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we REMEMBER

Memorial Day is May 29.

“Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.” — ISAIAH 1:17

A special thank-you to all servicemen and women past and present for serving our country and protecting our freedoms.

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COMMENT

Keys to the Future

The Media Insight Project released a study in May identifying keys to the future for news sources like *The Alabama Baptist* (*TAB*). The keys were not surprising — content, funding and readership — but some of the findings related to the various keys were.

The report stated, “The most important reason given for subscribing was that the publication had significant editorial expertise” in an area of interest to the reader.

That finding has two parts. One relates to the reader; the other to the publication. In the case of *TAB* that means readers have to be interested in growing as Christian disciples. The ministry’s vision statement declares, “*The Alabama Baptist* will help empower Baptists to live out the biblical concepts of Christian discipleship in their personal lives, their professional lives and their lives within the community of faith.”

That is why the paper is filled with resources for personal Christian growth, reports of what God is doing around the world, insights about moral and ethical issues, Bible study helps, training opportunities, information about Baptist life and much more.

TAB will not be of interest to one whose relationship to God is not a priority but if one is interested in growing as a disciple of Christ then what this ministry offers should be considered.

The second part of the finding is the publication’s expertise in covering the topic. Awards are not a guaranty of expertise but they do indicate the quality one can expect to find in a publication.

Among top in nation

It is important to know that 11 times in the past 21 years *TAB* has been selected as the top regional Christian newspaper in the nation by at least one of the three major ecumenical journalism associations. And for 20 consecutive years the ministry has been selected as among the top three regional Christian newspapers in the nation by one of those groups. They are Associated Church Press, Evangelical Press Association and Religion Communicators Council.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

TAB celebrates its 175th anniversary Feb. 4, 2018. In December 2018 it will celebrate 100 years as an Alabama Baptist entity. That history attests to quality and expertise in informing, inspiring and connecting Alabama Baptists for discipleship and service.

All writing staff are active members of Baptist churches. Some hold theological degrees. Some have been international missionaries. All are national award winners. The more than 175 awards hanging on the walls of the office building attest to the ministry’s expertise as Christian journalists.

Funding *TAB*

Funding has been a challenge for *TAB* since its beginning and it still is. The subscription price is artificially low to make the publication affordable for churches to provide for their active resident families. At 27 cents a week no church can say it is too big an investment to make in growing Christian disciples.

The subscription price only covers printing and postage. The Cooperative Program contributes toward salaries and operating costs. Increasingly, however, the publication must look to advertising to help balance the books.

TAB has the third largest circulation among newspapers in Alabama (behind *The Birmingham News* and the *Mobile Press-Register*) and reaches one of the most desirable audiences from an advertising standpoint. Still the challenges are great. Some of the state’s legacy companies refuse to partner with *TAB* because of the word “Baptist” in the name. *TAB* is classified a general circulation publication by the Alabama Press Association and falls near *The Birmingham News* on the list of newspapers in the state. Yet some businesses are afraid of associating with anything as sectarian as “Baptist.”

Partnering with *TAB*

That is hard to understand when Baptists also make up the largest affinity group in the state.

Some think advertising is inappropriate for *TAB*. Some business leaders who are regular readers of *TAB* have trouble picturing their businesses in the publication, on the ministry web-

site or one of the other products produced. They say it might lessen the quality of the paper.

Others have read the paper but never think about partnering with *TAB*.

To be honest, there are a lot of ads *TAB* does not accept because it is inappropriate for the purpose of growing Christian disciples. But advertising we do accept helps build quality businesses because advertising in *TAB* works. Businesses win by reaching a desirable audience and readers win by having information about reliable services and products.

TAB helps connect the business and the client and, at the same time, gains needed funding to undergird continued ministry.

Regional editions

To encourage Baptist business owners to partner with *TAB*, the publication prints three regional editions every week — a Tennessee River edition, a metropolitan Birmingham edition and a Montgomery–Mobile edition. This allows targeted advertising for specific areas of the state that match the reach of local TV stations.

We continue to pray that Christian business leaders will consider partnering with *TAB* to build their businesses and to help undergird the ministry of Baptist communications.

Readership — the third key — relates to personal reaction to the publication. The study found 40 percent of new subscribers started because a friend or family member recommended it. Word of mouth testimonies still beat all other types of promotion.

Sharing with others

Readership studies document that about 25 percent of *TAB* subscribers share their copy of the publication with someone outside their immediate family. That is great. Hopefully a recommendation to subscribe to *TAB* could go along with the shared copy.

People who read and appreciate the publication can encourage Sunday School class members and others to subscribe. Even a word to the pastor, church treasurer or some other decision maker in the church could be helpful.

More than two out of three Baptist churches in Alabama provide *TAB* to any member who asks for it. So encourage others to ask for a subscription. And be assured that those of us privileged to work in this valuable ministry will continue to do our best to provide quality news and information about growing as Christian disciples. We will diligently pursue finding partners to undergird the ministry financially.

But all of that is in vain if you, your family, friends and fellow church members are not benefiting from the resources it provides to personally grow as Christian disciples. You play a vital part. You are a key to the future. ✠

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TAB

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

"If ye continue in My word, then ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:31-32

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'Lasting effects in our community'

Hundreds respond to gospel at Will Graham crusade in Dothan

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

Music, drama and preaching by Billy Graham's grandson drew thousands to the Wiregrass Area Will Graham Celebration on May 5-7 in Dothan.

"We're thankful for the Will Graham Celebration coming to Dothan, and we're excited about the future of our community and church because of the mission focus the Will Graham Celebration brought to our area," said Nolan Helder, associate pastor of children and family ministries at First Baptist Church, Dothan, in Columbia Baptist Association.

Will Graham, son of Franklin Graham and grandson of Billy Graham, headlines four to five Celebration events each year for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA). The Wiregrass Celebration was 1 of 4 on this year's BGEA event calendar.

Building relationships

Sandy Uhler, director of ministries at Harvest Church, Dothan, told *The Dothan Eagle* that local leaders have been working with BGEA since 2012 to bring an event to Dothan. Once Dothan was chosen, representatives from 143 churches worked with BGEA in a five-month effort to organize the crusade held at the Dothan Civic Center.

The relationships built between churches during the planning will make a lasting impact on the Wiregrass area, Helder said.

"We're excited to see how God will use the improvement of our churches working together for the community," he said.

Total attendance at the four sessions held throughout the weekend totaled 7,700.

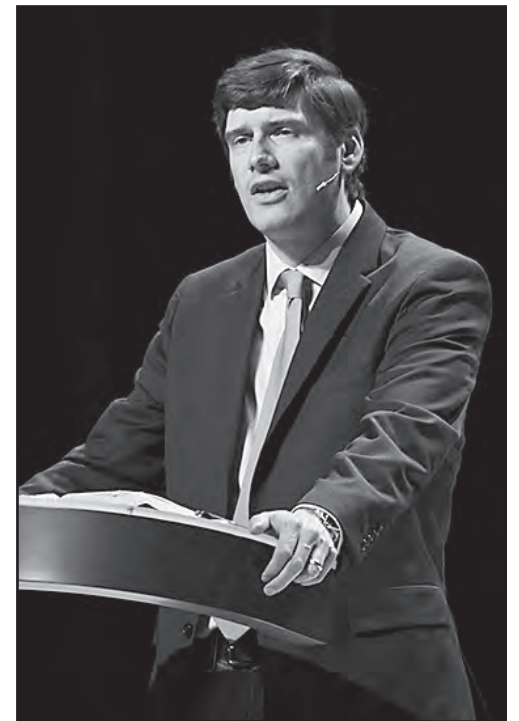
The May 6 KidzFest drew a crowd of 1,000 and featured a petting zoo and a three-act play, "The Greatest Journey," which was designed to teach kids in a fun way how great it can be to be a follower of Christ. That evening's youth-oriented session included music and testimony by 18-year-old rapper Aaron Cole and a concert by Christian pop rock band The Afters and drew a crowd of 1,750. All events related to the Celebration were free of charge.

Attendance at sessions on Friday night and Sunday filled the 2,500-seat auditorium. More than 32,000 viewers around the world streamed the services, which were broadcast live at billygraham.org.

According to a BGEA report following the event, 353 individuals were saved and 125 others made decisions during the Celebration.



Above: Thousands gather for the Wiregrass Area Will Graham Celebration in Dothan. **Right:** Will Graham, son of Franklin Graham and grandson of Billy Graham, headlines the Wiregrass Celebration.



BGEA photos

"We're excited to see how God will use the improvement of our churches working together for the community."

Nolan Helder, associate pastor of children and family ministries, FBC Dothan

"To watch people go forward at the end of each session was incredible," said Merrell Henry, associate pastor at Camp Ground Baptist Church, Ozark, in Dale Baptist Association.

In the months preceding the Celebration, almost 1,500 local believers prepared to lead others to Christ by taking the BGEA Christian Life and Witness Course on how to share one's faith and be a counselor at large events. Their preparation will have a lasting impact in the Wiregrass area, Helder said.

"We had almost 70 people trained in counseling and evangelism and discipleship through the BGEA," Helder said. "They are now using their training to disciple those at our church who made decisions."

Counselors from BGEA will remain in the area for the next few weeks to follow up with individuals who made decisions at the Celebration. Area churches also are planning events to keep people motivated, Helder said. Two student-oriented community events are scheduled for upcoming weeks, WIRED

2017, a youth camp in June and Winshape Kids Camp at Northview High School in July.

Clearer understanding

Henry took students from Camp Ground to the Sunday session and said they came away with a clearer understanding of what it means to live life for Jesus each day. If everyone who attended practices that message, the impact of the Celebration will last, he believes.

"The message was not complicated," he said. "If people who were there 'go and tell,' this event will have lasting effects in our community."✠

Global landscape

Babies born to Muslims will increase over Christians in next 40 years, Pew predicts

The world's religious makeup will look very different in 50 years if a Pew Research analysis proves accurate.

