



INSIDE



Peggy Wehmeyer shares about her career, ministry journey as evangelical Christian woman

◆ Page 3



Explaining what podcasts are, what they offer and why you should care

◆ Page 7



Seminaries' online doctoral programs a 'beneficial' option for Alabamians

◆ Page 8

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."

SBC

by the

numbers

Worship attendance rises, baptisms decline in 2017

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) expanded by more than 270 churches in 2017. More people showed up for weekly worship services, and congregations gave more generously in a strengthening economy.

However, reported baptisms and membership declined as fewer churches participated in the SBC's Annual Church Profile (ACP).

Longstanding patterns continued to dominate the ACP, which is compiled by LifeWay Christian Resources in cooperation with Baptist state conventions.

▶ The number of churches cooperating with the SBC grew for the 19th consecutive year, reaching 47,544. That's a 16.3 percent increase in churches since 1997.

▶ Membership fell for the 11th consecutive year to 15 million. Since 2006, Southern Baptist congregations have lost about 1.3 million members.

▶ Baptisms also declined, as they have for eight of the past 10 years. Congregations reported baptizing 254,122 people — 26.5 percent fewer than in 2007. The latest ratio was one baptism for every 59 church members.

"It's heartbreaking to be baptizing fewer people for Christ, even

though Southern Baptists have nearly 2,900 more churches than we had a decade ago," said LifeWay President Thom S. Rainer.

"Yet a quarter million baptisms is not an insignificant number. We praise God for every individual who has come to Christ and followed Him in baptism. It is my prayer that God would embolden Southern Baptists to share the gospel with their friends and neighbors."

'Gospel conversations'

"We know conversion is only by the Holy Spirit, but we also know God begins most of these conversions with gospel conversations."

Alabama Baptists reported eight

fewer churches in 2017 than in 2016, though 32 additional church-type missions were reported. Baptisms in Alabama were down, as were other additions. Churches reported 288,889 average weekly worship attendance and 204,855 average attendance in small groups,

including Bible study and Sunday School.

Receipts in 2017 reported by Alabama Baptist churches totaled \$730,598,590, down from \$743,166,224 in 2016.

In a separate report, the SBC reported \$37,889,967 in Cooperative Program contributions from Alabama in 2017.

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said the overall numbers "tell a story about Great Commission ministries among our family of churches" and expressed his appreciation to Alabama Baptist churches that submitted ACP data.

Not the full story

In Alabama and across the SBC, the ACP numbers don't tell the full story of baptisms or other measurables among Southern Baptist churches.

Despite the best efforts of associations and state conventions across the country, 26 percent of churches did not participate, said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research.

Seventy-four percent of churches participated in the 2017 ACP survey (See 'Voluntary,' page 11)

LATEST REPORTS

SBC statistics

Provided by LifeWay Insights, LifeWay Christian Resources

	2017	2016
Associations	1,131	1,136
Churches	47,544	47,272
Baptisms	254,122	280,773
Weekly Worship Average Attendance	5,320,488	5,200,773
Total Membership	15,005,638	15,216,978
Total Receipts	\$11,728,420,088	\$11,461,572,538
Total Missions Expenditures	\$1,185,509,033	\$1,189,656,873
Great Commission Giving	\$593,980,600	646,017,306

LATEST REPORTS

ALABAMA BAPTIST statistics

Provided by LifeWay Insights, LifeWay Christian Resources

	2017	2016
Associations	75	75
Churches	3,246	3,254
Baptisms	13,451	15,895
Other Additions	16,844	18,105
Total Membership	925,286	949,416
Total Receipts	\$730,598,590	\$743,166,224

COMMENT

Can a Woman Lead in the SBC?

Days before the recent annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in Dallas, the SBC was abuzz with talk about electing a woman to serve as convention president. Texas pastor Dwight McKissick, who is frequently involved in convention actions, announced he was willing to nominate popular Bible teacher Beth Moore for the office.

At least one news story asked whether a woman would be eligible to serve as SBC president. Evidently Article 18 of the Baptist Faith and Message (BF&M) 2000 caused some to question the appropriateness of a woman in a leadership role. That article reads, in part, "A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She ... has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation."

Even though Article 18 affirms the equal worth of women before God, such statements about submission and serving as helper to the husband caused some to wonder if a woman could serve as a leader in the SBC.

Women in SBC history

Some may also have been concerned with the BF&M statement that "While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture" (Article 6). Only ordained ministers, primarily pastors, have served as SBC president in the memory of most persons attending the SBC annual meeting. Some may have concluded that being a pastor was a prerequisite for service.

The last time a layperson was elected SBC president was 1973 when Owen Cooper, a Mississippi industrialist, was elected to his second term.

SBC Executive Committee vice president Roger Oldham was quoted in a news story saying there is nothing in the SBC constitution or bylaws that prevents a woman from holding an



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

elected office. The constitution says only that officers of the convention "shall be members of Baptist churches cooperating with this convention" (Article 8).

That means any man or woman who is a member of a cooperating Baptist church is potentially eligible to serve in elected office.

A quick check of SBC history also answers the question. Some will be surprised to learn that a woman has been nominated for SBC president. It happened in 1972, the year Cooper was elected to his first term as president.

Marie Mathis, a longtime Texas and national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) leader, was among seven nominees for the SBC's top elected office. Mathis failed to make the runoff that year but she made history as the first woman nominated for SBC president.

Some will find it equally surprising that Mathis had previously served as SBC second vice president. In 1963 she defeated three prominent pastors to earn a first ballot victory for second vice president.

In 1976, Southern Baptists elected another woman as second vice president. It was the bicentennial of our nation and messengers gathered in Norfolk, Virginia. President Gerald Ford addressed the convention and like this year, messengers objected to politicizing the annual meeting.

Convention proceedings record that immediately prior to the election of the second vice president, the registration secretary announced 18,191 messengers had registered for the annual meeting. That is almost twice as many as gathered for the recent convention in Dallas.

Again, four nominees were offered — three

pastors and Myra Bates of North Carolina. Her husband, Carl Bates, had been elected president of the SBC in 1970 and 1971, but Myra Bates was influential in her own right. In 1975 she nominated the person who was elected SBC first vice president on the first ballot in a three-candidate race.

This time Bates herself won on the first ballot against her three opponents.

A woman also has served as first vice president of the SBC. Christine Gregory of Virginia won the office in 1982. Gregory, like Mathis, was a longtime state and national WMU leader. She was the top vote-getter in a field of five on the first ballot and defeated a prominent Texas pastor in the runoff.

So women are eligible to serve as elected SBC officers. A woman has been nominated for SBC president, and women have served as both first and second vice president of the SBC.

Hopefully women will soon serve again as SBC elected officers — perhaps as president.

Openness to women

Yet there is no denying that it is more difficult for women to serve in church leadership among Southern Baptists today than it was 50 years ago. This is true for ministry positions as well as strategic decision-making bodies within local congregations.

Newly elected SBC President J.D. Greear explained at his first news conference that he understands the BF&M 2000 to bar women from serving in any church capacity that carries the title

"pastor" or "elder." That is different than the debate at the time the wording was adopted. Records show that those presenting the wording originally argued the term "pastor" applied only to the "senior pastor" and that women would be eligible for all other positions.

But the understanding of the term has evolved as Greear's position indicates and at least one Alabama Baptist church has been kicked out of its association for having a woman serve as associate pastor.

Greear indicated he is willing for women to serve in the church as long as they carry titles like "minister" or "director."

An adopted SBC resolution called for greater openness to women in leadership. It will be interesting to see how Southern Baptists react to that call. ☞

"Yet, there is no denying that it is more difficult for women to serve in church leadership among Southern Baptists today than it was 50 years ago. This is true for ministry positions as well as strategic decision-making bodies within local congregations."

Connect with us
 >>>> **ONLINE** <<<<

 thealabamabaptist.org

 facebook.com/thealabamabaptist

 twitter.com/alabamabaptist



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

(ISSN 0738-7741;
USPS 011-080)

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

PRINT SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Church Budget — \$13.75
Individual — \$22.25

DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Church Budget — \$8.50
Individual — \$14.95

DR. BOBBY S. TERRY
EDITOR

Jennifer Davis Rash
Editor-elect

Lauren C. Grim
Designer

Jessica Ingram
Editorial Assistant

Linda Harrison
Financial Administrator

Bill Gilmore
Advertising Director

Debbie Campbell
Director of Circulation and Public Relations

NEWS SERVICES
Baptist Press (BP), Baptist News Global (BNG), Religion News Service (RNS), Forum 18 (F18), Morning Star News (MS).

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
The Alabama Baptist
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209

ADDRESS CHANGE
Send old and new addresses, and name of church to:
Subscription Department
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209
Allow two weeks.

To the best of our knowledge, all of the ads in *The Alabama Baptist* represent legitimate companies and offerings. However, one should always exercise normal business caution in responding to ads.

Full member of Alabama Press Association

Accredited member of Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability



'Nation's Top Regional Christian Newspaper'

1999, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017 as judged by Associated Church Press, Baptist Communicators Association, Evangelical Press Association or Religion Communicators Council

Women in leadership roles

Wehmeyer shares about her career, ministry journey as evangelical Christian woman

By Peggy Wehmeyer
The Dallas Morning News

First came sexual harassment scandals in powerful evangelical pulpits. Then the movement's best-known female Bible teacher, Beth Moore, charged church leaders across the country with widespread misogyny. And now the president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, has been fired for religious chauvinism that pressed abused women to stay with their husbands and a rape victim to forgive and drop charges against her perpetrator.

"The terrible swift sword of public humiliation has come with a vengeance," warned one powerful church leader, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President Al Mohler. He added that the story's not over.

I should have seen it coming. I'm one of millions of American women who converted to evangelical Christianity because of its life-changing promise of hope and healing. The problem is that some of the men in leadership have used the Bible to mask a patriarchal misogyny. That's what's driving today's #MeToo church movement. A whole host of leaders, like fired seminary president Paige Patterson, have silenced and marginalized the voices of women for decades. And that leaves my faith family morally compromised.

I had wanted to dedicate my life to full-time ministry since becoming a Christian in college. The Jesus I met at the University of Texas was a revolutionary who inspired His followers to usher in the kingdom of God, fight for justice and give up your life to save it — whether or not you were a woman.

No one understood

I thought I could learn how to do that at Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS). The people closest to me didn't understand. The dean of my journalism school shook his head in bewilderment, my sorority sisters whispered, "She's joining a convent," and my parents, who unsuccessfully hired a psychiatrist to have me "deprogrammed," cut me off financially.

I reached Dallas in my tattered Toyota station wagon, broke, alone but unafraid. Each morning when I woke up in this new place, I knelt in the dark, closed my eyes and cranked up Handel's Messiah, singing along, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

At 21 all I knew about DTS was that it produced great Bible teachers and had a job opening for a writer. I grabbed it. Too broke to enroll, I slipped into any class I could audit, attended chapel whenever I could and begged for audiences with theologians whose teaching I devoured.

