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Racial Reconciliation Sunday is Feb. 11.

UNIFIED

Photo by Sam Evans

Kameron Pugh, pastor of Iron City Church, Birmingham, says his church sees unity amid diversity as a gospel-centered goal.

Birmingham Baptists see racial unity as vital to faith

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**K**ameron Pugh's church sits right in the heart of Birmingham — and he hopes that it's sitting right in the heart of the gospel too.

"Growing up in Sylacauga, I knew some of the story of Birmingham, this city that Martin Luther King called the most racially divided city in America," said Pugh, pastor of Iron City Church. "It's been literally divided by a mountain between white and black for years."

So over the years, racial reconcili-

ation was an issue that worked its way into his heart, not as a fad but as a passion, he said.

Heart of the gospel

Unity is at the heart of the gospel — Jesus Himself told His disciples that the way others would know they were His followers was by their love for each other, Pugh said.

But if unity is nothing more than a "gospel fad" in the church, it doesn't last when things get tough, he said.

"It's like adoption — adoption is also a gospel issue," Pugh said. "But the truth is, when you get that baby home, it's not cool anymore — it's really hard."

And if you aren't on board for the long haul, things can unravel quickly, he said.

The same goes for intentionality in developing unity across ethnic, racial and socioeconomic lines, Pugh said. When a church is made up of people who look alike and talk

alike, "we can fool ourselves into thinking we're united around Jesus," he said. "But once you have a multicultural church, you have a family of people with different perspectives on life, politics and church. Are you willing to work through those things as a family? Will we be able to see that Jesus really is the one bringing us together?"

That's what he's hoping will happen at Iron City Church — that over time, the congregation will become a diverse family united around Christ.

"It's not something we can manufacture, even with a diverse preaching team and a diverse music style," both of which they have, he said. "If our people aren't living multicultural lives throughout the week, around

(See 'Inspiring,' page 3)

IMPACT coming to Montgomery

**I**nterested in learning more about building relationships and ministries across cultural lines? The IMPACT Conference, set for April 20-21, aims to empower ministry leaders to do just that.

The purpose of IMPACT — which stands for "intentionally moving people across cultures together" — is to equip leaders "in the Christ-centered practices of sharing our faith among different racial and cultural people groups," said Rick Barnhart, director of the office of associational missions and church planting for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

"We will do some training for church and community ministries," he said, noting that those community ministries encompass everything

(See 'Celebrating,' page 13)

# COMMENT

## Acting Against Racism

Terrence Jones asked a question during the recent State Evangelism Conference that deserves an answer. Speaking during the Tuesday morning session, Jones asked why Alabama Baptists and Southern Baptists take such definitive action to disassociate themselves from churches that support homosexuality but allow cooperating churches to practice racism without a convention response.

The question was not the primary point of Jones' sermon but the question may have been the most prophetic words uttered during the entire meeting.

Jones, pastor of the multiracial church Strong Tower at Washington Park, Montgomery, did not question the convention's opposition to homosexuality. Nor did he challenge the actions taken by Baptists against churches which demonstrate support for the practice. In fact, he affirmed that he shares the opposition to homosexuality expressed in convention resolutions and actions.

What he asked about is why Alabama Baptists and Southern Baptists do not take similar steps against churches demonstrating overt racism as we take against churches supporting homosexuality. Remember, racism is using power structures to dominate others based on the categories of race.

Jones asked a valid question. Why don't we act toward racism as we do toward homosexuality?

### Amended constitution

In the early 1990s a sprinkling of Baptist churches began considering ordaining homosexuals to ministry or performing same-sex "marriage" ceremonies. In response the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) amended its constitution declaring, "Among churches not in cooperation with the Convention are churches which act to affirm, approve or endorse homosexual behavior." The wording has been changed since being adopted in 1993 but Article III of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Constitution titled "Membership" still prohibits membership of any church friendly to homosexuality.

When the Baptist Faith and Message was revised in 2000, the writing committee felt homosexuality was such an important issue that wording was added to affirm marriage between one man and one woman for life and to oppose homosexuality in any form (see Article XVIII).



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Churches in several states, including Alabama, have had SBC membership withdrawn from them over this issue.

In 2015, Weatherly Heights Baptist Church, Huntsville, was kicked out of Madison Baptist Association and the Alabama Baptist State Convention after a volunteer staff member from the church performed a same-sex wedding and it was learned the pastor was sympathetic to same-sex "marriages."

At the time, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions Executive Director Rick Lance said in a written statement, "Our position is that any church that allows staff members to perform marriage ceremonies for same-sex couples has demonstrated that they are no longer in like-minded fellowship and friendly cooperation with Alabama Baptists and Southern Baptists."

Alabama Baptists affirmed that position during the 2015 annual meeting in withdrawing fellowship from the church.

Obviously, Southern Baptists and Alabama Baptists have staked out a clear position regarding homosexuality and have acted to uphold that position.

Words condemning racism have been equally strong from both Southern Baptists and Alabama Baptists. Racism has been labeled "a deplorable sin" and "antithetical to the gospel." At the 2017 SBC annual meeting, messengers said racism and ethnic hatred are "a scheme of the devil intended to bring suffering and division to our society."

Through resolutions, Alabama Baptists have called "racism in all its forms contrary to the gospel." Another resolution urged Alabama Baptists to "intentionally seek to destroy barriers of racism and build bridges of racial reconciliation to unify the body of Christ."

The words are strong. They reflect biblical teaching. They are consistent with the Baptist

Faith and Message which says, "Every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love" (Article III).

But where are the actions of Baptists to back up this position like we back up our position on homosexuality? Why have we been content to hang our heads and say "that is just the way it is" or to sit silently and say nothing when cooperating churches commit intentional acts of racism?

This is not an issue confined to the Civil Rights Era of the 1950s and 1960s. Racism remains a problem today. Jones referenced incidents in the last two months where Alabama Baptist pastors were told not to baptize certain children because of their race.

Is it time for Baptists to act to put in place a way to respond to churches guilty of such practices like we respond to churches that support homosexuality? Is it time to say churches that practice overt racism have "demonstrated

that they are no longer in like-minded fellowship and friendly cooperation with Alabama Baptists and Southern Baptists?"

Honestly, there is a danger in this approach because once one starts down this road there is no stopping place. As an autonomous body, the state convention or the national body could insist on a common position on everything from who can take the Lord's Supper to the end times. Conventions could become creedal bodies insisting on what churches have to believe and do.

That is not the Baptist way.

But 25 years ago Baptists decided the threat of homosexual-

ity was so great they were willing to risk adding this stipulation to the SBC Constitution. Baptists wanted to do more than pass resolutions. They wanted to be able to act and they have.

### Should we practice discipline?

Racism is equally wrong and it must be resisted. Alabama Baptists have called on members to "intentionally seek to destroy barriers of racism." Can we begin within our own fellowship by having the possibility of discipline for churches that practice intentional racism?

What kind of message would it send to cooperating churches, to the Christian world, to our nation and beyond if Alabama Baptists and Southern Baptists not only said racism is wrong but acted so that no church which practiced overt racism could be a member of our conventions? 🇺🇸

***"Racism [like homosexuality] is wrong and it must be resisted. Alabama Baptists have called on members to intentionally seek to destroy barriers of racism."***

Follow Bob Terry  
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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

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# Inspiring oneness

## Intentionality is key to bringing people together, Campbell says



Photo by Sam Evans

Daniel Sheshi (left) and Alex Leslie lead worship at Iron City Church, Birmingham. The church's motto is 'For unity. For diversity. For the city. For the glory of God.'

(continued from page 1)  
the dinner table day to day, it's not going to happen."

Peter himself struggled with filling the table with people just like him, Pugh said. In Galatians 2, Peter had stopped eating with Gentiles when the Jews were around, and Paul "openly rebuked him for being out of step with the gospel," he said.

### 'We're growing'

So Iron City Church is trying to take that seriously. Pugh said he "wouldn't call us a multicultural

church yet but we're growing."

And they make mistakes but love and grace is there to cover them, he said.

"There are a lot of things we still have to learn but I'm hopeful," Pugh said. "If embracing diversity is a fad it will fade away, but if it's a gospel-motivated desire we'll see the fruit we want to see in our church and in our city because the gospel demands it."

Sammy Campbell, church planting specialist for Birmingham Baptist Association, said that in order to see that kind of fruit,

Christians have to be intentional to go out of their way to meet others.

"If oneness is to be achieved, someone of one group must take the initiative to interact with the other group," Campbell writes in his book "Unity Admits Diversity."

### Forming bonds

In the case of the Body of Christ, that means forming intentional bonds with Christians of other races.

In the case of outreach, it means finding a way to intentionally serve people unlike you, Campbell said. That may mean finding a way to reach out to the impoverished, or it may mean reaching out to people after a crisis or a natural disaster with needed services.

For the church, it also could be providing space for a community center that would bring people together who don't yet know Christ so that they can find relationships and experience the gospel.

Whatever the method, intentionality is the key, he said.

In John 4, Jesus traveled through Samaria so He could

have an intentional encounter with the woman at the well. It was an encounter that changed her life, Campbell said.



PUGH

Those kinds of encounters can still happen today, he said.

Intentional contact with people unlike us dispels our preconceived perceptions, Campbell said. And when we serve, it creates a neutral ground to build lasting friendships and "creates new patterns of unity that inspire oneness."

When it comes down to it, "until we experience life with others, we will never gain the value of their life enhancing our own," Campbell said.



