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Anchor Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, currently meets on Sunday mornings at the BCM center at the University of Alabama.

Photo by Aaron Barnes

# 'Vital' ministry partner

## BCM, church planting leaders cooperate to reach out in college towns

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**  
The Alabama Baptist

**O**n Sundays, Alabama's nine Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) centers are closed for church.

That is, unless church is at the BCM center.

Alabama BCM centers have become a vital partner in church planting efforts around the state, said Mike Nuss, who directs col-

legiate ministries for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

### Working together

"Across our state, BCM, in partnership with local Baptist associations and church planting efforts of the SBOM, is often a vital ministry partner in efforts to plant churches that reach college students and young adults," Nuss said.

The BCM facilities at South Ala-

bama and the University of Alabama are good examples.

When Nuss was campus minister at the University of South Alabama, BCM students helped canvas Daphne-area neighborhoods in preparation for the planting of what is now Eastern Shore Baptist Church. Sunrise Baptist Church, Mobile; Forest Hill Baptist Church, Mobile; and Celebration Church, Saraland, also got support from BCM students as they got started.

"When Sunrise Baptist planted, several teams of BCM students helped them with cleaning and remodeling of their first facility. Sunrise is now having a great impact on discipling collegians in their congregation," said Jerrod Brown, BCM minister at South Alabama.

BCM facilities also have provided temporary homes for church plants. In Mobile, Dayspring Baptist, now a thriving church in west (See 'Intentional,' page 3)



**Myers-Mallory**  
State Missions Offering

**WEEK OF PRAYER FOR STATE MISSIONS IS SEPT. 10-17.**

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# COMMENT

## A Growing Source of State Missions Funding

**M**ake no mistake about it. The Cooperative Program (CP) is still the primary channel for funding missions and ministries in Alabama. The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) is budgeted to receive \$11,172,660 this year to undergird all the work done across the state to strengthen and support churches. That money pays all the salaries and provides all the infrastructure for missions and ministries carried on by state missionaries almost every day somewhere in the state.

Unfortunately, CP support for work in Alabama is shrinking. Since 2007, CP receipts have declined about 14 percent — from a high of \$44.95 million in 2007 to \$38.77 million in 2016. So far this year undesignated receipts are running behind last year's at this time by slightly more than 2.5 percent, according to reports.

State work has taken other hits. In 2007, 43 percent of all CP funds went to SBC causes. This year that percentage is 48 percent and the recommended budget for 2018 will move the division between funds used in Alabama and funds shared with SBC causes to 50–50. And this has happened during years of declining budgets.

### No more room to maneuver

In addition, the North American Mission Board helped underwrite ministries in Alabama ranging from evangelism to Christian social ministries in 2007. Now most of those funds are gone and so are many of the ministers and ministries they helped fund.

State missionaries serve valiantly — often without raises and with reduced benefits. SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance has changed a number of positions from full-time to part-time or contract status. Other positions have been eliminated. The current staff is about half of what it was when Lance was elected in 1998. But after a while there is no more room to maneuver.

Like other mission boards, the SBOM has turned to a special offering. It is called the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering. Myers is the martyred Southern Baptist missionary Martha Myers, an Alabama physician murdered in Yemen in 2002. Mallory is Kathleen Mallory who led national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) for 36 years (1912–1948) after first serving as leader of Alabama WMU. Theirs is a great missions legacy.

While this is the second year of the statewide Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering, there has been a state missions offering for years. However, prior to last year, the offering focused solely on WMU.

Last year the offering was refocused with a new name and new causes. Now the offering includes disaster relief, church planting, partnership missions and church revitalization in addition to WMU. WMU is a fostered entity of the state



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

convention but each of the other four causes is assigned to SBOM.

The agreement between SBOM and WMU specifies that WMU will receive 55 percent of the offering goal since the state missions offering was originally theirs. The other causes will divide the other 45 percent on a percentage basis. This year disaster relief will receive 20 percent of the offering, church planting 10 percent, partnership missions 10 percent and church revitalization 5 percent.

Alabama Baptists know the necessity of having money on hand when tragedy strikes. Many times our state has been ravaged by tornadoes, hurricanes and floods. We have seen the immediate response of Alabama Baptist-trained volunteers and the resources made available through various associations and the state convention. Kitchen units, shower units, laundry units, child care units, chainsaw crews, mud out crews, chaplains and more can quickly respond because of the training and resources provided by the state disaster relief program.

Alabama Baptists don't have to "get ready" when a disaster strikes. Alabama Baptists are ready. What a blessing that is.

### Changing population patterns

Even though our state is highly "churched," the churches are not always where the people are. Changing population patterns necessitate new church plants. So does the growing number of people from other nations who call Alabama home.

In some instances churches decline even though they are surrounded by people. Alabama Baptists' innovative program of providing coaches and mentors to work with leadership of such churches is a great resource. Coaches work with pastor and lay leaders to see what can be done to equip the church to be a congregation attempting to enlist

its community for the cause of Christ. But even that takes money to train the coaches and put coach and church together.

Helping churches commit to ministry "in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth" is the goal of the Acts 1:8 program — a partnership ministry strategy promoted by Alabama Baptists. Not only do state missionaries promote this biblical teaching in the churches, they help churches become aware of ministry opportunities in the U.S. and abroad. Volunteers are trained and other services offered.

A special point about the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering is that all of the funds are used in Alabama for equipping Alabama Baptist saints for missions and ministry. When these funds are combined with the salary and infrastructure support of CP, Baptists have a winning combination.

Evidently many Alabama Baptists share that conclusion. Last year, the first year of the statewide missions offering, the goal was \$750,000. Baptists gave \$956,666.09. That is 127 percent of the goal.

This year the goal adopted by state convention messengers is \$1 million. However, state leaders hope for a higher offering to help underwrite the needed ministries. They announced a hallelujah goal of \$1.2 million. Reaching that goal would be a stretch but it can be done.

Special offerings are just that. They are offerings above and beyond one's regular gifts to the church, part of which goes to missions and ministries through CP as churches invest in all Baptists do together in

Alabama, the nation and around the world.

Special offerings allow those concerned about international missions to make a special investment in that cause through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions. Those concerned about the underserved areas of the U.S. can give a special offering to the Annie Armstrong Offering for North American Missions.

Now those concerned about the lost in Alabama, about missions and ministry in our own state, can make a special offering through the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering.

The Week of Prayer for this emphasis is Sept. 10–17. Be a part of your church's efforts to support work in Alabama. Study the material prepared by Alabama WMU. Pray for the state missions causes. Then give as the Lord lays on your heart because this special offering will be a growing part of support missions and ministries in our state. ✠

***"Be a part of your church's efforts to support work in Alabama. Study the material prepared by Alabama WMU. Pray for the state missions causes. Then give as the Lord lays it on your heart."***

**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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# ‘Intentional connection’

## ‘BCM has always pointed students to the local church,’ Nuss says

(continued from page 1)

Mobile, got its start at the South Alabama BCM. South City Church is currently using the BCM facility and is reaching young families, singles, college students and refugees, Brown said.

“These partnerships illustrate clearly what it means to be Alabama Baptists,” Brown said. “Working together allows us to do more. It is the wonderful partnership of the SBOM, the Mobile Baptist Association and these local congregations that make these types of outreaches possible.”

### Greater advantage

The meeting place is one of the first vital decisions a church planter must make, said SBOM church planting strategist Lamar Duke. Because the BCM facilities are located on campus, they offer space, parking and convenience. If they are reaching out to the college population, they have an even greater advantage.

Anchor Baptist in Tuscaloosa currently meets on Sunday mornings at the BCM facility at the University of Alabama. Pastor Harvey Edwards said the location has been a blessing for the church.

“It’s a natural place to connect with college students because we’re right here on campus — students can walk to us,” Edwards said.

### Multigenerational

Anchor Church’s goal is to be a multigenerational church that is collegiate-minded, so the college campus is its missions field, Edwards said.

But not all church plants that utilize BCM facilities are reaching out to college students — and that’s okay, too, Nuss said.

“BCM has always pointed students to the local church. Indeed one of the hallmarks of our ministry has been our intentional connection and partnership with the local Baptist church,” he said.

Many local churches do a great job of reaching out to college stu-



Photo by Ryan Brooks

Pastor Harvey Edwards of Anchor Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, says the BCM at the University of Alabama is a ‘natural place to connect with college students because we’re right here on campus — students can walk to us.’

dents, he said. But research also shows that churches designed especially to reach college students are more apt to accomplish that goal than churches that might have that as one of many ministry goals.

“That’s why collegiate church planting, especially in other parts of the country and throughout North America, is important,” Nuss said.

However, at the heart of BCM is ministry to students. BCM is a recognized student organization on many campuses and brings the critical “spiritual/faith-based” element to a student’s education and personal development, Nuss said.

“BCM exists to reach college students for

Christ and grow students into disciples that make disciples,” he said.

That mission is first accomplished through BCM’s presence on campus and extends to challenging students to be involved in missions and ministry, including helping with church planting efforts, Brown said.

### Greater understanding

“We have discovered that when college students are a part of this kind of missions and ministry with churches in their infancy, it gives them a greater understanding of the Church and the essentials of a biblical church,” he said. “They see the church as intricately connected to mission and existing for the mission of reaching communities with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Most every student that has worked with BCM in church planting efforts now has a better understanding of the mission of the body of Christ — to make disciples.”

**Church planting efforts are one of the ministries supported by local church gifts through the Cooperative Program and to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering.**

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE WORK OF CAMPUS MINISTRIES AROUND ALABAMA, VISIT [WWW.BCMLINK.ORG/](http://WWW.BCMLINK.ORG/). FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CHURCH PLANTING WORK IN THE STATE, VISIT [WWW.ALSBOM.ORG](http://WWW.ALSBOM.ORG).

**Grandparents Day is Sept. 10.**

# Becoming a 'parent' again

## How Alabama churches can minister to grandparents raising grandchildren

By **Denise George**  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**T**om and Glenda Thompson, members of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, became legal guardians for their 2-year-old grandson, Andrew, 19 years ago when their daughter was unable to raise him. While a good experience, the Thompsons, now 70 years old, admit they faced some challenges as grandparents rearing a grandchild.

