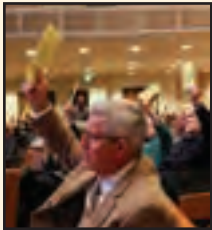




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Plan in place

Convention messengers hear details of 'new relationship' with Samford

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Messengers to the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) annual meeting, held Nov. 14-15 in Huntsville, heard the full and final report of the ad hoc Samford Relationship Study Group.

Bottom line: Samford University in Birmingham and ABSC plan to continue in partnership but without two traditional aspects — funding and board member affirmation. The report, which was approved by the State Board of Missions (SBOM) in August in its role as the convention ad interim, did not require a vote of the messengers.

While Samford has been governed by a self-perpetuating board legally elected by its own trustees since 1994, the university did work with ABSC's Committee on Boards and Commissions to present the incoming slate of trustees to messengers for affirmation at each annual meeting. That will no longer be the case.

Changes outlined

"We believe that to continue the practice would imply a relationship with Samford which does not exist," the study group report says. "We also believe that the reasons which originally supported the presence of the convention's president and executive director on Samford's board no longer exist."

Samford agreed and has amended

its bylaws to remove those positions but will continue to invite the ABSC president and SBOM executive director to attend as guests.

Samford trustees also "codified their commitment that all future trustees be Baptists but not necessarily Alabama Baptists," the study group report says. (*TAB* will report more on Samford's new board make-up in next week's issue.)

As far as funding goes, Samford announced in July a voluntary withdrawal from the Cooperative Program budget, so the 2018 budget approved by messengers Nov. 14 (see story, page 6) excludes Samford.

The plan for the new relationship between ABSC and Samford is being developed. The plan's points noted below are "not all meant to be conclusive," according to the report.

1. Ongoing communication "is recognized as important" so along with ABSC leaders being invited to Samford trustee meetings, Samford will be invited to report to various convention-related meetings.
2. SBOM and Samford's Ministry Training Institute plan to continue partnering but will review the relationship annually.
3. The Alabama Baptist Historical Commission (ABHC) will work with Samford on future use of facilities.



Photo by Maggie Walsh
Rick Lance (right) introduces Andrew Westmoreland during the report of Samford University to convention messengers Nov. 15.

ABHC offices are currently housed at Samford.

4. Samford will continue partnering with The Baptist Foundation of Alabama.

5. Alabama Woman's Missionary Union will continue collaborating with Samford's Ida V. Moffett School of Nursing.

6. Current Samford recipients of the A. Earl Potts and Board of Aid scholarships will be honored but Samford students will not be eligible for those scholarships going forward.

7. Alabama Baptist-related events may be hosted on Samford's campus "when mutually advantageous."

According to the report, "Samford's board has agreed to this plan and to work toward these ends. ... (Also the) potential points of relationship will be evaluated periodically.

"Be assured that any future relationships by the state convention with Samford will be characterized by the convention's faithfulness to Scriptures we hold dear as God's timeless truth. These potential relationships will be framed in such a way to help foster our mission which is the Great Commission," the study group report says.

The work of the group has been (See 'ABSC,' page 7)



COMMENT

What Will Be the Legacy?

Near the end of his convention sermon on Wednesday morning, Stuart Davidson, pastor of Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne, asked messengers what legacy their personal lives were building. The issue of legacy seems an appropriate question to ask of the 2017 annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

What will be the legacy of this important meeting? There are several possibilities.

The days and weeks leading up to the report of the Samford Relationship Study Group of the State Board of Missions was a tense time. Many wondered what would happen. Some feared what might happen. And several groups worked to tap down emotions that could be divisive. Would this controversy be the legacy?

Hallway conversations said the Resolutions Committee was considering whether or not to present a resolution dealing with sexual abuse. Unofficial accounts said debate waged between leading the convention to take a stand on this public issue or to heed warnings about the possible political implications of such a resolution in the state's current race for United States senator.

Would the legacy be the committee's decision?

Encouraging reports

The ministries of Alabama Baptists all presented encouraging reports. Messengers saw lives changed by these ministries, learned of record offerings for hurricane relief, heard about expanding opportunities at related colleges and faithful service of all they support in Alabama through the Cooperative Program. Would the ongoing work of the entities related to the state convention be the meeting's legacy?

The legacy could be the inspiration provided by the outstanding sermons of Davidson, convention president John Thweatt and Derek Gentle, pastor of First Baptist Church, Tallassee. It could be the work of laymen like Rick Burgess and Kevin Derryberry who drew the largest crowd of the convention on Tuesday evening or layman Malachi Gandy of Bush Memorial Baptist Church, Troy, who described his personal experience in making Christian disciples.

Would the words of lay Alabama Baptist leaders be the most lasting part of the annual meeting?

Instead of choosing a single event, perhaps there is a word that embraces the many varied parts of the annual meeting. If so, that word has to be "hope" for hope is what messengers clung to as they departed Huntsville at the conclusion of the 195th annual session of the state convention.

In practically all controversies, parties see facts from their particular perspective. Caution, and even mistrust, can filter perceptions. The Samford Relationship Study Group called its report of the history of the committee's work "facts." But in Samford University President Andrew West-



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

moreland's brief response during the discussion time following the report, he indicated differences in understandings of certain "facts" shared by the study committee.

Whose understandings are right and wrong is not the issue. We celebrate that all parties worked to be transparent with Alabama Baptists. That in itself provides reason for hope. Power and manipulation cannot long live where transparency reigns. At the same time we recognize that those closest to a controversy are not always those with the clearest perspective despite their best efforts. If they were, there would be few controversies.

Still hope persisted at the end of the day. Samford remained a part of the state convention. Yes that relationship is evolving as the report stated but Westmoreland described Samford as "velcro" that would stay stuck to Alabama Baptists. The convention promised to continue working with Samford. Hope believes those promises and works to make them come true.

The Resolutions Committee reported out resolutions on several important topics including one on "Gospel Unity for All Races and Ethnicities in Alabama" (see story, page 3). But the committee did not bring up the topics of sexual abuse or harassment of women.

Online statement

Hours after the convention ended, however, an ad hoc group calling itself the Alabama Baptist Pastor Group circulated a statement online denouncing "Sexual Abuse, Assault, Harassment and Exploitation of Women" (see story, page 5). The statement drew early endorsement from Alabama Baptist leaders such as convention president John Thweatt and Alabama Citizens Action Program Executive Director Joe Godfrey.

The statement continues to circulate on social media and had 59 signatures at press time.

The reason for hope is that an increasing number of convictional leaders are finding ways to

articulate a biblical view related to a growing number of important moral and ethical issues of the day without regard to politics. That is what Baptists have done on issues such as gambling, alcohol, abortion, homosexuality and more. Why should sexual abuse, harassment and exploitation of women be any different?

Despite the backdrop of denominational controversy for the past several months and the continuing decline of financial support through the Cooperative Program, Baptist entities have persevered in faithfulness to their various charges from Alabama Baptists. One could not listen to the reports from convention-related entities without a new sense of appreciation for their contributions to Kingdom work in the state and beyond.

As Gentle quipped in his sermon, Baptists persevere and God preserves. Alabama Baptist entities continue to persevere at their assigned tasks and they continue to make a difference in the lives of individuals, churches and the denomination as a whole. They continue to trust God to preserve. What could be a better legacy of hope than that?

Hope abounded in the sermons and testimonies. Thweatt reminded messengers, "Character matters regardless of the leader. Whether you are the president or a pastor, whether you are a senator or a Sunday School teacher, whether you are a governor or a greeter, character matters," he declared.

Sell out to God

Burgess captivated listeners as he paced back and forth across the platform of Whitesburg Baptist Church urging listeners to quit playing games and sell out to God. Even the opening song of the convention shared by the Alabama Baptist Singing Men and Alabama Baptist Singing Women illustrated the timeless hope of the gospel message. The arrangement combined a song written in the 1700s with a song written in 2015 and both stressed the grace of God.

The eternal hope of the gospel should be a legacy of every convention and the basis for our hope in God through Jesus Christ.

The road of life is filled with bumps. That includes the road of relationships among Christians. Sometimes we may feel afflicted, perplexed, even persecuted. But we are never crushed, never in despair, never forsaken and never alone (2 Cor. 4:8-9). We are part of a Christian family and individually and corporately, our hope is in God. That is and always will be our ultimate legacy.✠



"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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'Jesus brings us all together'

Messengers adopt racial reconciliation, pro-life resolutions

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Baptists joined the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and five other state conventions in adopting a resolution condemning racism and white nationalism and promoting racial unity.

Messengers to the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) passed Resolution No. 7, "On Condemning Racism and Promoting Gospel Unity for All Races and Ethnicities in Alabama," on Nov. 14. The resolution was modeled on a similar one passed by SBC messengers in June. Alabama joined state Baptist conventions in Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, Oklahoma and Louisiana, all of whom have passed similar statements condemning groups commonly referred to as the Alt-Right.

Resolution No. 7 states that such groups "are awakening racial and ethnic divisions that seek to reignite social animosities, reverse improvements in race relations, divide our people and stir up anger and further separation of races" and have "expressed hatred toward our immigrant and refugee neighbors."

The statement calls on Alabama Baptists to "denounce and repudiate" racial and ethnic animosity of any kind; to stand up for immigrants, refugees and any who are persecuted and harassed by such groups; and to "prayerfully and urgently seek racial reconciliation in our respective communities across Alabama to show the power of the gospel and to give respect, honor and love to one another ... as an expression of the love of Jesus Christ."

Alan Cross, missional strategist for Montgomery Baptist Association, and author of "When Heaven and Earth Collide: Racism, Southern Evangelicals and the Better Way of Jesus," was one of several pastors who submitted the ABSC resolution. Cross said they were motivated to take action in response to white nationalist marches in Charlottesville, Virginia, and Shelbyville, Tennessee, and the growing influence of groups like League of the South, an Alabama-based "Southern nationalist organization for white Gentiles," according to the group's president.