CAMPBELL

That's what Pugh said his church is hoping for — to humbly make friends and experience life with others.

"We want to come as a church into downtown with a humble posture," he said. "We know it's going to take a lot of hard work to see unity happen. But Dr. King said once that if justice could come to Birmingham and the church here could be a light, we might get somewhere. That's a challenge that we should hear and hold onto." ✝

## Look at your church through eyes of others, Gadsden pastor recommends

No matter your background, ethnicity or color of your skin, you belong here."

That's the first line you see when you google Cornerstone Church in downtown Gadsden, and Pastor Daniel Woodcock said they mean it — it's part of the fabric of who they are.

### 'Reaching unchurched people'

"Our whole mindset is reaching unchurched people and that transcends cultures, races and backgrounds," he said. "We wanted to look like the people in our community — eclectic and diverse — and in doing that, we have reached white, African-American, Hispanic and Asian."

Woodcock himself is Korean American, which "kind of gets people's guard down," he said.

He said they try to keep all cultures in mind as they plan church services and try to look at it through the eyes of someone who has never attended church before.

"I think what we've seen is a safe place develop for people to attend," he said.

Woodcock said he's "never met a church that said it's only for white people or only for black people," but that doesn't mean people of other races feel comfortable coming there, he said.

If a church is trying to reach different ethnicities, it's vital to think about your church

through their eyes — would they feel comfortable coming?

### Appealing to different cultures

"We try to think about how we can lower their guard to allow the Holy Spirit to work on them," he said.

They think about what they can do to make families feel safe about bringing their children. They try to plan upbeat worship that appeals to different cultures.

"What we have ended up with is a crazy dichotomy of people but when you're in the service you don't see that," Woodcock said. "We're all just people trying to grow in our faith." (Grace Thornton)



Photo by Lisa Rose

Members of the Mixtec Bible study in Montgomery make Christmas cards during one of their weekly gatherings in December.

# Holy Spirit working

## Alabama's first Mixtec church to hold building dedication, celebrate gospel presence

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**L**isa Rose remembers when the Mixtec people first began arriving at Montgomery-area ministry centers. Volunteers thought they were Hispanic but realized quickly that they were wrong — they couldn't communicate in Spanish.

"We found out that what they spoke was called Mixteco," said Rose, director of compassion ministries for Montgomery Baptist Association. "I had never heard of that, so I started doing lots of research."

What she found was that the Mixtec people — one of Mexico's indigenous people groups — were the most unengaged unreached people group in the Americas. So she and volunteers from area churches

began to do the hard work of building relationships and laying a foundation for the gospel among the Mixtec.

Now, more than a decade later, a fledgling Bible study group among Alabama's Mixtec is dedicating its new church facility Feb. 10. The group doesn't have a name yet, but it will be meeting in a building provided to them by Highland Gardens Baptist Church, Montgomery.

### Active evangelism work

"It is phenomenal — as it continues to grow, it will be the first Southern Baptist church among the Mixtec in Alabama," Rose said. "To my knowledge, there are only three more in the U.S. — one in California, one in Virginia and one in North Carolina."

But because of the ministry to the Mixtec

that local churches have done in all four of those states, the group has been moved from "unengaged, unreached" to "unreached" status, meaning there was now active evangelism work going on among them.

And though there's still much work to be done, that is something to celebrate, Rose said.

For about 10 years, as Montgomery-area Baptists served the Mixtec, they invested in the children and "got to know the people and the culture very well but we were just not able to reach out to the adults," Rose said.

It was a problem largely caused by the language barrier, she said. So they began to really pray and formed a task force.

And last year they had a breakthrough — when the people faced heartache, they reached out to the Christian community that

had been so kind to them for so long.

"Two people in the community died within a few months of each other and they asked us to perform the funerals," Rose said. "There were 200 to 300 people in one room together and we were able to very clearly articulate the gospel."

### Open doors

Some of the teenagers and young adults who spoke English served as translators, and with their interest piqued, it opened the door for Rose and others to begin to disciple them.

"That made us begin to consider starting a regular Bible study group," she said.

So they got training in Bible storying from Jack Day, an International Mission Board missionary, and in July 2017, they began two Bible studies — one in the Ch-



Photo by Lisa Rose

The Mixtec, an unreached people group from Mexico, began migrating to Alabama more than a decade ago.



Photo by Lisa Rose

Alan Cross (left), a member of FBC Montgomery, leads worship in the Mixtec Bible study group's new building and John Halbrooks, also a member of FBC, shares the Bible lesson. They hope that as it grows into a church, it will eventually be Mixtec-led. They are praying that young adults will rise up and become the leaders of the church.

isholm neighborhood and one in the Forest Park neighborhood.

And people started coming.

"We consistently have five to seven families and it's growing," said Rose, noting they recently moved the combined study into the building at Highland Gardens Baptist. "We have supper together, have a Bible study and sing some worship songs. We talk about life issues and how the Bible guides us."

The Bible is new to the Mixtec, as is the Christian life, but they are "growing rapidly," Rose said.

One Mixtec young adult whom Rose is discipling got in the car with her one day and said someone had asked her over the weekend if she was a Christian. She responded that she went to church.

"She told me, 'I felt guilty all weekend; I feel like Peter in the Bible,'" Rose said. "I told her that was the Holy Spirit working in her, and she said from that day on, she planned to be bold."

And she has been, Rose said. The young woman serves as a translator for the people in the community who only speak Mixtec, boldly sharing her faith.

Other young women have been bold too, Rose said. One teenage girl, the only believer in her house, has risked the anger of her family as she's turned her back on the mysticism of the Mixtec people.

"It's a small group of believers but step by step they are becoming more bold and

## WHO ARE THE MIXTEC PEOPLE?

*A people group indigenous to Mexico who speak their own language, Mixteco. Roughly 726,000 Mixtec people live in Mexico, with another 100,000 or so living in the U.S., mostly in California.*



Photo by Lisa Rose

Rhonda Thompson, director of FBC Montgomery's Nehemiah Center, talks with girls and women attending the Mixtec Bible study.

the group is growing," she said. "We've seen the men in the community step up and be curious and want to come hear the story of God."

Rick Barnhart, interim pastor of Highland Gardens Baptist, said that being involved in ministry to the Mixtec has been an amazing thing for his transitional church.

"As part of the intentional look at how to be the best church God has called them to be, they voted to make that building available to the Mixtec community," he said.

That decision was an extension of their existing ministry to the people group. One set of 10 siblings had been coming to the

church's children's ministry for some time, even though the parents weren't involved, Barnhart said.

"When the dad passed away recently, we were able to really minister to the family and assist them," he said. "We made the decision to expand the use of that annex building to the whole Mixtec community."

### Praying for leaders

Currently the Sunday night Bible study is being led by John Halbrooks, a member of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, but Rose said they hope that as it grows into a church, it will eventually be Mixtec-led.

"We are praying that the young adults here will rise up and become the leaders of the church," she said. "And our hope is that one day if some of them go back to Mexico, they will take the gospel with them."✠

## Mixtec summit set for Feb. 9-10

The same weekend that the fledgling Mixtec Bible study group in Montgomery dedicates its new church building, Montgomery Baptist Association will host its fourth annual National Mixtec Summit.

Set for Feb. 9-10, the summit will bring together people who serve among the Mixtec in the U.S. and Mexico.

Sessions include:

- ▶ Engaging Mixtec men
- ▶ How to work with Mixtec children
- ▶ Spiritual practices of the Mixtec
- ▶ What the Bible says about immigrants

▶ How to pray for the Mixtec

Saturday also will include a community outreach for local Mixtec featuring pastors preaching in their heart language. It will be a chance for local Mixtec believers to meet like-minded Mixtec from other parts of the country, said Lisa Rose, director of compassion ministries for Montgomery Association.

The summit will end with the building dedication at Highland Gardens Baptist Church at 3 p.m.

"It's an annual gathering to encourage one another," Rose said. "Anyone is welcome to come." (TAB)

**For more information, call 334-271-6227.**

**"Our hope is that one day if some of [the young adults] go back to Mexico, they will take the gospel with them."**

**Lisa Rose**  
director of compassion ministries, Montgomery Baptist Association



# Across ALABAMA'S Associations

## TALLAPOOSA

► **Ben Hayes** is the new pastor of **First Church, Dadeville**. He previously served as pastor of Southside Church, Decatur. Hayes holds a bachelor's degree from Mobile College (now University of Mobile) and a master's degree and doctorate from New Orleans Seminary. His first Sunday is Feb. 11. He and his wife, Sonya, have two daughters and three grandchildren.



HAYES

is for veterans of any status and military branch. For more information call Coffee Association Director of Missions John Granger at 334-894-6411. Granger also is pastor.

## MORGAN

► **Walnut Grove Church, Decatur**, will host Jason Runnels in concert Feb. 18, 11 a.m. Everyone is invited for this time of worship. A love offering will be collected. For more information call Andy Crow at 256-280-6723. John Bain is pastor.

## TUSCALOOSA

► **Irby Jackson** is the new pastor of **New Hope Church, Buhl**. He previously served as pastor of Crestline Church, Tuscaloosa. He also served at London Church, Castleberry; Bethlehem East Church, Tallassee; and Dogwood Grove Church, Adger. He holds a bachelor's degree from Leavell College in New Orleans. Jackson and his wife, Traci, have two children.✠

## COFFEE

► **Church on Boll Weevil Circle, Enterprise**, will host the first meeting of the Enterprise Military Support Group on Feb. 20, 7 p.m. The group will meet on Tuesday evenings at 7 p.m. for six weeks and

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Church announcements should arrive three weeks prior to the event.