"As 'empty nesters,' we had already changed our lifestyle and had gotten accustomed to the freedom and flexibility to do things together," Tom Thompson said. "We looked forward to just having each

other instead of our lives rotating around our children."

Even though in good health, Thompson admits to physical and energy adjustments in becoming a "parent" again. "There's a reason God doesn't give babies to 50 year olds," he said with a laugh. "Physically we were not where we were at 30."

### Emotionally supportive

A retired businessman with BellSouth and a 10-year former staff member at Dawson, Thompson actively involved Andrew with him in church worship and youth programs. The family found Dawson's members emotionally supportive, encouraging and helpful.

"Members

made affirming comments to us," he said. And church families with children Andrew's age took interest in taking Andrew with them for outings, giving the Thompsons a break.

Andrew is now 21 years old, well adjusted and a senior in college. "Andrew is biologically our grandson," Thompson said, "but in every other sense, he is our son."

Grandparents raising grandchildren is a growing trend in Alabama and across the nation.

Nationwide, 7.8 million children live with grandparents or other relatives with more than 5.8 million children living in grandparents' homes. More than 2.5 million grandparents take primary responsibility for these children.

Grandparents must often step in and care for grandchildren (either part-time or full-time) when their own grown children are ill or deceased, living with domestic violence, mentally ill and/or disabled, addicted to substances, homeless, incarcerated, deployed, abusive and/or neglectful, divorcing, irresponsible or

otherwise not capable of caring for their children.

Rearing grandchildren comes with challenges that can cause financial, physical and legal difficulties for older adults. The church can minister to this often-overlooked church group by supporting, helping and encouraging grandparents and their grandchildren.

### How to help

► Search out grandparents in your congregation who need help financially. Some are impoverished and others might be struggling to live and raise young children on a fixed income.

► Help them find church, community and federal programs that can offer help and support.

► Help them work through the maze of medical, educational and legal forms they will be required to fill out.

► Help them in practical ways such as with child care, meal preparation, transportation to doctor's appointments, selecting school supplies, shopping for children's school clothes, etc.

► Involve "grandfamilies" in church programs that will help, support and encourage them and their grandchildren.

### Providing resources

► Provide seminars, guest speakers and resources that will address some of the many problems they face. Provide child care in the church during these events.

► Start a grandparent support group that meets on a regular schedule and brings together grandparents rearing grandchildren for resources, information and fellowship.

► Encourage church families with children to "adopt" a family where grandparents are raising the grandchildren. Include them on fun events, vacations, shopping trips, etc.

► Pray for and with grandparents and their grandchildren. Let them know they are a vital part of the church. ✠

**Nationwide, 7.8 million children live with grandparents or other relatives with more than 5.8 million children living in grandparents' homes. More than 2.5 million grandparents take primary responsibility for these children.**



## Be aware of potential difficulties

**Change of lifestyle:** Grandparenting grandchildren can be unexpected and can interrupt or cancel retirement plans/dreams. Grandparents may be angry and resentful with their grown children for putting them in this position. Grandparents may also be caring for their elderly parents. Taking in grandchildren may mean finding a larger house, moving, difficult transitions and more financial strain.

▶ **Age-related health problems:** A grandparent may suffer poor health, chronic illness or a disability that limits the mobility needed to rear a child. Older adults need great strength and stamina to raise children. They may also worry about what will happen to the children when they become debilitated and/or die.

▶ **Stress and exhaustion:** Caring for a child 24/7 and year-round is stressful as well as physically and emotionally exhausting, especially for older grandparents. They also may be anxious, angry, embarrassed over the situation and dealing with their grown children's problems.

### Medical issues

▶ **Complicated medical situations:** A traumatized or abused child may need specific medical help, regular medications and expensive counseling and therapy. The child may have behavioral problems that are difficult for an older adult to manage.

▶ **Complicated legal situations:** Legal arrangements might include adoption, guardianship, foster parent status and/or caregiver's authorization. Adopting a grandchild can be confusing, financially draining and require extensive paperwork.

▶ **Poverty and Fixed Incomes:** The estimated cost of raising a child from birth through age 17 is \$233,610, not including pregnancy or college expenses, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Some grandparents aren't able to take on additional and often heavy expenses. (Denise George)



123rf.com

# Helpful resources

## Websites, programs provide insight for grandparents raising grandchildren

### Financial assistance website

▶ [http://www.raisingyourgrandchildren.com/Financial\\_Assistance.htm](http://www.raisingyourgrandchildren.com/Financial_Assistance.htm)

### Legal assistance websites

- ▶ <http://www.grandfamilies.org>
- ▶ [http://www.raisingyourgrandchildren.com/Legal\\_Issues.htm](http://www.raisingyourgrandchildren.com/Legal_Issues.htm)
- ▶ <https://www.usa.gov/child-care>
- ▶ <http://www.crckids.org/legal-resources/family-law-overview/alabama-law/>

### Programs in Alabama that can help

- ▶ <http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/relationships/friends-family/grandfacts/grandfacts-alabama.pdf>
- ▶ <http://www.grandparents.com/family-and-relationships/grandparents-rights/new-law-benefits-grandparents>

### Supplemental nutrition assistance program

▶ Alabama Food Assistance Division, 334-242-1700, [fs@dhr.state.al.us](mailto:fs@dhr.state.al.us), [http://dhr.alabama.gov/services/Food\\_Assistance/Food\\_Assistance\\_Division.aspx](http://dhr.alabama.gov/services/Food_Assistance/Food_Assistance_Division.aspx)

(Compiled by Denise George)

## A look at grandparents raising grandchildren in Alabama

▶ 63,529 Alabama grandparents are responsible for their grandchildren.  
▶ 148,127 children live in a grandparent's or relative's home (13 percent of all children under age 18 in Alabama).  
▶ 55 percent of the grandparents are white,

42 percent are black and 2 percent are Hispanic/Latino and other races.  
▶ 45 percent have no parents of the children present in the home.  
▶ 70 percent of grandparents are under age 60.  
▶ 24 percent live in poverty.

(Source: AARP)

**Grandparents raising grandchildren is a growing trend in Alabama and across the nation.**

# ALABAMA

## UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

### Hilderbrand celebrates 20 years at University Baptist

In Eddie Hilderbrand's 20 years at University Baptist Church, Huntsville, he's learned a thing or two about having a sustainable ministry. Chief among them is that "everything can be handled by God."

Take his own ministry path, for example. When he was 20 years old, Hilderbrand knew God had placed a call to ministry on his life. But it took eight years for that call to come to fruition.

When the Lord led him to University Baptist, he joined the staff as minister of education and children. Eventually, God shifted Hilderbrand's position to associate pastor of education and senior adults.

"The change in my position came as a combined sensing of God's direction in my life and in the life of our youth minister at that time. Both of us simultaneously sensed God changing our ministry directions," he said. "Our youth minister felt God leading him to a more comprehensive ministry ...



HILDERBRAND

[and] I felt God leading me to minister with senior adults."

For both men, the Lord had each situation well in hand and paved the way for His will to be done by working in each of their hearts to shift their passions.

Other lessons Hilderbrand has learned include the importance of

being flexible, supporting the pastor, never saying "never" and being willing to be the peacemaker.

Hilderbrand holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg and a master's degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

He and his wife, Becky, have two children and two grandchildren. (TAB)

### Lightsey marks 30 years of faithful church ministry

Eddie Lightsey encourages young ministers to "truly tap into the most valuable resource that you have available — your congregation." And young ministers would be wise to heed Lightsey's advice, as it comes from much experience. Lightsey has been in ministry 30 years, with 20 of those years at the same church, West End Baptist, Clanton.

"God calls church members the same as He calls ministers," Lightsey continued. "God has everything He needs to accomplish all that He desires within the fellowship of believers where you serve."

For instance, Lightsey was heading into his senior year in high school when God called him into music ministry at a youth retreat in Ridgecrest, North Carolina. It was a clear calling, he recalls, and it's one he has been faithful to ever since.

Prior to West End, Lightsey served as mu-

sic minister for Bethsalem Baptist Church, Billingsley, and First Baptist Church, La-combe, Louisiana. He also served as minister of music and youth for Eastside Baptist Church, Birmingham, before transitioning to West End as music minister. For the past four years, Lightsey has served as associate pastor.

"I have had the opportunity to serve alongside a tremendous and loving congregation for over 20 years. ... I can't wait to see what the next 20 years will bring."

Lightsey holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Montevallo and a master's degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Sharon, have two children. (TAB)



LIGHTSEY

### Scarborough to retire as pastor of Auburn Heights Baptist

After 33 years, Wayne Scarborough Sr. will be retiring from his role as pastor of Auburn Heights Baptist Church, Phenix City, on Dec. 31. Rodney Mitchell, associate pastor and minister of music, will step up as pastor of Auburn Heights Baptist when Scarborough retires. Mitchell has served at Auburn Heights alongside Scarborough for the last three decades.

Scarborough said, "My replacement ... is a man of integrity, who has a very deep love for God and His people, which we have shared for 31 years together in preparation for this divine moment of him as an associate pastor taking up the banner of senior pastor."

Prior to entering the ministry, Scarborough served as a sergeant in the U.S. Army, and then was an electronic technician for the government. He became a pastor in 1979, serving first at Bellwood Baptist Church and then moving into a role at First Baptist Church, McHenry, Mississippi. His third calling as pastor was to serve at Auburn Heights starting in 1985, and he's been there ever since.

Looking back on his years at Auburn Heights, Scarborough says he's most proud of the way his church members have grown in their love for both the Lord and one another.

"The Lord has sustained the church through many trials, and the Lord's people have bonded even more through the trials and victories the Lord has brought us all through," he said.

In retirement, Scarborough is looking forward to spending more time with his wife of 47 years, Rhonda. The couple has one son and three grandchildren. (Anna Keller)



SCARBOROUGH



## Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

### Toward a Theology of Work

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

This week we are on the threshold of Labor Day, the holiday dedicated to recognizing and honoring that vast army of workers who have made and continue to help make our nation a most desirable place to live with its strength and prosperity.