A growing effort

Cross and fellow Montgomery pastors, including Terrence Jones, pastor of Strong Tower at Washington Park, and Eric Smith, pastor of Vaughn Forest, held a forum on race and the gospel in September after the Charlottesville march. In August the pastors led a prayer march near the Alabama Capitol to pray for the Church to be a witness to racial unity. The event attracted around 75 participants in Montgomery and more than 45,000 people joined in via Facebook as the event was livestreamed by the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN).

Cross said the ABSC resolution came out of that work.

"We want to speak into these issues and make sure the gospel is a witness into these divisions emerging in our society," Cross said.



Photo by Maggie Walsh

Messengers adopt resolutions without debate.

"Now is an important time for Alabama Baptists to repudiate these movements. This is not what we're for. Jesus brings us all together."

Resolution No. 4 "On Support of the Biblical and Constitutional Right of the Sanctity of Human Life" also adopted Nov. 14. The statement comes ahead of a statewide constitutional amendment referendum on the November 2018 ballot, according to John Killian, director of missions for Fayette Baptist Association, who submitted the resolution. The proposed amendment, also known as House Bill 98, seeks to

declare that Alabama's public policy is to "recognize and support the sanctity of unborn life and the rights of unborn children, most importantly the right to life."

Killian said ABSC Resolution No. 4 is not "a generic pro-life statement" but is intended to encourage voters to support the amendment vote next year.

Seven approved in all

Other resolutions passed during ABSC:

Resolution No. 1: On appreciation of Buster Taylor, executive director of Shocco Springs, who will retire Dec. 31.

Resolution No. 2: On appreciation of Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers.

Resolution No. 3: On appreciation to Whitesburg Baptist Church, Madison Baptist Association, other local churches and volunteers who helped with all aspects of the ABSC.

Resolution No. 5: A statement in opposition to a City of Birmingham nondiscrimination ordinance that "infringes on religious liberty by creating an unconstitutional burden on religious freedom for churches, ministries and religious entities ... individuals and businesses."

Resolution No. 6: On affirmation of parents as their children's primary educators and discipline makers.

Resolution No. 8: On appreciation to the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee for preserving the adoption tax credit in current national efforts to overhaul the U.S. tax code and urging national legislators to preserve the credit in the final bill. ✝

Thweatt re-elected state convention president



**Officers
re-elected**

Photo by Maggie Walsh

All three officers of the Alabama Baptist State Convention were re-elected without opposition for a second one-year term. They are: president, John Thweatt (center), pastor of FBC Pell City; first vice president, Tim Cox (left), pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea; and second vice president, Buddy Champion (right), pastor of FBC Trussville.

'Called to be holy'

Burgess challenges Alabama Baptists to focus on transforming society by making disciples

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

In his popular tell-it-like-it-is style, syndicated radio host Rick Burgess of "The Rick & Bubba Show" laid his message out plainly — a transformed society begins with making disciples.

Burgess, the featured speaker for the Tuesday evening session, drew the largest crowd of the Nov. 14–15 annual meeting of Alabama Baptists at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville.

Christian artist Kevin Derryberry served as worship leader alongside the praise team from Westwood Baptist Church, Alabaster.

"If the way we are doing things is the way we should continue it, then I should see a lot more transformed disciples of Jesus Christ who walk like Jesus Christ or at least like His early followers," Burgess said. "We are not seeing transformed believers.

"If that was enough, then we should see a transformed society and we don't. So undoubtedly we aren't doing it right," he said. "We are not developing disciples

of Jesus Christ. I know exactly what it means to believe in Jesus. I was not transformed until I became a disciple of Jesus."

More than believing

Sharing his personal faith journey as well as a glimpse of the pain endured by his family at the loss of his young son, Bronner, in 2008, Burgess said it is more than merely believing in Jesus.

"I kept getting baptized over and over because I didn't see transformation, but I had never submitted to the lordship of Jesus Christ," he said. "I simply believed in Him."

Still many believers are content with perpetual spiritual infancy, he said. And this means discipleship isn't taking place because if it were, churches would be developing more spiritually mature believers, he noted.

A serious, committed focus on discipling men is where to start, Burgess said.

"Pastors, are you discipling men in your church? Have you made that your number one priority? ... Did God say man is the spiritual leader of his home? Yes or no?"

"Based on all the research ... men's ministry is the most important ministry in the church," he said.

"Men and women are equal heirs but they are not the same," Burgess said. "If we really believe what we continue to say, it should be paramount that we are discipling men above everything."

Men are not always cooperative, however, he said.

"It is hard. It sure is. You better believe it is hard."

But a man who doesn't know Jesus "is useless in the church," Burgess added. Spiritual maturity brings discernment with it and the ability to distinguish good from evil, he said.

"Perpetual open sin in the church always stops revival.

"It is blasphemy to think so little of Jesus ... that you can comfortably usher in sin in His presence."

'Free but it ain't cheap'

Burgess added, "You may not always live out what you profess but you can't stop yourself from living out what you really believe.

"Grace is free but it ain't cheap," Burgess said. "What will it cost you? Your sin.

"I've had some terrible things happen in my life even after fol-



RICK BURGESS



Photo by Bethany Rogers

Above: Rick Burgess speaks during the evening session Nov. 14. **Right:** Christian artist Kevin Derryberry serves as worship leader for the Tuesday evening session of the annual meeting.



Photo by Maggie Walsh

lowing Jesus (but) I'm going to go to bed tonight at peace under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

"I'm a follower of Jesus and it's not easy. It's a daily struggle but ... I'm not satisfied in being a spiritual baby. I can't wait to see what He is going to show me next." 🌈

Put eternity of others first, Sherri Burgess challenges



Photo by Bethany Rogers

As Sherri Burgess looked out over the crowd gathered for dinner, she posed a question: "What's it going to take?"

Burgess, author of "Bronner: A Journey to Understand" and wife of syndicated radio host Rick Burgess of "The Rick & Bubba Show," said her young son's death was what it took for her to realize God's urgent call for sinners to be saved. Her question challenged those in the audience to consider what it would take for each of them to put the eternity of others first.

"What's it going to take to get you up here in this place ... between heaven and earth, crying out 'sinner, dear sinner, come home'?"

Burgess spoke of a chair that belonged to her 2-year-old son Bronner, who drowned in 2008. She said she uses the chair now as a step stool, which is fitting because Bronner's death taught her that life as a believer is lived not quite on earth and not quite in heaven.

"I can see so clearly now looking back how God used Bronner to help me step into that place — not quite heav-

en, even though I grasp for it all the time," she said. "I'm not really still on the earth either completely. My citizenship is in heaven, and my hope is in seeing the glory of God face to face."

Burgess said she has learned that suffering and calamity are part of the Christian experience for a reason — to "fan into flame any bit of faith we've got and to mark who we belong to."

She challenged those present to rejoice in times of trial because those times help us "see clearly who we are in respect to omnipotent Holy God and realize that we are utterly helpless." In those times "all we can say is 'God help me' because we know nobody else can."

Burgess said she is now "right where God wants me to be" and wants others to remember that God is real and present here and in heaven.

"I used to want heaven because I wanted Bronner, but now I know that more than I need Bronner, I need God. Because God is incomparable, greater than anything." (Carrie Brown McWhorter)

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS



Photo by Maggie Walsh

John Thweatt, pastor of FBC Pell City and president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, delivers the president's address at the annual meeting Nov. 14.

Never live easily in sin, Thweatt urges

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

John Thweatt says his biggest fear is that he will be so comfortable in his own sin that he will step into the pulpit one day and find that the anointing of God has left.

"We live in a day and an age of tolerance," said Thweatt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pell City. "But I pray we get to the place where we can never live easily in our sin. I pray that it would haunt us, that it would keep us up at night."

That was the message Thweatt offered during his president's address Nov. 14 at the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting held at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville.

Preaching from Psalm 51, he encouraged convention messengers to learn from David's confession of his sin after he had committed adultery and tried to cover it up with murder.

"It's one of the most intimate and deep confessions we find in the Word of God. It's like we're getting to peek over David's shoulder into a time of intimacy between him and God," Thweatt said. "And thousands of years later, he's still teaching us about sin and confession."

'Sin is overwhelming'

In the Psalm, David is engulfed in guilt, Thweatt said. "His hidden sin is not hidden. What he thought he got away with he didn't ... and the sin is overwhelming to him."

It's not an uncommon story, Thweatt said.

"I remember how many preachers have fallen," he said. "Many who have sat in this convention with us in years

past are no longer here with us because of sin."

So often sin is exposed. "It's in a moment like this that David turns to God on the basis of His character," Thweatt said. "He doesn't pretend that he deserves mercy ... but he desperately wants God's mercy, and he comes to Him asking for it on the basis that He's a God of love."

Being 'de-sinned'

In this Psalm, David is done trying to cover his tracks — he's openly confessing that he missed the mark with active rebellion and open perversion, Thweatt said.

"We must see sin as God sees sin," he said. "We best not justify it. We should confess it."

Then, as David did, Christians should ask for God to wipe their sin away.

"David asked for God to 'de-sin' him," Thweatt said. "I wonder if he sees his sin like spiritual leprosy, knowing that he needs God to cleanse him and purge him."

It's the same work God does today through the cross, Thweatt said — "He blots out our iniquities, and through cleansing in Christ, He keeps us."

"David asked God not to cast him from His presence," Thweatt said. "He knew God had removed His spirit from Saul, and David desperately doesn't want to lose the spirit of God."

"Learn from David and walk in holiness," he said. "Don't be another statistic. If you're in the middle of open sin I want you to know God sees it. Stop right where you are. Don't let it grow. Confess it. Admit your sin and let God begin to restore you." ✠

Time to be 'salt and light'

Alabama Baptist pastors speak out on sexual assault

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

A group of Alabama Baptist pastors have decided it is time to speak out on the issue of sexual abuse, assault, harassment and exploitation of women — and they are urging other pastors across the state to join them.

