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IMB photo by Chris Carter

David Platt, president of the International Mission Board, prays with the Harmening family, including (second from left) Scott, Karen, Sophie, Kristen and Katelyn, during a chapel service Oct. 25. 'We praise God that even now Sarah's life resounds for His glory,' he said.

# #ServeLikeSarah

## Teen's Christian witness to reverberate through generous memorial gift

By Margaret Colson  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The Christian witness that Sarah Harmening shared in her short 17 years of life on this earth will continue to reverberate for eternity because of a generous memorial gift presented by her family to the International Mission Board (IMB).

The Alabama teen's parents, Karen and Scott Harmening — along with their three other daughters, Katelyn, Kristen and Sophie — presented a check for \$91,120 to the IMB on Oct. 25.

### 'In honor of Sarah'

"This is what was donated and raised in honor of Sarah, her life and legacy. So we're excited to bring the check for \$91,120, all for Lottie Moon," Scott said as he presented the check to David Platt, IMB president.

Sarah died in a bus accident this past June as she traveled as part of an International World Changers team from her home church, Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville,

on her way to her first international missions trip to Botswana.

In Sarah's final journal entry, which was written on the bus, she wrote about reading 1 Peter 5 and 2 Peter 1, reflecting, "So mostly I was just reminded of why I'm here and that God has called me here and has done so for a reason. So I know He's going to do incredible things."

Those "incredible things" are already becoming reality.

"Sarah's greatest passion in life

was her relationship with Jesus Christ and making Him known,"

said her mother, Karen. "There was a fire in her bones for the spreading of the gospel."

"This (the monetary gift to IMB) has been the perfect way to honor Sarah's legacy because it is continuing her mission — and ours — lifting high the

name of Jesus Christ and making Him known in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the

(See 'Beautiful,' page 3)

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# COMMENT

## Relating to Samford University

When messengers gather at Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville on Nov. 14–15 for the annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) the report outlining a new relationship with Samford University is likely to be a major issue.

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions will recommend a seven-step proposal outlining a new relationship with Samford. The school will remain a “fostered entity” of the convention but will no longer receive Cooperative Program (CP) support through the ABSC budget.

Such a development was unthinkable a year ago. At no time in recent years had the relationship between the university and the state convention been stronger.

All of that began to unwind on April 27 of this year and the proposed relationship cannot be understood without remembering what happened.

On April 27 the Samford faculty voted to officially recognize a student group called Samford Together. Many Baptist leaders believed the organization was a homosexual advocacy group, something that should not exist on an Alabama Baptist college campus.

### Working through disagreement

Samford officials countered that the student group was a discussion group, adding that discussion of major societal issues was appropriate for a college environment.

The disagreement on the purpose of Samford Together put the two entities at loggerheads. On June 9, ABSC President John Thweatt sent a letter to Samford President Andrew Westmoreland saying, “If the Samford trustees vote to deny permanent recognition” to Samford Together the Samford allocation would remain in the 2018 budget. If the trustees did not vote against the group “we will not recommend any allocation for Samford University,” the letter continued.

This was a major disagreement for both parties. For Samford it meant losing its annual appropriation which this year is about \$3.5 million. The money is used to fund scholarships for Alabama Baptist students. For the convention it meant severing relationship with its oldest and largest Baptist university.

Thankfully, the situation was resolved in a way that satisfied most Alabama Baptists.

On July 7, Westmoreland announced that as president he had vetoed recognition of Samford Together. Discussions about homosexuality, gender identity and other issues would take place on the campus, he said, but under the school’s direc-



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

tion. The discussions will be to produce better understanding among students, to equip students to live in today’s world and to help students know how to bear witness to a traditional understanding of biblical sexuality.

The bottom line is the position of state Baptist leaders prevailed. Samford Together was not officially recognized and there will be no homosexuality advocacy group at Samford.

That should have lowered tensions but it did not.

During the discussion about Samford Together questions again arose about convention funding of the university. Historically Samford received about 10 percent of the total CP budget while Christian Higher Education, including Samford, received about 20 percent of the budget.

Most observers knew those percentages could not continue. As Alabama Baptists focused more and more on missions causes in the state and around the world, the hard reality was the unusually high percentage of funds marked for Christian Higher Education with Samford getting the lion’s share of the appropriation.

Westmoreland attempted to address that issue in 2014 when he asked that Samford’s CP appropriation — more than \$4 million that year — be reduced annually until it dropped 50 percent.

On July 7, when he announced his veto of the Samford Together student group, Westmoreland also announced that Samford was voluntarily withdrawing from CP funding. The school desired to maintain its historic relationship with the ABSC, he explained, but without CP funding.

The idea of a relationship without funding had surfaced earlier, SBOM members were told in their August meeting. Executive Director Rick Lance initially raised the issue, asking Westmoreland if the convention and the school could have a relationship without CP funding. Samford’s decision to forego CP funding was an affirmative answer to Lance’s question, Westmoreland said, and

could be a new model for Southern Baptists.

But many Alabama Baptists are uneasy. The ties to Samford are deep in Alabama Baptist life. Some fear removing funding is a first step in the school moving away from its close relationship with Alabama Baptists, a pattern seen in other states.

Under the proposed arrangement Samford will continue as a “fostered entity” of the convention. It will report to the convention, and the state executive director and convention president will continue to attend trustee meetings. State programs will continue to work with Samford and Samford will continue to host Baptist events.

One item hard to understand, at least for this writer, is the convention will no longer consider Samford ministerial students eligible for ABSC Board of Aid scholarships. But for the most part, the relationship will go on like it has since

Samford trustees became self-perpetuating almost 25 years ago. As the recommendation states, “Alabama Baptists and Samford University (will) seek to be on mission with the Great Commission.”

The only significant change is that Samford will no longer receive CP funds through a direct allocation.

Will this new arrangement work? Only time will tell. Although Alabama Baptists have

been the largest donor to Samford through the years, Samford is no longer tied to the convention by its CP allocation. This year’s CP allocation of \$3.5 million amounts to about 2 percent of Samford’s budget.

Samford’s primary ties to Alabama Baptists are a shared heritage, a shared mission, shared values and shared leaders. These have not changed.

### Reaching the goal

Also important is that Samford’s decision to withdraw from CP funding allows Alabama Baptists to reach the goal of dividing CP funds evenly between state causes and Southern Baptist Convention causes. When Samford asked for its appropriation to be lowered through annual reductions, that put Alabama Baptists on the road to reaching that goal in 2020. This decision means the goal will be reached in 2018.

The new proposal does change the relationship with Samford somewhat. And change produces anxieties. That cannot be avoided. But change does not have to be bad. If Alabama Baptists and the leaders of Samford University continue to emphasize our common heritage, our common mission, our common values and our trusted leadership, the bonds between us can be as strong as ever. Personally, I believe they will.✠

**LETTERS**  
TO THE EDITOR

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# TAB

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

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# 'Beautiful example'

## Harmening lived as 'faithful citizen of heaven,' family pastor says

(continued from page 1)

remotest part of the earth," she said.

Sarah's passion inspired the hashtag "#serve-likesarah" and theme "Live Redeemed" for her family's gift-giving efforts.

The family chose to make the financial gift to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO) for International Missions, Karen said, because of the offering's focus on international missions and because "every penny" of the offering is earmarked for direct missionary support rather than administrative expenses.

Kevin Moore, pastor of Mount Zion Baptist, accompanied the family to IMB's headquarters in Richmond, Virginia. He echoed the family's sentiments, saying, "Sarah Harmening wanted more than anything to tell people about Jesus. She lived as a faithful citizen of heaven. She was sure of what she hoped for and certain of what she could not see."

### Inspiring others

"I pray that her life and example will inspire countless others to live their one life for Jesus Christ," he said. "This donation to the Lottie Moon offering is a memorial to her beautiful example."

Accepting the memorial gift, Platt reflected on Sarah's final text message to some of her friends, "We are like a wisp of smoke. We are only here for a moment. And this is not about us. Life is not about us. It's about God who is eternal. So I want to dedicate the one moment I'm here completely and entirely to Him."