So this week Theology 101 takes a look at the Bible's take on honest work by raising the question: Why should Christians, who are given the ability and opportunity to work, aspire to be dedicated workers?

We acknowledge, of course, that some people lack the physical or mental capacity to join the work force and others who desire to work cannot find a suitable place that matches their skill or experience. But given ability and opportunity, God's Word gives us several simple reasons for working.

A most basic reason for working is to provide for one's own basic life needs such as lodging, clothing and food. This reason for working has special reference to a husband and father. Not only is he to be the leader and protector of his family, he is to be their provider.

The Bible is quite clear and straightforward about this for Christians: "If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim. 5:8).

#### Working day and night

The apostle Paul set an example in his time by working day and night in order not to burden others with furnishing him food. With his own practice as an example, he set forth this principle to the Thessalonians, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thess. 3:10).

Later when he wrote them a second letter Paul called on the church to confront some who were not working but being busybodies in their idle time: "Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread" (2 Thess. 3:12). So

a basic reason for working is for one to furnish food for himself and his family.

Another reason for working is to have something to give to others. Christian compassion recognizes that some are not able to work and provide for themselves or are not able to find employment. A Christian response to such a situation is to see work as enabling us to respond with generosity by sharing with them. Such is the admonition of Ephesians 4:28: "Let him who stole steal no longer but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need."

#### Testimony before others

Yet another reason for working at honorable occupations (that which is good) is to maintain a positive and admirable testimony before others. The apostolic urging given to the Thessalonians included this aspect of the value of being committed to work: "We urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside" (4:11-12). If unsaved outsiders see believers shunning honest work they will be turned off from coming to Christ.

On top of everything else, we might deduce that since God set the pattern for work by working at creation six days before resting that work is indeed a godly thing to do. †

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.



# Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

## Floyd named National Day of Prayer president

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — Immediate past Southern Baptist Convention President Ronnie Floyd has been appointed president of the National Day of Prayer Task Force, the organization announced Aug. 22.

Floyd, who will continue to serve as pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, wrote in a blog post announcing his latest ministry assignment, “America’s greatest need today is to experience the next Great Spiritual Awakening. We know that no great movement of God ever occurs that is not preceded by the extraordinary prayer of God’s people.”

The role of president is new for the National Day of Prayer Task Force. Previously, leadership came from the office of chairman, a role filled since May 2016 by Anne Graham Lotz. With input from Lotz and others, the board developed the office of president. Lotz will continue to serve through May 2018.

As National Day of Prayer president, Floyd will oversee mobilization of individuals, churches, denominations and organizations to participate in ongoing prayer for America, culminating in the annual National Day of Prayer emphasis in May.

Congress established the National Day of Prayer in 1952, and a 1988 law designated the first Thursday in May as a national day of prayer. In 2017 some 2 million people participated in more than 30,000 events in all 50 states. (BP)

## Baptists hit hard in Sierra Leone mudslide

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone — An Aug. 14 mudslide that left more than 500 dead and 810 missing in Sierra Leone hit the majority Muslim nation’s small Baptist community particularly hard, according to Baptist World Alliance (BWA).

Samuel Conteh, coordinator of the social ministry department with the 190-church, 25,000-member Baptist Convention of Sierra Leone, told the international Baptist body based in Falls Church, Virginia, that mudslides triggered by heavy rainstorms seriously affected western and central parts of Freetown — Sierra Leone’s capital and largest city — where a majority of Baptist churches are located.

Conteh said 60 members of Bethany Baptist Church in West Freetown have died. Hillside Baptist Church in Central West Freetown lost two members.

Brickson Sam, a North Carolina pastor, said about 20 members of Victory Baptist Church in Freetown, where he was pastor before emigrating to the United States in 2009, also perished.

About 400 Baptist families are among 3,000 left homeless in the city with a population of a little more than 1 million.

BWA is collecting donations for relief efforts through Baptist World Aid, BWA’s relief-and-development arm. For more information about how to help, visit [www.bwanet.org](http://www.bwanet.org). (BNG)

## Mississippi Convention severs ties with church

JACKSON, Miss. — A Mississippi church has been told it can no longer be a part of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

Northminster Baptist Church, a congregation in Jackson that was established in 1967 as a mission of Hinds County Baptist Association, was “found not to be in friendly cooperation with the convention” anymore, according to William Perkins, editor of *The Baptist Record* newspaper. He declined to give a reason, however, saying that the convention’s executive committee respected the autonomy of the local church.

In September 2016 the convention decided to stop receiving funds from the church. On July 24 convention leaders sent Northminster a letter saying they were severing ties.

The tensions that led to the decision reportedly stemmed from Northminster being listed as a “spiritual/church” resource in a guide for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) youth in Mississippi, according to Baptist News Global. Convention leaders reportedly asked for them to remove themselves from the guide, and the church declined. (TAB)

# Illegal gambling

## Court says online ‘auctions’ are same as slot machines

By Carrie Brown McWhorter  
The Alabama Baptist

A ruling by the Jefferson County Circuit Court has shuttered a Birmingham gambling operation and once again upheld Alabama’s prohibitions on gambling and slot machines.

In its ruling, the court found that the machines seized Aug. 24, 2016, at the Bid City location near Tarrant operated as slot machines under Alabama law.

According to court documents, deputies seized more than 100 computer stations and approximately \$1,000 in cash in the raid. The computers were equipped with software that included illegal sweepstakes games in conjunction with online auctions, according to a press release issued by Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall’s office.

“Bid City profited by targeting our communities and misrepresenting their slot-style machines as legal sweepstakes,” said Jefferson County District Attorney Pro Tem Danny Carr in a statement thanking the sheriff’s office and the attorney general’s office for their assistance in the case.

Marshall announced he has issued a cease and desist letter to Blue Streak Bids, parent company and operator of Redibids.com, provider of the software. The company offers online versions of the games found on the Bid City computers, which Marshall said were also illegal. Blue Streak Bids has until Sept. 1 to stop offering illegal gambling



Photo courtesy of Robert Drake with the Jefferson County DA office

More than 100 computer stations and approximately \$1,000 in cash were seized by deputies Aug. 24, 2016, at Bid City near Tarrant. The computers were equipped with software that included illegal sweepstakes games in conjunction with online auctions.

on their website in the state of Alabama.

The raid at Bid City is one of several that have taken place in the state this year, including another facility closed down by the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office. That case is still pending in court, according to a spokesperson in the attorney general’s office.

In March, Calhoun County deputies seized six machines in a raid on a liquor store. In April, Tuscaloosa police seized multiple illegal gambling machines.

And in May, a joint operation between the Jasper Police Department and the Walker County Sheriff’s Office resulted in the seizure of almost 50 illegal gambling machines at four separate

locations. The Walker County seizures included a Bid City location where players were purportedly bidding on merchandise yet were paid in U.S. currency with no requirements to bid on anything, according to local news reports.

“There’s never any end to the imagination of gamblers,” said Eric Johnston, a Birmingham lawyer who represents the Alabama Policy Institute and Alabama Citizens Action Program. “They come up with some of the most unusual ways to get your money. Under the definition of ‘slot machine,’ it’s a game of chance no matter what you’re doing in the game.”

### Spotty enforcement

The raids come at a time when enforcement of Alabama’s prohibition on gaming and illegal gambling is spotty at best. Electronic bingo operations are open in Macon, Greene, Lowndes and Houston counties despite multiple court decisions declaring them illegal.

“The fact is we still have gambling in Alabama and it still needs to be prosecuted,” Johnston said. ¶

**“There’s never any end to the imagination of gamblers. They come up with some of the most unusual ways to get your money.”**

**Eric Johnston  
Birmingham lawyer**

## UM’s Ministry Resources to connect churches, students

Churches may now request worship bands, interns, Disciple Now leaders and preachers through the University of Mobile’s new Ministry Resources initiative.

Representatives from churches across Alabama and the region can fill out a request form at [www.umobile.edu/ministry-resources](http://www.umobile.edu/ministry-resources) to post employment and volunteer opportunities to be advertised to students, pri-

marily in the School of Christian Studies. Churches with missions trips or projects for ministry teams also can post those needs.

“We hope to provide our students with opportunities to serve in and through the local church,” said Chase Alford, director of university ministries.

Alford is hopeful that the fall semester will allow many students the opportunity to serve. (UM)

# Recent study asks: Can volunteering time at church replace tithing?

Is it OK to give volunteer time to the church instead of putting money in the offering plate? Are the two — time and finances — interchangeable?

According to a recent Barna study, pastors and church members have different opinions.

Nearly 70 percent of pastors say they disagree strongly with the idea that volunteer time can take the place of financial giving.

But only 10 percent of Christians as a whole say they disagree strongly with the statement that it is OK for a church member “who volunteers extensively not to give financially.”

## Large disparity

When the people who “somewhat disagree” are added in, those numbers only go up somewhat — to more than 80 percent of pastors and 20 percent of Christians.

It’s a large disparity between the two groups, but the Barna study says the data shows that pastors themselves might be somewhat responsible for the confusion.

Research showed that only 39 percent of pastors reported speaking from the pulpit at least once a month about tithing or giving. But 62 percent of them said they did speak at least that often about volunteering.

“So, by their own estimates, pastors talk about volunteering much more often than they talk about financial giving,” the Barna study says. “Thus, it’s no surprise that at least some of their congregants believe serving is an acceptable substitute for tithing.”

But Barna says pastors shouldn’t decide too quickly to cut back on talking about volunteer service — the study also notes that Christians who give most are most likely to report that they have volunteered recently.

“Those who give more are most likely to spend time serving others — but they are also more likely to say generosity is a frequent topic of conversation in their family,” the Barna report said.

The report, “The Generosity Gap,” was done in partnership with Thrivent Financial, a not-for-profit financial services organization headquartered in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

## Views of generosity

In addition to dealing with the topic of volunteering versus financial giving, the report studied differences in views of generosity. Pastors and other Christians have similar views on what makes an act generous, but their views are not identical, the study shows.

“In general, most agree that generosity comes from an unselfish, sincere spirit, not from a sense of obligation or of self-interest,” Barna reported.

But church leaders are more likely to “believe generosity is both an inward attitude and an outward discipline,” and other Christians are more likely to “have a slightly more romantic view of giving” and feel that it’s a spur-of-the-moment decision.

