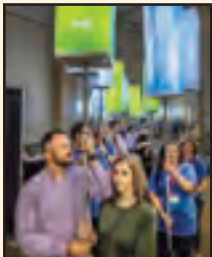




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Supernatural God can lift Southern Baptists, Gaines says

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Affirmation of women, proper ways to deal with abuse surface at SBC

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Photo by Adam Covington

Messengers overwhelmingly vote June 13 during the annual meeting against a motion that would have removed members of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary trustee executive committee from the board of trustees, effective immediately.

Came to do business

SBC messengers line up to make motions, share concerns

Alabama Baptists were among messengers participating in one of the heaviest years of business in recent history at the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting.

Held June 12–13 in Dallas, the annual meeting ran long its opening day in part because of 20 motions proposed by messengers.

One of those motions — which dealt with Southwestern Baptist

Theological Seminary (SWBTS) in Fort Worth, Texas — was debated then defeated the next day. The motion by Tom Hatley of Arkansas proposed dismissing SWBTS’s trustee executive committee.

Hatley, a former International Mission Board trustee chairman, said his proposal was based on his perception the SWBTS trustee executive committee acted with “haste, lack of proper investigation,” apparent disregard of the seminary’s founding documents and failure to allow then seminary president Paige Patterson to respond to accusations against him. Patterson was terminated May 30 from his employment at SWBTS, where he had served as president since 2003.

The previous week, the seminary’s trustees moved him to president

emeritus status on the same day allegations surfaced that he mishandled a sexual assault report during his 1992–2003 presidency of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

‘Would destroy system’

Former SBC President Ronnie Floyd spoke against the motion, asking messengers to look past whether these trustees made the right or wrong decision and recognize that adopting a motion to remove trustees “would destroy our own system of government.”

Bart Barber, a member of the SWBTS trustee executive committee, spoke on a point of personal privilege, alleging that Patterson, as Southwestern’s president, attempted

J.D. Greear elected SBC president

North Carolina pastor J.D. Greear was elected Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) president June 12 during the 2018 annual meeting in Dallas, two years after conceding a closely contested election to lead the denomination.

Greear beat out former Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary President Ken Hemphill by a margin of 69 percent to 31 percent to become the denomination’s youngest president in 37 years.

The newly elected president succeeds Memphis-area pastor Steve Gaines who served two one-year presidential terms from 2016 to 2018.

During the 16 years Greear has led The Summit Church, worship attendance has grown from 610 in 2002 to just under 10,000, according to statistics available through the SBC’s Annual Church Profile (ACP). Total baptisms increased from 19 in 2002 to 631 in 2017 at the church’s nine campuses.

Summit has planted 248 churches to date, including 208 outside the U.S., with a goal of starting 1,000 churches in 50 years, according to North Carolina’s *Biblical Recorder*.

Over the past two years, Summit has given a combined \$1 million through the Cooperative Program (CP), making it the top CP-contributing church in the state in terms of total

(See ‘Ready,’ page 14)



GREEAR

To watch the videos from this week’s issue, visit our YouTube channel or use the HP Reveal app on your phone or tablet and hover over the segments marked “AR.”

COMMENT

SBC 2018

Democracy and Accountability at Work

The annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is often described as the largest democratic gathering in the world. This year 9,637 Baptists from across the United States, including 452 Alabamians, congregated in one room of the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas to conduct the business of the largest evangelical denomination in America.

While this was not the largest gathering of SBC messengers (45,519 met in Dallas in 1985), the meeting demonstrated how unpredictable democracy can be.

Going into the meeting, messengers generally had a sense of relief after former Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary President Paige Patterson announced he would not deliver the convention sermon nor attend the annual meeting. Less than two weeks before, Patterson had been removed as president emeritus of Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Patterson's decision would help avoid a major controversy, most felt.

But before Texas Gov. Greg Abbott could welcome messengers to his state, the meeting was embroiled in the first of many debates. Some messengers challenged the proposed agenda. They objected to having Vice President Mike Pence on the convention program, calling his presence "insensitive" to African-Americans and other minority brothers and sisters.

It did not help when messengers learned the White House had asked for Pence to speak. After nearly a half-hour of debate, the invitation was affirmed. But the issue did not die.

'Political stump speech'

Pence was allotted 15 minutes but spoke for 40. In his first five minutes, he shared his Christian testimony. In his last five minutes, he commended Southern Baptists for their worldwide missions and ministry efforts.

The rest of the time was devoted to a political stump speech including a call for support in the upcoming fall elections. His performance resulted in motions asking that politicians and office hold-



THOUGHTS
By Bob Terry

ers be barred from speaking at future SBC annual meetings. The motions were referred to the SBC Executive Committee for consideration.

The annual budget sparked another unexpected debate when a motion was offered to defund the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC). The motion was roundly defeated but only after emotional debate.

Re-election of ERLC trustee debated

Another routine item that sparked debate was the report of the Committee on Nominations. The chairman of the ERLC trustees accused the committee of failing to re-nominate an eligible member for a second term because that member was not critical enough of ERLC leadership.

After several back-and-forths, messengers amended the committee report and approved the ERLC trustee for the customary second term.

While the debates demonstrated the unpredictability of a democratically run organization and made a mess of both day's agendas, the debates also demonstrated the accountability of denominational structures to Southern Baptists as a whole.

A motion was offered to remove Southwestern Seminary trustees who serve on the trustee executive committee (the group that severed ties with Patterson). With only 10 to 15 percent support from the voting messengers present, the motion failed overwhelmingly but the debate illustrated that entity trustees are accountable to the messengers.

Messengers continued their march away from racism in a resolution that stated, in part, "our public renunciation of racism in all its forms, including our disavowal of the 'curse of Ham' doctrine and any other attempt to distort or misappropriate the Bible to justify this evil."

On immigration, messengers said, "We desire to see immigration reform including an emphasis on securing our borders and providing a pathway to legal status with appropriate restitutionary measures, maintaining the priority of family unity."

Messengers called on governmental authorities to "implement preventive measures that would reduce gun violence and mass shootings" in ac-

cordance with the Second Amendment.

These are not positions one would expect to hear from a group largely considered to be part of President Donald Trump's political base. But the SBC cannot be the most racially and ethnic diverse Protestant denomination without that impacting understanding of Scripture and resulting political positions.

To no one's surprise messengers condemned spousal abuse saying it "dishonors the marriage covenant and fundamentally blasphemes the relationship between Christ and the Church." Abuse victims were urged to contact civil authorities and "separate from their abusers."

While not asking that women serve as pastors, messengers did urge a greater role of leadership for women in the church and in the denomination.

Each seminary president was questioned by messengers about the treatment of women students at their respective seminaries and about women in leadership. Presidents talked about the growing number of female students but the institutions largely remain bastions of male dominance. One seminary, for example, lists 73 faculty members, two of whom are women. The website of that same school lists 14 persons who carry a vice president title. All are male.

One president was asked about reports of male students walking out of preaching labs and other classes when it is the turn of a female student to preach. That question went unanswered.

It will be interesting to see if SBC-related seminaries become more open to women in teaching and administrative roles.

Despite the changes taking place in SBC life, one thing remains constant — Southern Baptists' commitment to share the gospel with all people everywhere. For this writer, two experiences demonstrated that commitment most clearly. One was gathering around a newly appointed international missionary couple who will serve in Eastern Europe, laying hands on them and praying God's blessings on their ministry.

'Best service of convention week'

The other was the closing session of the national Woman's Missionary Union annual meeting. For me that may have been the best service of convention week. Testimonies from missionaries serving in security-sensitive areas around the world and in North America, words from the leaders of both the International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board, an emphasis on work in local churches and state conventions — the session seemed to illustrate the wholeness that is supposed to be the SBC.

In a day when every part of denominational life seems to think itself the whole, I was grateful to be reminded that we are all working together for a common goal. 🙏



To read more coverage, see a gallery of photos and watch select videos from the annual meeting as well as the SBC Pastors Conference, visit www.sbcannualmeeting.net.

TAB
THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

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'Keep changing lives'

VP Pence commends SBC as one of 'greatest forces for good'

By Margaret Colson
Reporting for Baptist Press

Vice President Mike Pence affirmed Southern Baptists for their gospel witness and then encouraged them to continue in that commitment, speaking at the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting June 13.

"What began more than 170 years ago at First Baptist Church in Augusta, Georgia, has now become one of the greatest forces for good anywhere in America. ... The Southern Baptist Convention has always strived to reach the world for Christ, and so you have throughout the decades. I believe with all my heart: Your faith has moved mountains and your witness changes lives every day," he said in his opening remarks.

He described being raised in a Christian home, attending church on Sunday mornings and saying "grace before dinner," and recounted when he heard the gospel message afresh "40 years ago this spring. ... I walked the sawdust trail that night in 1978 and gave my life to Jesus. Thank you for carrying that timeless message every day so faithfully," he said.

Southern Baptists, he said, "have always worked to bring about renewal of America and new beginnings."

Stump speech

Pence said he believes America is in "a time of renewal and a new beginning of greatness." He recounted numerous accomplishments of President Donald Trump's first 500 days in office. "It's been 500 days of action, 500 days of accomplishment, 500 days of promises made and promises kept," Pence said.

Among the accomplishments Pence highlighted were a stronger military, law enforcement support, Trump's recent summit with North Korean leaders, America's fight against terrorists, the opening of the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem, a recovering economy, protection of religious liberty and commitment to the sanctity of human life.

Pence said these accomplishments are due, in part, to the "support of men and women like so many of you."

Pence commended Southern Baptists for their faith that translates into action. "We know that what you do in the ministries of your churches make an extraordinary difference in the life of our nation. We know that what you confess with your lips is the conviction of your hearts. We know that because we see it," he said. "You're the cornerstone, not just of your communities but, in so many ways, of our country.

"Thank you," he said, "to the Southern Baptist Convention for the essential and irreplaceable role you play in America."

The vice president encouraged participants to "continue in your calling with renewed energy. Stand and go and speak. ... I believe that



Photo by Bob Carey

Vice President Mike Pence shares his Christian testimony with messengers at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Dallas on June 13.

your voice, your compassion, your values and your ministries are more needed now than ever before."

Saying that he and the president will "fight for what we know is right," Pence acknowledged that "the most important work in America doesn't happen in the White House or anywhere in Washington, D.C., for that matter. The most meaningful, the most transformative work happens through you, through your ministries in the hearts and lives of the American people."

Pence continued, "No podium that the president and I will ever stand behind will be of greater consequence than the pulpits that you stand behind every Sunday. No policy we enact will ever be more meaningful than the

Pence receives some pushback

Vice President Mike Pence being added to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting program June 13 did not happen without some discussion — discussion that continued days after his speech.

After the June 11 announcement that Pence would be addressing messengers, some messengers pushed back. Prior to approving the meeting's order of business June 12, an amendment was proposed to replace Pence's scheduled message with a time of prayer.

A Virginia pastor, Garrett Kell, stated that omitting Pence could further unity, especially among Southern Baptists of different ethnicities, clarify the gospel's centrality to the SBC and avoid putting overseas workers at risk.

"We must do all that we can to preserve the purity of the gospel and this invitation works against it," he said. "Right now there is a world filled with people who are going to hell, and

ministries you lead. No action will ever be more powerful than your prayers."

Commending the leadership of Pastor Frank Pomeroy in the aftermath of the horrific church shooting at First Baptist Church, Sutherland Springs, Texas, Pence said, "Theirs was a small church, but their faith was not small."

In his concluding remarks, Pence encouraged Southern Baptists to "continue to do what each one of you do every day. Preach the Word, in season and out of season. Always be prepared to give a reason for the hope that you have. Keep changing lives. Keep ministering to the spiritual and practical needs of the American people, especially the most vulnerable."

Quoting the late evangelist Billy Graham, Pence said, "'To get nations back on their feet, we must first get on our knees.'

"In these challenging times with threats abroad and too much division at home, let's pray for America."

'Be on God's side'

He said he was not asking for prayer for an agenda or a cause, quoting President Abraham Lincoln, who once said, "My concern is not whether God is on our side. My greatest concern is to be on God's side."

Pence continued, "I have always believed those ancient words recorded millennia ago that Americans have clung to in much more challenging times than we face today, and they are still every bit as true today: If His people called by His name will humble themselves and pray, He will do what He has always done through the long and storied history of this country. He will hear from heaven, He will hear us pray as one nation, under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all."✠

what we need to be about is the gospel and anything that can distort that, I think, is a step backward and not a step forward."

In response, Grant Ethridge, chairman of the Committee on Order of Business, explained that the White House approached Southern Baptist officials about Pence's speaking during the annual meeting. "The Southern Baptist Convention aligns itself with no political party. Our loyalty is to King Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords," Ethridge said.

After quoting several Scriptures, Ethridge further stated, "We respect the position, regardless of whether or not you supported or voted for the person," adding that if former President Barack Obama had requested to speak at Southern Baptists' annual meeting when he was serving, that request would have been granted.

The vote to amend the order of business failed. (TAB, BP)

SBC 2018

Bart Barber, pastor of FBC Farmersville, Texas, and member of the Southwestern Seminary board of trustees, addresses messengers.

Business items



Photo by Adam Covington

Messengers propose 20 motions; Southwestern trustees garner floor debate

(continued from page 1)

to remove a trustee, disregarded a request from trustee chairman Kevin Ueckert and refused to attend trustee executive committee meetings when asked to do so.

Once Patterson was president emeritus, his attorney “sent an email questioning the legal validity” of the full board’s action.

“What is your seminary to do when a president emeritus is working to undermine the legitimacy and validity of the seminary’s board of trustees?” Barber said. “If you take away the spine of the trustees, you take away the messengers’ voice.”

Barber also said, “If you’ve been impatient with what we’ve done, you should blame me personally. I was the last person on the executive committee” to reach the conclusion the committee should fire Patterson.

The motion to dismiss the trustee executive committee of SWBTS failed on a show of ballots.

Motions referred

Grant Ethridge, chairman of the SBC Order of Business Committee, moved on behalf of the committee that 12 motions be referred to the SBC Executive Committee (EC) for consideration and report to the 2019 SBC annual meeting in Birmingham.