Daniel Atkins, pastor of Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, said, "We felt the need to speak to what is going on in our culture right now. ... Any given Sunday every single one of us (pastors) have men and women in our congregations who have been victims.

"If we don't speak to it now, then we lose our credibility to speak to it in the future," he said. "In this current climate of all these accusations that are flying around, we as the Church must be on top of speaking out to the issues that are relevant in culture."

While the issue of sexual abuse and assault is not new, it has gained a new level of attention with current conversations taking place across the nation, he noted.

During the past six months news outlets have been inundated with allegations of harassment and assault from women across the country against various high-profile subjects, including media moguls, actors and politicians.

These allegations, plus a flood of #MeToo stories across social media, have sparked a national conversation on sexual harassment and assault.

"We felt it was necessary to provide a biblical perspective," Atkins said. "We felt there needed to be a biblical worldview on what's going in (the) culture."

John Brock, pastor of Highland Baptist Church, Florence, is one of the initial signers of the statement.

"I signed it because it is an issue that is very current in our culture," he said. "It is an issue that demands ... that we be salt and light, that we speak the truth of Scripture on the issue. ... It is important that the Church let its voice be heard on issues that are going on in the culture right now."

The statement reads:

"Prompted by the amount of victims of sexual abuse, assault, harassment and exploitation within the past several weeks coming forward with their accusations against persons (predominantly men) in positions of power and authority, we first, as followers of Jesus Christ, and second, as Alabama Baptist pastors,

find it incumbent upon us to make the following statement:

"We believe that the Bible declares that God has created both male and female in His image and after His likeness (Genesis 1:27) with intrinsic value and worth and to live before Him in complementary roles;

"We believe that the Bible teaches that God created humanity to live in perfect relationship with Himself and with each other, and that God's perfect design was broken by the fall of man (Genesis 3:16-19);

"We believe that the Bible teaches that sexual intimacy is to be practiced only within the confines of marriage between one man and one woman (Hebrews 13:4);

"We believe that the result of man's fallen condition and deviation from God's perfect design for His creation is the brokenness of relationships between men and women which, at times, manifests itself in the form of physical and sexual abuse of women by men (Judges 19:25; 2 Samuel 11:2-4; 2 Samuel 13:14); and that in a broken and sexually depraved culture where every 98 seconds an American is sexually assaulted and every year over 321,000 Americans are sexually assaulted (<https://www.rainn.org/statistics/victims-sexual-violence>);

"We believe the gospel redeems and restores the brokenness of mankind in every facet of God's creation, including relationships between men and women, demanding and enabling men to treat women with the utmost honor, dignity and respect (1 Peter 3:7; Colossians 3:19) and that the Bible teaches that, in Christ, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28);

"We resolve, therefore, as ambassadors of the gospel of Jesus Christ in this fallen world to denounce and condemn every form of sexual abuse, assault, harassment and exploitation of women. We also resolve to pray for and seek opportunities to minister to victims of sexual abuse in the name and healing grace of Jesus Christ and to continue to uphold the honor, dignity and respect of all people, both males and females, as image-bearers of God."

The statement was posted at albaptistpastors.wordpress.com Nov. 15 and at press time had 62 signatures. ✠



Photo by Maggie Walsh

Pastors Daniel Atkins (left) of Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, and Ben Bowden (right) of FBC Enterprise are among Alabama Baptist pastors speaking out on sexual assault.

Reaching the 50-50 goal

Messengers approve \$37 million budget, vote to sell Auburn BCM property

For several years, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) has been working its budget toward a 50-50 split of funds with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). But that gradual goal was accomplished in one fell swoop this year as Samford University in Birmingham withdrew from state convention funding, freeing up \$3.5 million.

With that in mind, messengers to the annual meeting Nov. 14 at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, unanimously approved a \$37 million budget for 2018 — \$3 million less than the current year's \$40 million budget.

The Samford withdrawal from Cooperative Program (CP) funding was announced by university officials July 7. The plan is for Samford to continue in partnership with the Alabama Baptist State Convention but without any CP support (see story, page 1).

Budget allocations

With the extra \$551,231 left over from Samford after the \$3 million reduction in the budget, an extra \$107,576 is headed to SBC causes to accomplish the parity goal.

In Alabama three entities also will receive a boost in funding. Judson College in Marion will get an additional \$101,293, University of Mobile (UM) is allotted an

extra \$242,362 and the Board of Aid receives an extra \$100,000.

And while the money for Board of Aid and A. Earl Potts' scholarships will continue to fund existing Samford student recipients, those funds will not be granted to Samford students going forward.

Budget amounts for all other entities will remain at 2017 levels, according to the SBOM report.

Auburn BCM

In addition to approving the budget, messengers also approved selling the property of Auburn University's Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) to the City of Auburn in exchange for new space for Auburn's BCM and money to renovate the nine other BCM properties around the state.

"Numerous developers from Auburn and beyond have approached us in the past about purchasing that property, and we rejected those ideas because we like our current location," said Bobby DuBois, SBOM associate executive director.

In those cases, selling the property would've meant moving away from student traffic, he said.

But the City of Auburn's proposal seems to be a win-win, he said — they would tear down the existing building and con-



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Cooperative Program awards were presented by Jim Swedenburg (right) to Danny Wood (left), pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, for largest amount of undesignated receipts (\$799,200); Chip Starnes (second from left), pastor of FBC Bay Minette, for largest percentage of undesignated receipts (21 percent); and Ed Cruce, pastor of Fairfield Highlands Baptist Church, Midfield, for largest per capita amount of undesignated receipts (\$344.60 per resident member).

struct a parking deck with a new BCM facility contained on the ground floor. They also would deed 15 parking spaces to the Auburn BCM.

In this arrangement, DuBois said, the Auburn BCM gets an updated facility and all the other state BCMs get a facelift too.

"We would finish at the end of two years debt free," he said.

Also during the SBOM report:

- ▶ DuBois said the new SBOM building in Prattville is near completion with an anticipated operational date of mid-January.

- ▶ Messengers approved the auditor's report of SBOM.

- ▶ Messengers affirmed the special offering goals for 2018 — Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, \$12 million; Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, \$6.1 million; Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, \$3 million; Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering, \$1 million; and Global Hunger Offering, \$800,000.

- ▶ SBOM honored John Yarbrough of Mount Vernon Baptist Church, Collinsville, in Lookout Mountain Baptist Association as Missions Volunteer of the Year.

- ▶ The convention also honored three ministers with the Troy L. Morrison Lead-

ership/Church Health Award (see photo, this page).

Prior to the SBOM report, Rick Lance, SBOM executive director, announced that Alabama Baptists had given \$1,281,000 for disaster relief assistance during 2017, and that as of Nov. 13, \$957,000 had been given to the 2017 Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering. He felt confident the \$1 million goal would be met by the end of the year.

Lance also pointed out "The Christmas Code" books given to each messenger and how they were a way to support GuideStone Financial Resources' Mission Dignity program.

SBOM also is working alongside Southern Baptists to support the North American Mission Board's (NAMB) new Gospel Conversation Challenge, Lance said. "We are trying to help NAMB reach its goal of 1 million people having an intentional gospel conversation."

In other SBOM news, Morgan Bailey, pastor of Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer, was re-elected chairman and Mike Goforth, pastor of Sardis Baptist Church, Boaz, was re-elected vice chairman. And SBOM's Billie Davis will continue to serve as secretary. (TAB)

Troy L. Morrison Leadership honorees



Photo by Maggie Walsh

The Troy L. Morrison Leadership/Church Health Award went to (l to r) Faron Golden, pastor of Lake Pointe Baptist Church, Dadeville, in Tallapoosa Baptist Association, for new work; John Robles, pastor of Second Baptist Church, Boaz, in Marshall Baptist Association, for bivocational work; and Chad Burdette, pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church, Ranburne, in Cleburne Baptist Association, for established work.

760 messengers from 359 Alabama Baptist churches in 70 associations registered for the Nov. 14-15 state convention annual meeting in Huntsville.

To read the full report of the Samford Relationship Study Group, visit ricklance.com/samfordstudygroup

ALABAMA BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION

Cooperative Program Budget for 2018

(Approved by convention messengers Nov. 14)