## ‘A response’

About 66 percent of pastors believe that “generosity is always a response to Christ’s love,” but only 47 percent of all Christians feel that way. (TAB)



123rf.com



## Brantley Baptist celebrates 125th anniversary

Brantley Baptist Church in Alabama Crenshaw Baptist Association marked its 125-year anniversary Aug. 6 in what church member Earl Henderson called a “wonderful day.”

A special feature for the occasion was when the choir sang two songs written by Pastor Wesley Hatcher. Henderson also sang a solo.

The Alabama Baptist Historical Commission sent representative Dalton Campbell to present a commemorative certificate to the church. Hatcher brought the morning message.

Afterward, former and current members were able to flip through the scrapbooks and photo albums that were on display.



Photo by Dalton Campbell

## Coffeerville’s Union Grove marks 100 years

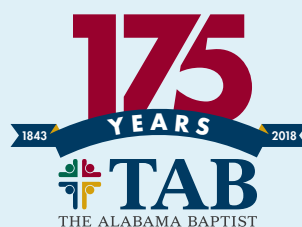
Union Grove Baptist Church, Coffeerville, took “A Walk Through History” on July 16 when it celebrated its centennial.

The commemorative service — which was “awesome from start to finish,” according to church member Ethel Autry — featured former pastor Eddie “Butch” Starks as guest speaker. Also during the 11 a.m. service Pastor Cleon Kyles read a history of the church and Brian Starts and Fletcher Cox sang a duet. Former pianist Diann Strachan returned to play for the service.

Two special presentations were made, one by Jerrol Hare, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative, and the other by Loren Robinson, director of missions for Clarke Baptist Association.

Each guest and member received a bookmark and was able to view displays of photos and items from years past.

Compiled by the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and TAB



According to the May 31, 1845, issue of *The Alabama Baptist*:

Of the meeting in Augusta, Georgia, Editor James W. Hoskins wrote, “The result was just what it should have been and warrants us in the belief that our southern organization will add to instead of detracting from the interest, importance and success of the cause of missions.” (TAB)

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# GREAT GRANDMA’S APPLE PIE RECIPE HAS BEEN PASSED DOWN FOR GENERATIONS.



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## RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services



### Fla. ministry called No. 1 'hate group' in state

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — A well-respected Florida ministry is suing after finding its name on a CNN map of “all the active hate groups where you live,” in addition to seeing local news reports calling it the No. 1 hate group in the state.

The organization, D. James Kennedy Ministries, provides resources about faith and religious liberty. In media coverage following the situation in Charlottesville, Virginia, the ministry was noted alongside about 60 other Florida groups on a map of “hate groups” posted on the website of the Alabama-based Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC).

According to the site, “All hate groups have beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics.” Conservative Christian organizations have challenged the SPLC’s “anti-LGBT” category for quite some time, but D. James Kennedy Ministries, which filed a lawsuit against SPLC on Aug. 23, is the first to take the battle to court, according to *Christianity Today* (CT).

In mid-August, several Christian groups on the list asked for apologies and to have the hate label retracted, according to CT. The Family Research Council, which also was included on the map, applauded the suit, saying, “The SPLC is inciting hatred against Christians, which has already led to violence. It needs to stop.” (TAB)

### Transgender students win legal battles

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — Two schools accused of discrimination against transgender students recently resorted to payout settlements and policy changes. The settlements do not bode well for schools that maintain traditional policies on gender, gender transitions and restroom use.

Nova Classical Academy, a charter school in St. Paul, Minnesota, agreed Aug. 7 to adopt a far-reaching gender inclusion policy and pay a child’s parents \$120,000. The agreement ended a 16-month legal battle initiated in 2016 by David and Hannah Edwards, the parents of a then-kindergartner who was born a boy but wanted to identify as a girl. The lawsuit came after the school had expressed a desire to allow the other kindergartners’ parents to opt out of their children hearing the explanation of the Edwards’ child’s gender transition plan.

Another recent settlement involved three transgender students in a Pittsburgh-area school district. The students sued the Pine-Richland School District over a restroom policy requiring students to use either unisex restrooms or the restroom that matches their biological sex. According to the settlement, the district agreed to pay each student \$20,000 and attorney fees, rescind the previous restroom policy and update its nondiscrimination policy to include gender identity. (BP)

### Coach Kennedy loses appeal to pray in public

BREMERTON, Wash. — Former high school football coach Joe Kennedy lost his appeal Aug. 23 at the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which ruled he did not have a right to pray at the 50-yard line after games.

A three-judge panel of the court said Kennedy’s prayers did not amount to constitutionally protected free speech because he was acting as a public employee when he offered them.

“By kneeling and praying on the 50-yard line immediately after games while in view of students and parents, Kennedy was sending a message about what he values as a coach, what the district considers appropriate behavior and what students should believe or how they ought to behave,” Judge Milan Smith wrote in the majority opinion.

Kennedy served in the U.S. Marines and was a part-time coach at the Bremerton, Washington, high school. He began his post-game prayer routine in 2007. The short prayers soon attracted large groups of students and parents — and the attention of school district officials who ordered him in 2015 to stop. When he refused, he lost his job. He sued nearly a year later. (BP)

# ‘Trust and verify’

## Churches can help prevent mishandling of money

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

Jim Swedenburg can’t remember the last time a month went by that he didn’t hear at least one report of an Alabama Baptist church dealing with a significant misappropriation of money.

“And if we’re hearing about one, there’s probably nine others we aren’t hearing about because they are handled locally,” said Swedenburg, director of the office of Cooperative Program and stewardship development for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

### Recent survey

LifeWay Research backs up his sentiment — according to a new survey, about 1 in 10 Protestant churches nationally has had someone embezzle funds. A smaller study done in Kansas and Missouri five years ago found similar data — 13.4 percent of churches had seen embezzlement or another type of fraud happen.

“It absolutely is more common than churches think,” Swedenburg said.

Mishandling of money can range from major embezzlement to a clerical error that sends money to the wrong place, he said.

“I doubt that there’s any churches in our state that haven’t had some money mishandled, they just don’t know about it,” Swedenburg said. “It could be individuals taking up money for events, or money

used in youth activities — there are so many different things that can happen.”

Churches want to assume that they can trust, and it’s important to find people they trust, he said. “But we also hold people accountable. I use a quote from Ronald Reagan often — he used to say ‘trust and verify.’”

The best practice to verify that money is being held correctly is to separate duties, Swedenburg said — don’t have the same person doing all of the steps.

The same person who writes the check shouldn’t be the one who signs it, and the person who signs it shouldn’t be the one who sends it, he said.

At the same time, “always have two people looking at each step in the process,” he said. “The main thing is you never want to have money be handled by one single person. There should always be two people in the loop with each step.”

Churches also should have an audit done each year, Swedenburg said, though he noted that it can be expensive to have an external audit.

“It’s pretty expensive, so many try to alternate and have an internal audit for two years and an external one every third year,” he said. “The most important thing is

to do it — there is a very high percentage of our churches who have never had an audit.”

According to the LifeWay study, 34 percent of pastors say their church’s most recent audit was more than five years ago, that their church has never had an audit or that they don’t know when their last church audit was.

At the very least, churches should do an audit of their controls to see how their money is being handled, Swedenburg said. “If you do that, you can pick up on some of the danger signs that leave you vulnerable to something bad happening.”

One key step churches can take in this audit is to run credit checks on anyone who handles money, he said. “If they’ve got a low credit score, they aren’t handling money well in their personal life. It also lets you know that they need money.”

### Keep a paper trail

Other steps? Always keep a paper trail of where money goes and train your financial secretary and your treasurer, he said. Record all gifts and send quarterly contribution statements. Handle accounts and receipts with care.

Swedenburg’s office offers at least two workshops per year for this type of training. †

For more information, call 1-800-264-1225, ext. 283 or email [jswedenburg@alsbom.org](mailto:jswedenburg@alsbom.org).

## Two gifts totaling \$1M to fund NOBTS scholarships

When New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) President Chuck Kelley began his day Aug. 7 he had little idea of the blessings to come: Two gifts totaling \$1 million dollars for student scholarships were received that day.

“This has been one of the greatest Mondays in the history of the institution and quite an exciting way to begin a new academic year,” Kelley said. “It was a ‘Million Dollar Monday.’”

NOBTS will immediately distribute more than \$200,000 of the money this school year designated for student scholarships. And one-half will be used to endow a scholarship fund that will provide annual scholarships for years to come.

“We rejoice at what God has done to lay the needs of seminary students on the hearts of Southern Baptists,” Kelley said. “Scholarships are becoming ever more important for those God has called to the church and the mission field.”

The gifts will assist African-American students

studying on the main campus or at the North Georgia Hub in metro Atlanta; small church pastors in Montana; and expository preaching students from Mississippi.

### ‘Need to become more ... diverse’

One anonymous donor sent a check for \$200,000 to be used immediately as a part of the Fred Luter Jr. African-American Scholarship Program — a scholarship the donor established in 2011. Of that, \$150,000 will provide scholarships in New Orleans; \$50,000 will fund scholarships at the North Georgia Hub.

“Southern Baptists need to become more and more racially and ethnically diverse if we are to reach our nation and our world,” Kelley said. “An anonymous donor has been greatly blessed and inspired by the ministry of Pastor Fred Luter and wants more God-called African-Americans like Dr. Luter to be able to receive quality theological education.” (BP)



# Across ALABAMA'S Associations

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

## BESSEMER

► **Canaan Church, Bessemer**, will launch its 200th anniversary Sept. 10, 9 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Special guest will be Gov. Kay Ivey. Morgan Bailey is pastor. ► **Raimund Heights Church, Bessemer**, will celebrate the 50th anniversary of ordination for Pastor Tommy Chesser on Sept. 10, 2–4 p.m. Chesser was ordained Aug. 27, 1967, at Anderson Memorial Church, Lipscomb.

## COFFEE

► **Church on Boll Weevil Circle, Enterprise**, will host a military support group beginning Sept. 19, 7 p.m. This first set of meetings will last approximately six weeks. This is an effort to connect soldiers and veterans with others who have similar experiences. For more information call 334-894-6411. John Granger

is pastor and director of missions.