When at last I earned enough money to enroll as a student, I discovered something troubling: The master of theology program, the one that prepared students for leadership in the church, was off-limits to women. That came home to



Photo courtesy of Peggy Wehmeyer

Peggy Wehmeyer

me one day after a New Testament class. A few men approached me outside the room.

"You don't plan to preach to a mixed audience, do you?" they asked.

My answer: "I just want to study the Bible," I said. "I don't know how I'll use it yet."

I learned at seminary that many biblical texts could only be understood in the context of ancient Hebrew culture and that made sense to me. What confused me was that the harsh passages prohibiting women from leadership — in church and at home — were the ones taken literally.

The limitations of my future in a church led by men should have become apparent early on. My female hero of the faith, Elisabeth Elliot, wife of martyred missionary Jim Elliot, had been invited to campus. When she rose to the chapel pulpit to speak to the students, almost all male, a group of them walked out in protest. Preaching to men presumably gave her authority over them and that was forbidden.

Did I challenge the system? Hardly. As a young Christian I accepted the teachings of seasoned theologians. I agreed that the Bible was inspired by God and that its truths transcend culture. What I struggled to understand was which Bible passages were to be taken literally. After all, no one was suggesting we should have slaves and make them obey their masters, a command listed in the same place where women are told to submit to their husbands. What if the seminary leaders had it wrong? What if Jesus and his apostles actually elevated women who were treated deplorably in their day?

Women of the Bible

When I asked about the heroic women of the Bible, like the prophet Deborah, who led her people into battle, or Queen Esther, who stood

up to a king and saved the Jews, I was told that God used women to lead only when men failed to step up to the plate. We were God's backup plan for weak-willed men. And to quote Paige Patterson, our role in church and at home was "to be submissive in every way."

Almost all of the seminary students and professors treated me with respect and kindness, so I didn't resent the limits placed on my role as a woman. I trusted the intentions of church leaders. They believed in complementarian theology, which gave men primary leadership in the church and home.

That affected the shape of my life. By my fourth year at DTS, I was doubting my own instincts about what career path to take. My only brush with leadership in the church came when two outlying professors offered to train me, on the condition that our meetings stayed under wraps. After hours I slipped into their offices to learn how to interpret Scripture, outline a sermon and deliver it with flair. Larry Moyers and Mike Cocoris were traveling evangelists. When they took me on a preaching circuit to East Texas, only they could teach in the sanctuaries. My sermons were restricted to women who met on the peripheries of the church.

At seminary I felt like a racehorse lunging at the starting gate, waiting for the bell to sound, with no track ahead of me. And then I stumbled into wide open space: a job opening at a local TV station, where career restrictions had everything to do with skill and nothing to do with gender.

'What is God's will for your life?'

Before I could take the job and clear my seminary desk, a prominent professor called me to his office. I remember standing with him outside the pastoral ministries department when he asked me the ultimate question for a follower of Jesus: "What is God's will for your life?"

By now I knew the answer he wanted. "To get married and have children," I said. "But God hasn't led me to marry yet. Until he does, I'm going to go out and make a difference in the world."

What he said next felt like a curse and it would haunt me for years. "Peggy, if you leave Christian work for a career in the secular media, two things will happen: You'll lose your faith, and it's unlikely any Christian man will want to marry you."

I was speechless. To lose my faith was to lose my life compass. To miss marriage and children would be to miss God's highest calling for a woman.

I took the risk and I left seminary to be a copywriter for WFAA-TV in Dallas. Within a year I was named the first television religion reporter in the nation. I covered the FBI siege of the Branch Davidian cult compound in Waco and the first terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. We tracked the rise of the Mormon church in Texas and reported on all the major Southern Baptist Conventions, including the

(See 'Discerning,' page 4)

Discerning God's will

'Jesus was a revolutionary ... He dignified women in a culture that (didn't)'

(continued from page 3)

ones where the embattled Patterson led the conservative takeover of the denomination. I interviewed Patterson countless times in the '80s and '90s.

Like many women my age I managed all of it while married and raising two children, but it wasn't my church that supported me in the herculean task of juggling family and work.

For support later in my career I pulled together my own small community of women from both coasts. We met each week for a decade by speakerphone, talking and praying about everything from how to integrate our faith at work, to raising our children, to discerning the will of God.

Rarely did I seek out my pastor for counsel, but once, during a rough patch in my marriage, I did. He urged me to follow the Bible verse that tells women to be "like Sarah, who obeyed her husband, Abraham, and called him her lord."

So why did I remain an evangelical? This community had introduced me to Jesus and helped me build a relationship with a personal, loving God whom I could trust.

I held onto my faith and my evangelical family even as my secular career ramped up. When the call came from New York, my 5-year-old daughter, Hannah, was click-clacking her Big-Wheel across our kitchen's hardwood floors. The voice on the other end sounded uncannily like that of my broadcasting hero.

"Hello, Ms. Wehmeyer? This is Peter Jennings at ABC News and I have two questions for you," he said. "Is it true that you cover religion? And are you willing to

make a major life change?"

"Yes. And maybe," I answered.

Months later, Jennings and ABC received a rush of publicity for hiring me as the first religion correspondent in the history of network news.

Soon Christian leaders wanted me on the covers of their magazines and speaking in their college chapels. But I was

careful about when and where I spoke personally about my own faith. For me, the highest calling of a journalist was to separate my personal bias from the stories I covered. It was because of my faith, not in spite of it, that I could distance my personal beliefs from my reporting.

But Christian colleges were having a serious problem. More than half their student bodies were made up of women and this generation of evangelical women wanted futures that included robust professional careers. Who would mentor and lead them?

Wheaton College, the "Harvard of Christian colleges," pressed me to be that person. The school chaplain called to tell me the president of the college was proud of my work and struggling to find female role models for their students. Wouldn't I please reconsider their request to speak in chapel?

"Who's your president?" I asked.

Speaking to young women

It was the same theologian, who 20 years earlier, as a professor at DTS, had told me to throttle back and find a husband.

I agreed to speak in the Wheaton chapel, only after I was no longer reporting on religion. I stepped into the pulpit where Billy

Graham and countless high-profile male ministers had preached and looked out at a sea of young female faces. I purposely singled out the Wheaton women:

Young women: Hear me now.

Trust your own deepest convictions and let no one else overwhelm the quiet pull of God on your life. You're the one who will come home every day to your choices.

And do not limit what God wants to do with your life. Why would you narrow His plan to include only marriage and family? These are high callings, but for both men and women.

The student body responded with a standing ovation, but the president promptly accused me of fueling a feminist fire. The discussion it roused on campus led one Wheaton student to call me several years later.

Like me, this young woman had committed her life to following Jesus. It had

led her to the South Side of Chicago, to four years in some of the nation's most dangerous neighborhoods with Teach for America. Now she was frustrated because her time in the classroom had taught her that education held only part of the answer for children and families whose lives were riddled with poverty, violence and drugs. She wanted to tackle spiritual poverty too.

"The church is the best place to address both the economic and spiritual vacuum in people's lives," she told me. "I want to study theology and become a minister so I'm better equipped to help people who struggle."

If this had been just any young evangelical woman, I might have counseled her, "Go for it, but it's going to be tough."

Painful memories

But the words came from my own daughter, Hannah, the one who was in kindergarten the day Peter Jennings called. The one whose crib I had knelt at in the dark, asking God to give her strength for whatever challenges she would face as a woman.

"Hannah!" I said, "What are you thinking? Women can't be leaders in the church. You'll be beating your head against the wall."

Painful memories — many stories I had never told Hannah — rushed to the surface. I tried every way I could to

shut down my daughter's dream, but she wouldn't have it.

"You got to be a pioneer in television, Mom. Why can't I be one in the church?" she argued. "You're the only one discouraging me from taking this path. My own mother!"

Generational changes

I've heard it said that dreams and visions blocked in one generation can surface in the next. I had spoken harsh words to spare my daughter from the pain I knew by heart. What I failed to account for were the changes she already was a part of.

In recent years a few evangelical seminaries have reconsidered their interpretation of Scripture on women. Now some of them allow for women's ordination. A groundswell of leading evangelical churches, where women now serve as pastors and elders, reflect that shift. The the-

ology on women's roles at places like DTS hasn't changed, but more than four times the number of women are enrolled there than when I was a student.

Last year I was worshipping at the church I now attend in Dallas, where former President George W. Bush and his wife, Laura, are members. As worshippers walked to the altar to receive communion, I watched the Bushes kneel at the rail. A young minister in robes approached the table with a chalice of wine and bread in her hand.

The same world leader I'd once peppered with tough questions about faith was now being led in his faith by my daughter, Hannah.

This fall, the story comes full circle. Hannah will begin seminary, one that prepares women for every facet of ministry. She'll learn, as I did, that Jesus was a revolutionary, not just in the ways He taught us to love but in the ways He liberated and dignified women in a culture that treated them like second-class citizens. While Hannah works and studies, I'll help care for her 1-year-old daughter, Eliza, a name that translated from the Hebrew means "God is faithful."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Peggy Wehmeyer is a writer in Dallas and a former news correspondent for WFAA and ABC News. She wrote this column for The Dallas Morning News. Used with permission.

"Trust your own deepest convictions and let no one else overwhelm the quiet pull of God on your life. You're the one who will come home every day to your choices."

Women discerning their call

Former Alabama Baptist and new author Kristen Padilla remembers crying to her pastor father wishing she had been born a boy. At least then she could be a preacher, she said as a young girl working through her call to ministry.

Ordained Baptist minister Alice Hunt understands. "I remember hearing in a new way God's call on my life at 16 but not knowing how to articulate that. I remember thinking that if I were male, then I would know what this call was,"

she said. "Years later I understand that call more fully."

Hunt grew up as a Southern Baptist missionary kid in Taiwan, the daughter of Alabama Baptist ministry and missions leaders Bob and Rosalie Hunt.

Rosalie Hunt added the struggles for women in ministry are "nothing new." Women in early church life also faced difficulty in their roles, she said.

Read more about Padilla and the Hunts at www.thealabamabaptist.org.

Helpful resources

▶ National Domestic Violence Hotline's 24-hour telephone number: 1-800-799-7233

▶ Alabama's Domestic Violence Hotline number: 1-800-650-6522

▶ In Alabama: To report child abuse: dhr.alabama.gov/services/Child_Protective_Services/Abuse_Neglect_Reporting.aspx

▶ For state resources in Alabama (advocates, shelters, lawyers, courthouse locations, sheriff departments, etc.) see www.womenslaw.org/find-help/al

▶ For more information on recognizing warning signs of abuse, see www.alabamalegalhelp.org/resource/recognizing-the-warning-signs-of-domestic-violence-and-abuse?ref=d0Th7

▶ For information about domestic violence laws, see domestic-violence.laws.com/spousal-abuse

▶ For information about Alabama's domestic violence laws, see www.dhr.alabama.gov/services/Adult_Protective_Services/Adult_Abuse_Facts.aspx

▶ For information about creating a plan for safety (Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence), see www.acadv.org

▶ For information about how to help an abused friend or family member, see acadv.org/get-help/safety-tips/#friend

▶ For a listing of Alabama domestic violence treatment centers, see www.psychologytoday.com/us/treatment-rehab/domestic-violence/alabama

▶ To find the 34 organizations in Alabama that provide domestic violence services, see www.domesticshelters.org/al/alabama-domestic-violence-help-statistics

How to recognize spousal abuse

▶ Have visible cuts, bruises, black eyes, etc.