	2017 BUDGET	2018 BUDGET
SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION MINISTRIES		
SBC Executive Committee	18,392,424	18,500,000
SBC GuideStone (Church Retirement Plan and Mission Dignity)	799,338	*See below
Total for Southern Baptist Convention Ministries	19,191,762	18,500,000
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS MINISTRIES		
<i>EVANGELISM/DISCIPLSHIP (27 full-time employees)</i>		
Evangelism	106,938	106,938
Sunday School and Discipleship	307,862	307,862
Collegiate and Student Ministries	96,427	96,427
Evangelism/Discipleship Salaries/Housing	1,640,839	1,640,839
Evangelism/Discipleship Travel/Field Services	164,345	164,345
<i>LEADERSHIP RESOURCE (7 full-time employees)</i>		
LeaderCare/Church Health	315,866	371,866
Worship Leadership/Church Music	86,140	86,940
Leadership Development Salaries/Housing	523,462	523,462
Leadership Development Travel/Field Services	51,867	51,867
<i>MISSIONS MOBILIZATION (10 full-time employees)</i>		
Associational Missions & Church Planting	756,652	756,652
Global Missions	211,869	209,353
Missions Mobilization Salaries/Housing	679,485	679,485
Missions Mobilization Travel/Field Services	67,325	67,325
<i>MISSIONS SUPPORT (16 full-time employees)</i>		
Executive Director		
A. Director's Office	48,427	22,734
B. Disaster Relief	1,000	1,000
C. Supplemental Aid	1,000	1,000
D. Strategic Initiatives		
D. Partnerships	1,000	1,000
Financial/Facility Services		
Director's Office	424,752	352,000
Accounting & Human Resources	2,135,383	2,285,000
Church Compensation Services	14,561	0
Facility Services	1,418,914	1,328,018
Cooperative Program & Stewardship Development	32,390	32,390
Communications & Technology Services	323,090	323,090
Missions Support Salaries/Housing	1,604,124	1,604,124
Missions Support Travel/Field Services	158,943	158,943
Subtotal for State Board of Missions Ministries	11,172,660	11,172,660
*GuideStone (moved from Southern Baptist Convention Ministries — see above)		799,338
Total for State Board of Missions Ministries		11,971,998
STATE CONVENTION ENTITY MINISTRIES		
Christian Higher Education Ministries		
A. A. Earl Potts Scholarship	111,761	111,761
B. Board of Aid to Students	254,110	354,110
C. Judson College	936,870	1,038,163
D. Samford University	3,551,231	0
E. University of Mobile	2,385,366	2,627,728
Other Entities and Commissions Ministries		
A. Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries	253,625	253,625
B. Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center	544,943	544,943
C. The Alabama Baptist	552,673	552,673
D. The Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers	186,125	186,125
E. The Baptist Foundation of Alabama	132,251	132,251
F. The Christian Life Commission	24,475	24,475
G. The Education Commission	3,230	3,230
H. The Alabama Baptist Historical Commission	127,775	127,775
Auxiliaries and Other Ministries		
A. ALCAP	65,354	65,354
B. Alabama Woman's Missionary Union	505,790	505,790
Total for Convention Entity Ministries	9,635,578	6,528,002
GRAND TOTAL COOPERATIVE PROGRAM BUDGET	40,000,000	37,000,000
SPECIAL OFFERING GOALS		
Lottie Moon Christmas Offering	11,600,000	12,000,000
Annie Armstrong Easter Offering	6,100,000	6,100,000
Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries	2,700,000	3,000,000
Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering	1,000,000	1,000,000
Alabama Baptist World Hunger Offering	800,000	800,000
Total for Special Offering Goals	22,200,000	22,900,000

ABSC, Samford 'where we need to be now'

(continued from page 1)
completed and officials confirmed the group has been dissolved.

The recent group consisted of John Thweatt, ABSC president; Tim Cox, ABSC first vice president; Buddy Champion, ABSC second vice president; Travis Coleman, ABSC immediate past president; Morgan Bailey, SBOM chairman; Mike Goforth, SBOM vice chairman; and Rick Lance, SBOM executive director.

The group was formed in May when a controversial student organization seeking "to discuss topics related to sexual orientation and gender identity in an open-minded and accepting environment" sought official recognition.

Concerns arose among ABSC leaders because the organization's emblem featured the colors of the rainbow, a trademark of the homosexual community, and because one of the student founders had been involved in homosexual-rights organizations.

The student organization passed several university hurdles, including being affirmed by a majority of the faculty present for the vote on it in April. While the anticipated next step was for the organization to be presented to Samford's board in September, Samford President Andrew Westmoreland decided to decline recognition of

the group himself in late June, thus also eliminating the provisional status it had been functioning under since early 2016.

From there came the decision by Samford's board of trustees executive committee to withdraw from state convention funding.

Following the study group's report, only one messenger went to a microphone to respond — Westmoreland. While noting he

disagreed with a few points, he said, "I affirm the work of the study committee. On behalf of Samford University, I affirm the biblical understanding of marriage and human sexuality," he said. "We are velcroed to Alabama Baptists and will stay anchored."

Prior to the study group's report, Lance shared with

messengers that "some of you have said, 'You have been too permissive ... and let them off too easy.' I don't think so.

"Some of you have said, 'You have been too punitive and [reacted] too harshly.' I don't think so.

"We did our best to tamp it down and ... say this is where we think Alabama Baptists are."

Bailey added, "None of the parties wanted to go through what we went through. I do believe we are where we need to be now and we can move forward in the new relationship for His kingdom."✠



Photo by Maggie Walsh

SBOM chairman Morgan Bailey reads the study group report to messengers Nov. 14.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland (right) prepares to speak to a breakfast crowd in Huntsville on Nov. 14 prior to the state convention annual meeting.



Coleman shares how discipleship is pattern of his life

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

His life is a love story. But I didn't realize it until I talked to him one-on-one.

Robert Coleman, who will be 90 on his next birthday, is a man with an impressive resumé. He's taught as a distinguished professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts, since 2001 and averages about 35 speaking engagements a year that take him all over the world. He also taught at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School for 18 years and, prior to that, at Asbury Theological Seminary for 27 years.

He's been mentored by Billy Graham, is the president of Christian Outreach and has written 21 books, including best-seller "The Master Plan of Evangelism."

There's so much more that I could note, but none of that is what made me realize that his life is defined by steadfast, wholehearted, abiding love. When we talked on the phone, I only asked Dr. Coleman two questions during our 41-minute conversation. He's one of those people who begins to answer a question and just gets rolling. But somehow, he manages to weave various details and thoughts together in such a way that you don't want him to stop talking (even if you are sitting on a child-sized table at the end of a hallway and getting a neck cramp from holding your cellphone to your ear with your shoulder). You just keep listening.

Importance of discipleship

In answering my second question about how and when he discovered the importance of discipleship, Dr. Coleman told me that it wasn't until he took the professor of evangelism position at Asbury Theological Seminary. It was then when he started asking, "What did Jesus do?" and "How did He relate this or that to the lives of ordinary people?"

Those questions combined with a concentrated studying of the Gospels led him to the importance of discipleship.

"I started letting my male students come with me to things ... and said they could come study the Bible with me or

pray with me," he said, and since then "it's been a pattern of my life."

Dr. Coleman and his wife, Marietta, shared a desire to invest in others and be true partners in ministry.

A love story

Hearing how he talked about Marietta was moving. I could hear the appreciation in his voice when he mentioned how much she sacrificed so he could take on so many speaking engagements. I could tell that he was smiling when he talked about all the ways she served the Lord. He even said her name tenderly, like it was so much more than just a means of identification.

Dr. Coleman has been a widower since Jan. 3.

"When she was dying I would lay down beside her and sing. It was snug, but we were together," he said. "She died in my arms."

"It was a wonderful time."

When he said "it was a wonderful time," that's when I realized that Dr. Coleman's life is a love story. It's not a story about the love between him and Marietta, although theirs was beautiful to hear.

It's a story about his love for his Savior.

When Dr. Coleman can say in all sincerity that letting go of half his heart, his wife of 65 years was "a wonderful time," it shows his heart. And it shows that his eyes are fixed heavenward, on the promise of eternity with the Lord that he was born to worship. No earthly loss, no matter how great, would take his eyes from his Creator. This is love, a love that not only drives him to disciple young men but also to accept with open hands that the Lord gives and the Lord takes away.

By the end of the phone call I was crying. What began as just one more thing to do in a whirlwind of a day ended as one of the most unexpectedly encouraging conversations of my life.

Dr. Coleman and I crossed paths because he was 1 of 8 speakers for the 2017 Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference on Nov. 13. This year's Pastors Conference urged pastors to "finish the course" and "keep the faith."

Robert Coleman, I can say with all confidence, is finishing well. ✠



Photo by Maggie Walsh

Robert Coleman preaches during the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference on Nov. 13 at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville.



Photo by Maggie Walsh

Rob Jackson, pastor of Central Baptist Church, Decatur, served as president of the 2017 Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference.

'Finish!'

Pastors Conference encourages church leaders to finish course, keep faith

By Grace Thornton and Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

J.D. Greear said that if Peter were to share the high point and low point of his day in Matthew 16, those points would've been pretty polarized.

The high would've been when Peter told Jesus he believed he was the Christ and Jesus said He would build His Church on that confession.

But the low would've been not too long after that when Jesus called Peter "Satan."

"Jesus ties all of His power to the confession of the apostles," said Greear, pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. "But when Peter tried to reshape Jesus to meet his expectations, Jesus responded with the strongest rebuke of the Bible — 'Get behind Me, Satan.'"

Distortions of Jesus still happen today, Greear said — people try to make Him fit who they want Him to be. "The truth of the gospel is not that if you follow Jesus, He will make all your dreams come true. It's that He's better than 10,000 dreams come true and is worth laying them all down and picking up a cross instead."

Cling to Jesus

That was Greear's message for the crowd gathered at the evening session of the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference (ABPC), held Nov. 13 at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville.

If Christians will cling to Jesus — the real Jesus — and know Him for who He really is, they will see great things happen in the Church in the midst of very dark days, Greear said. "I believe the greatest movements of God are still in front of us, not behind us."

Running strong into the future was the

message of the conference, which was based on the theme "Finish!" from 2 Timothy 4:7, which says, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."

Rob Jackson, pastor of Central Baptist Church, Decatur, and president of the ABPC, said many of the messages centered on long-term discipleship and pursuing God passionately for the rest of one's life and ministry.

"I think the overall theme of discipleship really spoke to people and really ministered to those here," he said. The messages were complemented by worship led by Clint Kimmel, associate minister of music and worship at Central Baptist.

Into the headwind

David Uth, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Florida, urged pastors to do the thing that God has called them to do, even if there's resistance.

Preaching from Acts 27, he talked about how Paul felt called to Rome and headed there even though there was a headwind.

"Everybody has a Rome in their life, that place you want to go or that ministry you'd really love to start that God has put in your heart and you can't get rid of," Uth said.

He encouraged them to lean into the call of God on their life and to make use of the resources He provides — including shelters from the wind where they can find rest.

"Ninety percent of pastors are discouraged. Some say, 'I'd rather burn out than rust out.' Isn't there another option? We've got to get out of the wind. We've got to find time to rest."

Teman Knight, pastor of Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, encouraged pastors to wholly follow God like Joshua and Caleb in Numbers 13-14.

Pastor J.D. Greear of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, urges listeners to cling to Jesus — the real Jesus — and know Him for who He really is.



Photo by Maggie Walsh

When the other 10 spies saw obstacles, Joshua and Caleb said, “It’s just like God told us, what are we waiting for — let’s go,” Knight said. “When God wants you to do something, He’s going to provide what’s needed to get the job done. Dare to be different. Quit making excuses.”

