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Photo by Doug Rogers

Rick Lance (left), executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, joins John Thomas (right), associational mission strategist/director of missions for Southeast Alabama Baptist Association, and his wife and disaster relief volunteer Cindy (front, center) on Oct. 12 in prayer for Cottonwood First Baptist Church and its pastor Jimmy Bolin (back, center).

'Unprecedented'

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief assists after Hurricane Michael

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**
The Alabama Baptist

In the small southern Alabama town of Cottonwood, the steeple of Cottonwood First Baptist Church lay in twisted pieces in the church yard. Less than a block away, the visitor's bleachers at Cottonwood High School's football stadium were upside down on the field.

Throughout the community downed trees and power lines told the story of Hurricane Michael's destructive path through the southeastern corner of Alabama.

But as neighbors checked on neighbors, and first responders in the region rescued people trapped in their homes, residents expressed gratitude that no lives were lost and praised the work of emergency personnel as the cleanup began.

John Thomas, associational missionary/director of missions for Southeast Alabama Baptist Association (SABA), received more than 175 requests for

disaster relief assistance following the storm. His Facebook post was shared nearly 3,000 times in 24 hours, and there was no shortage of work to be done.

SABA volunteers cooked at area shelters and started pulling together resources. A chainsaw team from

Salem-Troy Baptist Association got to work in Dothan.

A feeding unit from Morgan Baptist Association was deployed to feed people in shelters and others in the area. A command center was set

up at Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Dothan, and additional resources were being called out as needs were being assessed, said Mark Wakefield, disaster relief strategist for the Alabama Baptist

State Board of Missions.

Wakefield said Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (ABDR) would focus on southeastern Alabama for the initial cleanup and would coordinate with disaster relief partners in Florida and other states as cleanup and recovery continued.

Though property damage was great in southeastern Alabama, the destruction was worse along the Florida Gulf Coast.

Michael tore through beach communities and inland areas with its powerful wind, storm surge and heavy rains. One day after Michael's destructive landfall, Florida Gov. Rick Scott called the storm "an absolute monster."

Damage assessment

"The damage left in its wake is still yet to be fully understood," Scott told NBC News.

As of Oct. 12, 11 deaths were attributed to the storm: four in Florida, one in Georgia, one in North Carolina and five in Virginia, where the remnants of Michael brought flash flooding before moving back into the Atlantic Ocean.

Brock Long, administrator of the
(See 'Devastation,' page 3)

**For more information
on training and Alabama
Baptist DR, visit www.sbdr.org. To donate to
Hurricane Michael DR
efforts, go to www.sbdr.org/donate.**

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

COMMENT

It Is All About the Team

Friday, Oct. 5 was one of the most joyous experiences of my life. It also was one of the most humbling. (See story, pages 4–5.) After the speeches and presentations celebrating my upcoming retirement on Dec. 31, I jokingly asked if the tape of the evening could be played at my funeral.

People said more kind things about me than I ever dreamed would be said, even at my funeral. The words and the honors were simply overwhelming for one who has served during some of Southern Baptists' most turbulent times.

But even as the people spoke, I was reminded that all the accomplishments cited were not mine alone. Each happened because of a team of committed women and men seeking to serve God by serving God's people through the ministry of communications.

Importance of teamwork

Like other ministries, Christian journalism is all about the team. Story ideas come from the team. Sometimes more than one person works on an article. Stories may be written by one person but even then the story goes to multiple editors who do more than correct grammar or spelling mistakes. Editors examine story structure, look for unanswered questions or "holes" in the story, work on leads that demand attention and tighten stories by cutting superfluous information.

What appears in the state Baptist paper may be the third or fourth rewrite, not the story's original version. Almost always the final product reflects the work of several people.

Seldom have I written a story or an editorial that was not edited by the team. That is the foundation of good journalism. That is what assures readers one is not reading the biases of an individual writer but the best work the publication can produce.

And what happens with a story also happens with photos and layout and all the other processes that go into producing a state Baptist paper, along with a website, a breaking news network, a radio program, a podcast and more.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

So Friday evening as people spoke, I thought about the people who taught me to write and about the people who gave me opportunity to write. I thought about professors and mentors and, mostly, about coworkers. Without them, the Oct. 5 event honoring my retirement from state Baptist papers would not have happened.

Some coworkers have been sticklers for details, applying the same exacting standards to things written by the editor as they applied to beginning news writers. Some have been masterful organizers, since taking something from idea to print on a page is a complex process necessitating complying with rigid time schedules. Some have been artists painting word pictures that captivated the mind and lifted the spirit. Some were craftsmen providing dependable information on which one could act.

Some have been as exasperating to me as I was to them. But we learned from each other and we all worked together for a common cause. We worked as a team to help equip readers to live as Christian disciples in their families, in their churches and in the public square. Our goal was to build up that part of the body of Christ called Baptists and to honor the name of our God.

So the artist and the craftsman, the organizer and the technician, the salesperson, the bookkeeper, the circulation manager and all the others formed a team where each was committed to the other. None could succeed without the team and the team could not succeed without the contributions of individual members.

Team at its best

When individuals won honors — and there have been many over the years — every team member rejoiced because every team member contributed to the individual's success.

When the ministry was honored, we rejoiced even more. Twelve times in 20 years *The Alabama Baptist* was chosen by at least one national organization as the best regional Christian

newspaper in the nation. Twenty consecutive years our publication has been among the top three regional Christian newspapers in the nation.

That is not an individual's accomplishment. That is the team at its best.

Across the years the team tried to build on truth as best we could understand it.

We tried to build on the principles of Christian journalism so readers could have confidence in what we shared.

We tried to build on integrity by doing the job asked of a state Baptist paper without partisanship and without favor to power and privilege.

We tried to build on commitment to the task given us so what we provided reflected our best efforts. Can we offer God any less?

We tried to build on the confidence we have in Baptists. One cannot serve a people whom one fears. That is why Baptists communicators have long said, "Tell the truth and trust the people."

We tried to build on trust in God, who made us Christian journalists and members of the team at *The Alabama Baptist* for more than 23

years, for Missouri Baptists' *Word & Way* for 20 years and Kentucky Baptists' *Western Recorder* for seven years before that.

Our strength is in God no matter where we are. He is the author and finisher of our faith.

Like a river

The ministry of communications is like a river that never ceases to flow. It has been our privilege to wade in the river's water for a time. Sometimes the waters were deep and turbulent. Sometimes the waters flowed gentle and smooth.

God has been sufficient for whatever the circumstance. He always is, for whom God calls God equips.

We have never been alone in the water though the team changed regularly as coworkers came and went. Now I am wading toward the river's bank. Soon another will stand in the place where I have stood, just as I stood in the place of those who stood here before me.

But the river will continue to flow for *The Alabama Baptist* as it has during the publication's 175 years of ministry and 100 years as an entity of the Alabama Baptist State Convention. A new team will continue to function and the ministry of communications will continue to build up the body of Christ.

Thank you, God, for the opportunity of service, and thank you, God, for the team. 🙏

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

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Devastation is 'incredible'

Florida Gulf Coast communities face long-term recovery

(continued from page 1)

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), told CNN the death toll would likely climb in Florida as rescue workers sifted through damaged homes.

"I expect the fatality count to come up today. I expect it to come up tomorrow as well, as we get through the debris," Long said. "Hopefully it doesn't rise dramatically, but it is a possibility."

Record-setting storm

Hurricane Michael made landfall just west of Mexico Beach, a community in the Florida Panhandle shortly after noon Central time Oct. 10. With winds near 155 miles per hour, Michael was a strong category 4 storm, and the strongest hurricane to ever hit the Florida Panhandle, according to the U.S. National Weather Service.

Michael was a record-setting storm, with an all-time low sea level pressure recorded at Panama City, Florida. Rainfall amounts in excess of six inches fell in Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina.

Several Florida beach communities including Panama City and Mexico Beach were devastated by the storm's fierce winds and flood waters. Entire neighborhoods were flattened as the storm came ashore.

Southeast Alabama also received extensive damage as the eye passed near Gordon in Houston County as a Category 3 hurricane.

Dothan mayor Mark Saliba called the storm "an unprecedented catastrophic event."

The *Dothan Eagle* reported that thousands of trees were toppled in winds ranging from 60 to 90 miles per hour.

Brian Hastings, director of Alabama Emergency Management, said the storm left 92,000 residents without power. Crews from area electricity providers were working diligently at press time to restore service.

In Florida millions were without power and water. FEMA had teams on the ground assessing damage and doing search and rescue. Florida Baptist Disaster Relief (FBDR) teams were staging to respond once federal and state agencies gave the go-ahead, said Tommy Green, executive director of the Florida Baptist Convention.

"We are committed as churches in Florida to come right beside these communities and churches," Green said.

Keila Diaz, digital communication assistant for the Florida Baptist Convention, reported Oct. 11 that a team of 20 volunteers led by Marvin Corbin, logistics and field missionary for FBDR was on the way to Tallahassee with equipment and supplies.

"There are already clean-up and recovery teams on the ground in Wakulla and Panacea near Lake Ellen," he said, adding that there was a team in Panama City doing a wind-shield assessment. "They are driving through



Photo by Linda Adams

A chainsaw team from Salem-Troy Baptist Association works in Dothan on Oct. 11, one day after Hurricane Michael's destructive landfall.

seeing where the most damage is, where to focus efforts, evaluating what can be salvaged and what is a total loss."

Green said the level of devastation was "incredible," with homes, churches and businesses damaged. Several police and fire stations lost their roofs or sustained significant structural damage.

Diaz reported that several Florida Baptist

churches sustained heavy damage as a result of the storm including roof loss, structural damage and flooding. Some of the churches are Family of God Church, both Panama City campuses; First Baptist Church, Port Saint Joe; First Baptist Church, Lynn Haven; First Baptist Church, Panama City; and Hiland Park Baptist Church, Panama City.

"Just about every church has had some level of damage," said Lewis Miller, west Florida regional catalyst for the Florida Baptist Convention. "It's going to be a long, long time of recovering and rebuilding."

The Baptist College of Florida in Graceville also had moderate to severe structural damage but no one was injured.

How to help

Mark MacDonald, strategic communication catalyst for the Florida Baptist Convention, said disaster relief updates would be posted at www.FLBaptist.org as cleanup and recovery continues. Disaster relief strategists in Florida discourage material goods donations because logistics for accommodating them would complicate disaster response.

Wakefield has noted in the past that ABDR does not collect and distribute donated goods. Churches and individuals who wish to send items such as cleaning supplies, bottled water, clothing or other necessities should coordinate with a specific church or organization who is willing and able to accept the donations, he said.

Those wishing to help with hurricane relief efforts are urged to give through ABDR at <https://sbd.org/donate>, where every dollar given is used toward disaster relief efforts. ✝

Southern Baptists now have two options when supporting disaster relief efforts

By Margaret Colson
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

For more than 50 years, Southern Baptists have been there. In the aftermath of hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes and other natural disasters, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) volunteers have been there to help individuals pick up the pieces of their forever-changed lives and rebuild on the spiritual foundation of Christ.

With its 70,000 trained volunteers and 1,550 mobile units for feeding, chainsawing, mudouts, child care and more, SBDR has become the nation's third largest mobilizer of trained disaster relief volunteers, outpaced only by the American Red Cross and The Salvation Army.