"The Changing Global Religious Landscape" report estimates that by 2035, the number of babies born to Muslim mothers will slightly exceed births to Christian mothers. Between 2055 and 2060, the birth gap is expected to widen to an estimated 6 million more babies born to Muslim mothers than to Christian mothers. As a result, the global Muslim population will almost equal the global Christian population by 2060, the Pew report concludes.

The study released in April is an analysis of information collected for the 2015 Pew report "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010–2050." The projections in the study take into account an expected global population increase of 32 percent to 9.6 billion people expected between 2015 and 2060.

Recording demographics

The projections may be a bit misleading, however, said Philip Jenkins, distinguished professor of history at Baylor University's Institute for Studies of Religion. The demographic analysis fails to take into account other significant factors that affect religious populations, he said.

One factor is how demographics in various countries are recorded.

"Christian and Muslim countries tend to be very different," Jenkins said. "In a Muslim country, everyone is assumed to be Muslim but a lot aren't religious at all. It is possible for someone to be an atheist but described as Muslim by default."

The same standard is not applied to other countries, Jenkins said. For example, everyone in France would not be considered Christian even though around half the people are Roman Catholic.

Jenkins said much research also suggests a decline in the Muslim birthrate in recent years. Iran is a good example. In the 1980s, the typical woman in Iran had seven children in her life. Today the average is well under two children.

Fall in birth rate

"The number dropped significantly in 30 years — the fastest fall in birth rate ever recorded in human history," Jenkins said. He noted that other countries, including Algeria and Morocco, have seen similar declines.

"There is a strong argument that low fertility rates correlate with secularization. If that's right, Iran is going to be a very secular country," Jenkins said.

The Pew analysis supports this argument, noting that countries with aging populations and low fertility, including Japan, Europe and North America, have large religiously unaffiliated populations.

Age and fertility will be primary influ-

ences on religious population numbers in the next 40 years, according to Pew. For example, the Christian population in sub-Saharan Africa is relatively young and expected to grow in the decades ahead. Therefore, the share of Christians worldwide who live in Africa is expected to increase dramatically between 2015 and 2016 from 26 percent to 42 percent.

But the number of deaths of Christians in Europe already exceeds the number of births to Christian mothers. This was not the case among Muslims.

Mortality rates

Migration of Muslims to Europe and changes in infant mortality rates and maternal health initiatives also are making a global impact on religious demographics.

According to the World Health Organization, the infant mortality rate has decreased from 8.9 million in 1990 to 4.5 million in 2015. Maternal mortality rates have dropped by about 44 percent worldwide in the same period. These trends indicate that religions with many adherents in developing countries where infant and maternal mortality have historically been higher are likely to grow quickly. Much of the worldwide growth of both Islam and Christianity, for example, is expected to take place in sub-Saharan Africa.

Worldwide, the current Christian population is approximately 2.26 billion, making up 31 percent of Earth's 7.3 billion people. Muslims are second with 1.8 billion people. "Nones," those who describe themselves as religiously unaffiliated, rank

third in population, followed by Hindus and Buddhists. Adherents of folk religions, Jews and members of other religions make up smaller shares of the world's people.

Having fewer children

The Pew study also noted that the number of individuals switching between having a religious affiliation and not having one will be overshadowed by the impact of fertility and mortality. This will be especially significant as families have fewer children in the future, Jenkins said.

"Perhaps the bigger problem is a world with fewer children and more old people and very old people," Jenkins said. "Fewer children means less connection to institutional churches. Christians and Muslims aren't so different in that aspect." (TAB)

10 demographic trends shaping the nation, world

1. The U.S. has more millennials than any other generation.

In 2016 there were 79.8 million millennials (age 18 to 35), overshadowing the baby boomers by nearly 6 million. It's a number that will continue to grow as a result of immigration, according to Pew. This generation is less likely to be married, own a home or have children, and they are more likely to be living with their parents.

2. Marriage has declined, cohabitation has risen.

In 2015 half of American adults were married — a large drop from 70 percent in 1950. But the number of cohabiting relationships rose nearly 30 percent in the past nine years, according to Pew. That growth was especially notable among adults 50 and up. Not only that — divorces for couples in that age range doubled between 1990 and 2015.

3. Women may never reach half of the workforce.

Women made up 46.8 percent of the American labor force in 2015, according to Pew, an increase from nearly 30 percent in 1950. But the Bureau of Labor Statistics forecasted the number would peak at around 47 percent in 2025, then start tapering off.

4. As baby boomers retire, immigrants step in.

As the older generation stops working, immigrants and second-generation immigrants will be the ones who grow the working-age population in the U.S., according to Pew.

Estimates indicate that by 2035, immigrants will be responsible for 18 million spots in the workforce, partly because of the lack of American-born children of American parents.

5. The unauthorized immigrant population has fallen.

Of that population, Mexicans remain the largest group but their numbers have recently fallen to 50 percent of the total, Pew reported. Unauthorized immigrants make up about 5 percent of the civilian labor force (stayed about the same in recent years).

6. In the last 45 years, the overall increase in U.S. births is credited to immigrant women.

This reality is credited to the growth in the nation's foreign-born population and the fact that immigrant women tend to have more children than American women, Pew reported.

7. On a global scale, babies born to Muslim mothers will outnumber babies born to Christian mothers by 2035.

Between 2010 and 2015, 223 million babies were born to Christian mothers and 213 million babies were born to Muslim mothers. But high fertility rates among Muslim women are changing the tide rapidly. The Muslim population is expected to grow 73 percent by 2050 while the Christian population will grow only 35 percent. Pew projects that the population of those who do not identify with a religion will decline. Currently it stands at 16 percent.

8. The middle class declined in Western Europe.

In 7 of 11 countries in Western Europe, the number of adults in middle-income households fell, according to Pew. They decreased in Finland, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway and Spain (like in the U.S.) and increased in France, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

9. Europe had 1.2 million first-time asylum seekers in 2016.

This number was only slightly down from the record 1.3 million in 2015. The most common countries of origin were Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Germany received the largest share of the applicants, with 45 percent, Pew reported.

10. The U.S. admitted nearly 90,000 refugees in the fiscal year 2016.

This was the highest total since 1999, according to Pew, and the largest numbers went to California and Texas. Nearly half of the refugees were Muslim. (Compiled from Pew report)



123rf.com

Caring for caregivers

Ministering to families dealing with Alzheimer's provides encouragement, valuable resource

By Denise George
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Laura Jones' husband, Jerry, began showing signs of Alzheimer's disease in his mid-60s. He began losing things, couldn't remember people's names and struggled to find the right words in social conversations. As the disease progressed, Jerry Jones missed paying bills and could no longer balance the checkbook. When he was finally diagnosed with Alzheimer's, Laura Jones decided to take care of him full-time at home.

Through the years Jerry Jones' mental health has continued to decline. He often becomes confused, forgetting things that happened just the day before. Major personality changes have followed. He has become unaware of his surroundings and requires assistance with dressing, toileting and bathing. In her caregiving Laura Jones often feels overwhelmed with the work and responsibilities. She feels anxious about the future and often feels sad and isolated as little by little she loses her husband and his companionship.

Help from Sunday School class

Laura Jones has extended family members living nearby in Birmingham but they aren't able to help as much as she needs. She does have a bright light in these dark days, however — the members of her Sunday School class at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills.

"It means so much for someone from my Sunday School class to come and sit with Jerry for a while to give me a break or allow me to attend worship services," she said. "The class is very supportive with

their prayers and visits. And that gives me strength."

Almost 90,000 Alabamians, ages 65 and over, currently suffer from Alzheimer's and the disease is the sixth leading cause of death in the state. Experts predict that number will rise to 110,000 Alabamians by 2025. More than 302,000 caregivers of family members, like Laura Jones, are spending 344,000,000 hours in care each year. The total value of their unpaid care is estimated to be \$4,209,000,000.

Caregivers tend to be middle-aged women (49 years old) who care for elderly (69 year old) family members who need long-term physical care. They usually give care 20–24 hours a week, helping the loved one with personal bodily care, running the household, shopping, cooking meals and managing business affairs and medical and/or nursing tasks.

Many caregivers are married and working outside the home. Care recipients either live with the caregiver or within 20 minutes of their

homes. They may or may not have a support system. Because of the nature and demands of the disease, family and friends may have disappeared.

While caring for a loved one is physically and mentally challenging, caregiving also is emotionally difficult. Caregivers may experience depression and feel helpless and hopeless when caring for chronically ill family members. Since the disease has no known cure, the caretaker must watch their loved one mentally decline and often assist with basic tasks such as bathing, dressing, moving from a bed or chair, using the toilet, caring for incontinence, etc.

Caregivers also admit to sometimes feeling angry, frustrated and resentful of the

disease and its jarring interference in their lives. The hard work and long hours of caregiving may have ended successful careers, made job promotion opportunities impossible or caused early retirements.

They also may experience loneliness, isolation, depression and anxiety as they are sequestered away from family, friends, church and social activities. Many deal with feelings of guilt, thinking they've done too little or have shown too much irritation or impatience with loved ones. Grief is another emotion that comes when caregivers watch the cruel disease rob them of a loving relationship. Most caregivers are so busy giving care they neglect their own health, missing sleep, meals and doctors' checkups.

Negative impact on health

Recent surveys show the overwhelming stress of caregiving for persons with Alzheimer's (or dementia) impacts the caregiver's immune system for up to three years after their caregiving ends and can take as much as 10 years off a family caregiver's life.

Like Laura Jones' faithful Sunday School class members, a church can be a valuable resource and encouragement to caregivers. Here are a few suggestions about how your church can help:

- ▶ Organize a weekly adult day-care program to care for Alzheimer's and dementia patients so caregivers can take a break from heavy responsibilities.

