he said. "What will you do with that power?" (Maggie Walsh)

"Judson continues to be involved in heeding the fire of our Savior."

David Potts, president, Judson College

JUDSON COLLEGE

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

'Hidden gem'

Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland could have spent his time onstage talking about a number of programs, projects or plans but he instead chose to invite a colleague to share about a "hidden gem" at Samford.

While Kevin Blackwell is assistant to the president for church relations, he also serves as executive director of the university's Ministry Training Institute (MTI), and that is what Westmoreland wanted messengers to hear more about.

'Addressing challenges'

Samford seeks to accomplish its mission of sending Christians into the world by "graduating students capable of addressing the profound challenges facing today's society," according to its report.

And MTI is one avenue toward that goal.

Samford's extension division has been around since 1947 under various names and in many locations. From the inception of The Howard Plan to its evolution into MTI in 2014, the program has offered a theological education to thousands who have had a desire to learn more.

Blackwell said he is encouraged when he thinks about how MTI concluded the 2015-2016 academic year with more than 950 students in locations across Alabama. And since August, there have been 850 enrollments in MTI classes.

"God is doing a tremendous

work in this program and I'm grateful to be a part of it," Blackwell said.

And as MTI classes are being taught at five prisons in the state, the program has a unique opportunity to reach outside of its normal student base of existing Christians. In prisons, Blackwell said, some come to a class for education and some are seeking truth.

At the Federal Correctional Institution (for women) in Aliceville recently, two of the students approached their instructor after a lecture on the Old Testament. The instructor thought the women were going to ask him a question about what he had just taught. Instead they wanted to know how they could be saved.

MTI is more than just a convenient option for a little learning; "it's a way to transform lives through the ministry of reconciliation," Blackwell said. (Maggie Walsh)



WESTMORELAND

"God is doing a tremendous work in this program and I'm grateful to be a part of it."

Kevin Blackwell, executive director, Ministry Training Institute

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

'Head-to-heart transformation'

When a parent sends their student to a university ... we believe there is a process of more than just an academic learning degree," said University of Mobile (UM) President Timothy L. Smith in his inaugural report to Alabama Baptists.

The first goal is for students to understand who they are individually and who they are in Christ.

'Imago Dei'

"This is what we call 'imago Dei' — being an image bearer of God. We want this to happen not just in the classroom but out in the world," he said, noting that this is done through a renewing of the mind like Paul talks about in Romans 12.

"We want students to under-

stand that if you want to engage in Christian higher education it's about understanding this head-to-heart transformation."

Essentially it's a goal of "higher education for a higher purpose" by teaching students to have a biblical worldview. To do so, UM will focus on being Christ-centered, student-devoted, academically focused and distinctively driven.

"We are wanting to be clearly a Great Commission university," Smith said, which is why UM recently broke ground on a Great Commission Globe project that will signal a new tradition for the university.

When students first arrive at UM, they will touch the globe "to consecrate their hearts and minds for the calling of Christ."

And as they touch the globe for the second time at the close of their graduation ceremonies, they will be "sent out into the world to do whatever God has put on their hearts," Smith said.

This symbolic act embodies the sending mission of the 55-year-old university.

Numerous changes

Along with a new president, UM also now has a new mission statement and vision statement that reflects the institution's focus on academic preparation and spiritual transformation. And more changes are coming, from campus enhancements to new academic programs to the development of new partnerships as well as an expanded chapel program.

No matter how many changes take place, however, "Christ is still the leader of this institution," Smith said. (Maggie Walsh)



SMITH



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Rick Lance (right), SBOM executive director, presents a plaque to John Thweatt (left), newly elected state convention president.

Additional officers elected to serve

(continued from page 1)
him as pastor of a large church who still had time to drive some distance to go see my mentally challenged cousin, who was a member of his church."

"To the pastors in his area and his church members, he is Bro. John," Killian said.

Vice presidents

Also elected during the state convention annual meeting were first and second vice presidents.

Tim Cox, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea, was unanimously elected first vice president. He was unopposed in the election and was nominated by Kevin Blackwell, assistant to the president for church relations and executive director of the Ministry Training Institute at Samford University in Birmingham.

"Tim is a great pastor with a vibrant Christian faith," Blackwell said in his nomination speech. "He's a champion

of the faith and a friend of Alabama Baptists. He has served us well and will continue to serve us well."

Buddy Champion, pastor of First Baptist Church, Trussville, was elected second vice president 200 to 102 over Craig Carlisle, pastor of Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Rainbow City, near Gadsden.

Champion was nominated by Teman Knight, pastor of Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery.

Carlisle was nominated by Steve Loggins, director of missions for North Jefferson Baptist Association.

Re-elected officers

Messengers also re-elected Billie Davis as the recording secretary and Bobby DuBois as statistical secretary and registration secretary. Davis serves in the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) executive director's office. DuBois is the SBOM associate executive director. ✱



Photo by Maggie Walsh

Messengers vote during the election of officers Nov. 16. The new officers began their term at the conclusion of the annual meeting.



Outstanding Missions Volunteer

Sims' enthusiasm for missions 'contagious,' Mt. Zion member says

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In life and in ministry, 2016 Outstanding Missions Volunteer of the Year Jerry Sims is guided by a simple yet powerful belief — investment in God's kingdom is “the only thing that will last for eternity.”

Sims, a member of Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville, in Madison Baptist Association, was recognized in the afternoon session of the Alabama Baptist State Convention on Nov. 15.

In nominating Sims for the honor, Mildred Haga, also a member of Mount Zion Baptist, called Sims' enthusiasm for missions “contagious” and praised his dedication to local church ministry through Vacation Bible School and involvement in community outreach efforts.

“Jerry is an excellent role model for the children,” Haga wrote. “His varied personal experiences and range of interests make him a vital and engaging person who promotes missions activities even for the young children.”

‘Acts 1:8 heart’

Ron Madison, recently retired pastor of Mount Zion, also commended Sims' missions efforts, writing that Sims “truly has an Acts 1:8 heart that is sensitive to God's call in our church, our greater community, our state, our nation and to the ends of the earth.”

Sims' missions work certainly has taken him to several far-flung locations. He has served on short-term projects in Romania, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Nepal. Sims' leadership has been especially significant in Mount Zion's work in Nepal, said David Cochran, minister of mission outreach at Mount Zion.

“Jerry has taken the lead with our partnership in Nepal (where) the main focus is on working with the local pastors in increasing their knowledge of the Bible, demonstrating new teaching techniques and encouraging local believers in how to share the Word and make disciples,” Cochran said.

Growth in Nepal

Sims also noted that the work in Nepal, now in its sixth year, has been “amazing.”

“He is with us regardless of where we are. He said that in the Great Commission: wherever you go, even unto the ends of the world, I will be with you.”

Jerry Sims
member of Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville



Photo courtesy of Mount Zion Baptist Church

Jerry Sims (second from right above and on scaffolding in photo to the right), a member of Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville, was awarded the 2016 Outstanding Missions Volunteer of the Year. His work has taken him to Romania, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Nepal, as well as on trips around the U.S.

“From year to year I can see God's hand at work planting churches and growing the body of believers in that country,” Sims said. “There is no doubt that the Kingdom has grown significantly in Nepal.”

Closer to home, Sims has been involved in several construction and renovation projects, including work on the Vineyard Christian Retreat Center in Coffee County and in church planting work in Huntsville, New York and Ohio.

‘His love can reach anyone’

The eternal impact of investing in people who live in darkness drives Sims in his missions efforts. “Seeing a person move out of the darkness into God's light is a glorious sight,” Sims said. “As we and the churches there (in Nepal) follow God's Word and simply obey His commands, He does great things that we cannot even imagine.”



Photo courtesy of Mount Zion Baptist Church

Sims said serving as a missions volunteer has taught him two important truths about God. The first is “how big God is and how His love can reach anyone anywhere.” The second is that believers are never alone.

“He is with us regardless of where we are. He said that in the Great Commission: wherever you go, even unto the ends of the world, I will be with you. The greatest comfort I have whether I'm going locally here or whether I'm going across the state or across the state line is that God is always with us. He goes before us, He goes with us, He goes behind us. We don't have to do it on our own. We don't have to do it in our own strength. He's always proven Himself that He's there and He's with us.”

Resolutions adopted seamlessly

Messengers to the 194th annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention adopted all five resolutions presented to the convention without any discussion from the floor.