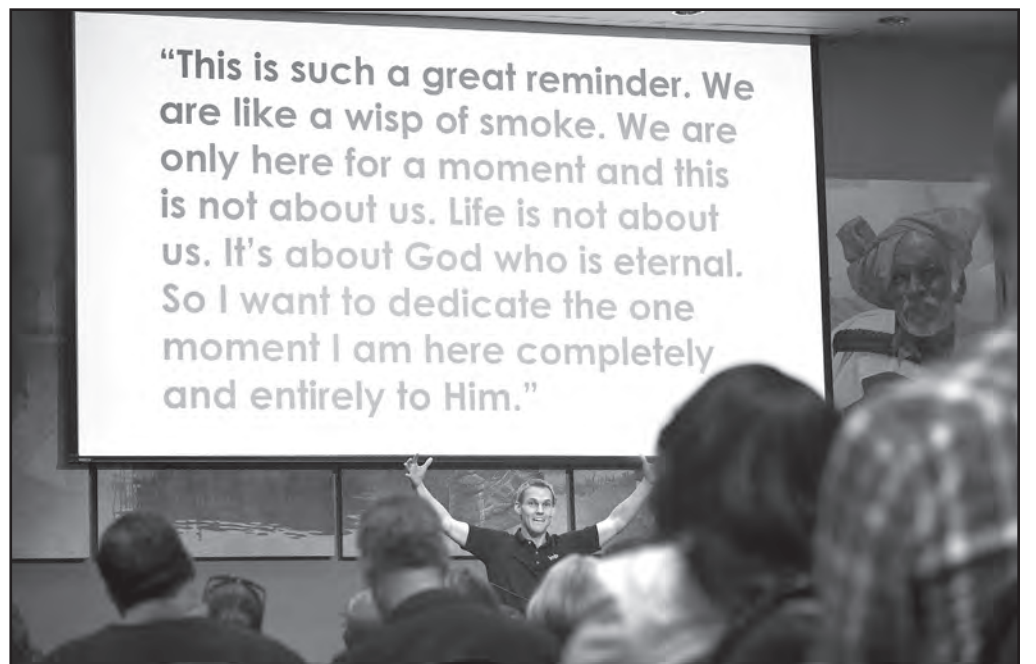
Platt said Sarah "lived for what lasts forever. The fruit of that, in this gift to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, is going far beyond what anyone could have asked or imagined.

"We praise God that even now her life resounds for His glory so that others may hear the gospel in Botswana and beyond. We pray that this gift will be multiplied in souls saved and churches

Karen Harmening snaps a photograph of her daughters Sophie, Kristen and Katelyn alongside a life-sized replica of Lottie Moon during the family's visit to the International Mission Board on Oct. 25.



IMB photo by Chris Carter



IMB photo by Chris Carter

David Platt, IMB president, preaches on Psalm 90 during a chapel service Oct. 25. He referred to a text (shown on the screen) by teenager Sarah Harmening that relates to the passage.

multiplied, and more people being where Sarah is right now — with God for eternity."

The financial gift to IMB came through donors from the family's church and community as well as many donors from across the nation. Also, the sale of T-shirts with the "Live Redeemed" theme and "#serve-likesarah" hashtag imprinted on the front contributed to the family's gift to LMCO.

Funds surpassed the Harmening's initial goal and the family remained prayerful.

"We have been consistently praying over this monetary gift — that God will providentially guide its distribution, that it will be effectively used for life-changing ministry," Karen said.

Almost \$30,000 of the funds given will be designated to three Lottie Moon projects in Botswana.

The family is committed to "partner with those ministries in prayer" and possibly do "hands-on ministry with them," she said.

The remaining funds, as well as any subsequent gifts, will go to the general LMCO fund for missionary support.

In Richmond the Harmening family met with senior global leadership staff about missionaries and missions work in Botswana, which included a Skype call with a missionary serving in sub-Saharan Africa. ☛

## Making eternal impact through financial gifts

Alabama Baptists have the opportunity to make memorial or legacy gifts to ministries in Alabama, North America and the world, said Barry Bledsoe, president of The Baptist Foundation of Alabama (TBFA), adding that such gifts are invaluable and enduring ways for a Christian's influence to continue long after an individual has passed away.

The mission of TBFA is helping Alabama Baptists create such "Christ-honoring gifts" and then administering the gifts on their behalf, he explained.

For more information, visit [tbfa.org](http://tbfa.org), call 334-394-2000 or email Rodney Bledsoe, TBFA chief development officer, at [rbledsoe@tbfa.org](mailto:rbledsoe@tbfa.org). (TAB)

# ALABAMA BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION PROGRAM

DISCIPLE — Be One, Make One / Nov. 14–15, 2017 / Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville

## TUESDAY MORNING 8:30–11:50

PIANIST ..... Frank Jones  
WORSHIP LEADERS ..... Keith Hibbs, Frank Jones

8:30 Pre-session Music ... Alabama Singing Men and Women  
8:35 Prayer Focus ..... John Thweatt  
8:40 Call to Order ..... John Thweatt

### GREETINGS

Madison Baptist Association ..... Charlie Howell  
Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville... Jimmy Jackson  
Congregational Music ..... Keith Hibbs

8:50 Enrollment of Messengers ..... Billie Davis  
8:55 Committee on Order of Business ..... Rob Jackson  
9:00 Committee Appointments ..... John Thweatt  
9:05 Memorial Service ..... Paul Moore  
9:15 Ministers Benefit Society ..... Mike McLemore  
9:20 Introduction of Resolutions ..... Cecil Sanders  
9:25 Congregational Music ..... Frank Jones  
9:30 Committee on Committees ..... Steve Loggins  
9:35 Committee on Time, Place & Preacher ... Mike Northcutt  
9:40 RECOGNITIONS

Former Convention Presidents ..... Rick Lance  
New Pastors/Church Staff Members ..... Bobby DuBois

9:50 Audit & Insurance Committees ..... Bobby DuBois  
9:55 Special Music ..... Alabama Singing Men and Women  
10:05 DISCIPLE — Be One ..... Derek Gentle  
10:30 Cooperative Program Recognitions .... Jim Swedenburg

### DISCIPLES ON MISSION

10:40 *The Alabama Baptist*, Bob Terry; Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, Lonette Berg; The Baptist Foundation of Alabama, Barry Bledsoe; Alabama Citizens Action Program, Joe Godfrey; Christian Life Commission, Michael Brooks

11:10 Presentation of Convention President ..... Rick Lance  
11:15 Special Music ..... Mrs. John (Kim) Thweatt  
11:20 President's Address ..... John Thweatt  
11:50 Benediction ..... Zach Richards

## TUESDAY AFTERNOON 1:30–3:55

PIANIST ..... Frank Jones  
WORSHIP LEADER ..... Rick Stone  
WORSHIP

1:30 Congregational Music ..... Rick Stone  
1:40 Prayer Focus ..... Tim Cox

### DISCIPLES ON MISSION

Report of State Board of Missions

1:45 Report of Executive Director ..... Rick Lance  
2:00 Report of the Samford Relationship Study Group  
2:20 State Board of Missions Recommendations and Convention Recognitions

### DISCIPLES ON MISSION

2:55 Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, Rod Marshall; Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center, Buster Taylor; Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers, Ray Burdeshaw; Alabama Woman's Missionary Union, Candace McIntosh  
3:25 Miscellaneous Business  
3:45 Resolutions Committee ..... Cecil Sanders  
3:55 Committee on Boards and Commissions ... Greg Pouncey  
Benediction ..... Dee McGuire

## TUESDAY EVENING 6:45–8:30

6:40 Pre-session Music ..... Frank Jones  
6:45 Prayer Focus ..... John Thweatt  
6:55 Recognitions ..... Rick Lance

7:00 Music Worship ..... Kevin Derryberry  
7:30 Message ..... Rick Burgess

## WEDNESDAY MORNING 8:30–11:20

PIANIST ..... Frank Jones  
WORSHIP LEADER ..... Clint Kimmel  
WORSHIP

8:30 Congregational Music ..... Clint Kimmel  
8:35 Prayer Focus ..... Buddy Champion  
8:40 DISCIPLE — Make One ..... Malachi Gandy  
9:05 Election of Officers  
9:15 Previously Scheduled Business  
9:45 Resolutions Committee Report ..... Cecil Sanders

### DISCIPLES ON MISSION

10:00 Samford University, Andrew Westmoreland; University of Mobile, Tim Smith; Judson College, David Potts; Education Commission, Barry Cosper; Board of Aid to Students in Church-Related Vocations, Randy Johnson  
10:30 Congregational Music ..... Clint Kimmel  
10:40 Introduction of Convention Preacher and Alternate Preacher ..... John Thweatt  
Special Music ..... Carter Reeves  
Scripture ..... Terrence Jones  
10:50 Convention Sermon ..... Stuart Davidson  
11:20 Introduction of Convention Officers ..... Rick Lance  
Benediction — Adjournment ..... Bobby Burt

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# Blessing in the midst of grief

## Benefit society eases end-of-life financial burden for ministers, spouses

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

Jack Green said he and his wife, Mary Edna, just finished a year-and-a-half long “honeymoon” of sorts.  
“She got really sick about a year and a half ago, and I stopped doing everything so I could take care of her,” said Green, a

longtime Alabama Baptist pastor.

It was just the two of them, and they didn't have to worry about anything other than each other, said Green, 91.

Then on Aug. 25, she passed away.

“She was a pastor's wife and she lived that role to the fullest,” Green said. “She was a great mother, a wonderful wife, a

WMU director in two associations. She taught Bible study and sang in the choir. We had 68 years of ministry together.”

### Financial aid

And in the weeks since her death, one blessing in the midst of the grief was a gift from the Alabama Baptist Benefit Society, a group that provides financial aid to its members' families after their death.

“The basic idea behind the benefit society is a plan for how pastors can support fellow pastors or anyone in Christian vocation,” said Mike McLemore, who serves as the society's secretary/treasurer.

That includes any church employee — pastors, secretaries, janitors, anyone — or any employee of a Southern Baptist ministry, whether its in Alabama or not, he said. Applicants must be 60 or younger and in good health. Eligible members pay a \$5 registration fee, \$10 in yearly dues, then \$1 each time a member dies.

