



January 18, 2018  
Vol. 183, No. 3

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123rf.com photo, graphic by Lauren C. Grim

## Abortion still common procedure despite drop in numbers

By Denise George  
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Since 1973, when the Supreme Court made its landmark decision in *Roe v. Wade*, almost 60 million abortions have been performed in the United States. Today's experts estimate that more than 900,000 abortions are performed in the U.S. each year.

Despite recent declines, abortion is still a common procedure. The Guttmacher Institute states that 1 in 4 women (23.7 percent) will have an abortion by age 45. Women in their 20s account for the majority of abortions, and more than 30 percent of these women identified themselves as mainline or evangelical Protestant.

Obtaining an abortion in Alabama is difficult — the state has some of the nation's most significant abortion restrictions. During the '80s and

'90s, Alabama had more than a dozen abortion clinics, but now it has fewer than five. In April 2016 the state prohibited persons and institutions from accepting compensation for fetal organs, tissue or remains for research, experimentation or transplantation.

### Dismemberment abortions

In May 2016, Alabama passed and enacted a ban on dilation and evacuation abortions, which the legislation referred to as dismemberment abortions.

In 2015, 5,899 abortions were performed in Alabama. In 2006 the number of abortions in the state peaked at 11,654. From 2009 to 2015 each year saw a decline in the number of abortions performed in Alabama.

In 2016 the number of abortions performed was 6,642. West Alabama Women's Center in Tuscaloosa performed about half of those abortions, according to numbers provided by Sue Turner, executive director of Alabama Physicians for Life.

As of July 1, 2017, Alabama has placed new and stricter restrictions on abortions, including:

- ▶ State-directed counseling for women that discourages abortion and a 48-hour waiting period before

any procedures can take place.

- ▶ An ultrasound before an abortion is allowed.

- ▶ Health plans that only cover abortion if the woman's life is in danger or if impregnated by rape or incest.

- ▶ Prohibited telemedicine/medication abortion.

- ▶ A parent's consent for minors to abort.

- ▶ Abortion allowed at 20 or more weeks post-fertilization only if the woman's life is endangered or her physical health is severely compromised.

The opioid epidemic also is reducing the number of abortions taking place in Alabama. Alabama's abortion providers are rejecting women who seek abortions if they are regular users of opioids. Providers claim they can't administer pain-killing medication during the agonizing abortion procedure because the patient's opioid use often nullifies the effects of surgical pain relievers.

That makes a big impact, because the state tops the nation in its ratio of opioid prescriptions per capita (1.2 prescriptions per person versus 0.76 nationwide). Alabama opioid  
(See 'Church,' page 4)

## SBOM opens doors at new Prattville location

By Doug Rogers  
Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

For the first time since 1963, the State Board of Missions (SBOM) has a new address and a new place to call home. On January 15, SBOM officially opened its doors at 1404 Fairview Avenue in Prattville after a weeklong moving process to vacate the Montgomery location, which itself followed many months of cleaning out, purging and packing.

The new 39,900-square-foot facility, which sits on just under four acres, was constructed and occupied in just under one year. The building is a result of a plan between Baptist Health, who built the new facility, and SBOM, amounting to an exchange of keys and property but with no funds exchanged, leaving SBOM debt-free.

Baptist Health will take possession of the former SBOM facility, located at the corner of Narrow Lane Road and East South Boulevard in Montgomery — immediately next door to Baptist Medical Center South.

Several offices were moved  
(See 'Committing,' page 3)

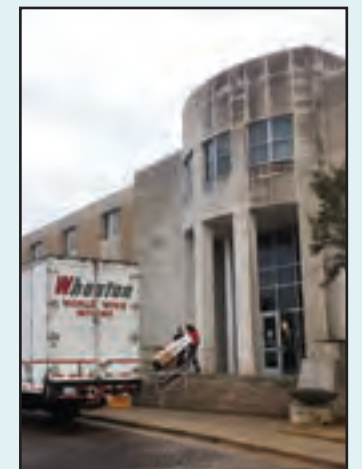


Photo by Doug Rogers

Moving trucks flank the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' Montgomery location Jan. 8.

# COMMENT

## In the End God Wins

A December 2016 study by the Gallup organization confirms what most of us already knew from our own experience — fewer Americans are giving to religious causes.

The percentage of Americans donating financially at least annually to religious causes has dropped from a high of 64 percent in 2005 to 52 percent in 2017.

At the same time, the percentage of Americans giving to secular charities has been practically steady — 76 percent in 2005 to 75 percent in 2017.

Again, the results are not surprising. News stories of past years have repeatedly highlighted the growth of the religious category called “nones” — people with no religious preference. In fact, Gallup points out the 12-point decline in those making charitable donations to religious causes between 2005 and 2017 “mirrors the 11-point decline in the percentage of Americans who say they are a member of a church or synagogue.”

In 2005, 64 percent of Americans reported membership in a church or synagogue. In 2017 that percentage was just over half, Gallup said. That decline in membership was expected to express itself in declines in other areas such as financial support.

### Volunteer work

In addition to giving money, Americans support religious causes through volunteering. Even there the news is not good. In 2003 the percentage of Americans who said they volunteered for a religious cause was 42 percent. In 2017 that percentage was 44 percent, demonstrating only slight growth over 14 years.

During the same time frame, Gallup found the percentage of Americans volunteering with secular charities had increased from 43 percent to 51 percent. That is a growth rate four times that of religious causes.

When Gallup sorted survey participants by age, income, education and religious preference, support for donating to charities and volunteer-



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

ing was strong in every category. Interestingly, the religious “nones” volunteered time with a charity less than Protestant or Catholic participants. Protestants volunteered at a rate of 70 percent, Catholics 61 percent and nones 51 percent.

### Strong culture

Obviously America has a strong culture of helping others that grows out of the biblical emphasis of caring for one’s “neighbor.” Helping those beyond one’s immediate circle of family and friends is not a trait common to cultures untouched by the Christian gospel.

Personal experience also confirms what the Gallup study found. While some churches continue to defy the trends, most denominations, including Southern Baptists and Alabama Baptists, are experiencing falling membership, declining giving and less participation generally.

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) reported its highest membership total in 2008. That year membership stood at just over 16 million. Eight years later that number had dropped by more than a million.

The Alabama Baptist State Convention reported its highest total membership in 2003 — 1,131,854. In 2016 total membership stood at 946,714 — a 16.4 percent decline.

Calculating worship attendance in Alabama Baptist churches based on the state’s percentage of SBC membership, between 325,000–350,000 people worship in Alabama Baptist-related churches on any given Sunday. The number par-

ticipating in Bible study or small group activities sponsored by churches is about two-thirds of that total.

Fewer total members and less participation in worship are good predictors that giving is declining. As a result, churches have had less to give.

Alabama Baptists reached their highest Cooperative Program (CP) receipts in 2008, a total of \$44,782,408. During the next eight years Alabama CP receipts slowly declined until 2016 when receipts reached \$38,770,875 — a 13.8 percent decrease from 2008.

Again, the numbers say what most know intuitively. These have been difficult years for churches, conventions and missions and ministries of every sort. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “We are hard-pressed on every side but not crushed ...” (2 Cor. 4:8).

Alabama Baptists still have almost 950,000 church members. That is almost 20 percent of the state’s population and the largest religious group in Alabama by far. We still have nearly 350,000 people gathered for worship any given Sunday and more than 200,000 in Bible study.

Southern Baptists still have more than 15.2 million members and cooperating churches receive more than \$9.2 billion in undesignated receipts.

Church members are still caring for others in Jesus’ name as they reflect God’s love and mercy into every area of life and every area of the world.

With the Apostle Paul we declare, “Therefore, we do not lose heart. ... We fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen” (2 Cor. 4:16, 18).

We look toward that day promised in Isaiah 45:23 when God said, “As surely as I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow before Me; every tongue will confess to God.”

### Name above all names

That promise forms the background of the Apostle Paul’s words recorded in Philippians 2:9–11, when he wrote, “Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. To the glory of God the Father.”

So we take seriously Gallup’s findings. We are informed by denominational statistics but we keep our focus on what is yet to be. In the end God wins. Glory be to God! ✠

***“We look toward that day promised in Isaiah 45:23 when God said, ‘As surely as I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.’”***

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

(ISSN 0738-7741;  
USPS 011-080)

© The Alabama Baptist, Inc. is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 1-800-803-5201. Fax: 205-879-6026. **Website:** www.thealabamabaptist.org. **Email:** news@thealabamabaptist.org or circulation@thealabamabaptist.org. Periodicals postage paid at Birmingham, Ala., and at additional mailing offices.

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# Committing to God's glory

## SBOM looks forward to using new facility to resource Alabama Baptists

*(continued from page 1)*  
each day beginning Jan. 8 from the Montgomery location to the Prattville facility, located 1.5 miles west of exit 181 off Interstate 65. By Jan. 11 every office had been moved and staff members were busy setting up and preparing for opening day. On Friday afternoon, Jan. 12, staff members closed the week out with a prayer walk encompassing the entire facility and parking lot, committing the new resource center to God's glory and the usefulness of Alabama Baptists.

