



The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



Samford's Beeson Divinity School names new dean: Doug Sweeney

◆ Page 13



Pastor in tornado-hit area says God prepared them decades before

◆ Pages 8–9



Ronnie Floyd elected president of SBC Executive Committee

◆ Page 11

To watch the videos from this week's issue, visit our YouTube channel "TAB Media."

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION PREVIEW SERIES



Road to BIRMINGHAM

Photo courtesy of the Greater Birmingham Convention and Visitors Bureau

SBC annual meeting returns to Birmingham after 'goodly number of years'

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

It will, in all probability, be a goodly number of years before the convention comes our way again."

If "goodly" means 78, then F.M. Barnes was right on the money when he wrote this in 1941. After Barnes and others closed the books on the

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting that year it would be almost eight decades before the meeting would be held in Birmingham again.

It would be a "goodly" amount of understatement to say things have changed a bit in that time.

The last time the SBC met in Birmingham, Barnes — then secretary/treasurer of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions — and others were talking about World War II around the dinner table.

If the ads were any indication, they might have had that conversation at a Britling Caf-

eteria — a Birmingham staple where kids got a special tally card and could check boxes every time they drank all their milk. After a certain amount they got a ceramic mug as a prize. (Stronger bones, too.)

On everyone's minds

Everyone was having to grow up a lot in those days.

"Bear this in mind: the Germans are still winning the war," editor L.L. Gwaltney wrote in the convention coverage issue of *The Alabama Baptist*.

"We do not dare a prophecy, but we do guess the following: They will take the Suez

Canal; Turkey will desert Britain in the pinch."

The U.S. hadn't entered the conflict yet. Pearl Harbor Day was still seven months away. But it was on everyone's minds.

With all that going on people could use an encouraging gathering, Barnes wrote. It was worth the drive to unite around the gospel.

"It is almost impossible for many of our business men to be away for several days at a time, but from any section of Alabama they can go and spend two days and one night in one of the most profitable
(See 'Contact,' page 10)

Night of encouragement and laughter



DAVID GARRARD



NEW GROUND

Photos by Travis Frantz



PASTOR MICKEY BELL

To see photos from this event as well as the previous four events visit tabonline.org/event.



AARON WILBURN

On March 30, *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) joined forces with magician David Garrard, gospel trio New Ground, comedian Mickey Bell and songwriter and comedian Aaron Wilburn at Calvary Baptist Church, Wetumpka.

The evening was made possible by Alfa Insurance, Auburn AV, The River and The Baptist Foundation of Alabama.

The purpose of the event was to bring a night of laughter and encouragement to a town that experienced a damaging tornado in mid-January. Many buildings, churches and homes sustained damage — some were destroyed.

TAB plans to offer the community of Beauregard a similar event to help with healing from the deadly March 3 tornado that ripped through Lee County.

TAB also is working out the details to develop a special concert series similar to the March 30 event so associations and churches can bring this fun night of Christian entertainment to their communities.

For more information email news@thealabamabaptist.org.



THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

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Send address changes to:
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Birmingham, AL 35209

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Send old and new addresses, and name of church to:
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Allow two weeks.

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Full member of Alabama Press Association

Accredited member of Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability

'Nation's Top Regional Christian Newspaper'

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



Wetumpka donations delivered

Thanks to all those who donated to relief efforts in Wetumpka during the March 30 concert event. The donations were delivered to the Wetumpka Police Department and Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief on April 5.

MY RASHIONALE

By **Jennifer Davis Rash**
President and Editor-in-Chief

jrash@thealabamabaptist.org
@RashionalThts



Is it really about better communities? Where's the proof?

Covering gambling debates in Alabama through the years has been one of our most interesting and colorful reporting assignments.

Several staff members have helped with the in-depth research including exposing an improper assessment touted as proof of the positive economic impact of gambling.

The 2015 Auburn University at Montgomery (AUM) report was commissioned by Alabama Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh and prepared by the university's Institute for Accountability and Government Efficiency.

It was *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) that initially reported how the numbers in the study didn't add up.

The article was released in May 2015 while Alabama legislators were debating several gambling proposals and later won Alabama Press Association's FOI — First Amendment Award.

The debunked AUM assessment is only one of many articles and editorials on the harms of gambling published by TAB staff during the past 25 years. TAB has reported on the countless attempts at expanding legalized gambling in the state and the never-ending fight against illegal gambling, and TAB was a major player in the defeat of a statewide lottery in 1999.

If you search for "gambling" on our website (www.thealabamabaptist.org), you will find 6,700 articles. A search for "electronic bingo gambling" shows 1,300 articles, "electronic

gambling" brings up 800 articles and "lottery" nearly 1,700.

There's no shortage of gambling-related research nor reports of court cases confirming that machines looking and acting like slot machines are illegal in Alabama. Calling the machines "bingo" and having a small cartoon bingo card on the screen does not miraculously change the machine from an illegal version.

And yet here we are again with illegal operations popping up — all in hopes this is the year slot machine-style gambling becomes legal.

Media reports indicate the Walker County Sheriff's Office shut down the newly established operations in its district while the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office so far has not.

Illegal gambling operations in Greene County have operated almost consistently and seemingly without question for at least two decades.

Law enforcers and elected officials can't seem to agree on what Alabama law actually states even though the state Supreme Court ruled clearly in 2014 that electronic bingo gambling is illegal under state law.

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall says his office will go after all illegal operations that local authorities ignore. To report gambling halls in your area, call Marshall's office at 334-242-7300.

It's an exhausting battle. Gambling industry leaders are relentless, which indicates there is money to be made — for them, not for the communities they claim to embrace. After all, if the concern were truly about the communities, wouldn't those same industry leaders be focused on economic development and job opportunities with or without gambling? 🇺🇸

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

Beeson Divinity School's incoming dean has Baptist roots, also feels at home in school's academic culture, approach

Timothy George and Beeson Divinity School are one and the same for me.

As an alumna of Beeson, I have had the highest respect for Dean George since first meeting him in 1996.

Imagining Beeson without Dean George leading the school is difficult but I also admire him for determining the right time to transition from the dean role to a research and faculty position.

Beeson's interdenominational set up and strength of theological training allows the school to maintain an elite position among divinity schools.

Newly elected dean, Doug Sweeney, describes Beeson as "the best-conceived and cultivated divinity school in all of North America" (see story, page 13).

In the coming days, you will hear much about Doug Sweeney's seasoned experience as an academic leader and his reputation among top evangelical scholars.

You will discover he is indeed among those who are able to sit with theologians and thinkers like our own beloved Dean George and contribute at a high level.

Getting to know him

There's no question that Dean Sweeney will represent Beeson well among top evangelical scholars, but I also believe he will quickly win the hearts of Beeson and Samford faculty, staff and students as well as churchgoers across the state and nation.

Alabama Baptists will want to know more about his previous experience in Baptist life and what

led him to migrate to an evangelical Lutheran denomination. *The Alabama Baptist* will be sharing more about that soon.

Along with Dr. Sweeney's scholarship and leadership qualities, he also brings a steady confidence and peace about himself and the role to which God has called him at this time.

He understands the need for fundraising and the importance of relationships when leading an interdenominational Christian seminary that is one of 10 schools on a Baptist college campus in the South.

Dr. Sweeney is a solid evangelical and theologically sound leader who is ready to tell the world why students interested in seminary should consider Beeson first. —Jennifer Davis Rash

Your Voice



Share your comments, letters to the editor, blog excerpts, social media posts

'Just Be Kind' movement is much-needed

By **Bill King**
Tuskegee-Lee Baptist Association

I was driving north on I-65 when I saw it for the first time — a simple black and white billboard with only three words on it. They were big, bold letters that read, “Just Be Kind.” I was immediately struck by the simplicity of the billboard but even more so by its message.

It’s a message that is greatly needed in our society.

After a little research, I learned that there is a kindness campaign

taking place across the country. Billboards and signs have popped up in many places.

The small town of Plainfield in central Indiana claims to have started the movement back in 2015. The “Just Be Kind” (JBK) group there began with a group of kids as an afterschool club. They made signs, t-shirts and key chains with the slogan on them.

Soon after that humble beginning, the JBK movement began to spread to other cities and states. JBK signs and apparel have popped up across

the nation and even in different parts of the world.

Almost every day we hear of horrific acts played out all around us. We stand in need of a revival of kindness. If we would “Just Be Kind,” modern problems like bullying, road rage, mass shootings, hatefulness and simple rudeness might be held a little more in check.

Jesus told a story about some mean men, two apathetic men and one kind man. The mean men robbed and beat a lone traveler and left him to die. Two men passed by the injured man on the roadside, a priest first and then an assistant to the priest. Both passed by without helping.

Finally a man we know as the “Good Samaritan” was moved with compassion and acted with kindness. He cared for the man’s wounds, put him on his own animal (which meant he walked), took him to an inn and took care of him. When he left, he even paid the innkeeper to take care of the stranger and promised to come back and pay anything else that was owed.

While the first two men went out of their way to not show kindness, the Samaritan went out of his way to be kind. May we follow his example and the admonition of modern sign-makers and “Just be Kind.”

EDITOR’S NOTE — Bill King is associational mission strategist (AMS) for Tuskegee-Lee Baptist Association.

There is something incredibly reassuring and comforting ... about confessing the Christian faith as Christians have confessed it for two millennia.

Albert Mohler
Author, “The Apostles’ Creed: Discovering Authentic Christianity in an Age of Counterfeits”

You’ve got to have a Nehemiah moment in your own life to find your mission.

Pastor Randy Overstreet
The Church at Liberty Park

The government may not discriminate against religion generally or against particular religious denominations.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh
U.S. Supreme Court

Bitterness eventually destroys you.

Ed Stetzer
Executive Director of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College

Letters to the Editor

The promise of millions for a dollar adds up to a first-class, unadulterated, shady scam on the Alabama people.

Why oppose the lottery?

1. Who can afford to throw money down a black hole? Lower income citizens spend more on lottery than others. Their fuel is the prospect of a better life that doesn’t come with lotto.

2. Lottery produces collateral damage. Tickets are purchased with grocery, rent and utility money. The damage? Hungry children, homelessness and cold nights.

3. Local churches and helping agencies are called on to take up the slack. Police investigate more robberies. Community resources go only so far.

4. The craving for wealth dishonors God. “The love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith” (1 Tim. 6:10).