Three of those motions were by Alabama Baptists:

▶ Sam Fordham, pastor of Oak Bowery Baptist Church, Ohatchee, moved that the EC consider a separate entity for evangelism.

Fordham explained in a follow-up post on Facebook that his motion was about “prodding/stimulating/promoting.”

The evangelism department at the North American Mission Board (NAMB) has moved from a large staff to a part-time department head, Fordham wrote. “Evangelism has been de-emphasized.

“I’m not criticizing anyone at NAMB. We have some stellar people working hard to do great things,” he added. “What I am concerned about is the 1.2 million folks that we haven’t baptized over the past decade.

“When we say, ‘Well, evangelism is everything we do!’ And ‘Evangelism is everyone’s responsibility!’ Evangelism has a strange way of becoming no one’s priority. ... Sometimes we need a reminder.”

▶ Nine-year-old Zak McCullar of First Baptist Church, Carbon Hill, moved that a children’s ministry Sunday be added to the SBC Calendar.

▶ A.J. Smith of Bay Springs Baptist Church, Shelby, moved that the SBC

president appoint a committee to articulate the relationship between the Old Testament and the gospel.

Other motions referred to the SBC EC:

▶ That the convention cease inviting elected officials to speak at the annual meeting.

▶ To amend SBC Bylaw 21 to prohibit elected officials from addressing convention messengers.

▶ That the EC strengthen trustee training.

▶ That SBC Bylaw 10C be amended to include the percentage giving of candidates for office.

▶ That the chairman of the EC develop and provide more comprehensive trustee training.

▶ That the EC study the feasibility of remote site and digital participation in the annual meeting.

▶ That the EC recommend a program assignment for church revitalization.

▶ That the EC study the process of the Committee on Nominations and its standards.

▶ That the EC study the biblical authority for a woman serving as SBC president.

The following motions were automatically referred to the appropriate SBC entity under Bylaw 26B for consideration and re-

port to the 2019 SBC annual meeting:

▶ That the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission study expanded resources to help churches protect themselves from sexual predators.

▶ Requesting a task force for helping churches protect themselves from sexual predators.

▶ That the SWBTS board of trustees reconsider its decision regarding Patterson.

Out of order

Five motions were ruled out of order because they would direct the officers of the convention to act outside the scope of their duties as established by the convention’s constitution and bylaws, were in the nature of a resolution or were similar to other motions already referred.

One of those motions was made by Ron Wilson, pastor of Lakewood Baptist Church, Phenix City, and moved that the SWBTS executive committee resign from the board of trustees.

The other four moved that messengers be engaged in pro-life issues, that elected officials not be a part of the annual meeting program, requested focus on the John 3:16 gospel and requested Vice President Pence to format his address to the messengers in a particular manner. (BP, TAB contributed)

Record budget adopted but CP giving trends worrisome

Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) meeting in Dallas on June 12–13 adopted a \$194 million Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget for the 2018–2019 fiscal year which begins Oct. 1. The budget is slightly more than a 1 percent increase over the current \$192 million budget.

The annual budget, together with special offerings, funds the work of the SBC’s International Mission Board (IMB), North American Mission Board (NAMB), six SBC-related seminaries, the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) and the denomination’s Executive Committee (EC).

Almost three out of every four CP dollars received by the national body goes to missions agencies. IMB receives 50.41 percent of the budget and NAMB receives 22.79 percent. The six seminaries divide 22.16 percent of the budget on an enrollment-based formula. ERLC receives 1.65 percent while the EC receives 2.99 percent.

The proposed budget was adopted with only a scattering of opposition after a motion to defund the work of ERLC was turned back (see story, page 8).

But encouraging reports can camouflage less favorable

trends, said D. August Boto, EC’s interim president.

Pointing to information from the 2017 Annual Church Profile, Boto pointed out that local church giving to CP continues to decline. In 2017 only 4.86 percent of undesignated giving to churches was shared for missions and ministry beyond the local church through CP. That is down from 5.16 percent in 2016.

“In the last 18 years our national ministry receipts have improved just over \$17 million. Our state ministry support has shrunk by over \$41 million,” Boto told messengers.

Dependent on the Cooperative Program

“We cannot forget that missions and ministries at the state level depend on the Cooperative Program too,” he declared.

Outgoing EC chairman Stephen Rummage told messengers the search committee for a new EC president will receive recommendations through June 30.

The committee has already surveyed EC members, state executive directors, SBC entity heads and others as the committee attempts to clarify the kind of leadership needed in the position.

In other actions, messengers approved two changes in

the denominational calendar recommended by the Executive Committee. The first changed the name of Orphan Sunday (the first Sunday of November) to Orphan and Widows Sunday. The second added the National Day of Prayer (the first Thursday of May) to the calendar.

During the EC report, the importance of ministry on college campuses also was emphasized. Josh Miller, who is leading a church plant at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, said, “If we’re going to reach the 22 million college students in North America, we as Southern Baptists must all re-prioritize the campuses.”

At its final meeting of the year June 9 the EC also voted to withdraw fellowship from Raleigh White Baptist Church, Albany, Georgia. The church’s local association and state convention earlier withdrew fellowship from the church because of “overt racism” (see the April 18 issue of *The Alabama Baptist*).

“Southern Baptists are not only on record but strongly committed to standing against racism and prejudice. And if a church stands for racism and prejudice, then they do not stand with us and we do not stand with them,” Rummage said. (BP, TAB)

Therefore be it resolved

SBC messengers adopt 16 resolutions; topics deal with immigration, abuse, gun violence

By **Bob Terry**
Editor, The Alabama Baptist

On June 14, two days after messengers to the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) adopted a motion on immigration reform, U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions attempted to respond to concerns of those he called “our church friends.”

Speaking to a law enforcement group in Fort Wayne, Indiana, Sessions said, “I would cite you to the Apostle Paul and his clear and wise command in Romans 13, to obey the laws of the government because God has ordained them for the purpose of order. Orderly and lawful processes are good in themselves and protect the weak and lawful.”

The SBC resolution on immigration called for secure borders and a pathway to legal status that maintains “the priority of family unity, resulting in an efficient immigration system that honors the value and dignity of those seeking a better life for themselves and their families.”

“We declare that any form of nativism, mistreatment or exploitation is inconsistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ,” the resolution said. The resolution was adopted without debate and by nearly a unanimous vote.

In his speech, Sessions defended the Trump administration policy of arresting children of illegal immigrants at the border and separating them from their parents.

“Many of the criticisms are not fair, not logical and some are contrary to state law,” he said.

The resolution on immigration was among 16 adopted by SBC messengers. The full text of each resolution can be found at www.thealabamabaptist.org. Below is a synopsis of each resolution:

Resolution 1 — On Dignity and Worth of Women on the Occasion of the 100th Anniversary of Women as Messengers to the SBC

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of women serving as messengers to the SBC annual meeting, messengers acknowledged the contribution of women to Great Commission work and encouraged women to serve to advance the gospel in biblically appropriate ways in their homes, churches, communities, marketplace and denomination.

Resolution 2 — On Abuse

Messengers condemned abusive behavior, calling it “unquestionably sinful and under the just condemnation of our Holy God.” Spousal abuse dishonors the marriage covenant and victims should contact civil authorities and separate from their abusers. Abuse

is not the result of personal guilt or fault of the victim. The resolution said all persons should intervene on behalf of the abused and seek church discipline against the abusers. Churches were urged to implement policies and practices to ensure safe environments and to uphold the dignity of all human beings as image bearers of God.

Resolution 3 — On the Holiness and Integrity of Ministry Leaders

Messengers urged ministry leaders to recognize and uphold the high standards of moral and ethical purity required of them. When failure occurs, the resolution urged churches to exercise “redemptive church discipline” for the purpose of seeking “restorative grace.”

Resolution 4 — On Renouncing the Doctrine of the “Curse of Ham” as a Justification for Racism

The resolution calls the interpretation of Genesis 9:25–27 as justifying subordination based on race an “attempt to distort or misappropriate the Bible to justify this evil (racism).” The resolution urged “Southern Baptists at every level to withdraw fellowship from churches that insist on excluding from fellowship anyone based on race or ethnicity.”

Resolution 5 — On Immigration

Messengers affirmed the value and dignity of immigrants regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, culture, national origin or legal status. The resolution called for “an emphasis on securing our borders and providing a pathway to legal status with appropriate restitutionary measures.” The resolution called for maintaining the priority on family units in immigration and honoring the dignity of those seeking a better life for themselves and their families. Any form of mistreatment or exploitation of immigrants is “inconsistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ,” the resolution continued.

Resolution 6 — On Reaffirming the Full Dignity of Every Human Being

The resolution affirms the “sacredness and full dignity and worthiness of respect and Christian love for every single human being.” Messengers denounced abortion except to save the physical life of the mother. Messengers agreed on the full dignity of every human being “whether male or female, young or old, weak or strong and denounce(d) every form of abuse whether physical, sexual, verbal or psychological.” The resolution denounced rhetoric that “diminishes the humanity of anyone.”

Resolution 7 — On Christlike Communication and the Use of Social Media

Southern Baptists who use social media were called on to comment on denominational issues in a way that maintains “brotherly and sisterly love by resolving our differences in a biblical manner.” The resolution asked Southern Baptists to “guard our tongues” and to refrain from remarks that tear down others made in the image of God which includes avoiding gossip and slander. Differences should be resolved with respect, always speaking the truth in Christlike love.

Resolution 8 — On Gun Violence and Mass Shootings

Messengers grieved the epidemic of gun violence in the United States and commended the heroism of police and other first responders who intervene in violent situations. Messengers called on federal, state and local authorities to implement measures to curb gun violence while respecting the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Messengers also pled with gun owners to be aware of “the sinfulness of one’s own heart.”

Resolution 9 — On Opioid Abuse and Addiction

Messengers urged individual Christians and churches to become advocates for solutions to opioid abuse and to serve those impacted by addiction. The resolution condemned the wide use of the drugs and urged their use only under stringent circumstances. The resolution called on Baptists to “demonstrate grace toward the addict” and to live out the biblical mandate to care for the fatherless by supporting organizations working with homes impacted by opioid abuse.

Resolution 10 — On Prayer and Support for Arab Christians

The resolutions committee encouraged Baptists to pray for and befriend Arab Christians in the Middle East and worldwide to help them overcome the feelings that they have been forgotten by the rest of the world. The resolution also urged prayer that God would use Arab Christians to reach nonbelieving Arabs and Muslims.

Resolution 11 — On the 50th Anniversary of Southern Baptist Disaster Relief

The resolution noted the role of Texas Baptist Men in galvanizing Southern Baptist Disaster Relief after Hurricane Beulah in 1967 and expressed gratitude to God for His multiplied blessings of the ministry during the intervening years. Churches and indi-

viduals were urged to support disaster relief either through prayers or involvement.

Resolution 12 — On the Centennial Anniversary of GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention

The resolution noted the founding of the ministry and the financial gifts by both John D. Rockefeller Sr. and John D. Rockefeller Jr. which, together with a contribution from the Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources), made possible the beginning of the SBC Annuity Board. The resolution gave thanks for those who have served in this ministry and pledged to continue serving pastors and other church and ministry workers.

Resolution 13 — On the Centennial Anniversary of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

The resolution expressed appreciation for the founding of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1917 as a “gateway to Central America” and affirmed the school’s commitment to the continued pursuit of the Great Commission in its home city and beyond.

Resolution 14 — On Commemorating the Life and Ministry of Billy Graham

Messengers expressed their grief at the death of Billy Graham on Feb. 21, 2018, while celebrating his life and ministry as a beloved Southern Baptist.

Resolution 15 — On Affirmation of Foundational and Compassionate Commitment in Several Submitted Resolutions

Because Baptists believe in the “authority, integrity, sufficiency and inerrancy” of the Bible, the resolution urged messengers to “welcome and adopt refugees into their churches and homes as a means to demonstrate to the nations that our God longs for every tribe, tongue and nation to be welcomed at His throne.” Also, Baptists were encouraged to adopt a child or become foster parents “to show Christ’s love to little children.”

Resolution 16 — On Appreciation

The resolution expressed “profound gratitude” to all who worked to bring about the annual meeting. The list included churches, associational leaders, staffs of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, SBC committees and entities and hundreds of volunteers. ✠

SBC 2018

‘We must focus on quality’

Disciple-making task force atop NAMB report at SBC

Kevin Ezell delivered the North American Mission Board’s (NAMB) report to messengers June 13 focusing on disciple-making and relaying an update on the effectiveness of Southern Baptist church planting efforts and NAMB’s new initiative in Puerto Rico.

Ezell, NAMB’s president, began the report by inviting Robby Gallaty to share findings and recommendations from the disciple-making task force that NAMB and LifeWay Christian Resources convened two years ago. Gallaty, who chaired the committee, serves as pastor of Long Hollow Baptist Church, Hendersonville, Tennessee.

Gallaty said the task force analyzed the last 20 years of Annual Church Profile (ACP) data. They discovered that despite the impressive number of baptisms over that span — 7.1 million — average church attendance remained virtually flat. Even after factoring in for mortality, Gallaty said 6.5 million people had dropped out of church attendance during those 20 years.

“Our convention could be twice as large as it is today if we would have simply engaged the people we just baptized,” Gallaty said.

Gallaty summarized the task force’s recommendations: increase Bible engagement for church members; examine the connection between salvation decisions and group involvement; and examine the number of groups that multiply on a regular basis.

Church planting

Ezell followed Gallaty with a recap of NAMB’s church planting efforts since he began leading the entity in 2010.

“Seven years ago, we began a new journey and started a laser focus on church planting,” Ezell said. “That is the New Testament model and we believe (it’s) still the very best strategy for evangelism today.”

Church plants baptize at a 67 percent better attendee-to-baptism ratio when compared to established churches, Ezell said.

He also reported that NAMB has significantly increased its church planter assessment process. Today, only a third of candidates pass NAMB’s assessments.