Those funds are collected and sent to the family of the deceased member to help with funeral costs or other needs. So, for

instance, if the society has 1,300 members at the time of a death, the member's family would receive \$1,300.

“It's a death benefit, not an insurance policy,” said McLemore, executive director of Birmingham Baptist Association. “Many pastors of small churches don't have the resources that a pastor in a large church has. This can help people in their greatest moment of need, when they've lost someone.”

It's not an investment; it's a ministry, he said. “It's a way of serving those who serve others.”

Green said he and his wife signed up for the Alabama Baptist Benefit Society years ago and have been giving ever since.

### ‘Needs are still there’

“Times have changed a great deal, but the needs are still there,” he said.

The money Green received from the benefit society almost exactly matched what he needed to pay the remainder of his wife's funeral expenses, he said. “It helped a great deal.”

**“Many pastors of small churches don't have the resources that a pastor in a large church has. This can help people in their greatest moment of need.”**

**Mike McLemore**  
executive director, Birmingham Baptist Association

# Inspiring the church to stand up

## Rick Burgess to headline Tuesday evening session of upcoming state convention

By Doug Rogers  
Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

**W**hen you bring up the topic of discipleship to Rick Burgess, it doesn't take long to discover the level of passion he has for it. But even that might be eclipsed by his desire to see the Church take seriously its role to equip believers to make disciples.

Burgess, co-host of the popular syndicated "The Rick and Bubba Show" radio program and a member of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, will be the featured speaker for the Nov. 14 evening session of the Alabama Baptist State Convention. In his message, he'll be reflecting on the convention theme, "Disciple — Be One, Make One," based on Matthew 16:24.

"I'm glad the convention is focused on this because I think a lot of times we as the Church deal with the symptoms in people's lives, instead of dealing with the disease," Burgess said. The real problem, he says, is that many church members have really never been disciplined, leaving them in the state of perpetual spiritual infancy Paul teaches about in 1 Corinthians 3.

"That was one of the biggest struggles in my life early on. I believed in Jesus from the time I was a child, but I didn't become a disciple until I was 31."

### Huge platform

Burgess and his co-host, Bill "Bubba" Bussey, regularly talk about their faith, spiritual matters and Scripture on the show, which has been on the air more than 20 years. Broadcast on more than 65 stations in 16 states with a listenership of 3 million, it's given them a huge platform. But just as important to Burgess as reaching the masses is following Christ's call to disciple individuals one at a time, as others did with him.

He credits two pastors and his wife, Sherri, for starting him on the road to true discipleship. Rick Cagle, who led the Burgesses through premarital counseling, helped him realize that his life was bearing no fruit and

that "the first step to true discipleship was coming to grips with the fact that you aren't one."

He remembers the night he went home and read James 4:7-8, having not opened his Bible for 13 years, "and it just clicked. I had never submitted to the authority of Christ. I had simply believed in His existence."

### Lighting a fire

Then three things happened. God gave Burgess a "fire to consume the Word of God," and Sherri Burgess began to disciple

her husband. Then Jerry Starling — then pastor of Lakeview Baptist Church, Oxford, their first church as a married couple — took them both under his wing. "He began to invest in us to get us out of spiritual infancy and into spiritual maturity," Burgess said.

From there Rick Burgess developed friendships with other men who invested in him and he became involved in Bible studies. Rick Burgess recalled, "Once I learned the Scriptures, I couldn't ignore what it said. 'You've been made a disciple, now you go make some.'"

For him, the "make one" part of discipleship started when he began teaching 12th grade Sunday School at Shades Mountain Baptist, reluctantly at first. But he knew, "If you're going to teach, you've got to be prepared," he said. "That's when you really start learning."

Then He felt God calling him into men's ministry in his local church, something he wrestled with at first. It was Sherri Burgess who reminded him something he had told her, "If God tells you to do something, you'd better do it." He realized he had been leading conference after conference outside his church but hadn't done anything to invest in the men in his own church. As a result, he and some other men began to develop and lead services aimed at discipling men at his church. Then about two years ago, he started leading a men's Bible study at "The Rick and Bubba Show" studios each Wednesday at noon.

"I can't tell you what that entire process



Photo by Doug Rogers

Rick Burgess (second from right) speaks to students and youth leaders at the SPEAK conference at Vaughn Forest Church, Montgomery, on July 22.

has done for me not only in growing as a disciple, but it's also given me tools to make new disciples — in my home, at church with the youth and now with the men of our church," Rick Burgess said.

Joining Rick Burgess in the session will be Kevin Derryberry, worship leader at Westwood Baptist Church, Alabaster. Both are reprising roles they played in 2008 for that year's annual meeting in Montgomery, still the largest attended Tuesday evening session in recent memory.

Preceding the evening service, Sherri Burgess will speak at a dinner to be held in conjunction with the state convention meeting (see story, this page).

"If you don't take the opportunity to go hear her teach when you have the chance, you've really missed out," Rick Burgess said. "She loves her Lord, she loves His

Word and she's an incredible teacher."

Both Rick and Sherri Burgess will be available after the evening service to meet those who stop by and sign books. Their books will be available for purchase, with proceeds going to support ministries funded by the Bronner Burgess Memorial Fund.

Rick Burgess said it is his hope that the two events will "inspire the Church to stand up and to be who God has called us to be, to be the salt and light in a very, very dark society."✠

**For more information about the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting, visit [alsbom.org/convention](http://alsbom.org/convention) or call Charleen Hobbs at 334-613-2231.**

## Sherri Burgess to share her story

**A**uthor and speaker Sherri Burgess will share her story at a Nov. 14 dinner preceding the Tuesday evening service of the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting, where her husband, Rick Burgess, co-host of "The Rick and Bubba Show" radio program, will be the featured speaker.

Sherri Burgess' event will be held at Whitesburg Baptist Church's South Campus in Huntsville. Meal service

will begin around 4:30 and she will speak around 5:30. Tickets are required and can be reserved at [alsbom.org/burgess](http://alsbom.org/burgess).

Burgess, a member of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, will be speaking about what God taught her in the years following the death of their youngest son, Bronner, leading her to write the book, "Bronner: A Journey to Understand." (Doug Rogers)



# Across ALABAMA'S Associations

## COFFEE

► **Bethany Church, New Brockton**, will hold a fall festival Nov. 8, 5:30–8:30 p.m. There will be fun, games, activities, food and fellowship. The church also will hold a canned food drive for the Christian Mission Food Pantry on Nov. 12. For more information call the church office at 334-894-2344. James Newell is interim pastor. ► **New Ebenezer Church, Elba**, will celebrate homecoming Nov. 5. The time has been changed to 10:30 a.m. There will be no Sunday School. Larry Doster will speak. Lunch will follow the service. Randall Pearson is interim pastor.

## COLBERT-LAUDERDALE

► **Little Bear Creek Church, Tusculumbia**, is now a member of the Colbert-Lauderdale Association. Tyler Fenton is the new pastor.

## GENEVA

► **New Hinson Church, Slocomb**, will hold Harvest Day on Nov. 12, 9 a.m. Mike Shirah will speak and The Conrad Family will perform special music. Lunch will follow the service. Bryan Klobe is pastor. ► **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will hold the 39ers CLUB on Nov. 14, 11 a.m. Horace Franklin will speak. If you are a regular attendee, contact your table host-

ess to make or cancel your reservation by Nov. 7. If you would like to attend for the first time call Carol Brannon or the church office at 334-684-9617 by Nov. 7. Steve Wegmann is pastor.

## COVINGTON

► **Keith Ray** is the new pastor of **Harmony Church, Andalusia**. He began Nov. 1. He previously served as pastor of Arbor Church, Pell City. He also served as an adjunct professor at Southeastern Bible College in Birmingham. He holds a bachelor's degree from Southeastern Bible College, a master's degree from Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham and is currently pursuing his doctorate from Beeson Divinity School. He and his wife, Rebecca, have two children.



RAY

## PICKENS

► **The Pickens Association Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) Women's Day of Prayer** will be held Nov. 6, 6:30 p.m. at the associational office in Carrollton. A missions offering will be received. Debra Abston is associational WMU director. †

## Morgan County court order shuts down electronic bingo operation

An Oct. 26 order by the Circuit Court of Morgan County has shut down an electronic gambling operation in Lacey Springs.

The ruling means River City Entertainment must close its doors while a civil lawsuit filed in early October makes its way through the courts.

The lawsuit was filed jointly in Morgan County by Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall and Morgan County District Attorney Scott Anderson to stop the operation of electronic gambling machines at the facility.

On Oct. 4, Marshall announced the filing of civil lawsuits in Morgan, Greene, Houston, Lowndes and Macon counties against the operating casinos, machine manufacturers and vendors, and the governmental authorities responsible for licensing and overseeing electronic bingo operations in those counties.

### On grounds of 'legal nuisance'

The lawsuits call upon local circuit courts to prohibit the defendants from promoting, operating and transporting so-called "electronic bingo" machines and slot machines in those counties, because "the illegal gambling they offer presents legal nuisances in the state."