Through the coordinated response of thousands of SBDR volunteers sporting

their signature bright yellow T-shirts and caps, thousands of people have come to faith in Jesus Christ through the years.

Since the 1990s the North American Mission Board has helped coordinate the work of SBDR through state conventions. Today most of Southern Baptists' 42 state conventions have their own disaster relief ministries. And countless associations assist the conventions by sponsoring teams and equipment focused on specific areas of work, such as chainsaw teams, laundry and shower units and feeding teams.

"Even when Southern Baptists were known for their infighting among themselves, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief was still viewed with respect and admiration across the nation," wrote Lonnie Wilkey,

(See 'Understanding,' page 7)

Editor Bob Terry addresses those gathered Oct. 5 at The Club in Birmingham to celebrate his tenure in state Baptist papers and upcoming retirement.



Photo by Doug Rogers

Faithful servant

TAB's Terry honored for 50 years in Baptist work, named editor emeritus

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Gary Fenton says that in 1975, Bob Terry made a statement that changed the course of his life. At the time, Terry had just been tapped as editor of Missouri's *Word & Way* newspaper, and those on the executive board — which included Fenton — were still unsure of the search committee's wisdom in putting such a young man in charge during a contentious season for Missouri Baptists. Could he handle it?

Terry responded to them with a quote from E. Stanley Jones — “There comes one experience in every man's life in which he must put all of his weight on Jesus or forever live as a coward.”

'Word man'

“He was not aware of it at the time, but I was dealing with a call in my own life and had decided not to go,” Fenton said.

After the vote — which was affirmative — Fenton “walked out of the room, found a pay phone, called the church and said, ‘If you still want me, I'll come.’ It changed

the course of my life and ministry.”

Fenton, now senior advancement officer for Samford University and former long-time pastor of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, told those present at Terry's retirement celebration that Terry has spent his life as a “word man” who uses his gift to impact others.

“Your gift with words has been used to express thoughts, but it was also used to build lasting relationships,” he said. “That's why this room is filled tonight.”

More than 225 of Terry's friends, family and ministry colleagues gathered at The Club in Birmingham on Oct. 5 to celebrate his 50 years in state Baptist paper work and 23 years as editor of *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB).

He will retire Dec. 31.

Numerous presentations — including a commendation from Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey and a resolution passed by the Alabama Senate — took place during the celebration. Resolutions, commendations, certificates and gifts came from Baptist World Alliance, International Mission Board, North American Mission Board, Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, Judson College in Marion and the Association of State Baptist Publications (ASBP).

Scholarships, gifts and endowments were among other special moments during the evening.

Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director of national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), and David George, president of WMU Foundation, presented a gift in Terry's honor to the endowment for the Dr. El-

eanor F. Terry Chair for Christian Women's Leadership at Samford University, established in honor of his late wife in 1999.

Timothy Smith, president of University of Mobile, announced the creation of the Dr. Bob Terry Endowed Scholarship at the university and presented him with an official presidential proclamation commending Terry's service and leadership.

Endowed scholarships

ASBP President Tim Yarbrough shared that ASBP established the Dr. Bobby S. “Bob” Terry Scholarship for journalism and mass communications students at Samford University in Birmingham in his honor.

Arthur Williams, chairman of TAB's board of directors, followed Yarbrough with an announcement that the TAB board voted to send a gift of \$25,000 to the scholarship fund to ensure it was officially endowed in time for Terry's retirement dinner. The scholarship has received nearly \$30,000 to date.

Williams also announced that the TAB board of directors had named Terry the first-ever editor emeritus of *The Alabama Baptist*.



Photo by Doug Rogers

Guests attending the Oct. 5 celebration event congratulate Bob and Pat Terry following the dinner program.



Photo by Caroline Summers

Editor Bob Terry (center) has mentored many people throughout his 50-year career. Three of his managing editors — Jennifer Davis Rash (left), Michael Chute (right) and Tannis Henderson — went on to become (or will soon become) editors themselves.

Retirement Reception

Dr. Bobby S. “Bob” Terry

president and editor of *The Alabama Baptist*



Tuesday, November 13 | 4:30 p.m.-6:30 p.m.

FBC Trussville, Second Floor (A200)

HORS D'OEUVRES | TEA | COFFEE
hosted by *The Alabama Baptist* board of directors



Right: More than 225 of Terry's friends, family and ministry colleagues gather to celebrate his 50 years in state Baptist papers and upcoming retirement.
Far right: Arthur Williams, chairman of TAB's board of directors, announces that they named Terry the first-ever editor emeritus of *The Alabama Baptist*.



Photo by Doug Rogers



Photo by Doug Rogers

One of the most emotional moments for Terry came when Samford President Andrew Westmoreland bestowed on him a doctor of humane letters honoris causa, an award Samford has made only 361 times in its 177-year history.

'Very humbled'

Another emotional moment came at the close when Terry's cousin and popular Southern Baptist evangelist Junior Hill prayed over him following the hymn "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" being sung by Dawson music associate Brent Coleman.

"I'm very humbled to be standing in this place," Terry said. "I've tried to be a good and faithful servant to God and to Baptists. Thank you for the privilege and the opportunity."

Terry's first two managing editors were among those sharing during the celebration.

Trennis Henderson, national correspondent for WMU and former Baptist editor, shared stories and anecdotes of how Terry mentored him in life as well as in overseeing a state Baptist newspaper. "He was my boss, my editor, my friend and, most

importantly, my Christian brother."

In the role of editor, Henderson said Terry was "an authentic Baptist editor who knew when and how to make a stand."

Leads with wisdom

Throughout the decades, Terry has led with wisdom and tackled tough issues, sometimes covering more in just a few months than most editors would in years, Henderson said. "Bob does it week after week, year after year, decade after decade."

Michael Chute, professor of journalism at California Baptist University and former

Baptist editor, said that besides his parents and his wife, Terry "has probably been the most influential person in my life."

"Bob Terry took a raw young man 40 years ago and poured himself into my life," said Chute, recounting the story of when Terry hired him as managing editor of *Word & Way*. "Your contribution will surely be missed, but I hope this is another great season in a life that has contributed so much to so many."

After he retires, Terry will continue to write on relevant topics at his new blog, nowconsiderthis.com.



Photo by Doug Rogers

Samford President Andrew Westmoreland bestowes on Terry a doctor of humane letters honoris causa.

McKeever's sketches add extra smiles to celebration

As guests gathered to celebrate Bob Terry's long career in Christian journalism, Joe McKeever chronicled the event in his own special way.

McKeever, a longtime writer and cartoonist for religious publications, including *The Alabama Baptist*, brought a few cartoons with a humorous take on Terry's editorial leadership. Then throughout the evening, he drew those gathered, from Terry and his wife, Pat, to the wait staff who served. McKeever and his wife, Bertha, were among the last to leave the party — which is not unusual, since McKeever wants everyone to have a turn as his subject.



Photo by Doug Rogers

Joe McKeever sketches cartoons of the guests and wait staff all evening at Terry's celebration dinner.

McKeever, an Alabama native who served as a pastor in Southern Baptist churches for 42 years and served five years as director of missions in New Orleans, has a long relationship with *The Alabama Baptist*.

Former *TAB* editor Leon Macon assisted in McKeever's ordination in 1962. In 1972 former editor Hudson Baggett asked him to do some cartoons for the paper. His cartoons have appeared in *TAB* throughout the years, and he draws a daily cartoon for Baptist Press.

He also writes a series on "My Favorite Deacon" for LifeWay's *Deacon Magazine*, blogs daily for church leaders at www.joemckeever.com and has published a number of

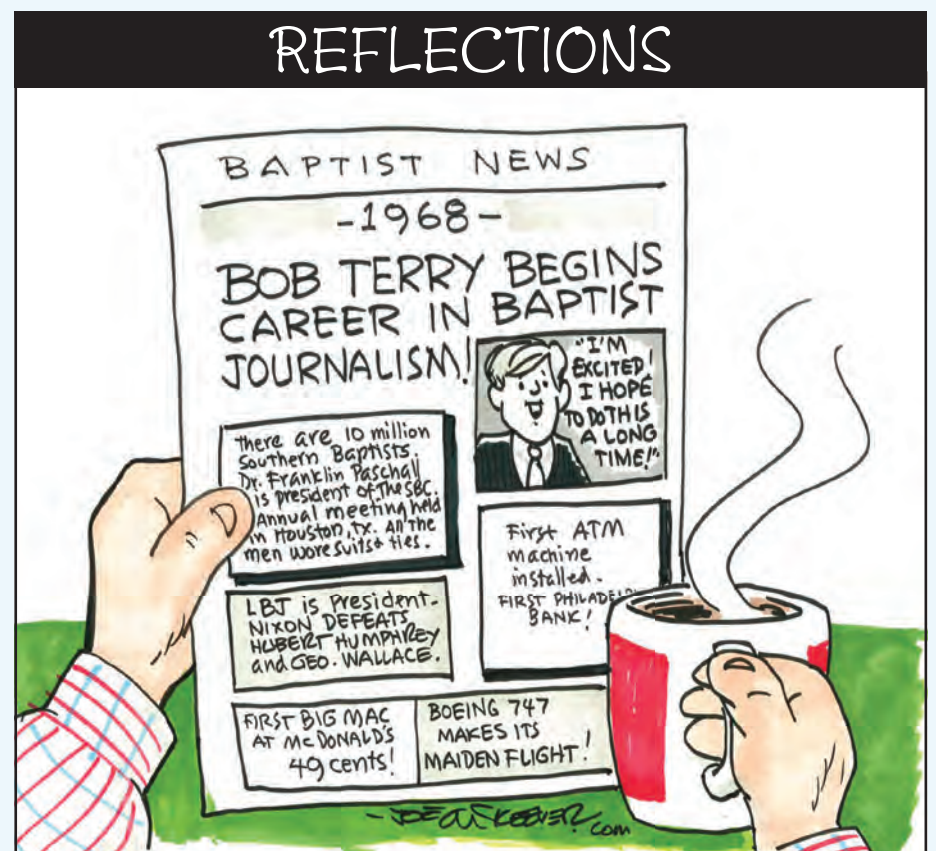
books. He is a featured artist at many weddings and events.

McKeever estimates he has drawn more than 100,000 people throughout the years, and he has learned that "everyone would

change something about themselves if they could" he said. But when he talks to kids, he shares with them an important lesson — "there's a beauty in every person."

And whether his subject is a pastor or a

bride, a dignitary or a child, he's learned one more truth through the years — "everyone looks better smiling and you can just decide to smile." (Carrie Brown McWhorter)



Rockford to host social media, smartphone workshop for seniors

The many functions of today's smartphones make them powerful and helpful tools, but sometimes the features are less than intuitive. To get the most out of smart devices, users must first understand what they can do and how to use them.

That's why Rockford Baptist Church is hosting a social media workshop Oct. 24 for senior adults and others who want to know how to better use their smartphones and the tools they offer and stay safe while doing so.

The idea for the training came from questions Rockford pastor Jeff Fuller got during a senior adult revival at the church in early September.

"At the end of the meal, some of the seniors began to ask questions about copying and pasting on Facebook, finding videos from past services at the church and other general questions about social media and their smartphones," Fuller said. "Then they asked why we didn't offer something for seniors to educate them on using social media."