As someone said, “Lottery is a tax on optimism.” Promoting false hope, encouraging addiction and propping up government on a revenue stream that declines yearly. That’s no way to run a state.

We’ve no reason to give in yet. Truth and right can prevail if Alabamians stand fast on the moral high ground. Let your voice be heard.

Darryl Wood
Liberty Baptist Church
Chelsea, Ala.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“Time is a great healer but it doesn’t come fast enough.”

RUSTY SOWELL

Pastor, Providence Baptist Church, Opelika, Ala.

Sadly, many people in the Bible Belt are haunted by the idea of Christ, while not understanding His love for them. The judgment of God lingers in their minds. Believing the gospel would allow them to understand that it is the kindness of God that can actually lead them to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

Dean Inserra

**“The Unserved Christian:
Reaching Cultural
Christianity with the Gospel”**

Historic norms of “evangelize the unsaved and disciple those who embrace the gospel of Christ” are now confused. It is true that, in most situations, to evangelize without relationship can be limited

in its benefit. But the answer isn’t to invite the unsaved to “belong to the church” before they embrace the gospel.

Brad Buser

Co-founder

Radius International

We see Jesus as a revolution-ary, as a healer, as teacher and so much more. No one snapshot of His life captures all that He is. The Messiah demonstrates that human beings are complex and need to be judged by God in His time.

Pastor David Gray

FBC Garrettsville, Ohio

“The 23rd Pastor: Pastoring in the Spirit of Our Shepherd Lord” by John McCallum is a book that

should be required reading for every person in ministry and for everyone considering ministry. It is practical, challenging, theologically sound and transformational.

Pastor Clay Hallmark

FBC Lexington, Tenn.

Even if all humanitarian appeals were fully funded, it is likely that many millions of people would still be left behind. [The 2018 World Disasters Report] should shake the entire international humanitarian sector into actively seeking out those left desperate and hidden in the shadows.

Elhadj As Sy

Secretary General

**International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent**

From the *Twitterverse*

@ronniefloyd

To everyone, thank you for your blessing, encouragement, and prayer support. May the will of God be done today. We need God’s favor, wisdom, peace, power and love in every way.

@WarrenColeSmith

Christian apologists have produced an amazing amount of material in the last few decades tackling almost every tough question there is. The answers are out there, but those answers haven’t always made it in to Christian discipleship and study.

@richardaross

In your church, lots of dads who love the Lord are heartbroken over online secrets. Some moms are sad over chatroom flirting. Some young ones are confused about their af-

fections and gender. Is it time for families to embrace holiness and purity?

@DrMigEchevarria

Diversity is not just allowing minorities into your spaces; it’s empowering minorities to reshape them.

@pastoremase

We have had in the vision of our church since its inception to develop a crisis pregnancy center because of those cross-ethnically in our community who don’t see birth as an option.

@BethMooreLPM

Do not give up. We’re not just struggling against flesh & blood but against demonic powers & principalities. Some of the things we’re

fighting against have had a strong hold in our environments for generations/centuries. They will not let go easily. Do not stand down. Stand FIRM.

@ERLC

“Christianity’s robust vision of human dignity is one of the best gifts we have to give to the world.”
—@dandarling

@Rgallaty

We haven’t become disciple makers until the disciples we’ve invested in replicate their lives into another person.

@isaiahhyoder18

“Jesus never said these things [loving everybody] would be easy. He just said it would work” @bobgoff on the money with that one.



Photo by Liberty Baptist Church

Tim Cox is pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea, and president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

Blessed to be a blessing

Numerous times each day the familiar question comes my way: “How are you?” My sincere response is most often, “Blessed!”

The world of social media may define “blessed” as success when life is good. Good job? #Blessed. Great family? #Blessed. Financial abundance? #Blessed.

But for the children of God, to be “blessed” means far more than life is good or successful by the world’s standards.

We are “blessed” in Christ every moment of every day ... even when treading through the treacherous waters of life. Not stress or problem free but rather “blessed” in Christ.

We are “blessed” to be called the very children of God (John 1:12; Rom. 8:15–16). We are “blessed” to live our lives on mission with Jesus every day (Matt. 28:18–20).

As I watch Alabama Baptists serve with gospel intentionality I see a “blessed” people being a blessing to others, often in and through difficult circumstances.

Through our state missionaries, entities, directors of missions, local pastors and precious lay people, the love of Christ is impacting lives.

We are “blessed,” so let’s be a blessing to others!

—Tim Cox

Baptisms

Cooperative Program Receipts

FOR CHURCHES

More than 3,200 Alabama Baptist churches report CP receipts, designated offerings, baptisms

Alabama Crenshaw	Baptism	CP	Designated
Bethel	2	\$1,952.00	\$0.00
Bradleyton	0	\$1,800.00	\$1,972.54
Brantley	0	\$2,949.64	\$2,524.82
Calvary	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Chapel Hill	8	\$2,342.08	\$7,050.82
Danielville	7	\$1,029.72	\$16,541.22
Dozier	2	\$540.00	\$2,648.00
Friendship	1	\$2,089.00	\$1,500.00
Glenwood	1	\$0.00	\$0.00
Highland Home	2	\$0.00	\$250.00
Joaquin	0	\$2,025.00	\$2,915.00
Luverne First	3	\$13,417.01	\$5,651.18
Magnolia	2	\$134.74	\$174.15
Mt Zion	6	\$13,260.32	\$4,606.00
New Ebenezer	11	\$4,621.92	\$2,133.00
New Harmony	0	\$600.00	\$2,102.00
Oakdale	0	\$0.00	\$1,500.00
Panola	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Patsburg	0	\$800.00	\$4,000.00
Pleasant Home	0	\$1,893.78	\$2,020.34
Rock Hill	0	\$1,489.03	\$1,489.03
Rutledge First	0	\$840.00	\$1,141.00
Siloam	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
South Luverne	6	\$27,538.47	\$7,204.20
Spring Hill South	1	\$7,732.00	\$900.00
Union	1	\$6,000.00	\$1,948.00
Weed	0	\$891.24	\$2,145.00
Alabama Crenshaw Totals	53	\$93,945.95	\$72,416.30

Autauga	Baptism	CP	Designated
Autaugaville	4	\$41,533.89	\$46,505.11
Bethel	4	\$4,875.43	\$75.00
Bethesda	1	\$1,125.00	\$1,920.00
Bethlehem	0	\$782.00	\$2,747.00
Big Springs	1	\$650.00	\$0.00
Billingsley	3	\$6,712.41	\$2,089.57
Boone's Chapel	27	\$24,279.68	\$9,696.08
Calvary	0	\$5,694.50	\$2,345.43
Camellia	7	\$28,574.34	\$15,716.51
County Line	0	\$7,845.00	\$2,000.00
Crestview	0	\$2,028.78	\$100.00
East Memorial	4	\$0.00	\$0.00
Evergreen	0	\$2,200.00	\$2,914.00
Fresh Rain	29	\$1,800.00	\$300.00
Glynwood	16	\$101,298.49	\$48,429.25
Indian Grave	8	\$27,622.41	\$9,805.71
Jones	5	\$10,800.00	\$3,389.80
Liberty	2	\$6,084.48	\$1,044.75
Marbury	0	\$1,249.14	\$373.00
Milton	0	\$958.35	\$359.38
New Prospect	1	\$695.01	\$846.90
New Vision	12	\$2,227.56	\$7,414.36
Pine Level First	3	\$2,650.80	\$2,621.78
Pleasant Hill	0	\$500.00	\$390.00
Posey Cross Road First	14	\$3,332.85	\$4,941.82
Prattmont	3	\$6,757.18	\$8,784.91
Prattville First	33	\$436,905.48	\$214,425.22
Primera Iglesia Hispana	0	\$390.72	\$0.00
Pueblo De Dios	3	\$902.22	\$0.00
Unity	2	\$5,609.14	\$8,045.11
Wadsworth	0	\$10,636.10	\$3,559.00
White Pond	2	\$7,918.17	\$9,018.62
Autauga Totals	184	\$754,639.13	\$409,858.31

Baldwin	Baptism	CP	Designated
3Circle Church	64	\$12,000.00	\$1,140.00
3Circle North		\$0.00	\$0.00
Barnwell	3	\$5,723.09	\$1,580.00
Bay Minette First	4	\$123,947.80	\$53,881.02
Bayside	2	\$4,709.36	\$5,130.71
Bethel	8	\$9,542.34	\$8,579.82
Bridgewater Community	1	\$2,626.00	\$656.00
Bromley	2	\$1,850.00	\$558.00
Calvary Bay Minette	0	\$1,485.51	\$402.96
Calvary Foley	4	\$1,895.00	\$6,362.00
Crossway	1	\$4,575.00	\$1,410.75
Crosswinds Church	4	\$1,079.00	\$720.00
Daphne	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Durant Chapel	2	\$26,814.55	\$17,027.01
East Pointe	8	\$57,656.86	\$87,286.15

TOP CHURCHES IN BAPTISMS			
1. Willowbrook, Madison	191		
2. Redemption Church, Mobile	133		
3. Triune, Etowah	132		
4. Restoration Church, Mobile	123		
5. Gardendale First, North Jefferson	119		
Montgomery First, Montgomery	119		
6. Union #3, Etowah	109		
7. Macedonia, Cleburne	100		
8. Hill Crest, Calhoun	97		
9. Cottage Hill, Mobile	95		
10. Shades Mountain, Birmingham	87		
11. Lifepoint Church, Marshall	83		
12. Emeus, West Cullman	78		
Clements, Limestone	78		
13. West Mobile, Mobile	68		
Highland Park, Colbert-Lauderdale	68		
14. 3Circle Church, Baldwin	64		
15. Dawson, Birmingham	63		
16. Opelika First, Tuskegee Lee	61		
17. Hepzibah, Pleasant Grove	57		
Mount Zion, Calhoun	57		
18. Lindsay Lane, Limestone	55		
Pelham First, Shelby	55		
19. Colbert Heights First, Colbert-Lauderdale	54		
20. Whitesburg, Madison	52		
Calvert, Mobile	52		
21. Eden Westside, St. Clair	50		
22. Vaughn Forest, Montgomery	50		
23. Lakeview, Tuskegee Lee	48		
Cove Baptist, Madison	48		
Hunter Street, Birmingham	48		
24. Antioch Oxford, Calhoun	46		
25. Seddon, St Clair	45		
The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham	45		
Valley View, Tuscaloosa	45		