The state also filed motions requesting that the circuit courts grant preliminary injunctions to cease unlawful gambling op-

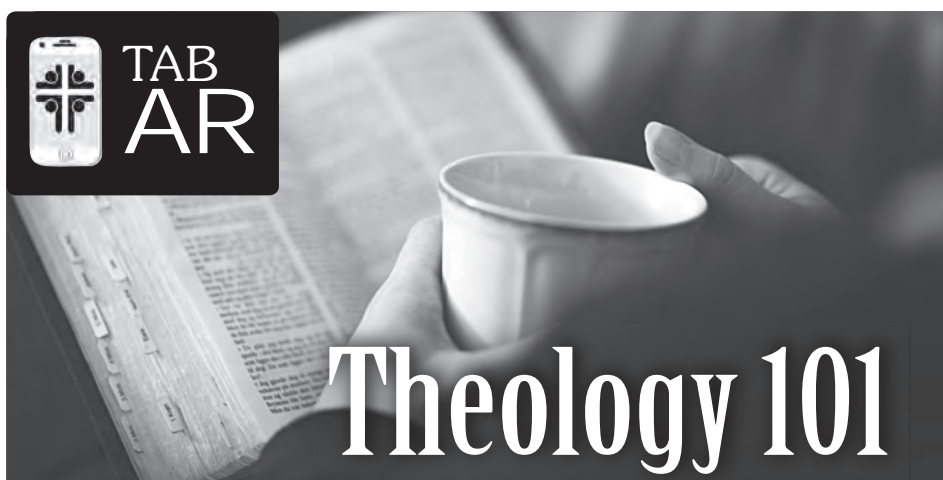
erations in these counties while the lawsuits are pending. The Morgan County case is the first that has been set for a hearing on the state's requested injunctive relief. The order preempted a hearing previously set for Oct. 26.

### 'First step forward'

"This is the first step forward in our continued efforts to curtail illegal gambling activity in Alabama," said Marshall. "The next step in this case is to push forward at trial before the Circuit Court of Morgan County and present the findings of our investigation in that public forum. We are confident that our prosecution of this case will shed the light on the illegal activities at River City Entertainment and prove the claims we made in our complaint."

The Alabama Supreme Court has repeatedly ruled that the game of bingo cannot be played on electronic devices and that machines claiming to be electronic bingo are in fact slot machines and therefore illegal in Alabama, according to Eric Johnston, a Birmingham lawyer who represents Alabama Citizens Action Program and other anti-gambling efforts.

Marshall said his office will continue to work with Anderson and Morgan County law enforcement officials to "make sure that the laws of our state are followed." (TAB)



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Demonology

# Spiritual Warfare

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

As we noted in an earlier installment of Theology 101, Jesus encountered numerous persons whom evil spirits had overtaken and thus controlled. In the most severe cases the unclean spirits had come to possess those individuals, hence the common expression "demon possessed." At this point we do well to observe that Satan or evil spirits cannot in this sense possess a genuine Christian in whom Christ dwells by His Spirit, since "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). On one occasion, Jesus made the observation, "No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods unless he first binds the strong man" (Mark 3:27). We may think of Christ indwelling believers as 'the strong man' whom Satan and his emissaries cannot bind in order to take over or possess the house. But what about a Christian's encounters with the devil or demonic powers that fall short of total possession? The Bible refers to this as spiritual warfare.

The expression "spiritual warfare" refers to the view that all Christians share in common an ongoing struggle between competing forces of good and evil. Galatians 5:17 gives one expression to this conflict by declaring, "The flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary to one another so that you do not do the things that you wish." The Bible everywhere assumes that such a struggle is the common experience of all believers. However, the flesh or our sinful nature is not the only enemy in this warfare. We also contend with the devil and his minions.

The underlying observation is that Christians are caught up in the cosmic warfare between the forces of God the forces of evil. At the heart of the forces of evil are Satan and his angels. Satan's emissaries, the demon spirits, employ a variety of means in seeking to oppose God's forces for good. On the personal level, evil spirits employ human agents. The Bible warns us that Satan is crafty,

even coming against us by means of human agents, even agents that are not aware that they are being used or who are not themselves evil persons.

Such was an experience of one of Jesus' disciples. Peter's thoughts found expression on an occasion when Jesus was speaking of His approaching death. Upon hearing Jesus' words, Peter vehemently objected, taking Jesus aside and daring to rebuke Him (Mark 8:32). Jesus rebuked Peter with the words, "Get behind Me, Satan. For you are not mindful of the things of God but the things of men" (Mark 8:33). We are not to understand that Satan had taken possession of Peter, but was influencing Peter's thoughts so that the expression of those thoughts played into Satan's strategy opposing Jesus' saving mission.

### Satan's emissaries

In the warfare between good and evil, Satan's emissaries may seek to work through other channels. They may work by means of physical or natural occurrences such as illnesses or natural calamities, seeking to persuade believers to become critical and complaining, even beginning to distrust God. When such as this happens the light of our witness in the world is dimmed. Evil spirits may work by making use of political and social institutions, using processes of the world as channels through which to oppose God and harm people. The constant challenge for God's people is to stay aware of demonic strategies and stand against them as one would oppose human enemies in warfare. More about confronting demonic opposition next week. †

*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.*



Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

Focus  
on

ONE MISSION

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

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

# The Family Reunion Approaches

In less than two weeks, on November 14-15, a family reunion approaches as Alabama Baptists gather at Whitesburg Baptist Church in Huntsville for the annual meeting of our State Convention.

This will be a time of inspiration, worship celebration, proclamation of God's Word, making strategic decisions and hearing ministry reports about how God is working through Alabama Baptists.

Much more about this special time may be found elsewhere in this issue of "FOCUS on One Mission" and by going online to [alsbom.org/convention](http://alsbom.org/convention).

**Disciple** Be One. Make One.  
Matthew 16:24

## The Disaster Relief 100% Promise

During the past several weeks, many have demonstrated once again their heart for ministry and generosity through giving to Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief. All funds have been and are being sent to help those impacted by the recent hurricanes.

Please know that 100 percent of all funds designated to Hurricane Relief are used entirely to help people whose lives have often been decimated by the storms. None of these funds are used for any kind of salaries, overhead or administrative costs.

While some nonprofits and charities of necessity and by practice use a percentage of donations for these type of expenses, Southern Baptists are different. Indeed, gifts through the Cooperative Program have

already provided the ministry infrastructure that allows your State Board of Missions to take

point in deploying Alabama Baptist volunteers, disaster relief funds and other DR resources to places hit so hard by the hurricanes.

If you or your Alabama Baptist church would like to donate, please send a check payable to: State Board of Missions, P.O. Box 11870, Montgomery, AL 36111-0870, for: "Hurricane Relief," or go online to [SBDR.org/HurricaneRelief](http://SBDR.org/HurricaneRelief).

## Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering

Last year, Alabama Baptists were so generous during the inaugural year of our state missions offering. More than \$900,000 was given, and our goal this year is \$1 million with a "Hallelujah Goal" of \$1.2 million.

Even as many churches and individuals have responded generously already, I am hoping for a generous and good response as we near the end of this calendar year.

THE MYERS-MALLORY STATE MISSIONS OFFERING SUPPORTS FIVE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

- Along with Cooperative Program, **Alabama Woman's Missionary Union** relies on

a significant percentage of its annual support from the Myers-Mallory offering. Alabama WMU is definitely on mission with the Great Commission alongside Alabama Baptist churches and the State Board of Missions.

- **Disaster Relief** provides ongoing support for the training of volunteers, maintenance and acquisition of much-needed disaster relief equipment, and

laying vital groundwork for a prompt and strong response when needed. As noted above, none of the

funds for this or the strategic priorities listed below are used for overhead, salaries or other administrative costs but used entirely to prepare Alabama Baptists for quick response and deployment when natural disasters strike.

- **Alabama Partnership Missions** seeks to connect Alabama Baptist churches and individuals with Alabama-connected missionaries across the U.S. and around the world.

*continued on page 8*

By Rick Lance  
State Missionary



continued from page 7

- **Church Planting** efforts of Alabama Baptists work closely with local Baptist associations across our state to plant new churches that are reaching people with the Gospel, led by God-called leaders, and networked with mentors and prayer partners who can provide support and insights as a church grows to maturity.
- **Church Revitalization** is a key need across the Southern Baptist Convention, including in Alabama. Many of our state convention's churches, though declining or plateaued, are being helped toward revitalization with a network of coaches who work alongside pastors through encouragement, prayer and counsel.

For more information about the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering, please go online to [myers-mallory.org](http://myers-mallory.org). For more information about the Cooperative Program, please contact State Missionary Jim Swedenburg at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 283, or (334) 613-2283, [jswedenburg@alsbom.org](mailto:jswedenburg@alsbom.org).

I hope to see you in Huntsville in just a few more days!

*Rich Jones* Matthew 16:24

# Why I Believe in the Cooperative Program



TIM COX

## ***I believe in the Cooperative Program because it works!***

Since 1925, Southern Baptists have invested in financial cooperation rather than competition for Great Commission ministries.