- ▶ Enlist church members to visit, call and spend time with caregivers, especially during holidays, lessening their sense of loneliness and isolation.

- ▶ Keep caregivers aware of church happenings but resist from asking them to help fill church ministry positions. Realize they are already doing part- or full-time ministry as caregivers.

- ▶ Help provide volunteer or paid care during Sunday morning worship services so caregivers can participate.

- ▶ Encourage caregivers to take care of their own physical, emotional and mental health.

- ▶ Show your love and appreciation through home-cooked meals delivered to the caregiver's home. Remember birthdays and special occasions with cards and emails.

- ▶ Offer to help with shopping and house and yard work.

- ▶ Seek out local Alzheimer's support groups and help make it possible for the caregiver to participate (see sidebar).

- ▶ Let the caregiver know you and the church are praying for him or her.

In these practical ways and many others your church can reach out and minister to caregivers, making them feel loved, remembered, appreciated and a vital part of the church family.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Denise George is the author of 30 books including "Our Dear Child: Letters to Your Baby On the Way." She is married to Timothy George, founding dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham. †

Helpful resources

To learn more about Alzheimer's, adult day care scholarships and other resources in central Alabama, call 205-871-7970, 1-866-806-7255 or write: Alzheimer's of Central Alabama, P.O. Box 2273, Birmingham, AL 35201.

For information about caregiver support groups, visit www.alz.org/apps/we_can_help/support_groups.asp or call 1-800-272-3900 (Alzheimer's Association Support Groups), www.caring.com/support-groups (Caring.com Support Groups) or www.caregiver.org/support-groups (Family Caregiver Alliance Support Groups).



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Soteriology

Salvation as Glorification

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

Salvation not only has a definite point of beginning and a continuous period of development throughout one's lifetime, it also has a point of completion or perfection. Christians have commonly referred to this culmination experience as glorification.

We might think of this whole process in terms of how God works in the Christian experience in relation to the fact that we're all sinners. At conversion or the beginning point of salvation, God forever saves us from the penalty of sin. As we noted several weeks ago, salvation viewed as justification speaks to the removal of the penalty due us because of our sins.

During the span of a Christian's life, God works in us to deliver us increasingly from the practice or power of sin. Since such deliverance is always a work in progress, we must continually experience God's ongoing forgiveness for our sins. These sins cause us to come short of doing and becoming all God wants us to do and be. We need to practice regular confession.

Salvation ultimately is pointing toward the finish line when God receives us into His eternal presence, and we know for the first time deliverance from the very presence of sin, both our own and the sins of all who are around us.

The Bible speaks repeatedly of salvation in terms of the future. That being so, we can speak accurately and biblically about "having been saved" (conversion) as well as "going to be saved" (glorification).

'Our salvation is nearer'

For example, this future sense of salvation finds expression in 1 Peter 1:5 where Christians are described as those "who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." This same chapter a few verses later speaks of Christians "receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls" (v. 9). Viewing salvation in its future

aspect, Romans 13:11 reminds us "now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed."

Similarly, Hebrews 9:28 tells us "Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him, He will appear a second time apart from sin for salvation." Thus we think of glorification as the final phase of a great salvation, a phase that is initiated at the return of Christ. At that return He will raise the bodies of believers for a reunion with their souls, which will have been with Him during the time between death and His return. Those believers yet living at Christ's return will experience a transformation of their earthly bodies. Together all believers through all the ages will have perfect bodies like Christ's own resurrection body. This will then be glory for us all.

Final phase

Philippians 3:20-21 summarizes the prospect of final glorification in these words: "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ ... who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body." In its final phase, salvation will include bodies suitable for inhabiting the "new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet. 3:13).

When we see salvation in its broadest sense of involving justification, sanctification and glorification, we understand how our Christian testimony can assert, "I have been saved, I am being saved and I will be saved." †

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.



FBC Montgomery's Ferguson helps others comprehend God's love

As Jane Ferguson looks back on her life, she sees God's hand at every turn, even if the turns were unexpected.

Ferguson, who recently retired from her role as minister of community ministries at First Baptist Church, Montgomery, spent more than 28 years serving the "poor and hurting" in the Montgomery area.

A native of Webster's Chapel, she graduated from Alexandria High School and attended Jacksonville State College (now Jacksonville State University). She met and married her husband, Barney, in 1959 before completing her degree and the couple moved so he could serve as pastor of Sixth Street Baptist Church, Alexander City. With another move or two and serving other churches along the way, Jane Ferguson became a mom and a supportive wife to her pastor



FERGUSON

husband. More than a decade later while her husband was serving a church and attending seminary, Jane Ferguson felt called to help "solve problems" she and her husband saw at the inner-city church they served in Louisville, Kentucky. It was then that she went back to college to finish her undergraduate degree and continued on to earn a master's degree in church social work from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

In 1988, Dale Huff, then pastor of First, Montgomery, invited Jane Ferguson to start up the church's community ministries program, making her the first social worker to be hired on a local church staff in the state.

During her first six months in the role she observed the existing strategy to find out what various ministries were doing in the area already. She then worked to find ways to walk alongside them, "train the saints

that would do the work of the ministry" and make an eternal difference.

Jane Ferguson became an expert not only in Montgomery but grew the church's ministry to the tricity area. She spoke at statewide and national conferences on how to start and maintain community ministries through the local church.

"My passion and strongest convictions come out of the knowledge that there are a lot of human beings that can only begin to comprehend God's love when they see it and feel it and touch it," she said.

Through First, Montgomery, Jane Ferguson was instrumental in starting multiple community ministry outlets including a conversational English school, the Caring Center, the Children's Learning Center and the Nehemiah Project, all thriving programs that help church members look "outward"

instead of "inward," she said.

When her husband died six years after moving to Montgomery, Jane Ferguson said she knew "it was God's plan to have me in Montgomery. ... God took a little country girl from Alabama and used me in ways that I could not even fathom."

'National best practice'

Jay Wolf, pastor of First, Montgomery, said Jane Ferguson "has guided our community ministries to be a national best practice. ... (She) has marshaled an army of volunteers to assist in the holy quest of 'offering a cup of cold water in Jesus' name.'"

And as for her plan in retirement? When *The Alabama Baptist* spoke with Jane Ferguson she was driving a church van to pick up internationals for a conversational English class and said she's open to whatever God would have her do. (Neisha Roberts)

Muscle Shoals Assoc. hosts Wild Game Dinner



Photo by Jim Fiscus

Approximately 210 participants gather under a tent to listen to evangelist Michael Mason (standing) during the Wild Game Dinner hosted by Muscle Shoals Baptist Association on May 13 at Taylor Camp in Town Creek. A variety of wild game was served and hunting and fishing accessories were given away as door prizes. Robert Smith is director of missions.

Competing WORLDVIEWS

Historically non-Christian beliefs heavily influencing practicing Christians, Barna finds

If there ever was a time when Christians shared a single, unified worldview rooted in Scriptures and church, it's over now.

The Barna Group announced in early May that it found only 17 percent of practicing Christians have an actual biblical worldview.

Its new research "found strong agreement with ideas unique to nonbiblical worldviews among practicing Christians," Barna said in a study titled "Competing Worldviews Influence Today's Christians," which it released May 9 in partnership with Summit Ministries.

"This widespread influence upon Christian thinking is evident not only among competing worldviews but even among competing religions," Barna said.

Example: Thirty-eight percent of Christians said they are sympathetic to some Muslim teachings.

'New Spirituality'

One of the biggest influences Barna said it found in Christians' outlooks is that of "New Spirituality." Sixty-one percent of Christians said they agree with ideas generated there.

"For instance, almost 3 in 10 ... practicing Christians strongly agree that 'all people pray to the same god or spirit no matter what name they use for that spiritual being,'" Barna reported.

Another 27 percent say that "becoming one with all that is" provides meaning and purpose to their lives.

Only 17 percent of practicing Christians have an actual biblical worldview.