## SBOM holds ribbon-cutting ceremony



Photo by Jay Sailors

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) holds a ribbon-cutting ceremony at its new facility in Prattville on Feb. 1. Participating in the ceremony were (l to r) Morgan Bailey, SBOM chairman and pastor of Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer; Bill Gillespie Jr., mayor of Prattville; Rick Lance, SBOM executive director; Bobby DuBois, SBOM associate executive director; Jake Dean, assistant vice president of facilities, Baptist Health; and John Thweatt, Alabama Baptist State Convention president and pastor of FBC Pell City.



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## What's New?

# A New Name

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

In this New Year, Theology 101 is exploring aspects of the newness toward which God is moving His people. We have considered among the new things a new covenant, a new memorial meal (The Lord's Supper), a new commandment (Loving as Christ loves) and a new day of worship (The Lord's Day). This week we look back on the new name by which Christ's followers became known, the name "Christian."

Those who chose to become followers of Christ were not immediately termed "Christians." In fact, this term does not appear until the gospel reached into Gentile territory. While it is the commonly used designation for followers of Christ today, the name "Christian" occurs only three times in the Bible. The first recorded use of this new name is found in Acts 11:26, "And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." It occurs a second time in the account of Paul's witness to King Agrippa, at the end of which Agrippa responded, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian" (Acts 26:28). The remaining occurrence is in the admonition of 1 Peter 4:16, "If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter."

Prior to this new name, the followers of Jesus and His teaching were termed "disciples," in the general sense of learners or adherents to the Christian message. Often the simple designation of "followers" of the way (Acts 9:2) or "believers" (Acts 4:4; 5:32) or "those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47) sufficed as descriptive terms for those who responded positively to the gospel.

The motivation behind the name bestowed at Antioch is not given. It is possible the name originated with opponents whose intent was to ridicule believers by attaching to them a name associated with Jesus who had been rejected and subjected to an ignominious death on a Roman cross. If so, what originated as dishonor became a badge of honor. On the other hand, it is pos-

sible the new name came out of admiration for a group of Christ-followers whose manner and character were reflections of Christ Himself. If so, this new name carried the compliment of describing Christ's followers as "Christ-like" or "Christian."

Sadly, the name "Christian" does not always convey Christlikeness today. Sometimes it only designates a religious person as non-Jewish or non-Islamic or such like. Sometimes the term "Christian" is used only with sociological overtones to indicate a segment of society that is not pagan or nonreligious. Because of the diminished meaning that attaches to this new name, some have suggested that the Church needs to revisit and reverse Antioch so that Christians become known today as disciples or disciplined learners in process of knowing more about Christ and becoming more like Him in attitude and action. After all, Jesus' vision for His followers as expressed in His Great Commission was for the Church to go into all the world to make not Christians but disciples.

## Resembling Christ

Even so the new name, rightly understood and used, is a wonderful way to describe believers in and followers of Christ, especially when it connotes people who resemble Christ and reflect His teachings.

Concerning the new name, might we all be able to say with the gospel songwriter who gave expression to this ideal of the new name when he included in his song the chorus that says, "There's a new name written down in glory, And it's mine, oh yes, it's mine."✠

*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.*



# Pastor's COMPENSATION

## Churches may need to approach pastor salary structure differently, financial planner says

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**F**or more than half of Alabama Baptist pastors, the salary they get for filling the pulpit isn't their sole income. About 1,500 of the state's 2,928 pastors work a second job during the week.

But for those who do make their living entirely from their church, the going can get tough when it comes to money, said Larry Byrd of Nowlin and Associates Wealth Management.

For many "it is very difficult to go to their committee and ask for a raise," even if they are unable to support their families, said Byrd, a member of First Baptist Church, Birmingham. "It can also be uncomfortable to ask a church for the freedom to get a second job to supplement their income. They are caught between a rock and a hard place."

It's not an uncommon story for pastors, according to Christian Messemer, a certified financial planner and a doctoral candidate at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

He said he is regularly asked to look over compensation packages that churches have offered to potential pastors.

"Without fail, when I begin to do the math, it quickly becomes apparent that the numbers will not work," Messemer said.

For him, the problem boils down to one major issue — the way churches look at their pastor's compensation structure.

More times than not, when the potential pastor went back and talked to the committee again, the committee told him they did not realize the true cost for the benefits and other taxes paid for by an employer that most W-2 employees take for granted.

Those benefits are what human resource professionals call "total compensation," he wrote.

Messemer recently outlined this issue in "A Shift Toward Total Compensation" and offered three ways for pastors and churches to look differently at the way they do salaries in order to avoid financial crisis.

**1. As a church, consider total compensation for your pastor rather than a gross wage model.**

Gross wage is what an employee is paid prior to personal deductions for taxes, insurance and retirement. A total compensation model would include gross wages but also



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benefits from the employer such as health insurance, life insurance and retirement contributions.

Often, Messemer said, churches will pay the pastor a salary and leave him to deal with his own insurance and retirement.

So, for example, if he is paid \$35,000 and then has to pay his own taxes and insurance premiums, he would make far less than an employee in the workforce who made \$35,000 in gross wages plus \$15,000 in employer-paid benefits.

"The decision to sacrifice financially for the church is nothing new for [Southern Baptist Convention] pastors," Messemer wrote. "For years SBC ministers have focused not on asset accumulation but on properly stewarding the Word of God, knowing that their 'other' retirement program — the rewards given to a good and faithful servant — remains secure."

While this is noble and sacrificial, the consequences are only just beginning to show up as pastors in the Baby Boomer generation retire, he wrote.

"For these men and their families, their

financial sacrifice for the Kingdom continues into retirement, turning their golden years into a financial nightmare," Messemer wrote.

**2. Remember to factor in the importance of a cost of living adjustment.**

A cost of living adjustment, or COLA, is not to be confused with a performance-based raise, Messemer pointed out — rather, it simply helps a pastor keep the "buying power" of his original salary rather than letting it erode with inflation.

### Yearly adjustment

"Many pastors are familiar with this situation," he wrote. "Without a yearly adjustment, the ever-increasing prices in goods and services place a continuous strain upon the family's budget."

At first they try to cut all they can — eating out, name-brand merchandise and family activities might all fall by the wayside, Messemer wrote. But as the years go by, even those cuts aren't enough.

"The addition of a COLA to a pastor's compensation package provides financial flexibility to pastors by taking into account the ever-increasing price levels of goods and services," he wrote.

**3. If your church can't pay enough, con-**

**sider freeing up some of your pastor's time to get a second job.**

The reality is — a pastor needs a COLA, social security and insurance to survive, Messemer wrote. But the reality also might be that the church is unable to supply those things.

If that's the case, the pastor and the church may need to "work together to realize the weaknesses of the pastor's compensation package and to develop a plan which will allow the pastor to continue his service to the local church while providing the opportunity for the pastor to seek additional opportunities that will fill in the gaps produced by the church's plan," Messemer wrote.

This could mean getting an additional full- or part-time job that has benefits. Or it could mean getting an additional job without benefits, but taking their pastor's salary in the form of medical insurance and a housing allowance instead of gross wages, Messemer wrote.

"Despite the church's inability to provide in total for the pastor's financial need, churches can be great partners as they work with the pastor to structure his compensation package in the most beneficial way," he wrote. †

**For Christian Messemer's report, "A Shift Toward Total Compensation," which includes worksheets and other resources, visit [guidestone.org](http://guidestone.org).**

## FINANCIAL ISSUES

# Discussing MONEY & BENEFITS

## Tips for navigating compensation topics as pastor, committee member

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**A** job interview is rarely stress-free — especially if the job is a pastorate. But introduce the topic of financial compensation and the hot seat becomes even hotter for the potential pastor, said Larry Byrd of Nowlin and Associates Wealth Management.

In most cases, there's a small margin in which that conversation can go well, he said.

"Early on in their ministry, pastors say they would not feel comfortable having a compensation discussion in their job interview, so they don't bring it up," said Byrd, a member of First Baptist Church, Birmingham.

That's not good, he said. "But on the other hand, if the first thing out of their mouth is about compensation it's a big red flag. It has to be done carefully."

It's important for pastors to know how to have this discussion in the right way, Byrd said.

But even more important than that — a finance or search committee needs to know the realities that a pastor or potential pastor faces, he said. They also need to know exactly what they're working with budget-wise as a church.

### What is a white paper?

The pastor's compensation articles mention a report prepared by Christian Messemer, a certified financial planner and a doctoral candidate at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. This report is often referred to as a "white paper," but what is a white paper exactly?

A white paper is a report written by an authority (or someone with some expertise) on a specific topic. It is typically a presentation of information in everyday language and sometimes is meant to persuade the reader toward a certain point.

So what's the best place for both to start?

### Pastors and committees: Go through the worksheet together

In his report, "A Shift Toward Total Compensation," Christian Messemer, a certified financial planner and a doctoral candidate at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, offers worksheets for seeing how the numbers crunch (see story, page 7). Byrd recommends committees and pastors find that report and its included worksheets at GuideStone.org and work through it together.

"Those tools that are available would help everybody understand exactly the impact of where the money goes," Byrd said. "Work through them together until both the pastor and the committee members are comfortable with the way

the worksheets look."

### Committee members: Educate the next group elected

Once you've done that, be sure to pass those worksheets and knowledge along to the next committee members who rotate on, Byrd said.