## DEKALB

► **Liberty Church, Crossville**, will celebrate homecoming Sept. 17, 10 a.m. Brian Free & Assurance will perform special music. A love offering will be received. For more information call 256-738-5767. Chris Andrews is pastor.

## GENEVA

► **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will hold the 39ers CLUB on Sept. 12, 11 a.m.–noon. Kay Chandler will speak. To attend or cancel your reservation contact your table hostess by Sept. 5. To participate for the first time call the church office at 334-684-9617. Steve Wegmann is pastor.

## MARSHALL

► **Mount Calvary Church, Albertville**, will hold a senior adult

singing Sept. 12, 10 a.m.–1 p.m. Lunch will be included. To register visit <https://alsbom.org/event/senior-adult-singin-albertville/> or call Eileen Mitchell at 334-613-2221. Brent Roe is pastor.

## MONTGOMERY

► **Trinity Memorial Church, Montgomery**, will host an anniversary tea for Pastor Stanley Holt on Sept. 10, 2–4 p.m. Holt will celebrate 50 years of ministry on Sept. 10.

## RANDOLPH

► **Zion Church, Woodland**, will celebrate its 150th anniversary Sept. 10, 10:30 a.m.–noon. Lunch will follow the service. David Daniel is pastor.

## SHELBY

► **Oak Mountain Church, Pelham**, will celebrate homecoming and its 50th anniversary Sept.

10, 10:30 a.m. The Reunion Singers will provide special music. Special guests include Mavis Gates from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and Keith Brown, ministry center director for Shelby Association. All former members and pastors are invited. Lunch will follow the service. James Blair is pastor.

## TUSCALOOSA

► **Rosedale Church, Tuscaloosa**, will hold a special service Sept. 3 to honor the church musicians. Kenny Overstreet is pastor.

## WALKER

► **Burnwell Church, Dora**, is now **Greater Vision Baptist Church**. Services can be viewed on livestream at 11 a.m. Sunday mornings on the Alabama Cable Network and on Charter Cable Channel 80. Wayne Ferguson is pastor. †

## 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](mailto:ads@thealabamabaptist.org). Copy deadline is two weeks before publication.

### CHURCH POSITIONS

#### SENIOR PASTOR

Western Heights Baptist Church is located in LaGrange, Georgia, east of the Alabama border. An affiliate of the Southern Baptist Convention, WHBC seeks a candidate to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, provide administrative leadership, engage in pastoral care ministries and meet the needs of the church and community. The senior pastor serves under the supervision of the elder board. Preferred requirements: master of divinity, a minimum of 8 years' pastoral experience as a senior pastor or associate pastor. Submit resumé and statement of interest to: [whbcresume@gmail.com](mailto:whbcresume@gmail.com).

#### PASTOR

Camellia Baptist Church, 201 Woodvale Rd., Prattville, AL 36067, prayerfully seeking God's choice for a full-time pastor. Resumés with photo may be mailed, Attn: Pastor Search. [www.cbcprattville.org](http://www.cbcprattville.org)

#### 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](mailto:immanuel38464@bellsouth.net). Our website is [myimmanuel.net](http://myimmanuel.net). Please include current sermons on websites.

#### WORSHIP LEADER

Deerfoot Baptist Church, Trussville, Alabama, is seeking a part-time worship leader. The primary responsibility is, as a Christ-follower, to lead and grow a "blended" worship ministry. Resumés may be submitted by email to: [churchoffice@deerfootbaptist.org](mailto:churchoffice@deerfootbaptist.org), or mailed to: Deerfoot Baptist Church, 5450 Mount Olive Church Rd., Trussville, AL 35173.

#### WORSHIP MINISTER

We seek a born-again believer who will lead all ages in a blended style of worship to facilitate the spiritual growth of our church. Part time. \$20,000 negotiable. Please send resumés to: P.O. Box 326, Double

Springs, AL 35553, or email at: [fbcds.office@gmail.com](mailto:fbcds.office@gmail.com).

#### BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC DIRECTOR

Calvary Heights Baptist Church, Alexander City, Alabama, is receiving applicants for a part-time, bivocational music director. Deadline for resumés is Sept. 30. Resumés and inquiries may be sent to: [CalvaryHeightsBaptist@gmail.com](mailto:CalvaryHeightsBaptist@gmail.com).

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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

### Embrace — don't fear — pushback

The pastor seemed sad but determined as we talked. His young adult daughters had recently left the denomination and he was disappointed.

They grew up in Alabama Baptist churches where he had always been their pastor — and now they wanted out. Not out of the faith, not out of church activity but out of Baptist life. It was oppressive and narrow-minded, they claimed.

Their decision hurts their dad more than they know and he challenges them when appropriate, but family discussions on the subject tend to end up heated. So he pulls back. He makes his case, reminds them of the benefits and then loves them unconditionally. They consistently advocate for their position and provide justification — at least justification that makes sense to them.

#### Opportunity to spar

The dad said he counters carefully and wants to make sure they always feel safe to share with him — and even spar with him. He wants to be their sounding board, no matter how much it hurts.

As he talked, I thought of how my dad has allowed me the same freedom to debate with him as I've worked to figure out life through the years. We have agreed on some items and disagreed on others but in every case I knew my daddy's love for me had not changed.

Each opportunity to articulate the concept being debated helped me clarify my own thinking while also gaining a better understanding of the opposite side, which reminded me to value the other person as a person even if we disagree.

What a privilege it is for those of us who have mentors who don't try to control our every thought and opinion. They allow us the opportunity to figure out life and faith and where we fit while in the safety of a loving, godly space — even if

it disappoints, hurts or scares them in the process.

#### Maintaining bond

Finding the perfect balance of helping guide and sharing wisdom while not imposing a top-down, forced directive isn't an easy skill to achieve. And sometimes conversations do end up heated with lines drawn but if both parties remember the core of their bond, then what better place for those coming up through the ranks to find their way?

I would much rather process and navigate my way through life issues in an environment where I know I'm loved, trusted and respected. And when I make mistakes the recovery rate is so much quicker because of that support system helping me learn and grow from those mistakes rather than leaving me alone and defeated.

And what about all those questions we bounce around in our heads? So many times we need more information to truly understand. Sometimes we need to ask difficult, uncomfortable questions to get there.

#### Who can you trust?

But finding someone you can trust with the most vulnerable parts of your heart, mind and soul is difficult. Who can you trust to love you anyway, not give up on you, not be harsh and scolding because you asked such questions? Who in your life — outside of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ — can handle watching you wrestle with the specifics of our value system and worldview?

Are we developing ministry leaders, mentors and believers who are secure enough and studied enough in their faith to encourage questions from those searching to find their way? And are we kind enough to embrace the questions as an opportunity rather than shutting someone down for even asking? †

# RASHIONAL Extras ...



## 'Stand Firm'

By Shea Lowery  
firstdallaswomen.wordpress.com

The road was tough, the pain severe, the circumstances horrendous. The strength of one young woman was fading and discouragement was setting in. "Was it worth it anymore?" she pondered. Lisa stood at a crossroads in her mind.

One way meant a great deal of work, sacrifice and perseverance but victory guaranteed. The other road, the most popularly traveled, would certainly be the easiest but would result in little at the end.

The deceiver was attacking Lisa's mind and quitting suddenly seemed best. She was tired, weary and uncertain of her future. She had almost talked herself out of the path to which God had called her. Why? She was focusing on the circumstances surrounding her journey instead of on the God who had called her to it.

Lisa, quickly realizing she was in the middle of a spiritual warfare, surrendered her thoughts and feelings over to God. As the Lord overtook the young woman's

heart, she determined from that moment on to move forward with her Father, no matter the severity of the path.

At times, we too may find ourselves in conflicting situations. Yet we must remember Satan longs to alter our progress by tempting us to take the easy route or even quit the course all together. However, through Christ, we must learn how to fight the battle of spiritual warfare (see Eph. 6:10-17 NASB).

Pay close attention to the words "stand firm." They mean "to be of a steadfast mind." As we support ourselves with God's armor, we must do so by refusing to waver as a result of circumstances. Trials are going to come. Temptations will frequently persist. Satan will continue to attack until you and I go home to be with the Lord. Yet in God's Word, He clearly states how to fight the good fight effectively and accurately.

Don't allow the enemy to sway you back and forth in your emotional stance between circumstances or God. Armor up and stand firm!

## Finding purpose

One's purpose in life determines values and priorities. It determines how one spends his time — our greatest asset — and money.

As I have spent time with older senior adults, especially widows and widowers, I am burdened by the countless hours, days and weeks they seek to fill with meaning and purpose, which seems to have eluded many of them. God tells the Church to minister to widows (James 1:27) and some do so.

Perhaps one thing we can do for our elderly is get them praying. By praying, I mean help them develop an organized, systematic prayer life. They need a prayer notebook/journal with specific people and requests.

If the church could harness the prayer power of our elderly, we would see lost people being saved and revival break out. It also would give them a sense of purpose and usefulness, especially as they see prayers being answered.

—Chip Warren  
Ministry leader

## From LinkedIn ...

When we accept employment, we are entering into a contract to provide work in exchange for income. We must honor that contract by excelling in our assignments.

**Michael Smith**  
Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries

What Jesus is doing IN you is more important than what He is doing THROUGH you!

**Joel Bruce**  
H2 Ministry

"We all die in the end. That's not what to be afraid of. What's to be afraid of is getting paralyzed by fear and dying in the middle. We all die in the end. Just don't die in the middle."

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

#### @ThomRainer

Don't love your position in ministry so much that you can't hear God's voice when it's time to move on.

#### @DannyAkin

Is it possible our hearts get so filled with the little things of this world that we have no room for the greatest thing which is Christ?

#### @TBrianKight

How many people are wishing to be anywhere but where they are now? I love people who can appreciate where they are w/out complaining abt it.