### Coming together

The building and move-in process was superintended by Bobby DuBois, SBOM's associate executive director and chief financial officer.

"I can't say enough about the way our State Board family came together to accomplish this huge task and the support of Alabama Baptists in this endeavor. We are looking forward to many years of using this facility to resource our churches for Great Commission Ministries."

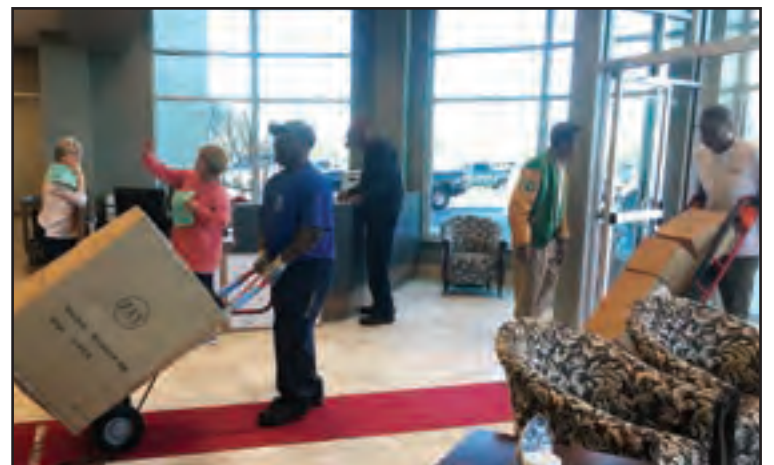
In addition to housing the offices of SBOM, Alabama Woman's Missionary Union and Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers, the new facility will feature a Great Commission Ministries (GCM) Conference Room which will seat around 150 and can be subdivided into three sections, a meal service area, three additional conference rooms and a classroom.



Movers deliver boxes to the new Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions Office Facility in Prattville located 1.5 miles west of exit 181 off Interstate 65.

The State Board of Missions Office Facility will be officially dedicated during Executive Committee and State Board of Missions meetings on Feb. 1 and 2. Forthcoming announcements will detail opportunities for tours and open houses throughout the next several months.

The 39,900-square-foot facility, which sits on just under four acres, was constructed and occupied in just under one year.



## My JESUS Story

By Jenni Ingram  
Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

Do you all know the parable of the vineyard workers? If not, see Matthew 19:30-20:16. It dawned on me while reading this during a difficult time one day that there can be many interpretations of the passage. My thought this day was of the lost as it applies to this parable. I gave my

heart and life to Christ on Oct. 21, 2002, and I am confident of my salvation. But what about those who make "deathbed confessions" in the 11th hour? Are they any less saved than me? No — they will stand in the same judgment that I will and receive their reward just like me.

Well friends, now is the 11th hour. Jesus is coming and soon. I urge you to accept Jesus' precious gift of salvation and become one of God's workers now. Remember, the harvest is plenty but the workers are few (Matt. 9:37). We need you, brothers and sisters. We may feel like Peter after he denied Christ in John 21:15-18, totally guilty and unworthy. But Jesus still wanted him to fulfill his purpose. He gave him very specific instructions just like He gives us:

"Feed My sheep." He gives us another command in Acts 1:8: "Witness."

We can't keep this good news to ourselves, friends. Look around you. I guarantee if you spend more than five minutes in public you will come in contact with at least one person who is lost, struggling or out of relationship. How can you tell? Look at their faces. Look at someone and just smile. They may smile back, but that joy may not reach their eyes.

These are the "sheep" that need to hear us say, "God loves you," and maybe even say a quick prayer for them. Be prepared — that may result in tears, but God will catch every one of those tears.

**ABORTION**

# Closing clinics

## US sees increase in abortion clinic closures in recent years

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**  
The Alabama Baptist

**O**ne kindergarten classroom full of children — on average that's how many babies are aborted each day in Alabama.

There is hope, however.

Operation Rescue reported in December that the number of abortion facilities in the U.S. declined in 2017, with clinic closures far outpacing openings. Using data collected through the end of November 2017, Operation Rescue estimates that the total number of abortion facilities in America decreased by 27 from 2016 to 2017.

Nationwide, 49 abortion facilities — 35 surgical and 14 medication-only clinics — closed or halted abortion services, the report said. Only eight new surgical abortion facilities were opened, along with 11 new medication abortion facilities, according to Cheryl Sullenger, senior vice president of Operation Rescue.

### Alabama numbers

The number of abortion clinics in Alabama stayed steady from 2016 to 2017. Alabama has seen an overall drop in abortion providers over the past decade, however.

In 2006, Alabama had 10 abortion centers, said Sue Turner, executive director of Alabama Physicians for Life. Today the state has five clinics, one each in the cities of Birmingham, Huntsville, Mobile, Montgomery and Tuscaloosa.

In the Operation Rescue report, which is based on an annual survey of abortion facilities, Sullenger suggests several reasons for the closure of abor-

tion clinics nationwide, including a decreased demand for abortions. She also credits the decline in abortion numbers to successful pro-life activism, failure of facilities to comply with licensing and safety regulations, the decrease in providers willing to perform abortions and new state laws.

The drop in the number of clinics has mirrored a drop in the overall number of abortions performed in the United States (see story, page 1).

According to Guttmacher, U.S. abortions in 2014 hit a record low since 1975, two years after the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision legalized abortion. In 2014, 926,200 abortions were performed.

The Operation Rescue report also notes that the number of abortion facilities that offer only abortion-inducing drugs is holding steady but is likely to rise. This includes many Planned Parenthood sites, which operate nearly half of all abortion facilities in the U.S. and account for about one-third of all abortions done nationwide, according to Operation Rescue.

"Abortion facilities that provide only abortion drugs comprise an increasing slice ... of the abortion pie," said Troy Newman, president of Operation Rescue.

Usually referred to as chemical or

medication abortions, the drugs used for the process carry many risks, Turner said, because they require follow-up care that often is neglected by the women who take them and the abortion providers who give them the drugs.

"There are more complications for chemical abortions than for surgical ones because if everything (inside the woman's uterus) isn't expelled, there is a greater risk of infection," Turner said.

Pro-life advocates are excited about advancements in abortion pill reversal treatment, which uses natural progesterone to counter the effects of abortion medications. The abortion pill reversal

process uses injections of progesterone to counteract the effect of mifepristone, the first of a drug duo used in chemical abortions.

After taking the first drug, more than 400 women have called the Abortion Pill Reversal hotline and successfully saved their babies' lives, according to pro-life organization Heartbeat International.

Turner knows of at least two babies in Alabama born after their mothers took steps to reverse a chemical abortion, and she believes there will be more as more people learn about the treatment.

"This is going to go so far in helping women in the healing process, even if they are unable to save their babies," Turner said. "It's a wonderful source of redemption and healing to realize, 'I made a mistake, but I tried to do something about it.'"



123rf.com

**For more information, including referrals to doctors who will provide the abortion pill reversal, visit [www.abortionpillreversal.com](http://www.abortionpillreversal.com) or call 1-877-558-0333.**

**Information about 40 Days for Life, an annual prayer and outreach effort that runs from Feb. 14 through March 25, is available at [www.40daysforlife.com](http://www.40daysforlife.com).**

## Church leaders have opportunity to help

(continued from page 1)

overdose deaths are at an all-time high — 1 of the 5 greatest in the nation. But even with all those factors in mind, pregnant women who are considering abortion still sit in Southern Baptist church pews each Sunday in Alabama. Pastors and other church leaders have a huge opportunity to discourage potential abortions and to encourage live births and legal adoption.

Here are some ways to take advantage of that opportunity:

▶ From the pulpit, preach on the value and sanctity of life.

▶ Stay abreast of church and national observances, incorporating sermon and Bible study to the chosen theme.

▶ Encourage pregnant women to carry babies to full term and, if they are unable to care for them, to consider adoption.

▶ Be especially aware of the pregnant single women in your congregation. As a church, show them nonjudgmental love, practical concern and prayer support and keep them involved in worship, Bible study and church activities.

### Event planning

Organize events for young church couples who seek to strengthen marriage and family.

▶ Invite speakers from local agencies to address pregnancy issues, explaining the facts and stages of pregnancy as well as the importance of medical and self-care, etc.

▶ Help a pregnant woman receive an ultrasound at a local clinic.

▶ Refer pregnant women in your church to supportive and helpful agencies, organizations and crisis pregnancy centers.

▶ Make sure each pregnant woman in your church is receiving necessary medical care. If needed (and if your church is financially able), help provide funding.

▶ For a woman unable to afford to raise a baby, encourage her to choose adoption instead of abortion. As a church, minister to her throughout her pregnancy. Before delivery, provide her with a female guide/friend from the church or community who understands and can explain adoption and will walk with her throughout the process.

▶ Support Christian-based ministries such as Sav-A-Life that provide free services to those facing unplanned pregnancies.