Eastern Shore	24	\$140,062.15	\$55,461.22	Grace	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Eastwood	1	\$5,900.83	\$2,099.49	Gulf Shores First	31	\$124,952.14	\$36,753.00
Elberta First		\$5,634.00	\$1,849.00	Hamilton	1	\$11,436.14	\$3,021.00
Exalt		\$520.00	\$130.00	Iglesia Cristiana Dulce Refugio		\$0.00	\$0.00
Fairhope Avenue	0	\$12,000.00	\$5,396.56	Impact		\$0.00	\$0.00
Fairhope Community	1	\$880.00	\$5,375.00	Josephine		\$0.00	\$0.00
Fairhope First	20	\$180,330.59	\$87,961.30	Jubilee	22	\$120,274.35	\$49,802.00
Faith Family Fellowship	9	\$42,820.16	\$28,453.40	Lagoon	7	\$2,074.12	\$4,865.05
Fish River	4	\$11,499.06	\$3,152.00	Lifeway Community		\$0.00	\$0.00
Foley First		\$35,000.04	\$21,286.00	Lillian First		\$0.00	\$0.00
Friendship	0	\$10,316.54	\$5,448.00	Loxley First	0	\$42,619.62	\$12,572.00

Magnolia Springs	2	\$8,189.00	\$4,261.24
Miflin	0	\$0.00	\$1,265.01
Mision Hispana de Robertdale	4	\$0.00	\$0.00
Montgomery Hill	0	\$1,875.00	\$6,825.00
New Horizon	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
New Life	6	\$4,555.00	\$5,073.31
New Providence	0	\$1,800.00	\$401.62
Oasis Church	6	\$5,561.39	\$2,224.56
Orange Beach First	6	\$9,793.00	\$9,927.85
Oyster Bay	10	\$26,119.70	\$15,046.84
Perdido	0	\$1,886.19	\$6,942.42
Perdido Beach	0	\$849.81	\$1,961.09
Pine Grove	5	\$15,788.47	\$6,806.25
Pleasant View	1	\$10,105.00	\$9,102.95
Point Clear First	0	\$170.56	\$1,770.78
Robertsdale First	14	\$10,967.48	\$22,081.04
Romar Beach	0	\$1,000.00	\$1,182.00
Shell Banks	0	\$3,555.98	\$6,153.77
Silverhill First	4	\$44,182.19	\$18,459.14
Southside	3	\$17,551.56	\$9,735.48
Spanish Fort First	10	\$19,150.02	\$3,911.00
Spanish Trail	0	\$0.00	\$1,075.00
Stapleton	5	\$40,031.29	\$7,337.45
Stockton First	4	\$13,366.68	\$2,775.00
Styx River	7	\$1,885.82	\$600.00
Summerdale First	4	\$15,057.30	\$4,861.00
Three Rivers	27	\$2,770.00	\$408.13
Trinity	3	\$1,200.00	\$0.00
Vernant Park	5	\$18,519.18	\$3,383.00
Whitehouse Fork	0	\$1,380.00	\$2,600.56
Baldwin Totals	349	\$1,277,534.87	\$664,530.93

Barbour	Baptism	CP	Designated
Anderson	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Belcher Bethel	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Bethlehem	0	\$1,245.21	\$1,000.00
*Calvary	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Christian Grove	0	\$500.00	\$3,300.00
Clayton	0	\$14,607.27	\$8,482.31
Clio	1	\$381.00	\$0.00
Corinth	0	\$0.00	\$1,554.00
Cross Baptist	3	\$11,796.00	\$13,726.10
Emmanuel	5	\$2,175.96	\$213.00
Eufaula First	8	\$89,021.04	\$37,000.48
Evergreen	2	\$6,796.46	\$225.00
La Esperanza	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
(d) Lake City	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Louisville	3	\$15,039.14	\$4,041.00
Mt Zion	0	\$3,722.24	\$2,145.00
Parkview	3	\$41,051.65	\$18,147.91
Pine Level	4	\$6,828.34	\$485.00
Pleasant Hill	3	\$300.00	\$334.01
Pleasant Plains	0	\$1,361.93	\$425.00
Prospect	0	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
Spring Hill	6	\$690.00	\$669.00
Sykes Creek	0	\$120.00	\$0.00
Union	0	\$1,686.80	\$2,962.08
Barbour Totals	38	\$197,323.04	\$95,709.89

Bessemer	Baptism	CP	Designated
Believer's Temple		\$0.00	\$0.00
Bellview	6	\$19,085.00	\$10,154.88
Bethel	3	\$27,999.96	\$10,282.45
Calvary	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Canaan	18	\$96,625.57	\$68,612.34
Christ Our Hope	0	\$300.00	\$870.00
Christian Walk	0	\$0.00	\$200.00
Concord	3	\$21,603.69	\$5,780.82
Concord Highland	3	\$21,118.00	\$5,154.00
Cornerstone	0	\$1,400.00	\$225.00
Cottage Hill	0	\$5,095.00	\$4,385.00
Crossway	0	\$7,577.26	\$2,205.00
Dolomite	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Eastern Valley	1	\$17,064.67	\$9,898.50
Edgewater	0	\$3,262.28	\$1,986.65
Ezra	2	\$29,397.28	\$3,793.00
Fairfield Highlands	0	\$28,900.90	\$5,354.17
First Missionary	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Flint Hill	15	\$1,200.00	\$4,000.00
Grace Covenant	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Grace Life	33	\$48,000.00	\$35,080.84
Grant St.	0	\$3,000.00	\$6,799.00