Photo by Van Payne

Kevin Ezell delivers the North American Mission Board’s (NAMB) report to messengers June 13 focusing on disciple-making and relaying an update on the effectiveness of Southern Baptist church planting efforts and NAMB’s new initiative in Puerto Rico.

“When we raised our assessment, we knew church plant numbers would go down. But we will not compromise our quality in order to present bigger numbers the second week of June,” Ezell said in reference to the SBC annual meeting. “We must not focus on quantity, we must focus on quality.”

Ezell said that as the quality of assessments increased, the survival rate of our church plants has gone up. Overall, churches planted since 2011 have an 84 percent survival rate.

Demonstrating the impact of recent church plants, Ezell reported that in Canada, 71 percent of all baptisms came from churches started since 2010. In the Minnesota-Wisconsin convention, more baptisms came from church plants than all other Southern Baptist churches combined. In the New England states, 34 percent of all baptisms were from church plants.

In addition, as church plants demonstrate staying power, they are accounting for a

growing percentage of total churches located outside the South.

In all but four non-South state conventions, 20 percent or more of Southern Baptist churches were started since 2010. In New England, it’s 35 percent, and in Canada more than 50 percent of all churches were started since 2010.

“Southern Baptists, we are gaining ground for the gospel outside the South,” Ezell said. “We are determined not to lower our standards. We are not going to waiver on our desire for excellence.”

Ezell shared that NAMB has added Puerto Rico as a new Send Emphasis Area in North America. For 25 years, there were no new Southern Baptist churches planted in San Juan — a city of 350,000 people.

Relief effort in Puerto Rico

“Today we have 12 church plants launched or nearing launch,” Ezell said. “The relief effort in Puerto Rico will take many years, so please consider sending groups from your church to Puerto Rico to assist.”

Ezell ended the NAMB report to messengers with notes of thanks.

“We are honored to partner with Southern Baptists and to care for and equip your missionaries who are serving throughout North America. Please keep them and the North American Mission Board in your prayers and thank you for all you are doing to reach your community, our nation and our world for Christ.” (BP)

‘All of us’ must evangelize

Lay persons, pastors, churches, state conventions and Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) entities all have a role in an evangelism renewal plan Southern Baptists adopted June 13 at the SBC annual meeting.

Messengers adopted an eight-pronged approach recommended by an Evangelism Task Force that Steve Gaines appointed in 2017 in his final term as SBC president. Task Force vice chairman Adam W. Greenway presented the plan to messengers after first releasing the document June 11.

“It will take all of us working together in unity for the task of the Great Commission to be accomplished,” said Greenway, dean of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary’s Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry in Louisville, Kentucky. “Every one of us has a part to play. This is a critical task for us.”

Before the vote, the task force concurrently submitted to messengers a 12-point Evangelism Articles of Affirmation and Denial, based on and supported by Scripture.

“We wanted to take the opportunity to provide a clear set of principles in terms of things we believe Southern Baptists can heartily affirm as it comes to speaking about evangelism,” Greenway said, “and with clarity saying things we do not believe evangelism entails.”

Stance on evangelism

“One of the most important things we can give to our convention of churches, and to a watching world, is a clear statement about ... where Southern Baptists stand on the issues related to evangelism.”

Southern Baptist churches are autonomous and are not obligated to put the recommendations into action but are encouraged to embrace the report as a ready and viable church resource.

The task force called on all Southern Baptists to “renew with great urgency the priority of evangelizing the next generations” and to adapt the recommended methodology to individual environments “without changing our theology.”

“If the only people who ever hear you talk about the gospel are already believers,” Greenway said on the annual meeting stage, “then you are not being gospel-centered. You’re not committed to sharing the gospel.”

“It was never meant to be merely an intramural subject for debate,” he said of the gospel. “It was meant to be the intentional passion that we declare to lost people — that there is hope in Jesus Christ.” (BP)

“[Church planting] is the New Testament model and we believe (it’s) still the very best strategy for evangelism today.”

Kevin Ezell
president, North American Mission Board

Spreading the gospel

IMB Sending Celebration recognizes 79 missionaries

In an International Mission Board (IMB) service marked by testimonies and prayer for approximately 11,700 people groups around the world, IMB President David Platt reminded Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) messengers that the SBC exists foremost for the spread of the gospel.

“Tonight we have the opportunity to remember the reason we came together in the first place. We exist to combine the efforts of our churches for the spread of the gospel in the world,” Platt said during IMB’s Sending Celebration the evening of June 12.

Platt introduced 47 newly appointed missionaries approved by IMB trustees during their June 11 meeting in Dallas. The celebration also recognized 32 journeymen — recent college graduates who will serve internationally as full-time, fully funded church planters for two to three years.

All are going to “people and places where the gospel has not yet gone,” Platt said.

The celebration emphasized the importance of the local church in identifying, nurturing and supporting missionaries. Platt introduced a new resource for churches: “Foundations,” a magazine-style summary of the biblical and theological foundations of what the IMB does around the world.

Platt underscored the cooperative nature of Southern Baptists’ global evangelistic efforts. “We

have given together all year long. By God’s grace through you, the IMB is on firm financial ground, so tonight we’re going to pray together and we’re going to send together,” he said.

The new missionaries together with local church representatives entered the hall to the beating of African drums, which heightened the excitement and anticipation of the evening. Meghan, a journeyman to Southeast Asia whose last name wasn’t used, opened the service with her story.

Personal stories

Meghan said, “The stories we tell you are glimpses into how our churches played their role in our call to missions. I’m from a small church of 100 people and I’m the first missionary we’ve sent out in 60 years.”

The 79 new workers represent both large and small churches in large cities and small towns in the United States and abroad.

Fiodor and Galina Baraniuk, newly appointed missionaries to Europe, grew up in the former Soviet Union where life was “difficult for Christians,” Galina Baraniuk said.

The two came to faith in Christ at a young age in the Soviet Union and later moved to the United States. They are being sent by Meadow Brook Baptist Church, Byhalia, Mississippi.

“Through our church, God moved our hearts for European

people,” Galina Baraniuk said.

Jason and Kim Milton, of Auburndale Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, spent their careers “climbing the corporate ladder. But the more we served our church, the more we felt called to missions,” Jason Milton said.

“Through our church, which has a heart for the nations, we learned from missionaries and began working with refugees,” Kim Milton said. The couple and their four children will serve in Kenya.

Platt also led messengers to pray for people groups around the world by name, instructing the audience to open an envelope placed on their chairs before the service.

“There are an estimated 11,700 distinct ethnic or people groups in the world. In this room, we have about that many people, which means the card you are holding is most likely not matched by anyone else in this room. For the next few minutes, the responsibility of praying for that people group is upon you,” Platt said.

Together the audience prayed for people groups with little or no access to the gospel, for those that are less than 2 percent Christian and for those with a significant number of believers where churches are able to multiply.

‘We have His attention’

Before the prayer, Platt reminded the audience, “We are about to talk to God. ... There are 7.2 billion people on this planet and right



Photo by Matt Jones

Matt and Joni McCann are 2 of 79 missionaries who marched into the International Mission Board Sending Celebration holding lanterns June 12 during the evening session of the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

now, we have His attention in this hall.”

As the service concluded, Southern Baptists dispersed across the hall to lay hands on and pray for those being sent out.

“With 2.8 billion in the world who have yet to hear the gospel and a room of 10,000 people who have the gospel, God may be calling out more than just these 79,” Platt said.

He challenged the audience by a show of hands to commit to ask God, “Do you want me to go too?” Across the hall, hands raised.

Referring to Baptists’ tradition of voting on resolutions and other matters with raised ballots during their annual meetings, Platt concluded, “With these hands raised, my prayer is that this may be the most eternally fruitful vote cast in this room in these two days.” (BP)



Photo by Ethan Loveless

Kie Bowman, pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church, Austin, Texas, preached the convention sermon from Ezekiel 37, calling on Southern Baptists to ask God to breathe life into families, churches and the SBC at the annual meeting in Dallas June 13.

Convention sermon focuses on new life

Kie Bowman, pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church, Austin, Texas, preached the convention sermon from Ezekiel 37, calling on Southern Baptists to ask God to breathe life into families, churches and the Southern Baptist Convention at the annual meeting in Dallas on June 13.

Bowman, this year’s alternate convention sermon preacher, stepped in to give the meeting’s keynote message after Paige Patterson, former president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, withdrew June 8.

During his message, Bowman noted that “Ezekiel was a priest. That means he had spent his entire life ministering around the things of God.

“But in 597 B.C.,” he noted, Ezekiel “was captured as a prisoner of war and taken to a pagan culture, and 10 years later he got word that the temple had been destroyed. That means that everything

he’d ever prayed about, everything he’d ever hoped for, everything he’d ever worked for was evaporated in the winds of war.”

‘Army of skeletons’

God led Ezekiel, in a vision, to “the ultimate example of his shattered hopes and the desecration and the devastation of his national dreams — an army of skeletons,” Bowman said. “This once great army was lying scattered on the desert floor.”

The message God gave Ezekiel 2,600 years ago was one of hope and life, he said, and it applies to believers today.

“This message is still a message of hope and life to your situation because our God is a God of life and a God of resurrection, and anything that looks dead to you may be the next God raises back to life,” Bowman said. (BP)

SBC 2018

Formula for **unity**

— President's Address —

Supernatural God can lift Southern Baptists, Gaines says

Amid the perplexing and potentially divisive issues facing the denomination, outgoing Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President Steve Gaines said the formula for unity and restoration is surprisingly uncomplicated.

"Stop talking about how big your problems are and start talking about how big your God is," Gaines said in his presidential address June 12 at the SBC's annual meeting in Dallas.

Believing and trusting in the supernatural abilities of God is the key to overcoming all obstacles that Southern Baptists are facing, said Gaines, pastor of the Memphis-area Bellevue Baptist Church who completed two years as the convention's president.

"What is going to be the solution to our decline? What can God do with us? First of all, you have to believe in a bigger God than you believe in right now," Gaines said. "You need to believe in the God of the Bible and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Gaines opened his message with a song, joining his daughter, Bethany, for a duet of "At the Cross." He also closed with a song, this time going solo, for a rendition of the resurrection anthem, "He's Alive."

How to fulfill gospel mission

Between the two songs, Gaines delivered a message on four supernatural characteristics of God — His promises, protection, power and provisions — that can bring harmony and, more importantly, help the SBC fulfill its gospel mission.

Gaines opened his message by citing both biblical and personal examples of instances in which God showed His supernatural promises being fulfilled.

Gaines first referenced the story of the Apostle Paul in which he, while being held

as a prisoner, became shipwrecked on the island of Malta — and God provided for all his needs. Paul was able to use the miracles to point the other passengers toward God.

"Encouragement is putting courage back into people," Gaines said. "Discouragement is when the devil or the world or sin pulls courage out of you. Paul encouraged the sailors" who had experienced the shipwreck.

Gaines then shared a story of how God's supernatural powers appeared in his own life when his son, Grant, was restored to health after doctors had feared that, at age 2, he might have leukemia. Grant now serves as pastor of a growing church.

"I can assure you that every promise of God comes true," Gaines said. "If you have a need, God has a promise."

Gaines also spoke of the protective powers of God in referencing Paul's ability to literally shake off a snakebite. The same type of protection is given to Christians today who believe in God's abilities, he said, noting this is true for each facet of everyday life — the guarding of marriages, the protection of children and the safeguarding of financial needs and challenges.

"God can protect you completely and

absolutely in every way when you pray it through, when you seek to live under an open heaven and when you steadfastly obey the living God," Gaines said. "He will be your shield until it is time to take you to

heaven. No human is stronger than almighty God."

God's supernatural power is as much on display today as it was in biblical times, Gaines said. "Our God can still move mountains," he said. "Our God can still say, 'Hush, be still' to raging seas. Our God can still heal the sick and raise the dead. He can save you if you are lost."

God's healing power can include deliverance from all types of sexual immorality and other moral crises, Gaines said. "God is still alive, God is still sovereign," he said. "He is the same

yesterday, today and forever. If you will exercise faith, God will exercise power."

Gaines challenged messengers to spread the hope and joy of the gospel into their everyday lives.

"I believe one of the greatest things we could (do is) tell the world that God is still on His throne," Gaines said. "I believe there is a supernatural God. And I thank God that the hero of our Bible is not dead." (BP)



Photo by Marc Ira Hooks

Steve Gaines, outgoing president of the Southern Baptist Convention, asks messengers, "What is God doing in your life that people say, 'That is the hand of God?'" during his address at the annual meeting in Dallas on June 12.

ERLC funding, trustee re-nomination topic of discussion

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) became the topic of conversation twice during routine business items at the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Dallas.

Prior to approving the 2019–2020 Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget as proposed by SBC Executive Committee chairman Stephen Rummage, a Florida messenger made a motion to amend the CP budget to defund ERLC. The amendment was defeated but prior to the vote the messenger described concerns with ERLC President Russell Moore. He suggested shifting the ERLC portion of the budget to the International Mission Board.

Rummage urged defeat of the amendment saying, "We see the great value of our ERLC. They perform vital services on behalf of our convention and need to be included in our CP budget."

Vance Pitman, pastor of Hope Church, Las Vegas, said, "No SBC entity has done more to engage African-Americans, Hispanics (and others) than ERLC. ... ERLC has done more than all resolutions combined.

"You may not always agree with Russell Moore and at times I have not," Pitman said. "But ERLC has been doggedly pro-life, pro-marriage, pro-religious liberty and is rooted in evangelism.

"Conspiracy theories are a false witness against the body of Christ and we must not tolerate it," he said.

Former ERLC head Richard Land also spoke against the amendment. "The world needs to hear what Southern Baptists believe about compelling issues," he said.

In a separate discussion later in the day, ERLC trustee chairman Trevor Atwood moved that the Committee on Nominations' report be amended to grant trustee Dan Anderson a second term. Messengers agreed.

Anderson had reportedly expressed interest in serving a second term but he had been denied the opportunity to serve again. No clear explanation was provided about why he was not selected for re-nomination.