Barna Group

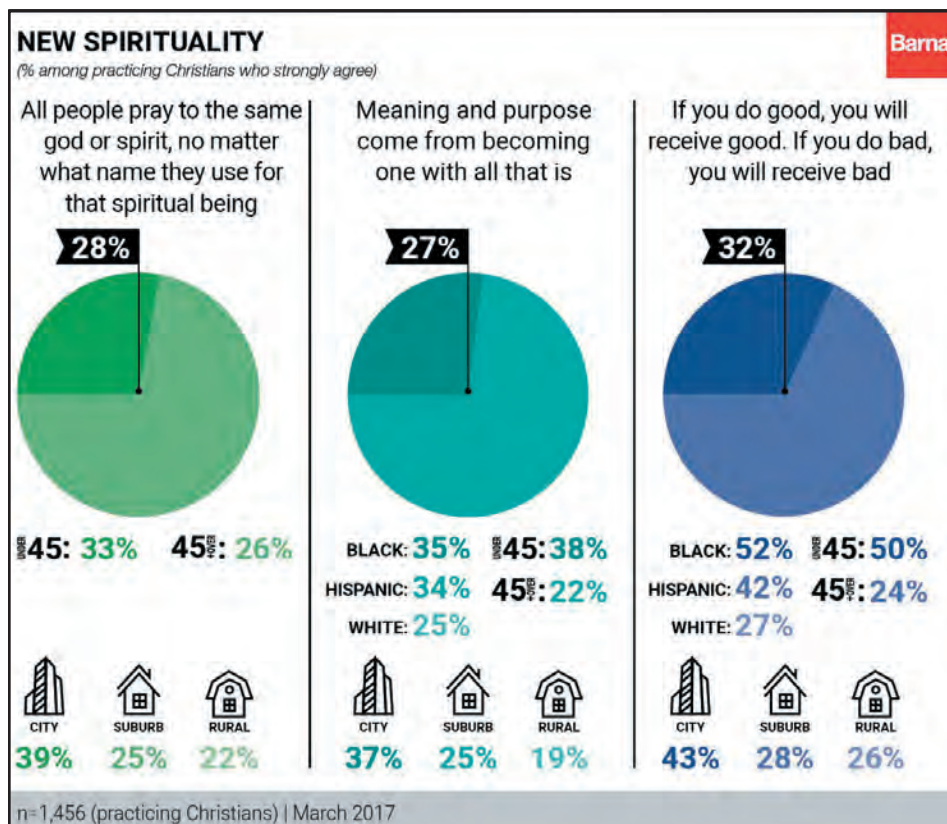
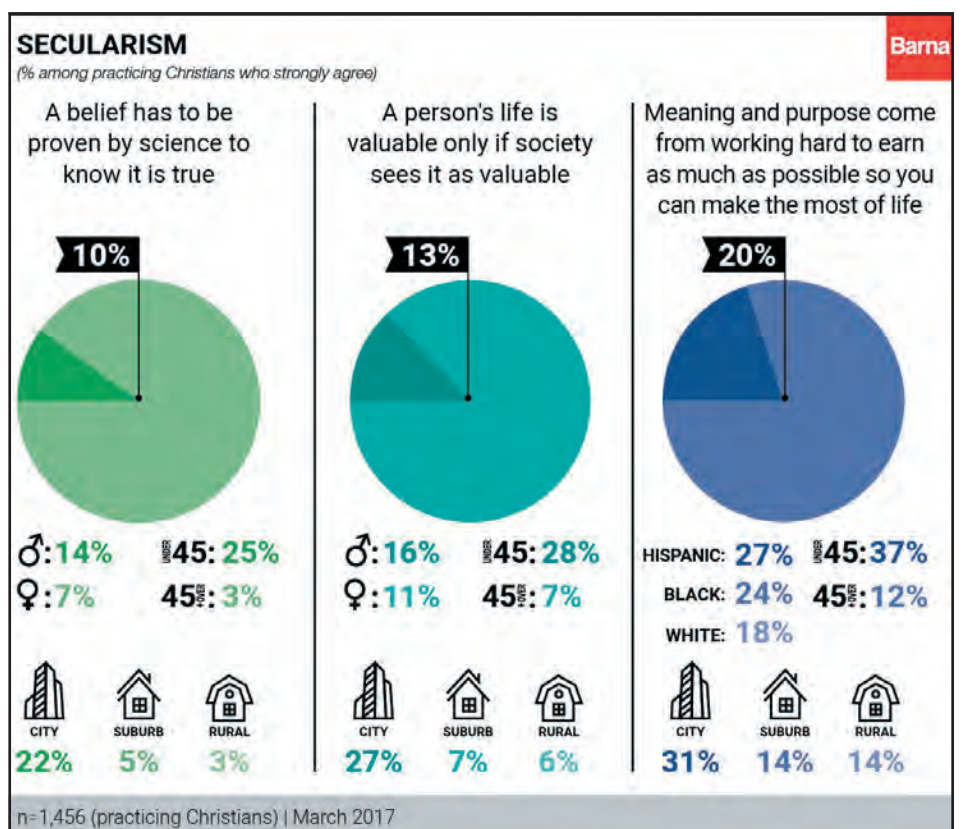
Postmodernism — defined here as an abandonment of objectivity — is another significant influence. Barna said 19 percent of those surveyed agreed that there is no way to determine the meaning and purpose of life.

Even among those who did not embrace that viewpoint there were those who did accept other tenets of postmodernism, Barna found.

"As a whole, more than half (54 percent) of practicing Christians embrace at least one of the postmodern statements assessed in the research."

A large number of Christians also embrace secularism in their worldviews. One of its component beliefs, materialism, holds that the material world is all that exists.

Those respondents told Barna that the purpose of life is "to earn as much as possible so you can make the most of life."



sible so you can make the most of life." That attitude was shared by 20 percent of Christians, including by 24 percent of African-Americans, 27 percent of Hispanics and 31 percent of Catholics.

The research group added that the results of its study were heavily swayed by generation.

Younger generations

"First millennials and Gen Xers, who came of age in a less Christianized context, are in some cases up to eight times more likely to accept these views than boomers and elders," Barna said. "The same is true of gender — males are generally more open to these worldviews than women, often at a 2 to 1 ratio." (BNG)





FBC Headland commemorates 150 years

Special guests and special music marked the 150th anniversary celebration of First Baptist Church, Headland, in Judson Baptist Association on April 23.

The Celebration Choir presented a mini-musical titled “The Church Triumphant” by Bill and Gloria Gaither. Pastor Cecil Sanders weaved his message into the choir’s musical, speaking on Ephesians 3:20–21.

Former pastors Louis Wilhite, David Southerland and Norman Simmons as well as former interim pastor Billy Nolen were recognized and given the opportunity to share with the congregation. A



Photo courtesy of FBC Headland

video on the church’s history expressed the celebration theme of “150 Years of God’s Faithfulness.”

Special presentations were made by Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions; Ellen Dewberry, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative; Headland Mayor Ray Marler; and Otis Derrah, director of missions for Judson Baptist Association.

Each of the approximately 400 participants received a commemorative leather bookmark of the occasion and fellowshiped during the lunch that followed.

Locust Grove remembers, celebrates 150 years

The 150th anniversary service of Locust Grove Baptist Church, New Market, was an action-packed day featuring rich history, cherished memories and lots of music.

In the two months of Sunday morning services leading up to the May 7 celebration, a “Historical Minute” segment informed congregants and built anticipation for the anniversary.



Photo by Joe Teal

Various choirs and church ensembles sang during the 10:30 a.m. anniversary service and Pastor Robert White Jr. brought the message. The service was divided into three 50-year segments with each segment featuring music and photos from that era.

Joe Teal, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative, presented a framed certificate and the service concluded with a note burning. Participants were able to take home a booklet titled “Locust Grove Memories” and children received a historical coloring book. The burial of a time capsule and a balloon release were special aspects of the celebration. Lunch concluded the service.

Daviston marks 175 years in ‘uplifting’ service

The 175th anniversary celebration of Daviston Baptist Church was a family affair as former and current members came together April 23 to rejoice in the life of the church and its ministries.

Pastor Shane Dye experienced this firsthand as members of his extended family — including his father, two aunts and an uncle — were the musical guests. The Dyes sang strains of southern gospel music after Shane Dye read the church covenant from 1842 and shared a history of the church with the congregation.

Former interim pastor Larry Cummings was the guest speaker and Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a framed certificate to the Tallapoosa Baptist Association church.

A “warm and uplifting” moment of the celebration, said Shane Dye, was when the congregation sang the last verse of “The Old Rugged Cross” a cappella. Lunch concluded the celebration.

Compiled by the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and TAB

Working together

Why are associational missions important?

I believe the value of an association and the reason churches should belong to their association is simply that exact word — ‘association.’ We should, and I believe are commanded to, ‘associate’ ourselves together. We are to not forsake the gathering of ourselves together. Together we can accomplish so much for the Kingdom than we can individually. Together we represent a greater cause with greater support. Without church involvement, there simply is no association. Church involvement, participation and cooperation are vital to the existence and the work of the association.”

Brad Campbell, director of missions, Bigbee Baptist Association, and pastor, Siloam Baptist Church, York

People saved and called by God to work together and win their area for Jesus — that’s what an association is. The association is only as good as the commitment the people make to it and to the Lord. ... It’s more than convenient collaboration — pastors need each other. The pastor of any church is quite possibly the loneliest person on earth. In an association a pastor can find friends and mentors among other pastors and have

someone to lean on. Through the association the churches also get to know each other and develop friendships across the area. This makes working together for Christ all the easier.”

Keith Box, director of missions, Marion Baptist Association

The local association is the avenue for resourcing, training, encouraging, equipping and fellowshiping that has a greater impact for the Kingdom. It allows churches to be a part of something much larger than themselves and reach further than they could ever

imagine. Something we did just recently that was a major evangelism effort was ‘Sharing Across Cherokee County.’ In this 30 of our 39 churches worked together from March 19 through Easter weekend praying over our church communities and distributing gospel packets to approximately 7,000 homes. The resources for this emphasis was provided by the association and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. It allowed our churches to be plugged

into a large-scale ministry that not one single church could have done alone, with the goal of reaching our county for Christ.”

Wendell Dutton, director of missions, Cherokee Baptist Association

Becoming a director of missions only one year ago has helped me to see in Acts 16:9–10 clearly the need for our churches

to accomplish the task given to us. So we started a program called Partner with a Partner. Each of our churches was given a church not in their community to become a partner with.

Our pastors are work-

ing together to create not only an associational connection but a personal connection with their partner church. We encourage them to have services together, lend singers to each other, share youth drama teams or just fellowship together. ... I believe as we come together, we as an association will accomplish the Acts 1:8 challenge.”

David Miller, director of missions, Walker Baptist Association

Associational Missions Emphasis Week is May 21–28.

State Baptists serving in SBC leadership roles

Three Alabama Baptists have been tapped to serve in leadership roles related to the upcoming Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting and through positions on boards.

Daniel Wilson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove, was appointed to the 23-member Credentials Committee by SBC President Steve Gaines. The committee will serve during the June annual meeting in Phoenix.

The board of trustees for Gateway Seminary in Ontario, California, has elected **Larry Felkins** as chairman through spring 2019. Felkins is director of missions for Chilton Baptist Association.