"The people with the knowledge are typically always rotating off," he said. "Make sure the next committee that will set salaries

**"Bring up the future and discuss it in broad terms so that if in the future it does come up, you've already talked about it."**

**Larry Byrd  
Nowlin and Associates  
Wealth Management**



123rf.com

is educated, whether that's the search committee, personnel committee or finance committee."

The person in charge who rotates off should be responsible for sitting down with the incoming chairman and saying, "Let's do the math together; this is where we are," Byrd said.

### Potential pastors: Ask, "What is your philosophy of benefits?"

Asking about philosophy of benefits helps the pastor understand the church's thought process but also doesn't sound like he's going straight for the bottom line, Byrd said.

It's a comfortable question to ask, he said. "Bring up the future and discuss it in broad terms so that if in the future it does

come up, you've already talked about it."

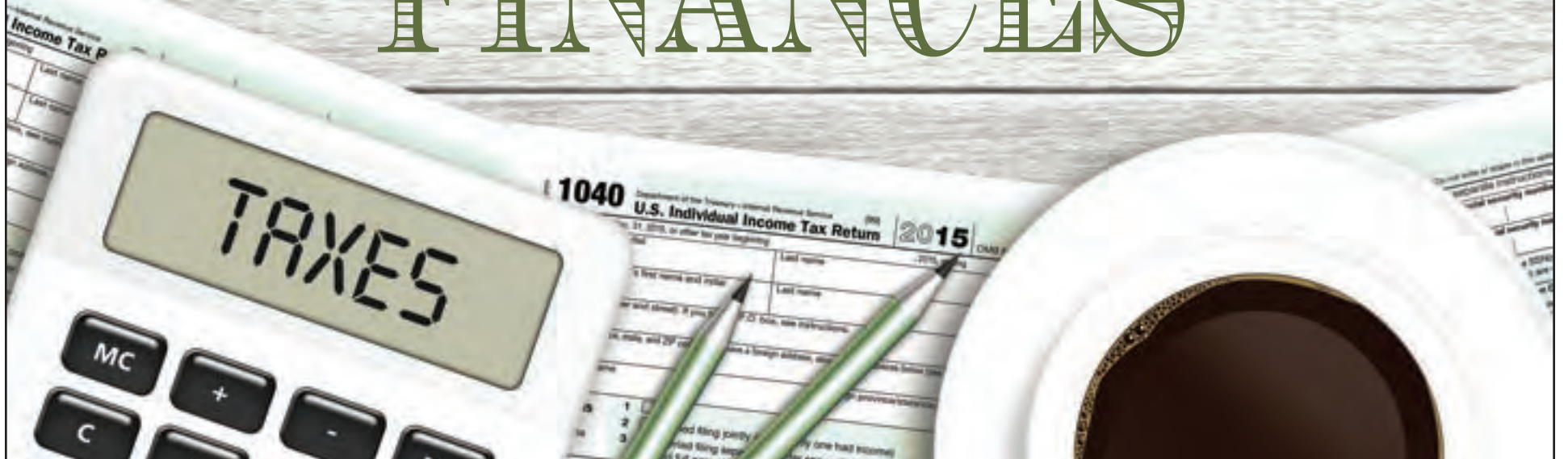
This includes topics such as if the church would be willing to consider bivocational ministry, Byrd said.

"If I am a pastor and I am interviewing in a smaller congregation where I know money is going to be an issue, they may say, 'We can handle your salary.' But I recognize that everything goes up in the future, so with that in mind I would ask, 'If I get to a point where I am considering going bivocational, how would we handle it? What would we do?'"

It also opens the door to talk about medical insurance, disability policies and other topics like that, Byrd said. "It gets those landmines out on the table up front and takes away some of the potential for crisis later."✝

**Asking about philosophy of benefits helps the pastor understand the church's thought process but also doesn't sound like he's going straight for the bottom line.**

# Church FINANCES



123rf.com

## Church leaders urged to be wise managers of Lord's money, educated on tax laws

By Michael J. Brooks  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

It's the Lord's money and church leaders need to use it wisely, said Lee Wright, coordinator of church compensation services for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Wright speaks on this topic often. In fact, he led 10 "Church Financial Issues" conferences in 2017. He discussed a variety of financial issues in speaking to church leaders during those conferences.

**Business mileage deduction.** To be considered nontaxable, automobile expenses should be part of a minister's accountable reimbursement plan. Without such accountability at least every two months, these expense reimbursements are considered taxable income, Wright said.

**Tax audit.** The probability of a church tax audit is rare, Wright said. If the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) were to contact a church, it would normally be by letter explaining the error and the amount owed. If the church agrees, the church pays the bill; if not, the church responds with reasons for disagreement. Audit rates are a bit higher for ministers than other taxpayers, so ministers must know and follow tax law.

**Social Security.** Some ministers begin to take Social Security benefits before full retirement age to supplement their incomes. The amount a minister can earn from employment before full retirement age without impacting Social Security payments was \$16,920 (including housing allowance) in 2017 and could be more than \$17,000 in 2018.

**Housing allowance.** "The ministers' housing allowance continues to be a court issue," Wright said. "The Freedom from Religion Foundation has challenged this benefit in court, but we recommend that ministers continue to take full advantage of it until a final ruling comes, possibly from the Supreme Court."

### Taxation

A housing allowance is subject to Social Security and Medicare taxation at the self-employment rate of 15.3 percent but it is not subject to federal income tax, Wright explained.

"The amount claimed each year must be justified but there is no dollar limit or percentage limit for the minister," he said.

**W-2 forms/church contribution statements.** Wright said W-2 forms are due to recipients by Jan. 31 for both state and

federal taxes. He cautioned that those who wish to file their returns early should wait until they have their church contribution forms in hand.

"The IRS has taken the position that donors must have their church contribution statements prior to filing and that not following this rule could result in denial of all the contributions," he said. "We think churches should put a cautionary note

in the bulletin to let members know about this."

**Health care.** There is much anxiety about health insurance today and the rise in health care cost has impacted the nation and ministers, Wright said. The Affordable Care Act, he reminded church leaders, "continues as the law of the land."

"Health coverage for ministers must be

a group plan for it to be a tax-free benefit not included on the W-2, although there is a current exemption for 'groups fewer than two.' Thus a single-staff church can provide this benefit. All health plans provided by GuideStone Financial Resources are considered group plans, even in a single-staff church," he said.

"Some ministers have opted out of Social Security, but this also means they're ineligible for Medicare unless they have it as a spouse or with 10 years of secular work," he said, adding that it would be "very difficult" for a retired minister to afford health care without Medicare.

**Private benefit.** Wright discussed "private benefit," which might occur if a church member taught music lessons or directed an exercise class at the church facility and accepted fees from participants.

### Personal benefit

"The IRS doesn't think anyone should have personal benefit in an organization that receives tax-deductible gifts," he said.

"It can be argued that it's personal benefit if the teacher or leader uses church equipment and facilities without reimbursement. It's much better for the church to control these kinds of ministries and pay the leaders a salary."

**Designated funds.** Wright advised caution regarding churches receiving designated funds, and he emphasized that any designated account should be church-approved and church-controlled.

"It's best to label the funds broadly, such as 'building fund' rather than 'new sanctuary fund.' This gives the church flexibility if its plans change over time," he said.

### Internal controls.

Churches should exercise internal controls over contributions and expenditures, Wright said, suggesting that churches separate duties and use several people in this process.

"For example, one person might issue checks and two others might sign them. Counting committees should rotate. And occasional audits are good. These help those who handle money know they're doing it correctly," he said.

### Electronic giving.

Audience members asked about the growing practice of electronic giving, and Wright said

he believes checks would be discontinued in the future.

"In other countries they're discontinuing paper checks," he said. "In America we may see banks begin charging for each paper check and the effect would be the same. So we need to plan for additional means of donor contributions."✠

**"Some ministers have opted out of Social Security, but this also means they're ineligible for Medicare unless they have it as a spouse or with 10 years of secular work."**

Lee Wright  
coordinator of church  
compensation services,  
Alabama Baptist State Board  
of Missions

# Symposium to focus on *TAB*'s impact

The history and future of *The Alabama Baptist's* place in Alabama journalism will be the focus of a symposium March 2.

The symposium is co-sponsored by Samford University in Birmingham and the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and will begin at 10 a.m. in the Regions Room of Cooney Hall on Samford's campus.

## Scheduled talks

Four talks are scheduled for the day, including:

► Journalism standards through the years by Steve Stew-

art, Troy University assistant professor of multimedia journalism.

► *The Alabama Baptist's* role in theological controversies by Timothy George, dean of Samford's Beeson Divinity School.

► *The Alabama Baptist's* impact on Alabama Baptists and beyond by J. Mark Baggett, Samford associate professor in the areas of legal writing and English.

► The future of the ministry of *The Alabama Baptist* by Editor Bobby S. Terry.

The event is free and open to the public. Lunch will be provided for pre-registered participants.

Terry said of the event, "I am

excited about the coming symposium and somewhat anxious about what those preparing papers will say about the contributions of *The Alabama Baptist* through the years.

"But every ministry has to be willing to stand transparently and be examined by others. This

will be a learning time for *The Alabama Baptist* and for all who attend. We look forward to this event and hope many people will join us. And we are thankful Samford University and Alabama Baptist Historical Commission for sponsoring this symposium," he said. (Carrie Brown McWhorter)

**You're invited to celebrate 175 years of *The Alabama Baptist* at a symposium on March 2 at Samford University.**

For more information or to pre-register, contact Linda Harrison at 205-870-4720, ext. 109 or lharrison@thealabamabaptist.org.

## TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

### CHURCH POSITIONS

#### SENIOR PASTOR

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

#### ASSOCIATE PASTOR FOR WORSHIP & MUSIC

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New Beginnings, Graysville, is searching for a bivocational worship minister. Ability to lead Red Back Book and contemporary music as well as directing the adult choir required. Send your resumé to: secretary@nbcbbaptist.com.

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#### PART-TIME MUSIC DIRECTOR

Montevallo First Baptist Church, Montevallo, Alabama, is seeking a part-time minister of music. They will give leadership in planning and leading of our worship services in an energetic blended style of worship. Their primary additional responsibility will be to lead the choir ministry and choir rehearsals. Interested persons should send a resumé to: Montevallo First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 46, Montevallo, AL 35115, or email address: drtsutton@bellsouth.net.

#### PRESCHOOL & CHILDREN'S PASTOR

The First Baptist Church of Mauldin, S.C., is seeking a full-time preschool and children's pastor. Send resumés to: First Baptist Mauldin, 150 South Main Street, Mauldin, SC 29662 or email: wleonard@fbcmauldin.org. For more information, visit www.fbcmauldin.org to view the job profile and job description.

#### BIVOCATIONAL/PART-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTER

Wooley Springs Baptist Church is located in North Limestone County. Inquiries can call 256-423-3494 or email resumés to: tony@wooleysprings.com.

### OTHER POSITIONS

#### DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

Walton County Baptist Association in DeFuniak Springs, Florida, is seeking resumés for a full-time director of missions. Please email resumés to: wbpastassoc@panhandle.rr.com.

#### ASSISTANT/ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Samford University's Christian

Ministry program, which will launch in fall 2018, invites applicants interested in serving in a Christian university environment to apply for the position of assistant/associate professor of Christian ministry. This full-time position will begin August 2018; rank, tenure and salary are negotiable. This professor will teach courses in disciple making, evangelism and missions, and will perform additional duties as assigned. Qualified candidates will hold a doctorate in missions, evangelism or related fields or may hold a doctorate in another area with extensive experience in the aforementioned fields. Candidates should have practical experience in areas of disciple making, evangelism and missions, as well as some post-secondary teaching experience. For more information, please visit Samford's faculty employment opportunities page at www.samford.edu and click on the "Assistant or Associate Professor of Christian Ministry" link under School of the Arts.

#### FULL-TIME YOUTH/MISSIONS POSITION

Tuscaloosa Youth For Christ seeks leader to join their team in our mission to unchurched teenagers. We seek a strong leader with calling to youth evangelism, bachelor's degree and two years plus youth ministry experience. Send resumé to: campuslife@tuscaloosayfc.com. For more information, go to www.tuscaloosayfc.com.

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- 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.

# Keeping your church secure

## Shelby Association one of several groups hosting church security conferences

By Michael J. Brooks  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**T**he stats for gun violence in churches are relatively low — less than 4 percent of active shooters target churches.

But according to the Shelby County Sheriff's Department, it's still imperative for church leaders to prepare for the unthinkable.

The sheriff's department, in partnership with Shelby Baptist Association, held a church safety conference Jan. 20 at First Baptist Church, Columbiana, to equip leaders to react if a worst-case scenario ever happened at their church. Other associations and churches across the state are holding similar events.

"We planned this conference before the tragedy in Sutherland Springs, Texas," said Keith Brown, Shelby Association's church and community ministries director. "But there's been so much interest that we changed our focus a bit to cover active shooting as well as other emergency situations. Our churches must have a mindset of awareness in the future."

### 'Unfortunate trend'

Shelby County Sheriff John Samaniego agreed, calling church shootings an "unfortunate trend."

"Churches must do risk management," Samaniego said. "Law enforcement is here to help and we need to be on the same sheet of music with our churches as we work together."

Deputy Debbie Sumrall challenged participants to "take control of your space."

"We can't 'do nothing' — that's not a viable option," she said. "We have to be alert to what happens around us and have plans in place."

Sumrall said there's no profile of an active shooter but certain things are known from the incidents already recorded.

### 'Avenger mindset'

"Shooters most often have an avenger mindset and they may broadcast their grievances beforehand," she said. "And they're mostly male. The average lapse time for law enforcement to arrive at the scene is three minutes, and that's amazing, but some terrible things can take place in the first three minutes."

Sumrall spent most of her presentation time explaining the ALICE system response, recently adopted by homeland security in the state of Alabama ([alicesystem.com](http://alicesystem.com)).

In the ALICE system:

▶ **A is for "alert."**

"We must be aware of our surroundings and take initiative if something doesn't look right," Sumrall said. "Many churches now have security teams in their parking lots to look for threats."

▶ **L is for "lockdown."**

Churches can restrict entry to their buildings in emergencies.

▶ **I is for "inform."**

That means that leaders must tell the congregation in plain lan-



Photo by Michael J. Brooks

The Shelby County Law Enforcement Chaplains Association assists with registration at the Jan. 20 church safety conference at FBC Columbiana.

guage what to do in emergency situations.

▶ **C is for "counter."**

This has to do with distracting an intruder by shouting or throwing objects or "swarming" the intruder by several people rushing and overpowering him.

"Counter" doesn't mean that we have a bunch of people firing guns," Sumrall said. "This is a misconception about the church safety process. Anyone who has a weapon needs to be trained in how and when to use it responsibly. If not, more people potentially can be injured."

▶ **E is for "evacuate."**

According to Sumrall, this is always the best option in a dangerous situation, if possible.

In addition to offering training in shooter preparation, Chief Spruce McRee of Brierfield Fire and Rescue spoke about fire safety.

He urged church safety teams to do risk analysis at least once each month, including inspecting electrical cords, clearing out flammable materials and checking fire extinguishers for proper charge.

McCree cited the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA)

latest statistics from 2007 to 2011 that show \$111 million in fire damage to churches in that time frame. NFPA records show 30 percent of church fires result from kitchen use and cooking, 16 percent of fires are intentional, 10 percent are electrical and 4 percent are because of lighting and candles.

Brian Peters, meteorologist at ABC 33/40 in Birmingham, spoke about weather preparedness.

### Tornado statistics

Peters said heat and cold kill more people than other weather issues but Alabama has grim statistics on tornado fatalities. Alabama was No. 1 in the nation in tornado deaths between 1950 and 2017 with nearly 700 fatalities. Alabama overtook Texas in the rankings when more than 200 deaths occurred in April 2011.

"A watch means that conditions are favorable for tornado activity and a warning means that a tornado has been sighted,"

he said. "Every church needs a weather radio on premises and a plan to move worshippers to a safe location when there's a warning. And there are several

telephone apps available that issue warnings automatically for whatever area you're in. These are good to have as well."

GuideStone Christian Resources associate account manager

Steven Riggins was a vendor and lunch sponsor at the conference. He also serves as head of the security team at North Shelby Baptist Church, Birmingham.

"We're seeing more and more churches establishing security teams," Riggins said. "GuideStone believes this a good thing. We recommend good policies and procedures, and we have materials to help with this. We also recommend that church leaders be familiar with their insurance coverage to help cover losses due to tragedies that might occur." ❖

**For more information, contact Riggins at 205-383-6885 or [Steven.Riggins@GuideStone.org](mailto:Steven.Riggins@GuideStone.org).**

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NMLS #207518

# Greear, Hemphill announced as candidates for SBC president

North Carolina pastor J.D. Greear and former seminary president Ken Hemphill will be on the ballot for Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) president during the SBC annual meeting June 12–13 in Dallas.

Florida pastor Ken Whitten plans to nominate Greear.

Greear is “all about what Southern Baptists have been all about” and will give Southern Baptists the opportunity to impact another generation, Whitten said.

## ‘Established record’

A coalition of Southern Baptists announced their intention to nominate Hemphill in the Louisiana Baptist Convention’s *Baptist Message* newsjournal on Feb. 1.

Louisiana Baptist Convention executive director David Hankins said, “We desire to elect a man who is a Southern Baptist through and through, values our understanding of the gospel, and has an established record of affirming the cooperative work of our local churches through the associations, state conventions and national entities.”

Hankins said Hemphill met those characteristics. Hankins and Hemphill said a decision is forthcoming on an individual to make the nomination at the SBC annual meeting.

“It’s always better for Southern Baptists when we have several good candidates” for convention president “because it gives us an opportunity to exercise our congregational polity” and discern the Holy Spirit’s leading “in a corporate context,” Hemphill said.

Greear, pastor of The Summit Church, Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, was nominated two years ago at the 2016 SBC annual meeting in St. Louis, but neither Greear nor current SBC President Steve Gaines received a majority of votes on the first or second bal-

lot for president. So Greear withdrew his candidacy and moved that the convention elect Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, Tennessee, on the third ballot.

In a statement Greear said he had agreed to the 2018 nomination. “The basic things that God laid on my heart haven’t changed from 2016,” Greear wrote, “and I feel more committed to them than ever.”

Among themes Greear would emphasize as SBC president, he wrote, are “the gospel above all” as the convention’s source of unity; “cultural and racial diversity”; “intentional, personal evangelism”; “church planting”; and “engagement of the next generation in cooperative giving and mission.”