### Obligation to minister

Sometimes, despite your best efforts, a woman in your congregation may choose abortion over adoption. In this case, pastors and church leadership have an obligation, as well as an opportunity, to minister to her.

Here are some suggestions:

▶ Always be nonjudgmental in your attitude toward women who have ended pregnancies through abortion. You can do this by loving them, praying with and for them and keeping them involved in church.

▶ If she is experiencing physical complications, refer her to a local Christian medical doctor. Encourage her to keep appointments. Follow up on the treatment she receives.

▶ If she is experiencing psychological trauma, refer her to a Christian counselor who will provide post-abortion counseling pro bono or at an affordable rate.

▶ Provide a support group in the church that allows instruction and dialogue for women who suffer from abortion-related issues.

▶ Talk with her about God's forgiveness.✝

### U.S. women who have abortions

- ▶ Unmarried women account for 85.2 percent of all abortions.
- ▶ Women in their 20s account for the majority of abortions.
- ▶ Women ages 15–19 accounted for 11.4 percent of abortions.
- ▶ For more than half of women who choose to abort, this was a first abortion.
- ▶ The abortion rate among poor women remains the highest (36.6 abortions per 1,000 women of reproductive age) and accounts for 49 percent of the nation's abortions.

Source: CDC, 2013

### Why women have abortions

The five most common reasons women choose abortion over birth:

- ▶ A concern or responsibility to other individuals.
- ▶ The inability to afford the expenses of childrearing.
- ▶ The belief that a child will interfere with work, school and/or the ability to care for other dependents.
- ▶ The desire not to be a single parent.
- ▶ Current problems with a husband or partner.

Source: Guttmacher Institute, 2014

# Children are a gift

## Adoption, foster care can be alternative for mothers considering abortion

By Denise George  
Special to The Alabama Baptist

**O**n any given day in the United States, nearly 428,000 children live in foster homes or institutions. Currently 107,918 children in our nation are eligible for and waiting to be adopted. Inevitably some of those children were almost aborted by their mothers but, by the grace of God, were carried to term and given up for adoption.

Infants and children usually enter foster homes when they are orphaned, have imprisoned or homeless parents or are abused or neglected by their birth parents. Alabama's unusually high opioid overdose and death epidemic is sending many of the state's children into foster care.

The Southern Baptist Convention's resolution "On Adoption and Orphan Care" encourages "each Southern Baptist family to pray for guidance as to whether God is calling them to adopt ... a child or children, and ... to encourage our pastors and church leaders to preach and teach on God's concern for orphans."

### How to help

How can church pastors and congregations support Alabama's foster children?

- ▶ Encourage members of your congregation to consider adopting a child or children who are adoptable and currently living in a foster care situation. Make church members aware of the great need for adoption.
- ▶ Provide your church leaders, staff and



Photo by Maggie Walsh

Scripture tells us that children are a gift and heritage from God and that Jesus loves the world's children.

### The theology of spiritual adoption

**As believers in Christ, we have received the "Spirit of adoption" and are now beloved children of God and joint heirs with Christ. Scripture references on spiritual adoption include:**

- ▶ John 14:18
- ▶ Rom. 8:12-25
- ▶ Gal. 3:27-4:9
- ▶ Eph. 1:5

congregation with material to study the facts of today's foster children and their needs.

- ▶ Invite knowledgeable speakers from a local foster or adoption agency to your church to share information about potential children waiting for adoption, parental qualifications for adoption, etc.

### Enlist volunteers

- ▶ Ask for church volunteers who have adopted children or are familiar with Alabama's adoption laws to guide new adoptive parents through the entire legal process.

### Types of adoption

- ▶ **Domestic adoption**
- ▶ **International adoption**
- ▶ **Closed (confidential) adoption:** No information is shared between birth family and adoptive family. The adoption files are sealed after the adoption and typically not available to the adopted child.
- ▶ **Open (cooperative) adoption:** Allows for varying degrees of association among birth family, adoptee and adoptive parents.

*Disclaimer: Before entering into the adoption process with any organization, families should get references and do research on the agency.*

difficult or painful home situations.

- ▶ As a local church, champion the evangelism of and ministry to orphans and foster children.
- ▶ Help and equip adoptive and foster families within your congregation with financial aid and other practical resources.

### What Scripture says

Scripture tells us that children are a gift and heritage from God and that Jesus loves the world's children (see Matt. 18:2-5; 19:14 and Ps. 127:3-5).

As your church prays for and ministers to Alabama's foster children as well as children around the world, study and contemplate the beautiful biblical theology of adoption — your own adoption in Christ.✠

### Helpful resources

#### Websites

- ▶ [www.adoptuskids.org](http://www.adoptuskids.org)
- ▶ [dhr.alabama.gov/services/Adoption/intro\\_adoption.aspx](http://dhr.alabama.gov/services/Adoption/intro_adoption.aspx)
- ▶ [www.alabamachild.org](http://www.alabamachild.org)
- ▶ [www.childrensal.org/international-adoption-clinic](http://www.childrensal.org/international-adoption-clinic)
- ▶ [www.adoption.com](http://www.adoption.com)

#### Some adoption services in Alabama:

- ▶ Alabama Family Adoption Services: [www.familyadoptionsservices.com](http://www.familyadoptionsservices.com) or 205-227-7937
- ▶ Children's of Alabama International Adoption Center: [www.childrensal.org/international-adoption-clinic](http://www.childrensal.org/international-adoption-clinic) or 205-638-6964
- ▶ Children's Aid Society of Alabama: [www.childrensaid.org](http://www.childrensaid.org) or 205-251-7148
- ▶ SAFY of Alabama: [www.safy.org/alabama/#tab-3-Adoption](http://www.safy.org/alabama/#tab-3-Adoption) or 205-945-7483
- ▶ Lifeline Children's Services: [www.lifelinechild.org/adoption](http://www.lifelinechild.org/adoption) or 205-967-0811
- ▶ Agape of Central Alabama: [www.agapeforchildren.org](http://www.agapeforchildren.org) or 205-733-9408

*And calling to Him a child, He put him in the midst of them and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me."*

Matt. 18:2-5



# Across ALABAMA'S Associations

## BESSEMER

► **Canaan Church, Bessemer**, will host an active shooter presentation by the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department on Feb. 15, 5:30–7 p.m. Morgan Bailey is pastor.

## BETHEL

► **Pine Hill Church** will be hosting "Sunday Nights on Monday Nights" at 7 p.m. each Monday night in February. Special guests will be: The Kingsmen Quartet, Feb. 5; soloist Joseph Habedank and Thomasville Church Pastor Ty Parten, Feb. 12; The Kendricks and evangelist Phil Waldrep, Feb. 19; and soloist Squire Parsons and evangelist Tim Lee, Feb. 26. Chris Kynard is pastor.

## BIRMINGHAM

► **Robinwood Church, Tarrant**, is holding a discussion series of the book "Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire" by Jim Cymbala, pastor of The Brooklyn Tabernacle in New York, for 11 Wednesdays. The series began Jan. 10. For more information call 205-518-0578 or email ronloug1@att.net. Ron Geiger is pastor. ► **Hunter Street Church, Hoover**, will host Daniel B. Wallace, executive director of The Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts, on Feb. 6, 6:30 p.m. "Can We Trust the New Testament?" will be the subject of Wallace's talk. The event is presented by Hunter Street, Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham and Tactical Faith. Buddy Gray is pastor.

## FRANKLIN

► **Mountain View Church, Phil Campbell**, will hold its "Return To The Word" rally Feb. 1, 7 p.m. Allen Taylor, director of Sunday School and church

education ministry at LifeWay Christian Resources, will speak. Sammy Taylor is pastor.

## MORGAN

► **Blue Springs Church, Somerville**, will host a church security workshop Jan. 28, 6 p.m. Morgan County Sheriff Ana W. Franklin will speak on topics including safety and security assembly, security basics for any congregation, dealing with armed intruders, developing safety and security, and planning for crises. Richard Richie is pastor. ► **Southside Church, Decatur**, will honor **Wayne Baggett**, minister of music and senior adults, for 25 years of service Jan. 21. Ben Hayes is pastor.

## MUD CREEK

► **Sparks Gap Church, Bessemer**, will hold a gospel singing Jan. 20, 6 p.m. Eagles Wings will perform special music. The church also will hold revival services Feb. 4, 6 p.m. and Feb. 5–7, 7 nightly. Tuson Stovall will speak and there will be special music. Marvin Terry is pastor.

## SHELBY

► **First Church, Helena**, participated in the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and exceeded the goal of \$5,000 which the Women's Missionary Union of the church set. Mike Shaw is interim pastor.