John Thweatt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pell City, continues his role as chairman of the board of trustees for Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, for one more year. (TAB)

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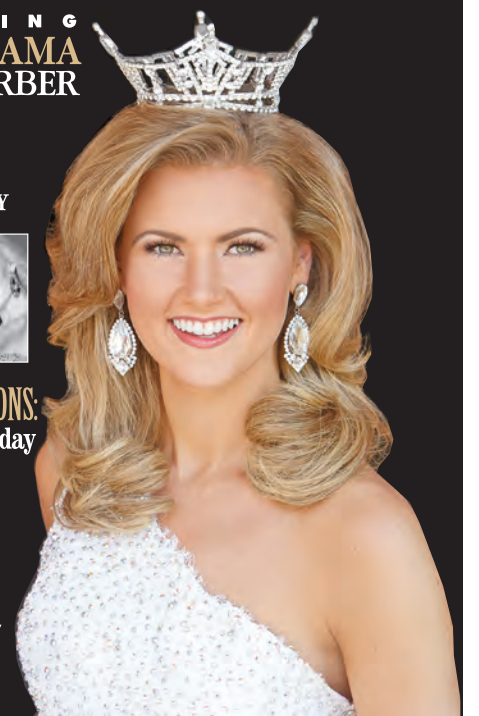
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Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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BIRMINGHAM

► **Michael Adams** is the new interim pastor of **First Church, Chalkville, in Birmingham.** He previously served as interim pastor of First Church, Haleyville, and First Church, Jasper, where he also served as pastor for 13 years prior to retirement.



ADAMS

COFFEE

► **Bethany Church, New Brockton,** will hold VBS on June 4-8, 6 p.m.-9 p.m. Tony Dye is pastor. ► **Damascus Church, Elba,** will hold VBS on June 4, 5 p.m.-8:30 p.m. and June 5-8, 6 p.m.-8:30 p.m. Steve Watson is pastor. ► **Zion Chapel Church,**

Elba, will hold VBS on June 4, 5 p.m.-8:30 p.m. and June 5-7, 6 p.m.-8:30 p.m. Cary Maulden is pastor. ► **First Church, Elba,** will hold VBS on June 4, 5 p.m. and June 5-8, 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Michael Woodham is pastor. ► **First Church, New Brockton,** will hold VBS on June 4-7, 5:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. Nathan Sims is pastor. ► **Macedonia Church, Enterprise,** will hold VBS on June 4-8, 6 p.m.-8:30 p.m. Tim Bradley is pastor.

GENEVA

► **New Hinson Church, Slocomb,** will celebrate its 75th anniversary June 4 with a special service from 10 a.m. to noon. Tony Barber, a former pastor who served the church twice; Dicky McAllister, Geneva Association director of missions; and Rick Lance, executive director of the State Board of Missions, will speak. The church praise band will provide special music. There will not be Sunday

School. Lunch will follow the celebration. Bryan Klobe is pastor.

MADISON

► **Jimmy Jackson,** pastor of **Whitesburg Church, Huntsville,** has announced he will retire from the church in June 2018, which will coincide with his 40th anniversary as pastor. More information about Jackson and events planned around his



JACKSON

anniversary and retirement will be in future issues of *The Alabama Baptist*.

MARION

► **Mount Olive Church, Hackleburg,** will host Archie Watkins and the Inspirations in

concert June 1, 7 p.m. Doors open at 6 p.m. For more information call 205-395-1256. James Nichols is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Trinity Memorial Church, Montgomery,** will host Marvin and Vernell Morrow in concert June 2, 7 p.m. A love offering will be taken. Stan Holt is pastor.

SHELBY

► **Siluria Church, Alabaster,** will hold a women's conference May 28. Dinner will begin at 6 p.m. and the service will follow. Local TV anchor Brenda Ladun will speak. For reservations or information call 205-663-7904 or email siluriabaptist@gmail.com. Michael Brooks is pastor.

WALKER

► **Scott McCullar** marked his 10th year as pastor of **First Church, Carbon Hill,** on May 14. He is married to Suzanne. ☞

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

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

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Macedonia Baptist Church in Russellville, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumés to: Pastor Search Committee, 37050 Hwy 724, Russellville, AL 35654.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Pineywood Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational pastor. Requirements will be discussed between the candidate and church committee. Please forward re-

sumé with references to: office@pineywoodonline.com.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC DIRECTOR

South Chapel Hill Baptist Church in Morgan County organization is looking for a part-time bivocational music director. Resumés may be sent to: hayes8137@gmail.com.

MUSIC DIRECTOR

First Baptist Church, Union Grove, is seeking a bivocational music director. Submit resumé to: FBC Union Grove, P.O. Box 125, Union Grove, AL 35175.

OTHER POSITIONS

MINISTRY ASSISTANT

Taylorville Baptist, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, seeking full-time ministry assistant. Knowledge of Microsoft Office, phone tree and prior secretarial experience preferred. Email resumé to: jnelson@taylorvillebaptist.org.

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- 7 Each week when TAB arrives, open the app and hold your device over the augmented reality articles.



Rashional THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

SNAPSHOTS OF LIFE WHEN LIFE HAPPENS

I can fix that — but should I?

How has life been this week? Working through any disappointments?

It's hard for me to watch anyone be let down. I tend to take responsibility for reversing such situations even when it's not my responsibility to bear. I also will carry an unhealthy level of guilt if I discover there was something I could have done but didn't do to prevent someone in my life from experiencing disappointment.

The desire to serve others in this way includes everything from helping co-workers with daily responsibilities to being there for friends in need to keeping up with all that happens with extended family.

My hubby, Jason, and I have been known to drive five hours one direction to spend Christmas Eve with one side of the family, stay until everyone goes to bed, and then drive seven hours over night another direction to make it to Christmas morning breakfast with the other side of the family.

Difficult decisions

I know, many of you are shaking your head right now and scolding me for that kind of nonsense. But ask any young married couple about the struggle over where to spend various holidays during the first few years of marriage — it can be a difficult season of life transition.

In our case, we couldn't dream of disappointing either side so we found a solution that kept everyone happy — at least we thought. We soon realized we actually caused anxiety for both sets of parents because of all the travel we were doing with no sleep.

And while it has been almost two decades since first facing those kinds of family-related decisions, I continue to fight an internal battle every day about how I can best serve those around me. The difference now comes with tough life lessons

teaching me to work with the information and resources I have to determine what is best for everyone involved, not necessarily what prevents disappointment.

God moments

I still hurt when others are unhappy and I always want to "fix" things but I'm learning to step back, assess the situation and pray for guidance about my proper role. So many times I have rushed to take care of something or someone without working through it with God first.

God has provided several life-altering, face-on-the-ground-grateful-to-Him opportunities to serve since I gave Him my heart and life at age 19. The most profound opportunity revolved around Belle, my precious niece who snuggled her way into countless hearts during her courageous five-and-a-half-year battle with cancer. (*P.S. Belle would have been 10 on May 24. To learn more about her, visit rashionalthoughts.com and click on the "Snapshots of Belle" category.*)

So when I can evaluate such impactful seasons such as what God gave me through Belle, why would I dare snatch every random opportunity to help as if they were really all for me? Could I be swiping another person's chance to serve and thus be stealing his or her blessing?

And why would I not strictly follow Him to the specific areas of service He has in store?

I'm sure part of it is because of the desire to prevent unhappiness in others. Another aspect is likely a need to be needed or the fulfillment that comes with making others happy. And then there is the extreme need for efficiency I have as well as the ability to quickly assess a situation — these two traits allow me to solve problems quickly.

But as one of my mentors always reminds me, "strength overdone becomes weakness."

Another lesson I've learned in recent years is to be mindful of each person's tolerance level related to frustrations and what is really

a call for help versus a verbal processing of anxiety.

My typical response to being overwhelmed or experiencing distress is to focus, prioritize and get to work. I will attempt to chip away at each item, starting with the most urgent and maneuvering my way from there. I intend to handle everything put on me without ever asking for help. Granted, this is not necessarily the right thing to do nor is it always possible but it is where I start.

So a lesson I learned the hard way is that while I personally will wait until it is nearly too late to be rescued before I will dare ask for help, others aren't built that way.

Some are much healthier in their approach and know the proper time to request assistance as well as specifically what is truly needed from others and what they can handle themselves. They know the right thing to ask from the right person at the right time.

However, there are others — none I know of course (eh hem) — who start expressing fret, disappointment, unhappiness, fear, etc., the second anything changes in their day or something doesn't work exactly right. Combine their immediate screams for help and my innate desire to take care of others and I'm forced back into an internal battle.

How do you react?

For me it is about setting boundaries and learning to hesitate unless I know it is a serious issue in which I need to assist.

For others, if you are one who reacts quickly, loudly and with anxiety to frustrations in your day, please know you are likely taking others down around you without even realizing it. Finding a way to cope through calmer and more productive methods could be your way of truly serving and improving the quality of life for those around you. ☩

RASHIONAL Extras ...



Hating the pain, suffering

By Jenni Ingram
Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

As I sit writing this my heart is heavy with the knowledge that very soon a young man I have known almost since birth will be going home to heaven.

He is a talented, loving, kind 16 year old who has a knack for making people smile just by being around him. He will be gaining his healing from cancer when He arrives in the arms of Jesus but that doesn't make this transition easier on anyone.

I can very easily emphatically say, "I hate cancer," and I do. After all, the cancer will take this precious child of dear friends as it has taken so many others before him, including my father.

More than cancer I hate the enemy. You know, the one who tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden and allowed sin, sickness, pain and suffering to enter into the

perfect world that God created.

As a Christian, I know I am not supposed to hate but in these instances, I feel it's acceptable.

Let me tell you what the Bible says about hate and how I feel about it.

Psalm 97:10 says, "Let those who love the Lord hate evil."

Therefore I do not feel badly about hating the enemy because I do love the Lord and I hate all evil. Not just the evil of illness, but also the evils of blasphemy and godless behaviors as well as my own struggles of doubt and worry.

However, I love my brothers and sisters who fight every day right beside me to live as the Lord commands.

My current battle is not to become jaded with the pain of this world. I give all of this pain and all of this sorrow to the Lord for He alone is capable.