▶ Wear heavier than usual make-up (to hide abuse marks on her face)

▶ Wear heavy clothing out of season (to hide physical abuse marks)

▶ Won't stay around to talk after church; must hurry home

▶ Seem withdrawn, on edge or jittery or experience frequent mood swings

▶ Miss church sporadically with unexplained absences

▶ Will never volunteer to work or teach in the church

▶ Miss appointments consistently

▶ Won't invite anyone into their home. (Denise George)

Sensitive issue

How pastors, church leaders can address domestic abuse

By Denise George
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Domestic violence is the No. 1 public health issue facing women and children in the United States today.

Spousal abuse is a big part of that problem. A serious form of exploitation, it victimizes, damages, belittles, maims and sometimes ends the life of a wife or husband. No one should suffer any type of violence or abuse in the home, whether it is physical, emotional, psychological, verbal or sexual.

In June, Southern Baptist Convention messengers addressed the issue and approved a resolution on spousal abuse, stating that it dishonors the marriage covenant and blasphemes the relationship between Christ and the Church.

But even so, spousal abuse is a sensitive issue — so sensitive that church leaders might avoid confronting it. Spouse abusers and their victims often hide in plain sight, sitting beside us in worship services, serving on church committees or teaching Bible studies.

Using church as a cover

Some abusers might use church as a cover, becoming a smiling deacon/Dr. Jekyll at church and a hurtful husband/Mr. Hyde at home. Domestic violence happens within Christian homes at the same rate as in non-Christian homes.

As much as we wish to believe that every Christian household in our church is “home sweet home,” the statistics reveal that not every marriage is based on Colossians 3:18–19 and not every husband and wife practice a 1 Corinthians 13 type of love.

Seventy-five percent of the nation's telephone calls to 911 are related to domestic violence. It is the leading cause of injury to women — more than car accidents, muggings and rapes combined.

Each year in the U.S., 5.3 million incidents of interpersonal physical violence occur, and 2 million women are injured through some sort of physical abuse. Every nine seconds in the U.S., a woman is physically assaulted or beaten.

And every day in the U.S., three women are murdered by a husband or boyfriend. About 1,300 women die each year as a result of domestic violence.

But abuse doesn't stop with just physical violence. Emotional, verbal and psychological abuse include threats, name-calling, stalking, withholding needed money, intimidation, degradation, belittlement and verbal or emotional attacks that aim to control or to instill fear.

Aggravated threats are those that threaten rape, maim or murder.

Sexual abuse is the administration of any unwanted or forced sexual acts.

And spousal rape is forced, nonconsensual intercourse within a marriage.

In addition to the pain and trauma in the marriage relationship, spousal abuse has other effects. Women who survive domestic violence are 60 percent more likely to develop chronic diseases than women with no abuse history. A boy who sees his father abuse his mother is twice as likely to grow up and abuse his own wife.

Between 30 percent and 60 percent of spouse abusers also abuse children in the home. When discovered, child abuse must be reported to the authorities.

When abuse is suspected, church leaders must take immediate action, ensuring the safety of each family member in the home. If not addressed and stopped by professional intervention, abuse will always escalate.

How can pastors and church leaders respond to domestic abuse?

▶ Address spousal abuse in sermons and Bible studies. (One study found that 65 percent of pastors had spoken one or fewer times about domestic violence; 22 percent had addressed it annually; 33 percent had mentioned it rarely; and 10 percent had never preached or taught it.)

▶ Host a speaker from your community's domestic violence center, hold a seminar and educate your staff and congregation about spousal abuse and ways to respond.

▶ Help support your community's domestic violence centers.

Christian counselors

▶ Keep a list of Christian domestic violence counselors to refer to abusers and victims. Counseling for the abuser could lead to repentance and healing and possibly preserve the marriage.

▶ Include a study on family violence (and its prevention) in the adult Bible study curriculum.

▶ Teach your youth about healthy dating relationships and biblical marriage.

▶ Put together a list of resources, hot line numbers, domestic violence centers, etc.

▶ Update information frequently, making

it available to leaders and members.

▶ In visible places, display brochures, newsletters and information about domestic violence (especially the National Domestic Violence Hotline number — 1-800-799-7233).

▶ Never counsel an abusing husband and wife together. (She will be afraid to speak and he may increase the violence.)

When you suspect spousal abuse:

▶ If warning signs (see sidebar, this page) indicate the possibility of abuse, privately ask, “Is everything OK at home?” Or “Is someone hurting you?” If she indicates that things aren't OK, ask: “Is your husband hurting you?” If she affirms it, take action.

▶ Listen to her without judgment or criticism.

▶ If she agrees, call the national hotline. If it's an emergency, call 911. Police are trained to handle domestic violence incidents.

▶ If she is injured, make sure she receives medical care.

▶ Help her and her children move into a local domestic violence center. Christian women usually stay much longer in abusive relationships, usually leaving only when “he hurts the children.” She must not stay in the home with the abuser. Make sure she is taken to a

safe place that is unknown to her abusive husband. Never put other lives in danger by taking her to a family member's home or to your own home.

▶ Make sure she takes important papers with her when she leaves, including birth certificates, passports, health insurance documents, cash, etc.

▶ Provide her with funds, if needed.

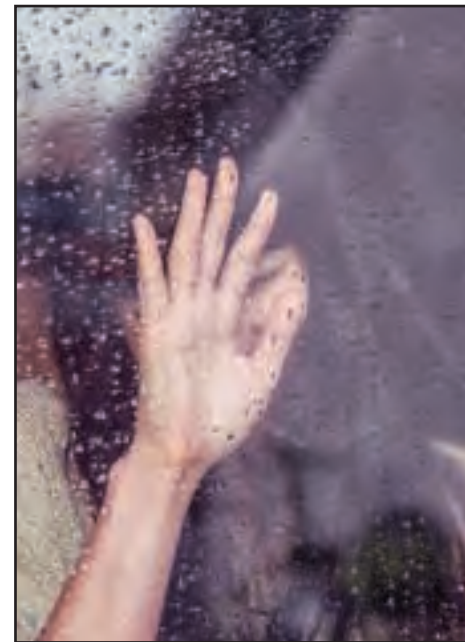
▶ Support her if she decides to have her husband restrained or arrested. Domestic violence is a punishable crime.

▶ Keep everything she tells you in strict confidence, sharing with professionals and others only with her permission.

▶ Put her in contact with a trained domestic violence counselor. Her children might also need special counseling.

▶ Support her with your prayers.

Domestic violence is a delicate and embarrassing subject, not easily identified or addressed. Learn the warning signs, and if you suspect abuse in a church member's home, take action immediately. You might just save a marriage and a life. ✝



Unsplash.com



Across ALABAMA'S Associations

BIRMINGHAM

► **Mac Brunson** is the new pastor of **Valleydale Church, Hoover**. His first Sunday in the pulpit is July 22. Brunson comes from the 10,000-member **First Church, Jacksonville, Florida**, where he served 12 years. Prior to his role in Florida, Brunson was pastor of **First Church, Dallas**, for seven years and also led churches in South Carolina, Virginia and North Carolina. He is a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention Pastors Conference and the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. Brunson holds master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He and his wife, Debbie, have three children and 10 grandchildren. ► **Westmont Church, Birmingham**, will hold a summer revival July 22–25, 6:30 nightly. Steve Browning will be the guest speaker. For more information call 205-788-6811. Landon Byrd is pastor.



BRUNSON

BESSEMER

► **Church at McAdory**, will hold an Active Shooter Preparedness Workshop organized by Department of Homeland Security Aug. 14. The one-day training will describe how to incorporate key elements of successful incident management into planning efforts. Church and school officials are encouraged to attend. Seating is limited to two seats per organization. Registration closes Aug. 12. For more information or to register, visit www.govevents.com/details/28545/dhs-active-shooter-preparedness-workshop-mccalla-al/. Bill McCall is pastor.

COFFEE

► **Damascus Church, Elba**, will hold a homecoming service July 22, 10 a.m. Lunch will follow the service. Steve Watson is pastor.

COOSA RIVER

► **First Church, Tallasahatchie, Alpine**, will hold a homecoming service July 22, 10:30 a.m. Randy Hagan will speak and Richard Robertson will share special music. The church also will hold a revival July 23–25, 6:30 nightly. Jim Griffin is pastor.

FRIENDSHIP

► **First Church, Oneonta**, will hold a concert July 22, 10:15 a.m. featuring Charlotte and Amy Langner. A reception will be held from 2 to 4 p.m. in honor of Charlotte Langner as she retires after 45 years as the church's organist. Larry Gipson is pastor.

GENEVA

► **Bill Pritchett** is the new interim pastor of **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**. He

previously served as interim pastor of **Harmony Church, Andalusia**. He holds a bachelor's degree from the Baptist College of Florida and a master's degree from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He and his wife, Pat, have two children, four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

► **New Bethel Church, Collinsville**, will hold revival services July 22–25. The Sunday services will begin at 10:45 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday–Wednesday services will begin at 6:30 nightly. Phil Glisson will be the guest evangelist. Trey Kincer is pastor.

MADISON

► **Terry Herald** recently retired from **Whitesburg Church, Huntsville**, after serving 25 years total during two different stints on staff under recently retired pastor Jimmy Jackson (see story, page 9). Herald served as minister of education for four years in the 1980s and then most recently as executive pastor for 21 years before retiring in late May. Herald's wife, Mary Lou, serves as food services director at Whitesburg. Charles T. Carter is interim pastor.



HERALD

MORGAN

► **Rob Jackson** wrapped up his time as pastor of **Central Church, Decatur**, after more than 14 years on July 8. He is the new executive director of the Institute for Global Leadership at University of Mobile (see story, page 13). During his time at Central, Jackson helped move the church to its current location. He holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham and a master of divinity degree and doctorate from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He and his wife, Tonya, have one child.