Training workshop

Fuller was already working to improve his church's social media and online presence with the Center for Congregational

Resources at Samford University and TAB Digital Services through *The Alabama Baptist*.

The seniors' questions motivated him to plan the Social Media Training Workshop to help smartphone users, especially those adults who did not grow up with the technology, have a better, more complete experience online.

Participants are invited to bring their laptops, smartphones or tablets so they can try out new tips as they are covered. The highly interactive workshop will address several areas, including:

- ▶ Basic social media sharing, including copying and pasting text
- ▶ Safe sharing, including security tips and best practices
- ▶ Basic smartphone functions, including

photo/video recording and sharing

- ▶ Online etiquette
- ▶ Emergency tips for smartphone users.

The training will be held at Rockford Baptist Church, in Central Baptist Association, Oct. 24, 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Lunch is provided for the event, but reservations are requested.

For more information or to register, call 256-377-4900 and leave your name and phone number. You can also e-mail Fuller at rbccoosa@gmail.com. (TAB)



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Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Ecclesiology Through Imagery

The Church as a Building

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

We have previously considered insights from two biblical images for the Church — a body and a bride. This week Theology 101 turns attention to the image of a building as a way of thinking about the Church. Ephesians 2:19–22 uses this imagery, saying, "Now, therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."

Several truths about the Church stand out in this passage. A basic truth is that the Church is God's building. The Church is much more than another human institution; it belongs to God. We who help comprise the Church are not our own but have been bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:20). Consequently, the Church is not a building but a people — people who have been redeemed through Christ. Although we commonly refer to the structures where God's people gather for worship as a church, we do well to keep in mind that the essential building material for churches does not consist of wood, brick and mortar, but individuals who belong individually to God.

'Holy temple'

The church as a building suggests further that this is not an ordinary kind of building but a temple kind of building, described as "a holy temple in the Lord." It is the indwelling of a holy God that makes redeemed individuals a holy temple. As the temple building in Old Testament times was God's dwelling place, so now God's people comprise His dwelling place by His Spirit.

This truth serves as a reminder that when we think of God's Spirit being present when His people gather for worship, we are not to think of the

Holy Spirit as floating invisibly around, above or under the pews. His presence is found in His indwelling of the gathered people who belong to God because of the purchased redemption made possible through the coming of Christ. Spiritual sacrifices are offered to God from within the lives of believers. The Spirit seeks to flow through us and touch others with the sense of God's presence. Open-hearted praise and worship allows the Spirit access to the whole gathered congregation.

The truth about the Church expressed through the imagery of a building is much larger than the analogy itself. This spiritual building is capable of growing but not by adding on another wing or extending a couple of walls. This building is capable of growing in holiness, as well as growing in size through the conversion of sinners.

Chief cornerstone

The building imagery about the Church also captures the truth that this spiritual building was initially built on the foundation of apostles and prophets. Among those foundation stones, Christ Himself became the chief cornerstone. The physical building of a church grows as masons lay brick upon brick. The Church as the spiritual building of God has grown through the ages as person after person has responded to the gospel. All of those redeemed by the blood of Christ have been "fitted together" to comprise God's building.

We do well to remember always that what God has fitted together we are not to devalue, discount or disassemble.✠

Former Alabama children's minister indicted on sexual abuse charges

Former children's minister William Wesley Williamson, 38, has been indicted on four counts of sexual abuse of a child.

Houston County Sheriff Donald Valenza said the first three alleged incidents, all involving boys, occurred at a summer camp in 2017. The fourth charge was filed by an additional victim and related to a different occasion between August and September of 2017.

Dothan news outlet WTVY said investigators said in one instance, Williamson "pushed in on the victim's private parts in an effort to make him sit down." Previous charges claim Williamson brushed against clothing in the genital area of two boys, one of them twice.

The *Dothan Eagle* reported that Williamson is scheduled to enter a plea to

the charges in November. A jury trial has been scheduled for Jan. 14.

Williamson served at Mount Gilead Baptist Church, Dothan.

The church placed him on leave after receiving reports of possible misconduct and fired him in March when he was first arrested.



WILLIAMSON

In related news, Acton Bowen, a former youth evangelist first arrested in April on multiple child sexual abuse charges, entered a plea of not guilty and not guilty by reason of mental disorder or defect.

Court records indicate Bowen was arraigned on a total of 21 felony crimes and seven misdemeanors Sept. 10 in Etowah County, where he is currently jailed without bond. Bowen also faces child sexual abuse charges in Jefferson County. (TAB)

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.



Understanding Disaster Relief

NAMB's new Send Relief separate ministry from traditional Southern Baptist DR efforts

(continued from page 3)

editor of the *Tennessee Baptist and Reflector*, in a May 30, 2018, editorial.

However, with the launch of Send Relief by North American Mission Board (NAMB) in 2016, SBDR seems to be swirling in a storm all its own — a storm of confusion about the status of the historic relationship between NAMB and SBDR.

“The North American Mission Board developed and launched Send Relief to fulfill NAMB’s sixth ministry assignment from the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) related to assisting churches as they serve disaster survivors and other people in need,” explained David Melber, president of Send Relief, which was set up as a nonprofit corporation but is governed by NAMB trustees.

Send Relief was established with five main priorities: poverty, refugees and internationals, foster care and adoption, human trafficking and disaster response.

“Send Relief is the compassion ministry arm of NAMB. We are to compassion ministry what Send Network is to NAMB’s church planting efforts,” Melber said.

Some associational and state leaders, fearing the nomenclature confusion between Send Relief and disaster relief might diminish traditional SBDR efforts, have questioned why SBDR was placed under the NAMB umbrella of Send Relief.

These leaders are concerned that SBDR funding as well as volunteer recruitment and training might be in jeopardy. Some even sense that Send Relief might be an effort to replace SBDR or compete with it.

Claiming that Send Relief “is capitalizing on the success of SBDR over the years,” Wilkey wrote, “I’m all for Send Relief as it deals with poverty, human trafficking, foster care and other important concerns, but it does not need a (disaster relief) element. We already have it.” He cited the experience of one individual who thought she was donating to SBDR for hurricane relief but was surprised when “the return information from NAMB was Send Relief stuff.”

Concerns

Tom Stacey, director of missions for Selma Baptist Association in Alabama, was more direct in his Send Relief assessment.

“The North American Mission Board through Send Relief is soliciting funds directly from Southern Baptist Convention churches to fund their SUVs (spontaneous untrained volunteers) that they will deploy to our area without notification of or in cooperation with the state convention or the association, so I’m asking churches to send their disaster relief funds to Selma Baptist Association,” he said.

“We raise our money to pay for our fuel,

meals, motels, supplies, etc. We send our team all over, and NAMB doesn’t pay for any of that even though they are wanting people to give to them. ... We have trained people on the ground doing the work, and we raise the money to pay for everything — the background checks, the equipment, everything,” Stacey said.

Melber has heard these objections to Send Relief, and he states there is no cause for alarm.

“The first thing to note is that Send Relief is pro-SBDR,” said Melber, who himself is trained in disaster relief “in multiple states.”

‘SBDR is invaluable’

“SBDR is invaluable and has made an immeasurable impact on communities both physically and spiritually,” he said. “Send Relief’s disaster response ministry aspires to build upon that legacy and encourages its volunteers to sign up with SBDR through their state convention.”

Through Send Relief, “We want to meet a physical need, to build relationships with people we are serving and ultimately to be able to share Christ,” he said.

In answering those who have asked if Send Relief is trying to replace SBDR, Melber responds, “An absolute no. We want to come alongside and support and, in a sense, kind of backfill where there could be some gaps,” such as in funding or in the volunteer base.

Send Relief “doesn’t do anything that would be what SBDR is known for, such as mass feeding efforts or credentialed chainsaw teams,” Melber said, but it does help resource those efforts.

In each of Send Relief’s priority areas, “Our efforts are designed to complement, not compete with these (state convention-sponsored) ministries,” Melber explained.

Send Relief’s nonprofit status enables the organization to solicit funds “outside of the traditional Southern Baptist fishing pond. ... There are a lot of resources out there that I think we’re not going to necessarily ask for through traditional, historic Baptist practices,” Melber explained. He said he understands that state conventions solicit donations for SBDR through their churches.

“What we want to do is try to stay out of causing confusion with Southern Baptists (regarding disaster relief donations),” he said. Melber added that he recently counseled a minister at his home church in Alpharetta, Georgia, to send the church’s disaster relief donations to Georgia Baptist Mission Board Disaster Relief.

The bottom line for clarity is to determine where the person donating wants the funds to go, several officials involved in disaster relief efforts noted. Donating directly to an association will keep the funds related



Send Relief photo

Send Relief volunteers replace a roof on one of tens of thousands of homes still in need of repair in Puerto Rico a year after Hurricane Maria hit.

to that association’s disaster relief efforts. Donating to a state convention will keep the funds focused on that state convention’s disaster relief efforts. Donating to Send Relief will mean funds are used for a much broader purpose, but in all cases, marking the funds for “disaster relief” will ensure they are used for disaster relief efforts. Also, on the NAMB Send Relief website, users can link to several Baptist state conventions to make financial donations for SBDR.

Currently Send Relief is funded by contributions from NAMB, unrestricted gifts and designated gifts for specific areas, Melber said, with donations coming from individuals, grants, endowments and other sources.

As Send Relief seeks donations beyond traditional Southern Baptist means, Melber noted that last year Send Relief was included on the Obama Foundation website as third on the list of valid and trustworthy charitable organizations to which donors can send money. “How we got there (on the Obama Foundation website), I have no idea,” he said, but he saw major donations coming to Send Relief as a result.

Also, Send Relief welcomes volunteers who are not Southern Baptist, including individuals who are nonbelievers. “We believe including non-SBC and even unchurched volunteers is an effective way to share the gospel with nonbelievers as they serve alongside believers,” he said. With minimal training, these volunteers are put into action, usually for short-term opportunities, ranging from a few hours to a few days.

Send Relief does not respond to every natural disaster in the nation. Instead, it “primarily focuses on the largest regional and national events that draw significant interest from untrained volunteers,” Melber said.

Often “needs in a disaster outpace the ability to help,” Melber said, adding that Send Relief can sometimes get its less-trained volunteers on the ground immediately, “allowing time for SBDR to deploy. ... There is a desperate need for more volunteers.”

Beyond disaster relief

With its five priorities, Send Relief also seeks ministry opportunities beyond disaster response. For example, in responding to hurricane devastation in Puerto Rico beginning in 2017 and continuing today, Send Relief leaders discovered the poverty level on the island is more than 50 percent. “We engaged in Puerto Rico because of the hurricane crisis. But when we engage with the people and figure out their more long-term needs, that leads us to consider how we address those needs because just getting a roof back on a house doesn’t solve the core issue.

“There are still tens of thousands of people without a roof in Puerto Rico, and it’s over a year later from the storm. We want to continue to replace the roofs, but if we don’t provide training and education for people to gain meaningful employment, then they will continue to deal with the effects of poverty which is cyclical and becomes a generational issue,” he said.