## ST. CLAIR

► **First Church, Ashville**, will hold the St. Clair Association Church Security Summit Jan. 21, 2–5 p.m. Mark Wakefield, disaster relief and chaplaincy ministries strategist for the State Board of Missions, will speak. Jay Stewart is pastor.✝

## Flu emergency strikes Alabama

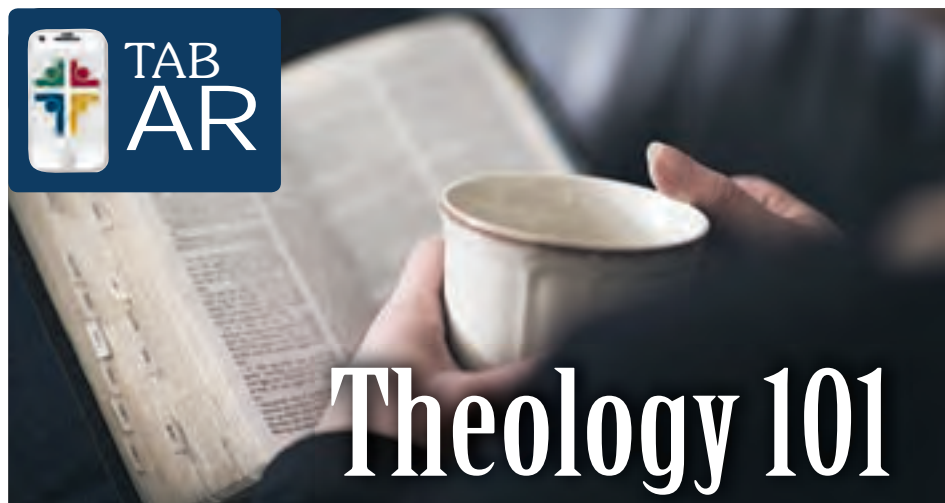
Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey issued a state-wide public health emergency Jan. 11 due to widespread reports of influenza.

At least one Birmingham-area school, Briarwood Christian, closed last week due to the large number of students and teachers with the flu. A statement from the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) said hospitals and clinics are seeing high volumes of patients.

ADPH advises patients experiencing mild to moderate flu symptoms to call their doctor's office first to see if they are eligible for antiviral medications without an appointment or to seek help from tele-medicine or call providers to avoid long wait times at medical facilities.

Health officials also advise people to stay home when sick, wash hands frequently and stockpile supplies such as fever, cough and congestion medications for home care.

For more information on coping with the flu, visit [www.baptistfirst.org](http://www.baptistfirst.org).✝



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## What's New?

# A New Meal

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

**W**e have begun in the New Year to think about truths that the Bible labels as new. Thus, Theology 101 began last week with the New Covenant as contrasted with the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant had a memorial meal, which we commonly refer to as the Passover.

The Passover Meal was historically related to the deaths of the firstborn in Egypt that led to Israel's deliverance from bondage. Jewish households took a lamb for sacrifice and sprinkled its blood on the lintel and doorposts of their homes (Ex. 12:7).

The presence of the blood secured the safety of the Jewish slaves when an angel visited the Egyptian homes securing the death of the firstborn of their families and flocks. The meal that centered on the lamb became known as the Passover Meal, the annual observance of which was a perpetual reminder of divine deliverance and a repeated occasion for instructing future generations.

## The two elements

As one aspect of Jesus fulfilling the Law of the Old Covenant, He shared a final Passover with His disciples. In the setting of that Passover Meal, Jesus instituted a new meal when He took bread, broke it and, having given thanks, gave it to the disciples and commanded them to eat it. He did similarly with the wine.

In doing so Jesus referred these two elements to His own body given and blood shed. In that context He said concerning the cup, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood" (1 Cor. 11:25). Thus, just as the Old Covenant had a meal of remembrance, so Jesus established a new meal as part of the New Covenant. We today commonly refer to this new meal as The Lord's Supper.

In establishing the new meal, Jesus explicitly invested it with the need for remembrance on the part of His followers. His familiar instructions included the words, "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19).

Not only is the Lord's Supper a meal

of remembrance, it is one of anticipation. Jesus explained it this way: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). Not only a means of remembrance and anticipation, the Lord's Supper also is a time for self-examination: "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (1 Cor. 11:28).

## Family dimension

Furthermore the Passover Meal had a family dimension to it inasmuch as it was explicitly observed in Jewish family gatherings.

In the case of the new meal its observance is fraught with a family significance in a spiritual sense: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread" (1 Cor. 10:16–17). The community of believers constitutes the spiritual body of Christ, which we also commonly refer to as the Church.

Baptists have traditionally understood the Last Supper of Jesus with the disciples to be the inauguration of this memorial meal of the New Covenant. We commonly view this meal as "a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His Second Coming" (Baptist Faith and Message, Article VII).✝

*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.*



In its Alabama news column, the paper reported these items May 29, 1879: "The Etowah County jail is now empty," "The crops in Lowndes County are backward," "Cholera is killing hogs in Dale County," "Burglars have been at work in Greenville," "Eggs are selling for 5 cents a dozen in Butler County," "Three prisoners escaped from the Clayton jail" and "Parties have been desecrating cemeteries in Albertville."

## Balancing commitments

Debbie and Maurice are in their seventh year of marriage. Debbie is a stay-at-home mom for their 4-year-old son, 2-year-old daughter and soon-arriving third child. Debbie runs a home sales business, and Maurice is employed at the local mill in town.

Recently, Maurice has been promoted into management, requiring increased work hours each week. They've enjoyed good times, and both spouses are committed to their marriage and family.

They have had their share of challenges and disagreements over the years, and once even went to counseling following the birth of their second child.

At that time they were experiencing increased stress and loneliness as they struggled to find time for one another in their marriage.

Now, with the increasing responsibility of a third child and Maurice's increased work schedule, conflict between Debbie and Maurice has returned, bringing with it feelings of discontentment, worry and stress, which is beginning to dominate larger portions of their day.

How can they balance all their commitments and prioritize the one they made to each other?

# Faith matters

*Spiritual commitment at the heart of a strong marriage*

## How to build strong foundation for marital success

By Larry K. Daniels, MAMFC, LMFT, LPC  
Pathways Professional Counseling

**C**hanges and challenges are inevitable in life and can be taxing on a marriage. If not addressed, such strains can damage even the strongest marriage. Divorce statistics and marriage counseling substantiate this. What's a couple to do?

It is normal for individuals to meet, fall in love, marry and begin a family. The God-ordained institution of marriage and family is designed to be productive and effective for holy matrimony. A holy matrimony is God's desire for us. Belonging, love, peace, joy, fulfillment and contentment are all part of God's hope and desire for us in our relationship with Him, others and especially our spouses — and praise God for His provision and guidance. An institution alone does not automatically make a home and holy matrimony, however.

### Covenant commitment

Jack and Judith Balswick, in their book "The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home," write: "The logical beginning point of any family relationship is a covenant commitment, which has unconditional love at its core. Out of the security provided by this covenant love develops grace. In this atmosphere

of grace, family members have the freedom to empower one other. Empowerment leads to the possibility of intimacy among family members. Intimacy then leads back to a deeper level of covenant commitment."

Let's look closer at these four components that help build a strong foundation for marital success.

**Covenant:** Both spouses love and are loved unconditionally. They intentionally get to know each other, understanding what makes the other tick and what ticks them off, as marital therapist John Gottman says. They share words and actions of appreciation and assertively address needs, issues, conflict and concerns without being dismissive, disengaging or damaging. They also take simple steps to improve their friendship.

Retired counselor Tommy Smith calls these the 3-Ts: Spend TIME together. TALK as friends. Do things TOGETHER.

**Grace:** Both spouses forgive and accept forgiveness which creates an atmosphere of acceptance. Ephesians 4:32 says it this way: "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you." When conflict arises, these couples

establish dialogue; tackle solvable problems with negotiation and compromise; and engage each other from a loving, positive approach first. Gottman calls this a "soft start-up." Begin conflict resolution with a compliment to your spouse about something you appreciate instead of jumping right in to the problem.

**Empowerment:** In a marriage both spouses are on the same team. Empowering is the act of helping someone become stronger and more confident, here in their role as husband or wife. Jesus taught us how to serve. A good lesson for spouses is to find ways to serve each other. Find

ways to advance the other's needs. Learn and speak your spouse's love language. Share the division of labor that makes a house and home run (chores, finances, parenting, etc.) Address and support your spouse's needs/desires as a priority. Assist your spouse to fulfill their dreams

**Intimacy:** When both spouses are committed, accepted through grace, forgiving one another and empowering one another (See 'Model,' page 10)



# When a spouse does not believe

## Pray for one's self, spouse, marriage continually in 'spiritual mismatch'

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**  
The Alabama Baptist

**R**oughly half of married American adults believe shared religious faith is very important to a successful marriage. However, interfaith marriages, including marriages in which one spouse is not religious, are on the rise.

Research on the intersection of marriage and religion suggests that almost 4 in 10 Americans who have married since 2010 have a spouse who is in a different religious group. Approximately one-fifth of those are Christians married to someone who has no faith affiliation at all, according to the 2014 Pew Research Religious Landscape Study.