CHURCH REPORT FOR 2018

Hopewell First	0	\$850.00	\$434.00	Faith	0	\$1,286.00	\$5,785.00	Mt Mariah		\$0.00	\$0.00	Shiloh	1	\$0.00	\$0.00
Hueytown	8	\$18,806.70	\$5,031.00	Four Points	3	\$4,450.13	\$14,277.70	Mt Zion		\$0.00	\$0.00	Shoal Creek	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Integrity Church	0	\$0.00	\$350.00	Haysop	3	\$5,516.50	\$2,331.50	Mulga	0	\$0.00	\$1,981.97	Taits Gap	2	\$0.00	\$12,000.00
Living Faith	0	\$900.00	\$1,350.00	Johntown	0	\$3,287.85	\$1,583.40	New Beginning		\$0.00	\$0.00	Twenty Fifth Avenue		\$0.00	\$0.00
Maytown	3	\$34,081.62	\$25,172.74	Lowerytown	7	\$0.00	\$9,059.96	New Birth Christian		\$0.00	\$0.00	Union Grove #1	3	\$0.00	\$978.88
McCalla First	2	\$1,000.00	\$1,610.00	Lucile	3	\$2,532.00	\$2,000.00	New Birth Missionary		\$0.00	\$0.00	Valley Grove		\$0.00	\$2,050.00
New Faith		\$1,200.00	\$120.00	Marvel	5	\$0.00	\$200.00	New Covenant		\$0.00	\$0.00	Warrior Creek		\$0.00	\$7,500.00
North Highlands	7	\$25,112.87	\$21,118.96	Mt Carmel	7	\$0.00	\$5,104.00	New Georgia		\$6,358.87	\$407.00	Warrior River		\$0.00	\$500.00
Pleasant Ridge	10	\$62,482.40	\$24,083.46	Mt Moriah	0	\$232.61	\$249.29	New Hope		\$0.00	\$0.00	Welcome #1		\$0.00	\$1,287.25
Pleasant Valley		\$0.00	\$0.00	Mt Zion	3	\$0.00	\$0.00	New Life Fellowship		\$500.00	\$0.00	Welcome #2	5	\$0.00	\$750.00
Raimund Heights	0	\$1,800.00	\$3,794.82	New Hebron	3	\$1,445.84	\$760.00	North Clay Baptist	8	\$0.00	\$4,862.00	Blount Totals	73	\$7,283.00	\$111,659.29
River Road	0	\$1,882.60	\$1,120.00	Old Union	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	NorthPark		\$29,166.69	\$87,411.38	Bullock Centennial	Baptism	CP	Designated
Rock Mountain Lakes	2	\$11,857.39	\$2,100.00	Pineview	23	\$18,104.66	\$516.19	Overton First		\$1,228.00	\$1,428.00	Eastside	0	\$3,495.76	\$2,592.00
Seventh Street	2	\$1,326.00	\$3,874.00	Pondville	0	\$1,360.74	\$1,455.31	Palmerdale Cross		\$33,445.24	\$9,558.60	Indian Creek	0	\$883.00	\$377.00
Shady Grove		\$7,232.86	\$4,024.49	Randolph	8	\$15,895.84	\$6,748.37	Philadelphia	0	\$2,000.00	\$10,250.00	Inverness	0	\$2,495.10	\$3,325.00
Southcrest		\$24,139.04	\$5,557.56	Rehobeth	0	\$1,245.11	\$4,103.19	Pineview		\$0.00	\$0.00	Liberty	2	\$1,217.00	\$300.00
Sylvan Springs First	1	\$0.00	\$0.00	Schultz Creek	0	\$7,405.46	\$2,923.00	Pinson First		\$22,916.63	\$23,050.94	Loflin	0	\$3,007.00	\$0.00
Tannehill Valley	8	\$89,549.96	\$19,975.61	Shady Grove	0	\$2,941.00	\$4,356.00	Pioneer		\$0.00	\$1,120.00	Macedonia	8	\$15,616.52	\$12,250.14
Church at McAdory	11	\$72,729.76	\$39,270.00	Shady Grove #2	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	Plainview		\$1,932.00	\$1,955.00	Midway	0	\$2,783.90	\$3,700.00
The Station	5	\$3,500.00	\$0.00	Six Mile	0	\$1,517.45	\$1,937.07	Pleasant Grove First	17	\$140,678.81	\$39,660.35	Mt Carmel	0	\$4,487.17	\$3,295.00
Valley Creek	7	\$21,886.26	\$7,748.72	Smith Hill	1	\$0.00	\$500.00	Queenstown		\$0.00	\$0.00	Union Springs First	1	\$17,709.28	\$10,080.00
Vineland Park		\$450.00	\$1,325.00	Thomas Mill	0	\$1,646.02	\$2,246.01	Raleigh Avenue		\$8,000.00	\$16,439.90	Bullock Centennial Totals	11	\$51,694.73	\$35,919.14
West Highland		\$91.92	\$2,984.53	West Blocton First	6	\$2,800.00	\$705.00	Richmond Street		\$0.00	\$0.00	Bullock Centennial Totals	11	\$51,694.73	\$35,919.14
Wilkes		\$0.00	\$0.00	Woodstock First	9	\$26,135.65	\$13,502.66	Ridgecrest	7	\$20,589.97	\$20,615.00	Butler	Baptism	CP	Designated
World Overcomers CC		\$0.00	\$0.00	Bibb Totals	122	\$190,590.77	\$132,916.69	River		\$200.00	\$0.00	Antioch East	9	\$36,123.85	\$17,936.92
Bessemer Totals	150	\$712,508.99	\$345,826.54	Bigbee	Baptism	CP	Designated	Robinwood		\$0.00	\$335.00	Antioch West	1	\$1,148.08	\$4,264.26
Bethel	Baptism	CP	Designated	Beulah	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	Rocky Ridge First		\$1,800.00	\$0.00	Bethel	0	\$550.00	\$1,069.00
Aimwell	1	\$10,212.00	\$5,155.00	Christian Valley	3	\$1,966.00	\$2,890.00	Roebuck Plaza First	0	\$5,309.43	\$3,120.00	Bible Baptist	4	\$0.00	\$0.00
Beaver Creek	0	\$1,639.90	\$200.00	Clinton First	2	\$0.00	\$0.00	Rose Hill	4	\$1,516.72	\$4,753.00	Brushey Creek	2	\$5,197.36	\$1,675.00
Bethlehem	0	\$5,649.00	\$7,857.00	Cuba	0	\$13,992.01	\$16,443.00	Ruffner Valley		\$700.00	\$0.00	Calvary	0	\$1,142.88	\$2,227.00
Calvary	5	\$7,237.39	\$8,068.44	Epes	0	\$0.00	\$500.00	Sandusky First		\$0.00	\$2,437.00	Central	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Catherine	0	\$375.00	\$3,275.00	Eutaw	3	\$1,700.00	\$2,515.64	Sardis		\$0.00	\$0.00	Damascus	2	\$313.00	\$313.00
County Line	0	\$3,061.57	\$4,730.33	Friendship	0	\$150.00	\$1,200.00	Shades Crest		\$11,038.01	\$31,379.73	East Greenville	2	\$508.97	\$578.35
Demopolis First	5	\$72,390.00	\$41,465.66	Gainesville	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	Shades Mountain	87	\$860,210.00	\$655,170.00	Ebenezer East	0	\$483.90	\$1,611.95
Dixon's Mills	0	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	Lamkin Memorial	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	Shannon First	5	\$0.00	\$100.00	Forest Home	0	\$6,745.00	\$4,265.00
Fairhaven	14	\$23,550.00	\$8,760.52	Livingston First	3	\$31,368.33	\$2,452.42	Shelby Crossings		\$0.00	\$0.00	Garland	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Forest Hill	9	\$6,141.00	\$550.00	Old Belmont	0	\$0.00	\$2,250.00	Sixth Avenue		\$4,500.00	\$5,500.00	Georgiana First	0	\$11,261.97	\$935.23
Friendship	0	\$250.00	\$1,517.86	Shorts	0	\$0.00	\$100.00	South Park		\$45.00	\$55.00	Gravel Hill	1	\$1,695.50	\$1,805.00
Hoboken	1	\$1,076.00	\$11,073.00	Siloam	0	\$8,452.93	\$7,228.00	South Roebuck	0	\$9,999.98	\$9,050.14	Greenville First	2	\$47,709.48	\$18,333.69
Hope	0	\$1,377.50	\$1,015.70	Sumterville	1	\$2,300.00	\$5,800.00	South Roebuck CC		\$0.00	\$0.00	Hopewell	1	\$0.00	\$5,140.00
Jefferson	0	\$1,000.00	\$4,106.50	Ward Baptist Church	0	\$1,411.86	\$4,032.10	Southside		\$321.92	\$5,674.92	Liberty	0	\$3,213.79	\$1,250.00
Lamison	0	\$682.06	\$962.13	West Greene	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	Spirit of Faith		\$450.00	\$900.00	McKenzie	1	\$2,000.00	\$6,748.30
Linden	10	\$27,722.95	\$27,242.75	York	0	\$12,564.56	\$9,921.82	Springdale	0	\$4,801.53	\$7,831.00	Midway	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Myrtlewood	1	\$2,080.94	\$795.30	Bigbee Totals	12	\$73,905.69	\$55,332.98	St James Baptist		\$0.00	\$0.00	Mt Olive East	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Nanafala	0	\$2,566.75	\$730.00	Birmingham	Baptism	CP	Designated	Tapestry Church		\$50.00	\$0.00	Mt Olive West	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Nicholsville	0	\$2,203.01	\$2,143.66	Adamsville	0	\$1,926.88	\$1,438.06	Tarrant First	1	\$7,777.00	\$2,380.00	Mt Pisgah	3	\$0.00	\$0.00
Oak Grove	0	\$658.89	\$928.80	Agape	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	The Chapel	0	\$3,504.13	\$3,475.00	Mt Pleasant	1	\$16,504.41	\$5,360.00
Old Union	1	\$400.00	\$1,300.00	Agape Cristiana	0	\$250.00	\$350.00	Brook Hills	45	\$50,000.00	\$19,650.00	Pleasant Hill	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Pine Hill	3	\$15,000.00	\$0.00	Agape Missionary	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	Church at GrantsMill		\$0.00	\$850.00	Sardis	1	\$1,826.55	\$3,718.66
Providence	1	\$12,073.29	\$10,483.00	Berney Points	0	\$0.00	\$25.00	The Cross		\$0.00	\$0.00	Shackleville	4	\$3,692.75	\$0.00
Rangeline	4	\$8,942.14	\$5,312.00	B'ham Deaf Church	0	\$578.45	\$1,523.21	Thomas First		\$0.00	\$0.00	Shiloh	2	\$0.00	\$0.00
Sardis	0	\$5,579.00	\$1,380.00	Birmingham First	5	\$96,964.26	\$104,310.40	True Life	0	\$1,200.00	\$0.00	Southside	30	\$27,000.00	\$11,714.00
Shiloh	0	\$6,812.27	\$13,359.30	Brewster Road	0	\$0.00	\$1,248.43	Trussville First		\$795,190.81	\$327,346.34	Spring Creek	5	\$3,952.15	\$6,316.38
Sunny South	0	\$1,808.01	\$6,400.19	Brewster Road	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	Valley East		\$0.00	\$0.00	Spring Hill	0	\$558.78	\$968.78
Sweet Water	2	\$17,043.62	\$5,352.00	Brookwood	4	\$3,252.90	\$62,035.58	Valley View	0	\$8,171.02	\$6,000.00	Welcome	0	\$140.00	\$485.74
Church At Putnam	1	\$0.00	\$0.00	Cahaba Heights	0	\$2,458.41	\$2,196.47	Valeydale		\$59,500.00	\$108,900.00	Butler Totals	71	\$171,768.42	\$96,716.26
Thomaston	0	\$20,664.23	\$12,616.71	Celebration Church	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	Vestavia Hills	20	\$28,076.00	\$10,525.00	Cahaba	Baptism	CP	Designate
Union Grove	0	\$200.00	\$1,000.00	Center Point First	0	\$38,667.00	\$13,638.10	Victory Missionary		\$0.00	\$0.00	Calvary	2	\$0.00	\$0.00
Vineland	0	\$340.67	\$281.75	Central	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	Walkers Chapel		\$12,859.08	\$7,095.34	Ephesus	0	\$950.00	\$3,450.00
Wayne	0	\$294.72	\$492.97	Central Missionary	0	\$0.00	\$0.00	Walking on Water		\$0.00	\$0.00	Faith Chapel	0	\$1,322.63	\$1,805.50
Westside	1	\$2,096.00	\$817.00	Central Park	0	\$2,444.00	\$1,380.00	West Point		\$0.00	\$0.00	Friendship	0	\$800.00	\$235.00
Yellow Bluff	0	\$204.08	\$612.22	Chalkville First	2	\$13,633.73	\$17,054.51	Westmont	8	\$4,300.00	\$6,048.72	Hopewell	1	\$6,642.18	\$6,086.00
Bethel Totals	59	\$262,331.99	\$190,984.79	Christ Fellowship	5	\$495.48	\$28,340.00	Westwood	0	\$7,853.16	\$9,201.65	Medline	0	\$0.00	\$50.00
Bethlehem	Baptism	CP	Designated	Christ First Community	4	\$25.00	\$25.00	Winewood		\$150.00	\$150.00	Mt Olive	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Barbara Locklin	0	\$1,200.00	\$2,410.00	Christ for the Nations		\$0.00	\$0.00	Word of Faith		\$600.00	\$600.00	Newbern	0	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Eastwood	4	\$24,440.15	\$22,715.67	Christ Missionary		\$0.00	\$0.00	Birmingham Totals	371	\$3,986,240.83	\$2,589,505.44	Ocmulgee	4	\$1,000.00	\$0.00
Enon	0	\$1,874.33	\$7,385.76	Church on the Bluff	3	\$16,423.62	\$7,640.00	Blount	Baptism	CP	Designated	Pine Flat	0	\$2,000.00	\$6,365.00
Eureka	0	\$1,979.00	\$1,566.00	Clearview		\$0.00	\$3,580.00	Allgood		\$0.00	\$250.00	Pine Grove	9	\$3,521.70	\$2,258.30
Excel	1	\$24,992.64	\$35,589.53	Covenant Fellowship		\$0.00	\$0.00	Antioch		\$0.00	\$0.00	Pisgah	0	\$5,001.30	\$8,523.00
Fountain	3	\$2,501.52	\$5,347.51	Crestway		\$4,643.16	\$2,030.00	Austin Creek	6	\$0.00	\$4,124.42	Siloam	2	\$13,200.00	\$3,732.00
Frisco City First	0	\$9,348.25	\$12,950.10	Dawson	63	\$513,036.21	\$189,563.03	Bethlehem		\$0.00	\$2,000.00	Uniontown Baptist	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
Goodway First	0	\$7,830.40	\$8,615.10	Deerfoot		\$31,170.70	\$18,619.06	Bethsadia	0	\$0.00	\$600.00	Cahaba Totals	18	\$35,437.81	\$33,504.80
Little River	0	\$2,664.97	\$2,288.00	Del Rio		\$600.00	\$600.00	Concord		\$0.00	\$0.00				
Mexia	7	\$43,256.75	\$26,032.72	Destiny Covenant		\$0.00	\$0.00	Corinth	0	\$0.00	\$150.00				
Mineola	1	\$3,810.36	\$9,501.84	Docena	0	\$60.00	\$60.00	Edgewood		\$0.00	\$1,050.00				
Monroeville First	1	\$66,455.15	\$29,091.96	East Gardendale	2	\$11,497.00	\$7,463.00	Fridays Crossing Missionary		\$0.00	\$0.00				
Mt Olive	1	\$532.00	\$3,356.00	East Lake		\$0.00	\$0.00	Friendship #1		\$0.00	\$0.00				
Mt Pleasant	11	\$8,735.00	\$11,710.41	Eastside	5	\$9,910.53	\$9,119.00	Harmony		\$0.00	\$0.00				
Oak Grove	2	\$6,000.00	\$10,332.07	Fairview		\$150.00	\$0.00	Hendrix		\$0.00	\$1,500.00				
Old Salem	13	\$10,710.00	\$6,082.00	Fellowship		\$2,865.03	\$0.00	High Mound	3	\$0.00	\$1				

'God saw this coming'

Pastor in tornado-hit area says God began preparing them decades before

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

So much more — that's what the March 3 tornadoes were to Rusty Sowell. So much more than he ever could have imagined.