As natural disasters continue to pummel our nation, Melber said he doesn’t want Southern Baptists to be swept up in a storm of confusion within the denomination. “I hope and pray you’ve heard my heart in this,” he said, adding that his desire is that Southern Baptists will not have lingering questions or confusion about the relationship of Send Relief with SBDR.✝

To learn about Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief efforts or to donate, visit sldr.org. To find out about Send Relief, visit sendrelief.org.

Charitable generosity

Impact of new federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act remains to be seen

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

When it comes to charitable support in Alabama, higher education typically takes the prize for biggest gifts. But most giving is local, which is why ministry leaders are keeping a positive attitude in light of this year's changes to federal tax policy.

Charity Navigator reports that nearly one-third (31 percent) of all donations given in the U.S., approximately \$127.37 billion, is given to religious groups each year. That makes Americans among the most generous people in the world, according to the 2017 World Giving Index.

Alabamians are generous as well. In a WalletHub report of the most charitable states in 2016, Alabama ranked 5th overall in charitable giving.

Americans give because they believe in the organizations and the causes made possible by their gifts, said Lee Wright, coordinator of church compensation services for the Alabama Baptist

State Board of Missions (SBOM). Giving is actually up this year, Wright said, citing information from the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA) that shows steady increases in giving to Christian ministries over the past few years.

Some experts are concerned that the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) passed by Congress and signed by President Donald Trump in December 2017 will have a negative impact on charitable giving. Wright hopes that is not the case.

"The average charitable giving of Christians has been in the 2 percent category for some time," Wright said. "But it's been

slightly higher this year, and many believe it's because of the improved economy. We trust Christians will continue to give from conviction rather than for tax benefits, and I believe they do give for the right reason."

The TCJA made changes to corporate tax rates, but the most significant changes of the law for the average taxpayer relate to personal income taxes. Here are three major changes:

► The law keeps the seven income tax brackets that were in place, but lowers tax rates within those brackets. For example, the income tax rate for a single filer earning \$38,700–\$82,500 per year would have been 25 percent in 2017. In 2018 the rate will be 22 percent. Employees have seen this reflected in the change in withholding rates from their paychecks since February 2018.

► Personal exemptions are eliminated. Before the TCJA, taxpayers subtracted \$4,150 from income for each person claimed. That's gone but the maximum child tax credit was raised from \$1,000 per child to up to \$2,000 per child for dependent children under the age of 17 at the beginning of the tax year.

► The standard deduction in 2018 is nearly double what it was in 2017. For single filers the standard deduction increases from \$6,350 in 2017 to \$12,000 in 2018. The deduction for married and joint filers increases from \$12,700 to \$24,000. By most estimates, some 95 percent of Americans will probably take the standard deduction for 2018 — up from 70 percent in 2017.

Itemized deductions are still allowed, including those for retirement savings, student loan interest, and medical expenses. Itemized deductions for charitable giving also

Americans give because they believe in the organizations and the causes made possible by their gifts.



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remain in place, and in fact, the charitable giving deduction limit is now 60 percent of adjusted gross income, up from 50 percent in 2017.

However, the higher standard deductions mean most taxpayers will not give enough to charity to exceed the standard deduction, therefore eliminating their incentive to itemize.

Itemized deductions

It just may not make sense for most taxpayers to claim these deductions, Wright said.

"Most of the familiar itemized deductions are still there, but the overwhelming majority of us will not be able to deduct them," he said. "Mortgage interest, medical, property taxes and charitable giving will have less importance for most Americans tax-wise."

Wright suggests taxpayers continue to keep track of receipts for potential deductions, at least through the end of 2018, to

see how their individual state and federal tax liability shapes up. Those receipts should keep coming, since nothing has changed for ministries and organizations in terms of receipting and acknowledging gifts.

At the federal level, proponents of the charitable giving deduction are working to reinstate a charitable deduction for those who may no longer be able to itemize. Moves are underway to separate the charitable deduction from the IRS's Schedule A form, which is used to report itemized deductions. (See 'Proposed changes,' page 9.)

The upside of the tax changes is that most Americans are probably already seeing a little more money in their paychecks and many may receive a bigger refund when their 2018 taxes are complete. And churches may see more financial benefits than other organizations as a result, Wright said.

"Churches may be in better shape than other charities due to strong convictions about stewardship and giving." ✝

Wage growth stagnant for most American workers

New tax rates for 2018 mean many Americans are bringing home a little more money each paycheck, but those dollars don't necessarily translate into higher purchasing power.

Despite some ups and downs over the past several decades, today's real average wage, the wage after accounting for inflation, has about the same purchasing power it did 40 years

ago, according to a recent report by Pew Research.

Americans' paychecks are bigger than they were in 1978, but after adjusting for inflation, today's average hourly wage has just about the same purchasing power it did back then.

A similar measure — the "usual weekly earnings" of employed, full-time wage and salary workers — suggests the same. In sea-

sonally adjusted current dollars, median usual weekly earnings rose from \$232 in the first quarter of 1979 to \$879 in the second quarter of this year. That may sound like a lot, but in inflation-adjusted terms, that \$232 in 1979 had the same purchasing power as \$840 in today's dollars.

Benefit costs have risen faster than wages in recent years as well, leading to speculation that employ-

ers may be unable or unwilling to raise wages to cover the rising costs of health insurance, retirement account contribution, tuition reimbursement and other benefits that might be part of an employee's compensation.

Stagnant wage growth comes during a time when many economic indicators are on the rise in the United States. Unemployment numbers are low (3.9 percent as of

July) and employers have been adding jobs for 101 straight months, Pew reported.

But Americans are still feeling the weight of economic concerns. The 2017 American Family Survey reported last November that two-thirds of Americans cite economic issues as one of the three most important issues facing American families. (TAB)

Proposed changes could allow for more itemized charitable donations

The increased standard deduction in 2018 put into place by the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) could mean that as many as 95 percent of Americans will claim the standard deduction rather than itemize when they file their federal income taxes, up from 70 percent of tax filers in 2017.

Concerned about what this might mean for nonprofits and churches, Rep. Mark Walker, R-N.C., an ordained Southern Baptist pastor, has introduced a bill in the U.S. House of Representatives to amend the Internal Revenue Code “to allow above-the-line deductions for charitable contributions for individuals not itemizing deductions.”

In the face of predictions that charitable giving in 2018 will go down anywhere from \$11 billion to \$20 billion as a result of the new tax law, many are hoping to see some form of universal charitable deduction separate from itemizing enacted.

‘Fair and efficient’

Jason Lee, chair of the Charitable Giving Coalition, an organization whose mission is to protect the tax deduction, says a universal charitable deduction is “a fair and efficient resolution that will continue to encourage Americans to redirect their dollars to charities.”

A universal charitable deduction would not only help recoup the anticipated loss of charitable contributions but would also promote fairness by allowing all taxpayers to deduct their contributions, Lee said in a statement online at www.ProtectGiving.org.

Another little-known provision of the new law is a parking tax that requires churches and nonprofits to pay a 21 percent tax on fringe benefits such as employee parking. Tax experts say churches can either pay taxes on the value of employee parking or pass the burden to employees by making it a part of their taxable income.

The National Council of Nonprofits — the nation’s largest network of charitable organizations — called on the IRS and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin’s office to delay implementation of the tax on fringe benefits for a year to give the nonprofit sector time and guidance to fully understand its obligations. (RNS, Carrie Brown McWhorter contributed)

Know the impact

New federal tax laws may affect ministers, church staff

By Michael J. Brooks
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) that took effect on Jan. 1, 2018, will most likely change the way many Americans, including ministers, file their taxes.

“Tax law hasn’t changed substantially since 1986, but this bill does change several of the things we’re accustomed to,” said Lee Wright, coordinator of church compensation services for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM). “It affects individuals, of course, but also our churches and ministers. Most ministers should pay less federal tax, but a few might pay more.”

Wright was one of several presenters at the Summit for Church Leaders held Aug. 3–4 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega.

One downside for ministers is the elimination of employee non-reimbursed business deductions on Schedule A. Ministers have been able to deduct business expenses in the past on Schedule A, after subtracting 2 percent of their adjusted gross income.

“So the ‘package approach’ is now dead,” Wright said. “Many churches customarily tell their ministers that they offer a package and let the minister divide it as he chooses. But the minister can lose money on business expenses that decrease his actual salary.”

Wright said the better approach is to offer three categories: compensation, benefits and accountable business expenses for ministers.

“An accountable plan means the minister must turn in receipts for business expenses and be reimbursed,” he said. “This way the money isn’t reported and there is zero tax. It’s how businesses have dealt with expenses like this for many years, and our churches need to do the same.”

Self-employment income

Wright said ministers may have some self-employment income from revivals, weddings and the like, and attendant expenses can be listed as deductible business expenses on Schedule C.

Another loss for ministers is the unusual double deduction they have enjoyed on housing allowances. Mortgage interest and property taxes can be part of a minister’s housing allowance that is sheltered from



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federal income tax though reported as self-employment income.

Until now the mortgage interest and taxes could also be included as an itemized deduction for federal taxes. However, the higher standard deduction may make this double deduction a relic for most ministers.

“Part of the uniqueness of ministers’ taxes is that they’re considered employees for federal tax purposes, and self-employed for Social Security taxes,” Wright said. “This means that ministers pay the 15.3 percent self-employment tax rate.”

Wright said the new tax act also removed the deduction for moving expenses, so if a church pays or reimburses a minister for moving, the amount is considered taxable income.

Wright noted that in late 2017, the national media focused on long lines in Northeastern states as people came in to pay property taxes early.

“They did this because their property tax deductions were about to be capped,” he said. “This isn’t really a major consideration for Alabama since our property taxes are lower. But we do need to keep in mind that Alabama tax law does allow generous deductions.”

State law

“Taxpayers need to compute medical expenses, charitable giving and the like for state taxes. It may be that state law will change one day to reflect the current federal law, but it hasn’t yet.”

Churches or ministers who would like more information on the impact of the new tax policy on ministry staff can contact Wright in the office of LeaderCare and church health by phone at 334-613-2241 or by e-mail at lwright@alsbom.org.

To find a guide detailing the best practices for churches visit www.Guidestone.org/CompensationPlanning.

“[This new tax bill] affects individuals, of course, but also our churches and ministers. Most ministers should pay less federal tax, but a few might pay more.”

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

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Alabama Baptist CHILDREN'S HOMES & Family Ministries

Nominees named for state convention leadership roles

Messengers to the upcoming Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting — set for Nov. 13–14 at First Baptist Church, Trussville — are preparing to vote for a new slate of convention officers.

The *Alabama Baptist* has learned of some of the nominations messengers plan to make for those roles.

Tim Cox, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea, will be nominated for convention president by his father, Henry Cox. Other pastors also have noted that they plan to nominate Buddy Champion, pastor of First, Trussville, for first vice president and Morgan Bailey, pastor of Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer, for second vice president.

Nominations

Henry Cox, himself a former convention president, said Tim Cox “is without any doubt a saved sinner who is born again by grace through faith in Jesus

Christ, a God-called preacher of the gospel, a loving pastor and teacher who is a humble servant of Jesus Christ.”

‘Gifted leader’

He also called his son “a gifted leader who continues to serve well, and a man who knows and loves his Heavenly Father and walks in His ways every day.”