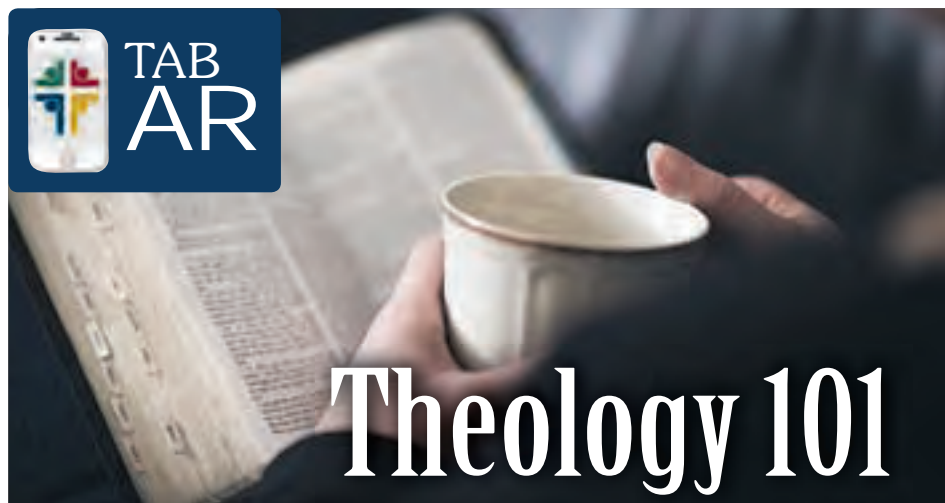
JACKSON

MUD CREEK

► **Snowtown Church, Dora**, will hold a homecoming service July 22, 11 a.m. Lunch will be served at noon and will be followed by a singing featuring The Waylighters Quartet. Bob Thomason is pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

► **Salem Macon Church, Notasulga**, will hold a homecoming service July 15, 10 a.m. featuring The Kempters. Former pastor John Bush will bring the message. Lunch will follow the service. Greg Pate is pastor.✠



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Christology Through Imagery

Chief Cornerstone

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

As we have discussed in recent weeks, Jesus used many common images by which to communicate truths about Himself — images such as bread, light, shepherd, door and vine.

Christ's early followers experienced such spiritual transformation as a result of trusting and following Him that they plumbed the range of their life and times for titles and images that helped them express their inexpressible new life in Christ.

One such image was that of a stone.

Then, as now, stones were a common sight, from small stones in the fields and roadways to massive stones in city walls and especially in the temple in Jerusalem. Stones were prominent in Old Testament times to mark a special site or stand as a memorial to a special event lest these fade from the memory of future generations. Underlying the stone image were passages from their Scripture, the Old Testament. Their frequent use of the Psalms embedded in their memory the prophetic word of Psalm 118:22, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone."

Along with this when the Prophets were read, they heard the word from Isaiah 28:16, "Therefore thus says the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation." The imagery expressed in the Psalms and the Prophets furnished both Christ and His followers a way of communicating divine truth. For example, Jesus one day ended a parable with the probing words, "What then is this that is written: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone?'" (Luke 20:17)

Some years later Peter would write with the reminder, "Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious," to which he appended scriptural warrant for this imagery with the assertion,

"Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame'" (1 Pet. 2:4–6).

A foundation stone

As we read the Bible we come upon the multiplicity of adjectives used to describe Christ as a stone: chief cornerstone, a rejected stone, a living stone, a chosen stone, a precious stone, a tried stone, a sure foundation stone. Thus Christ's followers strained their vocabularies for ways to express Christ's significance in God's redemptive plan and in their spiritual experience.

Among these descriptors of Christ as a stone, none is more meaningful than that of Him as chief cornerstone. While in modern architecture a cornerstone is usually symbolic and placed at the time a finished building is opened or dedicated, in biblical times a cornerstone was the first stone placed. It served to set the angle for all other foundation stones that would follow. As such, it was expected to be the most perfect stone with precise angles to which the subsequent stones would be aligned. Hence, we may think of "chief" as "occupying first place."

With the imagery of the Church as a spiritual building, we understand concerning Christ as the chief cornerstone that He is the perfect stone upon whom all the others rest. His perfection sets the standard for all the living stones that are added to God's building. In fact, 1 Corinthians 3:11 declares, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."✠

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.



Podcasts

for non-podcast people

Explaining what podcasts are, what they offer and why you should care

I've been listening to this mom podcast and it's really great. You should check it out."

"He's a great preacher. I listen to his podcast every week."

"I get my news every morning from this great 15-minute podcast."

Do you hear this kind of thing a lot? Wondering what the podcast train is and if you should be on it?

Well, plug in here. This is podcast 101 — everything you need to know.

What is a podcast?

It's a little bit like radio. Just like you might listen to a talk show or a sermon on the radio, you can listen to that same sort of thing as a podcast.

But there are a couple of major differences and you can see them both right there in the name. The "pod" part comes from Apple's iPod device, which plays songs and other electronic audio files. The "cast" part comes from "broadcast."

But unlike a radio broadcast, podcasts are individual, on-demand audio files that either can be streamed via the internet or downloaded onto iPods and other digital media players. Once you've downloaded them, you can listen to them any time at your convenience without internet access.

Also unlike a broadcast, the audience appeal of a podcast isn't as "broadly" intended — it's often about a specific topic or aimed at a specific audience, like financial news or podcasts for moms of young children.

How do I access them?

There are a lot of options.

If you use iTunes on your laptop, you can go to the Podcasts section of the iTunes store. There you'll find podcasts organized by topic, just like in a bookstore or on Netflix.

You can access this same sort of thing through the Podcasts app on your iPhone or through one of many podcast apps available through the Google Play store on your Android phone or computer.

If you use Spotify for music, you can also use it for basic access to podcasts, though not all podcasts are available there. An app called Overcast also comes highly reviewed, as does Stitcher. These are all free, though with some you can pay extra for premium features.

What kind of topics?

You can find topics from arts and business to news and politics. There's sports, technology, games and hobbies. You can find educational materials and religious



Unsplash.com

topics. And you can find serial dramas, interviews and comedies.

You can download podcasts a la carte, or you can subscribe to a podcast provider — for instance, a particular church or a topical show. Check out the list below for some popular Christian podcasts.

Why should I want to listen?

Podcasting continues to be a growing way that people are getting their informa-

tion. A 2017 study by Edison Research and Triton Digital showed that 24 percent of Americans had listened to a podcast in the past month, up from 21 percent the year before. And six in 10 Americans are now familiar with the term "podcasting," a figure that's 22 percent higher than two years before.

Amy Cherry, a member of Shoal Creek Baptist Church, Deatsville, in Elmore Baptist Association, said she loves pod-

casts because she can listen while she works, cleans the house and drives.

James White, pastor of Lighthouse Community Church, Vernon, in Lamar Baptist Association, said he listens to about 20 podcasts regularly.

"These vary on topic," he said. "For example, I listen to a marriage and family one, devotional ones, theological ones, ministry ones, political ones, etc. I feel that if they are done right, they can be a great resource for one to utilize to grow in their understanding of certain topics."

Could I make my own?

You could if you wanted. Much like blogs have opened up written publication to anyone with a computer, podcasts have done the same thing for anyone with a computer and a microphone. Your podcast might be better with some investment in equipment (like a sound mixer or a quality microphone), but it's possible to do it for free with software like Audacity, which is downloadable from the internet.

And if you are a church wanting to podcast your sermon, all you really need is a good way to make a digital recording of the message as it's preached and then a place to host it.

Websites or blogs with a WordPress base, for instance, come with podcast hosting abilities, then you can register your podcast with iTunes. (TAB)

Wondering where to start listening?

You might check out some of these:

▶ **Next Level**, a podcast created by the student team of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, available at ymlink.org/category/podcast. It deals with topics that help boost student ministry.

▶ **ERLC**, the podcast of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), which addresses trending issues in faith and culture. A related one is *Signposts*, a podcast by ERLC president Russell Moore. Both are available through most podcast apps.

▶ **Taking Route**, a podcast for expatriates living overseas. It offers ways to take root wherever you are. Available through most podcast apps.

▶ **Rainer on Leadership**, a podcast hosted by Thom Rainer, president of LifeWay Christian Resources. It offers practical training for church leaders and pastors. Available through most podcast apps.

▶ **The Briefing**, a weekday podcast by Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. It offers commentary on religion and culture

topics from around the world. Available through most podcast apps.

▶ **TAB News**, coming soon from *The Alabama Baptist*.

Churches and pastors across the state and nation also podcast their weekly sermons. Here are some examples:

▶ **FBC Pelham**, a podcast by First Baptist Church, Pelham, offers weekly sermons by Pastor Daven Watkins. Available through most podcast apps.

▶ **Vaughn Forest**, which offers weekly sermons by Pastor Eric Smith and staff of Vaughn Forest Church, Montgomery. Available through most podcast apps.

▶ **Bellevue**, which offers sermons from Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee, by Pastor Steve Gaines, former pastor of First Baptist Church, Gardendale. Available through most podcast apps.

▶ **Radical**, which offers weekly sermons from David Platt, president of the International Mission Board and former pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham. Available through most podcast apps. (TAB)

Bryan Gill, associate director of the office of professional studies at Samford University in Birmingham, was among the first students to participate in the new online cohort at Gateway Seminary. He earned his doctor of ministry in 2017 and was the first of that cohort to graduate.

Online options



Photo by Sarah Gill

Seminaries' online doctoral programs a 'beneficial' option for Alabamians

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Bryan Gill said he got into an online doctoral program a little bit by accident.

"I signed up when I lived in Memphis," said Gill, now associate director of the office of professional studies at Samford University in Birmingham.

The program was a new one offered by Gateway Seminary (previously known as Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary) in California.

Gateway's plan was to try setting up cohorts in a few places scattered from Memphis to Alaska to Japan, Gill said.

"But there weren't enough people in those cohorts to merit their own cohort, so they decided to form one online cohort out of all those regional groups," he said.

'New ground'

It was something new — Gateway had never done it before. Classes were online but synchronous, meaning at a scheduled time. Gill and other students sat

in front of their computers and listened to an instructor as if they were in a live class together.

"That was all kind of new ground," he said.

He graduated with his doctor of ministry in 2017 — the first of that cohort to graduate.

The program "is something that would be beneficial for

"I really enjoyed my time with the professors, even the time that was remote. It was one of the most rewarding things in my life."

Bryan Gill
Gateway Seminary graduate

somebody like me who has a full-time job and a family and also can't physically go to the campuses on a consistent basis," Gill said.

One thing that gave him a leg up in the program was his proximity to the Samford library for research, he said. Another factor that helped Gill was the way Gateway divided his

cohort into smaller groups that could serve as an online community for each other.

"That helped us to kind of have a support group," he said. "You are studying by yourself and you feel like you're all alone in this. The community aspect is so important."

So important in fact that Gill based his entire ministry project around the spiritual formation

of online students — knowledge that would help him assist online students at Samford, he said.

"I enjoyed the program. I thought it was great," Gill said. "I really enjoyed my time with the professors, even the time that was remote. It was one of the most rewarding things in my life. I wouldn't trade it for anything."

Gateway Seminary offers an online option for many of its cohorts.

The program requires one 10-day trip to one of its campuses. The rest of the seminar work is done online. For more information, email dmin@gs.edu.