Resolution No. 1 on appreciation recognized Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery, for “use of their facilities, services of every kind, and their support and hospitality.”

Resolution No. 2 in support of pro-life action in the Alabama Legislature noted how Alabama Baptists “have long advocated in our churches and in the public arena for the right to life of the unborn.”

“During the 2016 Legislative session, the Alabama Legislature passed three pro-life bills including the Unborn Child Protection from Dismemberment Abortion Act, the Unborn Infant's Dignity Act and a bill requiring abortion clinics to be at least 2,000 feet away from a public school.”

The resolution resolved that messengers thank the sponsoring representatives “for their courage and resolve to see these bills to passage.”

Resolution No. 3 on gambling resolved that messengers “oppose any and all attempts by the governor and/or state legislators to expand any form of state-sponsored, state-sanctioned and predatory gambling in Alabama” and that a copy of the resolution be sent to Gov. Robert Bentley, members of the newly appointed gambling advisory council and Alabama legislators.

Resolution No. 4 on prayer and support for Israel noted how Israel “represents the descendants of Jacob as an ethnic, cultural and national entity and the New Testament affirms that salvation is from the Jews and that God's Word concerning Israel will be fulfilled.

“We are to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and for the salvation of Israel,” the resolution reads, “and acknowledge that within the nation of Israel we have many brothers and sisters in Christ.”

Resolution No. 5 on the perspective of Christians toward the Islamic world noted, “We believe that all human beings are created in God's image. ... That the state wields the sword of justice ... and that not all Muslims are radical terrorists and are often the primary victims of radical Islamic terrorism.”

It resolved that Alabama Baptists should also view the Muslim world as a missions field, the resolution reads, and resolved that messengers join other Baptists in sharing the gospel with Muslim peoples. (TAB)

Alabama Baptists tapped for service

During the 194th annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, Baptists from across the state were elected to serve on the governing boards of convention-related entities. Also approved by messengers were individuals to serve on the committees of the convention.

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

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chairperson: John Thweatt

District: Jimmy E. Jackson, Craig Carlisle, *Bobby Bailey, Larry Cummings, Johnny Fain, Mark McCullough, *Kelly Jones, John Nicholson, James Nichols, Eddy Garner, Morgan Bailey, Rick Evans

Members at large: *Becky Head, Carl Williams, Buddy Champion, Mike Goforth, Britt Green, Jimmy Garner, Scotty Hogan, Mack Morris

Ex-officio members: SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance, Chairman of SBOM Morgan Bailey, State Convention President John Thweatt, First Vice President Tim Cox, President of Alabama WMU *Anna Speir

STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

Terms to Expire 2019: Tim Scarbrough, Autauga; Stuart Davidson, Baldwin; Orlando Buck, Barbour; Morgan Bailey, Bessemer; Mike McKee, Bigbee; *Bobby Keith, Birmingham; Chase Clower, Butler; Jeffrey Fuller, Central; David Bankson, Cherokee; Gary Jones, Chilton; Jeremy Sorrells, Choc-taw; David Nelson, Clarke; *Bobby Bailey, Cleburne; Michael Mynatt, Coffee; *Donnie Wells, Columbia; Larry Morrison, Coosa River; *Faye Brow, Dale; David McMillen, DeKalb; *Nan Auston, East Cullman; Mike Ingram, Elmore; Sammy Taylor, Franklin; Dee McGuire, Hale; Ronnie Marshall, Judson; Byron Pickering, Lamar; Ronald Berry, Lookout Mountain; Michael Stancil, Marion; Mike Goforth, Jeff Martin, Marshall; Todd Evans, Morgan; Sammie Reid, *Rebecca Head, North Jefferson; Jay Stewart, Chip

Time, place, preacher report

The 2017 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting will be held in Huntsville at Whitesburg Baptist Church on Nov. 14–15.

The convention preacher for the 2017 annual meeting will be Stuart Davidson, pastor of Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne.

Alternate preacher is Terrence Jones, pastor of Strong Tower at Washington Park, Montgomery.

Messengers voted for the 2021 annual meeting to take place Nov. 16–17 at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville. (TAB)

Thornton, St. Clair; David Hairston, Sand Mountain; Allan Murphy, Shelby; John Foles, Sulphur Springs; Larry Cummings, Richard Hall, Tallapoosa; Greg Hart, Tennessee River; John P. Gates, Walker; *Norma W. Blount, Washington; *Richard Gurley, West Cullman

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

Terms to Expire 2017: Rick Ellison, First, Silverhill

Terms to Expire 2020: Travis Coleman, First, Prattville; Ken Megginson, Moffett Road, Mobile; Rob Jackson, Central, Decatur; *Scott Swedenburg, Dawson Memorial, Homewood

BOARD OF AID

Terms to Expire 2020: Dino Danzey, Government Street, Mobile; Kenneth Fuller, Centreville, Centreville; *Tammy Simms, University, Huntsville; Todd Ray, First, Brewton

CHILDREN'S HOMES

Terms to Expire 2020: *Derry R. Johnson, Integrity, Birmingham; *Lana Hawkins, First, Arab; *Les Myers, Shades Mountain, Birmingham; *Randy Winton, First, Brewton

CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION

Terms to Expire 2020: Robert Grif-fin, Highland, Clanton; Joe Bob Mizzell, Hopewell, Marion; Robert Smith, Enon, Muscle Shoals

EDUCATION COMMISSION

Terms to Expire 2020: *Sammie Barstow, First, Tuscaloosa; *Melba Brown, Government Street, Mobile; Bill Cannon, First, Union Springs; Jerry Henry, First, Fairhope; Mike McLemore, Lakeside, Birmingham; *Debbie Morris, Chulafinnee, Heflin

BAPTIST FOUNDATION

Terms to Expire 2018: *Alan Taylor, First, Trussville

Terms to Expire 2020: *Morrell Dodd, Hunter Street, Hoover; *Rick Gibson, First, Tuscaloosa; *Bill Harper, Eastern Hills, Montgomery; *Diane B. Kennedy, Spring Hill, Mobile; *J. Timothy Mitchell, Parker Memorial, Anniston

HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Terms to Expire 2020: *Debbie Campbell, The Baptist Church at McAdory, McCalla; *Ralph Foster Jr., First, Montgomery; *Mavis Gates, Shades Mountain, Birmingham; *Johnie Sentell Jr., Dawson Memorial, Homewood

RETIREMENT CENTERS

Terms to Expire 2018: Earl Lee, First, Gulf Shores

Terms to Expire 2019: *Harold J. Hammond, First, Prattville

Terms to Expire 2020: Ken Farley, Rehobeth, Dothan; *W. Forrest Hatfield, Elkdale, Selma; *Talmadge Holbrook, Liberty Hill, Clanton; *Grover Jacobs, Taylor Road, Montgomery; Curtis Pace, First, Montgomery

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

Terms to Expire 2019: *Sue M. Belcher, Shades Mountain, Birmingham

Terms to Expire 2020: *Linda Bachus,

Hunter Street, Hoover; Gary Fenton, Dawson Memorial, Homewood; *Sherri Foyt, Shades Mountain, Birmingham; Randy Gunter, Meadowbrook, Gadsden; *Pete M. Hanna, Liberty Park, Birmingham; John E. King Jr., Sixth Avenue, Birmingham; *Mary Johnston Shaw, First, Pelham; *Rachel Wachter, Eastern Shore, Daphne; *Zeke W. Smith, First, Trussville

JUDSON COLLEGE

Terms to Expire 2020: *Eugenia Anderson, Mountain Brook, Birmingham; *Charles F. Dunkin, Shades Mountain, Birmingham; *Neal Isbell, Highland, Florence; *E. Gaylon McCollough, First, Enterprise; *Daphne R. Robinson, Daphne, Daphne; Roger Willmore, Cherry Street, Attalla; *Gary C. Wyatt, Dawson Memorial, Homewood

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

Terms to Expire 2020: *David Conner, Redemption, Saraland; *Jim Daniel, First, Trussville; *Richard Gaal, Spring Hill, Mobile; *Terry Harbin, Redemption, Saraland; Mike Holcomb, Life Church, Oxford; *Ronnie Holladay, Benton, Benton