Messengers approved Atwood's amendment to strike Richard Bott II and insert Dan Anderson before adopting the Committee on Nominations report. †

Alabamians elected to serve, lose two seats

Alabama Baptists lost a seat on both mission boards beginning with the 2018–2019 trustee year. The loss came when the 2017 Annual Church Profile (ACP) numbers were released and the report indicated the Southern Baptist population in Alabama dipped below 1 million with 925,286.

The 1 million mark allows for five seats on the International Mission Board (IMB) and three seats on the North American Mission Board (NAMB). Alabama now has four IMB board members and two NAMB board members.

The formula is part of Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) bylaws and informs how the Committee on Nominations does its work.

When Alabama IMB trustee **Richard Richie** heard about the reduction, he said he knew he should volunteer.

Technically, the last trustee appointed would have been removed but Richie said he had already served eight years because he had previously finished out an unexpired term.

Richie said he preferred **Cecil M. Sanders Jr.**, pastor of First Baptist Church, Headland, stay on and be re-nominated for a second term, and that's how it worked out.

Sanders also was named second vice president of the board.

As far as Alabama trustees for NAMB, the reduction came naturally. Mike McLemore, the late executive director of Birmingham Baptist Association, was serving as a NAMB board member at the time of his death in February.

Re-nominated for a second term on the NAMB board is **Danny Wood**, pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills. Wood also was named chairman of the board.

Other Alabama Baptists elected to serve on SBC boards, committees and commissions are:

Morgan Bailey, Bessemer, and **Chad Young**, Ranburne — SBC Committee on Nominations for 2018–2019

Phyllis S. Ingram, Montgomery, and **Neal Hughes**, Montgomery, terms expiring in 2022 — Executive Committee

David S. Puckett, Birmingham, nominated for a second term — GuideStone Financial Resources

Benjamin D. Posey, Kinston, term expiring in 2022 — LifeWay Christian Resources

Bradley M. Rushing, Dothan, term expiring in 2023 — Southern Seminary

Braden W. Mims, Thomasville, term expiring in 2023 — New Orleans Seminary (TAB)

Merging into #MeToo culture

Affirmation of women, commitments to find proper ways to deal with abuse surface at SBC

Woven throughout the June 12–13 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Dallas was a thread about women.

Reports, panel discussions, resolutions, new initiatives and an awareness rally dealt with the affirmation of women, awareness of the disrespect women in ministry have felt through the years and a commitment to be intentional against sexual assault.

The focus comes after months of buildup since the #MeToo movement exploded internationally and disclosures of sexual abuse, assault, misconduct and mishandling of assault surfaced within the SBC.

Several motions and messenger questions related to the May 30 firing of former Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary President Paige Patterson, who allegedly mishandled a 2003 report of sexual assault at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, during his presidency there.

Two resolutions addressed the dignity and protection of women: one on the dignity and worth of women on the 100th anniversary of women as messengers to the SBC and another on abuse.

Two motions on protecting churches from sexual predators were referred to the Executive Committee (EC), as was a motion asking the EC to study biblical authority for a woman to serve as SBC president.



Photo by Kathleen Murray

Panelists (l to r) Beth Moore, author and speaker; ERLC's Russell Moore; and Austin pastor Matt Carter discuss preventing and dealing with sexual abuse within the church at the Cooperative Program's booth in the SBC exhibit hall.

Leader after leader shared their appreciation for women and noted how many women they had on their staffs.

All six SBC seminary presidents addressed the issue of sexual abuse and misconduct during their reports.

Two presidents — Chuck Kelley of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Al Mohler of Southern Baptist Theological

Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky — said the institutions they lead believe the Bible's teaching on gender precludes women from service in some faculty roles, although women hold teaching and administrative roles at both seminaries.

Kelley said women do not serve as preaching professors at New Orleans Seminary, and Mohler said women do not serve

as professors in the School of Theology at Southern Seminary.

Outside of the questions for the seminary presidents, messengers did not debate the topic on the convention floor.

Several panel discussions and outside meetings took place around the SBC annual meeting, however (see story, this page for coverage of one of the meetings).

Author and speaker Beth Moore, who recently shared her own experience with sexism in the SBC was a popular speaker and panelist on preventing and dealing with sexual abuse, assault and harassment.

Also during the annual meeting Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), announced two new initiatives — a women's summit and an abuse study. ERLC will gather women from across the SBC and evangelical world "to think through ways to enhance our ministries and invest in our churches," Moore said. ERLC also will partner with LifeWay Research for a full-scale study on the extent of abuse in churches.

"There should not be one inch of toleration for the abuse or mistreatment of women or others within our churches, and if we care about human dignity, we must be clear about that," Russell Moore said. "I'm grateful that this [convention] has spoken with such clarity about what we believe about the dignity of women, our sisters in Christ and joint heirs in Christ." (TAB, BP)

UM graduates start organization to foster talks about women, work

Courtney Moore is a stay-at-home mom with three kids. Born and raised in Tallahassee, she's a University of Mobile (UM) grad with a seminary degree in biblical counseling.

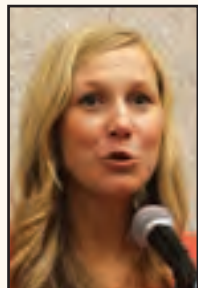
And as her husband, Brent, serves as pastor of adult groups at Pinelake Church in Jackson, Mississippi, Moore has wrestled lately with how to best harness her gifts for God's glory in this season.

"I wanted to be a good steward of the education He had given me," Moore said.

So she decided that as she worked through what that should look like, she would start a group where other women could get together and talk about these kinds of issues too.

The organization, called Women & Work: Stepping into Kingdom Productivity, held its first event at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting June 12 in Dallas.

The event — a panel discussion — featured Kelly King, women's ministry specialist for LifeWay Christian Resources; Amy Whitfield, director of marketing and communications at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina; Lauren Green McAfee, corporate ambassador for Hobby Lobby; and Mary Wiley, LifeWay Christian Resources marketing strategist for women's books.



MOORE

"We want to see you flourish and honor God in the workplace," Moore told the crowd gathered for the event. "We want to foster conversation — how do we do this? If you have kids, if you don't have kids — what does this look like?"

Wiley, a UM graduate who helped Moore start Women & Work, said, "As a mom of two toddlers, work looks different than it did just three years ago. My job hasn't changed, but I'm now constantly reminded of the need for my work to matter and to leave a faithful legacy."

She said she is "so thankful we don't work like the world, but are invited to join God in what He is doing and use our gifts for His glory, making even the seemingly most mundane work eternally valuable."

King encouraged those present to pray for friendships where women could cheer each other on in the gifting and assignment God has given them. Each mom has to follow in what God has for her right then and not compare herself to — nor judge — others, she said.

Whitfield agreed. "We have to be present in where we are," she said. "God has a purpose for this season; we have

to make the most of it. He has given us this context and this story — how can we use it to glorify Him?"

During the panel the women also talked about how it's healthy to set good boundaries and say "no" to good things so that they can do the best things. Accountability and community are some of those "best" things, they said.

King said she can't emphasize enough the importance of women being influential right where they are. "Do the thing that God has put right in front of you."

She said one illustration she heard earlier this year and loved was that when Jethro was telling Moses to divide the people and delegate leadership, he didn't need many people to be leaders of thousands — he needed a lot of people to be leaders of 10.

"That's what we need — we need a lot of people to be leaders of 10," King said. "What you're doing in building the Kingdom happens in your local church, it happens in your neighborhood, it happens in your home when you're raising your children. That looks different for every woman, but look at the women that God has put in your life, whether it's one or five or 50."

For more information or to connect with Women & Work on social media, visit women-work.net. (TAB)



WILEY

SBC 2018

Being — Pastors Conference — obedient

Faith will be tested; obedience offers hope, Watkins says

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

Have you ever been to Zarephath? The question was central to the message delivered by Daven Watkins, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pelham, in the first sermon of the final session of the Southern Baptist Convention Pastors Conference in Dallas on June 11.

Using 1 Kings 17:17–24 as his text, Watkins said Zarephath is “a place where faith is tested ... where the improbable becomes possible.”

The town was the place God sent Elijah to get food and water. It was there Elijah met a widow who was preparing to cook one last meal for herself and her son before their food was gone. It was there God promised the woman’s flour and oil would not run out — and it didn’t. And it was there that the woman’s son died and God restored his life.

“The story showcases God’s power and provision,” Watkins said.

First and foremost, the story shows that “obedience is required to the Word of God and to the God of the Word,” he said.

Watkins said one of the greatest challenges for the Church today is not belief in the Word of God because “many people still believe in the Word of God.”

“The greatest challenge is not access to the Word of God. The Bible remains the No. 1 seller, available in print and digital. The greatest challenge is not even knowledge of the Word even though biblical literacy is at an all-time low. ... The greatest challenge is obedience,” he said. “We have



Photo by Doug Rogers

Pastor Daven Watkins of FBC Pelham preaches during the final session of the Southern Baptist Convention Pastors Conference in Dallas on June 11.

gotten to the place where we are dysfunctionally disobedient.”

‘God hates sin’

Sin is rampant, he observed, noting high rates of divorce, adultery, pornography use, gossip, malice, slander and a host of other sins within the Church.

“God hates sin. Call it whatever you want. A mistake, a moral failure, a character flaw. ... But God hates sin,” Watkins said.

Sin brings God’s justice and judgment, which is why Zarephath is not just a place in the Bible but a spiritual space that everyone is either entering, living in or coming out of, Watkins said.

Zarephath was a place where metal was refined, a process that subjected metal to intense heat so the impurities would rise to the top, leaving the precious metal behind.

“God sent Elijah to this place of refining, to this place to be purified,” Watkins said. And Elijah was obedient, even when God’s Word didn’t make sense.

“Obedience precedes understanding,” Watkins said. “You don’t have to understand everything. Just be obedient and draw close to the One who is drawing close to you.”

When we are in Zarephath, God becomes “very real and personal,” just as He did for the widow when her son became sick.

“We understand her broken heart. There are many individuals who know the pain of losing a spouse ... who know the gut-wrenching feeling of standing at the casket of a child,” he said.

Elijah prayed, which is “sometimes the only way to cope with life,” Watkins said.

The boy’s life was restored, just one of many instances of life restored in the Bible, the most important of all being the resurrection of Christ Himself, Watkins said.

“Why does it surprise us when God moves? ... With God, the improbable becomes possible,” Watkins said. †

Pastors urged: ‘Fulfill Your Ministry’

Centering on the theme of “Fulfill Your Ministry,” the speakers at the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Pastors Conference on June 10–11 set out to encourage and inspire pastors to be faithful to the calling to serve the Lord in local church ministry.

In addition to Alabamians Daven Watkins and Robert Smith (see stories, this page), the diverse slate of conference speakers included Frank Pomeroy, pastor of First Baptist Church, Sutherland Springs, Texas; author, speaker and pastor Tony Evans; James Merritt, pastor of Cross Pointe Church, Duluth, Georgia; Juan Sanchez, pastor of High Pointe Baptist Church, Austin, Texas; and J.D. Greear, pastor of The Summit Church, Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, and newly elected SBC president. (TAB)

Peter’s faith journey gives all believers hope, Smith shares

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

In his well-known and well-loved sing-song style of wrapping up a sermon, Robert Smith did not disappoint as he concluded the afternoon session of the Southern Baptist Convention Pastors Conference on June 11.

Smith, the Charles T. Carter Baptist Chair of Divinity at Samford University’s Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, brought those in attendance to their feet following a detailed charting of Peter’s faith journey.

Using a variety of Scripture references from Peter, Romans, Acts, John, Samuel, Psalms and other books, Smith dissected each of Peter’s moments with the Lord and connected dots between the Old Testament, New Testament and believers of today.

“I’m grateful today that this same Peter who failed, this same Peter that disappointed the Lord knew that God is able to take your benediction and write an invocation,” he said. “I’m grateful that God is able to take your epilogue and make a prologue ... that God can lift

you from the quagmire of defeat and bring you to a place where you can proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

The Son of God has finished His salvific work but His refining is ongoing, Smith said. “God sifts us that we might serve Him with integrity and effectiveness.”

And throughout all a believer endures in life, the Son of God is praying and the Holy Spirit intercedes, Smith said, quoting Romans 8:26–27.

‘For His namesake’

“The Son prays to the Father for you, and the Spirit prays to the Father for you,” Smith said. “He doesn’t pray that we will not fall but that our faith may not fail.

“Whatever He does for us He does for His namesake.”

An overconfident Peter wandered from the direction of the Lord, Smith explained. “The problem with Peter is the problem of us — Peter loved sin more than he loved the Savior.”

But “God is in the business of reminding us of where we are and where He wants to take us,” Smith said, noting Peter’s reminder came in the form of a rooster’s crow and the penetrating eyes of Jesus (Luke 22:61). “One may never know the significance of a moment until that moment becomes a memory. ... All of us should have some memories now and then to show (us) where (we) could have been had it not been for the Lord on (our) side.” †



SMITH

Shades Mountain pastor Wood elected president of 2019 pastors conference



Photo by Doug Rogers

Danny Wood, pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, was elected president of the 2019 Southern Baptist Convention Pastors Conference.

“It is an honor and privilege to serve as the president of the conference which will be held right here in Birmingham,” Wood told *The Alabama Baptist*. “The goal for 2019 will be to provide a worship experience for pastors and spouses that will be uplifting, inspiring and challenging. Our worship pastor, Michael Adler, will be our worship leader with involvement from our entire worship arts team. It will be a great day and a half.” (TAB)

Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director/treasurer of national Woman's Missionary Union, speaks during the opening session of the group's annual meeting June 10 in Dallas.

Telling the story of missions



Photo by Van Payne

Alabama Baptists lead breakout sessions, share hearts at WMU annual meeting

In the hot deserts of Africa, an International Mission Board missionary named Frank walked from village to village with a small group of local believers, sharing the gospel.

The reception they got wasn't great — until they got to a house where a man invited them in and said he had prepared dinner for them.

They were surprised, but they found even more shock coming — the man had an adolescent son named Isa (pronounced ee-suh), the word for "Jesus" in that part of the world.

He had named his son Isa because a man in a white robe had appeared to him in a dream and told him that one day people would come to tell him what that name meant. And the night before Frank arrived, the man in the white robe had shown up in the man's dreams again — He told him to prepare a meal because those people were coming to tell him what "Isa" meant that day.

Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director/treasurer of national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), told that story June 13 during her report at the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Dallas.

For His glory

God "is showing up in the most desperate, most remote, most unexpected places on our planet today to love extravagantly for our good and His glory, and we get to have a part of His work in the world," she said.

WMU exists to tell the story of missions and call Baptists to generosity, Wisdom-Martin said.

It's a vital role, said WMU president Linda Cooper, who shared a Barna Group finding that only 17 percent of churchgoers say they have heard of the Great Commission and know what it means.

"How is that possible? The Great Commission is our great mandate and it is at the center of all we teach, promote and do

— making disciples of Jesus who live on mission," she said.

With that in mind, she and Wisdom-Martin shared story after story of how missions education makes an impact at home and around the world.

Wisdom-Martin said that since the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering was instated in 1888, WMU has helped to raise \$4.3 billion for international missions, money that has gone straight to fund missionary personnel like Frank in Africa. And since 1907, WMU has encouraged Baptists to give to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, an effort that has brought in \$1.7 billion for missions efforts in North America.

"Last year was the largest offering on record for Annie Armstrong," Wisdom-Martin said. "We rejoice that we have a part in calling people to steward the resources that God has entrusted to their care."

Before the start of the SBC meeting, WMU also held a missions celebration and annual meeting June 10–11 with the theme "Unshakable Pursuit."

During its Sunday gathering, WMU presented the Dellanna West O'Brien Woman's Leadership Development Award to Ruba Abbassi, CEO of Arab Woman Today, a ministry to women in the Middle East.

Those present also re-elected Cooper, a member of Forest Park Baptist Church, Bowling Green, Kentucky, to a fourth term as national WMU president. Jackie Hardy, of First Baptist Church, Social Circle, Georgia, was re-elected to a second term as recording secretary.

On Monday morning and afternoon, conferences were held on such topics from Hispanic leadership to harnessing online content for the glory of God.

Three Alabama Baptists led breakout sessions:

► Jean Roberson, director of field education for Samford University's School of Public Health, led sessions on facing anxiety and depression, two topics that carry heavy stigmas in the church.

► Rosalie Hunt, author of several books on missionary legacy, taught about the lives of Ann Hasseltine Judson, Hephzibah Jenkins Townsend, Lottie Moon and Fannie E.S. Heck and how women today continue their heritage of missions work.

► Grace Thornton, author of

WMU's theme devotional book, "Unshakable Pursuit," taught from Acts 17:16–28 about how God has planned our life's seasons so that we can know Him and help others know Him too.

Simulation experience

Participants also were encouraged to walk through a refugee simulation experience sponsored in part by WMU. The refugee crisis is a WMU social issue emphasis.

And during the missions celebration Monday evening, several hundred people gathered to pray for the advancement of the gospel, hear from the presidents of the missions boards and hear stories of missionaries who are walking courageously every day to share their faith all around the world. (TAB, BP contributed)

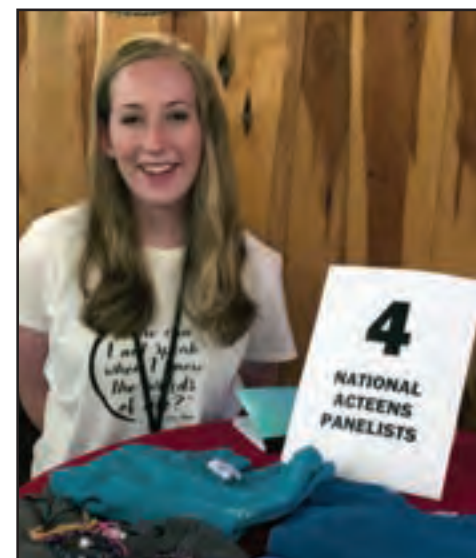


Photo by Candace McIntosh

Emma Kirkemier, of FBC Ashville in St. Clair Association, was 1 of 4 National Acteens Panelists who shared their testimonies at the WMU annual meeting.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Grace Thornton, author of WMU's theme devotional book, 'Unshakable Pursuit,' teaches from Acts 17:16–28 about how God has planned our life's seasons so that we can know Him and help others know Him too.

SBC 2018

Highlights of Alabama Baptists

serving, participating, being honored during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Dallas

Outgoing IMB trustee Richard Richie, pastor of Blue Springs Baptist, Somerville, settles in at the Pastors Conference.



Photo by Doug Rogers



Photo by Marc Ira Hooks
Zak McCullar of FBC Carbon Hill makes a motion to add SBC Children's Ministry Emphasis Day to the SBC calendar.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash
Greg Hyché (second from right), pastor of Ladonia Baptist Church, Phenix City, serves as chairman of the SBC Credentials Committee.



Photo by Doug Rogers

University of Mobile and Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center were the two Alabama Baptist entity booths represented in the exhibit hall at the SBC annual meeting in Dallas.



Photo by Matt Miller
Samuel Fordham, pastor of Oak Bowery Baptist Church, Ohatchee, makes a motion related to evangelism during the SBC annual meeting.



Photo by Doug Rogers

Jimmy Jackson (left), recently retired pastor of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, visits with Morgan Bailey, pastor of Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer.

SBC 2018

Aaron Ayers (USA)



Michaela Morgan (USA)



Becca Carver (Judson College)



Photos by Doug Rogers

A five-member student team representing four Alabama BCMs assisted with SBC messenger registration and participated in evangelism efforts. The team (bottom, right) joined a University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) team in prayer before engaging other UTA students in gospel conversations. Also on the team with the three students shown above were Faryn Fryer (UA) and Dawsen Miller (Wallace State). Adult leaders were University of South Alabama campus minister Beth Gardner, St. Elmo First Pastor Jeff Gardner and state missionary Chris Mills.



Photo by Doug Rogers

Alabama Baptists (l to r) Rick Barnhart of the State Board; Anthony Rhodes of Calvary Baptist, Wetumpka; Ray McKenzie of Elmore Association; and Mark Wakefield of the State Board chat about the latest disaster relief efforts.

Ric Camp (left), pastor of Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Trussville, and Buddy Reynolds, a member of the F.A.I.T.H. Riders motorcycle ministry, set up a booth for the organization at the Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas.



Photo by Adam Covington



Photo by Doug Rogers

Rod Marshall, president and CEO of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, represents the Baptist Coalition for Children and Families (BCCF), which he serves as president.

Daniel Atkins, pastor of Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, is introduced along with other members of Young Leaders Advisory Council of SBC.



Photo by Doug Rogers

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, leads the Tuesday evening closing prayer.



TAB screen grab



Photo by Doug Rogers

Alex Wolf (right), daughter of FBC Montgomery Pastor Jay Wolf, represents the International Mission Board in the exhibit hall at the SBC annual meeting in Dallas.

SBC 2018

Parliamentarian Barry McCarty (left) stands with J.D. Greear, newly elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention and pastor of The Summit Church, Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. Greear holds the gavel given to him by outgoing president Steve Gaines.



Photo by Kathleen Murray

Ready to lead

Newly elected Greear seeks to unite Southern Baptists, 'walk forward together'

(continued from page 1)
dollars given in 2016 and again in 2017.

In 2017, Summit gave 2.4 percent of its undesignated receipts through CP, the same percentage it gave in 2016, according to ACP data confirmed by the church.

Five years ago Summit voted to increase its giving through CP to 2.4 percent of undesignated receipts over five years, but the congregation achieved that goal two years early, the church reported.

In 2016, Summit began channeling all funds it regarded as CP gifts through the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, rather than forwarding some directly to the SBC Executive Committee for distribution according to the CP allocation formula, as it had done previously.

Summit said its Great Commission Giving totaled \$3.8 million (19 percent of undesignated receipts) in 2017. Great Commission Giving is a category of giving established by SBC action in 2011 that encompasses giving

through CP, Southern Baptists' unified program of funding state- and SBC-level ministries, as well as direct gifts to SBC entities, associational giving and giving to state convention ministries.

Included in 2017's Great Commission Giving was \$3,542 through the local Yates Baptist Association, according to ACP data, a 700 percent increase from the church's associational giving in each of the previous four years.

Funding for Summit's 40 Southern Baptist church plants is included in its Great Commission Giving as well, the church reported.

Some 158 Summit members are serving as International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries, the *Biblical Recorder* reported, with 17 in the "limitless pathways" initiative to mobilize missionaries who continue to work in secular careers while partner-

ing voluntarily with an IMB team.

Priorities as president

At a press conference following his election, Greear said his priorities as president will include gospel focus, diversity,

evangelism, church planting, collegiate ministry and engaging younger Baptists in the SBC's cooperative mission. He also said women should "sit at the seats of influence" in the convention and that Southern Baptist entities and churches must be "safe places for

women to report abuse."

Greear and his wife, Veronica, have four children. He holds master of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. (BP)

Greear said his priorities as president will include gospel focus, diversity, evangelism, church planting, collegiate ministry and engaging younger Baptists in the SBC's cooperative mission.

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Other SBC officers

- ▶ **A.B. Vines** — first vice president
- ▶ **Felix Cabrera** — second vice president
- ▶ **John Yeats** — recording secretary
- ▶ **Don Currence** — registration secretary

Passion for writing

Southern Christian Writers Conference provides inspiration, practical tips

By Jessica Ingram
The Alabama Baptist

Thirteen hours. That's how far Kenton and Sheila Young drove to be at the Southern Christian Writers Conference (SCWC) on June 8–9 at First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa. They came from Des Moines, Iowa, for the weekend-long conference where writers, editors and literary agents gather to encourage each other in their passion for writing.

It was the Youngs' first time at the conference and they said they were interested in it because it is a Jesus-centered conference.

"There have been some great speakers," Sheila Young said. "And I do appreciate it because it's focused more on the Lord and not on capital."

Melanie Dickerson, *New York Times* best-selling author and the Friday night keynote speaker, almost gave up writing before her first book was picked up. But she knew that wasn't God's plan for her.

"Every time I asked God about [giving up writing] He said, 'I don't want you to quit,'" the award-winning author said.

She's glad she stuck with it and now sees her career as an author

as her missions field. In fact, each of her 14 Christian fiction books (and counting) bring her back full circle to a desire she had growing up — to be a missionary — because her books are being sold across Europe as well as the United States. They also have been translated into Polish and German.

"There's a hurting world out there that needs our encouragement," Dickerson said.

Saturday afternoon keynote speaker and outdoor sports writer John Phillips spoke on the importance of being business-minded as a writer.

"You've got to know the business of writing to make a living as a writer," Phillips said.

Other guest speakers included Ramona Richards, associate publisher of New Hope Publishers in Birmingham; Bruce Barbour, founder

of Literary Management Group and co-founder of Barbour and Company; and Angela Benson, a seasoned writer who has written 14 novels, two novellas and a nonfiction book about writing. Workshops were led by a variety of communications professionals including Jennifer Davis Rash, editor-elect of *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB).



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Rick Bragg receives the 2018 Joanne Sloan National Award for the Encouragement of Writing on June 8 at SCWC.

"I wouldn't have written a lick if I hadn't had people nudging me along. You can change the world with a sentence."

Rick Bragg

Pulitzer prize-winning writer, University of Alabama professor and recipient of the 2018 Joanne Sloan National Award for the Encouragement of Writing



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

New York Times best-selling author Melanie Dickerson speaks at the Southern Christian Writers Conference at First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa on June 8.

Pulitzer prize-winning writer and University of Alabama professor Rick Bragg was honored Friday night with the 2018 Joanne Sloan National Award for the Encouragement of Writing. Bragg said it meant a lot to be recognized for encouraging other writers instead of for his own writing career.

"I wouldn't have written a lick if I hadn't had people nudging me along," he said. "You can change the world with a sentence."

Writing competitions

Writers from all over the South come to SCWC every year to learn more about writing, publishing and marketing their books and articles.

Several also participate in the annual writing competition and a few Alabama Baptists were among this year's winners:

► Rita and Harry Moritz from Seddon Baptist Church, Pell City, took first and second place, respectively, in the poetry competition.

► Karen Allen from Meadow Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham, captured third place in the newspaper article competition.

► Michael Brooks, pastor of

Siluria Baptist Church, Alabaster, brought home first place in the newspaper article competition.

Brooks also was featured during the opening session of the conference to share how the conference has encouraged his writing journey.

Betty Fields, who has attended the conference for more than 10 years, said she always leaves inspired.

"I come to get motivated and be inspired and learn new ways to market my book and to meet new friends," she said.

Veteran writers David and Joanne Sloan, founders of SCWC and longtime members of First, Tuscaloosa, are proud of how the conference has grown and influenced Christian writers.

"We're really trying to help people and be constructive," David Sloan said. "Our first conference had around 30 people and this year we had around 175."

As the conference wraps up its 27th year, the Sloan family hopes it will continue to nurture, educate

and encourage writers for many years to come.

The conclusion of the conference also marked a change in leadership. The Sloans are retiring from SCWC and handing over the coordination of the conference to their daughter, Cheryl Sloan Wray, and their son, Christopher Sloan — with assistance from

their children and grandchildren.

TAB also will partner with the Sloan family and SCWC going forward.

Rash said, "We look forward to the new partnership and hope

to assist Cheryl and Christopher with expanded resources and opportunities as they build on an incredible foundation of what David and Joanne have built through the years.

"The heart and spirit behind what SCWC represents and permeates will track perfectly with the mission and vision of TAB as well as our staff members who all have incredible hearts for Christ and community."✝

For more information about SCWC, visit www.scwcconference.com. For more information about TAB, visit www.thealabamabaptist.org.

Age doesn't keep Moundville woman from investing in Hale Assoc. retreat

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Somewhere in the woods between Greensboro and Eutaw there's a bit of a sleeping giant, Faye Colburn says.

It's an 80-acre property that's got a pond, a chapel, a kitchen, some bathrooms — and a lot of cleaning up to be done. But Colburn, a member of New Hope Baptist Church, Moundville, said it's going to make a fantastic campsite.

And if anyone in Hale County knows her way around a campsite, it's Colburn.