Countless lives have been touched and millions have come to know the Lord Jesus Christ because of faithful Southern Baptists giving through their local churches through the Cooperative Program. The past 92 years testify to the eternal impact of God's people working together with earthly treasures for His eternal work.

Of course, the Cooperative Program is more than money. It represents dollars ignited by a God-size vision and passion to reach the lost for Christ. From the local church to associations, state conventions, SBC entities and the SBC, God's people have pooled resources to equip believers and to share the Good News of Jesus Christ both near and far. The Cooperative Program is fuel for a God-given mission.

The Cooperative Program is about a people on mission. It is a portrait of

many members of one body working together to accomplish God's purpose for His church.

Together we can send more missionaries, offer a Christian education to more college students, train more seminary students, plant more churches, offer relief to more people in crisis, and defend Biblical principles and values more effectively before all levels of government than any one church could do on its own.

The Cooperative Program represents a passionate people on mission 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

I believe in the Cooperative Program because it is a tributary for changed lives.

I am one of those lives. I received the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior in a Southern Baptist church. I was nurtured in my faith; I surrendered to the Gospel ministry; I was equipped in both college and seminary through institutions of higher education that received Cooperative Program dollars.

The many Great Commission ministries of the State Board of

Missions continue to equip and strengthen me and our church to be intentional with life on mission with Jesus. And now I am blessed to lead one of our precious Alabama Baptist churches to be good stewards through the Cooperative Program!

Why do I believe in the Cooperative Program? Because I am a life that was changed!

To those who have gone before us, thank you. To those who carry the torch for the Cooperative Program today, persevere. And to those who come behind us, get on board with the most effective and efficient denominational mission program in the world.

— **Tim Cox**, senior pastor, Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea (Shelby Association); trustee, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions; and first vice president, Alabama Baptist State Convention



ONEMISSION:TheGreatCommissionONEPROGRAM:TheCooperativeProgramMANYMINISTRIES:GreatCommissionMinistries

Make your reservations for what we believe will be the largest gathering of Alabama church planting types ever to assemble.

The Alabama Church Planters' Network Dinner will be held on Sunday, **November 12, 2017, 4:30-8:30 p.m.**, at Essential Church, 1806 University Drive, Huntsville. This is the Sunday before the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference on November 13 and the Alabama Baptist Convention meeting on November 14-15.

**The cost will be \$15 per person or \$25 for a couple.**

We advertise this event as a family reunion of church planter types. It is really for any Kingdom-minded person. Church planters and their wives or anyone interested are invited to this event.

By Lamar Duke  
State Missionary



The speaker for this event will be Tommy Duke, connection pastor at Calvary Baptist Church, Savannah, Georgia. He has served as pastor of churches in Georgia, Pennsylvania and Florida and planted new churches in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Boca Raton, Florida.

Tommy has had five-plus years of experience in training, resourcing and coaching church leaders as vice-president of Training for Church Leader Insights and Nelson Searcy.

Alongside Searcy, Tommy co-taught The Launch Conference to 500-plus church planters. Since 2014, Tommy has trained more than 195 men in coaching networks across Alabama. Tommy and his wife, Amber, live in Savannah and have two children.

*"Tommy is a great guy with a heart for Christ and for pastors, especially church planters. As an experienced church planter and pastor, Tommy identifies with and empathizes with*

# ALABAMA CHURCH PLANTERS' NETWORK DINNER

NOVEMBER 12, 2017

*those of us in the trenches. He has a talent for laying out significant knowledge in ways that promote memory retention in the listener. His insights into the challenges of planting and how to navigate through those challenges are well worth the*

*investment of time!"* — Faron Golden, church planter

**Online information may be found at [plantalabama.org](http://plantalabama.org).**

For more information, please contact State Missionary Lamar Duke at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 332, or (334) 613-2332, [lduke@alsbom.org](mailto:lduke@alsbom.org).



**STUDENT MISSIONS  
Weekend**  
WORLDSONG COOK SPRINGS  
January 19-20  
♦♦2018♦♦

**STUDENT MISSIONS WEEKEND** is a gathering for students in grades 7-12 and their leaders.

**STUDENT MISSIONS WEEKEND** exposes students to missions through Bible study, worship and participating in local mission projects. They'll hear from a young missionary answering God's call at home and to the ends of the earth. SMW is a time of encouragement and challenge for students to dream big and ask the Lord how He would use their lives to make disciples.

**EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION DEADLINE:**

December 14 | Cost: \$40

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE:**

January 11 | Cost: \$50

Cost includes meals and lodging.

For more information, go on line to [alabamawmu.org/smw](http://alabamawmu.org/smw) or call 800.264.1225 ext. 226, or (334) 613.2226, [lglass@alsbom.org](mailto:lglass@alsbom.org)

#smw2018

**UNITE**  
A Gathering of  
Alabama Baptist College Ministry Leaders  
Monday  
November 13, 2017  
4:00-8:00pm  
Whitesburg Baptist Church  
Huntsville, Ala.  
Featuring:  
Stephen Lutz | Beth Masters  
Arliss Dickerson | Paul Worchester  
This event and dinner are free  
but you must register by Nov. 6  
at [bcmlink.org/unite](http://bcmlink.org/unite)  
This event is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

**DINNER PROGRAM**  
with Nick Floyd,  
lead teaching pastor of  
Cross Church, Fayetteville, Ark.  
"Reaching Millennials"  
Monday, 4:30 p.m.  
\$5 / person  
for pastors & wives

**FREE ADMISSION**

**2018 State Evangelism Conference**  
January 22-23, 2018  
Monday at 6:15 p.m. • Tuesday at 8:45 a.m.  
Eastmont Baptist Church  
MONTGOMERY

**Speakers**  
Roc Collins  
Greg Corbin  
Nick Floyd  
Ronnie Floyd  
Kevin Hamm  
Terrence Jones  
John Meador  
Tom Richter

**EVANGELISM RESURGENCE**  
Does your church have an effective evangelism strategy?  
PRAYER CARE SHARE  
featuring  
*Selah*  
Alabama Baptist STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS  
This conference is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

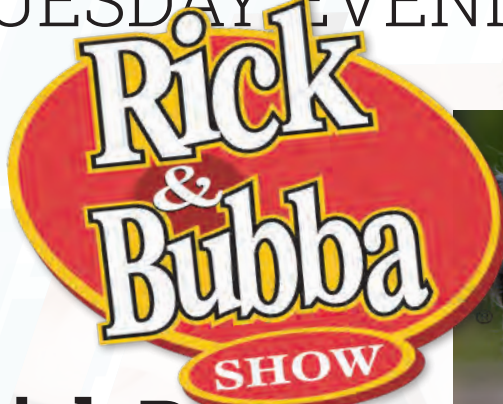
# Annual Meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention

# November 14-15, 2017

## Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville

**Disciple**  **Be One.  
Make One.**  
Matthew 16:24

FEATURED  
TUESDAY EVENING:



**Rick Burgess**  
radio personality  
and author  
(Tuesday Evening)



**Kevin Derryberry**  
worship  
leader  
(Tuesday  
Evening)



**John Thweatt**  
convention  
president and  
pastor, First  
Baptist Church,  
Pell City  
(Tuesday Morning)



**Stuart Davidson,**  
pastor, Eastern  
Shore Baptist  
Church, Daphne  
(Wednesday Morning)

For complete information about the convention, including an interactive hotel guide, please visit [alsbom.org/convention](http://alsbom.org/convention).

# BCM: YOUR CAMPUS CONNECTION

[bcmlink.org](http://bcmlink.org)



**Willie Alexander**  
Alabama A&M University  
Calhoun State Community College  
Decatur  
walexander@alsbom.org

Are you, or is someone you know, enrolled in an Alabama college or university this fall? Consider contacting one of these state missionaries, who serve as campus ministers through **BCMs** across our state. For a complete list of all campus ministers go to [bcmlink.org](http://bcmlink.org).