In addition to obstacles, shame can be a deterrent in following God well into the future, Phil Waldrep said. Shame can be “one of the greatest deterrents in the life of believers today,” he said.

But shame doesn’t have to have a foothold in your heart and life, said Waldrep, founder and president of Phil Waldrep Ministries. You have to “acknowledge its presence in your life,” “be willing to be transparent” and “be willing to accept the approval and the affirmation and the healing.”

When your identity is in Christ, He equips you to step out of the darkness of shame and into the light of one of His redeemed.

“Shame tells you to go and hide, but grace tells you to come out and play,” Waldrep said. “Shame tells you you’re nothing, but grace tells you you’re a child of the King.”

Living in that kind of freedom prepares believers to preach in the

way that Jimmy Jackson, pastor of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, encouraged pastors.

He told participants that God called Jeremiah to tear down the institutions, businesses and philosophy of his day so He could build them back up. And that’s exactly what we have to do in our country, Jackson said.

Jeremiah’s message was never popular but he was a man who cared for his people.

“In order to really minister to people you have to love them,” Jackson said, noting that showing real love in relationships is growing more and more rare with the increase of technology and prevalence of surface-level relationships.

Billie Hanks Jr., founder of the ministry Becoming a Disciple-Maker, agreed that deep, long-term discipling relationships are what’s needed in Baptist churches.

“We have the best pulpits in the land, but preaching and teaching alone won’t cut it,” he said. “We’ve got to get training back in the lives of our churches.”

Discipleship is a process not an event, he said.

“Every single person who prays to receive Christ in Alabama should be disciplined. No exceptions,” Hanks said.

Scott Guffin said he too has seen the need for discipleship in order to prepare the next generation for the future.

His new role as executive director of Samford University’s Christian Ministries Degree Program has him thinking differently about “finishing well” than he did a few months ago.

Because of this role, he’s been doing a kind of informal survey asking those in academia what

they think his focus should be in teaching students.

Teaching the Bible

“You know what they say? To teach them the Bible because we’re getting students in the seminary who know doctrine but they don’t know the Bible,” Guffin said to a surprised audience. “Maybe we’ve emphasized ‘watch your doctrine’ too closely, so this morning I want to put the empha-

sis on ‘watch your life closely.’”

Based on 1 Timothy 4:16, his message encouraged participants to watch their lives closely in three ways: by keeping pride in its place, by keeping relationships healthy and by keeping the world as our mission field.

“Do not love the world or the things of the world,” he warned. “The world’s not our playground. It’s not our battleground. The world is our missions field.” ✝

“The world’s not our playground. It’s not our battleground.

The world is our missions field.”

**Scott Guffin
executive director, Christian
Ministries Degree Program,
Samford University**

New Pastors Conference officers elected



Photo by Maggie Walsh

Newly elected Pastors Conference officers for 2018 are (l to r) Richard Richie, pastor of Blue Springs Baptist Church, Somerville, treasurer; Chad Burdette, pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church, Ranburne, vice president; Stuart Davidson, pastor of Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne, president-elect; and Daven Watkins, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pelham, president.

THEME INTERPRETATION

Discipleship more than 'upgrade' on Christianity

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

The word "Christian" appears three times in the New Testament. The word "disciple" appears 176 times in Matthew, John and Acts alone, Derek Gentle said.

So then, obedience to God's Word should naturally place us on the trajectory of discipleship. But what does it mean to "be a disciple"?

"There seems to be a widespread understanding today that a person can become a Christian, but if they want to experience more and serve more, they can opt to upgrade to discipleship," said Gentle, pastor of First Baptist Church, Tallassee, in his theme interpretation sermon Nov. 14. "So let us begin by saying discipleship is not a premium upgrade on regular Christianity for those willing to pay the price."

Rather, it's a "person who has accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior and is seeking to learn from, obey and follow after Him as the Master of his life," he said, quoting longtime Baptist pastor Paul Powell.

Marks of disciples

John 6 shows us that being a genuine disciple of Jesus is not easy. In verse 66 there are many who began following Him but turned away when Jesus' teachings were too much for them.

"Jesus makes radical truth claims that are hard to accept ... not hard to understand, but hard to accept," Gentle pointed out. By claiming to be the sole source of personal fulfillment, claiming to have come from heaven and claiming a unique relationship with the Father, Jesus discovers His true disciples because a genuine disciple "sticks to Jesus."

Wholehearted belief in Jesus is another mark of a true disciple, Gentle said.

"What you really, truly believe — not just what you think you are supposed to believe or say you believe, but what you really be-

lieve in your heart of hearts — that determines how you will perceive your life and the world around you, how you will act and react and (how you) will determine your priorities and choices."

And the only way to completely believe in Jesus day by day is to be "in a relationship" with Him.

"Trying to be like Jesus doesn't work," Gentle said. "But when we focus on Jesus and spend time with Jesus, the Holy Spirit does His transforming work from within to make us like Jesus."

He must be the well from which we draw every day, Gentle encouraged.

"We have to choose to draw His grace and power into our lives."

This is where Christian disciplines — such as spending time



Photo by Bethany Rogers

Derek Gentle, pastor of FBC Tallassee, delivers the Nov. 14 theme interpretation on Disciple: Be One.

alone with the Lord in prayer, memorizing Scripture, fellowshiping with other believers and relying on the Holy Spirit — come in.

"The disciplines themselves do not make us disciples," Gentle pointed out. "By themselves the disciplines would just make us lost people with lots of homework."

Instead the disciplines connect us to Jesus "relationally and plug us in to draw fulfillment, guidance and power from Jesus." ✝

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CHURCH POSITIONS

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

OTHER POSITIONS

DAY CARE DIRECTOR

Eastside, Birmingham. Responsible for the planning, organizing and execution of all programs and care. Send resumés to the Personnel Committee at bfmurphy@bham.rr.com.

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Alabama Baptists tapped for service

During the 195th annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, Baptists from across the state were elected to serve on the governing boards of convention-related entities. Also approved by messengers were individuals to serve on the committees of the convention.

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

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chairperson: John Thweatt

District: Scotty Hogan, Craig Carlisle, *Bobby Bailey, Larry Cummings, *Ronnie Marshall, Mark McCullough, Mack Morris, Dee McGuire, James Nichols, Jesse Reeder, Morgan Bailey, Britt Green

Members at large: *Becky Head, Mack Amis, Buddy Champion, Mike Goforth, Stuart Davidson, *Judith Cooley, *Judy Conaway, Rusty Sowell

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

STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

Terms to Expire 2020: Mel Johnson, Autauga; Robert Burns, Baldwin; Jason Leight, Bessemer; Chris Kynard, Bethel; Mark McCullough, Bethlehem; Greg Corbin, Birmingham; *Connie Cook, Cahaba; Alan Craig, Carey; Barrett Long, Chris Underwood, Colbert-Lauderdale; *Rhonda Grandstaff, Chad Hixson, Columbia; *Rodger Carroll, Conecuh; Gary Miller, *Shirley Smith, Covington; Christopher Woodall, Dale; Zach Richards, Nathan VanHorn; DeKalb; *Jessica Todd, East Liberty; Britt Green, Elmore; Mat Alexander, Etowah; *Karen Stewart, Friendship; Dusty McLemore, Kevin Ward, Limestone; *George Foust, Tim Milner, Madison; Royce DuBose, Rob Hatfield,

Roy Hill, Jeremy Smalley, Mobile; Daniel Atkins, *Patti Shoemaker, Montgomery; Scotty Hogan, Morgan; Paul Hicks, Mud Creek; Jesse Reeder, Muscle Shoals; Charlie Wilson, Pickens; Richie Ashburn, *Marcia Johnson, Russell; Max Stripling, Sipsey; Faron P. Golden, Tallapoosa; Larry Corder, James Nichols, Herb Thomas, Tuscaloosa; David Miller, Walker

THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

Terms to Expire 2020: Gary Fenton, Dawson Memorial, Birmingham

Terms to Expire 2021: Ben Bowden, First, Enterprise; John T. Brock, Highland, Florence; *Sallie M. Bryant, Lakeside, Birmingham; Rick Ellison, First, Silverhill

BOARD OF AID

Terms to Expire 2019: *Jerry Reeves, First, Leroy

Terms to Expire 2021: Todd Dean, First Oak Grove, Sylacauga; Jason Lee Smith, First, Summerdale; Benjamin S. Stubblefield, First, Jackson

CHILDREN'S HOMES

Terms to Expire 2021: *James A. Bearden, Valley Grande, Valley Grande; *Fred Graham, First, Tuscaloosa; *Leah S. Stephens, First, Montgomery; *Stephen Wellborn, Corinth, Cragford

CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION

Terms to Expire 2021: Chad Burdette, Macedonia, Ranburne; Art Burroughs, Woodridge, Mobile; *Joanne B. Farmer, Mount Hebron West, Elmore; Bill Morgan, First, Prattville

EDUCATION COMMISSION

Terms to Expire 2021: Jim Jackson, First, Tallassee; Rick Marshall, Eastern Hills, Montgomery; *Peggie Mizzell, Hopewell, Marion; John W. Nicholson Jr., Siloam, Marion

BAPTIST FOUNDATION

Terms to Expire 2021: *Phyllis Boone, Shades Mountain, Vestavia Hills; *W. Thomas Gaither, First, Eufaula; *Michael Lytle, Dawson Memorial, Birmingham; *Vicki M. Martin, First, Dothan; Scott White, Redemption, Saraland

HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Terms to Expire 2021: *Sonja J. Adams, Heflin, Heflin; Ken Allen, Second, Fort Payne; *Calvin Milford, First, LaFayette; *Mary Zeiger Staggs, First, Pell City

RETIREMENT CENTERS

Terms to Expire 2021: W. Ray Burdshaw, First, Montgomery; *Jennifer Foster, Heritage, Montgomery; *Janice L. Hull, First, Clanton; *Dwain Kinard, Eastern Shore, Daphne, George B. King, Dawson Memorial, Birmingham