"You may feel like being bitter but you have to choose to be better. You may feel like living in the circumstance but you have to choose to live in the vision. You may feel like giving up but you have to choose to fight weary. You may not feel like being kind but you have to choose to be a blessing. ... Placed in front of [you] is life and death. Choose. Placed in front of me is love and darkness every day. Choose love. Placed in front of you and me ... is faith and fear."

From "The Sender: A story about when right words make all the difference" by Kevin Elko and Bill Beausay

"Hurting people hurt people."

Rick Ousley talking about revenge at The Station Church, Hoover
Tweet from Pastor Randy Norris

Many leaders lean on leadership lies throughout their career. One of the biggest leadership lies is this one: "I can do it ALL by myself."

Dr. Tim Martin,
executive director/
personal life and
professional leadership
coach/adjunct professor/
motivational speaker/
consultant
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Follow me on Twitter
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Photos courtesy of University of Mobile

Right: The first graduating class starts a new tradition of touching the Great Commission Globe after receiving diplomas, symbolizing they are going out in the world to use their knowledge and skills. **Above:** Ashley Leann Caples (right) receives her diploma from University of Mobile President Dr. Timothy L. Smith.



'Reminder of our PURPOSE'

UM starts new tradition, brings graduation back to campus for first time in 41 years

University of Mobile (UM) held graduation on its campus for the first time in 41 years May 13 with more than 3,400 in attendance.

Among those in the audience were members of the 1967 graduating class, the first graduating class of the university, who celebrated their 50th reunion this year.

This year's class of 250 graduates was the first to start a new tradition of touching the Great Commission Globe, a black granite fountain in the center of the Dr. Fred and Sue Lackey Great Commission Lawn, after receiving their diplomas.

UM President Dr. Timothy L. Smith said the Great Commission Globe "serves as a reminder of

our responsibility before God as a university to prepare graduates from various disciplines for their Great Commission calling."

Touching the globe at graduation, Smith said, signals the graduate telling the Lord, "Here I am, send me," in the words of Isaiah 6:8.

UM presented its two top

awards to graduates who exemplify the mission of the university. The Weaver awards are given to the top male and female graduating students and are chosen by vote of the faculty.

The 2017 Annie Boyd Parker Weaver Excellence Award was presented to Kelli Rae Brown, of Jasper. She also was awarded

the College of Arts and Sciences Achievement Award, graduated summa cum laude and was an Honors graduate with thesis.

The 2017 William K. Weaver Jr. Excellence Award was presented to Joshua Thomas Hill, of Huntsville. Hill serves as worship associate for Government Street Baptist Church, Mobile. (UM)

To view a video of graduates starting this new tradition, go to vimeo.com/217507974.



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Focused FAITH

Samford wraps up 175th anniversary celebration with May commencement

Samford University in Birmingham wrapped up a yearlong celebration of the school's 175th anniversary with a series of seven commencement programs during May. The printed programs for the various Samford colleges and schools listed approximately 1,200 total candidates for degrees.

Samford President Andrew Westmoreland and Provost Michael Hardin presided over each of the ceremonies, all but one of which were in Samford's Wright Center. The program for Beeson Divinity School was in Hodges Chapel.

Samford's College of Health Sciences opened the commencement schedule May 5 with its graduate-degree recipients. Stu-

dents representing each of the schools spoke: Nathan Ewell, Ida Moffett School of Nursing; Jordan Webb, School of Health Professions; Zach Burns, McWhorter School of Pharmacy; and Amanda Gillespie, School of Public Health. They spoke on the theme of calling and its personal impact.

'Mustard seed-size faith'

Edwin Hurley, pastor of South Highland Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, told Beeson Divinity School graduates May 8, "Nothing will be impossible for you who have faith; not necessarily a massive mountain-size faith, but a mustard seed-size faith — small, yet ready to burst forth and grow into a great protective tree or a mountain that moves — because



Micah Green-Holloway (left) receives his diploma from Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland during the commencement for the Brock School of Business.



Photo courtesy of Samford University

this faith is focused not distracted."

Laura Kelly, management director for CoreLogic Inc. in Westlake, Texas, told Brock School of Business graduates May 12 they are the CEOs of their future and can unlock the untapped potential of their lives. She stressed "success is not a destination, it's a never-ending journey."

The importance of a Samford education and a passion for calling were recurring themes of four student speakers at College of Health Sciences undergraduate commencement May 12.

Speakers were Ken Gammada, School of Health Professions; Lana Hunt, Ida Moffett School of Nursing; Mark Gilliam, McWhorter School of Pharmacy; and Emily Mantooh, School of Public Health.

Federal Judge William H. Pryor Jr. of the U.S. Court of Appeals 11th Circuit told graduates of Samford's Cumberland School of Law on May 12 that commencement for a law school is more than a celebration of the success of its students and faculty. Law school commencement celebrates "the American commitment to the rule of law, which is the bulwark of our freedom," he said.

'Take the chance'

Carol Nunnelley, executive director of the Alabama Initiative for Independent Journalism, spoke to the Howard College of Arts and Sciences graduates May 13.

"Now is a good time for you to take some chances," she said. "Take the chance to chase your

dream or find one; to express what you really want against the odds; to reach beyond what you know you can do and hope for success but risk failure. You have the safety net of time."

Graduates from Samford's School of the Arts and Orlean Beeson School of Education were encouraged by Neil Davis of Davis Architects in Birmingham to step out in faith as they pursue their callings and watch the connectivity between faith, passion and work come to fruition in their lives. Davis reflected on his journey and passion for architecture during commencement for the two schools May 13. Davis and his father, the late Charles Davis, designed the majority of the buildings on Samford's campus. (Samford)

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YEARS
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TAB
THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

According to the Feb. 4, 1843, issue of *The Alabama Baptist*:

The Executive Committee of the Alabama Baptist State Convention reported, "Missionaries in different parts of the state have accomplished much in the Master's service."

For instance, Rev. S. Henderson, employed as missionary for Benton, Jackson, St. Clair and DeKalb counties, had preached 82 sermons, nearly as many lectures and addresses on different subjects and baptized 11 people during the past six months. (TAB)

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 28

Explore the Bible By Robert Olsen, Ph.D. Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

WHAT DO WE DO NOW? Matthew 28:16-20

Worship (16-18)

One of the things that separates Christianity from all other religions is that we worship a God who loved us enough that He became human to live and die for His people. For Christians salvation depends upon Jesus being able to die on our behalf.

Christians throughout the centuries have marveled at this and have emphasized this point; for atonement to be made, humans have to pay for their sin through death.

However, because we are sinners, our death only results in our damnation.

Only a perfect human can make a sacrifice on our behalf and the only one who can be perfect is God.

Therefore the incarnation involved God becoming human because a human has to pay the price for sin but only God can pay the price. The mystery of the incarnation hinges on Jesus being both fully God and fully man.

Many skeptics claim the Bible never states that Jesus is actually God. However, the Bible indicates Jesus' divinity at many points.

This section in Matthew is one such instance. The disciples worshipped Jesus. For Jews, the only thing worthy of worship is God; anything else is idolatry and yet here we see devout Jews worshipping Jesus, and Jesus allows it.

This means Jesus is surely God and our salvation depends upon His being divine. The fact that all authority in heaven and earth has been given to Jesus also demonstrates Jesus' divinity.

Mission (19-20a)

Based on Jesus' authority, He has the right to command His followers. Jesus is our Lord and loyal subjects obey their superior.

The Great Commission, as this statement is called, is one of the most crucial commands given to the Church.

It is common to hear Christians talk about the Great Commission and many churches emphasize doing missions overseas but often we neglect the call to make disciples. It is one thing to tell somebody the gospel. It is another thing to bring them up in the knowledge of God. Preaching the gospel is necessary but discipleship is too. Many churches focus on the first part and ignore the second part.

So while churches need to support international missions we need to focus on discipling the members of our own body. Never overlook the importance of teaching the Church the key aspects of what it means to be a Christian. Christians need to know what the Bible says so they are not led astray by false teaching and can live out the gospel properly.

One of the key teachings of the church is the command to baptize believers.

Baptism is a mark of a Christian. One who decides to follow Jesus shows his allegiance by being baptized. It is the public expression of an inward change.

Baptism needs to follow salvation — it does not precede it. Poor teaching regarding baptism often leads people to think that baptism is somehow involved in the salvation process which turns the focus off of Christ's redeeming work on the cross and onto an external work, which is against grace.

Presence (20b)

Because Christ is with us we can be encouraged that He knows everything we are going through and we can be confident He will be with us even unto death. There is no place we can go where Christ cannot be there with us. This should give us confidence to obey Jesus no matter where it leads us.✠

Bible Studies for Life By James Riley Strange, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Religion, Samford University

LIFE ON MISSION 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

Today's passage comes in a section of 1 Corinthians in which Paul uses elements of the Greek rhetorical style called "diatribe."

This is not a tirade or rant but a kind of teaching in which the author often changes personas, asks rhetorical questions, abruptly shifts topics and uses stock illustrations like the athletic contests of 24-27.

Step into the shoes of others to share Christ. (19-23)

By all indications Paul remained an observant Jew after becoming a follower of Christ.

In Galatians and Romans he will argue that Gentiles who are "in Christ" do not keep Torah: they do not circumcise their males, keep kosher dietary laws or observe the Sabbath.

Nowhere, however, does Paul say that Jews, even Jewish followers of Christ, are not to keep Torah.

"I have made myself a slave to all" probably refers to Paul's attentiveness to the welfare of others. "I became as a Jew" to his ability to debate Jewish law and "I became as one outside the law" (i.e. a Gentile) to his ability to use Greek rhetorical genres as he is doing here.

"Weak" may refer to those whose understanding of Christian practices is easily shaken and confused (see the discussion in 10:14-11:1).

Paul is not pretending to be someone he isn't but speaks of his ability to communicate to different groups of people in ways they will understand.