He'd heard before that tornadoes sound like a freight train, but as he and his wife lay on the floor and an F-4 storm rolled over their house, it was so much louder than a freight train could ever be, he said.

And it was more deadly than Sowell ever could have guessed as he wrapped up church services that morning at Providence Baptist Church, Opelika, the place he's served as pastor for the past 35 years.

"Our fire chief alerted me that there were some serious weather alerts, so we opened up the basement of the church as a shelter for anyone who wanted to come," he said.

People lined up. A Providence Baptist team trained in disaster response began registering people as they entered, including one church member who had gone home from church with her grandchildren, then thought better

of it and drove back to the church basement.

In the end there wasn't time to register everybody, Sowell said — church members had to throw open the doors and get everyone inside. One tornado dropped, then another as more than 80 people huddled there at the church.

'Bonus day'

"I had no idea at that point that so many people were gathered at the church," Sowell said.

But minutes later as the air cleared and the phone calls came, so did information. People had died and first responders — including Sowell's son — were searching for the missing.

The church member who had turned around and driven back to the church — her house was totally gone.

"We know of several like that who went home after the storm and their properties were totally destroyed, so we feel like lives were saved that day," Sowell said.

Sowell was one of them — homes all around his were destroyed. He says he sees every day since March 3 as a "bonus day," one he might never have had



Photo by Grace Thornton

Marshall Grimes, one of 23 victims of the March 3 tornadoes, posted on Facebook after the first tornado that he had made it through OK. When the second tornado hit he didn't survive. At his funeral fellow members of the Christian Motorcyclists Association led the procession.

of it and drove back to the church basement.



Photo by Grace Thornton

Rusty Sowell (right), pastor of Providence Baptist Church, Opelika, talks with church member David Dismukes about plans for a permanent monument on the church lawn to memorialize the 23 people killed by tornadoes March 3. In the weeks following the storms the community had these wooden crosses — constructed and driven down to Lee County by a retired carpenter from Illinois — as a reminder, but families were beginning to take them home in early April.

if things had been slightly different. those who lost their lives that day.

He's reminded of that daily as he drives by the 23 white wooden crosses on the lawn of Providence Baptist, notes written on them in marker to memorialize loved ones lost in the community.

"We realize our humanity and that life can change on a dime. It has," Sowell said. "I've seen grown men cry — me included."

Providence Baptist is currently making plans for a permanent monument on the church lawn to memorialize

A couple of weeks ago, as more thunderclouds rolled in and rain splashed the 23 wooden crosses on the lawn, people came flooding to the church's basement again, begging to get to safety.

The trauma is "still so fresh," Sowell said. "Time is a great healer but it doesn't come fast enough."

But where time has been slow, God has been right on time — to the point that church members are still shaking their heads in disbelief, he said.

"We began to look back and see the hand of God every step of the way. It's just humbling."

**Rusty Sowell
pastor, Providence Baptist
Church, Opelika**



Photo by Grace Thornton

David Dismukes, a member of Providence Baptist Church, Opelika, who has been helping with post-storm community ministry, points out the lone brick wall still standing at a house hit by one of the March 3 tornadoes. A family was huddled behind that wall praying when the storm hit. All survived.

Back in 1995 when Hurricane Opal's path traced across Lee County the church was "dead in the water" for a few days, Sowell said. They didn't have power and they didn't have any resources to use to minister in the community.

So in the years after, when they built the church's west campus, they built the building with disaster in mind. Though it's big enough to house worship services it's got other intentional features too — like massive shower and restroom facilities, a large commercial kitchen and a huge diesel generator.

And now, 24 years after Opal, Sowell says the church is confident God saw this coming.

"There was a moment a day or two into the tornadoes that as clothes were stacked head high and the room was filled with supplies, toiletries and water that we looked around and said, 'You know this is what this building was built for,'" he said. "We began to look back and see the hand of God every step of the way. It's just humbling."

Tell their stories

And God provided the team too, Sowell said.

One church member runs a trucking company and knew how to get things they needed plus how to organize shipments as they were coming in from generous donors across the country.

Another church member had

experience running a commercial cafeteria.

Still another was Toni Long, the Tuskegee-Lee Baptist Association disaster relief coordinator who organized relief efforts alongside Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief leaders.

"We had key people in our church that God brought through the years," Sowell said.

Another was David Dismukes, whose father, Robert, was pastor of Providence Baptist until he died in 1984. Dismukes grew up in the community, served in public affairs in the army and recently retired back to the area.

"He knew how to handle all the media and logistics," Sowell said.

As Dismukes drives around the area these days people know his truck. He's personally visited with the families of every victim, and as he goes down the list of crosses he can tell their stories.

The first, Marshall Grimes, was a member of the Christian Motorcyclists Association.

"I went back and found him on Facebook and after the first tornado rolled through, he posted on his wall that he had made it through just fine," Dismukes said.

The second tornado took his life.

Another victim, a small child, was missing the night of the tornado and Dismukes was called to join a search party. Before he got out the door he got the call that they had found the child's body.

**"We had key people
in our church
that God brought
through the years."**

**Rusty Sowell
pastor, Providence Baptist
Church, Opelika**

"It's been a real dark moment, but there have been glimmers of light all the way through this. God has taken care of us and we've tried to do our best to take care of everyone, and I think that's been a witness to the community of hope and love."

**Rusty Sowell
pastor, Providence Baptist Church, Opelika**

"Seeing them carry in the body bags, especially the small ones, is the worst part," said Dismukes, who along with Sowell — also a longtime volunteer firefighter and hospital chaplain — worked at the first responders' staging area the night of the storms.

Sowell agreed.

As a chaplain, "when we're called in it's trauma; it's tragedy," he said. "But this one has been harder than all of them."

It's been a tough struggle, he said, but the church is learning to praise God in the valley and lean into their faith.

"A lot of people are still walking around shell shocked, thinking they might wake up and it might be a bad dream," Sowell said. "But it's not. It's been a real dark moment but

there have been glimmers of light all the way through this. God has taken care of us and we've tried to do our best to take care of everyone, and I think that's been a witness to the community of hope and love."

The best way to help Beauregard in the immediate future is to donate to the work being done out of Providence Baptist Church, Opelika (providencelive.com), or Tuskegee-Lee Baptist Association (tuskegeelee.org).

They are working with survivors to determine what is not being covered by insurance, FEMA, etc., and trying to meet

those needs. Another good option is to help support the work of Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief by giving to sbdr.org/donate.



Photo by Grace Thornton

A sign with "#LeeCoStrong" sits outside the west campus of Providence Baptist Church, Opelika — a building church leaders say they believe was built "for such a time as this."

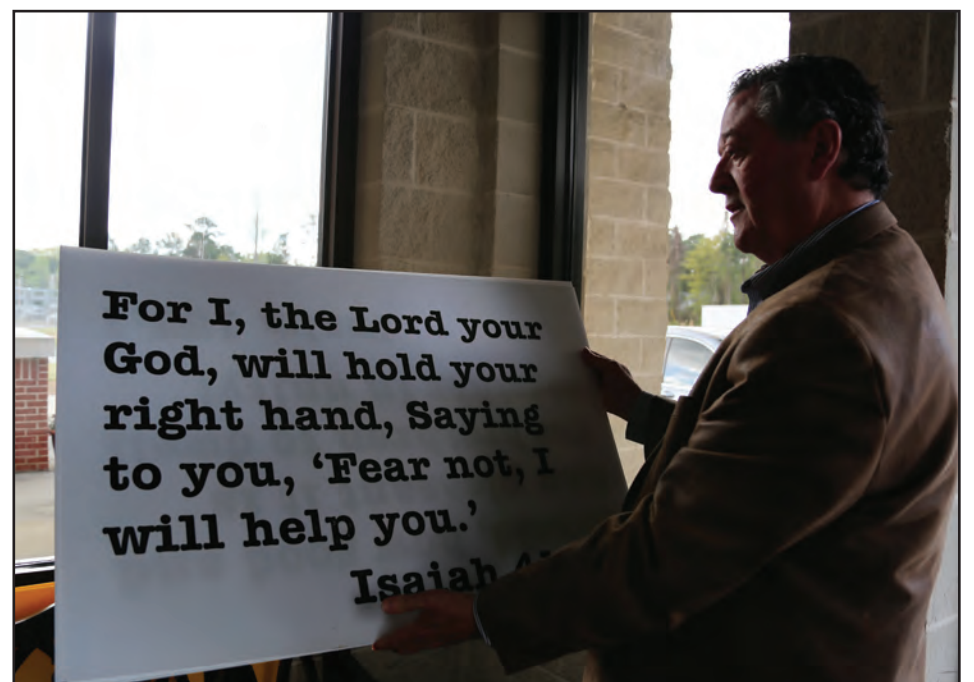


Photo by Grace Thornton

Rusty Sowell, pastor of Providence Baptist Church, Opelika, holds a sign with a verse he says the church and community clung to in the days following the March 3 tornadoes that destroyed numerous structures and took 23 lives — each represented by the 23 crosses displayed outside Providence Baptist.