Tim Cox has served as pastor of Liberty Baptist since 1998. He is currently convention first vice president and served as second vice president before being elected to that role.

Champion will be nominated for first vice president by Blake Kersey, pastor of First Baptist Church, Decatur. Champion currently serves as second vice president.

Champion has served at First, Trussville, since 2006.

“He is the same man of God on Tuesday in staff meeting or Thursday in his office as he is Sunday in the pulpit,” Kersey



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said, calling him a genuine and authentic Christian leader. “He walks with such humility before his congregation and displays genuine love to his family, staff and congregation.”

Bailey will be nominated as second vice president by Travis Coleman, pastor of First Baptist Church, Prattville, and a former convention president.

Bailey has served as pastor of



COX



CHAMPION



BAILEY

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. “He understands Alabama Baptists, is articulate in his speech, a man of wisdom and someone people trust,” Coleman said.

“He is a seasoned leader ready to

serve our state convention and assist Dr. Rick Lance in carrying out the mission of the Alabama Baptist State Convention.” (Grace Thornton)

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

2018 marks 175th anniversary of Christian and Missionary Alliance founder's birth

Albert Benjamin Simpson (1843–1919), also known as A.B. Simpson, was a Canadian preacher, theologian, author and founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA), an evangelical denomination that emphasized global evangelism.

This year marks the 175th anniversary of his birth.

He was born on Dec. 15, 1843, to James Simpson and Janet Clark in Bayview, near Cavendish, Prince Edward Island, Canada.

Called to preach

He was raised in a strict Calvinistic Scottish tradition, and his father was an elder in the Presbyterian Church.

Simpson was saved under the preaching of a visiting evangelist from Ireland

during a revival in 1859. Afterwards, God called him to preach.

He graduated from Knox College in Toronto in 1865, and was ordained in the Canada Presbyterian Church.

His first pastorate was at the large Knox Presbyterian Church in Hamilton, Ontario. He stayed there for eight years.

In 1873, Simpson left Canada for Chestnut Street Presbyterian Church, the largest Presbyterian church in Louisville, Kentucky. It was at Louisville that he first had a burden to preach the gospel to the common man.

His chance came in 1880 when he was called to the Thirteenth Street Presbyterian Church in New York City. He immediately started reaching out to the world with the hope and the joy of the gospel. He

had a burden for worldwide evangelism.

In 1881 he had a spiritual experience that changed him. Having suffered from poor health for most of his life, he was healed

from a serious heart ailment. He then was baptized in a Baptist church, resigned his pastorate and the Presbyterian ministry and started evangelizing to the poor and neglected masses in New York City. He founded an independent congregation later known as the Gospel Tabernacle.

In 1882, Simpson established the Missionary Training Institute (later called Nyack College). It was the first Bible institute of its kind in America.

He began gathering people with a passion for evangelism. These meetings were the beginnings of the C&MA. He served as

pastor of the Alliance until a year before his death.

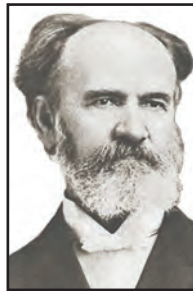
Simpson was a prolific writer and wrote 101 books, 80 hymns, periodicals, articles, booklets and curriculums, which had a great influence on countless people.

Last words

On Oct. 28, 1919, he went into a coma and died the next day. Family members said his last words were to God, a prayer for all the missionaries he had helped to send throughout the world.

He and his wife are buried on the Rockland County Campus of Nyack College in New York.

Simpson's legacy lives on today. In 2017 the C&MA had 500,000 members in America with 2,000 churches.✝



SIMPSON

By Joanne Sloan

Joanne Sloan, a member of First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, has been a published writer of articles and books for 30 years. She has a bachelor's degree double majoring in history and English from East Texas State University (now Texas A&M University–Commerce) and a master's degree specializing in English from the University of Arkansas (1978).



Covered in mud, washed in the blood

‘Good ol’ boy’ meets Jesus, uses old drinking truck to share gospel message

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

A couple of years ago, Terry Billings saw his old truck sitting in the field, weeds growing up through it, and he heard God whisper that He could take that old truck and make something new out of it.

“At that point, it was worthless,” Billings said.

He had spent a lot of years in that truck going mudding and drinking out on the farm. He’d lived his life far from the shadow of any church — he hadn’t gone in at least 25 years, except maybe to some weddings and funerals.

Conviction of God

And then one day his son got saved and invited him to his baptism.

“I figured that was a good dad move to go see my son get baptized,” he said. “I went and it was kind of nice to be there. But by 1 o’clock, I was drinking again.”

The next Sunday, his son invited him back. And he went.

“I’d kind of enjoyed getting dressed up that last Sunday,” Billings said.

When the third Sunday came, so did his son’s invitation — and Billings went again.

“I left after church that day, and my plan was to go back to the restaurant and chill out and drink for the rest of the day,” said Billings, who ran Billy’s BBQ in Gordo. “But boy, did God have something waiting for me — at Walmart.”

As he walked the aisles of the store, he said he felt the conviction

of God press on his heart.

“All of a sudden, I felt so visible, like everything I’d ever done was so visible,” Billings said. “His eyes were on me. I tell everyone I had a Damascus Road experience that day, but it was a blue light special — I got saved right there in Walmart at 45 years old. And my life has never been the same.”

He gets choked up talking about it. When God’s light broke through his darkness, he parked the old farm truck and traded his mudding and drinking for a pastorate.

For six years now, he’s served at Forest Baptist Church, Gordo, in Pickens Baptist Association — a church that’s been among some of the top in the state for baptisms in recent years.

God made something new out of him, Billings said. And as he looked at that old truck that day, he knew God had plans for it too.

“God gave me this vision to reach out to people who are getting ignored — the good ol’ boys. I’ve always been one of them,” Billings said. “I was an alcoholic and God reached out and touched me. If He hadn’t and if people hadn’t, I wouldn’t have been saved. So there’s nowhere that’s too far for me to go to reach them.”

So he towed that old truck out and began the process of rebuilding the whole thing, to be used for God’s glory and to help others meet Jesus. He recruited some friends to help. And as he stepped out on faith, God provided donations for the rebuild.

“Over two years, God provided \$100,000,” he said. “When people heard what we wanted to do, they just kept writing us checks.



Photo by Terry Billings

Terry Billings took his old truck, a symbol of his days of drinking, and turned it into a vehicle for the gospel. The truck goes to parades and events where Billings shares his testimony and the gospel.

People from California, Florida, Tennessee — they would stop in at the restaurant and leave us with a donation for the truck.”

And so the Heaven Bound Mud Bogger was born — a massive truck with a picture of a cross on the side and verses about finding eternal life in Jesus. On the tailgate it says, “Covered in mud, but washed in the blood.”

And it turns heads everywhere it goes.

Once the truck had new life, Billings and his ministry partners formed a nonprofit ministry, and they take the truck to parades and events to share the gospel. They set up tents, share tracts and then connect with the local Baptist association so they can do follow up.

‘Evangelistic tool’

“We’re booked almost every weekend from now to Christmas,” he said.

But even if they weren’t, attracting people would be no problem.

“Every time I stop anywhere, everybody in the gas station or Dollar General unloads and goes

out to look at it. Then I get to tell them my story and what Jesus did for me,” Billings said. “All it takes is a trip to Hardee’s, and we have church.”

Sammy Gilbreath, director of the office of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said Billings’ ministry is an “incredible way to reach a different segment of people.”

“Early on in our ministry in the evangelism office, we began to push event evangelism,” Gilbreath said. “People raised their eyebrows when they thought about motorcycle ministry.”

But now motorcycle ministry is huge, and later the same thing happened with horse whisperer events, he said.

“Mud bogging is a classic example. It becomes a great evangelistic tool reaching into a segment of our culture that is not being touched by any other phase of evangelism,” Gilbreath said. “I’m thrilled Terry is doing it. I think it will draw attention and spark ideas and creativity for other people too, and that can cause a domino effect.”

Billings said he’s grateful, but

no one is more surprised than him at how God has directed his path.

What God can do

“This old truck I had, it probably wasn’t worth \$100,” he said. “But it’s amazing when you give something to God what He can do. We’re just in awe.”

For more information, search for “Heaven Bound Mud Bogger” on Facebook. 🙏



Photo by Terry Billings

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BESSEMER

► **Seventh Street Church, Bessemer**, will hold a homecoming service Oct. 28, 10:30 a.m. Former pastor Neal Ruce will be the guest speaker. A covered-dish luncheon will follow the service.

CAHABA

► **Cahaba Association** will celebrate its 200th anniversary Oct. 28 at Siloam Church, Marion, beginning at 2 p.m. with food and special displays in the fellowship hall. The celebration service will begin at 3 p.m. Special guests will include Rick Barnhart from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, Jennifer Rash and Debbie Campbell from *The Alabama Baptist*, Lonette Berg from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and Doug Wilder, pastor of Cahaba Valley Church. Tom Stacey is DOM.

COFFEE

► **Eanon Church, New Brockton**, will hold a homecoming service Oct. 21, 10:30 a.m. Pastor Mark Ward will preach, and Day 3 will bring the music. A covered-dish lunch will follow the service. ► **County Line Church, Enterprise**, will host the 4th Annual Community Country Fest on Oct. 20, 4-6 p.m. Bluegrass music will be performed by The Jordan River

Band. Cowboy Steve will demonstrate roping. For more information call 334-347-6082 or visit www.CLBConthe.net. Danny Wiggins is pastor.

CONECUH

► **Evergreen Church** will hold a homecoming service Oct. 21, 10:30 a.m. Dennis Culbreth will be the guest speaker. A covered-dish lunch will be served following the service.

MOBILE

► **Union Baptist Church, Grand Bay**, will celebrate its 150-year anniversary Oct. 21, 10 a.m. Jimmy Jackson will be the guest speaker. David Walley is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Jennifer Foster** recently celebrated 10 years as children's minister at **Heritage Church, Montgomery**. She previously served at First Church, Piedmont, from 2004 to 2008. Foster holds degrees from Samford University



FOSTER

and New Orleans Seminary. She is married to Reid Foster. ► **Mike Northcutt** will retire from **Eastmont Church, Montgomery**, in 2019. He was called to serve at Eastmont in June 1987. He has served at churches in Kentucky and Alabama. He and his wife, Connie, have two children and five grandchildren.

MORGAN

► **Justin McAlpin** is the new pastor of **Westmeade Church, Decatur**. He has served as minister to students at Westmeade since 2012. He holds a bachelor's degree from Mississippi College in Clinton, and a master's degree from New Orleans Seminary. McAlpin and his wife, Amanda, have two children.

RUSSELL

► **Emmanuel Church, Phenix City, and North Phenix Church, Phenix City**, will host comedian/musician Billy Bob Bohannon on Oct. 28, 5 p.m. at Emmanuel Church. Alan Griffith is pastor of Emmanuel, and Tommy Poole is pastor of North Phenix.

ST. CLAIR

► **Mount Pisgah Church, Cropwell**, will host a concert featuring Paul's Journey on Oct. 21, 10:30 a.m. ✝

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ALABAMA

UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

Burns honored for a half century of perfect attendance

In the past 50 years, Leon Burns hasn't missed a single Sunday School lesson. Even when he was on vacation, he would make sure he attended Sunday School at a church where they were.