Sharing Christ takes discipline and self-denial. (24-27)

Paul uses two athletic images that are well-known in Roman moral writings.

Foot racing and boxing would have been part of the education of a young Roman man of high birth, but Paul doesn't indicate that he or his readers actually competed any more than a pastor's use of a baseball metaphor in a sermon means that he or she played shortstop.

Paul says only one person wins a race but then shifts to the plural to encourage the readers to compete: "Run in such a way that you [plural] may win it."

This prize is not limited to one but is offered to all.

But what prize does Paul have in mind? He is talking about two things.

In verse 19, Paul talks about his ministry of proclaiming Christ in such a way that people experience and respond to God's grace.

"Win the wreath" looks like a reference to people becoming followers of Christ.

The second is the "imperishable" wreath of verse 25, which is a reference to the "spiritual body" with which Christ's followers will be resurrected (see Chap. 15). In this case winning refers to participating in the resurrection of the dead when Christ returns.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul refers to the beatings, imprisonments and other sufferings he has endured in his ministry (2 Cor. 11:24-28).

For Paul the proclamation of the gospel really was a physical trial.

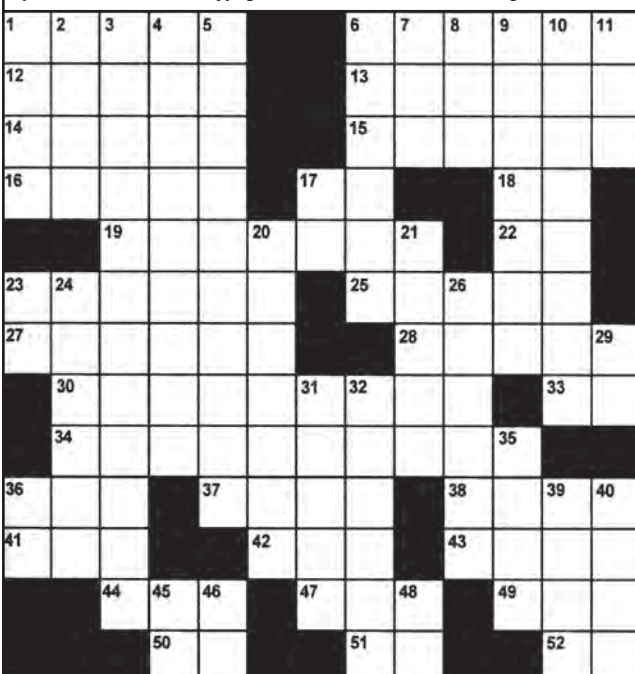
To share Christ we may often need to step outside of our own comfort zone. But we can bring the message of Christ to others in the culture in which they live.

It is difficult to read these passages without comparing our own efforts to Paul's. We might despair of rising to the example he set.

Rather than feeling despair let us be encouraged that we can do difficult things in the service of Christ.✠

Christian Crossword

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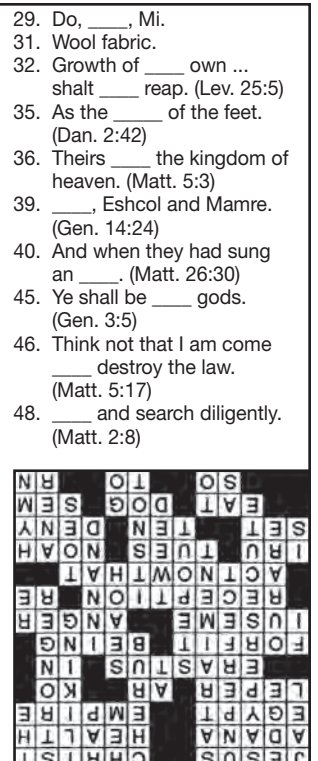
Across

- Son of God.
- The book of the generation of Jesus _____. (Matt. 1:1)
- Nebuzar-____, captain of the guard, ____ servant. (2 Kings 25:8; 2 words)
- Thou mayest prosper and be in _____. (3 John 2)
- And flee into _____. (Matt. 2:13)
- Published throughout all his _____. (Esther 1:20)
- Behold, there came a _____. (Matt. 8:2)
- I have given ____ into the children of Lot. (Deut. 2:9)
- Knockout. (abbr.)
- ____, the chamberlain of the city. (Rom. 16:23)
- Blessed are the pure ____ heart. (Matt. 5:8)
- ____ it is not _____. (Acts 22:22; 2 words)
- If ye then, ____ evil. (Matt. 7:11)
- Did ____ lightness? ... that with _____. (2 Cor. 1:17)
- Put off all these; ____, wrath. (Col. 3:8)
- Party after a wedding.
- Do, ____, Mi.

- In the very _____. Moses ... us, _____. (John 8:4,5; 3 words)
- The sons of Caleb, ____, Elah and Naam. (1 Chron. 4:15)
- Day after Monday. (abbr.)
- By faith, ____, being warned of God. (Heb. 11:7)
- City that is ____ on a hill. (Matt. 5:14)
- And when the ____ heard it. (Matt. 20:24)
- Whosoever shall ____ me before men. (Matt. 10:33)
- They did all _____. (Matt. 14:20)
- As a ____ lappeth. (Judg. 7:5)
- The son of _____. (Luke 3:36)
- Let your light ____ shine. (Matt. 5:16)
- They may appear unto men ____ fast. (Matt. 6:16)
- Registered Nurse. (abbr.)
- But I ____ unto you ... use you, and ____ you. (Matt. 5:44; 2 words)
- My substance, yet being _____. (Ps. 139:16)
- And ____ upon it ... his ____ white as snow. (Matt. 28:2,3)
- Every ____ had two faces. (Ezek. 41:18)
- Touched the ____ of his garment. (Matt. 9:20)
- Hit sharply.
- ____ fear my lord ... your faces worse _____. (Dan. 1:10; 2 words)
- Weakness of God is ____ than men. (1 Cor. 1:25)
- Blessed are ____ merciful. (Matt. 5:7)
- Heaven is ____ hand. (Matt. 3:2)
- If my ____ hath turned ____ of the way. (Job 31:7; 2 words, reverse order)
- ____(h) Zidon: for the ____ hath spoken. (Isa. 23:4; reversed)
- Fe, ____, Fo, Fum.
- For ____ lamps ____ gone out. (Matt. 25:8; 2 words)
- Brought him to an ____, _____. (Luke 10:34; 2 words)

Down

- ____ went out to meet Sisera. (Judg. 4:18)
- Fall by the ____ of the sword. (Luke 21:24)



RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

Kentucky court defends religious objections

FRANKFORT, Ky. — A Kentucky Court of Appeals ruled in favor of a Christian business that refused to make T-shirts for a gay pride event on moral grounds.

The three-judge panel ruled 2-1 that Hands On Originals could not be forced to make products for an event its owner was morally opposed to on religious beliefs. The ruling upheld an earlier decision from the Fayette Circuit Court in favor of Hands On Originals and against an LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) group and the Lexington Fayette Urban County Human Rights Commission, according to The Christian Post.

“Nothing in the fairness ordinance prohibits [Hands On Originals], a private business, from engaging in viewpoint or message censorship,” read the panel’s decision.

“Thus, although the menu of services [Hands On Originals] provides to the public is accordingly limited and censors certain points of view, it is the same limited menu [Hands On Originals] offers to every customer and is not, therefore, prohibited by the fairness ordinance.”

In his dissent, Judge Jeff Taylor defends the shirts, saying, “There was nothing obnoxious, inflammatory, false or even pornographic that [the Gay and Lesbian Services Organization] wanted to place on their T-shirts which would justify restricting their speech under the First Amendment.”

However, because Hands On Original has refused other orders on moral grounds over the years, it has demonstrated that it strives to “treat everyone the same,” said Fayette Circuit Court Judge James D. Ishmael in 2015.

“[Hands On Original] has treated homosexual and heterosexual groups the same. ... Those print orders that were refused ... included shirts promoting a strip club, pens promoting a sexually explicit video and shirts containing a violence-related message.” (TAB)

Support for gay ‘marriage’ hits new high

WASHINGTON — A recent Gallup study reveals a new high in the percentage of Americans who think gay “marriage” should be recognized by law — 64 percent.

While it’s just a 3 percent increase from the 2016 rating, it continues the generally steady rise since Gallup’s trend began in 1996, according to the annual Values and Beliefs poll.

The new high comes nearly two years after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states could not prohibit same-sex “marriage.” Since Gallup first polled on the issue, support for gay “marriage” has more than doubled, rising 37 percent in 21 years.

Protestants’ support for same-sex “marriage” also has grown to where the majority of Protestants are in favor of it for the first time. Today Protestants are about twice as likely to support gay “marriage” as they were in 1996 (55 percent versus 27 percent), according to the recent poll.

Gallup also reported an increase in support along party lines. While it’s no surprise that more than 7 in 10 independents and Democrats support same-sex “marriage,” the number of Republicans who support it also has hit a new high (47 percent) since 1996, nearly tripling.

Although a third of Americans are still opposed to same-sex “marriage” support has gradually increased over the past two decades, reaching majority support with new groups, as it did with senior citizens in 2016 and Protestants this year. (TAB)

CAMPUS News



UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

University of Mobile Students Earn Top Ranking in Business Simulation Game:

Three University of Mobile business majors earned Global Top 100 rankings in an international business simulation game and will go on to an invitation-only global competition this summer.

Team members are senior Kyle Moran, of Mobile; senior Christian Harris, of Dunlap, Tennessee; and senior Philipp Patt, of Cologne, Germany.

► **University of Mobile Faculty, Staff Honored at Annual Luncheon:** University of Mobile’s highest faculty and staff honors, the Megginson Awards, were presented at the annual year-end faculty-staff luncheon May 9.

The 2017 William A. Megginson Teaching Award was presented to Barbara Brousseau, of enrollment services and assistant professor of French.