Other seminaries

► Southwestern Seminary offers online doctoral studies taught via flex access. Though certain aspects of the program

— orientation, a comprehensive exam and dissertation defense — have to be performed in person, all other requirements can be fulfilled from anywhere. For more information, visit swbts.edu/academics/campuses/online/flex-phd.

► New Orleans Seminary does not technically offer a strictly "online" doctoral cohort, but it does offer a synchronous learning platform in its Ph.D. program. Students connect via the Blue Jeans video conferencing service during a live-taught class at a set meeting time. For more information, visit nobts.edu/research/sync.html.

► Midwestern Seminary does not offer an online option for its doctoral studies. It does, however, conduct much of the work through on-campus inten-

sives and work done at home, so relocation to Kansas City isn't necessary.

► Southeastern Seminary doesn't offer an online doctoral program, but it does offer an Ed.D. and D.Min. as part of a modified program with online components combined with on-campus intensives. This still makes degree completion possible without relocation. For more information, visit sebts.edu/advanced.

► Southern Seminary doesn't offer a doctoral program that can be completed online, but many of its programs offer flexible on-campus coursework options that can be completed without relocating to campus.

► Beeson Divinity School does not offer an online option for its doctoral program.✠

LEEDS STAINED GLASS & CHURCH FURNITURE
SINCE 1993

Toll-free: 888.699.9679
AL local: 205.699.9679
Call for **FREE** on-site consultation
Ask for Terry Barnes, Owner
information@LeedsStainedGlass.com
Visit www.LeadsStainedGlass.com
for an online gallery of windows and church furniture!

FAMILY MEMBERS VERIFIED THAT SHE ONCE TALKED NON-STOP DURING A 5-HOUR ROAD TRIP TO FLORIDA.

Children's of Alabama

CHILDREN AMAZE US EVERY DAY
and at Children's of Alabama, we want to see every child grow up and live to their fullest potential. That's why we recruit, train and retain the most inquiring minds, the most skilled hands and the most compassionate hearts in pediatric medicine.

1650 7TH AVENUE SOUTH BIRMINGHAM, AL 35223 (205) 638-9100 ChildrensAL.org
Healthcare as amazing as their potential

‘Faithful & fervent leadership’

Lance marks 20 years leading State Board of Missions

Two decades ago, when Rick Lance was elected executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), he said he would do everything he could “to focus the energies and talents and gifts of Alabama Baptists on being the salt of today’s life.”

He said his pledge was to “do my best to uphold the highest degree of integrity as a Christian leader” and devote himself “to helping Alabama Baptists make a difference for Christ in our world.”

And now, on Lance’s 20th anniversary, Tim Cox, current chair of the SBOM personnel committee, said Lance has lived that pledge well.

“Dr. Rick Lance’s leadership

as executive director of Alabama Baptists over the last 20 years has influenced my life and ministry as a pastor through his focused, faithful and fervent leadership,” said Cox, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea. “He is a faithful follower of Christ, a fruitful servant in Great Commission ministries, a fearless prayer warrior and one that I am honored to call my friend. I am grateful for an executive director who deeply cares for pastors and encourages us often.”

Before coming to the SBOM, Lance was a pastor himself, having served most recently at First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, from 1983 to 1998. During that time, he was active in the state convention, serving as president

from 1990 to 1992. He earned his bachelor’s degree from Samford University in Birmingham and his master of divinity and doctor of education from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

On June 16, 1998, Lance was named as the successor of Troy Morrison, who had led the SBOM since 1990. He began serving under Morrison on July 15, 1998, and then took the helm in February 1999 after Morrison’s retirement.

‘Life-changing’

The call to state missions was “a life-changing experience,” Lance said.

“I am grateful to Alabama Baptists and to our Lord for the opportunity to serve in this Kingdom capacity,” he said. “I believe the best is yet to be as we look to the future as an Alabama Baptist family of faith.” (Grace Thornton)



LANCE

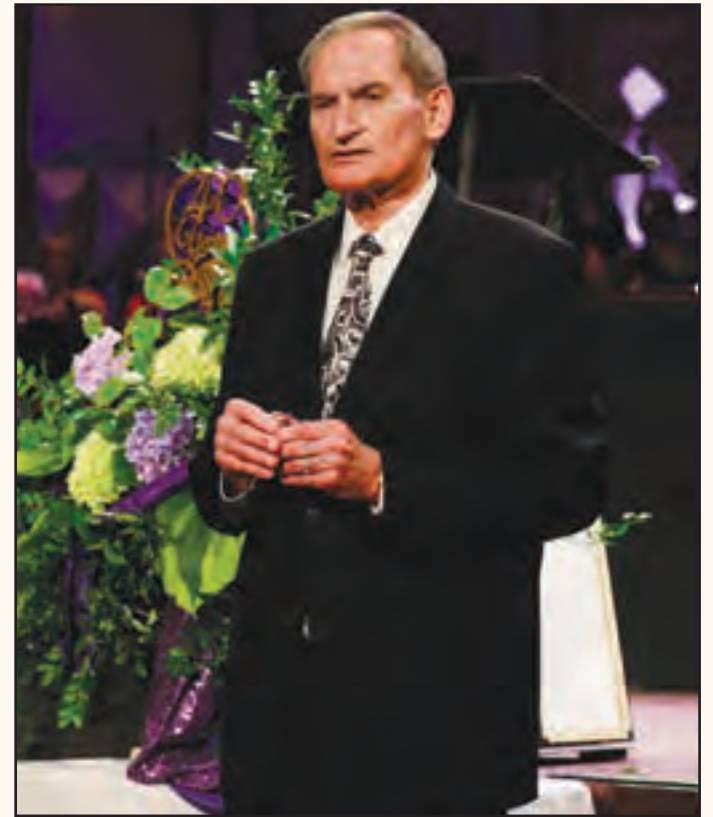


Photo by David Dye

Jimmy Jackson leads members and guests of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, in the Lord’s Supper on June 3 — his final act as pastor of the church.

Jackson begins new chaplain role after Whitesburg retirement

Jimmy Jackson closed the final Sunday service in his role as pastor of Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville, the same way he did on his first Sunday 40 years prior. He led the congregation in the Lord’s Supper.

Calmly and lovingly, Jackson talked the congregation through the steps and significance of communion before taking in one final musical piece by the choir and orchestra during the June 3 special celebration service in his honor.

He and his wife of 57 years, Bobbi, surrounded by their children and grandchildren,

were then whisked away for a special lunch and afternoon reception.

On July 1, Jackson, who has master’s and doctoral degrees from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, joined the staff of Cocoon Resources Inc., a for-profit venture group in Huntsville, as a chaplain.

“I knew I was not done yet,” Jackson said in a press release. “God has always led my path and now I can impact directly out in the marketplace every day where so many people are hurting and need to know God. I am thrilled God has called me to this ministry.” (TAB)

GUIDESTONE

PROPERTY & CASUALTY

What do you do when trouble walks into your church?

GuideStone® and Brotherhood Mutual want to help you take a proactive approach to security as you hope for the best — and prepare for the worst.

Download our 5 free security fact sheets to help you learn how to:

- CREATE A PLAN
- TRAIN YOUR PEOPLE
- SECURE KEY AREAS
- PATROL YOUR CHURCH
- PROTECT WITH CHURCH INSURANCE

GuideStone.org/AlabamaSecurity

Read *The Alabama Baptist Day*

NEW DATE ...

Sunday, August 19

More information coming next week.



UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► University of Mobile Names New Assistant Vice President for Marketing Creative Services:



TAYLOR

University of Mobile (UM) has named Josh Taylor assistant vice president for marketing creative services. Prior to joining UM, he worked in full-time pastoral ministry for 15 years, most recently as executive pastor at Mars Hill Church in Mobile. Taylor owns several businesses,

including a marketing, design and copywriting business.

► **University of Mobile Names Evangelical Author Visiting Professor:** Tony Merida, author and founding pastor of Imago Dei Church, Raleigh, North Carolina, has joined the faculty of the School of Christian Studies as a visiting professor to teach Christian worldview and preaching through on-campus intensives.

► **Sports Tourism and Business Development Leader Joins University of Mobile Athletics:** Sports tourism and business development expert Susan Shaw will join the University of Mobile (UM) athletics program. Shaw is UM's new director of athletics communication and strategy. Shaw will identify and build

initiatives for the growth and development of the university's athletic programs. Shaw also will assist in the development of new programs in sports marketing and management.



SHAW

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford Professor Earns Distinguished National Award:** Samford University Psychology Department chair Stephen Crew has earned the American Psychology Foundation's Charles L.

Brewer Distinguished Teaching of Psychology Award. He also has earned the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's state and U.S. professor of the year honors.

JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson College Student to Participate in Summer Program in Australia:** Judson College junior Katie Daniel, a biology and equine science major, is spending part of her summer with a veterinary service study abroad program in Australia. The experience is offered through LoopAbroad, a pre-veterinary program that offers hands-on learning opportunities with exotic animals. 🌿

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Enon Baptist Church is looking for a pastor. Send resumé to: Mitchell Harrison, 8393 Grissett Bridge Road, Atmore, AL 36502. Phone: 251-862-2527. Email: brian.presley56@yahoo.com.

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.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER

Hopewell Baptist Church, Hanceville, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational music minister. Send your resumé to: Hopewell Baptist Church, ATTN: Ed Hart, P.O. Box 423, Hanceville, AL 35077. eedhart@yahoo.com.

STUDENT PASTOR

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Moulton, Alabama, is seeking a full-time student pastor to plan, promote and lead activities for students 7th grade through college. Anyone interested in applying should send a resumé to: uarome@bellsouth.net or contact Jerome Porter at 256-565-5103.

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.

PART-TIME STUDENT MINISTER

Siluria Baptist Church, Alabaster, is seeking a part-time student minister. Job description available by request. Send resumé to: siluriabaptist@gmail.com. The church website is siluriabaptist.com.

PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER

Cypress Shores Baptist Church is seeking a part-time youth minister. Please send resumé to: Cypress Shores Baptist, 4327 Higgins Road, Mobile, AL 36619 or cypress9631@comcast.net.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The Butler Baptist Association is accepting resúmes for a part-time director of missions position. The deadline for resúmes is Aug. 1. Please submit your resumé to: Calvary Baptist Church, ATTN: Resúmes, P.O. Box 67, Georgiana, AL 36033 or email: butlerbaptist@camelliacom.com.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The Birmingham Baptist Association is a network of biblically faithful churches building one

another up and working together to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of Jesus Christ. The executive director of missions provides visionary leadership for the association staff, its ministries and its financial support. The executive director of missions should be an effective communicator of the gospel who is able to work with leaders from churches of various sizes and settings. The ability to represent the association among other city leaders is vital. Resúmes can be submitted to: Greg Corbin, 2865 Old Rocky Ridge Rd., Birmingham, AL 35243, or gcorbin@lakesidebaptist.com.

BUSINESS

DO YOU NEED A CHURCH PIANIST?