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

Terms to Expire 2018: *Albert L. Shumaker, First, Centre

Terms to Expire 2020: *Sharon D. Stuart, Dawson Memorial, Birmingham

Terms to Expire 2021: *Karon Bowdre, Dawson Memorial, Birmingham; *Victor M. Brown, Shades Mountain, Vestavia

Hills; *Andy Birchfield, First, Montgomery; *Robert Holmes Jr., Sixth Avenue, Birmingham; *Don Kilgore, First, Jasper; *Sheri P. McKean, First, Montgomery; *Gary Ray Pearman, Whitesburg, Huntsville; *Roderic G. Steakley, Whitesburg, Huntsville; Danny Wood, Shades Mountain, Vestavia Hills

JUDSON COLLEGE

Terms to Expire 2021: *Carol J. Crain, First, Pell City; *Daveta Dozier, Thomasville, Thomasville; *Doug Halbrooks, Siloam, Marion; *Ricky Kirkpatrick, Shades Mountain, Vestavia Hills; *James Sanford, First, Prattville; *Jerry Thomas, First, Tuscaloosa; *Rod P. Wilkin, First, Tuscaloosa

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

Terms to Expire 2019: *Michael B. Tew, Tillman's Corner First, Mobile

Terms to Expire 2020: *Terry H. Harbin, Redemption, Saraland

Terms to Expire 2021: *Mike Baggett, First, Scottsboro; Scott Dawson, Shades Mountain, Vestavia Hills; *Jim West, Spring Hill, Mobile

SHOCCO SPRINGS

Terms to Expire 2021: Glenn Bonds, Providence, Clanton; *Joy Reeves, First, Trussville; Philip Morris, Chulafinnee, Heflin; Mark Stokes, Billingsley, Billingsley

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Chairperson 2017-2018:

Rick Evans

Chairperson 2018-2019:

Stuart Davidson

Terms to Expire 2019: *Jo Ellen Carwile, First, Athens; Ken Allen, Second, Fort Payne; *Joanie G. Albright, First, Oxford; William Hand, First, LaFayette; *Judy Gay, First, Headland; Steve Dunn, Eastwood, Monroeville; Stuart R. Davidson, Eastern Shore, Daphne; *Brandy Roye, Greensboro, Greensboro; *Andrew Cicero, Circlewood, Tuscaloosa; Kenny Hatcher, First, Guin; *Kay Fisher Witt, Lakeside, Birmingham; *Emily Filipi, Thelma, Wetumpka

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Chairperson 2017-2018:

*Melissa Sahagun, First, Trussville

Terms to Expire 2020: *David Furst, Eastern Hills, Montgomery; *Jay Knight, Shades Mountain, Vestavia Hills

INSURANCE COMMITTEE

Chairperson 2017-2018:

*Rusty Melnick, First, Opelika

Terms to Expire 2020: *Lisa Lackey Paterson, First, Montgomery

TIME, PLACE, PREACHER

Chairperson 2017-2018:

James Nichols, Chapel Hill, Northport
Terms to Expire 2018: Bill Cannon, First, Union Springs; Mike Goforth, Sardis, Boaz; Jerry Henry, First, Fairhope; Bill King, Providence, Opelika; James Nichols, Chapel Hill, Northport; James W. Troglen, First, Wetumpka; Daven Keith Watkins, First, Pelham

Thweatt names committees

Two committees, the Credentials Committee and the Tellers Committee, were appointed during the state convention's opening session Nov. 14. The Committee on Committees also was named during the Tuesday sessions.

State Convention President John Thweatt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pell City, announced the appointments 30 days prior to the annual meeting in accordance with bylaw requirements, but messengers had to ratify the appointments during the meeting.

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

Serving as chairman of the committee was Michael J. Brooks, Siluria, Alabaster. Serving with him were John Robert Burt, University, Huntsville; Barry F. Coper, Church at McAdory, McCalla; George Riek, Orchard, Mobile; Jeremy Smalley, First, Bayou La Batre; Clayton Speed, First, Hartselle; Kevin Ward, First, Athens.

Tellers Committee members helped convention officers tabulate convention votes.

Roy Hill, First, Satsuma, served as chairman. Other members were Gary Linville, Shoal Creek, Decatur; Zach Richards, Union Grove, Crossville; Larry Roberts, First, Harpersville; A.J. Smith, Bay Springs, Shelby; Morris Stephens, Bethany, Horton; Keith Williams, Central, Albertville.

The following also were elected to serve on the Committee on Committees until 2020: Ben Stubblefield, First, Jackson, chair in 2020; Mat Alexander, First, Gadsden; James Sampley, CrossPoint, Trussville. (TAB)

MEMORIALS COMMITTEE

Chairperson 2017-2018:

Mike Shaw, First, Pelham

Terms to Expire 2018: *Betty Baggott, Eastern Hills, Montgomery; *Inez D. Barnett, Siloam, Marion; Ernest Hill Jr., Mount Zion, Huntsville; Mike Shaw, First, Pelham; Darryl Wood, First, Vincent

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Chairperson 2017-2018:

Rob Jackson, Central, Decatur

Terms to Expire 2020: Rob Jackson, Central, Decatur; Gregory Pouncey, Tillman's Corner First, Mobile

RESOLUTIONS

Chairperson 2017-2018:

Jim Cooley, First, Birmingham

Terms to Expire 2018: Jim Cooley, First, Birmingham; Matt Haines, Sixth Street, Alexander City; Ben Hayes, Southside, Decatur; Edwin Jenkins, First, Athens; *Frances King, Dawson Memorial, Birmingham; *Glenda Mims, First, Clanton; Mark Stokes, Billingsley, Billingsley

Time, place, preacher report

The 2018 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting will be held at First Baptist Church, Trussville, on Nov. 13-14.

The convention preacher for the 2018 annual meeting will be Terrence Jones, pastor of Strong Tower at Washington Park, Montgomery.

Alternate preacher is Rick Marshall, retired pastor from Montgomery.

Messengers voted for the 2022 annual meeting to take place Nov. 15-16 at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills. (TAB)

THEME INTERPRETATION

'Stick to what Jesus told us to do;' Gandy urges daily discipleship

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

There's a lot out there that's not true discipleship. Malachi Gandy has seen it, he's heard it and he's been a part of it. But he wants others to learn from his experiences.

A few years ago Gandy, a member of Bush Memorial Baptist Church, Troy, and co-owner of Deloney & Gandy Timber Inc., was challenged by his pastor to dig into what it means to be a disciple of Christ who then goes out and makes disciples.

To figure out how to go about that, he looked to the Gospels.

"Jesus taught His followers," Gandy said in his theme interpretation sermon Nov. 15. "He walked through life with them."

The whole idea of investing in someone's life and being intention-

al about being in their life comes from Jesus' example, he said.

"Before His ascension we see Jesus give the command for His disciples to go and make disciples," Gandy said. And we see in Acts 2 when 3,000 people were saved on the Day of Pentecost that Jesus' investment in the lives of His disciples bore fruit.

Verse 46 says, "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts."

This verse is key, Gandy said, because true discipleship "isn't a week-by-week thing."

This isn't a short-term, eight or 10-week commitment, Gandy said. He calls that model "cultural discipleship." Instead, true discipleship is daily.

"I look at what Jesus' example

was in the Bible and I look at how He invested in people's lives and how we see Him calling them to ministry and doing ministry and we see how He served them ... and I see Him investing in (His disciples for) three years. And I look at that and I say, 'Man that looks exhausting.'"

But that is healthy disciple making that takes concerted effort and perseverance, he said.

So how do we go from "cultural disciple making" to "actually biblically making disciples"?

"We never forget why we make disciples," Gandy said, emphasizing the importance of reading God's Word and speaking it aloud to yourself until the truth of it penetrates your heart.

"And we have to never forget who makes the disciple."

Jesus is the Vine, the source of anything good within us who are the branches, Gandy said, referring to John 15.

The "fruit" in verse 5 refers to "any fruit that [comes from] complete dependence upon Jesus Christ and persevering prayer in Jesus' name."



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Malachi Gandy, a member of Bush Memorial Baptist Church, Troy, delivers the Nov. 15 theme interpretation Disciple: Make One.

"The most lasting fruit we could ever bear is a follower of Jesus Christ."

**Malachi Gandy
member, Bush Memorial
Baptist Church, Troy**

"The most lasting fruit we could ever bear is a follower of Jesus Christ because that is for eternity."

And abiding in Christ every day is the only way to produce fruit that lasts. Practically speaking, that looks like "going to God as your source," Gandy said. Only when God is the source of your joy, your service, your perseverance can you turn to others and give of yourself sacrificially and consistently. And that impacts missions, commitment levels, ministries, giving — every aspect of church life.

"Stick to what Jesus told us to do," he encouraged. "Just make disciples." ✠

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Time is at a premium

Time is ticking second by second; use your time to make disciples, Davidson says

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

When you read the Bible from cover to cover, a lot of themes may jump out. But Stuart Davidson says one truth you can't miss is this — time is fleeting.

"The most precious resource you have isn't what's in your wallet, it's what's on your wrist," he said. "Our time is ticking by second by second."

And the most important way we can use it is to make disciples, said Davidson, pastor of Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne.

Your legacy

In his convention sermon Nov. 15, he challenged messengers to think about their legacy and how they invested their time. "There's nothing more important than in-

still the kingdom of God into someone else's soul."

Preaching from 2 Kings 2:1-14, he talked about how the prophet Elijah had taken seriously his call to invest in Elisha. Elijah knew he only had a short amount of time to invest. He also knew that his investment would change the trajectory of Elisha's life.

"There is no greater joy than to witness the spiritual growth of another man, woman, boy or girl," Davidson said. "There is no greater use of our life than to be a conduit of grace, peace, love, compassion and mercy for God. God uses our lives as conduits to powerfully impact someone's life."