And on a recent Sunday when he was taken to the emergency room, members of his church — Greensboro Baptist in Hale Baptist Association — brought Sunday School to him.



BURNS

"Fifty years of perfect attendance is an incredible testimony of this man's love for Christ," Pastor Dee McGuire said. The church honored Burns for that milestone of commitment on Aug. 26.

But that's not the end of the story, McGuire said.

Burns also makes handmade crosses, both single ones and sets of three.

"Just about every shop or store in Greensboro has a cross made by Leon in their place of business on display," McGuire said. "Often-times our church will take along crosses to be handed out on missions trips."

When Burns hands someone a cross, he also offers to pray with them, McGuire said.

"It is not uncommon for Leon to be seen on his way home from worship standing along the road praying with someone," McGuire said. Over the years, he has led more than 30 people to faith in Christ.

"We love Leon Burns at Greensboro Baptist," McGuire said. "Thanks, Leon, for being such a great example." (Grace Thornton)

Prattville's New Vision church celebrates 25 years

For the past 25 years New Vision Baptist Church has been a consistent presence in the Prattville community.

"We've been trying to build a church where anybody — regardless of the struggles that they're going through — can come and find a safe place," said J.B. Burt, the church's first and only pastor.

And in those years, they've seen God bless that effort. They've had a multicultural ministry, hosting an ongoing Bible study in Japanese and hosting a Spanish-speaking congregation, Pueblo de Dios. New Vision Baptist has also put a major emphasis on evangelism.

That's the impact the New Vision Baptist congregation will honor as they come together Nov. 4 to mark the 25th anniversary of both the church and its pastor. Mel Johnson, associational missionary/director of missions for Autauga Baptist Association, said New Vision Baptist is a church plant that has continuously aimed to plant other churches.

"They have been very instrumental in our missions strategy here in the association," he said. "I think it's a real blessing to see a church that has been planted turn right around and duplicate itself. As a result of that, we've had a lot of folks come to know Christ over the years, and that congregation continues to serve exceptionally."

Johnson said it's a testament to Burt's leadership.

"He's got a heart for reaching people for Christ, and as goes the pastor, so goes the church," he said. (Grace Thornton)

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PASTOR

Enon Baptist Church is looking for a pastor. Reply to: Mitchell Harrison, 8393 Grissett Bridge Road, Atmore, AL 36502. Phone: 251-862-2527. Email: brian.presley46@yahoo.com.

PASTOR

First Baptist Church, Glencoe, is in search of a full-time Southern Baptist pastor. Send resumés to: FBC Glencoe Search Committee, P.O. Box 5305, Glencoe, AL 35905 or email to: fbcg-searchcommittee@gmail.com. For more information, see our ad on www.thealabamabaptist.org/classifieds.

PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Foley is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resumés to: Sharon Collins at scollins@fbcfoley.com or P.O. Box 307, Foley, AL 36536.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Ohatchee First Baptist Church at 2090 Spring Road, Ohatchee, AL is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé/questions to: Beth Nance, church secretary, at be2str@aol.com.

MUSIC DIRECTOR

New Hope Baptist Church in Skipperville, Alabama, is searching for a part-time music director. Email resumés to: judwaldrop@yahoo.com.

YOUTH MINISTER

First Baptist Church of Opp, Alabama, is currently seeking a full-time youth minister. Resumés should be sent to the Youth Minister Search Committee at fbc@spcopp.com.

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Heritage Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, is seeking a full-time student minister. Please send resumés to: search@hbcm.net. Dr. Teman Knight is the pastor.

OTHER POSITIONS

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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.

Someone You

Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett

Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Virginia McLemore

Virginia Dare McLemore, 91, of Athens was a financial manager at Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville for more than 20 years. Two of her three children became ministers. (One son is the late Mike McLemore, who was a pastor for most of his career before becoming executive director of Birmingham Baptist Association.)

MINISTRY DESCRIPTION: Shares Jesus with co-residents in her assisted living home

CHURCH NAME: Lindsay Lane Baptist Church, Athens, in Limestone Baptist Association

LIFE VERSE: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:1)

Q: Describe where you focus your greatest ministry efforts.

A: I live in an assisted living environment. When I cannot go to church, I watch several preachers on TV (one being my son, Dusty McLemore of Lindsay Lane Baptist Church). I requested that a local TV channel (Jamie Cooper/WTZZ) air the local preaching so that we could watch it in our theater room. Everyone that cannot go to church can now watch several hours of preaching every Sunday morning. Sometimes, if given the opportunity, I ask co-residents if they believe in Jesus.

Q: Who was or is one of the most influential people in your faith life? Why?

A: The most influential person in my faith was my grandmother, Blanche Shannon. She carried me to church when growing up. She was a true Christian. ... She is the reason I started going to church and learned a lot ... at Shanghai Baptist Church in Athens. (The steeple on the church was added in Blanche Shannon's memory.)

Q: Tell about a "turning point" in your life and how God was involved.

A: Being saved at 12 years old at First Baptist Church, Athens. The pastor was Brother Leon Macon. I was truly

saved at that time during Vacation Bible School. (Mrs. McLemore was baptized in the Jordan River by her son Dusty on a trip to the Holy Land. Her son Mike baptized his sister, Ginger Martin, in the Jordan River.)

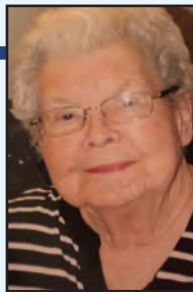
Q: If there were one thing you could tell your younger self about faith, what would it be?

A: Believe in God for His guidance and protection. I knew He was a forgiving and loving God and would accept me. He knows me as I am. He really helps me. He answers my prayers. He is with me all the time.

Q: Have you ever read a book or heard a song that changed the way you think about God and faith? What was it and what did you learn from it?

A: "Have Thine Own Way Lord" and "It Is Well with My Soul." The wording expresses how I feel. And I like the song, "How Great Thou Art."

Mrs. McLemore's daughter, Ginger Martin, assisted with this article.✝



MCLEMORE



FBC Scottsboro celebrates 150 years of ministry

On Sept. 2, First Baptist Church, Scottsboro, in Tennessee River Baptist Association, kicked off a month-long celebration for its 150th anniversary.



Photo courtesy of FBC Scottsboro

First, Scottsboro, pastor Shandy Dill started off the month preaching Sept. 2. Former pastors Rick Stevens, Alan Walworth, Tim Lovett and Kevin Wilburn also preached during September.

Former ministers of music Handy Avery, Martin Gureasko and Steve Hall shared special music.

Ken Allen from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented First, Scottsboro, with a certificate recognizing the anniversary.

Video clips of members sharing their memories of the church were shown each Sunday.

"The celebration has created an excitement and sweet spirit among members," church member Ann Looney said.

A covered-dish lunch was held after the final service Sept. 30. (TAB)

Chestnut Creek Baptist Church celebrates bicentennial

On Sept. 6 current and former members of Chestnut Creek Baptist Church, Verbena, packed the church to celebrate its 200-year anniversary.

Associational missionary/director of missions for Chilton Baptist Association Larry Felkins was the guest speaker for the service.

Gold City Quartet shared special music.

Johnie Sentell, from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented the church with a certificate, and Felkins gave the church a certificate of recognition from the association.

Old photos were on display and the church's history was printed in the bulletin "It was an awesome and exciting day," Pastor Terry Smith said. (TAB)

Antioch Baptist Church celebrates 100-year anniversary

Leading up to the centennial celebration at Antioch Baptist Church, Columbiana, on Sept. 9 the church spent 100 hours in prayer for the church.

Eric Brasher, son of former Antioch Baptist pastor Howard Brasher, was the guest speaker for the service. Special music was brought by church members Roger Mangham, Gaylon Beasley, Buddy Beasley, Angela Beasley and Pastor Phillip Rush.

Mavis Gates from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a certificate to the church, and Corley Ellis, state representative for District 41, presented a resolution from the Alabama House of Representatives and a greeting from Gov. Kay Ivey. Hugh Richardson, associational missionary/director of missions for Shelby Baptist Association, also presented a certificate.

A reflection video was shown, featuring photos and tributes to deceased members, as well as military deployments, crisis events and answered prayers.

"The celebration served as a launch into the next century," Rush said. (Jessica Ingram)



Photo by Mavis Gates

Cedar Grove celebrates 175th anniversary

On Sept. 9, Cedar Grove Baptist Church, Leeds, celebrated its 175-year anniversary with a special service and luncheon.

"It was a wonderful day," said church member Suzanne McCulley.

Pastor Billy Abrams brought the morning message, and Keri Lee Eastis shared special music. The Reunion Youth Choir also performed during lunch.

A video presentation of the history of Cedar Grove Baptist was shown.

Gerald Glenn from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a certificate to the St. Clair Baptist Association church, and proclamations were presented by Dickie Drake, member of the Alabama House of Representatives, and David Miller, the mayor of Leeds.

The oldest, longest and youngest members of the church — Louise Spearman, Janet Walker, Tristan Brown, respectively — also were recognized.

A luncheon followed the service. (Jessica Ingram)

DO YOU KNOW A PERSON WHO SHOULD BE FEATURED AS Someone You Should Know?

Send his or her name, a contact number and the reason you think he or she should be featured to Someone You Should Know, c/o *The Alabama Baptist*, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209, or to news@thealabamabaptist.org.

Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

Traeger to leave IMB executive EVP post in November

RICHMOND, Va. — Sebastian Traeger, executive vice president of the International Mission Board (IMB), has announced he will resign Nov. 15 at the next meeting of IMB trustees.



TRAEGER

Traeger tied his resignation to the departure of David Platt as IMB president to pastor a church in northern Virginia.

"I believe the primary role of an EVP is to lead alongside the president, and in light of David's transition, I want to respect this opportunity to give our future president total freedom to choose the right person to serve alongside him in the future," Traeger stated to missionaries in a Sept. 28 letter. Traeger became the IMB executive vice president in November 2014 after Platt's election by IMB trustees in August of that year. He previously worked in

the corporate world and with other Christian organizations. (BP)

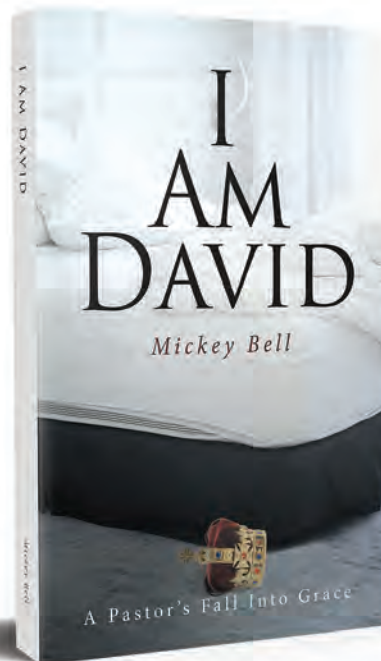
NAMB, Alabama Baptists plan for Crossover 2019

BIRMINGHAM — Birmingham-area Southern Baptists are looking to saturate the city with the gospel when Crossover 2019 comes to town next year.

The North American Mission Board is partnering with seven Alabama Baptist associations and other ministry groups in the state as plans are being made for the effort.