Try piano accompaniment CDs for congregational singing from Worship Service Resources. Hymns, choruses, DVDs, lyrics — free demo. Call 1-877-977-6800 or visit wsrpianocds.com. Try before you buy!

NEED A NEW CHURCH SIGN?

Reliable Sign Services — a Christian operated, full service, lighted sign company located in Pelham, Alabama, for 23 years — is ready to help you expand your church sign ministry. From digital message boards to traditional signs, Reliable Signs will design, fabricate and install

statewide. www.reliableesigns.com. 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955.

ELROD MOBILITY — GREAT PRICES

Stair-lifts, walk-in tubs, lift-chairs and lightweight take-apart scooters. Saving people a lot of money on walk-in tubs, stair-lifts and showers. Our lift-chairs and scooters are near internet pricing. A+ rating with BBB. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658.

TRAVEL/VACATION

LOG CABIN RENTAL

Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to www.paradisevista.net to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE CONDOS

Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, Alabama. Rent direct from Christian family owners. Lowest prices on the beach for over 25 years! Call Donna 251-656-4935, Eddie 205-556-0368, Don 251-752-2366 or www.gulfshorescondos.com.

GULF SHORES CONDO

1/2/3 BR luxury beachfront condos and 4 BR beach resort house. Owner direct saves you \$\$\$. Chris 1-800-713-6435 or cashley945@earthlink.net.



(augmented reality)

Follow these instructions

- 1 Download the HP Reveal app from your app store.
- 2 Tap the [] icon at the bottom of the screen.
- 3 You will see pulsating dots, which indicate the app is searching for a target. Once it finds a target the dots will turn to a bull's-eye. The bull's-eye will remain until the augmented reality image loads.
- 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.



James Earl Massey

Friend of Beeson James Earl Massey dies

Theologian, pastor and musician James Earl Massey died June 24 at the age of 88.

Massey was dean emeritus of Anderson School of Theology in Anderson, Indiana. For many years he served as senior pastor of the Metropolitan Church of God in Detroit (1954–1976), missionary educator in Jamaica (1964–1967), campus minister of Anderson University (1969–1977), speaker on the “Christian Brotherhood Hour” radio broadcast (1977–1982), dean of the Chapel of Tuskegee University (1984–1989), and dean of Anderson School of Theology (1989–1995).

He was a frequent teacher, preacher and guest at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham. Massey preached at the seminary’s first event, a conference for pastors during the summer of 1988. On three separate occasions Massey presented the William E. Conger Jr. Lectures on Biblical Preaching at Beeson Divinity School. The James Earl Massey Student Preaching Award is given twice a year to a Beeson student for excellence in preaching.

Massey was born in Ferndale, Michigan. He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Alabama native Gwendolyn Inez Kilpatrick Massey, and other family members. (Beeson)



MASSEY

Kenneth Griffith

New Elkahatchee Baptist pastor dies at 74

Kenneth Griffith, pastor of New Elkahatchee Baptist Church, Alexander City, in Tallapoosa Baptist Association, died June 27. He was 74.

Griffith had been in the ministry for 38 years, serving several other churches in the area including Eagle Creek Baptist Church, Dadeville; New Life Baptist Church, Dadeville; Zion Hill Baptist Church, Daviston; and Perryville Baptist Church, New Site. He was an avid gardener and chicken farmer.

He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Patricia; daughter, Missy; two grandchildren; and one great-grandchild. (TAB)

Alabama Baptist choirs sing at Carnegie Hall in New York City

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

The night the choirs of three Alabama churches filled the stage of Carnegie Hall on June 16, Michael Adler’s smile was big.

It was a big choir and orchestra — more than 300 people total, joined by gospel recording artist David Phelps and the Voices of Mobile from University of Mobile. It was a big opportunity for the three churches — Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia; Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover; and First Baptist Church, Trussville.

But something bigger was at play than simply what met the eye at their New York Worship Project.

“Our people took seriously the mission of passing out tickets to the streets of New York,” Adler, worship arts pastor at Shades Mountain Baptist, said. “When the room was that full, we know that the odds were high of there being a large number of unbelievers in that venue.”

The floor of the building was packed, with people lining the rims of every balcony, and they were alive and fully engaged the whole time, he said.

And Danny Wood, pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist, was “outstanding in his gospel presentation,” Adler said. “He instantly won the audience over with his good humor and then plunged quickly into a five-minute gospel narrative that was so on point.”

Before they left for New York, the combined choirs and orches-



Photo courtesy of Preston Deakins

Choirs from Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia; Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover; and FBC Trussville join David Phelps and the Voices of Mobile at Carnegie Hall.

tra held a preview concert June 13 at Shades Mountain, an event that included a tribute to Mike McLemore, executive director of missions for Birmingham Baptist Association, who died Feb. 10.

It was the last bit of preparation for a trip that’s been quite some time in the making.

SEND initiative

Adler began planning the trip two years ago as an extension of ministry work that the church had already begun there — Shades Mountain heads up the Southern Baptist Convention SEND initiative for the New York City area.

“We wanted to leverage the artistic gifts of these Birmingham-area churches while also helping to support these New York City church plants,” Adler said.

The day after the Carnegie

Hall concert, the three churches divided and went to four locations in New York City to lead worship services and grill and serve free food in a city park.

Joe Estes, minister of music and worship for First Baptist, Trussville, said his choir was able to lead worship at one of their partner congregations, New City Church. While they were there, they got to be a part of some of the church’s first baptisms — three sisters were baptized in a portable baptistry that day.

“That really was a highlight,” Estes said.

But he’s quick to say the whole trip was great.

“We just thanked the Lord for the opportunity. We were excited to be a part of it. It was a great, great experience and God was so gracious.”

Voluntary reports from churches are needed for accuracy

(continued from page 1)

by reporting at least one item. That’s down from 80 percent in 2013 and 77 percent in each of the last three years.

For that reason, reported totals do not include all activity within Southern Baptist life, though the summary does include adjustments in some categories for non-reporting congregations.

This summer LifeWay Research plans to release statistical analysis of the current state of the SBC that includes estimates of the congregations that did not report.

“Reports from congregations are the most accurate way to tell the story of the entire convention,” McConnell said, urging churches to participate in future ACP surveys.

Despite the lower participation rate, the recent report does show increases

in some areas. For instance, average attendance at weekly worship services climbed 2.3 percent to 5.3 million, an increase of nearly 120,000. That’s comparable to adding every man, woman and child in a city like Wilmington, North Carolina, or Beaumont, Texas, to the church pews every week.

States outside the South reported some of the strongest signs of growth. California now has 47 more congregations and Michigan has 24 more congregations than the previous year. Those figures include churches along with church-type missions — congregations that are not fully independent or self-sustaining.

Non-Southern states are now home to

21.3 percent of Southern Baptist churches and 32.2 percent of church-type missions.

Reported baptisms nearly doubled in Colorado and rose 31 percent in Iowa, 17.6 percent in Alaska and 13.4 percent in New Mexico.

In North and South Dakota, weekly worship attendance grew by 20.8 percent while baptisms climbed 34.8 percent.

Overall, Southern Baptist churches reported 4,376 church-type missions in 2017, down 2.6 percent from 2016.

The count of churches and missions combined is 51,920 congregations.

Southern Baptists saw an increase in overall giving of almost \$267 million.

Non-Southern states are now home to 21.3 percent of Southern Baptist churches.

Total and undesignated church receipts reported through the ACP increased 3.3 percent and 2.3 percent respectively.

Missions expenditures

Reported missions expenditures fell by about \$4 million in 2017 to just under \$1.19 billion.

However, the numbers are not directly comparable since there were changes in how many and which state conventions collected this statistic.

Individual congregations voluntarily report their ACP data to their local Baptist associations and/or their state conventions.

National statistics are compiled and released when all cooperating state conventions have reported. (BP, TAB contributed)



INSPIRING STORIES

of God healing the lives of children and families in need across Alabama

SENT STRAIGHT TO YOUR MAILBOX.

Lifestraps is a quarterly publication from Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, sharing inspiring stories of God working through the lives of children and families in need across Alabama. By signing up for *Lifestraps* by mail or e-mail, you can stay up-to-date on ways to pray, get involved, or help children in our care. Also, it's completely free!

*Visit alabamachild.org/lifestraps or call (888) 720-8805 to start receiving your free subscription to *Lifestraps*!*



Alabama Baptist
CHILDREN'S HOMES
& Family Ministries

Samford's new Christian ministry program announces first faculty

Samford University in Birmingham has named the first two full-time faculty members for the new Christian ministry degree program. J.D. Payne, of Birmingham, will begin his work at Samford in August, and Galen Jones, of Shawnee, Oklahoma, will join the program's faculty in January 2019.

The new degree program was first announced in summer 2017 and the first classes will be offered this fall.

Payne comes to Samford from The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, having served there since 2012 as the pastor of church multiplication and, most recently, as the interim global disciple-making pastor. Jones currently teaches at Oklahoma Baptist University, where he has served since 2013 as assistant professor of church planting and as Floyd K. Clark Chair of Christian Leadership.

Deeply significant development

Scott Guffin, executive director of Samford's Christian ministry program, noted that the addition of Payne and Jones to Samford's faculty is a deeply significant development in the direction of the program.

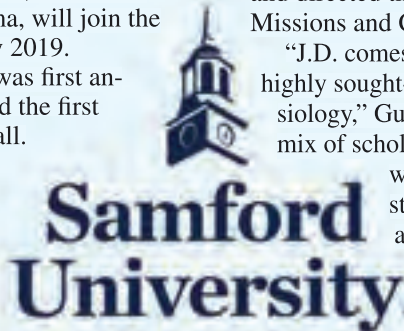
Prior to coming to Birmingham, Payne served for 10 years as associate professor of church planting and evangelism at Southern Baptist

Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. For nine of those years, he also was a national missionary with the Southern Baptist Convention's North American Mission Board (NAMB) and directed the Center for North American Missions and Church Planting.

"J.D. comes to us as a world-class scholar and highly sought-after expert in the field of missiology," Guffin said. "He brings with him a mix of scholarship and real-world ministry that will inform our students in both the study and the practice of missions and disciple making."

Jones has been a missionary with NAMB since 2007 and previously worked as a church planting strategist, coordinator and consultant in Alabama and Georgia. From 1993 to 2001, Jones was director of the Urban Ministry Training Project in Cincinnati, Ohio. He also has served in a variety of roles in churches in Ohio, Kentucky and Oklahoma.

"Galen describes himself as a 'scholar-pastor,' and as such he prepares his students for ministry by instructing them at both head and heart levels," Guffin said. "Through his work in church planting, church leadership and academics, he will bring to our students a depth and breadth of experience that will benefit them greatly as they train for engagement in ministry and missions." (Samford)



Jackson takes helm of UM's new global leadership institute

Rob Jackson said it's hard to leave a church family you've served and loved for 15 years. But even though Central Baptist Church, Decatur, holds a special place in his heart, he's excited about the new calling God has carved out for him at the University of Mobile (UM).