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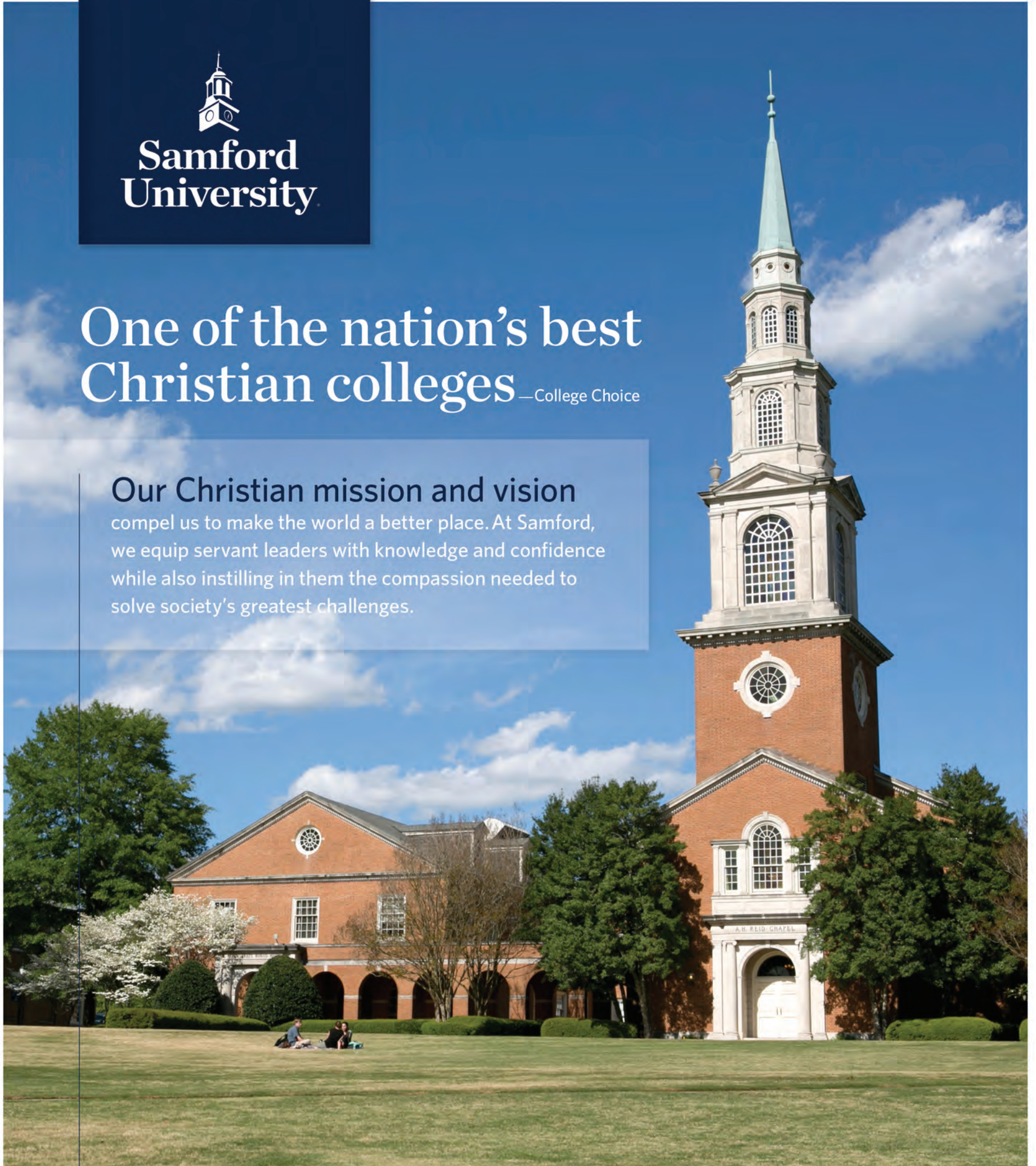


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# America's 5 'faith tribes' struggling with differences, recent study finds

Over the past few years, whether it be a conversation over coffee or a tussle at the polls, one thing is sure — Americans are struggling to talk through their differences.

That's what Barna Group says in one of its recent studies, "How We Got Here: Spiritual and Political Profiles of America."

"The cultural gridlock and angst that have characterized the past few years, and particularly the unconventional nature of the 2016 presidential election, may well be the result of the nation's tribes becoming even more divided and incapable of conversing across those differences," Barna reported.

So in the research, released in May, Barna studied America's five "faith tribes" and the things that make them tick.

## 1. Evangelical Christians

Despite the fact that they are splashed across the media, evangelicals only make up 6 percent of the adult population, Barna reports.

To be considered an evangelical, a person had to indicate a personal commitment to Christ that is "still important in their life today," plus seven beliefs:

- ▶ that confessing their sins and accepting Christ will get them to heaven,
- ▶ that they have a personal responsibility to share Christ with non-Christians,
- ▶ that Satan exists,
- ▶ that salvation is only available through grace, not works,
- ▶ that Jesus lived a sinless life,
- ▶ that the Bible is accurate
- ▶ and that God is all-knowing, all-powerful and perfect and rules the universe.

Evangelicals tend to be older than the other faith tribes, and they have been for the past 20 years, Barna reports. Most say they are socially and fiscally conservative. Eight out of 10 are pro-life. And 7 out of 10 say they "are angry about the current state of America." Only 4 percent say they are an advocate of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) rights. Only 2 out of 10 call themselves an environmentalist.

"All of these stances are perhaps to be expected, but evangelicals do refute one stereotype: that of being part of a heavily armed 'radical right,'" Barna reports — 69 percent of evangelicals do not own a gun.

But the next group, Barna reports, fits that stereotype more than evangelicals.



unsplash.com

Only 55 percent of non-evangelical born again Christians say they firmly believe the Bible is completely accurate, and 7 out of 10 say they believe in absolute moral truth.

## 2. Non-Evangelical Born Again Christians

People whom Barna classify in this group make up a quarter of the adult population of the U.S., outnumbering evangelicals nearly 4 to 1. This group says they have made "a personal commitment to Jesus Christ that is still important in their life today" and believe that when they die they will go to heaven because of that commitment. But they don't adhere to the other seven criteria that evangelicals do.

It's less conservative and less traditional, according to Barna. Twice as many call themselves environmentalists (37 percent), and seven times as many say they advocate LGBT rights (27 percent).

Only 55 percent say they firmly believe the Bible is completely accurate, and 7 out of 10 say they believe in absolute moral truth.

But 87 percent say they support traditional moral values, and nearly two-thirds say they are pro-life. They have the highest percentage of gun owners — 37 percent.

## 3. Notional Christians

People in this group say they are Christians but have not made a "personal commitment" to Jesus that they believe will get them to heaven. Four out of 10 U.S. adults fall into this camp, according to Barna.

This is the largest segment of people who claim to be "Christian."

And there are some notable characteristics of this group, Barna reports. They are the only Christian-oriented faith segment with a plurality that aligns with the Democratic Party. Just under

40 percent claim to be environmentalists and advocate for LGBT rights.

The "notional Christians" do not have a majority that claims to be conservative on fiscal and social issues. Only 3 out of 10 claim to be theologically conservative. And a large minority — 46 percent — claim to be pro-life.

## 4. Adherents of Non-Christian Faiths

This group is diverse and catches all the non-Christian religious Americans — those who follow Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and other faiths.

Six percent of U.S. adults land here — the same percentage as evangelicals. They are the segment most prone to civil disobedience (31 percent) but also the least likely to own a gun (10 percent).

Of this group 57 percent say they are in favor of traditional moral values and believe in absolute truth. But only 43 percent of them say their religion is very important to them — a view that lines up with the "spiritually complacent" Christian notionals, Barna reports.

## 5. Religious skeptics

People in this group describe themselves as atheist or agnostic, or they say they don't believe in God and have no interest in faith.

It claims nearly a quarter of the U.S. population, and it is the fastest-growing group, Barna reports. Half claim to be environmentalists, and 66 percent support LGBT rights movements.

Only 27 percent of religious skeptics believe in absolute moral truth, Barna reports. (TAB)

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**REVERSE MORTGAGE NEWS**

Hello fellow Baptists. The Lord is merciful and gracious and still smiling on me as I cover our great state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives. FHA has made several changes to the reverse mortgage the last few years, but they are still a great way to get rid of your mortgage payment or to get some cash that you never have to repay as long as your home is your primary residence. Did you know that you can also purchase a house with a reverse mortgage, or you can build a nest egg with a line of credit that grows at a fantastic rate?

Your financial situation may be great at present, but let's talk about how to make it greater. Then again, it may be awful. It's always best to talk before you get behind on your bills, but even if you are, please call and let's see what we may be able to do, ok? The number below is my direct line and I would love to talk with you today. Please call now.

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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 3

## Explore the Bible By Kyle Beshears Instructor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

### RELUCTANCE Exodus 3:4-14, 4:13-16

#### The Approach (3:4-6)

I love to camp. My idea of a good vacation is a long hike in the wilderness that ends around a campfire while I stare into the mesmerizing dance of flames that turns logs into ashes. It is a beautiful and powerful sight. Perhaps this is why God chose to appear with fire throughout Scripture.

God appeared to Abraham as a pot of fire when He made a covenant with the Hebrew patriarch (Gen. 15:17). God led His people from Egypt through the wilderness by night as a pillar of fire (Ex. 13:21). Daniel described God's throne as one of a "flaming fire" (Dan. 7:9). John's vision of Christ featured eyes like flaming fire (Rev. 1:14; 2:18; 19:12). As the author of Hebrews summarized, "Our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29)."

God's beauty and power, His absolute holiness, is communicated to us in the image of fire. It is purifying, refining and sanctifying, which is why Moses, a sinner, was instructed to remove his sandals. There is a gap between God's holiness and our sinfulness. We cannot come too close to the fire or it will burn us. Yet we see hope in the bush that was burned by fire but not consumed. It is possible to stand in the presence of God's holiness without succumbing to destruction by the sanctifying power of the cross and resurrection.

#### The Assignment (3:7-10)

Through the burning bush Moses was called to an important task — the redemption of God's people from slavery. How did Moses respond? He came up with excuses, even when God was calling him to something greater than he could ever have imagined. It is easy to judge Moses but I think we have all been in his sandals (or lack thereof) before. Moses, when reflecting on

God's call, asked a question that I am sure we have all asked, "Who am I?" Who am I that God would use me, choose me and love me? We ask the same question as if God is ignorant of our sin, failures and inadequacies.