SHOCCO SPRINGS

Terms to Expire 2020: Gena Butler, Parker Memorial, Anniston; Chip Colee, First, Montgomery; Saint Green, Grace Life, Bessemer; Sonya Tucker, Pinedale, Montgomery

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Chairperson 2016–2017:

Greg Pouncey

Chairperson 2017–2018:

Rick Evans

Terms to Expire 2018: Michael Cassity, Jackson Way, Huntsville; *Rick W. Hester, Southside, Southside; Larry Riddle, Heflin, Heflin; *Jean King, Providence, Opelika; Ray McKenzie, Cloverdale, Dothan; *Brad Mullins, First, Greenville; *Ward Edge, Tompkins, Grove Hill; Carl Williams, First, Demopolis; David Miller, Edgil Grove, Jasper; *William Smith, Highland, Florence; Jay Stewart, First, Ashville; Rick Evans, Dalraida, Montgomery

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Chairperson 2016–2017: *Richard LeCroy, Five Points, Northpoint

Terms to Expire 2019: *Richard LeCroy, Five Points, Northpoint, *Ray Breeden, Westmeade, Decatur

INSURANCE COMMITTEE

Chairperson 2016–2017:

*Rusty Melnick, First, Opelika

Terms to Expire 2019: *Rusty Melnick, First, Opelika; *John Vermillion, Taylor Road, Montgomery; Mike King, First, Opelika

TIME, PLACE, PREACHER

Chairperson 2016–2017:

Mike Northcutt, Eastmont, Montgomery
Terms to Expire 2017: Mike Northcutt, Eastmont, Montgomery; Tim Anderson, Clements, Athens; Adam Brewer, Glory Fellowship, Jasper; Micah Gandy, First, Monroeville; Paul Murphy, First, Winfield; Nic Seaborn, Raleigh Avenue, Homewood; Terry Trivette, Sharon Heights, Birmingham

Coleman names committees

Two committees, the Credentials Committee and the Tellers Committee, were appointed during the state convention's opening session Nov. 15. The Committee on Committees also was named during the Tuesday sessions.

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

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

Serving as chairman of the committee was J. Warren Culver, Capitol Heights, Montgomery. Serving with him were Chris H. Aldridge, Mount Pisgah, Cropwell; Mark Barber, Hillview, Birmingham; Jim Collins, Evergreen, Evergreen; Wayne Henderson, Rockford, Rockford; Trevor A. Perry, Letohatchee, Letohatchee; Tim Scarbrough, Indian Grave, Billingsley.

Tellers Committee members helped convention officers tabulate convention votes.

Kyle Valaer, Liberty, Chelsea, served as chairman. Other members were Roy Hill, First, Satsuma; Jonathan S. Jenkins, Sister Springs, Tyler; D. Keith Ray, Arbor, Pell City; Nathan S. Sims, First, New Brockton; Don Stephens, Plantersville, Plantersville; Stephen Whitehead, Jones, Jones.

The following also were elected to serve on the Committee on Committees until 2019: Greg Corbin, Lakeside, Birmingham, chair in 2019; Ron Madison, Mount Zion, Huntsville; James Watkins, First, Leroy. (TAB)

MEMORIALS COMMITTEE

Chairperson 2016–2017:

Bill Morgan, First, Prattville

Terms to Expire 2017: Bill Morgan, First, Prattville; Robert Hatfield, Dawson Memorial, Homewood; *Paul Miller, First, Pell City; Paul H. Moore, First, Pelham; *Sandra Reed, Pisgah, Selma

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Chairperson 2016–2017:

Rob Jackson, Central, Decatur

Terms to Expire 2019: Buddy Gray, Hunter Street, Hoover; Jeff Redmond, Parkway, Auburn

RESOLUTIONS

Chairperson 2016–2017:

Cecil Sanders, First, Headland

Terms to Expire 2017: Cecil Sanders, First, Headland; Daniel Atkins, Taylor Road, Montgomery; Ben Bowden, First, Enterprise; John T. Brock, Highland, Florence; *Joanne B. Farmer, Mt. Hebron West, Elmore; John Killian, Maytown, Maytown; Joe Bob Mizzell, Hopewell, Marion ☛



Robert Smith Jr., who serves as Charles T. Carter Baptist Chair of Divinity at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School, shared from Genesis 24 during the Tuesday night session.



Photo by Doug Rogers

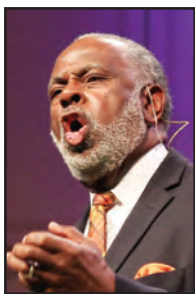
Smith finds plan for Church 'sown in soil of' Rebekah, Isaac's story in Gen. 24

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

As participants sang along to the familiar melody, "Yip-pie yi-yo. Yip-pie yay-ye," the Tuesday evening worship service of the Alabama Baptist State Convention was underway.

Three on a String wouldn't be considered a "typical" Tuesday night musical guest, but as three and then four men began picking away at the banjo, bass, guitar and then harmonica, the upbeat rhythm and familiar tunes brought smiles to the faces of those in the sanctuary of Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery.

The "perfect balance of musical entertainment and humor," according to its website, Three on a String consists of Jerry Ryan, Brad Ryan, Andy Meginniss and the real jokester of the evening,



SMITH

Bobby Horton, who changed into three or four outfits throughout the night, morphing into a high school band member, an elephant in a parade and a baroque-style musician. If these descriptions sound out of place for a state convention annual meeting, that just means you weren't there to laugh along with the others that night.

And laughter, as the evening's guest speaker Robert Smith Jr. said, "is music and medicine for our own soul."

Smith, who serves as Charles T. Carter Baptist Chair of Divinity at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, continued with the annual meeting's theme of "Sent ... Here, There and Everywhere" with his message from Genesis 24.

Though it might seem like the chapter's 67 verses are all about "how to get a good wife," Smith chuckled, the chapter "contains

the seed of the perpetuation of Israel that is sown in this passage." And in that, the ultimate plan for the Church is "sown in the soil of this passage," he said.

Israel has always been in danger, Smith said. From the story of Joseph being sold into slavery by his own brothers to Pharaoh's

order to kill the Hebrew babies to the 40 long years in the wilderness to spending 70 years exiled in Babylon.

Faithful promises

But "God made a promise that He would rebuild ... and re-establish Israel. ... And God is

faithful to keep His promises," Smith said.

One can see that faithfulness throughout the Old Testament, he said, and even in Genesis 24.

The plan for the Church is sown in this passage, Smith said, "because God knew that out of Abraham all nations would be

"I wonder if we are holding keys to locks of churches that no longer exist or are on their way out."

**Robert Smith Jr.
Beeson Divinity School**

KNOW what to do in case of suspected concussion



Children's
of Alabama®

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



www.ChildrensAL.org/concussion

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



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Church planters (in green shirts) fill the altar during the Tuesday evening session of the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting Nov. 15–16 while participants pray over them.

blessed — not just Jews, not just Gentiles.”

Referencing a story about a theologian who went back to where he used to preach for years in Hamburg, Germany, Smith said the man looked out over the city and the church where he once preached. The church building had long been destroyed and the members dispersed but the theologian noted how he thought it was odd that he still held the keys to the church building in his hands.

“I wonder if we are holding keys to locks of churches that no longer exist or are on their way out,” Smith said.

“I’m talking about the churches that have on their marquee [announcing] bazaars, rummage sales and nothing that would suggest there’s really life there. I’m talking about the church named in Revelation 3 where God says, ‘Behold I stand at the door and knock.’ He has

purchased the Church with His own blood and now He is on the outside knocking on the door asking for re-admittance.

“The Church in many instances is sick,” he said. “And a sick Church cannot minister to a critically ill world.”

But again the seed (that is Jesus Christ) that sustains the

Church itself and is the “future promise in terms of the future kingdom of God is planted in the soil” of Genesis 24, Smith said.

He noted four portraits that are important to recognize in the passage to see the seed planted there.

The first portrait is of Abra-

ham, a man who is 144 years old at the time and believes he needs to find a wife for his son, Isaac, so that the promise can be fulfilled through him.

But there were some stipulations on the woman that could be Isaac’s wife. She could not

***“The Bible
doesn’t need to
be adjusted, it
just needs to be
trusted.”***

**Robert Smith Jr.
Beeson Divinity School**



Three on a String performed Nov. 15 at the 194th Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting. They combined familiar tunes with humor for messengers and others.