Specific details will be released at a later date, but door-to-door evangelism in the suburbs and a Send Relief outreach downtown are expected to be part of the Crossover plans prior to the June 11-12 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Birmingham.

The SBC started Crossover in 1989 as a way to engage the host city of the SBC's annual meeting with the gospel. (BP)



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Pastor, FBC Woodstock, GA


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Mickey Bell
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1 CORINTHIANS 2:2


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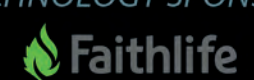
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My JESUS Story

By Jenni Ingram
Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

Imagine if you picked up the newspaper tomorrow and the front page headline read, "Due to immense pressure from retail giants Christmas will be held next week."

No, that would never happen, but can you imagine the frustration and the furor?

What if at your next checkup your doctor told you they had a new, non-invasive, very intense test that could calculate the exact date and time of your death. Would you do it? Why or why not?

What if it came with a 100 percent guarantee that if it was incorrect by even one minute, you would receive \$1 million? Would that change your decision?

What if you took that test and it said you would die tomorrow at

1:16 p.m.? How would you react to that news? What would you do in response?


There is a song called "Live Like You Were Dying" that makes me think about my life.

There also is a popular movie in which the stars had terminal cancer and each made a list of things to do before they died.

I don't necessarily advocate doing the things in the song or the movie, but what would your list look like?

I've created these scenarios and asked these questions to drive home this point: we are not promised another breath. At any moment our hearts may stop or that car may run the stop sign and end our lives.

If you are saved, Jesus may return "with a loud trumpet call" (Matt. 24:30-35). Just like that, it will be over. It does not matter if you are young, old or in-between.

What matters is if you have been saved. What you have done may matter to those left behind but the only thing that will matter to God is the above. Now, on to my bucket list. No. 1 ... 

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 21

Explore the Bible By Kyle Beshears
Associate Dean and Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

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

WITH PERSEVERANCE
James 1:2-15

Joy over Progress (2-4)

Lest we overlook an important detail, James identified himself in a very specific way — as a servant (1:1). The entire letter is written from a servant of Christ to fellow servants of Christ. James encourages his fellow servants to equate their trials with joy. How can a trial produce joy?

Trials produce steadfastness, which in turn makes us complete, giving us a more mature faith. The joy we experience in trials is in part a reminder of our future.

Our joy amid trials is found in our remembering our Lord Jesus.

He also experienced a trial of His faith under suffering to the point of death; however, He rose again and will come again soon to do away with sin and suffering for His people forever.

Confidence in Him (5-8)

It's a difficult thing to persevere during trials. Only through prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit can we ever hope to remain.

One blessing God gives us during trials is wisdom, a deeper understanding that moves beyond mere knowledge and facts. There aren't easy answers during trials, so it is important to look to God for wisdom and guidance.

He is not a God who, as we move through suffering, coldly observes our confusion and pain. He understands and empathizes in our suffering; just ask His Son.

So for those who ask by prayer in faith, God gives them the wisdom needed to persevere. Faith, prayer and wisdom — these three gifts, by the power of the Holy Spirit, provide stability for us in the middle of life's storms.

Focus on the Crown (9-12)

On the heels of trials, James warns the rich not to boast in their wealth. It might

seem like a strange jump from trials to riches, but the connection is clear. Trials cause us to lean on God, which makes us humble; however, money tempts us to lean on our wealth, which makes us proud.

As a warning James echoes Christ when He taught that "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:14). Why? When it comes to wealth, not only can't you take it with you, but it will eventually come to nothing, like a flower fading away in the scorching wind.

Isaiah gave a similar warning — people are like flowers who wither when the breath of the Lord is blown (Isa. 40:6-8). What are you boasting in for salvation? Your material wealth or the boundless wealth of Christ's righteousness by faith? Only the latter will survive the scorching wind of judgment by guaranteeing the believer an inheritance of eternal life, peace and love.

Guard Against Sin (13-15)

If God is good, why does He allow us to go through trials? We must first know that God doesn't tempt anyone. Yet at the same time, God certainly allows us to experience temptation and trials. Why? James has already told us — paradoxically, for our own spiritual maturity and health.

Just as a blacksmith uses a hot furnace to shape and form metal into something he desires, God uses the furnace of trials to shape and form us into the image of His Son.

Each time we enter and return from trials, we're a bit more purified and refined. One thing can upset the process — giving into sin. For this reason, during seasons of trials, we ought to remain extra vigilant for the enemy's schemes and our vulnerabilities.

Our Heavenly Father and our enemy below want two very different things for us. The latter desires sin leading to death; whereas, the former desires obedience leading to life. ✠

A PRAYER OF PRAISE
Matthew 6:9b; Psalm 96:1-9

As we continue our journey through the Lord's Prayer, we move on to the words, "Hallowed be Thy name." Unfortunately, "hallowed" is a term that has largely been retired from modern discourse. It does still survive in a few places though.

We are all familiar with the word "Halloween," which gets its name from the fact that it is the evening before Nov. 1, which is All Hallows' Day. We may also encounter the word when we hear someone describe a place of great sacrifice as "hallowed ground."

What is the common thread that binds usages like these together? Quite simply, "hallowed" is an older way of expressing the word "holy." All Hallows' Day is a day in the church calendar set aside to honor the saints, those holy men and women of old. Hallowed ground is another way of saying holy ground. It is the notion of holiness that links these two.

But to say that "hallowed" means "holy" is only to trace the question back one step. What exactly does it mean for something to be holy? While the term might conjure up all kinds of images in our minds, the biblical notion of holiness is quite different.

To be holy in the Bible is simply to be set apart for some special purpose. The temple is holy because it is set aside as God's symbolic abode. The priests are holy because they are set aside for the purpose of serving in the temple. Israel is holy because the nation has been set aside uniquely to serve God. To be holy is to be set apart.

When applied to God though, the notion of holiness takes on additional features. God's holiness is not just a matter of being set apart, not just a matter of being higher than and separate from His creation. God's holiness also involves viewing God with

a sense of reverent awe. To regard God as holy is to bow in awe and wonder at a God who is greater and higher than we.

Prayer begins with a desire to honor God. (Matt. 6:9; Ps. 96:1-3)

Psalm 96 is a psalm that challenges believers to consider carefully the awe and wonder that are due our God. It is a psalm that spells out what it means to say to God, "Hallowed be Thy name."

In the Hebrew Bible, the name of a person is more than his or her title. It is a way of referring to their reputation. Here, the psalmist extols the name and reputation of God by reminding his hearers that the God they serve is a God of salvation, a God of glory, a God who performs marvelous works among all peoples.

God's splendor and majesty call us to honor Him. (Ps. 96:4-6)

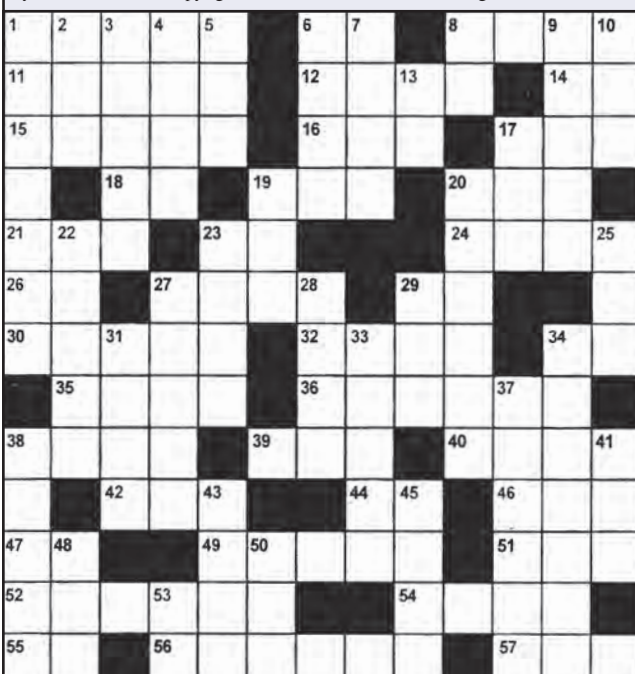
As the psalmist continues to draw attention to God's name, he emphasizes God's greatness. He is a God who is worthy of praise, a God who is rightly to be held in reverent awe. While the gods of the nations around Israel are nothing more than worthless idols, the God of Israel is the one who made the very heavens. Indeed, the psalmist seems to suggest that it is these same heavens that form His divine sanctuary.

Everything in our lives is to be an offering that honors God — including our prayers. (Ps. 96:7-9)

The psalmist concludes with the repeated command, "Ascribe to the Lord." We might rather render this as "Give credit where credit is due." When we ascribe to the Lord glory and strength and splendor, we are merely recognizing who God truly is. When we treat God's name and reputation with reverent awe, when we say with Jesus, "Hallowed be Thy name," we finally come into the right relationship with the God who created us. ✠

Christian Crossword

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Across

1. What the children of Israel ate for 40 years. (Ex. 16:35)
6. There hath _____ temptation taken you. (1 Cor. 10:13)
8. The firstborn of Isaac's twin sons. (Gen. 25:25)
11. Joel and Jehu's great-grandfather. (1 Chron. 4:35)
12. Shuah's second son. (Gen. 38:24)
14. Southern state. (abbr.)
15. _____ and see that the Lord is good. (Ps. 34:8)
16. We were comforted over you in _____ our affliction. (1 Thess. 3:7)
17. The voice of _____ crying in the wilderness. (Matt. 1:3)
18. _____ for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. (Josh. 24:15)
19. _____ kingdom come. (Matt. 6:10)
20. Herod slew the children ... _____ years old and under. (Matt. 2:16)
21. Even as a _____ gathereth her chickens under her wings. (Matt. 23:37)
23. The fourth tone of the diatonic scale.
24. A prophetess, the daughter of Paniel. (Luke 2:36)
26. A suffix forming the comparative degree.
27. God _____ forth his Son.