### Three categories

Kenny Hoopes, associate pastor for spiritual maturity and senior adults at First Baptist Church, Montgomery, said it is common today to see couples in what some label a "spiritual mismatch." Though there is no typical situation that defines such a marriage, Hoopes said these mar-

riages generally fall into three categories.

"Sometimes it's a believer marrying a nonbeliever, and from the very beginning, the believer thinks the spouse will change over time," he said. "Another situation is when two believers marry, but one has gotten crossways in their relationship with Christ and has pulled away from their beliefs and from the church."

A third situation is when one spouse becomes a Christian after the marriage. That was the case for Lee and Leslie Strobel. Lee Strobel has written extensively about his conversion from atheism to Christianity after his wife became a believer. The Strobels' marriage suffered after Leslie Strobel's conversion, as they write about in their book "Spiritual Mismatch: Hope for Christians Married to Someone Who Doesn't Know God."

"Our marriage was strong and secure — until someone came between us," Lee

Strobel writes. "The someone who nearly capsized our marriage was none other than God Himself. ... It was faith in Jesus Christ — which most couples credit for contributing to the strength of their marriage — that very nearly destroyed our relationship."



When a previously unbelieving spouse accepts Christ, everything changes, Hoopes said. The new believer may not feel right about doing things they enjoyed doing as a couple before. Church attendance can become a point of conflict.

Some nonbelieving spouses are ambivalent, Hoopes said, maintaining an attitude of "if

it makes her happy, she can go to church." In other cases, anger surfaces because the new believer's love seems to be split between Jesus and the spouse.

Lee Strobel writes that his wife was able to "gently and lovingly" point him toward Christ, though that doesn't happen in every marriage. Regardless of whether an unbelieving spouse ever comes to faith, Hoopes said a believer first can rely on the truth of God's Word to nurture his or her individual faith.

### 'Stay the course'

"The truth of God's Word is to stay the course. The godly life of a believer can be a very positive influence on the life of an unbeliever," Hoopes said, referencing 1 Peter 3:1-2.

A second thing a believing spouse can do is to respond in love to his or her spouse, just as Christ responded.

"Even though insults were thrown at Him and He was crucified, Jesus responded in love," Hoopes said. "Spouses can respond accordingly, just as Christ has done."

Finally, prayer is essential.

"We have the opportunity to pray for our spouse whether they are a believer or not," Hoopes said. "Let your spouse know you are praying for them. Even if he or she is a nonbeliever, prayer still has a tremendous effect on their lives."

### Importance of prayer

Lee Strobel recommends praying for one's self, one's spouse and one's marriage continually, just as Jesus did.

"(Jesus) never sopped praying for people who were far from God — including those who were bitterly opposed to Him," Lee Strobel writes. "If Jesus refused to give up praying for the very soldiers who were in the process of cruelly murdering Him, then how in the world could we ever stop praying ... for those who we love the most, including our own spouse?"

Lee Strobel says a spouse in a spiritually mismatched marriage can remember one other truth as well.

"Regardless of whether your mismatch lasts six months or 60 years, whether your spouse never becomes a Christian or becomes the next Billy Graham, one truth will endure above all else: God is faithful — even in the midst of a spiritual mismatch."✠

**"Let your spouse know you are praying for them. Even if he or she is a nonbeliever, prayer still has a tremendous effect on their lives."**

**Kenny Hoopes**  
associate pastor for spiritual maturity and senior adults,  
FBC Montgomery





123rf.com

# Keeping faith alive

## Couple's shared faith in God gives them common bond unlike any human resource can

Larry K. Daniels, MAMFC, LMFT, LPC  
Pathways Professional Counseling

**M**arriage has the capacity to be so much more than simply that which makes us happy. A biblically based approach truly leads us toward holy matrimony. The covenant commitment of marriage parallels the covenantal relationship between God and Israel and the covenantal relationship between Jesus and His followers that empowers believers to “have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

Happiness is situational, externally driven and fleeting. Holiness is consistently God-like, an internal decision from the heart, and eternal.

Faith in a loving, caring, giving God who sent His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins and to show us how to live is our greatest hope to an eternal life, a fulfilling life this side of heaven and a satisfying marriage.

Likewise, Jesus' example of how to be a servant provides us the strongest road map of how to make our marriages resilient and strong, holy and yes, even happy. But we must seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness in faith, and then all these things

will be added unto us (Matt. 6:33).

A couple's shared faith in God, through His Son, Jesus Christ, gives them a common bond. There is no human resource, capacity, event or standard that even compares to Jesus and His unparalleled resources.

Faith can hold us steady when all else seems lost. Faith gives us hope when all hope seems gone. Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

For an abundance of witnesses on the importance of faith, read the rest of the chapter.

### ‘Great cloud of witnesses’

Following the “great cloud of witnesses” in Hebrews 11, Hebrews 12:1–3 continues, “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the Author

and Perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who

has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” Galatians 6:9 further encourages us with, “Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.”

So if keeping faith alive in marriage is important, just what does that involve? What does that look like?

The single strongest indicator of an enduring marriage is commitment. The biblical word for commitment is covenant. A biblically based covenant leads to grace, which leads to empowerment, which leads to intimacy, which cycles back around to a stronger commitment. If a couple is not committed or has not made a covenant with one another, it is easier for one or both of them to find a reason or excuse to treat their spouse less lovingly and to bow out of

the marriage when times get tough.

In marriages that prioritize these foundational elements, selfishness is less likely to be consistently present. After all, “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” (James 4:1–3).

### Biblical roles

Therefore, keep faith alive in your marriage, so that you may fulfill your biblical roles as a husband and wife (Eph. 5:21–33). Keep faith alive so that you may prosper. Keep faith alive in your marriage to increase the opportunity to have a mutually satisfying and fulfilling marriage. Keep faith alive so you may bring up your children in the way that they should go (Prov. 22:6). Keep faith alive because God said so. Keep faith alive because it is good for you. Keep faith alive so the two of you continue to be one.✠

*“Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.”*

Gal. 6:9

# Conversation tips

Try one of these strategies when discussions seem to be turning into arguments

**D**ifficult conversations can easily get off on the wrong foot. When that happens, use repair attempts to stop the escalation of the conflict. These techniques are like the brakes on a car — they stop the situation from intensifying. Try one of these strategies when a discussion seems to be turning into an argument:

▶ **Show your appreciation as the conversation starts. Say:**

- I know this isn't your fault.
- My part of the problem is ...
- I see your point. Thank you for it ...
- That's a good point. We are both saying that.
- I understand. I love you.
- I am thankful for ...
- This is not your problem, it's our problem.

▶ **Reference your feelings. Say:**

- This feels scary/harsh.
- That hurt my feelings.
- Please say that more gently.
- I need things to be calmer right now.
- I need your support right now.
- I feel blamed/criticized. Can you rephrase that, please?
- Can we take a break from this discussion?

▶ **Reference your regret and/or contribution to the problem. Say:**

- My reactions were too extreme. I'm sorry.
- I really blew that one.
- Let me try that again.
- I want to be gentler to you right now and I don't know how.
- I can see my part in all this.
- How can I make things better?
- Let's try that over again, this time with

more respect for one another.  
Let me start again gentler.  
What you are saying is ...  
I'm sorry. Please forgive me.

▶ **Move toward a mutual "yes" with your spouse. Say:**

- You're starting to convince me.
- I agree with part of what you're saying. Let's compromise here.
- Let's find our common ground.
- I never thought of things that way.
- This problem is not very serious in the big picture.
- I think your point of view makes sense.
- Let's agree to include both our views in a solution.
- I'm thankful for ...
- One thing I admire about you is ...
- I see what you're talking about. (Larry K. Daniels)

## Helpful resources

- ▶ "Winning Him Without Words: 10 Keys to Thriving in Your Spiritually Mismatched Marriage" by Lynn Donovan and Dineen Miller
- ▶ "Sacred Marriage: What If God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More Than to Make Us Happy?" (Paperback) by Gary L. Thomas
- ▶ "A Wife After God's Own Heart: 12 Things That Really Matter in Your Marriage" by Elizabeth George
- ▶ "The Power of a Praying Wife" by Stormie Omartian
- ▶ "The Power of a Praying Husband" by Stormie Omartian

## Model offers biblical approach for marriage

(continued from page 7)

another, the chance for the couple to grow together as one is enhanced. The opportunity for shared meaning of your marriage and lives is heightened. As believers, you can assist intimacy by worshipping, praying and reading Scripture together. Sexual intimacy also is important, as is spending quality time together through parenting, projects, hobbies and interests.

This model of covenant, grace, empowerment and intimacy offers a biblically based approach for couples to thrive in their marriage. Once a couple begins working through these areas, this approach can become a concentric circle that has the capacity to continue strengthening the marital relationship. When engaging in such an approach, a couple's covenant forms the solid base for growth, which encourages acceptance and forgiveness of one's spouse, which can lead to couples empowering one another to be their best and to meet one another's needs, which increases the intimacy they share in their marriage, leading to an ever-strengthening of commitment between them. ✝

## STEPS TOWARD A Faith-Centered MARRIAGE





(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.