Photo by Doug Rogers

come from Canaan but had to be from Abraham’s family living in Aram-Naharaim, a 400-mile journey away.

Plan B is easier

It would have been much easier to have a Plan B, to take a wife from the Canaanites near where they were already living. But Abraham knew how such a plan had worked out in the past for him when he tried to fulfill the promise by his own power — having a child with the servant Hagar, instead of with his wife, Sarah.

“The Bible doesn’t need to be adjusted, it just needs to be trusted,” Smith said.

The second portrait is of the unnamed servant who went to find a wife for Isaac.

When the servant travels with an entourage of camels to find this mysterious woman who would hopefully marry Isaac without ever having seen him, “he only does one thing — talks about his master.”

Once he arrived at his destination he began praying. While he was praying the answer showed up before the prayer was over, Smith said. Rebekah was already approaching the servant with water.

“Trust Him while you are pray-

ing, that God is sending an answer. Open the door and trust that if it’s in His will He will do it for His purposes.”

The third portrait Smith noted in the passage was the willingness of Rebekah to go to a land far away from her family, “because she had heard what kind of master she would be going to see.”

God sees us first

The final portrait is found in the welcoming spirit of the bridegroom, Isaac. Before Rebekah even sees Isaac, he notices her coming into town with the unnamed servant. In a similar way, Smith said, God sees us before we see Him.

In an unlikely story about marriage, lineage, a 400-mile jour-

ney and fetching water from a well, one can find the seed of the Church being planted, watered and harvested. So when God calls you to go here, there and everywhere, “not through convenience” but through His plan, “keep on being His ambassador,” Smith urged.

Prior to the evening service, church planters from across the state filed into the sanctuary holding signs with the name of the city they are serving.

Lamar Duke, church planting strategist for the State Board of Missions, introduced the group and asked participants to surround them at the front while Bob Weber, pastor of Valley Creek Baptist Church, Hueytown, led in praying over the 24 church planters gathered at the altar. 🙏

Others meet in Montgomery around state convention

Other groups gathered during the Nov. 15–16 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting held in Montgomery.

Volunteers in Missions met Tuesday and celebrated the naming of the Outstanding Missions Volunteer of the Year, Jerry Sims (see story, page 8).

The Alabama Church Planter

Network met Nov. 13 at Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery, where participants heard from Jeff Christopherson, vice president of the Send Network of the North American Mission Board.

African-American pastors

Alabama African-American Pastors met Nov. 14 at Southlawn Baptist Church, Montgomery, and heard from guest speaker Terrence Jones, pastor of Strong Tower at Washington Park, Montgomery.

Other groups that met included the Alabama Network of Christian Community Ministers and Directors of Missions.

The Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference (see story, page 16) was held Nov. 14 at Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery. (TAB)

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THEME INTERPRETATION

'Shepherd the flock'

Whitley exhorts leaders through 1 Peter 5

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

The call to be "Sent ... Here, There and Everywhere" in Ryan Whitley's life was simple, he told messengers to the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting Nov. 16.

He was a senior in college and his then girlfriend, now wife, asked him to join her at a church event.

"God spoke to me and called me into the ministry [that evening]," said Whitley, who serves as pastor of CrossPoint Church, Trussville, and gave the second theme interpretation during the annual meeting held at Eastmont Baptist Church, Montgomery.

God also used mentors in Whitley's life to help develop that call, along with Scripture passages, like 1 Peter 5, that have spoken to him over the years.

In the New Testament letter the apostle Peter writes to various churches in Asia Minor, exhorting the leaders to lead well and teaching the followers how to conduct themselves in the face of persecution and suffering.

In order for Peter's words to carry more weight for the church leaders, he offered three credentials for why he sent a letter of exhortation, Whitley shared.

First, Peter affirmed that he too was a church elder. Second, he called attention to the fact that he was an eyewitness to the sufferings of Jesus Christ and had experienced his own suffering because of his relationship with Jesus. Third, he was a partaker in the glory that would one day be revealed.

"What are your credentials in ministry?" Whitley asked. "You are called. You are saved. You are sent by the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not your education. It's not your ability. It's not your skill, not the size of your church. It is the Lord that is your credential to ministry."

Responsibility to feed, lead

Peter also exhorted the leaders (or shepherds) to lead the church (or sheep/flock), Whitley said.

"The passage speaks of our responsibility to shepherd the flock of God. To feed, lead and protect our sheep. But the congregation that you lead is not your congregation. It's God's congregation," he said.

In verse 2, Peter writes what Whitley calls three "not-but statements" of leadership — "not under compulsion but willing," "not for shameful gain but eager to serve" and "not lording over them but being examples to the flock."

With those three statements Whitley asked participants to think about their own attitude toward serving in ministry, toward a pastor's compensation and toward each person in the flock.

To share alongside the theme of being sent, Whitley asked three pastors, Orlando Buck, Charles T. Carter and Blake Kersey, to share about their own call to ministry.

Buck, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church, Arton, urged participants to "be willing to go wherever He sends" and that it's "not a matter of if we've been sent but wherever we've been sent."

Carter, professor of pastoral ministry leadership development at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham and long-time Alabama Baptist leader, said he has learned that a "call to be sent is a call to prepare."

"Learn the Scriptures," he exhorted, "so you can lead others in how to be saved. Hide God's Word in your heart."

And Kersey, pastor of First Baptist Church, Decatur, said he used to think he didn't have a dramatic testimony to share since he was raised in a Christian home and accepted Christ in third grade after Vacation Bible School.

'Dramatic testimony'

"But then I realized I do have an extremely dramatic testimony. I was dead and Christ came and He made me alive. I was useless to anyone and He came and by His grace has made me useful to Him."

To conclude his message, Whitley asked those who had been called into the ministry to stand, first with those who had been called since 2010, then 2000, then since the 1990s, 80s and so on. By the end of the demonstration nearly every person in the room was standing and Whitley spoke this word over them — "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."

Whitley said, "Scripture is clear. We will receive a crown of glory. ... But that crown is not one-size-fits-all. It only fits the head of Jesus and when we receive it, we will properly place it at His feet." ☛



WHITLEY



TAB
AR

Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The Person of Christ

Thankful

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

Once again Thanksgiving Day serves to remind us of the value of cultivating a thankful heart. For sure, in the days of His flesh Christ displayed thankfulness. Theology 101 concludes the series about the personal qualities of Christ by taking note of how a thankful spirit was displayed in His life.

Last week we noted that at the Last Supper, Christ expressed joy through singing a hymn with the disciples. Prior to engaging in singing He prayed with thanksgiving. He prayed when He took one of the Passover cups. Luke 22:17 gives this brief account: "He took the cup and gave thanks." At that point Christ transitioned from historic Passover celebration to the New Covenant's new memorial supper. This new celebration involved the taking of bread. At this point, the record adds, "And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you.'" After the eating of the bread, the account reads, "Likewise He also took the cup." In so far as "likewise" indicates repetition, we may well understand that again Christ gave thanks before saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20).

In short Christ offered thanks for the privilege of offering His body and shedding His blood for our redemption. Such giving of thanks grew out of a longstanding attitude of thankfulness. Years later when the apostle Paul gave instructions to the Corinthian believers about their observance of the Lord's Supper, he included the fact that Christ gave thanks on that occasion, saying, "And when He had given thanks," He broke the bread before passing it to the disciples (1 Cor. 11:24).

Last week we also noted that He rejoiced at the return of the 70 whom Christ had sent out. Not only so, but He went on in His prayer to say, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them

to babes. Even so Father for it seemed good in Your sight" (Luke 10:21).

On another memorable occasion Christ fed a crowd of 5,000 with a young lad's lunch. The description of the event includes the fact that "Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted" (John 6:11).

Offering thanks

Later, on a similar occasion when He fed a crowd of 4,000, we read, "He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude" (Matt. 15:36).

Christ's simple act of offering thanks before feeding the multitudes made an impression on the disciples, at least upon John. Writing his Gospel many years later, John used His example of thankfulness as a way of identifying the place, writing, "Other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks" (John 6:23).

Do we not get the drift that Christ was a thankful person? Somewhat in imitation of Christ's example His followers across the years have made it a practice to give thanks at mealtime. Not only at mealtime, but also the Bible exhorts us to make thankfulness a part of all of our praying, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6). ☛

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.