For nine years before she retired, she went up to Cade's Cove in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to work as a seasonal park ranger, checking campers in and inspecting campground from May to October.

"Then my age caught up with me," said 70-year-old Colburn.

But age hasn't stopped her from taking on a big project back where she grew up — turning around the retreat property owned by Hale Baptist Association.

"God just put this on my heart to work there," she said.

The acreage was bought in 1965 and the Charlie Thomas Memorial Chapel was built in 1972 with money donated after the death of Thomas, pastor of Moundville Baptist Church.

Volunteer help

Volunteers renovated the chapel and added the fellowship hall and showers in 2001, said Bobby Hopper, but it's gotten a little grown over since then.

"We have been realizing that we have got this gift from God and we need to be good stewards of it," said Hopper, director of missions for Hale Association.

Colburn has taken that to heart. Hopper said listing all the work she's done on the property "would take all day."

Recently she has been working to clear a walking trail, clear a space for a chil-

dren's playground and get things ready at the chapel and kitchen for an association-wide fish fry.

Hopper said it took Colburn and others a month to prep for that event.

But when they held the fish fry May 19 more than 125 people representing all 13 Hale Association churches showed up.

Big ideas

"A lot of people had never been to the retreat," Hopper said. "The fish fry was a way to say, 'Hey, we have this available.' Ultimately we want to use it to nurture Chris-

tians and also to help people get out in the woods and get to know their Creator."

It would make a great area for a pastors' retreat as well, he said.

Funding is an issue for improving the property, but Colburn has "grandiose ideas," Hopper said.

She's offered to move her large house to the property and donate it for the retreat's use. It could house a dozen boys on one end, a dozen girls on the other and still have room for her to live in the middle part and help manage the property, she said.

Colburn also is working hard to get the pond up

and running for fishing, adding lime and consulting with fishery experts on the best ways to restock the pond with fish.

She's thought about adding an amphitheater, and she's thought about developing a beach at the lake.

There are so many ways the property could be used, from camping to fishing to using it as an outreach to people looking for a place to camp on their way to the beach.

'God has led me to this'

Colburn isn't sure which dreams will come to fruition, but she's working hard to make it the best it can be for whatever God might have in mind, she said.

"God just led me to this," Colburn said. "I just want to help get it to where it can be used." ✝

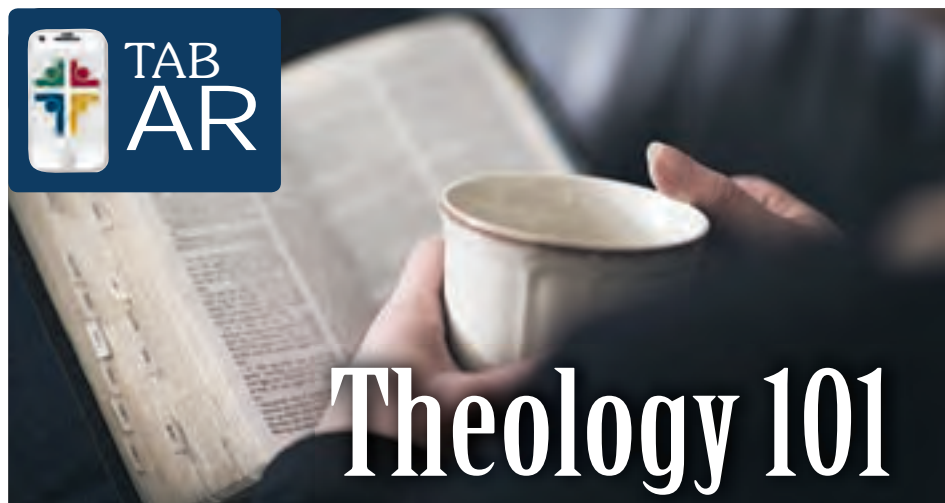
"We have been realizing that we have got this gift from God and we need to be good stewards of it."

Bobby Hopper, director of missions, Hale Baptist Association

The retreat property owned by Hale Baptist Association is between Greensboro and Eutaw. It's going to make a fantastic campsite, Faye Colburn said.



Photo courtesy of Hale Baptist Association



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Christology Through Imagery

King of Israel

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

Among the images used of Christ, none is more noteworthy than that of King. Kings were prominent in Israel's history. As human rulers go, some were good and others were bad. For centuries David was held as the premier king in Israel. He ruled in what is often described as the golden era in the nation's history. One can easily understand why King David was held in high esteem as the prototype of the expected Messiah who would be descended from the lineage of David. Some in Christ's time caught the glimpse of Him as the expected Messiah and referred to Him as the "Son (or descendant) of David." Even so, many if not most thought this Davidic descendant would be a mighty military ruler who would make right all that was wrong, particularly emancipation from Roman domination.

Prophetic vision

John 12 describes what Bible readers commonly refer to as Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem only days before His crucifixion. The crowds that went out from Jerusalem to meet Christ cried out, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord — the King of Israel!" (v. 13). When the Apostle John later recorded this momentous event, he described it as the fulfillment of the prophetic vision of Zechariah 9:9: "Fear not, daughter of Zion. Behold, your King is coming, sitting on a colt of a donkey" (John 12:15). The generation that lived during Christ's earthly ministry was familiar with their own national history of kings who ruled both the united kingdom of Israel and later the divided kingdom. Although the terminology had switched from king to emperor by the time Christ came, the domination of the Roman ruler over them kept alive the idea of a ruling king.

At the beginning of His earthly life, the wise men from the east came asking, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?" (Matt. 2:2). At the end of His earthly ministry, those in authority

under the Roman ruler made sport of Israel's promised King when Pilate presented Christ to the crowds with the sarcastic shout, "Behold your King" (John 19:14). Later the mockery continued with the title inscribed over His cross: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" (Matt. 27:37). What was voiced and written as mockery conveyed more truth than the mockers realized, only Christ's kingship was spiritual, not political.

In this spiritual sense, the imagery of Christ as a king conveys the idea of sovereignty or lordship over those who join themselves to Him through commitments of faith. First Timothy captures the kingship of Christ in a doxology: "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, God the only wise, be honor and glory forever and ever" (1:17).

With a change of terminology but with the same idea of sovereignty, this same epistle in its concluding chapter affirms Christ is "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach; whom no man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be honor and power everlasting" (1 Tim. 6:15-16).

The imagery of Christ as King comes to have personal meaning when each of us allows Him to be Lord of our lives. To that end He was born, lived, taught, died and rose again. To enable His kingship to become reality for us, He sent the Holy Spirit to make real His indwelling presence and lordship. Each time Christ ascends to the throne of human hearts, His ministry gains further fulfillment. ✝

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.





Photo courtesy of Nancy Gill

Above: Members from at least 17 Clarke Baptist Association churches prepared and served meals to flood victims and rescue workers during the cleanup post-flooding. **Right:** A crew of volunteers from Thomasville Baptist Church cut out drywall in a room that sustained water damage from flash flooding.



Photo by David Nelson

'We can pay it forward'

Clarke Assoc. buys trailer to start disaster relief team

Back in April, the people of Fulton found themselves in the middle of a lot of water and a lot of heartbreak.

"We had quite a bit of flooding," said Keith Johnson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Fulton, in Clarke Baptist Association.

And they needed quite a bit of help.

Fortunately for the community, disaster relief teams from Baldwin and Bethel Baptist associations descended on Fulton for two days, doing mudout work and other relief. While they

worked, area churches rallied to prepare meals for flood victims and disaster relief volunteers.

Surprising move

The Baldwin and Bethel teams "did fantastic work," Johnson said. "The result of that was that our congregation wanted to contribute some money to disaster relief."

But what Mark Wakefield, state disaster relief director, did with that money surprised them.

He hitched up an empty trailer that the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions had decided

to sell — the perfect size for a disaster relief team to use — and brought it down to the Clarke Association executive committee meeting.

"They voted that night to buy the trailer and start funding and recruiting a team," Wakefield said.

And he applied the money they had donated toward that effort.

'That left an impression'

"I'm excited for them," Wakefield said. The flooding, he said, made disaster relief "personal enough to encourage them that



Photo courtesy of Nancy Gill

this is something they could do and make a difference."

Johnson agreed. "When we needed those folks, they appeared, did the work and then they were gone. That left an impression on the people," he said. "Other folks will be hurting in the future, and we can pay it forward." (Grace Thornton)

Mark Wakefield (left), state disaster relief director, accepts a check from Clarke Association representatives that will allow the association to buy a trailer and start their own disaster relief team.

Pleasant Grove Association ministry center continues to thrive

Dan Wiggins had a lot of reasons he wanted to start Pleasant Grove Baptist Association's Christian Ministries Center 10 years ago, and one of those reasons was intensely personal.

He knows what it's like to have a hard time finding work.

Wiggins became director of missions for Pleasant Grove Association in 2004 while working a job in retail. Two years later, he lost that primary job.

"Overnight I became unemployed and found out I was unemployable," Wiggins said. "I was too old. Nobody was hiring. And that was kind of a discouraging thing."

In the process of working through that, God continued to lay on his heart the need for a place to help local people who have fallen on hard times. "It became more of something that the Lord kept after me about," he said.

And in 2008, he decided he didn't really need office space at the associational office — he could work from home and use that space as a ministry center instead.

Sharing the vision

Wiggins started traveling between the association's churches on Sundays and talking to them about the vision for a ministry center. They started having informational meetings. And he began talking to Shelby and Tuscaloosa Baptist associations to find

out how they ran their ministry centers.

"Slowly God took away all my concerns or objections," Wiggins said. "Little did I know that the economy was going to go down the tubes soon after that and we were going to need the center even more. It was a God thing."

Now 10 years later, the center is open every Monday and Thursday and provides food, clothing and other necessities to around 50 people per month.

Every day the center is open, Wiggins and others present the gospel, and chaplains are on hand to talk with clients. Over the past decade, 284 people have professed faith in Christ at the Christian Ministries Center.

"We've not only seen them come to know Jesus but seen them be active in our churches too," Wiggins said.

Meeting needs

Some years have seen more physical needs than others, he said. The economy struggled in 2011, and it pushed more people through the doors of the center. And in 2016 when the local mine shut down, the center had a boom in clients. Thankfully the mine opened back up, but that doesn't mean the Christian Ministries Center doesn't still have needs to meet, he said.

"We are grateful and delighted to keep going as long as the Lord wants us to," Wiggins said. (Grace Thornton)

Across ALABAMA'S Associations

EAST CULLMAN

► **Keith Warden** is the new pastor of **Northbrook Church, Cullman**. He holds degrees from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham. He previously served as pastor of First Church, Picayune, Mississippi. He and his wife, Kristi, have three children.



WARDEN

School will be held at 9 a.m. and worship will begin at 10 a.m. Lunch will follow the service. Andy McClellan is pastor.

BESSEMER

► **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will host a gospel singing July 6 featuring The Busby's. Dinner will be served at 6 p.m. and the music will start at 7 p.m. A love offering will be collected. Scott Bush is pastor.

COOSA RIVER

► **First Church, Tallasatchie**, will hold VBS on June 30, 9 a.m.–2 p.m. Jim Griffin is pastor.

MORGAN

► **Southwest Church, Hartselle**, will celebrate its 50th anniversary June 24, 11 a.m. A reception will follow the service. Greg Burcham is pastor.

MUD CREEK

► **Sparks Gap Church, Bessemer**, will hold a homecoming service June 24, 1:30 p.m. featuring the Southland Quartet. Everyone is invited. Marvin Terry is pastor.

WASHINGTON

► **Ben Posey** is the new pastor of **First Church, LeRoy**. He previously served as pastor of First Church, Kinston. He holds a bachelor's degree from University of Mobile and a master's degree from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Tori, have four children.✝



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Photo by Hannah Muñoz

Children in grades K-6 participate in Missions Madness 12, a one-day event sponsored by Lamar Baptist Association and held at Springhill Baptist Church, Millport.

Missions Madness event educates children on missions opportunities

Lamar Baptist Association is putting the spotlight on missions for the children in their area. The association recently sponsored Missions Madness 12, a one-day missions event for children in grades K-6, at Springhill Baptist Church, Millport.

The event is designed to communicate the importance and

relevance of missions by giving children the opportunity to hear from missionaries in every sphere: local, national and international.

Around 90 children and their leaders, along with missionary speakers and workers, participated in the late April event. Eighteen associational churches helped provide the food for the day, the gift

bags for the missionary speakers and also donated items for the missions project.

Scott Stokes, director of missions for Lamar Association, and his wife Sharon spent the day helping missionaries set up their rooms and pack up and load their cars at the end of the day. (Jessica Ingram)

East Liberty Association gives out Bibles in honor of longtime instrumentalist

When Laverne Smith was 14 years old, she started playing the organ at Center Baptist Church, LaFayette, in East Liberty Baptist Association. Over the years, she faithfully played the church's organ and piano.

And when she died May 17 at 86 years old, she hadn't slowed down at all, said Pastor Randall Hamer.

"As a woman who was part of the community and church and as a mother-in-law, you couldn't ask for a better lady," said Hamer, who is married to Deborah, one of Smith's four daughters.

Smith taught Sunday School and Girls in Action, and she would ride around in the community and pick up children and bring them to church, Hamer said. "Many Sundays after church, the kids would end up spending the afternoon at her house."

And now East Liberty As-

sociation is honoring Smith's legacy by continuing her outreach.

Instead of sending flowers after her death, the association purchased cases of Bibles in her memory, stamped her name

in the front and began handing them out to those in need.

It's a ministry the association often does when staff members of area churches or their spouses pass away. Some of them go to the local jail ministry. Some go to churches who are holding evangelistic events. Some of them stay in the office for whenever they might be needed.



Photo courtesy of Melissa Bruce

Laverne Smith was 86 years old when she died May 17.

East Liberty Association is honoring her legacy by continuing her outreach.

"(East Liberty Director of Missions) Dale Wood called me up and said he knew we needed to do this in her memory when he found out how long she had been at the church," Hamer said. "She has always been a precious woman. She was a lifelong member of Center Baptist and she was dedicated." (Grace Thornton)

"She has always been a precious woman. She was a lifelong member of Center Baptist and she was dedicated."