# Europeans likely to entwine identity, religion

When "fiercely atheistic" communist radicals swept into power in Russia more than 100 years ago, they had many targets.

One of them was the Russian Orthodox Church, "long a pillar of legitimacy and support for the Romanov czars," according to CNN. They tore down one prominent cathedral and built a huge swimming pool in its place. Another, St. Isaac's, was left standing as a museum against religion.

But when communism fell, that all changed. The church became a big part of Russians' identity again and the Kremlin actively promoted it.

"With the collapse of communist society, there was a great void," said Alexander Dugin, chief editor of Tsargrad TV, a Russian Orthodox channel. "The only way to fill this void was to return to the pre-communist values. And pre-communist values were Christian Orthodox."

## Official state religions

According to Pew Research, many of the formerly atheistic regimes of central and eastern Europe now have an official state religion or an unofficial preferred faith.

In those countries, people are "more likely to see religion and



IMB photo

So much of a Russian's national identity is entwined with Russian Orthodoxy that it is impossible to extricate the two even though it is not officially the state religion of Russia.

national identity as entwined," Pew reported.

The study surveyed 18 countries and found that two — Armenia and Greece — have an official state religion. Nine others, including Russia and Poland, unofficially "prefer" a religion, giving it disproportionate benefits.

Large majorities in those countries say that being a part of the preferred or official religion is part of their national identity — for instance, being Orthodox is important to being Greek, and being Catholic is important to being truly Polish.

Marc Ira Hooks, a former Southern Baptist missionary to Eastern Europe, says that's definitely true in his experience with Russians.

## Russian Orthodox

"To be Russian is to be Russian Orthodox," said Hooks, who now serves as associate director of missions for the Dallas-area Collin Baptist Association/CBA Church Network. "Though it is not officially the state religion of Russia, so much of a Russian's national identity is entwined with Russian Orthodoxy; it is impos-

sible to extricate the two."

Orthodox ceremonies mark major life events, such as birth, marriage and death, he said. And most Russian homes contain icons of the saints who at the very least are said to protect the home.

## Cultural identification

It's a cultural identification, but the majority of Russians hold to a faith that's nominal at best, Hooks said.

But even though that might seem to be a barrier to evangelism among Russians, it actually opens doors, he said.

"While on the surface it may seem this, coupled with 70 years of the suppression of spirituality by communism, is an obstacle to evangelical Christians engaged in sharing the gospel with Russians, the reality is much different," he said.

"Due to their tacit exposure to the biblical narrative and to the mysteries of God through Orthodoxy, most Russians are by nature very spiritual."

Because of that, they are often more willing to have conversations about God and faith, Hooks said. "In fact, many say it is easier to have a gospel conversation with a Russian than with someone from a Western European background." (Grace Thornton)

## 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

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Huffman Baptist is accepting resumés for full-time senior pastor. Please send resumés to: [tebaggett@yahoo.com](mailto:tebaggett@yahoo.com) or hard copy to: 1324 Bardswood Terrace, Birmingham, AL 35235.

#### PASTOR

FBC Silverhill, Alabama, is accepting resumés for full-time senior pastor position. Please send resumés to either [fbcsilverhillsearchcommittee@gmail.com](mailto:fbcsilverhillsearchcommittee@gmail.com) or hard copy to: FBC Silverhill Search Team, P.O. Box 237, Silverhill, AL 36576.

#### PASTOR

Calvary Baptist Church in Belmont, Mississippi, is seeking a full-time pastor. We are members of the SBC seeking the man God has prepared to lead us in His will. Please submit resumés to: [cbcpastorapp@gmail.com](mailto:cbcpastorapp@gmail.com).

#### PART-TIME MUSIC DIRECTOR

Lakeview Baptist Church, Oxford, Alabama, is seeking a music director. This is a paid, part-time position. They will supervise the planning and leading of our worship services in an energetic, blended style. Their primary additional responsibility will be to lead the choir ministry and choir rehearsals. Interested persons should send a resumé to: [lburell@cableone.net](mailto:lburell@cableone.net) and/or contact Lem Burell at 256-846-2807.

#### MINISTER TO STUDENTS

First Baptist Church of Oxford, Alabama, is seeking a full-time minister to students. Our student ministry is a thriving ministry focused on reaching, equipping and sending students for the glory of Christ. This ministry position covers grades 7 through college. Please send resumés to the Personnel Committee at: 95 E. Oak St., Oxford, AL 36203, or you may email resumés to: [stan@firstbaptistoxford.org](mailto:stan@firstbaptistoxford.org).

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First Baptist Church of Oxford, Alabama, is seeking a full-time minister to children. Our children's ministry is a vibrant ministry with incredible potential. This ministry position covers birth through 6th grade. Please send resumés to the Personnel Committee at: 95 E. Oak St., Oxford, AL 36203, or you may email resumés to: [stan@firstbaptistoxford.org](mailto:stan@firstbaptistoxford.org).

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Different address, same mission



The new **Alabama Baptist STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS** office facility opened in Prattville on January 15. It is located 1.5 miles west of I-65, exit 181, on the corner of Fairview Avenue (Highway 14) and Jasmine Trail.

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**OUR PHONE NUMBERS AND STAFF EXTENSIONS HAVE NOT CHANGED:**

Toll-free: 1-800-264-1225  
Local: (334) 288-2460  
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## Advertise in *The Alabama Baptist*

Contact Bill Gilmore  
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## JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson College to Host TAB Birthday Celebration:** Judson College will host a daylong celebration recognizing the 175th birthday of *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) newspaper on Feb. 6.

Jennifer Davis Rash, editor-elect of TAB, will be the featured speaker at a worship service in the Judson chapel at 11 a.m. The service also will feature the Judson Choir.

Lunch will be provided. After lunch, historian Elizabeth Wells and author Grace Thornton will share the story of TAB, as told in a new book, *"The Alabama Baptist: 175 Years of Informing, Inspiring and Connecting."* Copies of the book will be available for purchase.

Other events are scheduled throughout the day. Contact Linda Harrison at lharrison@thealabamabaptist.org or 1-800-803-5201 for more information.

## UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **University of Mobile Awarded Grant for Suicide Prevention Efforts:** University of Mobile (UM) has been awarded

a grant for suicide prevention efforts through a special initiative of the Alabama Department of Public Health. The Alabama Higher Education Suicide Prevention Program awarded UM \$10,000 to be used for awareness and suicide prevention measures.

The grant's purpose is to increase identification of at-risk students, increase help-seeking behaviors and start conversations on campuses to promote the overall emotional well-being of students.

### ► **Lonnie Burnett Honored for Local School Board Work:**

Lonnie Burnett, vice provost and dean of University of Mobile's (UM) College of Arts and Sciences, was honored by the Alabama Association of School Boards



BURNETT

(AASB) for his work as a member of Saraland City School Board.

Burnett helped to implement an agreement between UM and Saraland and Satsuma city school systems to allow high school students access to dual enrollment opportunities. He also was instrumental in the passage of a \$7.5 million ad

valorem tax that benefitted all students in Saraland City Schools.

## SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford Football Team Earns FCS Ranking:** The Samford University football team is ranked 17th in the final Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) Coaches Poll and 18th in the final STATS FCS Poll for the 2017 season. The polls were released Jan. 6.

Samford posted a final record of 8-4 overall and 6-2 in the Southern Conference. The Bulldogs earned an at-large bid to the NCAA Division I-FCS Playoffs for a second-straight season.

► **Samford Debate Team Wins Big in California:** The Samford debate team of Moriah Windus, of Ozark, and Kevin Aubrey, of Lafayette, Louisiana, won the Cal Swing 1 debate tournament at the University of California-Berkeley on Jan. 3-5.

The team won 15 of 16 ballots at the tournament and Windus was named second speaker.

Kiarra Broadnax, of Smith's Station, and Dovie Stem, of Dallas, Texas, also competed at the tournament, defeating teams from the University of Washington and San Francisco State University. ☞

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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 21

**Explore the Bible** By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

**Bible Studies for Life** By Jim Barnette, Ph.D.  
Samford University and Brookwood Baptist Church, Mountain Brook

**VALUE ALL**

**Acts 16:16-19; Psalm 139:13-16**

As we recognize Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, we need to remember that every human being is created in the image of God. Every human being should be treated with dignity and respect from the womb to the tomb. Acts is the unfolding story of the people of God, filled with the Spirit of God, engaging in the mission of God. As the gospel is proclaimed and the kingdom of God advances in the Book of Acts, we see the dignity of broken people restored in Christ.

**Freedom Gained (Acts 16:16-18)**

Paul and Silas met a demon-possessed slave girl. The phrase “spirit of divination” literally reads “python spirit.” According to mythology the Python guarded the temple of Apollo. Over time the word “python” came to mean a demon-possessed person through whom the Python spoke.