Contact TAB if you remember stories about the 1941 SBC annual meeting

(continued from page 1)
religious meetings they have ever attended,” Barnes wrote.

If you could get away from work you had almost nothing else to worry about by the looks of the state Baptist paper in the weeks prior.

Area businesses had what they thought messengers needed — the ads

said so. Need ointment for boils and itches or medicine for upset nerves? Birmingham had it. Need tires, seat covers and slack suits? Sears, Roebuck and Co. thought you might and they had you covered.

Much to talk about

When May 14–18 came, many a slack suit gathered. Messengers had a lot to talk about.

At the time the Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board [IMB]) had 527 missionaries serving around the globe, and a new set of missionaries

was preparing to set sail from New York that very week. (In 2019 the IMB has more than 3,600 personnel serving the Great Commis-

sion cause in countries around the world.)

They also had the 50th anniversary of the Sunday School Board to celebrate — a publishing ministry started at the 1891 SBC meeting in Birmingham. (It later

came LifeWay Christian Resources.)

Also at the 1941 convention:

▶ 5,884 messengers

attended the meeting at the Municipal Auditorium (now called Boutwell Auditorium).

▶ The Pastors Conference met at First Methodist Church.

▶ The convention’s slogan was “A Debtless Denomination by 1945.” That year would mark the 100th anniversary of the SBC’s founding. In 1941 they were making good progress with just under \$3 million in debt.

If you remember attending the 1941 SBC annual meeting in Birmingham as a child (and maybe drinking all your milk at Britling Cafeteria), or if you remember relatives telling you

about their experience at the meeting, we’d love to hear from you. Email news@thealabamabaptist.org with your stories. 🇺🇸

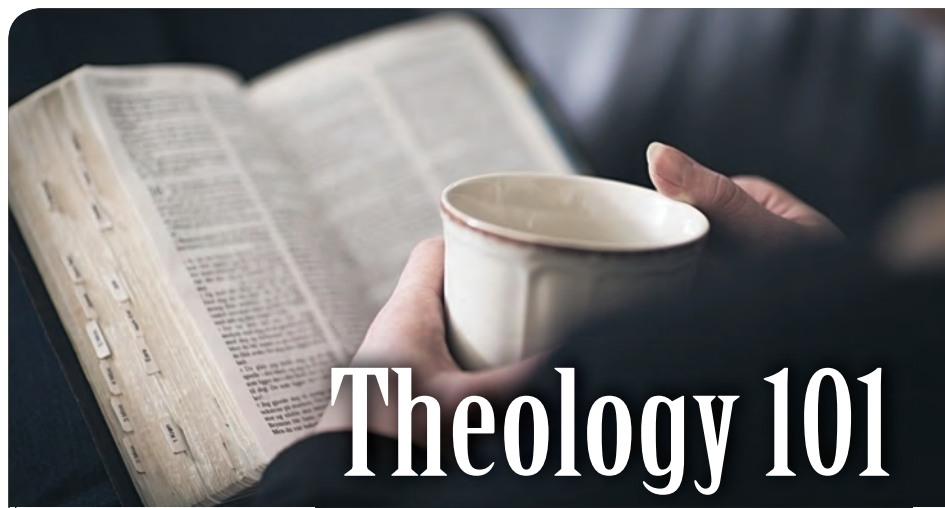


The 2019 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting will be held June 11–12 at the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex (BJCC).



Photo courtesy of the Greater Birmingham Convention and Visitors Bureau

For the first time since 1941 the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting will be held in Birmingham at the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex (BJCC) on June 11–12. The last time the meeting was in Birmingham — nearly eight decades ago — World War II was a current topic of discussion. The U.S. hadn’t entered the war yet and Pearl Harbor Day was still seven months away.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Insights through questions

A Question about the Worth of Life

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

One day Jesus put to His disciples a two-part question: “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 16:26) The implication in these questions is that a human life is more valuable than the whole world, thus no price would suffice as an exchange for a single human life.

Almost every day attests that many count human life as a cheap commodity as we read or hear about the shocking ease with which a life is snuffed out. The news bombards us with an awful array of shootings, stabbings, terrorist attacks and abandoned lifeless bodies in trash bags, in the woods or beside a road.

Eternity of the soul

What truths undergird the value or worth of a single human life? We have often heard about value or cost being in direct relation to supply and demand. The greater the demand or the more limited the supply serves to drive up the price.

In our better moments we are keenly aware that each of us is supplied only one life. Furthermore, each life is unique. Something about being one of a kind puts enhanced value upon an object. The resultant value of each life is beyond estimation.

Another factor in the worth of human life is the eternity of the human soul. The only commod-

ity on this present earth that will endure through an endless eternity is the human soul. That fact alone should drive up the value we place on each life.

Bearing the image and likeness of God also puts human life in a category all by itself. No other of God’s creatures mirrors His image. Furthermore, we humans can experience the life of God as nothing else of all He created does.

Loving God

This added value attached to each human life cannot be found in any other creature in all creation. When we recognize that a human life is unique it sets each person apart as inexpressibly valuable.

As we once again move through the annual remembrance of Palm Sunday and the cross that bore God’s only Son later in the week, we are driven to the conviction that a human soul is worth salvaging and saving. At least our loving God thought so.

Christ’s two questions serve as a reminder that the value of the whole world does not exceed the value of a person’s soul and that no exchange exists which equals the worth of a human life. 🇺🇸

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.



'Ready on day one'

"We're going to reach the world with all we have and call [the SBC] up to a level that we all need to go to."

Ronnie Floyd
President, SBC Executive Committee

Longtime pastor, SBC leader Ronnie Floyd tapped to head Executive Committee

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

An unwavering commitment to prayer and a strong biblical worldview are just two of the traits Ronnie Floyd will bring as president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee (EC), according to Alabama EC trustees.

Floyd, pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas and a former SBC president, was chosen to be the chief executive of the EC at a called meeting in Dallas on April 2.

"We're going to come and we're going to reach the world with all we have and call this convention up to a level that we all need to go to," Floyd told the EC. "Please pray for us."

Floyd's "unwavering commitment to prayer" made him a good choice for the position, said Jim Averett, a member of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, and an EC trustee.

Ready to lead

"During his time as president of the [SBC], he was faithful to schedule time for all attendees to get on their knees before God to plead for God's guidance and wisdom for our denomination. He has so ably served in so many leadership positions that he will be ready on day one to lead," Averett said.

Floyd, 63, has been pastor of Cross Church for 33 years.

His SBC service also includes two years as EC trustees chairman and a term as SBC Pastors Conference president.

In 2017, Floyd was appointed president of the National Day of Prayer Task Force and has overseen the annual National Day of Prayer emphasis in May. He has written for LifeWay Christian Resources and authored more than 20 books.

Floyd served as SBC president from 2014 to 2016. At each of the two SBC annual meetings at which Floyd presided an entire evening session was devoted to prayer for spiritual awakening in America.

Ben Kelly, an EC trustee and member of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, said he is "excited about Floyd's passion for spreading the gospel, for making sure the EC serves local churches and for unifying our convention."

Kelly believes Floyd will provide strong leadership on racial reconciliation and sexual abuse in churches — two issues that have come to the forefront recently.

"Under [Floyd's] leadership and J.D. Greear's leadership, we will make sure the victims know we are deeply concerned about them and let everyone know we are doing the best we can to make sure all churches implement safeguards to protect children and educate church staff on how to put



FLOYD

protections in place and be sympathetic to victims," Kelly said.

Floyd said as much in a Facebook Live session following the announcement of his selection.

Great Commission

Southern Baptists must "do everything we can" to help victims and resource churches to prevent abuse, he said.

And as Southern Baptists advance the Great Commission among people of all ethnicities, Floyd said, the SBC should seek to be known as "the greatest multigenerational, multiethnic and multilingual denomination in the United States of America."

Floyd said he will carry out his work at the EC with

a pastor's mindset and a love for local churches, drawing from his 42 years of pastoral experience.

"I will think like a pastor," Floyd said. "I will champion pastors. I believe in the church, and I will champion the church" as "the body God has anointed" to accomplish the Great Commission.

With only two months remaining until the 2019 SBC annual meeting Floyd invited Southern Baptists to "join us in this grand task" in Birmingham and, in the meantime, to "undergird this gathering with prayer like never before."

That call to prayer is important to Phyllis Ingram, an EC trustee and member of First, Montgomery.

"I believe in the power of fasting, and power will be needed to bring the church to repentance and revival," Ingram said.

"We need a spiritual awakening in our nation. I believe he is the man for such a time as this. As God tells us in 2 Chronicles 7:14, if His people will repent, He will heal our land." (BP contributed)



WEEKDAY MORNINGS ON WXJC

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announcements should arrive three weeks prior to the event.



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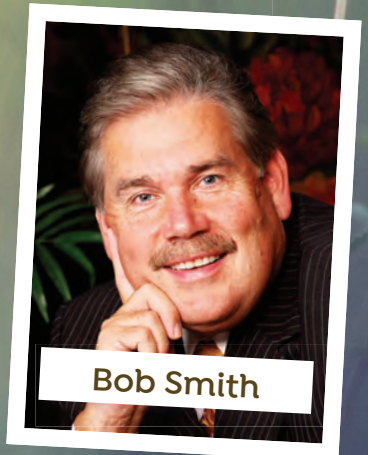
Daven Watkins



Roy Hill



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For further information, please contact
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1-800-264-1225, ext. 245



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National search completed

Doug Sweeney named new dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University

Douglas A. Sweeney has been named the new dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham effective July 1.

Sweeney is only the second dean to serve the interdenominational seminary, which was established in 1988 with Timothy George as the founding dean.

Sweeney's appointment follows a national search to replace George, who is retiring as dean at the end of the current academic year.

"The future of Beeson Divinity School is as bright as the promises of God, and I look forward to welcoming Dr. Sweeney as our friend,

colleague and leader," George said.

A world-renowned scholar of American theologian Jonathan Edwards, Sweeney comes to Beeson from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, where he is the Distinguished Professor and Chair of Church History and the History of Christian Thought and founding director of the Jonathan Edwards Center.