Since July 1, Jackson has been spearheading UM's new Institute for Global Leadership, aimed at equipping Christians to reach the world with the message of Jesus Christ.

He serves as a professor, a representative to Alabama Baptists and a liaison to build partnerships with international missions organizations.

"It's exciting, the global impact we can have," Jackson said. "When I met with Dr. Tim Smith (UM president), he shared with me a vision he has not only to train up students who are excellent in nursing or whatever field of study they may be pursuing but to train up young men and women who will be nurses or businesspeople who turn the world upside for Jesus Christ."

The institute also will partner with RAM, an international faith-based missions organization headquartered at UM. RAM has planted more than 400 churches, opened orphanages, organized medical missions and reached thousands of people in Eastern Europe. It recently began church planting and theological education in Western Europe.

RAM — which stands for Reaching Europe, Advancing the Kingdom and Making disciples — was founded 22 years ago by Jackson's late father, Bob, also a well-known Alabama Baptist pastor.



JACKSON

The cooperative work of the institute and RAM will provide more missions, ministry and service opportunities, Smith said.

"The opportunity to welcome Dr. Rob Jackson to University of Mobile ... will allow the university to extend its partnership with Baptist churches throughout Alabama while providing ministry opportunities to the ends of the earth in reaching people for Christ," Smith said. (TAB, UM)

DIXIE GOSPEL CARAVAN

with Mickey Bell

Monday-Saturday
92.5 FM / 850 AM



Afternoon Drive

3-6 p.m.

<https://850wxjc.com>



SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 15

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

GRIEVED

2 Samuel 13:15–20, 31–39

God is grieved over sexual sins of intent and action. Often these practices are accompanied by idol worship, whether the fertility deities of old or the contemporary practice of idolizing celebrities. To protect Israel God provided sexual laws as guardrails within the holiness code (see Lev. 18). Included in the law were prohibitions against incest, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality and ritual mating. His people were to reflect His holiness (Lev. 11:44–45) rather than follow the model of the Canaanites (18:27–30).

Throughout Israel's monarchy, obedience to the Mosaic law was selective. In many ways the practices from the time of the judges continued to be the model: "Everyone did whatever seemed right to him" (Judg. 21:25).

Shattered (15–20)

Lust, promises, rape, rejection. We tend to avoid topics like this in our classrooms and Bible studies and from our pulpits, though many women who attend our churches face these realities. Sexual misconduct shatters lives, robs purity from marriage, turns humans into objects of both desire and disdain and can lead to jealousy, hatred and murder. It happened in David's family and it shatters families and communities today.

Devastated (31–36)

Absalom conspired to have his half-brother Amnon murdered for raping his sister Tamar. His other brothers fled in fear as a rumor that he had killed all David's sons spread. A later report explained only Amnon was dead. Whether one son or many, David was experiencing the devastation that his own sin brought to the family.

What does the New Testament teach the

church about sex? Paul gave counsel to married couples about mutuality (1 Cor. 7:1–5) but wrote significantly more about sexual sins (Rom. 1:26–32; 1 Cor. 5:1–5, 6:12–20). Blatant, unrepentant sin of "believers" was devastating fellowship, discipleship and worship within the churches. Paul's instruction was to remove fellowship until they demonstrated godly repentance (1 Cor. 5:5, 9, 13). Contemporary churches must herald the sinfulness of sin, the righteousness of Christ, the coming judgment and the glorious hope we have through the gospel.

Separated (37–39)

Sin separates us from God, from each other and from the purpose for which God created us. Absalom's 3-year separation from David was a result of an avalanche of sins: David's adultery and murder of Uriah, Amnon's sin of rape and Absalom's sin of murder. Brokenness, heartache and separation are the outgrowth of sin.

Christians must recognize that forbidden sexual activity is still a sin, separating us from God and each other. Jesus taught that adultery of intent and of action is sin (Matt. 5:27–28). Jesus discussed only two genders, male and female, quoting Genesis 1:27 (Matt. 19:4). Jesus acknowledged only heterosexual marriage, quoting Genesis 2:24 (Matt. 19:5). Jesus taught that God allowed divorce only because of the hardness of human hearts (Matt. 19:8–9). Regardless of the raging winds of sexual trends in contemporary culture, Jesus is still our authority.

John records God's message that the unrepentant sexually immoral will be among those excluded from the eternal kingdom (Rev. 21:8). May we as Christians be faithful to share the transforming gospel so that people from every background may repent and find forgiveness and wholeness in Jesus Christ.✠

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

TITHING: AN OBEDIENT RESPONSE TO A GRACIOUS GOD

Malachi 3:7–12

Many Christians neglect the issue of stewardship, especially as it relates to giving money. But even when we do think about it, we tend to be more motivated by law than grace, by a sense of duty with little sense of what Paul suggests as cheerfulness, for "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7).

Obedience is reflected in our giving. (7–10a)

Malachi believes that expressions of worship are a reflection of the inner working of God's Spirit in our minds and hearts, thus his critique of Israel's attitude towards worship in chapter 1. When the people complained "what a weariness this is," this attitude led to complacency in the way in which God was worshipped. The prophet tells the people that God was weary with them.

Earlier in chapter 3, Malachi expressed his concern that the people had turned their backs on God and had changed in their attitude toward Him. They had turned aside from keeping the statutes and commands of God's law. The sins that are specified in verse 5 are all actions that the laws of Moses condemned.

Malachi suggests that Israel has no sense of guilt or shame; their conscience had been dulled by a history of unfaithfulness to God.

Malachi now brings his accusations to a specific part of their unfaithfulness: robbing God by failing to bring to Him tithes and offerings. Although tithing was never seen in the Old Testament as one of the stipulations of the Ten Commandments, it was a custom that was practiced in the religious life of Israel's neighbors long before they became a nation.

References to tithing in the Bible are few and scattered but it is encouraged in Numbers 18 and is seen as one means by which we practice the "fear of the Lord" (Deut. 14:23). Amos makes it clear that we can tithe outwardly with no inner change within our lives, and he condemns those who "love to tithe" (Amos 4:4–5) but do not promote "justice rolling down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:21–25). Jesus warned His hearers that they could tithe their mint and cumin and yet have no concern for the weightier matters of God's law for their lives, such as "justice and the love of God" (Luke 11:42).

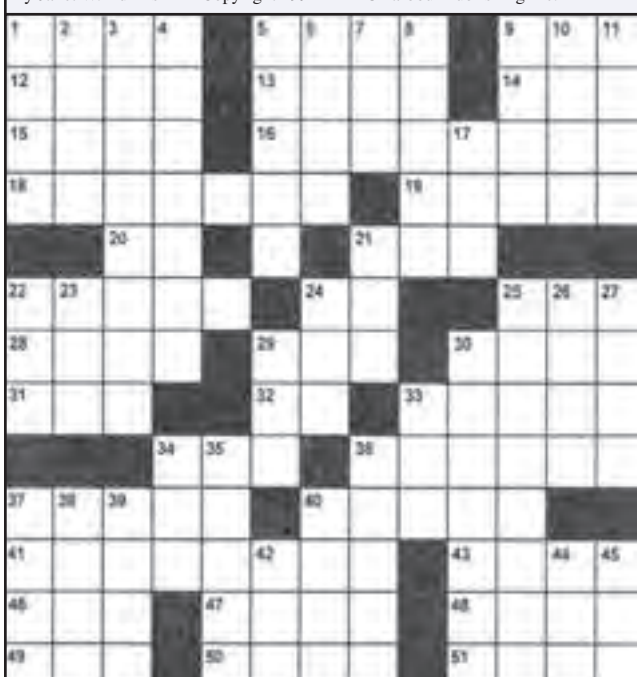
Obedience is blessed by God. (10b–12)

Malachi calls the people to return to the Lord and offer all of their lives to Him, not only in bringing their tithes and offerings, but in opening their hearts to a work of grace in their lives that will lead to spiritual renewal as He "opens the windows of heaven" and pours out his blessings on their lives.

The tax changes which have been introduced in the U.S. may well be a challenge to Christians to give, not because they gain any tax benefit in giving but solely because of grace and gratitude. We give for the sake of others. God gives to us so that we can help others; He gives to make us into generous givers. Everybody can give out of what they have received for the benefit of others. It means being willing to be an instrument, a steward of the grace of God to others, cheerful participants in God's mission of outgoing love for the sake of the world. In the words of the hymn "Take My Life and Let It Be": "Take my silver and my gold; / Not a mite would I withhold; / Take my love; my Lord, I pour / At Thy feet its treasure-store."✠

Christian Crossword

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



Across

- Indian tribe of Peru.
- Turned to the land of _____. (1 Sam. 13:17)
- Fuel.
- Fly away like a _____. (Hos. 9:11)
- Unwanted plant.
- Form of *to be*.
- A bright thought.
- "Praise Jehovah."
- The sin of Judah is written with ... the point of a _____. (Jer. 17:1)
- Form of medicine.
- Symbol for tantalum.
- Lawyer. (abbr.)
- Travel chest.
- And their coast was from ... all the kingdom of _____. (Josh. 13:30)
- Women's patriotic organization.
- Against me do they devise my _____. (Ps. 41:7)
- Uncle. (Spanish)
- Soccer great.
- Shoe width.
- "Strength." (Heb.)
- Christmas song.

- Thou ____ the man. (2 Sam. 12:7)
- Unusual occurrence.
- Amasa was a man's son, whose name was _____. (2 Sam. 17:25)
- Belonging to Ali.
- The Lord is my _____. (Ps. 23:1)
- And he came and touched the _____. (Luke 7:14)
- Meadow.
- Opera solo.
- Company insignia.
- Ever. (poetic)
- Malt beverage.
- And Seth lived 105 years, and begat _____. (Gen. 5:6)

Down

- In the same place.
- Nests.
- Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new _____. (2 Cor. 5:17)
- As an ____ harder than flint have I made thy forehead. (Ezek. 3:9)
- Large white birds.
- Retained.
- Of the sons of Bani ... Maadi, Amram, and _____. (Ezra 10:34)
- Skilled.
- Early France.
- Seed covering.
- For he hath founded it upon the _____. (Ps. 24:2)
- Put flame to the candle.
- The house that was builded these many years _____. (Ezra 5:11)
- Article.
- Ye tithe the mint and ____ and herbs. (Luke 11:42)
- He shall pour ____ upon it. (Lev. 2:1)
- I am in ____ daily, everyone mocketh me. (Jer. 20:7)
- Great amount. (2 words)
- Because thou didst ____ on the Lord. (2 Chron. 16:8)
- Asian holiday.
- Lord, speakest thou this ____ unto us. (Luke 12:41)
- The fourth part of a ____ of dove's dung. (2 Kings 6:25)
- Arpeggio. (abbr.)
- I will make mention of ____

- and Babylon. (Ps. 87:4)
- Detection advice.
- When they had gone through the ____ unto Paphos. (Acts 13:6)
- Give his angels charge over _____. (Ps. 91:11)
- ____, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord. (Deut. 6:4)
- Type of cheese.
- Before.
- The self.
- Mrs. Jimmy Carter.