#### The Appellation (3:11-14)

A friend of mine teaches Bible classes in a large prison. A few years ago, while teaching through the book of Exodus, his group of prisoners came to the passage we are studying today. As he began the lesson, my friend asked the group about their thoughts on this passage. One prisoner raised his hand, stood up and said, "I love Moses." My friend smiled and asked the prisoner why he loved Moses. "Well," the prisoner stammered, "because he is a murderer." This was an unexpected answer and, admittedly, my friend began to feel uncomfortable. Tears welled up in the eyes of the prisoner as he continued. "Moses was a murderer and that's why I love him. He was a murderer just like me. But the thing is, God loved him and used him anyway. And if God can love and use a murderer like Moses, then He can love and use a murderer like me."

#### The Assessment (4:13-16)

Moses was a murderer but God loved and used him anyway. Moses was not qualified and neither are we. But there is one who is qualified — the Lord Jesus Christ. Through the Son of God and His love, we are made qualified for every task He calls us to. The Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus' day believed they were qualified but instead Jesus chose unqualified fishermen and traitorous tax collectors to carry out the most important mission God has ever given humanity — to go into the world, preach the gospel and make disciples of all people groups (Matt. 28:19-20). God revels in calling the unqualified. What is stopping you from answering His call? ☩

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

### SATAN Revelation 12:7-12

In his first letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul instructs his readers: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face" (1 Cor. 13:12). Paul's words to the Corinthians are set in the midst of a long discourse on certain spiritual gifts. The Corinthians, always eager to seem intellectually superior, were fixated on the gifts they thought could give them deeper insight and revelation into the mysteries of the Divine. Paul charged the Corinthians to pursue instead those gifts that helped and served others, reminding them that even the most spiritually perceptive among us only sees "through a glass, darkly." Some mysteries we will only understand fully when we see our Creator face to face.

The spiritual realm certainly falls into this mysterious and difficult category. As we read the Scriptures, it becomes evident that the biblical authors were encountering territory they could only see in part. Consider, for example, the way the Bible describes angels. They appear at times merely as humans, at other times in more menacing form, carrying swords as they guard Eden, confront Balaam or rally Joshua. Still others take much stranger forms: The seraphs in Isaiah 6 have two wings to cover their faces, two to cover their feet and two to fly. The creatures in Ezekiel 1 have four wings, feet like calves and the faces of man, lion, ox and eagle. Given these widely varying descriptions, it is difficult to know just how we should describe angels at all.

The same can be said for the malignant forces the Bible describes. In the Old Testament, Satan hardly appears at all. Job 1-2, 1 Chronicles 21:1 and Zechariah 3:1-2 are the only places in all of the Hebrew Bible where the name "Satan" is found. Most often when the Old Testament describes the malevolent

forces opposed to God, it identifies them with the chaotic waters of the sea. They are the chaotic waters God controls at creation (Gen. 1), the waters He battles in the Psalms (Pss. 74, 89), Job (7:12; 9:8; 26:12) and in the prophets (Isa. 51).

#### Satan seeks to deceive us. (7-9)

In the New Testament, the chaotic waters still appear from time to time. More commonly though the malevolent forces that stand in opposition to God are centered in the figure Satan. Satan is described as the one who tempts and deceives God's people in an effort to separate them from God. One passage in particular encourages believers that they have no need to fear Satan's assaults (Rev. 12:7-12).

In the highly symbolic language so typical of Revelation, Satan is described as a dragon whom the archangel Michael must fight. It is a description that connects Satan with the language of sea and dragon from those Old Testament passages noted above.

#### Satan seeks to accuse us. (10)

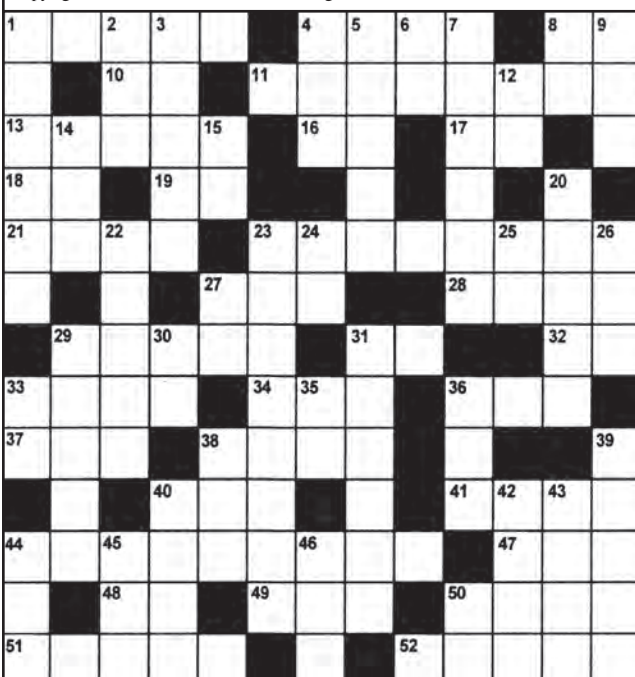
Verse 10 draws attention to the chief assault Satan is said to launch against God's people: He is "the accuser of our comrades," the one who "accuses them day and night before our God." This is the role attributed to Satan as early as Zechariah as he accuses the high priest of being unfit for office.

#### Satan is relentless — but he is defeated. (11-12)

What is most important in this passage is not the supposed power of Satan and the accusations he brings against God's people. What is most important is that he stands conquered by God, by the blood of the Lamb and by the testimony of believers who stay faithful even in the face of death. The author of Revelation reminds us that though the forces of evil remain a powerful part of our world, through His Son, God has defeated those forces once and for all. ☩

## Christian Crossword

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### Across

1. He laid each \_\_\_ one against another. (Gen. 15:10)
4. \_\_\_ for the multitude of Egypt. (Ezek. 32:18)
8. \_\_\_ are of God. (1 John 4:6)
10. Bachelor of Arts. (abbr.)
11. And the Jews' \_\_\_ was at hand. (John 2:13)
13. \_\_\_, when camest thou hither? (John 6:25)
16. Right. (abbr.)
17. They fled before the men of \_\_\_. (Josh. 7:4)
18. Neither \_\_\_ there salvation in any other. (Acts 4:12)
19. Left Tackle. (abbr.)
21. Bring him \_\_\_ unto Felix. (Acts 23:24)
23. The number of the army of the \_\_\_ were. (Rev. 9:16)
27. The hour cometh, and \_\_\_ is. (John 4:23)
28. Jesus began to be \_\_\_ amazed and heavy. (Mark 14:33)
29. \_\_\_ in their hands. (Rev. 7:9)
31. Why \_\_\_ ye that which is not lawful to do? (Luke 6:2)
32. 400 in Roman numerals.
33. The swallow hath found

### Down

1. Lord, save us, we \_\_\_. (Matt. 8:25)
2. A type of tide.
3. Many different wires make up a \_\_\_.
4. The beast ... shall make \_\_\_ against them. (Rev. 11:7)
5. Fall-blooming flower.
6. There \_\_\_ not one of them left. (2 Sam. 13:30)
7. A lad here which hath five barley \_\_\_. (John 6:9)
8. Why could not \_\_\_ cast him out? (Mark 9:28)
9. Unit of work.
12. 6 in Roman numerals.
14. \_\_\_ did what was right. (1 Kings 15:11)
15. Hold \_\_\_!
20. Goodness and \_\_\_. (Ps. 23:6)
22. On our solemn \_\_\_ day. (Ps. 81:3)
23. What the people yelled to the son of David. (Matt. 21:9)
24. Expression of pain.
25. Missouri. (abbr.)
26. Nickname for Edward.
27. New Mexico. (abbr.)
29. Pet \_\_\_.
30. Left Tackle. (abbr.)
31. Animal that is called an ass in the Bible.
33. Compass direction.

35. Learn to \_\_\_ well. (Isa. 1:17)
36. There \_\_\_ a great earthquake. (Matt. 28:2)
38. Australia. (abbr.)
39. Any among you \_\_\_ (singular verb form) to be religious. (Jam. 1:26)
40. They were the \_\_\_ of him. (2 Chron. 28:23)
42. Having seen the promises \_\_\_ off. (Heb. 11:13)
43. He \_\_\_ his hair out.
44. Jesse. (abbr.)
45. City in Brazil.
46. Lay not thine hand upon the \_\_\_. (Gen. 22:12)
50. Name of a musical note.



# WHAT ARE YOU READING?



## Alabama Baptists share about what they are currently reading

### JENNIFER DAVIS RASH

*The Alabama Baptist*  
www.rashionalthoughts.com  
“Finishing Well: My Daughter’s Journey Home” by Janice Pitchford

My dear friends marked their daughter’s 44th birthday in mid-August, the way they’ve faced it for nearly 20 years — with sweet memories, thoughts of what might have been, a desire to share special moments with her and a deep slice of grief permanently attached to their hearts.

In February, I met a new friend — Janice Pitchford, of Abbeville — who was marking her daughter’s 44th birthday that month in a similar manner. It was the 30th time for Janice.

She shared about her daughter Dawn’s battle with cancer in 1987 and how she entered her “eternal rest” seven months after her 14th birthday. Journaling the details of that devastating time (January through October 1987) became a therapeutic exercise for Janice, and now she hopes the rawness of those captured moments helps others who are fighting similar battles.

In 2015, Janice pulled her journal entries together, added a section about how their family survived losing Dawn and published “Finishing Well.”

Dawn’s sweet spirit, compassionate heart and fierce determination come alive through the pages of Janice’s storytelling. Dawn definitely had an extra dose of grace, perspective and maturity, similar to what I observed in my niece Belle, who fought a five-and-a-half-year battle with cancer starting at age 2.

So much of Dawn’s story re-

mind me of Belle’s journey and how it impacted her parents and siblings. I connected quickly to Dawn’s Aunt Sherry and saw the familiar faces of an entire community of extended family, friends, church family, doctors, nurses, teachers and so many more as Janice walks us through each step.