Pastor Randall Hamer
Center Baptist Church, LaFayette

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FBC Union Springs women assist community

Ask Gail Barr about her Women on Mission (WOM) group and you'll get a taste of just how excited she is about it.

Barr, WOM president for First Baptist Church, Union Springs, in Bullock Baptist Association, grew up in the area. She said it's been a "lovely, sweet place" to live and a good place to raise her children.

And now, after being retired for about 20 years, she said that unless God surprises her with a different plan, she will probably end up staying right there for the rest of her life. Union Springs is her missions field and she's embracing that.

And her WOM group of about 12 women is embracing that too.

"We like to learn about missionaries and we also like to do things ourselves here," Barr said. "We're a busy little group."

In May they hosted a tent at the Chunnenugee Fair, which takes

place every spring right outside the church.

'In Jesus' name'

"We gave a cup of cool water in Jesus' name. This year we also made salvation bracelets," Barr said. "We used the fair as an opportunity to have conversations and make contact with a lot of

people we wouldn't see otherwise."

Pastor Bill Cannon said it's a great outreach for First, Union Springs.

"The community is gathered right there on the main street,

North Prairie. And our church is in a prime location," he said.

"The ladies have been doing that for years now. They are able to share a word from the Lord with people, pray with them and help them out with anything they might need. It's a blessing."

And the WOM group doesn't stop there. They stay on call for area DHR, ready to provide

For more information about Women on Mission, visit wmu.com.



Photo courtesy of Mona Crawford

The Women on Mission group of FBC Union Springs made DHR pillowcases for a couple of local group homes in the area.

clothes and other items for foster children who show up with nothing but the clothes they are wearing. They collect needed items for Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries.

And every month they open up a clothing room at First, Union Springs, and offer gently used

clothes to the community that have been donated by church members, she said.

'We love the Lord'

"We love the Lord and we love doing what we do," Barr said. "We just pray we are honoring Him." (Grace Thornton)

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

CHURCH POSITIONS

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Oak Grove Community Church prayerfully seeking bivocational pastor and needing fill-in preachers. Mail resumé with photo to: Search Committee, 8447 Woodview Lane, Bessemer, AL 35023.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR FOR WORSHIP & MUSIC

Concord Baptist Church, a vibrant and growing church in Anderson, S.C., is seeking an associate pastor for worship and music. This person must have the calling, gifting, training and heart to lead a large and diverse ministry of worship. We are excited about our future! For a job description and/or to submit a resumé/profile, please contact jjames@concordbaptist.com. Please also visit concordbaptist.com for more information about our congregation.

BIVOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC/YOUTH

Hopewell Baptist Church, Bessemer, is seeking God's man as a bivocational minister of music and/or youth minister. Contact Jim Parker, 205-568-9500.

MINISTER TO STUDENTS

Vestavia Hills Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, is seeking a man or woman to be our next full-time minister to students. We are a suburban congregation of 850 members, du-

ally aligned with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Southern Baptist Convention. The minister to students' primary responsibility is to disciple youth into a transforming relationship with Christ by modeling a life with Christ and developing ministry programs that cultivate spiritual growth. The minister to students also is responsible for coordination of the church's college ministry and participates with other ministerial staff to provide pastoral care and leadership in congregational activities. Minimum master of divinity required with prior full-time experience in student ministry. Send resumé with an introductory letter, referrals or recommendations to: vhbc@vhbc.com with subject line "Minister to Students Resumé." More information about the church may be found at www.vhbc.com.

YOUTH PASTOR

Raimund Heights Baptist Church in Bessemer is looking for a part-time youth pastor to work with a small group of young people. Send email with resumé to: tnc4him.2@hotmail.com.

YOUTH MINISTER

Babbie Baptist Church is seeking a full-time youth minister. The youth minister will oversee the communications/evangelism/discipleship training/events and activities of the youth ministry. For detailed job description, visit our website: babbiebaptist.com.

Interested persons must send a resumé with references and work experience to: Babbie Baptist Church, 19863 Babbie Rd., Andalusia, AL 36420, or email to: babbiebaptist@centurylink.net.

MINISTER TO CHILDREN & FAMILIES

First Baptist Church in Huntsville is seeking a full-time minister to children and families. More information is available at fbchsv.org/employment. Resumés and inquiries may be sent to: search@fbchsv.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

PART-TIME SECRETARY

Southcrest Baptist Church, Bessemer, Alabama. Receptionist duties. Bookkeeping and payroll experience required (QuickBooks). Salaried position, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., M-F. Starting salary \$10-12K annually. Submit resumé to: office@southcrestchurch.net.

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4 Look for *The Alabama Baptist (TAB)* augmented reality logo (example shown above). Hold your device over the logo and watch the paper come to life.

5 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.

6 Each week when *TAB* arrives, look for the AR logo and hold your device over the noted articles to watch the video extras.

ALABAMA

UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Cooley retires after nearly 24 years at Mount Pleasant

After nearly 24 years as associate pastor and music minister at Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Enterprise, Phil Cooley has retired.

And as he leaves, he will leave a big hole behind, said John Granger, director of missions for Coffee Baptist Association.

"He has been a really faithful servant here," Granger said.

Over his years at the church, Cooley was "an association- and community-minded person," well respected by his peers inside and outside the Baptist realm, he said.

"And in the church where he's served, he's served well with all the pastors, and in the interim times he carried out the pastoral roles of visiting the sick and doing what needed to be done," Granger said.

The church honored Cooley's long ministry with a celebration May 6. Granger spoke, along with interim pastor Roger Richards and other members of the church and Cooley's family.

Before coming to Mount Pleasant, Cooley served at Ferris Hill Baptist Church, Milton, Florida; First Baptist Church, Carbon Hill; and Central Baptist Church, Tarrant.

He also served other churches while he was studying at Samford University in Birmingham and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

Over the years at Mount Pleasant, Cooley led worship, introducing new songs alongside the "great hymns." He also led the church's choirs of all ages and led the church's youth ministry until they added youth ministers to the staff.

Cooley said he and his wife, Evelyn, have been "truly blessed" to be a part of the church and community for more than a third of their lives and more than half of his ministry.

"We love Mount Pleasant and our folks there," he said. "We have a lot of good friends and good memories. It's been a wonderful time of ministry and I'm sure we'll continue, it just won't be full time."

He and his wife have three children and six grandchildren. (Grace Thornton)



COOLEY

Newberry retires after 70 years in ministry

This isn't the first time Harold Newberry has retired, but it will be the last. After 70 years in ministry Newberry recently retired from First Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove, where he served as music minister and later pastoral care minister for more than 40 years.

Newberry also has served at First Baptist Church, Fulton, Mississippi; Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills; First Baptist Church, Birmingham; and Bluff Park Baptist Church, Hoover (now Church on the Bluff), as well as churches in Georgia and Florida.

Newberry holds a bachelor's degree in sacred music from Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina.

Newberry was saved and baptized alongside his mom and dad when he was 8 years old.

In college he began working in music and that's where he's been ever since.

"I can't see myself doing anything else and I would never want to do anything else," he said.

Although God called Newberry into music ministry, he has had many opportunities to serve the church in other ways.



NEWBERRY

"God called me to be a pastor's righthand man. ... I've preached when the pastor wasn't there. I've preached a revival. I served as the education pastor and church administrator for a while too."

Newberry, however, gives all the credit to the churches he has served. "The churches are what I think ought to receive the honor and the blessings for my long ministry," he said. "(They're) what held my ministry together."

First, Pleasant Grove, renamed the church's music suite "The Newberry Music Suite" in honor of Newberry and his wife Quinn. Quinn Newberry has served alongside Newberry for almost all of his ministry. "She has been a mainstay to me," he said.

Harold Newberry hopes to spend the rest of his earthly life serving God, his church and the community. "I'll be doing that for the rest of my life as long as I'm able," he said.

The couple has two children and four grandchildren. (Jessica Ingram)

Ozark's Chalkhead Baptist commemorates 125 years

Excited members of Chalkhead Baptist Church, Ozark, gathered on a Saturday for a cleanup day in preparation for a big celebration the next morning.

On May 6 past and present members of Chalkhead Baptist in Dale Baptist Association joined together to celebrate the church's 125th anniversary. "Everything was wonderful," said church secretary Caroline Howell.



Photo courtesy of Judy Dyson

Former pastor Tommy West was the guest speaker. Special music was brought by West and his family and former pastor Cary Brown. Former minister of music Roger Fowler led congregational music. Former staff also were recognized.

Ellen Dewberry (center), Alabama Baptist Historical Commission representative, presented the church with a certificate honoring the occasion. Chairman of deacons Stan Powers (right) also shared.

Kenneth Hale (left) is interim pastor of Chalkhead Baptist. (Jessica Ingram)

Bethlehem, Lacey's Spring, marks 175 years of ministry

People came from as far as Athens, Georgia, to celebrate the 175th anniversary of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Lacey's Spring.

"The Lord blessed us with good attendance," said church member Janice Burt.

Pastor Joshua Doss spoke on "Looking Back, Charging Forward" during the April 29 service. Special music was performed by April Israel, the church choir and the children's choir.



Photo by Lonette Berg

Eldridge Criscoe, who served as pastor from 1964 to 1969, shared memories of his time at the church. Jackie Kay, a former member who was baptized, married and ordained at Bethlehem Baptist, sent in a video greeting for the congregation. Kay recently retired as pastor of Central Park Baptist Church, Decatur. Since 1960, Bethlehem Baptist has sent out 12 ministers and at least 3 of the 12 have served as missionaries with the International Mission Board.

Charlie Howell, director of missions for Madison Baptist Association, presented a certificate on behalf of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and Lonette Berg,

executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, also presented the church with a certificate. The service concluded with a time of prayer over the church and its future. (Jessica Ingram)

Friendship Baptist, Danville, celebrates bicentennial

On May 6 past and present members of Friendship Baptist Church, Danville, in Muscle Shoals Baptist Association, gathered to celebrate a huge milestone.

To commemorate Friendship Baptist's 200th anniversary the church held a special service featuring a message by Pastor Don Gentry and special music by the Drinkard Family. "The day couldn't have been better. Everything went beautifully," said church member Brenda Seifried.

Former pastors Nelson Tucker, Bill Pruitt and Dan

Compton also gave remarks during the service. Drew Fitzgerald, Madalyn Holladay, Ed Huggins and Judy Steele



Photo by Jerry Armor

also contributed to the special music.

Former church members Wayne Penn, Bruce Fitzgerald and Caleb Lewis spoke on their memories of growing up at the church.

Jerry Armor presented the church with a certificate on behalf of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and Robert Smith, director of missions for Muscle Shoals Association, commended the church for its faithfulness over the years. (Jessica Ingram)

Shiloh Baptist Church commemorates 200 years

Current and former members of Shiloh Baptist Church, Sardis, in Selma Baptist Association, gathered together under a big tent at the church for lunch celebrating the church's 200 years of ministry.

The lunch followed a special service May 20 where former pastor Buddy Champion was the guest speaker and former minister of music Ken Schroeder led a choir made up of past and present members.

Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented the church with a certificate honoring the anniversary.

Pastor Bill Gardner led the congregation in a responsive reading and former staff members shared memories from their time at the church.

I was "so pleased with the day," said church member Jim Harris. (Jessica Ingram)



Photo by Lonette Berg



SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For June 24

Explore the Bible By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D.
Dean, Office for Global Engagement, University of Mobile

ESTABLISHED
2 Samuel 7:8-21

Our focus this week is God's promise, His covenant with David that through him would come the eternal King. Centuries after David, Isaiah anticipated this Messianic, Davidic kingdom: "He will reign on the throne of David and over His kingdom ... forever" (Isa. 9:7).

Matthew wrote with an understanding that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. He included 10 references to the "Son of David," beginning with the very first verse of his Gospel account. He also recorded that in the time of Jesus' ministry, both the common people (Matt. 12:23) and religious leaders (Matt. 22:42) knew about this promise.

Mark, Luke and John each referred to Jesus as the Son of David as well. Blind Bartimaeus of Jericho cried out for mercy to the "Son of David" (Mark 10:46-47; Luke 18:38-39). Jesus' disciples asked Him about the re-establishment of Israel's kingdom just prior to His ascension (Acts 1:6). In Revelation, John called Jesus "the root and offspring of David" (Rev. 5:5; 22:16). From start to finish the New Testament clearly communicates that Jesus is the promised Son of David.

Rest (8-11a)

King David had utilized his political and financial partnership with Phoenician monarch Hiram to build a palace in Jerusalem. The Ark of the Covenant sat in a special tent near the palace. The Philistines posed no immediate threat. David was at rest.

Although he was at peace with his adversaries, his mind was racing. How could he live in a cedar-lined palace while the Ark of God sat out in a tent? Would God allow David to build a temple in which to place the Ark? He asked the Prophet Nathan.

Initially, Nathan gave him permission.

After receiving a word from the Lord though, the prophet told David he would not build a temple. In time God would grant Israel peace and rest from their oppressors. God had something better for David and his family.

Rule (11b-17)

God was going to establish the house of David. Not only would God establish the Davidic dynasty to reign over Judah until the Babylonian exile, but He also would establish the eternal kingdom.

Nathan spelled out several details of the Davidic covenant relating to David's rule. First God would establish the house of David. Second David's direct descendants would rule after his death. Third God and David's son would have a father-son relationship. Finally God would establish David's house, kingdom and throne forever. God's appointed King will reign.

Rejoice Over (18-21)

Upon hearing this revelation from Nathan, David rejoiced. This prophetic message was more than good news for David and his generation. The king recognized these words from God would have profound future impact on the kingdom of Israel.

In the midst of his praise to God, David demonstrated characteristics which believers today would do well to learn. He expressed humble praise, recognizing that God was the focus of attention and affection. He believed God's Word, acknowledging that His promises for the future are far greater than the blessings David had previously experienced. Finally he communicated few words in response to the prophecy.