Everything in Elisha's life changed because of Elijah's investment, he said. "He (Elijah) bestowed upon him purpose, power and God's presence."

With that in mind, he asked

this question — are you a disciple maker or a selfish taker?

"Are you someone who sees the potential in someone else and wants to help them be the person they're supposed to be, or do you just want to be a consumer? Oh, that we would have a passion to be disciple makers," Davidson said.

'Work today'

He told those present that he knows they are pulled in many directions and that time is at a premium.

"However, let me encourage you today that it is never OK to run away from our responsibility to use our time making disciples for Christ," Davidson said. "Remember, Jesus tells us to work today, in this moment of time, because one day we will be unable to work. Our time will be up."✠



Photo by Maggie Walsh

Stuart Davidson, pastor of Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne, delivers the convention sermon challenging messengers to think about their legacy and how they invest their time.

Mississippi Doctor Helps Visually Impaired To See

Advanced Technology Allows Many To See Better or Drive Again



Grandchildren as viewed by a person with Macular Degeneration



Same scene of grandchildren as viewed through telescope glasses.

For many patients with macular degeneration and other vision-related conditions, the loss of central visual detail also signals the end to one of the last bastions of independence - driving. A Mississippi optometrist, Dr. Roderick Fields, is using miniaturized telescopes which are mounted in glasses to help people who have lost vision from macular degeneration and other eye conditions.

"Some of my patients consider me the last stop for people who have vision loss" said Dr. Fields, one of only a few doctors in the world who specializes in fitting bioptic telescopes to help those who have lost vision due to macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, and other debilitating eye diseases.

Imagine a pair of glasses that can improve your vision enough to change your life. Biotic telescopes may be the breakthrough in optical

technology that will give you the independence you've been looking for. Patients with vision in the 20/200 range can many times be improved to 20/50.

Macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness and vision loss in people over 50. Despite this, most adults are not familiar with the condition. As many as 25% of those over the age of 50 have some degree of macular degeneration. The macula is only one small part of the retina, however it is the most sensitive and gives us sharp central vision. When it degenerates, macular degeneration leaves a blind spot right in the center of vision making it difficult or impossible to recognize faces, read a book, or pass the driver's vision test.

Nine out of 10 people who have macular degeneration have the dry form. Biotic telescopes treat both dry and wet forms of macular degeneration

as well as other vision limiting conditions including glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, Stargardts, optic nerve atrophy, nystagmus, rod-cone dystrophy, and albinism.

While age is the most significant risk factor for developing the disease, heredity, smoking, cardiovascular disease, and high blood pressure have also been identified as risk factors. Macular degeneration accounts for 90% of new legal blindness in the US. While there is currently no cure, promising research is being done on many fronts. "My job is to figure out everything and anything possible to keep a person functioning" says Dr. Fields. Even if it's driving.

"Biotic telescopes can cost over \$2,000," says Dr. Fields. "especially if we build them with an automatic sunglass."

"The major benefit of the bioptic telescope is that the lens automatically focuses on whatever you're looking at," said Dr. Fields. "It's like a self-focusing camera, but much more precise."

To learn more about bioptic telescopes or to schedule a consultation with Dr. Fields, call (866) 771-2040. You can also visit our website at:

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For November 26

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

SET FUTURES Leviticus 26:3-16,40-45

Promise (3-13)

God promises Israel their obedience to Him would lead to human flourishing. He promised sustained life, peace and crops — all the necessary ingredients for a healthy and godly culture. But there is something very important hidden in this promise. If verse 9 sounds familiar, the phrase “to be fruitful and multiply,” that is because we have seen it before. In the Garden of Eden, God commanded humanity through Adam and Eve to create families and cultures that honored Him (Gen. 1:28). We failed. Then after the flood, God reiterated His command for humanity to create families and cultures that honored Him (Gen. 9:1). We failed again. God issued the same command to Jacob (Gen. 35:11) and finally to Jacob’s offspring, Israel (Lev. 26:9). Guess what? They too eventually failed. However, hidden in verse 9 is a promise in the command. “I will turn to you [and] make you fruitful and multiply.” It is God who is fulfilling this task because obviously we cannot do it alone.

Much later the Lord Jesus echoed this same commission to be fruitful and multiply as His disciples who go into the world and make more disciples (Matt. 28:19-20). Unsurprisingly, He makes the promise of His presence “always, to the end of the age” as we obey Him in our task (Matt. 28:20). It is always God who wills and works in us to bring about glory to His name.

Warning (14-16)

Sin brings severe consequences. Not only does it disrupt the order that God desires and brings death, but also it invites God’s discipline for those whom He calls His own. Whenever Israel failed, God

committed to reprimand and correct them. Yet even the punishments were within His sphere of control. His punishment was done with the ultimate hope that Israel would recognize her sin, repent and return. The goal then was restoration. While it may seem strange, Israel ought to take comfort in these words. No other nation garnered God’s affection like theirs, “for the Lord disciplines the one He loves, just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights” (Prov. 3:12). Yes, sin brings consequences but those consequences are a sure sign of God’s favor.

Return (40-45)

God promised Israel that repentance from sin would always stir His memory to remember the covenant that He made with them. He would remember the covenant He made with Abraham to bless the whole earth through his offspring (Gen. 22:17-18). We know that blessing was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus (Gal. 3:16). This is the great comfort of the gospel. John wrote, “If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

Notice that he did not say when we sin but if we sin. Just as the goal for Israel was obedience, the default mode of the believer ought to be obedience. But if we sin, God has promised to forgive us through repentance in the Lord Jesus. That repentance ought to be followed by amending our wrong so far as it is possible. In doing so we further God’s desire for blessing and flourishing. Never forget this incredible truth: the kindness that God showed Israel for repentance has spread to the whole world through Christ. Everyone, regardless of gender, race or nationality, can place their hope in the offering of forgiveness from God through His Son to all those who would repent from sin and follow Him. ✠

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

ANDREW: ACTIVE WITNESS John 1:35-42; 12:20-26

What must it have been like to meet Jesus for the first time? Although the Gospels give us four vivid pictures of Jesus in His earthly ministry, it can still be hard for us to get our heads around what Jesus was like. We are never told how Jesus looked, whether He was handsome or plain, tall or short, muscular or thin. We don’t know what His voice sounded like or what it might have been like to look into His eyes.

We do know there must have been something impressive in Jesus’ bearing. Repeatedly in the Gospels we find people who are outmatched by Jesus’ dominating presence. The woman at the well in John 4 told her kinsfolk, “He told me all that I ever did.” Those who heard Jesus teach in the synagogues in Mark 1 marveled at the way He taught them by His own authority and not the way the scribes did. The religious leaders in Mark 3 fell silent when Jesus questioned them about healing on the Sabbath. In Luke 4 a crowd of Jesus’ townspeople from Nazareth sought to throw Jesus from a cliff but could not. As Luke puts it, “He passed right through their midst and walked away.” We do not know what Jesus looked or sounded like, but we know there was something compelling about Him.

Invite those close to you to encounter Jesus. (1:35-42)

One of the places we see Jesus’ authority most vividly illustrated is in His calling disciples to follow Him. In the first chapter of Mark’s Gospel we find Jesus walking along the shores of the Sea of Galilee and coming across Andrew and Peter hard at their work as fishermen. With a word, He commands them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” With no indication at all that they knew who Jesus was or

what He stood for, they drop their nets and follow Him.

John’s Gospel gives us more “behind the scenes” information about the call Jesus placed upon these two. In John 1 we learn that Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist, and he was with the Baptizer one day when Jesus walked by. Seeing Jesus, John proclaimed, “Behold, the Lamb of God.” At this, Andrew had to know more. He followed Jesus and even ended up staying with Jesus and listening to what He had to say. Having spent time with Jesus, Andrew sought out his brother, Simon, and told him, “We have found the Messiah!” And then, John tells us, he took the next step and brought Simon face to face with Jesus.

Invite those seeking answers to encounter Jesus. (12:20-22)

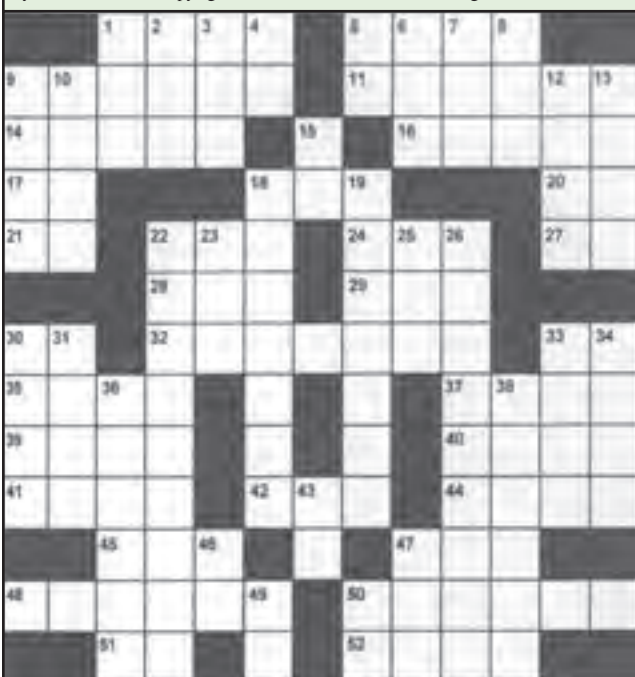
This was not the last time Andrew would be found bringing people to Jesus. Later in John’s Gospel, we find a story in which some Greeks had come to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Some of these had come to Philip to ask if they could see Jesus. Philip knew right where to take them — to Andrew. With Andrew’s help these two took the Greeks to meet with Jesus.