Hemphill, 69, is an administrator at North Greenville University, a private Baptist university in Tigerville, South Carolina. He was president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, from

1994 to 2003 and national strategist from 2003–11 for the SBC’s Empowering Kingdom Growth emphasis.

Hemphill has pastored churches

in Kentucky and Virginia and led the Home Mission Board’s (now the North American Mission Board) Southern Baptist Center for Church Growth in the early 1990s.

Hemphill holds master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and a doctor of philosophy from Cambridge University in England.



GREEAR

## Growing church

Greear, 44, holds master of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

In his 16 years as pastor at The Summit, worship attendance has grown to just under 10,000 and has 158 members serving as missionaries and has planted 248 churches, including 208 outside the U.S.

The Summit gives 2.4 percent of its undesignated receipts through the Cooperative Program (CP), according to the Annual Church Profile.

That amount made The Summit the top CP-contributing church in the state in terms of total dollars given in 2016 and again in 2017 — a total of \$1 million between those two years. (BP)



HEMPHILL



## Christian students knifed, beaten in clash

NAIROBI, Kenya — Muslim students at a high school in Nairobi beat and stabbed Christians on Jan. 23 who refused to recite the Islamic creed for conversion, a local source said.

Tensions grew over the course of several weeks at Jamhuri High School in northern Nairobi, with Muslims primarily of Somali, Boran and Oromo descent complaining of discrimination. The hostilities had grown so much that the boarding school designated separate bathrooms and separate sections in the library for Christians and Muslims.

At least 35 of the school’s 1,500 students were injured, including some Muslims, when the Christian students tried to defend themselves from being forced to recite the creed or participate in Muslim cleansing rituals, the source said. Some Christian students received hospital treatment for stab wounds and dislocated bones in their hands and joints. The school has been closed indefinitely while police investigate. (MS)

## Pastor found dead in his home in India

HYDERABAD, India — The body of Gideon Periyaswamy — the 43-year-old pastor of Maknayeem Church in Adayachery village, Kanchipuram District, India — was found hung from the thatched roof of his house Jan. 20, a week after he complained to police about opposition from Hindu extremists, sources said.

A convert from Hinduism 25 years ago, Periyaswamy was single and served as pastor in Adayachery for more than 12 years, his close friend, Pastor Azariah Reuben said. Reuben said local Hindus had tried several times to stop the ministry, and at pastors’ meetings, Periyaswamy spoke of Hindu hostilities to his church services and requested prayer, he said.

India ranked 11th on Christian support organization Open Doors’ 2018 World Watch List of countries where Christians experience the most persecution, up from 15th the previous year, and ahead of Saudi Arabia, Nigeria and Egypt. (MS)

## Bible Society bookshop threatened in Tel Aviv

TEL AVIV — In Tel Aviv, a Bible Society bookshop is under threat of being shut down.

The owner of the bookshop’s building alleges that the Bible Society is violating its commercial license by selling Christian literature other than Bibles and therefore should not have protected tenant status, according to advocacy group Middle East Concern. The shop has been in the same location for 55 years. (MS)

## — Clarification —

Two Alabama Baptist pastors currently serve on the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission’s 2018 Leadership Council. Buddy Gray, pastor of Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, was most recently named to the council. JD Thorne, pastor of Point Mallard Parkway Baptist Church, Decatur, also serves on the council.

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# 'Diverse larger & stronger'

## Samford to commemorate 50th anniversary of integration

**F**ifty years ago in fall 1967, the late Audrey Lattimore Gaston Howard became the first African-American to enroll full time at Samford University in Birmingham. She was a student in Cumberland School of Law.

Samford is commemorating the 50th anniversary of integration with a series of programs and recognitions during the 2017-18 academic year. A special highlight will be the recognition of African-American Samford alumni with Audrey Gaston Howard Awards.

Nominees for this recognition must have distinguished themselves through exemplary professional achievement and civic and community service.

In 1969 the late Elizabeth Sloan became the first African-American undergraduate to live on campus. That same year Samford became the first major university in Alabama to integrate its sports teams when three African-American junior college transfers — Sherman Hogan, Otha Mitchell and Billy Williams — joined the basketball team.

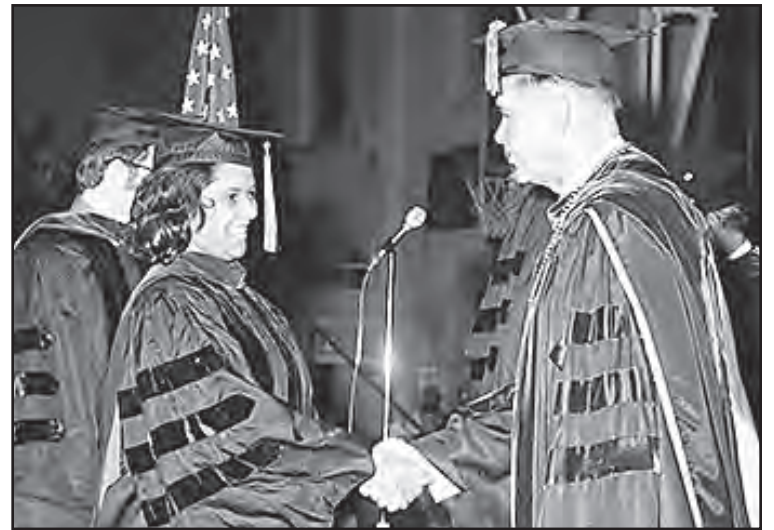


Photo courtesy of Samford University

Audrey Gaston (later Howard) receives her diploma from Samford University's then-President Leslie S. Wright. Gaston was the first African-American to enroll full time at Samford. She became a student in Cumberland School of Law in the fall of 1967.

"Fifty years ago, the Samford University family grew more diverse, larger and stronger ... and the world was better for it," said Samford President Andrew Westmoreland. "We continue to celebrate that progress with special events and commemorations this

year." Westmoreland noted that almost 2,000 African-Americans have earned Samford degrees during the past 50 years and have gone on to achieve success in medicine and science, business, ministry, education, the arts and politics. (Samford)

## 'Celebrating our faith amidst our diversity'

(continued from page 1)  
from food banks to job-skill training. "The goal is that we develop discipleship programs alongside the community ministry."

### Session topics

The theme of the event is "celebrating our faith amidst our diversity" and will begin with a solemn assembly and directed prayer time to reflect on your relationship with Christ and rela-

tionships with others. Session topics will include modeling community, reconciling relationships, investing in people, displaying unity and having intentional interaction.

"We want to set some of the patterns that are healthy patterns for churches and associations," Barnhart said.

The IMPACT Conference will be held at Highland Gardens Baptist Church, Montgomery. (TAB)

**For more information about the IMPACT Conference, call Rick Barnhart, director of the office of associational missions and church planting for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, at 334-613-2220.**



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To register or for more details, visit [www.livethedlife.com](http://www.livethedlife.com) or contact Bill Wilks at 205-228-0030.

In the Jan. 5, 1875, issue of *The Alabama Baptist* editors recalled the Great Anti-Missionary Controversy, writing, "Scarcely has the grand missionary enterprise, with its combined agencies such as Bible, Tract and



Sunday School societies and educational efforts, taken distinct shape ... and entered on their great careers of evangelization when a counter culture arose. ... That men professing to be Christian could find it in their hearts to oppose the spread of the gospel by every means ... present-

ed a paradox not less difficult for our fathers to solve than it is for us to understand. ... The missionary enterprise was 'the Great Beast of the Revelation' with seven heads and ten horns. A theological school to them looked more like the bottomless pit spoken of in the Revelation. Our missionaries were 'howling destructive wolves and ravenous dogs.'"

# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 11

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

### THE TESTIMONY Acts 22:3-8, 15-22

While at the temple in Jerusalem, Paul was falsely accused by some Jews from Asia. These accusations stirred up the Jewish people and they attacked Paul. The Roman tribune heard the city was in confusion so he went with soldiers, arrested Paul and put him in chains, assuming he was a terrorist. Paul identified himself as a Jew from Tarsus and asked for permission to speak to the crowd. The tribune granted Paul permission to speak. Surrounded by Roman soldiers, shackled in chains, Paul began to share his testimony with the angry mob.

#### Former Life (3-5)

Paul began by refuting he was opposed to the Jewish traditions. He declared that he was a Jew from Tarsus, brought up in Jerusalem and trained by Gamaliel, the most revered rabbi of that time. He had been thoroughly instructed in Old Testament law and rabbinical traditions. The accusation that he opposed the law was ridiculous.

Paul declared he was zealous for God just as they were. He shared with them how he had persecuted the followers of the Way (Jesus' followers), having them arrested and even killed. Paul had been the Christians' most feared persecutor from Stephen's martyrdom until Paul's conversion. If anyone still doubted his zeal for God, they could ask the high priest or the members of the Sanhedrin. He was so zealous that the Sanhedrin had authorized him to go to Damascus in Syria and arrest followers of Jesus.

#### Life-Changing Encounter (6-8, 15-16)

Having shown the absurdity of the accusations against him, he then defended his actions. The God of Israel had sovereignly intervened in his life and transformed him from chief persecutor to humble proclaimer

of the gospel of God's amazing grace.

Jesus came and "arrested" Saul (Paul) as he sought followers of Jesus to arrest. Near Damascus, he was blinded by the glory of the exalted Christ. He heard a voice asking, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" He replied, "Who are you, Lord?" The voice responded, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting."

This declaration shocked and horrified him. Instantly he knew how wrong he had been. The one whom he had despised and rejected as a blasphemer and false Messiah was in fact the Lord of glory. Paul obeyed Jesus' command and was helped into the city of Damascus.