Having served on Trinity's faculty since 1997, Sweeney was the founding director of the Carl F.H. Henry Center for Theological Understanding at Trinity, 2000–2012. He raised nearly \$4 million for the center among other roles.

Prior to his tenure at Trin-

ity, Sweeney served at Yale University where he was a lecturer in church history and historical theology.

Samford Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs J. Michael Hardin said, "Dr. Sweeney brings together internationally renowned scholarship, academic administrative experience and a deep love and commitment to the Church of Jesus Christ."

Samford President Andrew Westmoreland said, "Dr. Sweeney is ideally prepared to provide wise, visionary leadership for Beeson. His commitment to the relevance and authority of Scripture, his strong record of scholarship, his devotion to equipping those called to ministry and his engaging, irenic spirit will serve him — and Samford — well."

Gary Fenton, former longtime pastor of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, and senior advancement officer at Sam-



Photo courtesy of Beeson Divinity School

ford, said, "Dr. Sweeney is an excellent choice to build on the rich theological foundation that Dean Timothy George has provided for this school. I am so grateful for the school's past and excited for its future."

Sweeney is an active member of St. Mark Lutheran Church, an evangelical Lutheran church affiliated with Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ, serving as both an elder and vice president. A former Baptist, he is a longtime Sunday School and Bible

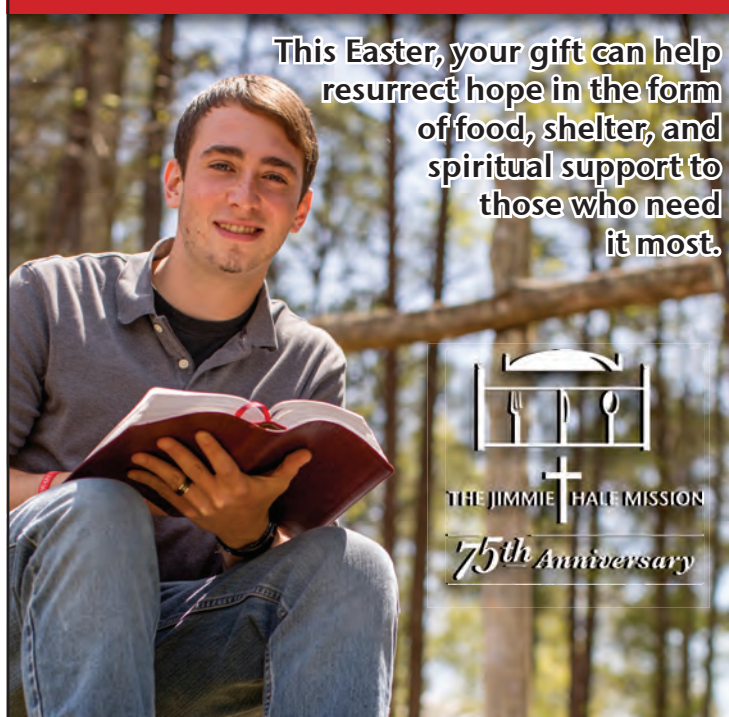
teacher, whose ministry extends into many other churches.

Sweeney holds degrees from Vanderbilt University (Ph.D., M.A.), Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (M.A.) and Wheaton College (B.A.). He and his wife, Wilma, have one adult son.

"I consider it a ... privilege to serve as the next dean," Sweeney said. "I have long been an admirer of [Dean George] and think Beeson is the best-conceived and cultivated divinity school in all of North America." (SU, TAB)

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Healthcare as amazing as their potential

Software programs can help keep your church organized

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Churches have a lot to keep up with. Membership rosters, giving records, church accounts — the list goes on and on.

How does your church organize everything? Do you have a particular kind of software you use to keep records? If you don't, are there some reasons you should consider it?

Mickey Crawford, an associate in the office of communications and technology services at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, says it's worth a look.

"The biggest thing to keep up with in a church is the people itself," he said.

Churches can track a lot of things for their membership, including allergies, prayer requests and background checks for student ministry workers.

Keeping track

Software programs can also help churches manage event registration or keep tabs on who is authorized to pick up children from the kids ministry area after they've been dropped off.

"Software designed for these kinds of records can help churches keep track of everything," Crawford said. "If you take it off paper and put it into a database, there's security in that. Only certain people have access."

Another benefit is that many church management software options work in tandem with programs like Mailchimp and Constant

Contact to help you organize how you keep in touch with members.

Every software package offers different options, and each one differs in how you pay for it. Some charge a flat fee, others a subscription service.

Crawford said he doesn't recommend a particular kind of software to churches, since a church's needs can vary based on size of

the church and software costs.

"I recommend that they look at some of these companies and see what they have to offer," Crawford said.

A few options are:

► **ACS Technologies**

This one's been around for quite some time and serves nearly 50,000 churches, according to its website.

The company describes it as "approachable," and the software offers tools like member profiles, giving options and accounting, child check-in and a variety of other resources. You can also use it through a cloud-based platform called Realm.

► **Shelby Systems**

Although smaller churches can use it too, Crawford says he knows a lot of larger churches in Alabama who choose this software and the breadth of resources it offers.

It can provide some of the same integrated tools like member management and online giving and can host your church's website too.

► **PowerChurch**

Often a fit for smaller churches, PowerChurch

offers membership and financial record keeping and tools for communicating with your congregation. You can buy the software to use without internet access or online. It calls itself complete, user friendly and low priced.

Cost-effective

Churches with fewer than 100 members might find Microsoft Office programs suitable for their needs. Though not church-specific, they are cost-effective because the software comes installed on many computers.

For example, Microsoft Access has free templates to create a basic Contacts database. The customizable database can include a photo of each member, along with name, address, phone numbers, emails, membership date and other information.

Another Office program, Microsoft Excel, is a spreadsheet program, and spreadsheets can be used to track weekly totals in giving, worship, Sunday School attendance, etc., as well as to keep track of individual giving. 🇺🇸

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BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Seventh Street Baptist seeks God's man to serve as a bivocational pastor for a traditional service. Please send resumés to: Pastor Search, 513 Seventh Street South, Bessemer, AL 35020.

MINISTER OF MUSIC

Westview Baptist Church, 809 Damascus Hwy, Enterprise, AL 36330 is prayerfully seeking resumes for a part-time minister of music. Please send resumé to church address, marked ATTN: Personnel Committee. For additional inquiries call 334-494-2336.

BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER

Seeking bivocational worship leader. Big Hurricane Baptist Church, Brookwood, Alabama. Contact: 205-553-3889.

STUDENT AND MUSIC PASTOR

Mount Gilead Baptist Church in Bethel Springs, TN, is seeking a full-time student and music pastor. We are a growing church with a heart for people all over the world. Please email your resumé and/or dvd's to: mlarue2020@gmail.com or mail to: Mount Gilead Baptist Church, 6185 Rowsey School Road, Bethel Springs, TN 38315, ATTN: Search Committee. For questions call 731-607-1000.

YOUTH MINISTER

Farley Community Church in Huntsville, Alabama, is seeking a dynamic, spirit-filled person to serve as our full-time youth minister. Christ-focused discipleship is at the heart of all of our ministries. A bachelor's degree from an accredited institution or seminary and previous youth ministry experience are required. Please submit resumés to: personnel@farleycc.org.

PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER

Concord Highland Baptist Church (Bessemer Assn.) is looking for Candidates to restart our Youth Ministry. Please mail resumes to: Youth Search Committee, Concord Highland Baptist Church, 105 Concord Highland Drive, Bessemer, AL 35023.

MINISTER OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES

FBC Dadeville is looking for a full-time Minister of Children

and Families. Only candidates called to long term ministry to children should send a cover letter and resume to Dr. Ben Hayes at bhayes@fbcdadeville.com or P.O. Box 308, Dadeville, AL 36853.

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Health care sharing ministries can save people a significant amount of money. A monthly 'share' typically costs hundreds less and the annual deductible thousands less than a comparable Affordable Care Act-compliant insurance plan.

Matter of Faith



Unsplash.com

Crowd-funding health care: Cost and conscience drive health care sharing ministries

By **Martha Simmons**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

More than nine years after the enactment of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), state and federal legislators are still kicking around the political football more commonly known as Obamacare.

Meanwhile, regular folks remain on the sidelines trying to figure out how — or even if — they can afford health insurance.

For some Christians traditional insurance isn't the answer. Even if they can afford the premiums and deductibles, they may object to their health insurance carrier covering services such as birth control, elective abortions or transgender operations.

Whether for reasons of finance or conscience — or both — some people are turning to Christian health care sharing ministries (HCSMs), organizations in which people with shared religious or ethical beliefs help pay each other's medical costs.

Similar beliefs

Think of it as a sort of crowd-funding for health care. But to join one of those crowds you'll need to share similar beliefs, avoid unhealthy and immoral behavior, and for the most part possess no pre-existing conditions. For instance Samaritan Ministries, one of the top three HCSMs, requires participants to, among other things:

- ▶ Be a professing Christian and sign a statement of faith
- ▶ Attend a Christian church at least three out of four weeks per month as health or weather permits
- ▶ Not abuse any legal or pre-

scribed substance, abstain totally from illegal drugs and recreational use of marijuana, and abstain from tobacco use — alcohol is allowed but only moderately

- ▶ Abstain from any sexual activity outside of traditional biblical marriage as designed by God between one man and one woman

- ▶ Agree not to sue Samaritan or each other.

Samaritan applicants must have a pastor, elder or accountability partner sign a statement attesting they meet the requirements. Participants must submit statements each year reaffirming they continue to live accordingly.

HCSMs can save some people a significant amount of money. A monthly "share" in an HCSM typically costs hundreds less and the annual deductible thousands less than a comparable ACA-compliant insurance plan. But it's important to learn exactly what is and isn't covered before signing up for one.

HCSMs usually don't pay for chronic or pre-existing conditions like diabetes or high blood pressure, as required by the ACA. That makes HCSMs a lot less attractive to older adults, who typically suffer more of these conditions as they age. Moreover, Medicare-eligible people can usually buy additional insurance coverage — which helps pay the 20 percent of costs Medicare doesn't cover.

HCSMs usually don't pay for preventive health care, dental or eye care either.

Nearly a million Americans now belong to HCSMs in 29 states including Alabama. But the concept is far from mainstream.