'One message'

'Everything should flow from' conviction of sufficient gospel message, Corbin says

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

From one pastor to the next, there are many differences — age, church size, you name it. But all of those differences fall away in the face of “our one message,” said Greg Corbin, pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, during the convention sermon that closed out the Nov. 15–16 annual meeting.

Paul understood this as he wrote a letter to the church in Corinth, telling them his philosophy of ministry in 1 Corinthians 2:1–5. These five verses describe Paul’s one message, and what should be every pastor’s one message, Corbin said.

“The culture of Corinth [at this time] valued wealth, pleasure and athletes with no law except one’s own desires. ... Do those ideas sound familiar?” he asked.

“While our technology is different and times have changed, our hearts haven’t. Like the apostle Paul all those years ago, all of us ... are navigating ministry in this type of culture. So what do we do?”

Look to Paul, Corbin said, pulling three key truths from Paul’s words.

► “We must have a conviction of the priority of the gospel.”

“Paul brought a radical message ... that went against everything the culture believed in every way,” Corbin said. Paul went to declare “the testimony of God” (1 Cor. 2:1).

Paul’s conviction in the gospel message shaped everything he did, and it should shape everything believers do now, Corbin said.

Paul went on to say in verse 2 that he is “determined” not to know anything other than Christ. This is a statement about “the centrality of the gospel,” Corbin said.

To believe is to share

“Only the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified could save, so everything should flow from that.”

► “We must have a commitment to the sharing of the gospel.”

“For Paul, to believe the gospel was to share the gospel,” Corbin said. “He believed that robust theology should lead to robust evangelism.”

And when sharing the gospel, it must be done completely, clearly and constantly.

When Paul talks about Jesus in these



Greg Corbin, pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, shares the convention sermon at the close of the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting Nov. 16.

Photo by Neisha Roberts

verses, he speaks specifically of Jesus’ crucifixion. “It is not just talking about Jesus generic, but it is a specific message about Jesus. Paul emphasized both the person and the work of Christ.”

The “treasure of theology,” Corbin said, is a rich message that is deep and tremendous. And it’s worth sharing every day.

► “We must have a confidence in the sufficiency of the gospel.”

In verse 3, Paul describes himself as weak, fearful and trembling. “Why does he feel that way?” Corbin queried.

Maybe it was because he understood the gravity of preaching the gospel or maybe it was because he was deeply discouraged. Regardless of how he felt, however, Paul

went on to say in verse 4 that he doesn’t rely on his own abilities.

“Rather he depends on the power of the gospel itself,” Corbin said, referring to verse 5. “You see, the power doesn’t reside in the messenger but in the message and the Spirit of God drawing people to Him.”

Getting job done

“The gospel will get the job done. (It’s) the only thing that will get the job done.”

“I stand here today as a testimony and as a preacher of the power of God to give a spiritual life of a spiritual death,” he said.

“That, my friends, is the gospel. That is our one message. It is sufficient — and it’s the only thing that will get the job done.”

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Top CP givers reflect on importance of giving

By Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

It's a high honor for churches to be recognized as top Cooperative Program (CP) givers in the state.

For Danny Wood, pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, it's something he's been able to lead his church to do for more than 20 years.

Wood was born in Birmingham but moved as a child with his family to Atlanta at the age of 5 and was raised in a CP-supporting church plant. As an adult Wood joined Shades Mountain Baptist as a member under the pastoral leadership of Charles T. Carter, also a firm supporter of CP giving.

Just as Wood was taught about the importance of CP throughout his life, he tries to lead his church in that direction.

"The DNA of our church is missions, and we set up our budget so that 10 percent of all the receipts coming into our budget go out through CP. That's just the starting point," Wood said.

"Our goal is to have 20 to 25

percent that comes in to go out."

On the opening day of the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting Nov. 15, Shades Mountain Baptist was recognized for giving the largest amount of money through CP in the state in 2015 — \$768,504.12.

Fairfield Highlands Baptist Church, Midfield, was recognized for giving the largest per capita giving — \$338.20.

Pastor Ed Cruce said his church is a "strong missions-minded church and through the years it has never considered reducing CP or just maintaining it."

The church gives at least 15 percent of its receipts through CP and "it's just part of who we are," Cruce said. "We lead our church in that way because that's the lifeline that Southern Baptists have to help one another reach the whole world with the gospel. ... [Through CP] we can have a share in what God is doing throughout the world."

Pisgah Baptist Church, Selma, was recognized for giving the greatest percentage of undesignated giving — 26.33 percent.

Tom Stacey, director of mis-



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Tom Stacey (left), director of missions for Selma and Cahaba Baptist associations, accepts a plaque on behalf of Pisgah Baptist Church, Selma, from Jim Swedenburg (center), SBOM's director of the office of Cooperative Program and stewardship development. Danny Wood (right), pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, and Ed Cruce (not present), pastor of Fairfield Highlands Baptist Church, Midfield, also were recognized.

sions (DOM) for Selma Baptist Association, and newly appointed DOM for Cahaba Baptist Association said, "It doesn't surprise me that [Pastor Harold Arnold's church] would give so strongly,"

noting that the church is small in membership.

"I don't care if a church has five, 500 or 5,000 members, that kind of attitude and spirit is really admirable." ¶

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youth. Please submit resúmes to search@libertyhillonline.org.

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OTHER

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The Fayette County Baptist Association is looking to hire its next director of missions to serve the people of Fayette County, Alabama. The FCBA is represented by 29 churches in northwest Alabama in a mostly rural setting. The person that we

are searching for needs to feel a call to associational missions with preferably more than 10 years experience in ministry. Please send resúmes to: DOM Search Committee, 18010 Highway 18 E, Berry, AL 35546.

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'Humanity's greatest need'

Blackwell says reconciliation to God vital to being sent

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Developing the state convention annual meeting theme of "Sent ... Here, There and Everywhere" during the opening session, Samford University's Kevin Blackwell reminded messengers they are ambassadors.

"You have been called into a ministry obligation and that obligation is to share the greatest news the world has ever known, that the

One who knew no sin became sin so that we could know the righteousness of Christ," said Blackwell, assistant to the president for church relations and executive director of the Ministry Training Institute at Samford.

'Together be reconciled'

"Allow Christ to plead through us ... through our pulpits [and] everyday interactions," he said. "Let's together be reconciled to God."

Preaching from 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, Blackwell said, "All of us who know Jesus as Savior have been called to the ministry, and our ministry is one of reconciliation. We all together are sent as ambassadors with a message from the King, and the message is very simple — be reconcilers to God."

Blackwell asked four ministers "on the front lines" to share with messengers about their individual callings and how God had sent them.

Daniel Atkins, pastor of Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, said when God called him to Taylor Road He impressed on him that He was making a major move at the church. "God said to me, 'You can hear about it or you can be a part of it,'" Atkins said.

'Rediscovering purpose'

"My wife and I moved to Montgomery in January and are helping communicate and rediscover the church's purpose, which is to exist for the glory of God and to introduce them to Him and teach them to follow Him," he said.

Jennifer Foster, children's minister at Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, said her journey began at 10 days old, the first day



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Kevin Blackwell, assistant to the president for church relations and executive director of the Ministry Training Institute at Samford University in Birmingham, expounds on the convention theme.

her parents took her to church.

"My parents trusted me to His care, guidance and leadership. I began my own relationship with Him in second grade.

"Being sent by God is an unfolding story from Samford to New Orleans Seminary to serving on the international missions field ... and being in service in ministry in Alabama," she said. "While the call is clear, the work can be frustrating and exhausting and wearying. God who called us is the God who sustains us ... as we are following after His heart to reach out into a broken, fractured world and preach the good news, the healing word of Jesus Christ."

Terrence Jones, pastor of Strong Tower at Washington Park, a new church plant in Montgomery, said, "God has called us to a very dif-

ficult part of town with a lot of violence and fatherlessness.

"But we serve a King who is both unelectable and unimpeachable."

He noted that leading a church amid gunfire in the street is not brave. "We are following the King — take up your cross and follow Him wherever He sends you," he said. "Not only has God sent us, but He modeled it for us."

Blake Newsom, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, was happily balancing his role as a professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and serving as an interim pastor when God made a move in his life — one Newsom wasn't sure he wanted to happen.

During the early days of 2016, Newsom was serving as interim pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist and realized God wanted him to transition into full-time service at the church, which meant leaving the seminary.