Be clear about what it means to follow Jesus. (12:23-26)

Andrew and Philip’s request that Jesus meet with these Greek seekers is met with an interesting response. Here, Jesus reminded them what the heart of His mission really was. Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, He tells them, it won’t produce fruit. Now it was time for Jesus to die. But in His death, He would produce spiritual fruit beyond their wildest imaginations. In essence, Jesus was confirming for Philip and Andrew and for the Greeks what Andrew had discovered and shared long ago: “We have found the Messiah!” ✠

Christian Crossword

By Janet Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- Poetic foot.
- I looked through my _____ment. (Prov. 7:6)
- Shall be in _____ of the judgment. (Matt. 5:21)
- Thou has _____d all things. (Rev. 4:11)
- By me if any man _____ in. (John 10:9)
- Alma _____.
- Indefinite article.
- Belonging to the talking horse.
- Continent. (abbr.)
- Baby’s first word.
- Shade tree.
- Let us make man in our _____ge. (Gen. 1:26)
- Poet Eliot’s initials.
- The shortest month.
- He who now letteth will _____ . (2 Thess. 2:7)
- Quiet, please.
- Effectual _____ prayer. (James 5:16)
- Alabama. (abbr.)
- When they ... had gone six _____s. (2 Sam. 6:13)

Down

- Money earned on account. (abbr.)
- He is of _____, ask him. (John 9:21)
- Sea. (French)
- One in a monastery. (abbr.)
- Medicine measure.
- In _____ was there a voice heard. (Matt. 2:18)
- Form of Alex.
- Part of a list.
- The Lord hath _____ the kingdom. (1 Sam. 15:28)
- Adam called his wife’s name _____. (Gen. 3:20)
- Neither shall ye break a _____ thereof. (Ex. 12:46)
- Day of the week. (abbr.)
- The Lord God is a _____ and shield. (Ps. 84:11)
- Belonging to Sarai’s husband.
- Belonging to Cephas.
- “Strength” or “strong one.” (Hebrew)
- In Isaac shall thy _____ be called. (Gen. 21:12)

- _____ yourselves likewise. (1 Pet. 4:1)
- The wicked are like the troubled _____. (Isa. 5:20)
- Ye shall _____ no manner of blood. (Lev. 7:26)
- Quickened who were _____ in trespasses, and sins. (Eph. 2:1)
- There was one _____, a prophetess. (Luke 2:36)
- The father of such as dwell in _____. (Gen. 4:20)
- Historical periods.
- Savings document.
- Paul, called unto him the disciples, and _____d them. (Acts 20:1)
- Let the woman learn in _____. (1 Tim. 2:11)
- The _____ fervent prayer. (James 5:16)
- Southern general.
- Not with eyeservice, as _____ pleasers. (Eph. 6:6)
- Characteristic.
- To practice boxing.
- Lest he _____ thee to the judge. (Luke 12:58)

- To whom be glory forever, _____. (Rom. 11:36)
- Jonathan ... had a son ... _____ of his feet. (2 Sam. 4:4)
- Midpoint. (British var.)
- Will never be _____ for by sacrifice. (1 Sam. 3:14 NIV)
- Roman numeral for 6.
- Printer’s measure.
- We shall _____ him as he is. (1 John 3:2)
- Naval vessel insignia.
- Thought added to letter.





(augmented reality)

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- 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.

Committed to disciple making

Alabama pastors share what's worked for them in discipleship sessions

By Maggie Walsh
The Alabama Baptist

Love and the Great Commission go hand in hand. You cannot do one without the other."

It's hard to tell who said it first, but between Robert Coleman and Billie Hanks Jr., it was a refrain of the "Becoming a Disciple-Maker" workshop Nov. 12 at Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, according to organizer Joey Hanner. Both men are lifetime disciple makers who have written popular books on the subject. Coleman is the author of "The Master Plan on Evangelism" and Hanks is the author of "A Call to Joy."

Through the session, Hanner hoped his fellow church leaders would be encouraged to start the fire of intentional discipleship in their churches. Hanner, pastor of Union No. 3 Baptist Church near Gadsden, has a passion for discipleship that is felt throughout his rural congregation — in the past six years they've baptized 900 people, following that up with one-on-one discipleship.

"I just know that if our churches would get ahold of this then we could celebrate what the Lord is doing together and the increase and spiritual maturity that comes along with it," Hanner said.

Hanks and Coleman both shared their personal experiences



Photo by Maggie Walsh
Bill Wilks (right) leads a D-Life demonstration Nov. 13 prior to the morning session of the 2017 Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference.

with discipleship, how it is a lifestyle of perseverance and investment.

When Coleman shared, "it was a monumental moment," Hanner recalled. "Pastors just had tears in their eyes."

Another Alabama pastor who

has a passion for discipleship is Bill Wilks, pastor of NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, who leads his church in a lifestyle disciple-making strategy called D-Life. He started D-Life three years ago and it's already in 28 states, Wilks said, which shows

that "the idea of living a life of discipleship has found a place in people's hearts."

"One of the main things that makes it successful is the simplicity of it," he said. "It's simple, but not shallow. ... And it's reproducible."

Wilks, along with a few volunteers, led a D-Life demonstration Nov. 13 prior to the morning session of the 2017 Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference at Whitesburg Baptist. Together the five men modeled what a typical D-Life meeting would look like, with Wilks providing additional information and suggestions for adaptation along the way. The demonstration was sponsored by Life Bible Study and *The Alabama Baptist*.

At the end of the demonstration Stan Albright, pastor of First Baptist Church, Oxford, shared his church's experience with D-Life. First, Oxford, began D-Life groups two years ago. In the first year 18 people were baptized. This year 86 have been baptized.

"It just shows you the power that has taken place in this process. ... My prayer is that you would go back and do something similar to this in your own congregation," Albright said.

For disciple-making materials and information, visit disciple-maker.org or livethedlife.com.

New DOM officers elected



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

New officers for the Alabama Baptist Conference of Directors of Associational Missions are president, Randall Stoner (center), Marshall Association; president-elect, Don Smith (left), Winston Association; and secretary-treasurer, Barry Cospers (right), Bessemer Association.

Paul Stewart Award presented

The 2017 Paul Stewart Lifetime Service Award was presented to Connie Hale (right) on Nov. 13.

The award is given annually by the Alabama Singing Men to one who is a 'true leader in church music, exhibiting a real calling to the work, modeling strong leadership abilities, showing durability through the years and possessing gifts of encouragement and guidance to those being led.' Hale is a popular leader at Mix MusicCamp

at Shocco Springs, having been involved for more than 30 years with both children's and youth music. Pictured with her is Frank Jones, chairman of the selection committee.



Photo by Guy Anderson

Life at convention

WHITESBURG BAPTIST CHURCH, HUNTSVILLE



Photo by Maggie Walsh

Left: Carter Reeves, associate worship pastor for FBC Prattville, sings special music prior to the convention sermon.



Photo by Maggie Walsh

Above: Pastor Terrence Jones of Strong Tower at Washington Park in Montgomery reads Scripture prior to the convention sermon.

Right: Lonette Berg (center), executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, attends the Tuesday evening session with her daughter, Elizabeth Hill, and son-in-law, Jonathan Hill. **Below:** Willa Dean Hinson checks out the Nov. 16 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

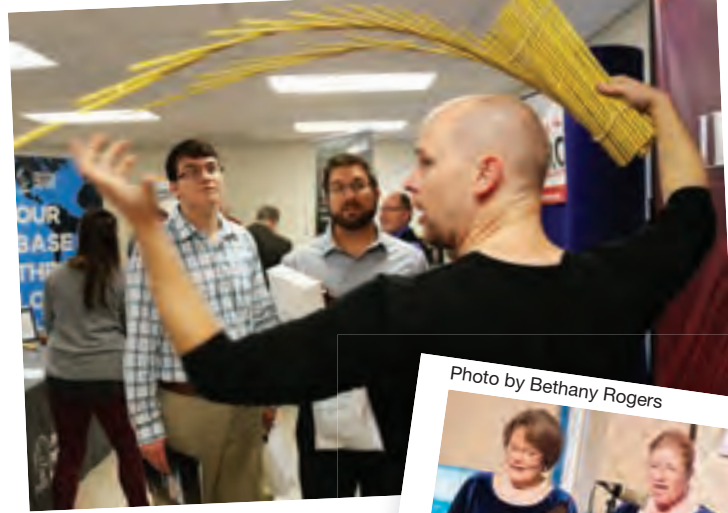


Photo by Maggie Walsh

Above Right: Christian illusionist Matt Adams (right) performs in the exhibit area. **Below:** Men and women across the sanctuary join hands in prayer during the evening session Nov. 14.



Photo by Bethany Rogers

Above: Alabama Singing Women kick off the annual meeting by opening up the morning session Nov. 14. **Below:** Rick Klepper (left) of Counter Threat Group assists a messenger in the exhibit area.

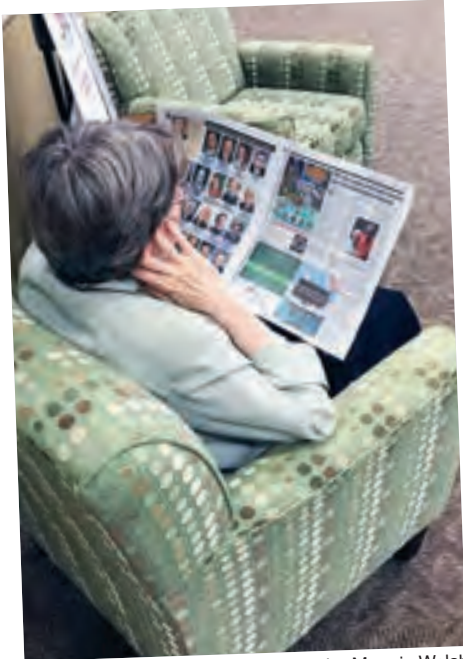


Photo by Maggie Walsh



Photo by Maggie Walsh



Photo by Maggie Walsh

Above: Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers are recognized.

Right: Kim Thweatt, wife of state convention president John Thweatt, shares the song 'Clean' prior to the president's address.



Photo by Bethany Rogers



Photo by Maggie Walsh