This last quality was one that David clearly passed on to Solomon: "Do not be hasty to speak and do not be impulsive to make a speech before God ... let your words be few" (Eccles. 5:2). May we learn this lesson well.✠

Bible Studies for Life By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh, Ph.D.
Chair and Armstrong Professor of Religion, Samford University

WHY DID JESUS COME?
Luke 1:68-79

Luke 1 is often a passage which we read during Advent season, reminding ourselves of the incarnation of our Savior. However, the Scripture is relevant at any time of the year because it focuses our attention on the heart of our faith as Christians, the saving work of Christ.

Jesus Christ came to redeem us from defeat. (68-71)

Salvation is a complex idea and it is a word which is often used outside of the Christian context. In the first century there were many expressions of religious and secular "saviors," often with the idea of political emancipation in view.

In our own cultural context, each of the world religions have some concept of what it means to experience salvation, differing enormously both with respect to how that salvation is achieved as well as what is experienced.

Furthermore, the term "salvation" has a threefold chronology in that salvation is experienced as something that affects the past, present and future.

We are saved from the penalty of sin, we are being saved from the power of sin in our lives and one day we will be finally saved from the presence of sin within our lives.

Jesus Christ came to redeem us from fear. (72-75)

The foundation and the assurance that this salvation will accomplish all that God had promised was based, in Zechariah's mind, on the truth that God would "remember His holy covenant."

The nature of God's saving grace is such that the only thing we contribute to salvation is the sin from which we are saved.

God has taken the initiative in determining

to save His people and in sending a Savior to deliver us. From start to finish it is all because of His mercy and grace. This fills the hearts of Zechariah and all of God's people with the assurance that not one of God's promises will fail to be fulfilled.

Jesus Christ came to redeem us from sin. (76-79)

In verse 78, Luke uses two beautiful illustrations to convey the wonder of God's saving grace. He speaks of the "tender mercy" of God. The phrase in Greek refers to the part of a being which controls the emotions. It is not found elsewhere in the New Testament. It speaks of the tenderness of God's feelings of compassion toward sinners.

He is moved to love us from the depth of His being as a God of love. Our experience of this grace is like the dawn that breaks through the darkness of the night to bring light to our lives.

The outcome of experiencing the grace of God in mercy and forgiveness is that we are led "into the way of peace."

Anxiety is probably one of the most common of everyday experiences. Sometimes it is characterized by a wave of worry that passes like a white cloud on a summer's day, but often it's associated with panic attacks, palpitations of the heart and a strong desire to escape and run away from the terrors of trouble.

To discover the grace of God, to trust in God will lead to experiencing the peace of God that surpasses all understanding, which "will guard (our) hearts and (our) minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7).

The closeness of God to our lives, the assurance that He knows all about our needs, means that a sense of peace within our hearts can be an actual reality as God guards our minds and hearts like a peace-keeping force to ensure we are not obsessed with worry.✠

Christian Crossword

By Janet W. Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- Where Paul addressed the Athenians. (Acts 17:22)
- Dull.
- Short for Abraham.
- The sons of ___; Arah, Haniel and Rezia. (1 Chron. 7:39)
- Take thine ___ eat, drink and be merry. (Luke 12:19)
- To them which were in ___. (1 Sam. 30:29)
- Father of Isaac.
- Belonging to a righteous king. (1 Kings 15:11)
- And the ___ went and called the child's mother. (Ex. 2:8)
- Nickname of Hephzibah.
- Girl's name.
- How dogs drink.
- America.
- Sons of Onam ... Shammai and ___. (1 Chron. 2:28)
- Shalt not abhor an ___. (Deut. 23:7)
- And ___ and Abimael and Sheba. (Gen. 10:28)
- Uncommon.

Down

- They could not drink the waters of ___. (Ex. 15:23)
- Those that walk in pride he is able to ___. (Dan. 4:37)
- Rejuvenated auto tire.
- And the children of Aram; Uz and ___. (Gen. 10:23)
- Negative prefix.
- Andean beast of burden.
- Jacob's father-in-law. (Gen. 28:1-2)
- Though he were ___, yet shall he live. (John 11:25)
- A cheer.
- ___ took the silver. (1 Kings 15:18)
- Bachelor of engineering of mines. (abbr.)
- Suppose.
- ___ Tin Tin.
- Type of retriever. (abbr.)
- Woman's name.
- Buddy.
- Yes. (Spanish)
- ___ the name of Jesus every knee should bow. (Phil. 2:10)
- An oak ... that pertained unto ___. (Judg. 6:11)
- The mother of all living. (Gen. 3:20)
- From ___ even to Beer-sheba. (Judg. 20:1)
- Organization. (abbr.)
- Hoshea ... sent messengers to ___ king of Egypt. (2 Kings 17:4)

- Prefix meaning "three."
- Florida city.
- By faith the harlot ___ perished not. (Heb. 11:31)
- Jewish holy book.
- I am Alpha and ___. (Rev. 1:8)
- Then Simon ___ having a sword drew it. (John 18:10)
- Smell.
- ___ and ahs.
- Wager.
- Sons of Jether; Jephunneh and Pispah and ___. (1 Chron. 7:38)
- Sheep's cry.
- Musical note.





Media reviews

TV/MOVIES

Also streaming this month

Netflix

▶ **“National Treasure” (June 1, PG-13)** — For lovers of history (like me), this fictional heist movie about the Declaration of Independence was a mixed bag. But I enjoyed it. Rated PG for action, violence and some scary images. Also contains some language.

▶ **Disney’s “101 Dalmatians” (June 1)** — The Netflix press release didn’t specify if this was the 1996 or 1961 version, but both are mostly kid-friendly. The 1996 live-action film was rated G, while the 1961 animated film was unrated.

▶ **Disney’s “Tarzan” (June 23, G)** — This 1999 animated movie follows the story of Tarzan from the time he was raised as an infant by gorillas to his meeting of Jane as an adult.

Amazon Prime

▶ **“I Am David” (June 1, PG)** — A boy escapes a Communist labor camp in 1950s Europe and embarks on a mission. Rated PG for thematic elements and violent content.

▶ **“Nacho Libre” (June 1, PG)** — The same writers behind “Napoleon Dynamite” wrote this quirky comedy, which tells the story of a monastery chef who becomes a wrestler. Rated PG for some rough action and crude humor, including dialogue.

▶ **“The Ant Bully” (June 1, PG)** — A real-life bully gets shrunk to the size of an ant. Animated. Rated PG for some mild rude humor and action.

▶ **“The Waltons,” seasons 1–9 (June 1)** — An Appalachian family struggles to survive during the Great Depression in this 1970s TV series. Some of the shows had adult themes but most were family-friendly.

Hulu

▶ **“The Lord of the Rings” trilogy (June 1, PG-13)** — The fantasy series based on J.R.R. Tolkien’s novels makes an appearance on Hulu. Warning: Many of the scenes are too intense for small children. Rated PG-13 for epic battle sequences and scary images.

▶ **“I Am David” (June 1, PG)** — See above. †



‘Thor: Ragnarok’

Courtesy of Disney

‘Thor,’ ‘The Last Jedi’ lead June streaming entries

By Michael Foust
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Netflix customers groaned in 2017 when Disney announced it eventually would sever its agreement with the streaming service.

But lost in the details was some good news for Netflix movie buffs: The separation wouldn’t take place for at least a couple of years, which meant Netflix subscribers could still enjoy blockbusters from the comfort of their couch.

This month on Netflix, two Disney property films — Marvel’s “Thor: Ragnarok” (June 5) and Lucasfilm’s “The Last

Jedi” (June 26) — begin streaming. Both are rated PG-13 and received high marks from critics, although they also have content that might trouble some parents.

Light-hearted

In “Ragnarok,” Thor is battling his long-lost sister, Hela, the goddess of death. The light-hearted movie doesn’t take itself too seriously — which is a good thing — although it has tons of violence and disturbing content, a moderate amount of language (I counted 17 coarse words) and a couple of sexually suggestive jokes.

“The Last Jedi” is the 2017 film that divided fans of the Star

Wars franchise. It picks up where “The Force Awakens” left off and follows Rey as she tries to persuade an aging and reclusive Luke Skywalker to aid the good guys. It has the same amount of violence and disturbing content as its predecessor and about six coarse words. It contains no sexuality.

Don’t wait forever to watch them though, as they could disappear from Netflix as early as 2020, according to entertainment website Polygon.com. The Disney-Netflix deal allows Disney films that were released in 2016, 2017 and 2018 to stream on the platform.

Disney is expected to launch its own streaming service in the future, perhaps as soon as late 2019. †



‘The Last Jedi’

Courtesy of Disney

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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Travis Whittaker (left), and his wife, Jen (second from left), felt God's call to move back to Michigan to plant Mile City church in metro Detroit.

NAMB photo

Bringing lasting hope

Whittakers go extra mile in metro Detroit

Known as the headquarters for the “Big Three” in the auto industry — Ford, Chrysler and General Motors — the Motor City has experienced prosperity, population explosion and most recently overwhelming urban decay through the years.

From financial crisis to automotive industry cuts to clean water issues, Detroit's struggle has affected the entire metro population of more than 4 million people. Violent crimes rank among the highest in the nation. Less than 10 percent of eighth graders in the inner city are proficient in reading. This is a city of hurting people who need hope.

Missionaries Travis and Jennifer Whittaker want to see Christ bring lasting hope to the metro area by transforming people who will then transform their city. The Whittakers chose a name for their new church inspired by a different side of the city's heritage: the grid system with roads placed one mile apart. In September 2015, Mile City Church held its first service.

Church for today and tomorrow

Every week Mile City Church meets in the Detroit suburb of Livonia on the campus of Schoolcraft College about 15 miles from the downtown area.

“We value helping, we value people and we value helping people move forward,” Travis Whittaker said.

As a church in rented space, each Sunday begins early with a flurry of volunteers setting up signage, nursery space and children's ministry equipment and turning a conference center into a vibrant and welcoming worship center.

The church's messaging is relevant and approachable — it's a church for today and tomorrow. Families are drawn to the hospitality and children's ministry with people of all ages responding to the gospel

message. An online “first-time visitor” video gives guests the lay of the land before they ever set foot on the property. And when they arrive, they are greeted with a smile, a handshake and free coffee. The idea: Make everyone feel welcome.

‘Warm and welcoming’

Brenda was one of those people seeking hope. After her husband left and her parents died, she was looking for something to hold on to. Her children started going to Mile City Church and she decided to go with them.

“It was so warm and welcoming,” she said. They all attended the Starting Point group together. “It was an awakening. I could breathe. I found out that no matter where I go or what I do, Christ was there to rescue me.” Travis Whittaker baptized Brenda, and her story is one of many lives changed and celebrated at Mile City.

“The vision of our church is helping people move toward God,” he said. “Our discipleship track has seven mile markers: faith, weekly gathering, daily encounter, groups, coaching, generosity and serving.”

Travis Whittaker considers raising up and equipping leaders a high priority, both within his community of believers at Mile City and outside the walls as well. “Mile City was never started to build buildings; it was to build His Church and make disciples,” he said.

As the plans for Mile City develop, growth is the goal — both spiritually and physically. A more permanent meeting location as well as a second church plant in another part of the city are both on the horizon.

But Whittaker isn't as concerned with plans as he is about the first priority which is always “making Jesus the big deal.” (*Missions Mosaic*, NAMB)



Letter urges immigration policy change

WASHINGTON — Several evangelical leaders sent a letter of concern to President Donald Trump on June 1 urging the administration to reconsider its policy on separating immigrant children from their families, saying the policy eliminates discretion in decision-making.

Signatories to the letter include Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, along with leaders of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, World Relief, the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, the Wesleyan Church and Korean Churches for Community Development/Faith and Community Empowerment, The Christian Post reported.

The leaders urge Trump to reconsider a “horrible,” “zero tolerance” policy that has led to an increase in immigrant children being separated from their families who entered the country illegally. *The Washington Post* has reported that the number of migrant children being held in U.S. custody without their parents increased 21 percent in May. Around 1,500 migrant children seized at the border are unaccounted for, according to Health and Human Services official Steven Wagner. (TAB)

PCUSA membership decline continues

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — The Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) continued to lose members in 2017, extending a pattern that has persisted since the mid-1960s, according to news released by the church's official communications arm June 4.

PCUSA currently has 9,304 congregations, 147 fewer than at the end of 2016. At the end of 2017 church membership totaled 1,415,053, a decline of 67,714 members from 2016. Larger losses were recorded between 2012 and 2016 when the denomination's General Assembly voted in 2010 to allow the ordination of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) people as church officers and the 2014 Assembly voted to allow same-gender “marriage.”

General Assembly Stated Clerk J. Herbert Nelson said the dismissals and separation of churches of the previous five years seemed to abate in 2017 but blamed the ongoing drop in membership as a sign that “Presbyterians are doing poorly at evangelism.”

“Churches leaving was a temporary roadblock. Our inability to share the faith — to demonstrate the power and justice of Jesus Christ and His church to change a world where inequality, injustice, violence and war seem to gain strength daily — is a critical factor in our failure to grow,” Nelson said. (TAB)

Methodist gathering edits Apostles' Creed

SAINT CLOUD, Minn. — The Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (UMC) removed references to God as “Father” from the Apostles' Creed for a worship service during its May 30–June 1 meeting.

Liturgical folders reportedly included a copy of the creed that removed gender specific language for God, changing “God the Father Almighty” to “God the Creator Almighty” and “Jesus Christ His Only Son” to “Jesus Christ God's Only Son,” The Christian Post reported. In the past 40 years UMC has made changes to liturgy, hymns and sermons to be more gender inclusive, removing or discouraging use of terms like “men” or referring to God with male pronouns, the Post reported. (TAB)

US moral values are ‘poor,’ survey says

WASHINGTON — Forty-nine percent of Americans say the state of moral values in the U.S. is “poor” — the highest percentage ever in Gallup's annual Values and Morals poll.

The survey reported a record-high 49 percent of respondents rating American values as “poor” and a record-tying-low 14 percent rating them as “excellent” or “good.” When asked whether U.S. moral values are getting better or worse, Americans have consistently said they are worsening and that remains the case today. Currently 77 percent say moral values in the U.S. are getting worse, while 18 percent say they are getting better. (TAB)