'Fervently' walking

He knew the call was from God and he listened. "(Now) we love what God has called us to do," Newsom said.

Noting Philippians 3 as the guiding passage of his life, Newsom said, "I must fervently walk with Jesus every single day of my life.

"My mission in life, my mission to convey to the church, is to know Christ and to win some as long as I am here on this earth," he said.

Just as the four ministers highlighted during his presentation are what Paul calls ambassadors for the King, Blackwell said, "A trustworthy ambassador always delivers the King's message." That should be true for all believers.

"A true ambassador does not give the message his own spin and never fails to deliver that message.

"Christ desires to use our mouths, to use our lives, to use our ministries in order to beseech and implore through us to humanity's greatest need — reconciliation." ☞

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PASTORS CONFERENCE

Coming 'Together'

Newly elected PC officers for 2017 are (l to r): Richard Richie, treasurer; Rob Jackson, president; Daven Watkins, president-elect; and Stuart Davidson, president-elect for 2019.



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Metaphorical Timothy, Barnabas, Paul speak to participants at Pastors Conference 2016

By Maggie Walsh
and Neisha Roberts
The Alabama Baptist

As president, Teman Knight wanted the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference to encourage participants and remind them they're not in ministry alone. That's why this year's conference theme was "Together," and it's a concept that was embraced — both figuratively and literally.

As the conference came to a close Nov. 14, pastors under the age of 40 gathered at the altar of Heritage Baptist Church,

Montgomery, to be prayed over by their fellow pastors. It was a clear picture of the "two are better than one" (Eccles. 4:9-10) model that Knight, pastor of Heritage Baptist, fervently wanted the conference to embody.

Rob Jackson kicked off the day with an old adage: "Big oaks from little acorns grow."

This is true on earth and in the spiritual things, said Jackson, pastor of Central Baptist Church, Decatur, drawing from Galatians 6:6-8 where Paul reminds

readers that "a man reaps what he sows" (v. 7).

While this is true for all believ-

ers, it's a vital truth to remember as pastors, Jackson said, emphasizing three areas where pastors must be diligent in sowing seeds. Pastors must plant seeds of faith, disciple making and unity, standing on the Word of God to guide and lead their congregants, he said.

"Every one of us must work together. We must be faithful in doing good," Jackson said, noting that was especially true in the small things. After all, "big oaks from little acorns grow," he said.

Bob Pitman, of Bob Pitman Ministries, also urged unity, telling conference participants, "There are a lot of things that would divide our togetherness but the one common bond, the one common uniting person, is Jesus Christ."

In this world there are a lot of things to divide us, Pitman said,

but Christ is so much bigger than any divisive element the world throws at us.

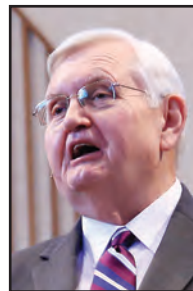
Referencing Luke 4:14-30, Pitman spoke about the time Jesus returned to His hometown of Nazareth. While there, Jesus did three things: He made the "unmistakable declaration" that He was the Messiah; He spoke an "undeniable revelation" where He revealed what the crowd was thinking and what was in their hearts; and He departed from them in an "unexplainable separation," escaping a hostile crowd by simply passing through their midst.

"How did that happen?" Pitman asked.

"I don't know," he said to a chuckling crowd, closing with the challenge to participants to "talk [to others] about the source of our togetherness — Jesus."



KNIGHT



PITMAN

During the afternoon session, Waylon Bailey encouraged participants amid the changing culture.

"The Church has changed since I was called to preach at 17," said Bailey, pastor of First Baptist Church, Covington, Louisiana. "The attitude toward Church has changed. Everything we do is different now."

He noted the generational differences today, from the gospel-loving baby boomers to the less-open-to-the-gospel millennials, the "least evangelized of any group."

But just because millennials are not as open to the gospel as previous generations, "it's not hopeless now," Bailey said.

In 2 Timothy 1, Paul was withstanding hardships but he had "not forgotten who the Lord is," Bailey said. The change we see today is "not hopeless because of the power that we have within us."

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phasizing repentance," Bailey said. "We have to get ready to give an answer and to give help. We have to be ready by working together, lifting one another up, encouraging one another and picking up those who fall."

It might be different, or even harder, now — but it's not hopeless, he said.

Kevin Wilburn said hardship is nothing new for Christ-followers. The Bible is filled with examples of seemingly hopeless situations that God works through — like how Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, in Genesis 22 because God told him to.

But thankfully Abraham and Isaac walked together up Mount Moriah and walked back down together.

Wilburn, vice president for advancement at the University of Mobile, said the pair only "walked together ... after these things" took place.

'These things'

"That makes you and I ask, 'What are these things?' In ministry you know things will happen," Wilburn said. "Abraham had experienced ... relocation, sorrow, deception and failure."

Abraham most certainly had a vision for how he thought things would turn out in his life, just like we so often do now, he said. But Abraham was serious about following God's plan over his personal vision.

"Is it possible that the vision in your life has become more important than the God that put the vision in you?" Wilburn asked participants.

With God working His good plan in and through our lives, Wilburn said, "we better be ready ... because testing is going to come. And Alabama Baptists, you better walk together."

Not only should Alabama Baptists walk arm in arm with one another but also with fellow Southern Baptists around the world, said Chuck

Kelley, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Kelley gave participants a "satellite look" at what's happening in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) with the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:19 mandates believers to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Unfortunately the "stunning" reality, according to Kelley's research, is that while the number of SBC-affiliated churches has grown, baptisms have lessened. What does this mean for the SBC?

It means "the world is doing a better job of pulling our people out of churches than we are doing of pulling lost people out of sin," which has led to Southern Baptists quickly becoming a "shrinking presence with a diminishing voice in our nation."

The convention-wide issue, Kelley said, is Southern Baptists



WILBURN



Photo by Neisha Roberts

Kenneth Loomis (center stage), worship and senior life minister at Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, leads worship during the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference held Nov. 14.

not making disciples of their local communities. And how the SBC improves the Great Commission health of its churches is a life-or-death issue for the convention, he said.

So what's the way forward? Owning the problem, living distinctly within the culture, seeking gospel conversations outside the walls of the church and seeking spiritual awakening, Kelley said.

"I need you to know how high the stakes are if we will not seek God's stirring. ... I am a man of immense hope because ... I know what God can do and I have no doubt in that and I know of His ability to work even

in these circumstances," Kelley encouraged participants.

The power of God can make a difference in the lives of friends

and neighbors — if Christians will share Him with others, said Mike Satterfield, founder of Field of Grace Ministries.

We serve a risen Savior, Satterfield said, and He is no longer in the grave. But instead of the truth of our living God being an uncontrollable exclamation, we too often treat it like the best-kept secret in our lives, he said.

"The Bible has told me the best-kept secret in town and I can't keep it to myself because secrets

are hard to keep. And I refuse to keep this secret."

It's about more than just going to church — it's about being the Church, Satterfield said. What does that mean for Christians?

"We have to believe it, receive it and spread it," he said, adding that before you share who God is with the rest of the world you have to share Him at home.

God can overcome anything the world hurls your way, Satterfield said. "You ought not be walking in death sentences when we have a life-giving message."

Camo gear

Sammy Gilbreath concluded the day of inspiration by walking into the sanctuary dressed in his reflective orange and camo gear, rifle over one shoulder.

Gilbreath shared how hunting has helped him understand how God works through his life, moving him from, "I got this," through "We got this," and on to "You got this."

Referencing Luke 4:42-44, Gilbreath said, "He just allows us to come along to be a part of His purpose being fulfilled. You see, we are not alone."

"We're not in this by ourselves guys," Gilbreath said. "I've learned I no longer got this. It's not even 'we got this.' It is the Lord that's got this. I'm learning it every day. It's together. He's allowing me by the very grace of God to be a part of Him accomplishing His purpose."

Gilbreath concluded by leading the time of prayer over the pastors gathered at the altar.

"Together, this group can change this state," he said, praying for the pastors to see a movement of God as they served together. ✠



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For November 27

Explore the Bible

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

WITH ANTICIPATION
2 Peter 3:3–13, 17–18

A Sure Return (3–7)

If you love Jesus, read your Bible and live for the glory of God, people will mock you. Scoffers may arise in your family or among your friends, co-workers or teachers. You will be controlled by either the fear of the Lord or the fear of man. When confronted by scoffers, the fear of man will cause you to deny Christ, disown Christ or diminish Christ. If you are motivated by the fear of the Lord, however, you will not allow the scoffers to define you, destroy you, discourage you or dissuade you.