The Lord sent Ananias, a follower of Jesus, to him. The Lord restored his sight and Ananias instructed Paul. God had appointed Paul to know His will, see the glory of the resurrected Jesus and go forth and bear witness to His person and power. Paul called on the name of Jesus and was baptized.

#### New Purpose (17-21)

After his conversion and a brief period of ministry at Damascus (Acts 9:20-25), Paul spent three years in Arabia (Gal. 1:17-18). Having returned to Jerusalem, he was praying in the temple. This was further indication that he had not rejected his Jewish heritage. While praying in the temple, he fell into a trance and saw a vision of Jesus. Jesus commanded him to leave Jerusalem because the unbelieving Jews would seek to kill him (Acts 9:26-30). Paul's primary focus would be to take the gospel to the Gentiles.

#### Rejection (22)

Upon hearing that Jesus commissioned Paul to take the gospel to the Gentiles, the mob stopped listening to Paul. They were so angry that they wanted to kill him on the spot. Paul's arrest by the Romans was actually God's way of protecting Paul. ✠

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

### I AM A PRIEST 1 Peter 2:4-10

#### We are a priesthood of believers who offer spiritual sacrifices. (4-5)

This whole section of Peter's epistle is built on a collection of Old Testament passages that refer to stones. The multiple references suggest that "stones" was a frequent image used in the early church to describe themselves and the Lord who is the Cornerstone. Verse 4 uses two adjectives to describe Christ as a stone: "living" and "precious." So in verse 3 the hope into which Christians are born anew is a "living hope" and in verse 7 the faith that Christians show is "more precious than gold." This passage reveals the contrast between what worldly people value and what God values. Worldly people have rejected this stone as if it were dead and worthless. God has chosen this stone as living and valuable.

In the old order among pagans, priests were a separate caste, set apart like the sons of Aaron. In contrast, all those in the living temple are priests with direct access to the God who equips them for His service. In the old order, sacrifices were material, animal or vegetable. In the new temple of living stones where every believer is a priest, the sacrifices are different. They are sacrifices of praise and worship. Note that Peter is speaking of what Christians are collectively. None of this is done alone. We are "cemented" together in making up God's temple. There are no freelance Christians according to God's Word; we are alive in Christ together.

#### Jesus Christ is the foundation for our position as priests. (6-8)

As heirs of Israel, Peter designates the church as the "people of God" and as those who have "received mercy." These two terms are taken from Hosea chapters 1

and 2. In Hosea the contrast was between unfaithful Israel rejected by God and the renewed Israel accepted by God. Here Peter applies this to the Gentile past of his readers, who now by divine mercy have been incorporated into the renewed people of God. The final word is one of divine initiative and saving mercy. The readers' new identity is now defined by the grace they have received through Christ.

#### We are a priesthood of believers who proclaim God. (9-10)

After introducing the image of the Church as a priesthood in verse 5, Peter elaborates on this image in verse 9 by describing our priestly position and function. The apostle explains what he means by "spiritual sacrifices" noted in verse 5. They include the submissive sufferings mentioned so often in the letter, but also the kind of sacrifice extolled in Hebrews 13:15 — that of "proclaiming our allegiance to His name." So we are to "declare the praises of God." Hence the church's mission to proclaim God's "mighty acts." The church does not witness to itself and its own experience, but to what God has done, what God is doing and what God is going to do.

Here Peter reminds us that we are called not only to do significant works in His name but to proclaim His name with our lips. To do acts of Christian kindness is a good thing; however, not to couple these good acts with the verbal declaration of the gospel amounts to mere humanitarian work. For all members of Christ's priesthood, selfless service must be punctuated by a robust, unabashed confession. To paraphrase Peter's fellow missionary, Paul asks us in Romans 10:14, "How can they believe in Him if they have never heard about Him? And how can they hear about Him unless a member of the royal priesthood tells them?" ✠

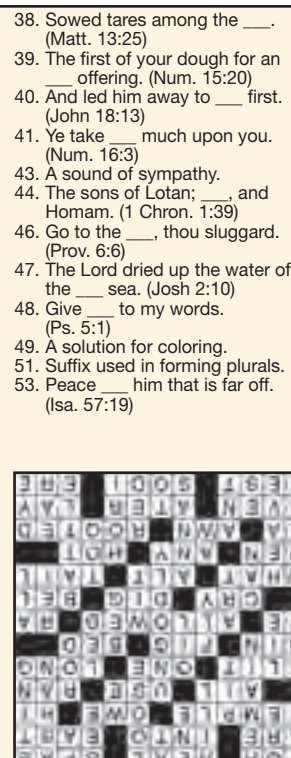
## Christian Crossword

By Evelyn Boyington Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



- Across**
- Look \_\_\_ new heavens and a new earth. (2 Pet. 3:13)
  - I will \_\_\_ thee: on the third day. (2 Kings 20:5)
  - Health resorts.
  - My days \_\_\_ like a shadow. (Ps. 102:11)
  - Enter \_\_\_ his gates with thanksgiving. (Ps. 100:4)
  - We have seen his star in the \_\_\_. (Matt. 2:2)
  - I will destroy this \_\_\_. (Mark 14:58)
  - \_\_\_ no man any thing. (Rom. 13:8)
  - To hurt.
  - A greeting.
  - We \_\_\_ great plainness of speech. (2 Cor. 3:12)
  - He \_\_\_ to meet them. (Gen. 18:2)
  - A narrow cut.
  - Voice of \_\_\_ crying in the wilderness. (Matt. 3:3)
  - With \_\_\_ life will I satisfy him. (Ps. 91:16)
  - An \_\_\_ of oil for an ephah. (Ezek. 45:24)
  - I saw thee under the \_\_\_ tree. (John 1:50)
  - Arise, take up thy \_\_\_. (Matt. 9:6)
  - What think \_\_\_ of Christ? (Matt. 22:42)
  - We were \_\_\_ of God to be put in trust. (1 Thes. 2:4)
  - Chemical symbol for radium.
  - Hear my \_\_\_, O God. (Ps. 61:1)

- Thou shalt \_\_\_ about thee. (Job 11:18)
- Babylon is taken, \_\_\_ is confounded. (Jer. 50:2)
- O Lord, \_\_\_ shall I say! (Josh. 7:8)
- Height (abbr.).
- He moveth his \_\_\_ like a cedar. (Job 40:17)
- Even as a \_\_\_ gathereth her chickens. (Matt. 23:37)
- Not willing that \_\_\_ should perish. (2 Pet. 3:9)
- I would thou wert cold or \_\_\_. (Rev. 3:15)
- A piece (abbr.).
- Wheat bristle.
- \_\_\_ and built up in him. (Col. 2:7)
- The high places also of \_\_\_. (Hosea 10:8)
- The children of \_\_\_ of Hezekiah. (Ezra 2:16)
- \_\_\_ up for yourselves treasures in heaven. (Matt. 6:20)
- An examination.
- Gaddiel the son of \_\_\_. (Num. 13:10)
- How long will it be \_\_\_ thou be quiet? (Jer. 47:6)
- Compass point.
- Marvel not \_\_\_ this. (John 5:28)
- \_\_\_ thy shoe from off thy foot. (Josh 5:15)
- Whereas I was blind, now I \_\_\_. (John 9:25)
- Dad.
- Ain, Remmon, and Ether, and \_\_\_. (Josh 19:7)
- O death, where is thy \_\_\_? (1 Cor. 15:55)
- Brought me up also out of a horrible \_\_\_. (Ps. 40:2)
- \_\_\_ are the children of God. (Rom. 8:16)
- Christ died for the \_\_\_. (Rom. 5:6)
- Moses took the \_\_\_ of God in his hand. (Ex. 4:20)
- Timid.
- I will \_\_\_ with my fathers. (Gen. 47:30)
- A horn of \_\_\_. (1 Kings 1:39)
- The Lord \_\_\_ me. (Gen. 24:27)
- For then would I \_\_\_ away. (Ps. 55:6)
- Therefore shall he \_\_\_ in harvest. (Prov. 20:4)
- Thou \_\_\_ the Son of God. (John 1:49)
- Powers of thinking.
- Shimei and \_\_\_, and the mighty men. (1 Kings 1:8)
- The Lord is good to \_\_\_. (Ps. 145:9)
- How \_\_\_ these things be? (John 3:9)
- The Lord mighty in \_\_\_. (Ps. 24:8)





# Media reviews

**MOVIES**

## Also on DVD this month

▶ **“Only The Brave”** (PG-13 — DVD Feb. 6, digital Jan. 23). Based on a true story of a “hotshot” firefighting crew that lost 19 members during an out-of-control 2013 Arizona wildfire, “Only The Brave” has a solid pro-family message and a redemptive element but tons of coarse language (I counted 70 words). Rated PG-13 for thematic content, some sexual references, language and drug material.

▶ **“Same Kind of Different As Me”** (PG-13 — DVD Feb. 20, digital Feb. 6). An art dealer gets a new perspective on life and family when he befriends a homeless man. Based on a *New York Times* bestseller of the same name, this one spotlights forgiveness in a way that may surprise you. It also puts Romans 8:28 and its implications on display. Recommended for teens and adults. Rated PG-13 for thematic elements including some violence and language (one misuse of h—l and four instances of the n-word).