The details related to the medical procedures and pain Dawn endured help fully tell the story. The transparency Janice offers in the struggles she faced as mother and primary caregiver keep the story real and relatable.

Janice’s writing style is clean and easy to read but you will need tissues within reach. She also does a good job with the pace and has the ability to bring the reader into the hospital room alongside the medical staff.

Each chapter left me inspired and hopeful despite the sadness of knowing the end of the story.

“As a family we have faced some difficult and painful days,” Janice writes in the epilogue, “but I have to say that through it all we have become stronger and we have grown in ways that I could have never imagined.

“I find that as a Christian, I now see death not as a defeat but a victory,” she continues. “We were dealt a devastating blow by Dawn’s death but our choice was to cherish the memories and reach out to help others through that suffering. Isaiah 58:10 says, ‘If you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness and your darkness shall be as the noonday.’ I believe without a doubt the way through our personal darkness is found by reaching out to others.”

Tell us what you are reading, a quick summary of what it is about and your response to it so far. Email [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org) or visit [www.thealabamabaptist.org/submissions/what-are-you-reading/](http://www.thealabamabaptist.org/submissions/what-are-you-reading/) and fill out the form. You may also mail your information to: 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.

# Media reviews

## Baptist Revival: Reaffirming Baptist Principles in Today’s Changing Church Scene

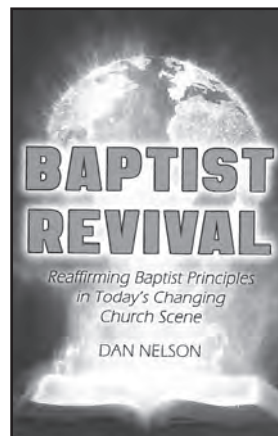
Dan Nelson. North Fort Myers, Fla.: Faithful Life Publishers, 2016. 124 pp. (Paperback).

Pastor Dan Nelson is concerned that our pragmatic culture and increasing lack of denominational affiliation may have caused Baptists to lose sight of our history and to take our beliefs too lightly. He wrote this book to present Baptist beliefs in a clear and understandable manner and to show why the beliefs are biblical.

The book begins with a short account of Anabaptist history, focusing on Balthasar Hubmaier’s life and martyrdom and setting the stage for contemporary Baptist beliefs and practice. The book focuses on seven basic Baptist beliefs, from the importance of the local assembly to baptism by immersion, freedom from governmental control of religion, local church autonomy, soul competency, to the priesthood of the believer and biblical authority.

Nelson maintains that delineating Baptist beliefs “does not put people in a straitjacket theologically.” Instead, presenting the principles of Baptist belief can breathe new life into the church’s mission.

The book was an informative and interesting reading, laying out the tenets of Baptist beliefs clearly, supported with scriptural and historical references. No real surprises here. It is a well-written and engaging reminder of who we are, how we came to be Baptists and what we believe.



## The Story of Reality

Greg Koukl. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2017. 189 pp. (Paperback).

Before I even write the first sentence of this review, I would guess any regular readers of *The Alabama Baptist* have a fair idea of what this book is about. And you are right: the author begins by informing the reader that he wants to tell the story about how the world began, how it ends and “everything deeply important that happens in between.”

OK — but the book is only 189 pages. How is that possible? I’m sure it wasn’t easy; I have

struggled with how to do this book justice in a couple hundred words, and I’m not sure I can.

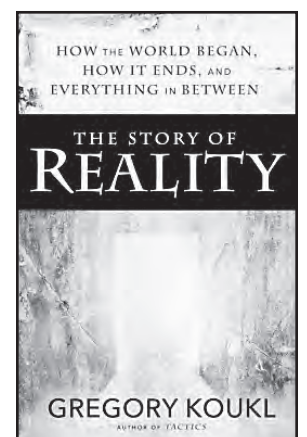
As Koukl points out, Christianity is reality. It also is a worldview — one that has competition from other religions and nonreligions. Worldviews help us answer the most basic questions in life, such as where we came from and where we are going. Every worldview, Koukl contends, is meant to tell “a” (not necessarily “the”) story of reality.

Like a jigsaw puzzle, not all worldviews have pieces that fit together, or even have all of their pieces.

As far as the argument that belief systems are equal — “my truth” versus “your truth” — Koukl demolishes the notion handily, pointing out that, “since believing something can’t make it true (otherwise there’d be no difference between believe and make-believe), it makes no sense calling any belief a ‘truth’ as if they were the same thing.”

Koukl’s premise for the book is that, even though the Christian story of reality is the correct story, many believers have a pile of pieces they aren’t sure how to fit together, or whether they have the right pieces. Koukl, a well-known and skilled apologist, lays out the story in the book with the right pieces in the right places.

In the end, the reader has a story “of how the world began, why the world is the way it is, what role we play in the drama and how all the plotlines” are resolved. I like to highlight important points as I read; my copy of this book has a lot of yellow in it. †



## Meet the reviewer

Martine Bates  
Fairbanks, Ed.D.,  
reviews books and  
movies for The  
Alabama Baptist.  
She is a university  
professor and retired  
principal. She is a  
member of Central  
Baptist Church,  
Decatur.



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# Bringing the Bible to life

## Will Museum of the Bible be most technologically advanced museum ever?

By **Michael Foust**  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**A**sk people on the street to describe their last visit to a museum, and you'll likely get a slew of less-than-enthusiastic responses: old, stale and even boring.

The Museum of the Bible, which opens in Washington D.C. in November, hopes to change that perception by becoming — in the words of representatives — the most technologically advanced museum in the world. The goal: bring the Bible to life as guests learn about its history and impact.

The \$500 million, 430,000-square-foot museum will house 12 theaters, 93 projectors, 250 computers and 384 monitors — not to mention 200 miles of low-voltage cables.

But the biggest advancement will greet visitors at the museum entrance. There, each guest will receive a computer tablet known as a “Digital Guide,” which will take advantage of 500 wireless access points throughout the museum to provide guests a one-of-a-kind tour experience based on their age and desires.

Jeff Schneider, vice president for information and interactive systems at the Museum of the Bible, said the vision for the Digital Guides came from the belief that the best museum experiences use live tour guides.

“We are trying to incorporate as much of a live tour guide experience as possible, paired with additional features that only technology can provide,” he said. “The resulting efforts create a new level of engagement and guest satisfaction that’s not easily achievable any other way.”

Visitors to the Museum of the Bible can listen to audio narration through headphones or read the full transcripts on screen. The Digital Guides — which are included in the price of admission — can:

- ▶ Re-route a guest’s tour from a busy room to a less-occupied one.
- ▶ Adjust the tour when a guest deviates from the pre-planned tour.

**“The Digital Guide automatically adjusts the kids’ tour experience based on how long [the adult with the child] dwells within an area.”**

**Jeff Schneider, vice president for information and interactive systems, Museum of the Bible**



Photo courtesy of Museum of the Bible

The Museum of the Bible hopes to bring the Bible to life as guests learn about its history and impact. ‘Digital Guides’ (pictured here) will provide guests with a one-of-a-kind tour experience based on their age and desires.

▶ Accommodate those with physical disabilities or hearing and visual impairments.

If guests just want to “wing it” — that is, to walk through the museum without a pre-planned tour — the Digital Guides will allow that, too. But even then, the Digital Guides can track a guest’s location and provide relevant information.

Indoor navigation was a challenge. That’s because three prominent options — GPS, Wi-Fi positioning and Bluetooth — fall short. GPS is not effective indoors, and Wi-Fi positioning and Bluetooth are not as accurate as needed. The solution came in “ultra-wideband radio technology,” which is accurate to within six inches.

“When developing various features of the digital guide, we visited many museums,” Schneider said. “Besides the most obvious use — such as finding the nearest restroom — our experience revealed a need for families and small groups. As individual mem-

bers of a family explore a museum at their own pace, it’s easy to get separated.”

The Digital Guides solve the separation problem by allowing parents and children always to find one another. An even bigger advancement might be the ability to keep children entertained while their parents stick in one room.

The Digital Guides have three age levels: adults and teens; 9–12; and 8 and under.

### ‘Immersive tour’

“The Digital Guide automatically adjusts the kids’ tour experience based on how long or brief the adult dwells within an area,” Schneider said. “This is quite an achievement given that both the adult and child are experiencing their own immersive tour experience, unique to themselves, even though they are in the same areas together.”

Digital Guides — and the next generation of such devices — may change how the public views museums.

“We believe the digital guide — the way we envision it — is one of the most effective ways of complementing the museum experience, providing new levels of engagement and interaction, as well as innovative solutions to meet guest needs,” Schneider said. “Just as paper maps have been replaced by GPS and Google Maps, so we believe the digital guide will disrupt the museum wayfinding and touring experience.”

*EDITOR’S NOTE — Michael Foust is an award-winning freelance writer and father of four children. He blogs at [www.michael-foust.com](http://www.michael-foust.com).*

## Nashville area churches show unity in Christ

**A**s the nation faced turbulence on the race-relations scene, two Tennessee megachurches — one predominantly white and one predominantly black — held an event in early August to show “what racial reconciliation looks like.”

The back-to-school charity event — put on by Mount Zion Baptist Church, Nashville, and Brentwood Baptist Church — provided school supplies and health screenings for children, according to The Christian Post.

“We invited families from every background and community to start the school year off right with free backpacks and health screenings, and get to know and enjoy one another in the process,” said Johnny Stephens, overseer of marketing and media for Mount Zion Baptist, one of the oldest black churches in Nashville.

The event, he said, was the first of many the two churches planned to coordinate together.

The two pastors — Mike Glenn of Brentwood Baptist and Joseph Walker of Mount Zion Baptist — became friends first over social media.

They decided to build bridges rather than walls, Walker said. “Our congregations are growing by leaps and bounds. So is this wonderful city. It is our responsibility to grow together and support one another.”

In recent years, churches across the nation have made more and more of an effort to reach across racial lines, according to the Post.

Steve Smith, communications minister for the predominantly white Brentwood Baptist, said the joint event held in Nashville was “fruitful.”

He said the pastors “decided that it was important for the Church to be a leader in proactively showing society what racial reconciliation looks like, embracing the fullness of the diverse expressions of God’s creation and exemplifying unity in Christ.” (TAB)



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