TOP 10

best-selling Christian books in June

JUVENILE

1. **The Jesus Storybook Bible**
By Sally Lloyd-Jones (Zonderkidz)
2. **The Beginner's Bible**
By Zondervan (Zonderkidz)
3. **Touch and Feel: Never Touch a Dinosaur**
By Make Believe Ideas (Make Believe Ideas)
4. **The Action Bible**
By Sergio Cariello (David C. Cook)
5. **God Bless You & Good Night**
By Hannah Hall (Thomas Nelson)
6. **Jesus Calling: 365 Devotions for Kids**
By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
7. **Touch and Feel: Never Touch a Monster**
By Make Believe Ideas (Make Believe Ideas)
8. **Never Touch a Dragon**
By Make Believe Ideas (Make Believe Ideas)
9. **When God Made You**
By Matthew Paul Turner (Waterbrook)
10. **Baby's First Book of Prayers**
By Melody Carlson (Zonderkidz)

Source: Christian Book Expo

TAB AR

BOOKS

Media reviews

Spiritual Foods for Senior Saints: Devotions for 80 Years and Beyond

Patti M. Devitt. Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2016. 124 pp. (Paperback).

From the “it takes one to know one” department, we have a gem of a book! I suspect that only a person who has actually lived the aging experience could think of the things Patti Devitt has covered in her book, and only one who sees life through a spiritual lens can write with such wisdom.

Devitt has written 31 devotionals, all aimed at senior adults and addressing the issues our over-80 friends experience. She writes, for example, of needing to know more than ever that the Lord is with her as she moves further into her elderly years. “The unknown is dark and scary to me,” she writes, noting some of the dangers like health and financial issues or unwelcome changes. She concludes that she does have reason to be apprehensive, “but when I am in right relationship with God I need not fear. I will ... laugh, love and learn something new every day.”

This would be a lovely gift for an older friend or relative.



Her Way: The Remarkable Story of Hephzibah Jenkins Townsend

Rosalie Hall Hunt. Greenville, SC: Courier Publishing, 2016. 293 pp. (Paperback).

I had heard of Hephzibah Jenkins Townsend before, but I really didn't know much about her life or her accomplishments. As it turns out, she was an amazing, independent woman of God who laid the groundwork for our modern women's missionary organizations, including the Woman's Missionary Union. What an inspiring story!

Townsend was born in 1780 in Charleston, South Carolina, which was under siege by the British. Her father had been arrested and thrown into jail by the British and her mother died within days of her birth. Hephzibah only survived because of a devoted slave couple who smuggled the newborn out of the city to safety.

This unexpected beginning would set the tone for Hephzibah's entire unexpected life. Hephzibah married a much older man who controlled her considerable wealth, as men did in those

days. Daniel Townsend loved Hephzibah and was good to her, but he could not understand her desire to support missions work and refused to loosen the purse strings for her to make any contributions. Hephzibah was not deterred, joining with friends to start

up a baking and catering business to generate the funds. This marked the beginning of Baptist women's involvement in supporting foreign missions — and only scratches the surface of the amazing Hephzibah.

Hephzibah's story is beautifully told by veteran writer and speaker Rosalie Hall Hunt, who lives in Guntersville.

Orchestra of Exiles: The Story of Bronislaw Huberman, the Israel Philharmonic and the One Thousand Jews He Saved from Nazi Horrors

Josh Aronson and Denise George. New York: Berkley Publishing, 2016. 370 pp. (Hardback).

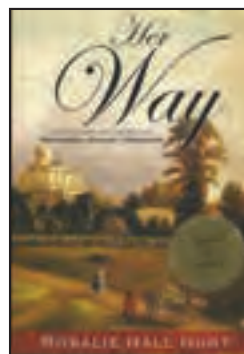
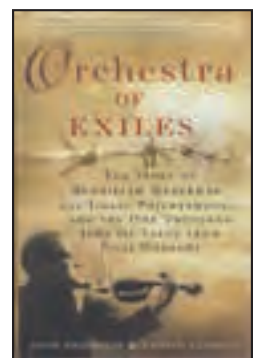
“Orchestra of Exiles” is a long book, but I read it quickly, unable to put it down for long. Bronislaw Huberman was a famous Jewish violinist who gave concerts all over Europe in the years prior to World War II, visiting Palestine for a series of concerts in the early 1930s.

Although Huberman felt an affinity for the Jews in Palestine (Israel was not declared a nation until many years later) and was well aware of their reasons for returning to their homeland, he was initially opposed to the Zionist movement.

However, after his second round of concerts in 1931, he began to reconsider, eventually coming to support the movement. This change of mind eventually led to his enthusiastic support for Palestinian Jews and, after the rise of Hitler and increased persecution of the Jews, an obsession with the idea of developing an orchestra to put the now unemployed Jewish musicians back to work.

The book is the meticulously researched story of Huberman's life and how the orchestra saved many Jews from the horrors inflicted by Hitler and his regime.

Even though the WWII era is not my favorite historical period, this is a riveting story told by a talented pair of writers. If you like history, music or biographies, you'll love this book. I suspect if you just like a good story, you'll also like this book. ✨



Meet the reviewer

Martine Bates Fairbanks, Ed.D., reviews books and movies for The Alabama Baptist. She is a university professor and retired principal. She is a member of Central Baptist Church, Decatur.



BookReviews@charter.net



RNS photo by Heather Adams

Kim Hak Song speaks to the Oriental Mission Church congregation in East Hollywood on June 2. Kim Hak Song was recently released after being detained for a year in North Korea.

'God's miracles still happen'

North Korean detainee speaks about his ordeal

In May of 2017, Kim Hak Song was on a train on his way back to Dandong, China, the border city where he'd entered North Korea some weeks before, when members of the North Korean security service approached him.

The government agents accused him of hostile acts toward North Korea and said they had evidence against him. It would be easiest if he simply confessed.

"I was thinking, I don't know what I did wrong," Kim said through a translator at his home church, the Oriental Mission Church in East Hollywood, after a service there on June 2, his first extended public comments since being released from a North Korean prison May 9. Kim preached and gave testimony about his detention.

When he asked his captors what hostile acts he reportedly committed against North Korea, he was told his crime was prayer.

Prayer, he thought, was normal. The North Korean government, he said, did not.

Overcome with joy

Kim Hak Song has denied that he broke North Korean laws against promoting religion. But his captors showed him an email he had sent to the elders of the Oriental Mission Church asking them to pray for the people of North Korea. They also had records showing he had led early morning prayer for a worship group.

According to the State Department's most recent International Religious Freedom Report, North Korea is holding up to 120,000 political prisoners, more than 1,300 of whom are charged with religious violations.

Kim Hak Song and two other detainees, Kim Dong Chul and Tony Kim, were released after negotiations

on their behalf by U.S. officials in preparation for a summit between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

Peter Joo, a pastor at Oriental Mission Church, an Independent Holiness Church, said his church members were overcome with joy when they heard Kim Hak Song was safe and on his way back to the United States.

Kim Hak Song said he's no longer allowed to return to China or North Korea, but he said he's praying about what to do next.

'Share God's message'

He's convinced that his time in North Korea wasn't wasted. While detained, Kim Hak Song said, an official asked him to write about Christianity.

"I was grateful and thankful that at this time I was able to share God's message to this person," he said.

He also said he spent a lot of time during his detention in prayer — confessing his sins, big and small, being thankful and asking God to watch over his family.

The day he was released guards told him to gather his belongings and asked if there was anything else he needed.

The answer: his Bible.

It wasn't until he was boarding a U.S. government plane, Bible in tow, that he knew he was being released to freedom.

Since landing, he's satisfied a craving for hamburgers, taken measures to assure his family would be financially cared for if he were to die — a fear he had while imprisoned in North Korea — and has begun sharing his testimony.

"God's miracles still happen," Kim Hak Song said during his sermon. "And prayer is still very important." (RNS)



Survey identifies Christian faithful in Europe

PARIS — A new survey by the Pew Research Center suggests the future of the church in Europe is not as bleak as it might look.

The region has garnered headlines regarding its dwindling rates of attendance at religious services and rising numbers of churches shuttered or sold, but when Pew asked Western Europeans what they think about religion, the results suggest a more nuanced picture.

Of the 24,599 adults Pew surveyed in 15 countries, 64 percent still identify as Christians even if only 18 percent say they attend church at least once a month. At 46 percent of the total sample, nonpracticing Christians make up the largest single group in the survey, almost double the 24 percent of religiously unaffiliated — atheists, agnostics and "nones."

About half of the nonpractitioners said they believe in a higher power or spiritual force and another quarter expressed belief in the God described in the Bible. Some 87 percent said they raise their children as Christians, not that far behind the 97 percent of churchgoers who do so. (RNS)

Asia holds most, least religious nations

BEIJING — China is the country with the least number of religious people while Thailand is the world's most religious country, according to a 68-country survey by Gallup International.

The study, which explored religious tendencies of 66,000 people in 68 countries across the world in 2017, found that 67 percent of Chinese citizens do not believe in religion; only 9 percent of Chinese surveyed identify as religious. In Thailand, 98 percent of the people declare themselves to be religious, the survey found.

Japan, Slovenia, Czech Republic and South Korea also had high numbers of unbelievers. European countries, including Belgium and France, had relatively low percentages of unbelievers, according to Gallup.

The survey also found that 71 percent of the world's population say they believe in God and 74 percent believe humans have a soul. More than half (54 percent) believe in life after death: 56 percent believe in heaven and 49 percent believe there is hell. (TAB)

British officials affirm single-sex spaces

LONDON — British officials said in June that some single-sex spaces, including toilets, changing rooms and some single-sex activities will continue to be off-limits to transgender people.

The statement came in response to a petition calling for women to be consulted before laws regarding transgender rights are changed in order "to protect women's and girls' right, safety, privacy and dignity." It also asked for "the principle of single-sex spaces to be upheld — and where necessary extended." The petition was started by feminist groups fearing the consequences of allowing men to self-identify as women. The petition received more than 12,000 signatures, according to the British online newspaper The Independent. (TAB)

Australian bishop sentenced for cover-up

CANBERRA, Australia — Archbishop Philip Wilson, age 67, became the most senior Roman Catholic cleric to be convicted of covering up child sex abuse when he was sentenced to 12 months in detention by an Australian court July 3.

Wilson was found guilty of failing to report to police the repeated abuse of two altar boys by a pedophile priest in the 1970s. Newcastle Magistrate Robert Stone said Wilson failed to act because he "wanted to protect the church and its image."

The case has been welcomed by some abuse survivors as a strong warning to institutions that fail to protect children, and lawyers say they expect more cases to be brought to trial. (RNS)