**Gary Brittain**  
Jacksonville State University  
gbrittain@alsbom.org



**Bill Morrison**  
University of Alabama at Birmingham  
University of Alabama School of Medicine  
bmorrison@alsbom.org



**David Sumner**  
University of North Alabama  
dsumner@alsbom.org



Baptist Campus Ministries



**Steve Thompson**  
Auburn University  
sthompson@alsbom.org



**Brad Bensinger**  
Troy University  
bbensinger@alsbom.org



**Craig Hawkins**  
University of Alabama at Birmingham  
Birmingham Southern College  
chawkins@alsbom.org



**Beth Gardner**  
University of South Alabama  
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**Sean Thornton**  
Auburn University  
Southern Union State Community College  
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**Ryan Brooks**  
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rbrooks@alsbom.org



**Edwin Hocutt**  
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Calhoun State Community College  
Huntsville  
ehocutt@alsbom.org



**Jake Duke**  
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jduke@alsbom.org



**Lee Dymond**  
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ldymond@alsbom.org



**Kim Andrews**  
University of Alabama  
Shelton State Community College  
kandrews@alsbom.org



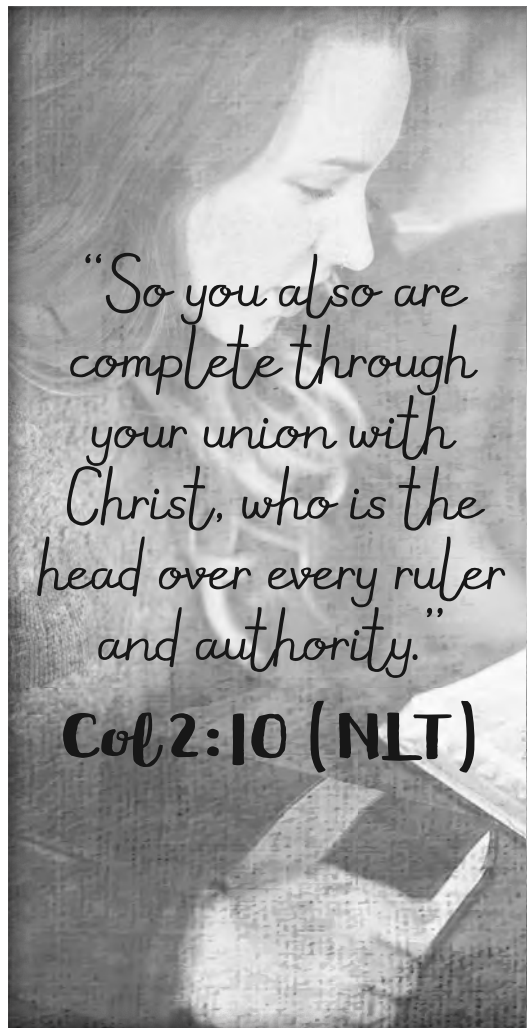
**Jacob Freeman**  
University of Montevallo  
Jefferson State Community College  
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ext. 276



Alabama Baptist Convention  
**State Board of Missions**

**FOCUS on One Mission**



“So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.”

**Col 2:10 (NLT)**

# Complete

A GATHERING FOR TEEN GIRLS

**MARCH 2-3, 2018**

EASTERN HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH  
MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE:**  
February 16, 2018

**\$35 PER PERSON**  
INCLUDES REGISTRATION,  
LUNCH, & T-SHIRT

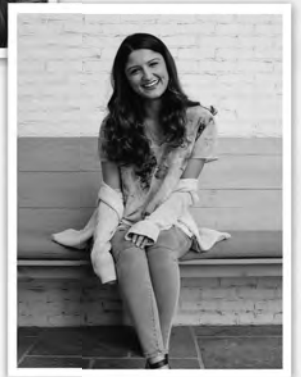
**COME AND BRING YOUR GIRLS FOR A WEEKEND OF:**

- SOLID BIBLE TEACHING
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**AND MORE!**



BIBLE STUDY LEADER  
**CHELSEA KELLUM**



WORSHIP LEADER  
**MADELINE CAVER**

**#COMPLETE18**

For more information: **Kathryn Helms**  
[khelms@alsbom.org](mailto:khelms@alsbom.org) | 800.264.1225 ext. 325

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

# Renew

A DAY AWAY WITH FRIENDS

**FEBRUARY 24, 2018**

**\$35 PER PERSON**  
INCLUDES LUNCH

REGISTER BY FEBRUARY 15

**HERITAGE BAPTIST CHURCH**  
MONTGOMERY



Bible Study with  
**KELLY KING**  
Women's Ministry Specialist, LifeWay Christian Resources

**RENEW WILL FEATURE:**

- Outstanding Bible teaching
- Moving worship
- Missions focus
- An environment for spiritual renewal
- Time with friends
- AND BACK AGAIN THIS YEAR -**  
The WorldCrafts Store

Worship with recording artist

**SHELLY E. JOHNSON**  
AND HER BAND



**FOR MORE INFO:**

Visit [AlabamaWMU.org](http://AlabamaWMU.org)  
Email [smckenzie@alsbom.org](mailto:smckenzie@alsbom.org)  
Call 800.264.1225 ext. 223

**#renew218**

# Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

March 11-14, 2018

Shocco Springs

**Scripture:** *I am the Lord your God who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go. ~ ISAIAH 48:17*

**General Conference Leader:**  
Melanie Hill, First Baptist Church,  
Dothan

**Music/Worship Leader:** Kevin Cobb,  
West Mobile Baptist Church, Mobile

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



More info: [alabamabaptistsecretaries.com](http://alabamabaptistsecretaries.com)

Please check out our website:  
[alabamabaptistsecretaries.com](http://alabamabaptistsecretaries.com)

Facebook page: Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries

For more information, please contact Lisa Daniels, 2017-18 AABS President, at (334) 699-1595 or [ldanielsbca@gmail.com](mailto:ldanielsbca@gmail.com)



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



Friday and Saturday, **January 26-27, 2018**  
Shocco Springs

THEME: **MARVEL IN HIS WORD**

Join us as we **MARVEL IN HIS WORD** at the 2018 Bible Drill Retreat. Conferences will be designed for children, youth and high school drill participants as well as their leaders. Participants will be learning God's Word and about its importance in their lives.

Leaders will have the opportunity to learn more about Bible Drill and how it can be an effective ministry in their churches. Bible Drill in a Box, a make-and-take conference that provides more than 35 activities to use in classrooms, will be offered for each church.

**REGISTRATION:** [shocco.org/bible-drill-retreat](http://shocco.org/bible-drill-retreat)

For more information, please contact State Missionary Belinda Stroud, [bstroud@alsbom.org](mailto:bstroud@alsbom.org), or Ministry Assistant Julie Smith, [jsmith@alsbom.org](mailto:jsmith@alsbom.org), at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 255, or (334) 613-2255.

## 2018 REGIONAL AND STATE BIBLE DRILLS

THEME: **MARVEL IN HIS WORD, PHILIPPIANS 4:13**  
**REGIONAL BIBLE DRILL SCHEDULE**

**Required Online Registration:**  
[alsbom.org/bibledrill](http://alsbom.org/bibledrill)

**Regional Drills Registration Deadline:**  
Monday, April 16, 2018

**April 19**  
East Highland Baptist Church, Hartselle  
Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Dothan

**April 22**  
Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham  
Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery

**April 23**  
Spring Hill Baptist Church, Mobile  
First Baptist Church, Livingston

**April 24**  
Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Alexandria

**STATE BIBLE DRILL AND SPEAKERS TOURNAMENT**  
**Saturday, April 28, 2018**  
Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery  
**Registration:** 12:20 p.m.  
**Drill:** 1 p.m.

Watch for more information to come about these Bible Drill events. Visit [alsbom.org/bibledrill](http://alsbom.org/bibledrill) to find resources, event dates and other information. If you need more information, please contact Ministry Assistant Julie Smith at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 255, or (334) 613-2255, [jsmith@alsbom.org](mailto:jsmith@alsbom.org).



# Myers-Mallory

State Missions Offering

*2017 gifts  
can be given  
through*

*12/29/17*

## Your gifts help support:

- Alabama WMU
- Disaster Relief
- Church Planting
- Alabama Partnership Missions
- Church Revitalization

[Myers-Mallory.org](http://Myers-Mallory.org)



Alabama Baptist  
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

**State Goal:  
\$1,000,000**





(augmented reality)

## Follow these instructions

- 1** Download the Aurasma app from your app store.
- 2** Choose the "ALBaptist" profile under channel and tap "Follow." You will only have to do this one time. (Any ALBaptist options will allow you to follow *The Alabama Baptist*.)
- 3** Tap the [ ] icon at the bottom of the screen.
- 4** You will see pulsating dots, which indicate the app is searching for a target. Once it finds a target the dots will turn to a bull's-eye. The bull's-eye will remain until the augmented reality image loads.
- 5** Hold your device over a page or image in *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) marked as augmented reality and watch the paper come to life.
- 6** If the image is slow to load at any point, then it may be your data speed or Wi-Fi strength. Change locations and try again.
- 7** Each week when TAB arrives, open the app and hold your device over the augmented reality articles.

# Church ANNIVERSARIES



Compiled by the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and TAB

## Zion BC remembers past during 150th anniversary service

In 1837 a bell hung in an old country church. The bell was used to ring in joy during church services and weddings, but it also rang out in sadness during funeral services and tragedies.

And although its toll hasn't been heard in many years, it served as a tribute to a simpler time Sept. 10 when Zion Baptist Church, Woodland, celebrated its 150th anniversary.

In addition to the bell, old documents, offering plates and photos also offered glimpses into Zion Baptist's history as Larry Morrison shared an overview of the past 150 years during the morning service. Zion Pastor David Daniel, who grew up in the church, shared a message and members gave accounts of their experiences with various ministries of Zion Baptist.

Special guests were a prominent feature of the celebration. Sonja Adams, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission (ABHC) representative, presented two framed certificates, one on behalf of ABHC and the other on behalf of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Rep. Bob Fincher, R-District 37, presented a commemorative resolution from the Alabama Legislature, an act that was personal for Fincher as his great-grandmother, Lucinda Darden, was a charter member of Zion Baptist.

Former pastors and members also were recognized during the service.