The scoffers will ask, “Where is the promise of His coming?” They are asking, “Where’s the Messiah?” The Old Testament Scriptures had prophesied that God would send fire upon the world (Mal. 4:1). Jesus came and did not set the world on fire and send everyone to hell.

The scoffers will call into question the biblical promise of the Lord’s coming. They scoff at the promise of the Lord’s return by arguing that because everything has stayed the same since creation, God will not intervene in the world. But these scoffers deliberately overlook the fact that God did intervene when He created the heavens and the earth with the word of His mouth and also when God judged the earth with water and it perished.

Their problem is not so much intellectual objections as it is moral rejections. Most people’s problem with Christianity is not with the facts but with the implications of the facts. If Jesus is Lord, then you cannot just do whatever you want to do.

In verse 7, God promises there will be a day of judgment for the ungodly. History will not go on forever. The end is coming. Jesus will return to the earth and bless the godly and punish the ungodly.

The Patient Father (8–9)

The Lord’s perspective on time is different from that of humans. It is not that God is slow in fulfilling His promise, but rather that He is patient. Patience indicates purposefulness and intentionality.

Peter explained that the delay of the Lord’s return is not a long time from God’s perspective. God is patient. He has not brought this period of history to an end because He does not wish that any perish. Although Jesus’ followers anticipate Christ’s return and the defeat of all evil, as long as the present stage of history lasts, an opportunity remains for people to be saved. The unsaved do not have forever; but one day they will. And it may be too late.

The Warning Issued (10)

God will not delay His judgment forever. When Jesus returns it will be sudden, without warning and like a thief. On the day of the Lord the heavens and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved. There will be no place the ungodly can hide. The earth and the works performed in it will be laid bare before God. The new earth will emerge, having been purified by fire.

While Waiting (11–13, 17–18)

Your worldview determines your life-style. What’s down in the well comes up in the bucket. Do you really believe Jesus is coming again? Then the Second Coming of Jesus ought to motivate you to live a holy life.

We’re not to kill time waiting for Jesus to return. We’re to fill time with holiness and godliness. If you want to be holy, focus on godliness. Jesus’ followers are to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus by spending time with Him daily, gathering with other believers weekly to worship, sharing life with other believers in small groups and engaging together to advance the gospel.✱

Bible Studies for Life

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

GIVE THANKS — ANYWAY!
2 Chronicles 20:10–12, 14–17,
20–22, 29–30

The rise of the Davidic monarchy and the development of Israel into a small empire in Canaan and the Levant coincided with a decline in the empires to the nation’s east and west. In the west, Egypt had been in a state of decline for centuries and would never regain the prestige it had enjoyed in previous eras. To the east, Assyria and Babylonia were both recovering from long periods of internal and external stress and were poorly positioned to dominate states like Israel. While these powerful empires on Israel’s borders were in retreat, Israel and her more immediate neighbors were left to work matters out among themselves. Conflict was never far in the past or future as Israel split into two kingdoms, Judah and Israel, and as nations such as Phoenicia, Philistia, Aram, Ammon, Moab and Edom fought for control of one piece of ground or another.

In 2 Chronicles 20, we find ourselves squarely in the middle of one of these moments of conflict. During the reign of the Judean king, Jehoshaphat, three nations to the southeast launched an attack on Judah. Ammon, Moab and Edom (called here “Mount Seir”) — nations that usually found themselves under Judean control — banded together to turn the tables on their erstwhile conqueror. King Jehoshaphat was quite frightened by the coalition pressing in on his eastern flanks (2 Chron. 20:3). The question was, “How would the king respond in the face of these fears?”

Give thanks because you can look to God when you are powerless. (10–12)

Jehoshaphat’s first instinct was one that was thoroughly biblical: He turned to God with words of lament. In verses 6–9 the king appeals to God, reminding Him that He is

the God who rules heaven and earth. He is the God who gave the land to His people, and it is to Him that the king expresses his determination to appeal for deliverance.

What is most interesting about the king’s appeal in verses 10–13 is its frank admission that the king has no choice but to rely on God: “For we are powerless against this great multitude that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You” (v. 12). With nowhere else to turn, the king rightly turns to God and expresses his complete dependence on Him.

Give thanks because God is with you. (14–17)

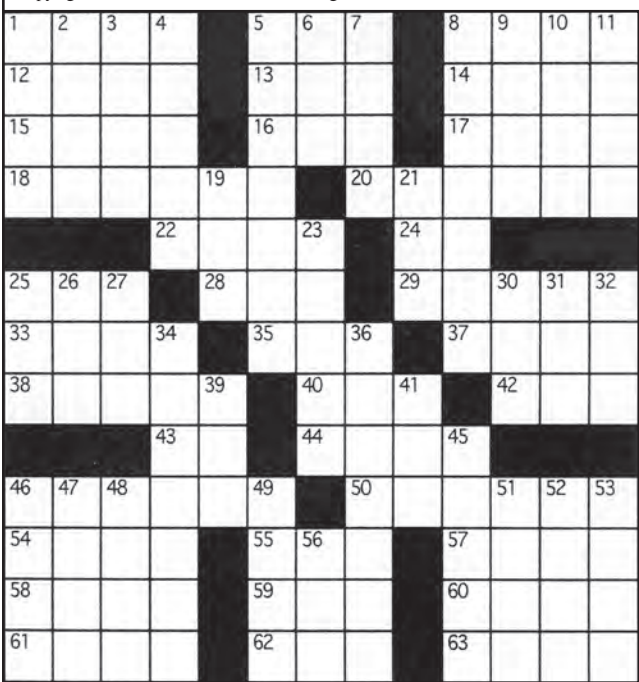
The response to Jehoshaphat’s prayer was immediate. The text records that God prompted a man named Jahaziel to go to the king and give him the divine response. That response was an affirmation of what the king himself had said: Jehoshaphat was powerless before the coalition allied against him, but God would intervene to win the battle on the king’s behalf. In verse 15 the prophet declares, “The battle is not yours but God’s,” and in words reminiscent of God’s assurances to Moses in Exodus 3, he adds, “The Lord will be with you” (v. 17).

Give thanks because God gives victory and peace. (20–22, 29–30)

The next morning, Jehoshaphat did just as God had commanded him. He went out early and encouraged the people that God would deliver them; they had only to trust his messenger. The text then tells us that the king took one more step to affirm his trust in God’s promise of deliverance, he appointed singers to lead the army with hymns of praise to God. Though the battle had not yet been joined, Jehoshaphat was already praising God for the victory that would inevitably come. Even in the face of terrible odds, the king expressed extraordinary trust and extraordinary thanks to his extraordinary God.✱

Christian Crossword

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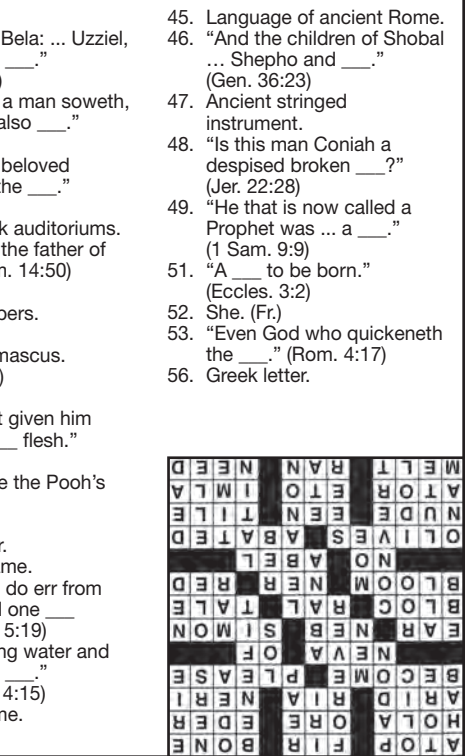


Across

- 1. At the peak.
- 5. “As for the stork, the ___ trees are her home.” (Ps. 104:17)
- 8. “This is now ___ of my bones.” (Gen. 2:22)
- 12. Hawaiian herb.
- 13. Mine product.
- 14. “The sons of Mushi: Mahli and ___.” (1 Chron. 23:23)
- 15. “... my flesh longeth for thee in a ___ and thirsty land.” (Ps. 63:1)
- 16. Long, narrow inlet.
- 17. “Son of Salathiel which was the son of ___.” (Luke 3:27)
- 18. “Behold, the man is ___ as one of us.” (Gen. 3:22)
- 20. “So then they that are in the flesh cannot ___ God.” (Rom. 8:8)
- 22. Leningrad’s river.
- 24. Preposition.
- 25. What Malchus lost. (John 18:10)
- 28. Bird’s beak.
- 29. “He lodgeth with one ___ a tanner.” (Acts 10:6)
- 33. Political group.
- 35. N.C. capital.
- 37. “We spend our years as a ___ that is told.” (Ps. 90:9)
- 38. Healthy glow.
- 40. “Abner, the son of ___.”