▶ **“The Star”** (PG — DVD Feb. 20, digital Feb. 6). A first century donkey, dove and

sheep accompany Mary and Joseph on their journey to Bethlehem. Recommended for the entire family. Rated PG for some thematic elements.

▶ **“Steve McQueen, American Icon”** (Unrated — DVD Feb. 20, digital Feb. 6). He starred in more than 30 films and 20 TV series during the 1950s, ’60s and ’70s and was the highest-paid actor in Hollywood. But toward the end of his life — sensing a void — he found Christ, as we learn in this documentary. Recommended for older children, teens and the entire family. No language or sexuality. Minimal violence.

▶ **“Coco”** (PG — DVD Feb. 27, digital Feb. 13). The latest Pixar film is colorful, funny ... and full of theological problems. It’s based on Día de los Muertos (“Day of the Dead”), a Mexican holiday in which families build shrines within their home to deceased ancestors so as to commune with and remember their relatives. Yes, those dead relatives come to life in “Coco.” Rated PG for thematic elements. †



Photo courtesy of Lionsgate

Jacob Tremblay (center) plays Auggie Pullman, a 10-year-old boy born with facial deformities, in the movie ‘Wonder.’ Owen Wilson (left) plays his father and Julia Roberts plays his mother.

## ‘Wonder’ tops February DVD releases

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

**A**uggie Pullman is an energetic and smart 10-year-old who is like most boys his age. He enjoys video games, “Star Wars” and all things NASA.

Except that he’s not like any other boy his age. He looks different. He sounds different. When he enters a room, people stare.

Auggie was born with facial differences, and even though he’s undergone multiple surgeries to improve his hearing and his looks, he still stands out in a crowd.

That’s one reason he wears a toy-like space helmet. Sure, it conceals his passion for science, but it also hides his face.

But now Auggie is exiting the comfortable confines of homeschooling and entering fifth grade in a public setting — a setting that could lead to stares, scorn and ridicule.

Will his classmates accept him?

The 2017 inspirational hit “Wonder” (PG) will release on DVD Feb. 13 and digital platforms Jan. 30, giving families the opportunity to watch and discuss one of the best films ever made on the subject of bullying. It stars Jacob Tremblay as Auggie, Owen Wilson as his father, Julia Roberts as his mom and Izabela Vidovic as

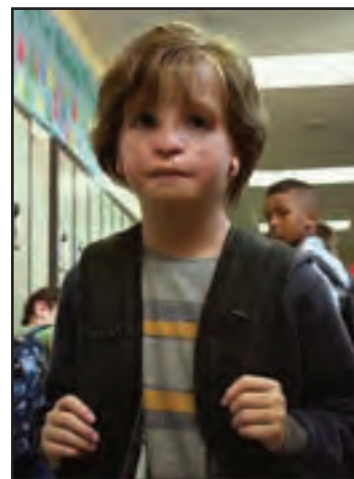


Photo courtesy of Lionsgate

Auggie exits the comfortable confines of homeschooling and enters fifth grade in a public setting.

his teenage sister, Via. “Wonder” is not a faith-based movie but its message is clear: Every person is valuable. The

film’s focus nearly gets derailed with a pair of fights that seemingly endorse violence but that can be fixed with a post-movie family talk.

### Thematic elements

“Wonder” is rated PG for thematic elements, including bullying, and some mild language. It is based on a children’s book by the same name.

Cautions: About 5 coarse words — OMG (3), misuse of “God” (1), misuse of “Jesus” (1). Two teens kiss, twice. We also see two fights. †

## 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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IMB photo

International Mission Board missionary Lily Llambes teaches an adult education class at a church in Mexico City. She and her husband, Carlos, spend many of their Sundays partnering with local churches, such as this one in the Barros Sierra neighborhood.

# Compelled to be there

## Missionaries share gospel in Mexico City's melting pot

From Todd Beel's house in Mexico City, he can spot planes coming in every five minutes or so.

"Each time, that's another couple hundred people coming in from Europe, multiple cities across Europe, cities across South America, many cities in the United States and Canada," he points out.

Each time one lands, the city of more than 28 million opens its arms to a little more diversity, and each time the task gets a little bigger for Todd's team of 12 International Mission Board missionaries. But that's exactly why they're compelled to be there.

"Those are people coming and going all day long for business, work, sports and study," said Todd, who serves as team leader. "It's kind of like, 'Who has the Lord brought to this city today who needs to be reached with the gospel?' Many of them are coming from unreached people groups around the world."

And as those planes leave again, they could be taking the gospel back with them, he concluded.

That's the hope of the team, a dozen people from a diverse collection of backgrounds and skillsets all working together to equip new believers to take the gospel to unreached pockets of Mexico City and the world. Some are single, some are married and some have children. They hail from places such as Colombia, Cuba, Korea and Tennessee. And they have one vision — to see the world worship Jesus and for it to start right where they are.

Will Wright, a 20-something who recently joined the team, said it's a big vision but at the micro level he can already see God at work. Will has been working to build a strategy to reach the city's universities.

In getting to know the students, a recent conversation turned into a four-hour discussion about the gospel. The next thing he knew, a young man named Daniel chose Christ over all the other things that had seemed good in his life before.

"Within a very short amount of time, there's drastic changes in his life," Will reported. "He's wanting to live for the Lord. I see him broken over the sins of other people. I see him with a passion that other people come to know the Lord."

And Will, Todd and others are praising God for that kind of transformation and hoping to fan the flame of that passion into a fire that reaches the whole world for Christ.

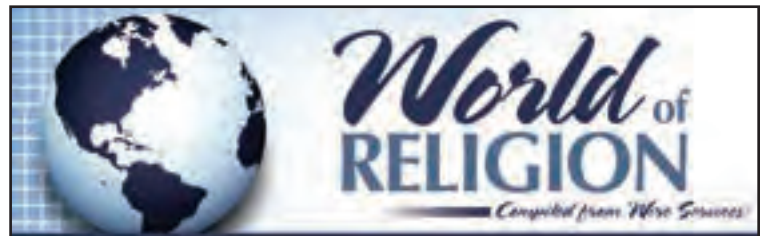
"I'm just excited to think about the potential in what may be happening in the years to come, not only within but also without, as the people of the city, those that will come to know the Lord or already do, are mobilized to make a difference," Todd said.

### Need for prayer

Pray for churches to be planted in the unreached neighborhoods of Mexico City. Pray also for God to call out among His people in Mexico those whom He would like to go into the most unreached pockets of the city, of the country and out into the nations. (WMU's *Missions Mosaic*, IMB)

**"I'm just excited to think about the potential in what may be happening in the years to come."**

**Todd Beel  
IMB missionary**



### Parents must consent on children's religion

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — In a decision seen as a victory for ethnic and religious minorities in this Muslim-majority nation, a court ruled Jan. 29 that the religion of a minor could only be decided with consent from both parents.

The decision upholds a lower court ruling in favor of M. Indira Gandhi, a Malaysian mother who challenged the conversion of her three children by her Muslim-convert former husband in 2009, according to the Malay Mail.

The ruling leaves police with the responsibility to locate and return Gandhi's youngest daughter, taken away by her ex-husband, Muhammad Riduan Abdullah, in 2009 when she was 11 months old, a source told Reuters. Riduan is believed to be in hiding.

The verdict is seen as a major victory for women under a government seen as moving toward widening sharia courts' jurisdiction in some parts of the country. Until now, the unilateral conversion of minors by Muslim converts had left women with little recourse, as their complaints would be referred to a sharia religious court, where non-Muslims have no standing to make claims, according to Reuters.

Muslims make up about 60 percent of Malaysia's 30 million population. Buddhists, Hindus and Christians account for a significant minority, with about 9.2 percent of the population practicing Christianity. (TAB)

### Canada institutes 'reproductive rights' test

OTTAWA, Canada — Churches and other Christian groups in Canada are concerned about a new rule that denies summer job funding for organizations that express pro-life beliefs.

The Canadian government recently issued a rule stipulating that applicants for the Canada Summer Jobs grant had to attest to support for abortion as part of their "core mandate" in order to qualify. Roman Catholic, evangelical and other religious organizations contend the rule is unfair and potentially illegal because it forces applicants to make known their stances on abortion during the application process, the *Ottawa Citizen* reported.

Employment Minister Patty Hajdu stated in mid-January that she was comfortable with requiring the grant applicants to check a box stating they have a "core mandate" which respects "reproductive rights." Unless the box is checked, the online application cannot be submitted for consideration. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also has defended his government's rule.

Canada's *National Post* reports that the summer jobs grant currently funds approximately 70,000 placements for students, and religious groups that have run summer camps, day cares, drop-in centers and other programs have counted on the funding. (TAB)

### Non-embryonic cells turned to stem cells

SAN FRANCISCO — Researchers at the Gladstone Institutes in San Francisco announced in January that they have turned skin cells from mice into stem cells by activating a specific gene in the cells. The new approach utilizes the genome editing tool CRISPR, which allows scientists to edit genomes by altering DNA sequences and modifying gene function.

Researchers are interested in stem cells because they can be turned into virtually any cell type in the body. As a result, they are considered to have potential therapeutic use for currently incurable conditions, such as heart failure, Parkinson's disease and blindness, according to a press release from Gladstone. However, ethical concerns about their use abound because a primary source of human stem cells is fertilized embryos.

Senior investigator Sheng Ding said the science behind creating the stem cells "is fundamentally different how they've been created before" and could lead to a simpler method of creating stem cells or "could be used to directly reprogram skin cells into other cell types, such as heart cells or brain cells." (TAB)