As members and visitors left the celebra-

tion they looked out over the cemetery adjacent to the church and saw on some grave-stones white ribbons swaying in the breeze, one last tribute to the charter members who followed the Lord's leading all those years ago to build a foundation that would stand the test of time.

## Oak Mountain BC rings bell in celebration of 50 years

For the first time in more than 20 years, the bell rang out. That church bell hung in the tower of Oak Mountain Baptist Church, Pelham, for years but then was put into storage. But on Sept. 10, Pastor James Blair (pictured) rededicated the bell during the 50th anniversary celebration of the church, saying that it will now ring out every Sunday at the start of morning services.



Photo courtesy of Peggy Sue Harding

The celebration service was a "warm and gracious fellowship," according to Mavis Gates.

Gates participated in the morning service, presenting a plaque to the church on behalf of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. Keith Brown, church and community ministries director for Shelby Baptist Association, also presented a plaque to the church.

The church also made some presentations of its own. Plaques were presented to J.C. Roden, longtime member and deacon, and in memory of Dorothy Burnett for "her tireless and selfless dedication" to the church.

The worship service was led by The Reunion Singers. To wrap up the celebratory day, Peggy Sue Harding prepared a slideshow of historic photos that was shown during the fellowship lunch. (Peggy Sue Harding contributed)

## Fyffe's New Bethel celebrates centennial anniversary

New Bethel Baptist Church, Fyffe, celebrated its 100th anniversary with a special service Sept. 17.

The service began at 10:30 a.m. and featured a variety of guest speakers. Chris Guinn, director of missions for Sand Mountain Baptist Association, brought the morning message. Also during the service, church secretary Sandra Traylor read a history of the church and Wendell Dutton from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a plaque honoring the church's years of steadfast ministry.

All former pastors in attendance were recognized and ancestors of the church's first pastor also were in attendance. The fellowship hall held displays of scrapbooks and old photos.

The celebration was a "great day of remembering all God has done," said Scott Traylor, chairman of deacons.

Clifford Millican 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

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Mt. Philadelphia Baptist Church in Cordova, Alabama, is accepting resumés for a bivocational pastor. Send resumés to: Search Committee, P.O. Box 13, Cordova, AL 35550.

#### PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER OR FULL-TIME MUSIC/SENIOR ADULT MINISTER

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# LETTERS

## TO THE EDITOR

### KAEPERNICK, TEBOW

I was appalled you had an article in *The Alabama Baptist* comparing Tim Tebow and Colin Kaepernick, calling both Christians with a cause.

Tim Tebow is a peacemaker trying to bring people together in love and worship. He gets on his knees for the right reason.

Colin Kaepernick is a troublemaker causing division in America. Christians are not troublemakers who divide. Christians are loving, unifying people who want others to feel valued and loved.

Tim Tebow shows great respect for God and others. Colin Kaepernick does not. They should not have been put in the same article together. There is no comparison of the two.

Sherra Claunch  
Oxford, Ala.

### STAND AGAINST SIN

I do not see why we are responsible to find "common ground" with the LGBT community.

The Word of God holds all the dialogue needed.

You know, as well as most folks, that we have had a continual flow of homosexual behavior and lifestyles throughout our Southern Baptist churches and universities. So it is no surprise as to what Satan is up to. In the garden, he said to Eve, "Surely God did not say that."

God speaks truth and is just. We do not need to deal with this problem. We need to stand against it. We are not Jesus but He wants us to be like Him.

He turned over tables and called church leaders "vipers and painted statues."

Will you join me in standing against sin?

As Billy Sunday used to say, "Listen, I'm against sin. I'll kick it as long as I've got a foot. I'll fight it as long as I've got a fist. I'll butt it as long as I've got a head, and I'll bite it as long as I've got a tooth. And when I'm old, fistless, footless and toothless, I'll gum it till I go

home to glory and it goes home to perdition."

Janie Johnson  
Gulf Shores, Ala.

### TEN COMMANDMENTS

When the government or some political anti-Christmas group wants to remove any monument or item that displays the Ten Commandments, Christians will speak up and complain. But I don't understand why the majority of churches do not display the Ten Commandments in the church. Most Baptists are not even aware of the Church Covenant. How can you expect to build a solid foundation and then question the condition of America when the Church is failing to educate?

Randy Talley  
Lafayette, Ala.

## 4 out of 10 countries have official religion

The U.S. may not have an official state religion or a preferred one, but four out of 10 countries worldwide do, according to a recent Pew Research report covering 199 nations and territories.

More than 80 nations favor a specific religion, whether that's shown by government endorsement or preferential treatment. Only 13 of those officially favored Christianity, the report showed. Nine of those countries are in Europe (including the United Kingdom, Denmark, Monaco and Iceland), two are in the Americas (Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic), one is in sub-Saharan Africa (Zambia) and the other is in the Asia-Pacific region (Tuvalu).

In contrast, 27 nations enshrined Islam, making it the most commonly state-instituted religion.

But in the other 40 countries with governments that unofficially showed preference to a religion, in 28 cases that religion was Christianity.

Most countries are neutral, the Pew study showed — 100 nations including the U.S. showed no governmental preference toward a particular religion.

In 10 nations, such as China,

North Korea and some former Soviet countries, governments are actively hostile toward all religions, restricting the legal status, finances and activities of religious groups.

But on the other end of the spectrum in countries that do claim an official religion, restrictions against nonofficial religions also can be extreme. (TAB)

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# in Loving Memory

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## Frances Gunter Morrison

### Wife of Troy L. Morrison dies at 85

Frances Gunter Morrison — wife of Troy L. Morrison, former executive secretary-treasurer of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) — died Sept. 30. She was 85.

A graduate of Jacksonville State University, Morrison taught math for more than 25 years, most of which was spent at Etowah High School in Attalla.

Faithful in ministry, Morrison served in many capacities at Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Gadsden, from 1968 to 1985 while her husband served as pastor. She still called that church home at the time of her death.

And while her husband served SBOM from 1990 to 2000, the two were a ministry team, said Rick Lance, SBOM executive director.

“Frances was a vital part of the ministry to which Troy Morrison was called both as a pastor to local churches and to his calling in state missions as an executive director,” Lance said. “Frances had a unique sense of humor and keen insight into matters of life. Personally, she was always an encouraging influence in my life and ministry. I respected and appreciated her immensely. I am grateful to have known her and loved her like a family member.”

Morrison is survived by her husband of 65 years; her son, Mark; five grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her daughter, Marsha Morrison Burttram. (TAB)



MORRISON

# Percentage of Americans who are ‘unpartnered’ on rise

More Americans are living without a spouse or partner these days, according to Pew Research. The share of adults living with a romantic partner has grown, but not enough to offset the decline in marriage, the study shows.

Since 2007 the percentage of U.S. adults who are “unpartnered” has climbed from 39 percent to 42 percent, the study shows.

Roughly 6 in 10 adults under 35 years old are now living without a spouse or partner — up 56 percent from a decade ago. Men are slightly less likely to be in this share of the population than women.

“The rise in adults living without a spouse or partner has also occurred against the backdrop of a third important demographic shift: the aging of American adults,” Pew reports. “Older adults (55 and older) are more likely to have a spouse or partner than younger adults. So it is surprising that the share of adults who are unpartnered has risen even though relatively more Americans are older.”

It’s unlikely that divorce has contributed to this, Pew reports — statistics are complicated, but di-



Unsplash.com

**Roughly 6 in 10 adults under 35 years old are now living without a spouse or partner.**

orce has been relatively stable or falling for the past several decades. Nearly 6 in 10 unpartnered adults have never been married, and only 2 in 10 are divorced. About 14 percent are widows, with the remainder either separated or married without a spouse present.

Of unpartnered adults, 56 percent are head of their household, 35 percent are living alone and 22 percent are living with others (such as children) in the home.

Thom Rainer, president of LifeWay Christian Resources, wrote on his blog that “church leaders repeat often that we desire to know

and reach our mission field. And we also know that our mission field demographics are shifting dramatically in the United States.”

He addressed one specific part of this population in a 2014 blog — the rise of single-parent families — and challenged churches to consider five questions:

1. Do the leaders in your church have an awareness of this large population group? Awareness can prompt action, Rainer wrote.
  2. Does your church have specific ministries designed for this population segment?
  3. What would your church need to do differently to reach this group?
  4. Are there any attitudes that would discourage this segment of the population from feeling welcome at your church?
  5. Have you attempted to connect with the people in your church who fit this demographic to get clarity about this group?
- “Yes, times are changing,” Rainer wrote. “But we in our churches have a great opportunity to reach a growing segment of the U.S. population.” (TAB)

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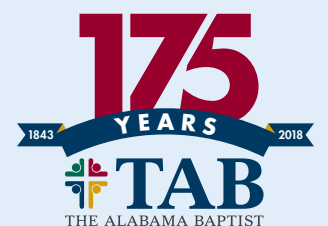
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According to the Feb. 18, 1852, issue of *The Alabama Baptist*, the board of managers for a new Baptist high school announced they had obtained a state charter for the school which would be located in Talladega. Bro. O. Welch had been appointed agent for the school and commissioned to raise \$25,000 to support the new undertaking.