This slave girl made clairvoyant predictions and uttered words in all sorts of strange voices. Because the people believed that such people were inspired by Apollo and the Python, many sought them out to hear their predictions. The girl’s owners made lots of money from her predictions.

When she saw Paul and Silas, she cried out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” Satan attempted to use the slave girl to associate Paul’s message with the occult. After many days, Paul was greatly annoyed. He resented the satanic assault on his ministry and felt sorry for the slave girl. In the power and authority of Jesus Christ, Paul commanded the demon to come out of the girl. Jesus set her free.

She presumably became a Jesus follower, just like the Gadarene demoniac in Mark 5. She now had a new owner, the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who freed her from spiritual and physical bondage.

**The Complaint (Acts 16:19)**

The reaction of the demon-possessed girl’s owners revealed the inhumane cruelty of the institution of slavery. Instead of rejoicing in her deliverance, they became enraged when they saw that their source of revenue was gone. Their attitude was similar to that of the Gerasenes in Mark 5. Instead of rejoicing over the possessed man’s deliverance, they were angered over the loss of a herd of swine. They were so upset that they begged Jesus to leave.

Later in Ephesus the craftsmen who made shrines of the goddess Artemis became violently opposed to Christianity. They were fearful that the spread of the gospel would hurt their business. Reactions like this demonstrate a sad spiritual reality: love of money blurs spiritual perception.

The owners of the girl made up false charges against Paul and Silas. They claimed they were disturbing the city and advocating unlawful customs. Soon the crowd joined the attack, and the magistrates ordered the men beaten with rods and thrown into prison.

**Valued by God (Psalm 139:13-16)**

Every human being is created in the image of God. Each has been given God-like glory and the moral capacity to reign and rule on the earth as God’s representatives. Here God revealed that He was active as the unformed substance (embryo) grew and developed. God was the one who formed our inward parts and knitted us together.

God saw our unformed substance and even had written in His book every one of the days that were formed for us. The worshipper realized that, even before his mother knew she was pregnant, the Lord was already showing His care for him. We should praise God for we are fearfully and wonderfully made. We know from this psalm that God has set His special love upon us from the earliest stages of life.✠

**I AM WONDERFULLY MADE**  
**Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18**

One of the most beloved poems of the Psalter, Psalm 139 speaks to the security and joy that we can find in God’s inescapable nearness. Francis Thompson’s powerful poem, “The Hound of Heaven,” owed its theme to this piece that celebrates the Lord’s presence and His relentless pursuit of us for our salvation’s sake. This is not the Psalm of a man who would escape God if only he could, but of one who knows that he cannot do so and finds no regret but only joy in that fact. Security in God is the central truth of this calm reflection on the omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence of God.

**God knows us intimately and values us. (1-6)**

The omniscience of God is expressed vividly, as God is the subject of all of the verbs. The verbs convey the powerful scrutiny that extends to all of our thoughts and actions. “Acquainted” means literally “painstakingly familiar with.” Such knowledge of us that God possesses could be a terrifying thing. But His knowledge of us is a protective knowledge. “You hem me in” is used often in the sense of “to besiege.” Here, however, the phrase connotes a fortress that surrounds us with the Lord’s protection. The strength of this protection is matched with the tenderness of the Lord “laying Your hand upon me.” This passage speaks to God’s omniscience not as a formulated doctrine but, as befitting a psalm, confessed in adoration. God’s knowledge of us is not merely comprehensive; it is personal and active.

**God created us and has a plan for each of us. (13-16)**

God as Creator oversees the psychological (“inmost being”) and physical (“knit me”) structure of all created humans. In this the Lord displays supernatural powers, but

the implication of His creative work is His intimate knowledge of His creature. “Inmost being” (literally “kidneys”) refers to the seat of emotion and affection. “Knit” speaks to God’s direct activity in the protection and growth of a fetus. The psalmist praises God “for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” Elsewhere in the Old Testament, “fearfully” refers to other mighty creative acts of God in nature (see Pss. 65:5; 106:22; 145:6). God’s creation of the psalmist is as wondrous — indeed more wondrous — as His other great deeds of creation. No other created thing was ever fashioned in God’s very image. As the climax of the Lord’s creative activity, God looked upon us and declared His highest work as “very good.” How blessed and how undeserving we are to be graced with this unfathomable expression of His love.

**God is with us. (17-18)**

God’s divine knowledge is not only “wonderful” but “precious” because it speaks to His commitment to us. God will not abandon the work of His Own hands (see Ps. 138:8). “I am still with you” differs from “you are still with me” in that the latter would express the idea of the presence of God, while the former expresses the idea of that peace with God we have because we remain constantly in His presence. “Awake” refers both to the experiencing of awakening day after day and to the great awakening after we leave this earth. God’s omnipresence, taken with the vast background of verses 7-12, is limitless even when it comes to death. Therefore “when I awake” offers us a glimpse of the resurrection. This unmerited gift of post-mortem paradise points us to Paul’s marvelous words that “neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”✠

## Christian Crossword

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**Across**

1. I am from \_\_\_\_\_. (John 7:29)
4. \_\_\_\_\_, thou that destroyest the temple. (Mark 15:29)
6. He shewed himself \_\_\_\_\_. (Acts 1:3)
10. To goad.
12. Local area network. (abbr.)
13. Have mercy on \_\_\_\_\_. (Matt. 15:22)
15. He giveth meat in \_\_\_\_\_. (Job 36:31)
17. Abram said unto Lot, Let there \_\_\_\_\_ strife. (Gen. 13:8; 2 words)
19. Royal Canadian. (abbr.)
20. Missing in Action. (abbr.)
23. Registered nurse. (abbr.)
24. Strain at a gnat, and swallow a \_\_\_\_\_. (Matt. 23:24)
26. 1,100 in Roman numerals.
27. The \_\_\_\_\_ a Pharisee, the other a publican. (Luke 18:10)
29. \_\_\_\_\_ the King of Bashan. (Num. 21:33)
31. Now \_\_\_\_\_ faith, hope, charity. (1 Cor. 13:13)
33. The price of wisdom is

- \_\_\_\_\_ rubies. (Job 28:18)
34. They \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus to the brow of the hill. (Luke 4:29)
35. Be not \_\_\_\_\_. (Matt. 14:27)
37. In a certain place.
38. The tower of \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 11:9)
42. Bringing sick f\_ s. (Acts 5:16)
43. Mom.
44. For many be \_\_\_\_\_. (Matt. 20:16)
45. The falling tide.
48. It is. (contraction)
50. They shall \_\_\_\_\_ as lions’ whelps. (Jer. 51:38)
52. Demonstrated.
53. Horse’s strut. (Nah. 3:2)

**Down**

2. Out of \_\_\_\_\_ are the issues of life. (Prov. 4:23)
3. What \_\_\_\_\_ these seven ewe lambs? (Gen. 21:29)
4. Arizona State University. (abbr.)
5. As a \_\_\_\_\_ gathereth her chickens. (Matt. 23:37)
6. Trumpets to cry \_\_\_\_\_.

- (2 Chron. 13:12)
7. They shall hold the ... \_\_\_\_\_ are cruel. (Jer. 50:42)
8. Incorporated. (abbr.)
9. Dorothy’s aunt.
11. A faithful man shall \_\_\_\_\_ with blessings. (Prov. 28:20)
14. The love of God is shed \_\_\_\_\_ in our hearts. (Rom. 5:5)
16. Printer’s measure.
18. \_\_\_\_\_able.
21. I am. (contraction)
22. For this is \_\_\_\_\_ in the sight of God. (1 Tim. 2:3)
25. Divided into sections, such as the brain, the ear.
27. Thou didst eat fine flour, honey, and \_\_\_\_\_. (Ezek. 16:13)
28. Electrical Engineer. (abbr.)
30. He that is of \_\_\_\_\_ heareth. (John 8:47)
32. \_\_\_\_\_ feared John. (Mark 6:20)
33. Whether they both shall be \_\_\_\_\_ good. (Eccles. 11:6)
35. That which I do I \_\_\_\_\_ not.

- (Rom. 7:15)
36. American League. (abbr.)
37. Whom do men say that I the Son of man \_\_\_\_\_? (Matt. 16:13)
39. Praise him for his mighty \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 150:2)
40. To smash, or a wild party.
41. Elevation. (abbr.)
46. Even a fruitful bough \_\_\_\_\_ well. (Gen. 49:22; 2 words)
47. Benjamin’s nickname.
49. All these things I kept from my youth \_\_\_\_\_. (Luke 18:21)
51. Lower case. (abbr.)





# Media reviews

MOVIES/TV

## Other streaming selections

### Netflix

▶ “Cars 3” (G, 2017). Remember when Lightning McQueen ruled the Piston Cup — when he won championships at ease and celebrated by doing donuts on the infield? Of course: Everyone does! Sadly though time has caught up with him and his winning days are over. But maybe he can make a comeback. “Cars 3” was one of my favorite movies of 2017 and it had lots of great lessons for the family. Animated. Streaming Jan. 31.