(Gal. 4:4)

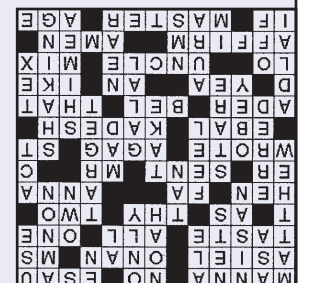
29. Mister. (abbr.)
30. Moses _____ all the words of the Lord. (Ex. 24:4)
32. King of the Amalekites. (1 Sam. 15:8)
34. Street. (abbr.)
35. One of the children of Shobal. (Gen. 36:23)
36. The well, Beer-lahai-roi, is between _____ and Bered. (Gen. 16:14)
38. And Zebadiah, and Arad, and _____. (1 Chron. 8:15)
39. I will punish _____ in Babylon. (Jer. 51:44)
40. At _____ time. (Matt. 12:1)
42. _____ though I walk through the valley. (Ps. 23:4)
44. Stingeth like _____ adder. (Prov. 23:32)
46. Nickname for Isaac.
47. _____, I am with you always. (Matt. 28:20)
49. Abihail was Mordecai's _____. (Esther 2:15)
51. To blend together.
52. These things I will that thou _____ constantly. (Titus 3:8)
54. From everlasting, and to everlasting. _____. (Ps. 41:13)
55. _____ ye then be risen with Christ. (Col. 3:1)
56. Ye call me _____ and Lord. (John 13:13)
57. Abraham ... died in a good old _____. (Gen. 25:8)

Down

1. The apostle who was a tax collector. (Matt. 10:3)
2. Abijam's son. (1 Kings 15:8)
3. The first month. (Esther 3:7)
4. The fishermen ... were washing their _____. (Luke 5:2)
5. A fermented drink.
6. _____ found grace in the eyes of the Lord. (Gen. 6:8)
7. The _____ wise God, be honour. (1 Tim. 1:17)
8. There is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at _____-dor. (1 Sam. 28:7)
9. David's firstborn. (2 Sam. 3:2)
10. _____ hospitality one to another. (1 Pet. 4:9)
13. Nickname for Albert.
17. He came unto his _____. (John 1:11)
19. A yellowish-brown color.
20. Six hundred shekels of gold went to one _____. (1 Kings 10:16)
22. They have _____ from the faith. (1 Tim. 6:10)
23. Suffer me that I may _____ the pillars. (Judg. 16:26)
25. The _____ of violence is in their hands. (Isa. 59:6)
27. They look and _____ upon me. (Ps. 22:17)
28. _____ up thy bed, and walk. (Matt. 9:6)
29. Thou are _____. (Acts 12:15)
31. Children _____ your parents

in the Lord. (Eph. 6:1)

33. Abda's grandfather. (Neh. 11:17)
34. There shall be as the _____ of an olive tree. (Isa. 24:13)
37. One of David's sons. (1 Chron. 3:5)
38. Shaphat's father. (1 Chron. 27:29)
41. Short for Texas.
43. A particular quality surrounding a person or thing.
45. He drew _____ to behold it. (Acts 7:31)
48. Put _____ the old man with his deeds. (Col. 3:9)
50. Names. (abbr.)
53. I am. (contraction)





Media reviews

TV/MOVIES

‘Growing Pains’ leads new streaming releases for October

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

Remember when most primetime sitcoms weren't vulgar? When the whole family could relax around the television and laugh out loud together?

As a child of the 1970s and '80s, I certainly do. I grew up watching shows like “Alf,” “Family Ties” and others — all of

which could be enjoyed without mom and dad needing to dive for the remote every two minutes.

Yes, they contained edgy content from time to time, but that was the exception not the rule.

This month on Amazon Prime, one popular sitcom from the '80s — “Growing Pains” — begins streaming.

The show follows the adventures of psychiatrist Jason Seaver (Alan Thicke) and his reporter wife Maggie (Joanna Kerns) as they raise their three children: Mike (Kirk Cameron), Carol (Tracey Gold) and Ben (Jeremy

Miller). The series is rated TV-G and was produced before sitcoms became saturated with jokes about sex.

In fact, most of the “Growing Pains” episodes even have positive lessons about life. (For example: Season 3, episode 8, in which the Seavers' home is burglarized and they subsequently learn that life is more important than material possessions.)

The series also showcases an intact, loving family and a father who isn't a clueless buffoon.

This doesn't mean every episode is OK for small children, as some involve adult themes and romance and the occasional mild language.

But it does mean you will find clean, original comedy for the whole family, not the trash that passes for sitcoms today.

All seven seasons are now streaming on Amazon Prime.

Other recent releases on Amazon Prime, Netflix and Hulu include:



Photo courtesy of ABC

For adults/teens

► **“More Than a Game” (Amazon Prime, Hulu)** — The high school career of legendary basketball star LeBron James is profiled. Great for any children who love sports. Rated PG for brief mild language and incidental smoking.

► **“The Lake House” (Netflix)** — A long-distance romance develops between a man and a woman through letters they mail in a magical mailbox. They soon discover they are living in separate years. Released in 2006, it is rated PG for some language and a disturbing image.

► **“Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves” (Netflix)** — This 1991 PG-13 film is based on the tale of the mythical hero and raises the same question as that old tale: Were Robin Hood's actions against the rich ethical? This portrayal is very violent though and contains brief strong language.

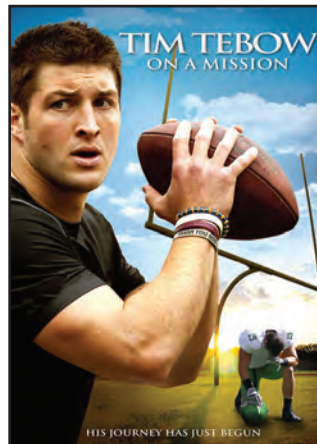
► **“Kicking & Screaming” (Hulu)** — Will Ferrell stars as an over-the-top parent/coach of a youth soccer team. Rated PG for thematic elements, language and some crude humor.

► **“The Miracle Season” (Hulu)** — A high school girls volleyball team makes a run at the state title after their star player is killed in an accident. Based on a true story. Rated PG for some thematic elements. Many parents would say this one is appropriate for children too.

For children

► **“Tim Tebow: On a Mission” (Amazon Prime)** — The faith and athletic career of the Heisman Trophy winner and football star is analyzed. (It was released in 2012, prior to his baseball career.)

► **“The Stinky & Dirty Show,” Season 2, Part 2 (Amazon Prime)** — A garbage truck named Stinky and a backhoe loader named Dirty learn to solve problems. Appropriate for all ages and great for young children. New episodes were released in August.



Meet the reviewer

Michael Foust covers the intersection of faith and entertainment as a media reviewer for The Alabama Baptist. He also is the husband of an amazing wife and the father of four young children.

Want your book considered for a review?

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TAB
THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



'Anywhere God calls him'

West Alabama tackle shares faith in Guatemala

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Hanging from the rearview mirror on his Yukon truck is a gift that changed the direction of Griffin Ricketson's young life.

It is a cross made of wood from a tree at St. Simons Island, Georgia, where Ricketson became a Christian.

"I will forever hold on to a little piece of a reminder of what God did in my life. It's something I get to carry with me. The fact that I got saved there has a special place in my heart," said Ricketson, who was saved on July 4, 2013, during a Fellowship of Christian Athletes camp.

Returning the next summer, Ricketson was given the cross by a huddle leader working with high school seniors.

Ricketson, a redshirt junior offensive tackle at University of West Alabama (UWA), had another experience where God did something in his life. He recently spent six weeks on a missions trip in Guatemala.

Working with missionaries Joe and Megan Frye, Ricketson and co-worker Jared Henderson did evangelism in Santa Lucia.

They played basketball and shared the gospel with youth and helped a local youth minister named Jorge, who is also a teacher in an English-speaking school.

They also delivered food, water and clothing to those affected by a volcano eruption June 3. They shared the gospel with each delivery.

New perspective

During times of rest, Ricketson and Henderson read their Bibles and prayed.

"We got closer to God in down times," said Ricketson.

The trip gave Ricketson, 21, a new perspective on his spiritual life, including being consistent in the Word and in his prayer life.

"The people we worked with are truly Christ followers in every aspect of their lives and spent every second of every day in some way furthering the kingdom of God," he said. "[The experience] taught

me that I should be that way and I should feel that responsibility in my everyday life. I don't have to go around the world to be a Christian, to share what Jesus has done for us. The Bible says love thy neighbor. We should share with people around us."

Greater plans

The Bible is teaching Ricketson that God has more for him than he ever thought.

"He has greater plans for me. He has more knowledge that He wants to share with me. There is always going to be room to grow. I need to be willing to grow in my faith and my faithfulness," said Ricketson.

Dakota Rushing, a senior defensive end for West Alabama, said, "His Guatemala trip strengthened his discipline and obedience to the Lord."

West Alabama head football coach Brett Gilliland said that Ricketson going on a summer-long missions trip showed his heart.

"He understands what is really important in his life. He is very instrumental in our team Bible study and being an example of his faith to his teammates. He is a young man of impeccable character. His faith is evident by the way he lives his life," Gilliland said.

Jeremy Davis, minister of youth at First Baptist Church, Pensacola, Florida, where Ricketson is a member, said, "I could tell that

he had developed a huge heart for the people in Guatemala."

While wanting to return one day, he will go anywhere God calls him, he said.

"What Jesus did for us is too good to not put Him at the center of our lives and share with others the gift that He gave us. It is too good of a gift to keep to ourselves," he said.

Ricketson, who loves to fish, be outdoors, play golf and spend time with friends, wants to continue to focus on his spiritual life.

"Living the Christian life is a blessing to what God has done for us. God's purpose is to be where my feet are, to remain faithful as a follower of Christ and be obedient where He has placed me at UWA," he said. "I feel like He has great plans for me down the road." ✠



Griffin Ricketson

Photo courtesy of University of West Alabama

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Violence against Christians intensifies

HYDERABAD, India — Christians in southern India are living in increasingly more fear as the level of violence against them continues to rise, sources said.

The southern states of Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala saw at least 60 cases of persecution of Christians in the first nine months of 2018, compared with 36 such attacks in the first nine months of 2017, according to religious freedom advocacy group Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF)-India.

The hostile tone of the National Democratic Alliance government, led by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, against non-Hindus, has emboldened Hindu extremists in several parts of the country to attack Christians since Prime Minister Narendra Modi took power in May 2014, religious rights advocates say.

India ranked 11th on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2018 World Watch List of countries where Christians experience the most persecution. (MS)

Three Indonesian churches sealed shut

JAMBI, Indonesia — While church members wept, the Jambi Civil Service Police pasted a notice declaring a Methodist church sealed because of lack of a permit.

Officials in Jambi, on Indonesia's island of Sumatra, escorted members of the congregation out before sealing the door shut. Christian leaders said authorities closed the church building and two others Sept. 27 to appease Muslim hard-liners preparing a protest for the next day, according to news outlet Gatra.com and social media sites.

Authorities cited lack of permits and violating public order for closing two other Christian churches.

Indonesia ranked 38th on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2018 World Watch List of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to live as a Christian. (MS)

School closures threaten Church in Syria

QAMISHLI, Syria — Kurdish authorities in northeastern Syria have closed private schools administered by the Syriac Orthodox Church, which Assyrian Christians say threatens the survival of the Christian community in the region.

The schools in the Kurdish-governed northeastern region of Syria were forcefully closed for refusing to implement a curriculum that school officials say undermines their religion and culture, promotes Kurdish nationalist ideology and ignores a long and painful history of Assyrian persecution at the hands of Kurds.

A director of the schools has since been beaten, and an Assyrian journalist who wrote extensively on the closings was detained. Assyrian advocates say these actions reflect a pattern of intimidation toward Christian minorities and others who oppose the policies of the Kurdish self-administration. (MS)

Pastor freed after 2 years in Turkey prison

IZMIR, Turkey — After a long diplomatic battle over his fate, a Turkish court ruled Oct. 12 to release Andrew Brunson, a pastor from North Carolina, after 24 months of imprisonment.

Brunson was arrested in 2016 on charges that he aided terrorists groups in a failed coup attempt against Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Brunson has denied those charges. At the time of his arrest he was leading the small Resurrection Church in Izmir, where he lived with his wife and three children.

Brunson — who was one of 20 Americans charged with similar charges after the coup — was sentenced to prison but will not serve time. In July he was released to house arrest because of health concerns, and on Oct. 12 a judge lifted judicial controls on Brunson and freed him to leave the country. (TAB)