# Media reviews

**MUSIC**

## Songwriter, storyteller Mark Lowry helps audiences find hope, healing, humor

By Leann Callaway  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

With a unique gift for communicating biblical truths through music and storytelling, Grammy Award-winning recording artist and comedian Mark Lowry desires to connect with audiences of all ages and keep them on the edge of their seats.

“I want people to leave the shows knowing that God is crazy about them and that He would rather die than live without them,” Lowry said. “It’s mainly Christians who are attending these shows, and hopefully, they are bringing friends who don’t know the Lord. I want people to hear about the Lord

in a way that is attractive and leads them to want a personal relationship with Him.”

For more than 20 years, Lowry sang baritone with the Gaither Vocal Band and served as the comedic sidekick on Bill Gaither’s live concert tours and best-selling Homecoming video and television series.

### Staying true

In spite of the success, Lowry focuses on shining the spotlight on Christ and stays true to his humble beginnings.

“I started singing in church when I was four,” Lowry said. “When I was 11, I recorded gospel music for a couple of years. Then

my voice changed and ended all that for a while.

“When I went to college at Liberty University, I thought that I was going to be focused on getting a business degree and getting a job, but the Lord called me to go into the music ministry. I actually tried everything I could do to avoid going into this ministry, but it became so clear that the Lord was opening doors and calling me to pursue music ministry.

“The humor came along by accident really. I had to do something between the songs when people were staring at me. Back then, you needed a few seconds in between songs for the sound guy to change the soundtrack. Since those few seconds of silence can be nerve-racking, I would tell stories about my life. When I heard people start laughing, I knew they were listening. I did that for eight years during the early 1980s, and I would sing in 200 churches a year.

“Then Bill Gaither came along and that changed everything when I joined the vocal band. When I joined the vocal band, I also signed a solo recording contract. So, the solo career and vocal band sort of took off about the same time and started gaining national coverage.”

Along the way, Lowry gained national recognition as the co-writer of the Christmas classic, “Mary, Did You Know?” The song is recognized as one of the best loved modern Christmas songs of this century and has been recorded more than 400 times by a variety of recording artists including Pentatonix, Reba McEntire, CeeLo Green, Michael English, Kenny

Mark Lowry



Photo courtesy of Daywind Records

Rogers, Sandi Patty and Rascal Flatts.

With his music and message, Lowry desires to connect audiences to God’s unfailing love and grace, which is the theme for his newest album, “What’s Not To Love?”

### God’s love

“If you listen to the album from the beginning to the end, it sets the tone about the goodness of the Lord and takes you on a journey about his love,” Lowry said. “If there’s ever a time in our country when God’s love is needed to be shown, it’s now.”

Throughout his musical journey, Lowry says he has learned valuable lessons, including realizing that God’s plans are far greater than he ever could imagine and that there is still a story to be told.

“A few years ago, I went through a burn-out period and went away for two years,” he

noted. “One thing I’ve learned is when the plane is out of gas, it’s coming down. You can either land it or crash it, but it’s coming down. A lot of people will crash and run away. But I’ve learned through the years, it’s better to face the music, land the plane, get off the road and get refreshed.

“I really didn’t think I would have new material, so I went away for a while. It was during that time that the Lord gave me some new songs and new things to talk about. I’ve learned that you have to pace yourself throughout this journey so you don’t crash.

“It’s funny because just when I was about to retire again, the Lord dropped all these songs in my lap. God has been reminding me not to worry about what comes next, because He is taking care of the details and that He created me for this purpose. The plan is just to keep telling people that God is crazy about them.” †

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Joey Krehbiel

Photo by David Calvert, Reno Aces

# 'Salvation is the best gift'

## Reno Aces' pitcher keeps Jesus as center point of his life

By **Bill Sorrell**  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**J**oey Krehbiel's mom's dream was for him to pitch in the major leagues. "She wanted me to make it more than anyone in the world," he said. "I don't think she missed more than a handful of games even though she worked every day. She still made time to take me to practice."

And two years ago, he lost her to cancer.

To celebrate her legacy and show his faith, Krehbiel got a tattoo of Jeremiah 29:11 — "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"

And Krehbiel, 24, is still seeing exactly what those plans are going to look like.

He was drafted out of high school in Florida by the Los Angeles Angels in 2011 in the 12th round and traded to the Arizona Diamondbacks organization in 2014. He played for Visalia in the California League (High-A) in 2014 and 2015 and Mobile in 2016.

During the 2016 season he had a 1-1 record, 2.75 ERA and was a midseason Southern League All-Star. He tied for first in the league with 52 appearances.

### Promotion to Reno

He was selected a midseason Southern League All-Star in 2017 for the Jackson Generals where he played 44 games before his promotion to Reno on Aug. 31. Reno is Arizona's Triple-A affiliate in the Pacific Coast League.

This season in Jackson he had a 2-4 record, 3.27 ERA in 44 games. He allowed 45 hits, 23 runs and struck out 74 batters.

Jackson manager J.R. House said Krehbiel relished the opportunity of getting the Generals out of tough situations.

"He competes," House said. "As a pitcher you look for velocity. He brings that. He is up to 95 to 97 mph. He has a good breaking ball and quality change-up."

While Krehbiel's goal is similar to every minor league pitcher's goal — to pitch in the major leagues — he has learned to be patient.

### God's plan

"I have been in the minor leagues seven years now," he said. "I want my time to come sooner than maybe God's plan for me. Patience is putting my faith and trust in Him. That has got to be No. 1 before anything. I know where He wants me to be is where I am supposed to be."

A former girlfriend led Krehbiel to Christ when he was 20.

"At the time it was go to church with her or not date," he said. "That was maybe not the right way into church but whatever gets you there is the right way. It ended up working for me. I have stuck with it. It has helped me through my tough family times and it is something that I never want to let go in my life."

He has dealt with his mother's death by resting in God's sovereignty. "It was not Him doing anything bad; it was my mom's time to go," Krehbiel said.

Jesus is his rock, he said.

"I know that salvation is the best gift anyone could ever have," Krehbiel said. "You have to put everything around Him, even baseball, relationships, anything you want to do has got to go through Him. He has got to be the center point for your life." ✠

## RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

### Calif. to add third gender option to documents

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Pro-family advocates are lamenting California Gov. Jerry Brown's approval Oct. 15 of a bill expanding rights for individuals identifying as transgender but celebrating his veto the same day of a measure that threatened religious liberty.

Brown signed Senate Bill (SB) 179, which adds a third gender option on official state identification documents for those who reject the designation of male or female and opt instead to be considered "nonbinary." Among his vetoes, meanwhile, was Assembly Bill (AB) 569, which would have made it illegal for religious organizations to prohibit their employees from having abortions or engaging in sex outside marriage.

SB 179 will make California the first U.S. state allowing residents to identify their gender as "nonbinary" on birth certificates and state identification documents. The bill also will ease requirements for California natives to change the gender indicated on their birth certificates.

SB 179 takes effect Jan. 1, 2018, with the third gender option on driver's licenses available Jan. 1, 2019.

Meanwhile, Brown's veto of AB 569, which prohibited employers from any discipline of employees for so-called "reproductive decisions," has drawn a sigh of relief from evangelicals.

A veto message released by Brown noted California "has long" exempted religious institutions from a state ban on employment discrimination based on "an employee's reproductive decision." (BP)

### Pro-life group denied right to participate in fair

BEREA, Ohio — A pro-life student group in Ohio was turned away from participating in a sexual health awareness fair at a Methodist college after being told they fail to promote "sex positivity."

The LGBT group that organized the event at Baldwin Wallace University said they did not feel the Nov. 3 fair was "an appropriate setting" for the message of the pro-life group, according to The Christian Post.

Bryan Istenes, president of Baldwin Wallace Right-to-Life, said they simply wanted to educate students about the physical, mental and emotional consequences of abortion and let them know there were other options available.

Morgan Getts, Ohio Regional Coordinator for Students for Life of America, said the LGBT group's decision to deny them the freedom to participate is part of an "unfortunate strain of prejudice" at the school.

Pro-life messages written in chalk around campus also have been erased, with other students celebrating those who have done the erasing. Istenes said he's "not mad people disagreed with what I wrote, I am mad they violated my free speech rights," according to the Post. (TAB)

### Girl in federal custody granted abortion

WASHINGTON — A 17-year-old Central American girl obtained an abortion in Texas on Oct. 25 after a court battle over issues of abortion and the rights of foreigners in the U.S.

The girl, identified as Jane Doe in court documents, was detained at the U.S.-Mexico border after crossing into the U.S. illegally. A medical examination revealed the pregnancy.

The girl, who was held in a federally funded Texas shelter, tried to schedule an abortion but was blocked by the Trump administration, which asserted that the government should not be forced to facilitate abortions for unaccompanied minors in federal custody after crossing the border illegally.

The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals sided with the girl, ending her individual challenge to the policy. The broader question of whether the federal government may continue to block abortions for undocumented teens in its custody is still pending. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton said he and other state attorneys general are prepared to defend the administration's position. (TAB)