▶ “Martin Luther: The Idea that Changed the World” (unrated, 2017). Five hundred years ago a monk by the name of Martin Luther took a stance that changed not only church history but world history too. This documentary aired in 2017 on PBS and was directed by David Batty, who also helmed several excellent movies about Christ including “The Gospel of John” (2014). Jan. 1.

▶ “Llama Llama” (2018). Animated series based on the delightful series of award-winning books by Anna Dewdney about a llama family. Jan. 26.

Also noteworthy for parents, with warning about coarse language: “Apollo 13” (rated PG but likely deserved a PG-13, 1995 — Jan. 1); “The Truman Show” (PG, 1998 — Jan. 1).

### Amazon Prime

▶ “A Ghost Story” (R, 2017). A thought-provoking drama that likely should have been rated PG-13 and not R, “A Ghost Story” is the type of movie that sparks discussions about life, death, grief and love. Rated R for brief language and a disturbing image. Jan. 7.

Also noteworthy for parents, with warning about coarse language and mild sensuality: “Freedom Writers” (PG-13, 2007 — Jan. 1); “Grantchester” (season 3, TV-14, 2017 — Jan. 19).

### Hulu

▶ “The Parent Trap” (G, 1961). The classic tale about twin girls trying to reunite their divorced parents. Camera trickery allowed actress Hayley Mills to play both girls. Jan. 1

“The Parent Trap” (PG, 1998) — In this remake of the 1961 film, Lindsay Lohan stars as both twin girls. Rated PG for some mild mischief. Jan. 1.

Other notables: “Duck Dynasty” (complete seasons 10, 11 — Jan. 1); “Flip or Flop” (complete season 5 — Jan. 1).

Also noteworthy for parents, with warning about coarse language and mild sensuality: “Freedom Writers” (PG-13, 2007 — Jan. 1); “This Is Us” (midseason premiered Jan. 10).✦

## ‘National Treasure,’ ‘Cars 3’ top January streaming

By Michael Foust  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**B**en Gates is a historian and treasure hunter who’s a bit like Indiana Jones: He never gives up.

His entire adult life he’s been searching for the “Knights Templar Treasure,” which legend says contains not only priceless artifacts from history but also the greatest fortune ever amassed. In fact, Gates’ great-great-great-great-great grandfather — who lived during the Revolutionary War — also hunted for the treasure and left his descendants clues about its possible location.

But not everyone shares Ben’s obsession. In fact, his father thinks he’s nuts. That begins to change when Ben (Nicolas Cage) gets a big break and discovers that the original copy of the Declaration of Independence — the one being closely guarded in Washington — likely contains a major clue. His goal: steal the Declaration of Independence, decode the message and find the treasure. Crazy? Yes! Impossible? Maybe not!

It’s all part of “National Treasure” (PG), the 2004 film that mixed a bit of history with a lot



Disney photos

of conspiracies and legends. It also left history teachers across America pondering: What do we do with this? Most of them embraced the film, believing it could whet children’s attitude for history and lead them to want to discover the true story. That’s what I did with my kids.



“National Treasure” began streaming Jan. 1 on Netflix. It is rated PG for action violence and some scary images. It also has a slight bit of sensuality, which means you might want to have a remote

handy to skip a scene or two. It also has one instance of h—I and a handful of OMGs.

If you’re not a fan of “National Treasure,” there are plenty of other options (see “Other streaming selections,” this page).✦

### Meet the reviewer

*Michael Foust covers the intersection of faith and entertainment as a writer and podcast host for Heirloom Audio. He also is the husband of an amazing wife and the father of four small children.*



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# ULTIMATE

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IMB photo

Jared and Tara Jones (center) gather for a meal with friends. The couple met when they were both serving in Japan as IMB Journeymen and have since gotten married and planted their family there.

# God can make doors

## Church plant in pediatrician's office sign of God's faithfulness

**F**rom the minute Tara Jones walked through the door of her new pediatrician's office, she knew something was going on that was bigger than the fact she had a sick child. Tara and her husband, Jared, had been praying for years for God to start a fire in the hearts of the people of Japan, where the couple serves as International Missionary Board missionaries. They had been praying for God to open very specific doors — doors that many people had told them were sealed shut. And they had been praying for God to soften hearts in a country many consider hard, cold and closed.

"Jared and I had been praying about where God would want us to start a church," said Tara, a University of Mobile graduate. "The time had just never been quite right." The Joneses weren't the only ones praying — people back home were too, including Tara's parents, Bill and Barbara Greene in Alabama.

"My parents are prayer warriors," Tara said, "and my dad had been praying that God would give us a national partner that we would have to run to keep up with. He said, 'I just feel like God is going to do something big.'" So that day when Tara met the pediatrician, she knew immediately that God was answering her father's prayer for God to shake a nation where less than 1 percent of the population claims Christianity.

"Our pediatrician asked me out of the blue, 'You guys are church planters, right?'" She said she had

been praying about starting a church there at her office," Tara said. "As she shared I knew God had brought our paths together."

Amazed, Tara went home and prayed with Jared, and they knew God was confirming this was exactly what He had in mind. The first week the new church opened its doors, more than 70 people came. "Jared and I were amazed — people showed up who we hadn't seen in years, people we had tried to share the gospel with but thought nothing had taken root," Tara said. "We just looked at each other and wept. It was a beautiful picture of what God had been preparing."

The hearts they've seen change in the months that followed represent a harvest only God could bring about, Jared said. "God was already at work," he said. "He can make doors where doors don't exist." Tara's dad, Bill, said "amazing" is the only word he can think of to describe it.

"We've seen God's faithfulness to answer prayer and we pray that

Japan will be the place where the next great spiritual awakening begins," he said.

### Prayers needed

Pray for the Jones and for the people who attend the church in the pediatrician's office to continue to bring their lost friends and show them what it looks like to live a life changed by Christ. Pray for the church to be firmly planted, a lighthouse in the community, and a strong witness for decades to come. (WMU's *Missions Mosaic*, IMB)

**"We've seen God's faithfulness to answer prayer, and we pray that Japan will be the place where the next great spiritual awakening begins."**

**Bill Greene  
Tara Jones' father**

## RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

### Mississippi 'religious liberty' bill allowed to stand

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court refused Jan. 8 to hear a challenge to a Mississippi law that would allow government workers and businesses to deny services to LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) persons and couples based on religious beliefs.

The nation's high court declined to hear two cases challenging the constitutionality of House Bill 1523, a law that forbids the state from taking "discriminatory action" against persons who act in accordance with religious beliefs that marriage "is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman." The measure has been criticized as the most sweeping anti-LGBT bill since the Supreme Court legalized same-sex "marriage" nationwide in 2015.

A group of 50 conservative Baptist pastors penned an open letter in 2016 affirming the legislation "wholeheartedly and without equivocation." The Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission called it "an exemplary model for public policy."

A smaller group of Baptist pastors, meanwhile, opposed the bill, saying it will lead to "increasing hostility and potential discrimination" against LGBT individuals. (BNG)

### Largest group of Mennonite churches leaves

LANCASTER, Penn. — The Lancaster Mennonite Conference (LMC), the largest group of Mennonite congregations in the U.S., has officially separated from the broader Mennonite community after a long-term disagreement over sexuality and the church.

The LMC — with 179 churches in Pennsylvania, Ohio and New York — voted to leave the Mennonite Church USA, the umbrella organization of Mennonite congregations, in November 2015. The decision to leave went into effect Jan. 1.

The LMC opposes same-sex "marriage" and members were increasingly uncomfortable with some Mennonite Church USA policies that affirmed it, including hiring policies that address LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) people. The Mennonite Church USA officially defines marriage as between one man and one woman, but there has been pushback against that from within as several pastors have performed same-sex "marriages" (and been censured or resigned) and smaller regional conferences that affirm LGBT relationships have departed. (RNS)

### Moody Bible Institute under new leadership

CHICAGO — Saying it is "time for a new season of leadership," the Moody Bible Institute (MBI) board of trustees has announced the resignations of President J. Paul Nyquist and chief operating officer (COO) Steve Mogek and the retirement of provost Junias Venugopal. The news was announced Jan. 10.

Concerns about the future of MBI led to the changes. The school's finances have been the subject of tensions between faculty and administration recently, as have decisions about program cuts, including the closing of the school's Spokane, Washington, campus.

The board has made the following transitional appointments: Greg Thornton, interim president; Mark Wagner, interim COO; and John Jelinek, interim provost. (TAB)

### Houses of worship can now receive FEMA aid

WASHINGTON — After lawsuits and a Supreme Court decision, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has issued a new policy extending disaster relief to churches, synagogues and other congregations.

Addressing a church-state separation issue, the agency's latest policy guide says FEMA made the change so houses of worship aren't considered ineligible "on the basis of the religious character or primarily religious use of the facility."

In FEMA's previous guide, language deemed private nonprofits ineligible for aid if they primarily offered religious activities — including worship and religious instruction. That language has been removed from the policy guide released Jan. 2. (RNS)