Down

- 1. “___ rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth.” (1 Kings 21:16)
- 2. Ripped.
- 3. Chemical suffix.
- 4. “The children of Sia, the children of ___.” (Neh. 7:47)
- 5. “The kingdom, the power and the glory ___.”
- 6. “The sons of Bela: ... Uzziel, Jerimoth and ___.” (1 Chron. 7:7)
- 7. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also ___.” (Gal. 4:7)
- 8. “Faithful and beloved partakers of the ___.” (1 Tim. 6:2)
- 9. Ancient Greek auditoriums.
- 10. Belonging to the father of Abner. (1 Sam. 14:50)
- 11. Great Lake.
- 19. Promise Keepers.
- 21. ___ Alamos.
- 23. A river of Damascus. (2 Kings 5:12)
- 25. Wane.
- 26. “As thou hast given him power over ___ flesh.” (John 17:2)
- 27. One of Winnie the Pooh’s friends.
- 30. Disfigure.
- 31. Corrida cheer.
- 32. Masculine name.
- 34. “If any of you do err from the truth, and one ___ him.” (James 5:19)
- 36. “A well of living water and streams from ___.” (Song of Sol. 4:15)
- 39. Feminine name.
- 41. Johnny ___.



Want to know GOD?

By Jenni Ingram
Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

The other day, my husband and I were blessed to have dinner cooked for us by my wonderful mother.

As I walked into my mom's house, I was assaulted by the amazing aromas of home.

The unmistakable scent of her favorite air freshener, the bouquet of supper baking in the oven, the sweet smell of fall air wafting in through the open windows — it was incredible to say the least.

A wave of nostalgia also hit me like a ton of bricks. All the things that were missing — the timber of my father's voice, the laughter of my young daughter, the family that has been called home. And I thought of the stories that were now left up to me to retell and ensure that our legacy lived on.

After I was stuffed to the gills with a homemade meal, I began to wonder when I get to Heaven and walk into the place that Jesus has prepared for me (John 14:1-3), will it be the same glorious feeling? Will I feel that childlike exuberance of coming home after I've been gone for a long time? As I enter in, will I smell the awe-inspiring smells of home? Will I walk into the dining room and see all of my loved ones sitting there waiting for me? I pray I will and seated at the head of the table will be Jesus inviting me to come in saying, "Well done, my good and faithful servant." (Matt. 25:23).

You see, if you accept the free gift of salvation from Jesus, no one can "ever snatch you from His hand" (John 10:25-29). We have these assurances from the one and only King — I'm thankful I know God. Wouldn't you like to have these assurances? ☛

God-inspired treasure hunt



Washington Association thrift shop makes 'big difference' in community

By Grace Thornton
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Amanda Allday says one of the things she enjoys most about her job is that, on many days, it feels like she's seeing people go on a God-inspired treasure hunt.

"Some people, they'll come in and happen to find something that they were needing, and they'll say, 'I believe it was meant for me to find this,'" she said.

That's why the Caring Heart Center is there, said Allday, a member of Antioch Baptist Church near Millry who serves as manager. The large thrift shop, a ministry of Washington Baptist Association, offers clothes, furniture and other household items for people who need them most when they need them most.

Helping families

"Our prices are not very high at all," she said. "And we often offer things to people who need them at no cost, like people who have had a house fire."

In recent weeks, they've had several families like that who have come through their doors, Allday said.

"It's definitely been a help to them," she said.

Larry Thompson, director of missions for Washington Baptist Association, said the Caring Heart Center has "made a big difference" in the community.

The ministry gathers donations from churches and individuals in the area and sells the items at a low price.

Then those profits — after paying for the overhead of the building — are put into the association's benevolence fund, which is used to pay up to \$75 on utilities for people who have received a cutoff notice, Thompson said.

"We can do that once a year for people who need it," he said.

The association had known for a while that it needed a better way to address the needs in its community and had "struggled with this for several years and researched what we could do" before opening the Caring Heart Center, he said.

"It's helped us tremendously and the profits help us even further in helping people," Thompson said.

The ministry operated for a while in a small building — about 1,000 square feet —

before moving to a larger 4,600-square-foot facility in 2009.

Connie Bryan, a longtime volunteer at the center, said the move greatly expanded their possibilities for ministry and bringing in more people is exactly what they're after.

'Contributing to community'

A member of Chatom Baptist Church, Bryan said her favorite part about serving at the Caring Heart Center is interacting with the people.

"It's a mission. You feel like you're doing something for people who really need it," she said. "Our prices are such that people can afford it and some of the items still have the price tags on them — they've never been worn."

She would know — she personally goes through many of the bags of donated items, pricing them and getting them ready to display.

"We all feel like we're contributing to the community by getting to work here," she said of herself and the dozen other volunteers who serve at the center on a regular basis. "It's not easy work. But it's rewarding in lots of ways." ☛

For more information, call the Caring Heart Center at 251-847-3575.

Musical partner to Billy Graham, Cliff Barrows, dies

Cliff Barrows, who led songs for evangelist Billy Graham for six decades, died in Charlotte, North Carolina, on Nov. 15. He was 93.

"Cliff and I were together more than 60 years and in all that time we never had an argument," Billy Graham said in a statement Nov. 15. "We had a few disagreements, but I can't even remember those. It's been a wonderful fellowship in our whole organization. There wouldn't be a Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in the way it is today without him."

Barrows, a native of Ceres, California, earned a degree in sacred music from Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina, and was an assistant pastor at Temple Baptist Church, St. Paul, Minnesota. On his honeymoon with his wife, Wilma "Billie"

Newell, the couple first met Graham and handled music for the evangelist's Grand Rapids, Michigan, crusade in 1947.

After that, Graham, Barrows and soloist George Beverly Shea — who died at 104 years of age in 2013 — were inseparable. The trio, backed by associate evangelists and guest musical artists, held campaigns across the United States and around the world. Their largest audience, 1.1 million, was during the 1973 crusade at Yoido Plaza in Seoul, Korea.

Barrows led the mass choirs at Graham's crusades, sang on occasion with Shea and was the weekly host/announcer for Graham's "Hour of Decision" radio broadcast. Barrows was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 1988 and into

the National Religious Broadcasters Hall of Fame in 1996.

"His uncanny ability to lead a Crusade choir of thousands of voices or an audience of a hundred thousand voices in a great hymn or gospel chorus is absolutely unparalleled," Graham wrote in his autobiography, "Just As I Am."

Jerry A. Johnson, president and CEO of the National Religious Broadcasters, said Barrows was full of joy.

"He spoke with joy, sang with joy and led God's people to sing with joy at the Billy Graham crusades," Johnson said.

Barrows will be interred at a private ceremony at the Billy Graham Library. (RNS)



BARROWS

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Life at convention

PHOTOS BY NEISHA ROBERTS



Left: TAB's Debbie Campbell (left) shares about the state Baptist paper with visitors to the convention annual meeting exhibit hall. **Center:** Alabama Baptist church planters line the front of the stage as Lamar Duke, church planting strategist for the State Board of Missions, shares about their efforts across the state. **Right:** Messengers visit with each other in the exhibit hall, where they also learn about ministries and services available to them.



Large photo above: Former convention presidents are recognized during the Tuesday session for their years of leadership. **Left:** The registration table at the annual meeting often serves as a reunion location for messengers and others who gather each year. **Center:** One messenger reads the latest issue of *The Alabama Baptist* between sessions. **Right:** Messengers vote on resolutions during the Tuesday afternoon session.