The 2017 Emma Frances Megginson Service Award was presented to Kristie Sanders, admissions information specialist and principal designated school official.

The 2017 Mitford Ray Megginson Research Award was presented to Troy Henderson, professor of mathematics. Henderson also was presented with a university medallion in recognition of his recent promotion to full professor.

Faculty and staff honored for service at five-year marks were:

- 35 years: Steven Carey, Audrey Eubanks
- 30 years: Kathy Sheppard
- 25 years: Nancy Huff, Barbara Greene, Uwe Tittel, National



TIMOTHY L. SMITH, University of Mobile president

Plant Service employee Kim Browder

► 20 years: Katherine Abernathy; Jane Finley; Aramark employees Debra Adams, Hines Croshon, Freda Jemison; National Plant Service employee Kenneth Handy

► 15 years: Jay Robertson, Eileen Gardner, Cindy Godwin, Kathryn Hollingsworth, Neal Ledbetter, Lesa Moore, Brian Person, Kristie Sanders

► 10 years: Phillip Counselman, Troy Henderson, Amy Taylor, Sally Shoupe, Darlene Smith

► Five years: Carolyn Corliss; Matthew Downs; Steve Dunn; Kathryn Hedlund; Alison Henry; Gyromas Newman; Chase Alford; Dana Allen; Billy Dock Evans; Jeremy Harford; Paige Hill; Tracie Marks; Kristopher McAuley; Aramark employees Cathy Caples, Luke Morris and Terrance Murphy.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

Samford University Named Top Producer of Fulbright Students:



ANDREW WESTMORELAND, Samford University president

Samford University in Birmingham is 1 of 23 masters institutions in the nation included on The Chronicle of Higher Education’s list of Top Producers of Fulbright Scholars and Students, 2016-2017.

Samford’s record number of successful 2016 student applications included alumni Natalie Bennie (2016 communication studies major, German minor), Analeigh Horton (2015 communication studies major, Spanish and Latin American studies minor) and Samantha Hurley (2015 nursing major, Spanish minor). Each were accepted to the prestigious Fulbright English Teaching Assistant Program.

► **Samford’s Beeson Divinity School Receives Third Kern Grant:** Samford University’s Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham received its third grant from the Kern Family Foundation for the extension of the school’s Faith and Work program. The grant is for \$78,520 for the period of May 2, 2017, to Nov. 2, 2018.

Directed by Associate Professor Mark DeVine, this initiative received its first Kern grant in 2013.

► **Samford University Trustees Approve New Academic Programs:** Samford University’s board of trustees approved new academic programs May 9.

A new master of studies in law is designed for professionals who are not lawyers but for whom a legal background would be beneficial. The 36-credit hour program will be online.

A new bachelor of science in health information management degree is designed to qualify graduates to sit for the Registered Health Information certificate examination. Both new degree programs are pending final approval for accreditation.

JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Local Police Support League Makes Gift to Judson College Criminal Justice Program:** Eutaw Mayor Pro Tempore Sheila Hann Smith made a gift of \$10,000 to Judson College



DAVID POTTS, Judson College president

in Marion on behalf of the Tommy Summerville Police Support League in April.

Smith presented Judson President David Potts and assistant professor of criminal justice Christine Bussey with the check to fund scholarships for deserving students in Judson’s Criminal Justice program. †



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‘Wake-up call to all’

Indonesian governor, Christian jailed for ‘blasphemy’

They called it.

At a roundtable discussion titled “Indonesia: A model for the Muslim world” in late April, discussion members warned that Islamic extremism was on the rise in the traditionally tolerant Southeast Asian country.

Although Indonesia prides itself on being the world’s largest Muslim democracy with tolerance for other religions, several expressed concern over the wave of extremism washing over the country.

“The threat of radicalism is growing,” said Jakob Tobing, Indonesia’s former ambassador to South Korea who helped lead the Indonesian parliament to rewrite its constitution, transitioning the country from dictatorship to democracy at the turn of this century. “Negligence of this consolidation has opened a very fertile soil for these ideas coming from the outside.”

Voters pressured

Tobing cited as an example the recent defeat of former Jakarta Gov. Basuki “Ahok” Tjahaja Purnama in the recent re-election campaign, according to The Christian Post. Purnama was the first Christian governor of Jakarta in more than 50 years and only the second Christian governor in the history of Indonesia, where 90 percent of the voters are Muslim.

He was defeated in his re-election by Anies Baswedan, a former education and culture minister and a Muslim.

Muslim radicals protested Purnama’s re-election bid in the thousands and reportedly “abused verses of the Quran and intimidated

Muslims” by saying “if you vote for [Purnama] that means you vote against the will of God,” said Alwi Shihab, the Indonesian president’s special envoy to the Middle East and OIC.

“I think the [Jakarta] election has become a wake-up call to all popular forces in Indonesia,” Shihab said during the roundtable discussion. “We have been so far complacent. We have been so proud to be seen as a model of Islamic religious tolerance and so forth. We are forgetful of the invasion of ideas and ideology.”

Purnama was sentenced by a five-judge panel to two years in prison for blaspheming the Quran. While Indonesian law allows a maximum sentence of five years in prison for blasphemy, prosecutors had only recommended a two-year probation so the sentencing was shocking. Purnama said he would appeal the verdict but it is unclear if that process will lead to his release.

The accusation stemmed from a video of Purnama telling voters they were being deceived if they believed a specific verse in the Quran prohibited Muslims from voting for a non-Muslim leader.

In his Sept. 29, 2016, speech, Purnama said, “You don’t have to vote for me because you’ve been lied to [or fooled] ... (or you fear you’ll go to hell That’s your personal right. These programs will go forward. ... Follow your conscience.”

Video footage of the speech went viral, inciting Islamic extremists and prompting an apology from Purnama on Oct. 10, 2016, “to all Muslims and anyone who felt offended.” (TAB, MS)

Not just your average kidney transplant story

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Bob Kuykendall said that, to the average person, his story looks like the feel-good kind that makes the 6 o’clock news.

A young father desperately needed a kidney. Kuykendall gave it. And everybody’s doing great.

“But that’s not exactly what happened,” Kuykendall said. “It’s not just a story about a kidney transplant. This is a story about two guys getting the gift of life.”

Kuykendall was a self-proclaimed deist the day he walked into a Birmingham-area coffeehouse to meet up with Greg Hasberry.

“I was a person who believed in God but doubted His involvement with us as we struggle through life, hoping for the best,” Kuykendall said. “I was growing more and more resentful toward people who credited God with various and often stupid decisions.”

But as he walked into the coffeehouse that day in 2015, he realized he really had no idea why he was there. The two men had met years before at the gym and the day before they met for coffee Hasberry had found Kuykendall’s number in his phone. He called to ask him a work-related question that he thought Kuykendall could answer.

He could.

“In fact, I could have answered it quickly so I’m not sure why I didn’t just answer him right then on the phone,” he said. “For some reason I felt compelled to ask him to meet me for coffee. And even as I walked in to meet him I kept thinking, ‘I’m too busy to do this today — why did I suggest it?’”

The reason began to get a little clearer when he noticed the scars on Hasberry’s arm from his kidney dialysis port and started asking questions.

“I had no idea he had kidney problems and I had never really known anyone who had to be on kidney dialysis,” Kuykendall said.

He found out Hasberry had been on dialysis several times a week for the past several years. His kidneys were failing. Hasberry’s brother had offered to donate a kidney but he wasn’t a match.

Hearing from God

“I felt this feeling that no one can explain, the same feeling that people in the past have said they get when they hear from God,” Kuykendall said. “In the past I’ve been the cynical guy that says no way. But the feeling was undeniable. And I knew why I was there.”

Kuykendall went home and started talking with his wife about the prospect of donating a kidney to Hasberry.

“We Googled so many things, starting

with ‘can you die from donating a kidney,’” Kuykendall said. “After talking for a while we decided to table the idea.”

That was a Wednesday.

On Friday, Kuykendall moved his daughter to Auburn and while his family was eating lunch the owner of the pizza place caught his attention.

“He was really charismatic and I thought, ‘I’m going to go meet this guy,’” he said. “It was really weird — once again I had no idea why I was doing it. I had the same feeling that I’d had when I met Greg for coffee.”

He went over and introduced himself and they struck up a conversation. After talking for quite a while — much to the bewilderment of his family — about things like football and lacrosse the topic took an unexpected turn.

“He mentioned that he only had one kidney — that he’d donated a kidney to a student eight years ago,” Kuykendall said. “He said it was the best thing he’d ever done. We talked for a while about what it had involved and what it meant to him.”

On the following Monday, Kuykendall called UAB Hospital in Birmingham.

After a barrage of tests and doctors saying it was an improbable match, they said Hasberry’s condition was so progressed they would give it a try if he was as much as a 20 percent match.

It’s a match

“They were hoping for 40,” Kuykendall said. And when the results came back he was an 80 percent match, the highest the surgeon had ever seen in his 30 years at UAB.

God had sent Hasberry a kidney donor, Kuykendall said — but He’d also sent Kuykendall a newfound faith.

It was a faith that Hasberry shared and he began to help fan the flame.

“It was a God process — it was definitely divine,” Hasberry said.

And the two are joining up these days to share their faith, help people face the mountains in their life and raise awareness for kidney donation. They are training to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa, this June as part of a group they’re calling Team Mountain.

It’s about encouraging people in their life, encouraging them to make time to help others and encouraging them to explore their faith, said Kuykendall, who attends Double Oak Community Church, Birmingham. Many of the people he meets now are struggling in the same way Kuykendall was before he met Hasberry and met God.

The four-year process for Hasberry wasn’t just about his kidney, Kuykendall said. “I believe God was working on a two-for-one kind of deal.” ✝

For more information, visit teammountain.org.

The Alabama Baptist regularly reports on the persecuted Church. Find more articles at www.thealabamabaptist.org.