The national Alliance for Health Care Sharing Ministries notes the great majority — 97 out of 104 certified HCSMs — are operated by Mennonite/OGB (Old German Baptist) churches and associations with closed membership.

In 2016 the Alabama Legislature codified an HCSM as a faith-based, tax-exempt non-profit organization that, among other things:

- ▶ Limits its participants to those who are of a similar faith
- ▶ Provides for the financial or medical needs of a participant through contributions from one participant to another
- ▶ Assumes no risk or promise to pay
- ▶ Provides a written monthly statement listing the total dollar amount of qualified needs submitted to the HCSM, as well as the participant contributions
- ▶ Provides a written statement that it is not an insurance company and that each participant is "personally responsible for the payment of your own medical bills," even if the HCSM folds.

HCSMs range from small groups

"For some Christians traditional insurance isn't the answer. ... Whether for reasons of finance or conscience — or both — some people are turning to Christian health care sharing ministries."

organized in individual churches to large national organizations. A December 2017 article in "Consumer Reports" reported that the three largest HCSMs — Samaritan Ministries, Medi-Share and Christian Healthcare Ministries — account for 85 percent of all people involved in health care cost sharing.

"Each ministry operates slightly differently, but in general members contribute a set amount — their 'share' — every month. If you have a medical issue you get it treated and afterward submit your bills to the ministry.

The ministry reimburses you or will pay the health care provider directly. But there's no guarantee that any or all of your costs will be covered," according to Consumer Reports.

Some HCSMs direct members to send a check directly to the individual needing to pay for medical services, while other HCSMs negotiate costs for services with the providers and pay them directly, earning substantial discounts for prompt payment.

Good track record

While most HCSMs maintain a good track record for making payments, it's important to underscore the fact that since they are not insurance companies they are unregulated and not backed up financially by a state guaranty association. If the health care ministry runs into financial problems the participant is still responsible for paying his or her own medical bills.

Participating in a health care sharing ministry is always a matter of faith. 🌿



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Alabama Baptist
CHILDREN'S HOMES
& Family Ministries

‘Still worth it’

Vacation Bible School impacts many lives, continues to win children to Christ

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Mechell Bice says she doesn't remember the name of the man who prayed with her in 1977, but she does remember his face. She was 7 and attending Vacation Bible School (VBS) at Light-house Baptist Church, Asheville, and she remembers that VBS volunteer teaching her about the love of Jesus.

“It was a very real moment in my life, and I very much wanted Jesus to come into my heart and to live my life for Him,” she said. “I always think back to that moment in the sanctuary of that little church and how wonderful and different I felt. I don't ever want to forget that moment.”

‘Forever appreciate’

As an adult, Bice — now a member of Evening Star Missionary Baptist Church, Pell City — said she will “forever appreciate” the value of VBS and the commitment of volunteers to show her the gospel.

Kelly Jones, a member of 3Circle Church, Mobile, agreed.

“I was saved during VBS at age 10 — 30-plus years ago — when the gospel was presented by the pastor,” she said. “I believe in VBS.”

It's because of stories like Bice's and Jones' repeated over and over that Landry Holmes, author of “It's



BGR photo

VBS students at Highland Park Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals, gave nearly \$2,000 toward building two wells in Guatemala in 2017. VBS is one of the leading evangelistic and missions efforts coordinated by the local church each year.

Worth It: Uncovering How One Week Can Transform Your Church,” writes that churches should not consider VBS expendable.

“VBS is worth it — all the effort, all the expense, all the hours, all the tears,” Holmes writes. “Why? Because VBS is the one week that mobilizes the entire church to reach the community with the gospel, while simultaneously providing a unique discipleship experience for the individual child and volunteer.”

Statistics bear that out. In 2017 alone, churches reported these stats to LifeWay Christian Resources:

- ▶ 21,376 churches held VBS
- ▶ 2,494,059 people enrolled
- ▶ 65,301 salvation decisions happened
- ▶ 835 decisions were made for vocational ministry
- ▶ \$7,012,010 given to missions during VBS.

And roughly 10 percent of those national numbers can be attributed consistently to Alabama, said Daniel Edmonds, director of the office of Sunday School and discipleship for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

“It's been a longstanding, great

tool that we've been blessed with,” said Edmonds, who oversees state VBS efforts.

Holmes agreed it has a rich history — and it all started in a bar.

Virginia Hawes held the first VBS in a rented beer parlor on New York's East Side in 1898. In 1900, they tried to move it to a church building, then they tried it in a neighborhood to see if they could get better attendance.

By the next year it was a movement — the New York City Baptist Mission Society picked up the banner and spread VBS. By 1924, Southern Baptists' Sunday School Board had a dedicated department for VBS.

In 1926 it began publishing materials to help guide churches as they planned, promoted and held VBS.

“I would argue that VBS's historical longevity proves it is a dependable ministry and a successful strategy,” according to Holmes.

It's an effective way for churches to involve the community and use the week as a missions tool, Edmonds said. “People around Alabama are learning more and more to think of VBS as missions and take it into areas underserved by the church.”

For more information about VBS training contact Edmonds at 334-613-2285.✠

Alabama VBS students impact thousands by funding two wells

By Casey Watson
Baptist Global Response

Myrna once walked hours over mountainous terrain in Guatemala to collect water for herself and her eight children.

She had to fight for this one, basic element of survival, and she had no way to guarantee its level of sanitation. According to Baptist Global Response (BGR) personnel in the area, her children often grew sick because she could only give them contaminated water.

But then BGR helped fund a water system for Myrna's community.

That project in Guatemala — and so many others — have touched lives like Myrna's because Southern Baptists have sacrificed their dollars for BGR water projects. Even children have piled their pennies into Vacation Bible School (VBS) offering plates so boys and girls like them can enjoy clean, refreshing water.

In fact, some VBS events, like the one at Highland Park Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals, have given impressive amounts to provide communities with this essential need.

Last summer, the roughly 220 students who attended the church's VBS pooled their money to offer nearly \$2,000 toward BGR water

projects. Global Outreach Pastor John Russell said the church added a little to the pot so the children could fund two complete wells for communities in need.

Passion for helping

Russell said the boys and girls discovered a passion for helping others after BGR CEO Jeff Palmer made a personal trip to Highland Park and talked to the students about villages that desperately needed wells, water systems and water filters.

“I think, at first, they were a little stunned — particularly our younger ones — because I don't think they had a concept of people not being

able to get clean drinking water,” Russell said. “And then [as they asked] questions and through the teaching we had done during the week, they began to get the big picture. They were very enthusiastic about their offering.”

BGR hopes to give that opportunity to more children this summer. Those interested can visit gobgr.org/VBS or call the BGR office at 866-974-5623 to get more information about how their VBS students can show God's love to villages in Myrna's area and around the world.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Myrna's name changed for privacy reasons.✠

3 stories you should know



Photo courtesy of Texas Department of Criminal Justice

After the U.S. Supreme Court halted the execution of a Texas inmate because his Buddhist chaplain would not be allowed into the execution chamber, the state has chosen to ban all prison chaplains from its execution chamber. The state previously allowed only Christian and Muslim clerics employed with the state into the death chamber. In a similar case in February the Court declined to stop the execution of an Alabama prisoner who requested an imam at his execution. (TAB)

National CP giving exceeds projections

Contributions to Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries received by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee (EC) in March were 3.85 percent above the projected budget at the mid-point of the current fiscal year, according to a news release from the EC.

As of March 31 gifts received by the EC for distribution through the Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget totaled \$100,736,376.81, or \$29,550.18 above the \$100,706,826.63 received through the first six months of the 2017–2018 fiscal year. The fiscal year begins on Oct. 1.

CP allocation receipts for SBC work for the month of March totaled \$15,066,586.47. Designated gifts received in March amounted to \$25,684,181.99. (BP)

Born-alive protections stifled in Congress

Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives have initiated another effort to gain a floor vote on legislation to require health care for a baby born alive during an abortion.

Minority Whip Steve Scalise (R-La.) filed a discharge petition April 2 for the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, which states that a child who survives an abortion is a “legal person” deserving protection of the same degree of care offered “any other baby born alive at the same gestational age.”

Success of the discharge petition seems unlikely. More than two dozen attempts to bring the bill to a House vote have failed because the presiding officer from the Democratic majority has declined the request. Similar efforts in the Senate also have failed. (BP)

— NEWSBRIEFS —

Bluff Springs to honor Davis’ 70 years of ministry and missions service



Homer Davis remembers the second Sunday in April of 1949 like it was yesterday.

He was a student at the University of Alabama, and he went to a revival service at Calvary Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, where John L. Slaughter, then pastor of First Baptist Church, Birmingham, was speaking.

“He shared his testimony and it was like the Lord was saying, ‘That’s you.’ It was almost identical to the struggle I had been having,” Davis said. “I dedicated my life to the ministry that day.”

And 70 years later he says he’s “just amazed that God could use a little cotton-picking farm boy to do all that He’s allowed me to do.”

Davis has served as pastor of churches in Mississippi, Georgia, South Carolina and Alabama, including Bethel Baptist and Ridgecrest Baptist



DAVIS

in Dothan. He served as director of missions for Columbia (now Southeast Alabama) Baptist Association, and he served with the North American Mission Board and the Georgia Baptist Mission Board working with church planters. He’s preached on five continents.

And on April 14, Bluff Springs Baptist Church, Ashford — the church that ordained him — will celebrate his long legacy of ministry with a special service and a lunch.

“I’ve spent a lot of time reflecting and thinking about the good things that God has done, and I’m just blown away,” Davis said. (Grace Thornton)

‘Unplanned’ film’s box office success ‘defies logic,’ Christian critic says



“Unplanned,” a film that tells the true story of Abby Johnson’s ascent to become one of the youngest Planned Parenthood clinic directors in America and her subsequent conversion to pro-life views, brought in just under \$6.4 million March 29–31.

It finished No. 4 at the box office, according to the website BoxOfficeMojo.com, which had

projected the movie to gross approximately \$3 million.

All other movies in the weekend’s top five showed on at least twice as many screens as the 1,059 that showed “Unplanned.”

The opening weekend success came despite protests and ad bans on television networks and social media, combined with an R rating by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) for some “disturbing/bloody images.”

An R rating generally discourages a Christian audience, said Christian film critic Michael Foust. The film’s rating was cited by some as evidence of media bias against the movie’s pro-life perspective. The film contains no profanity, nudity or immodesty.

“The movie’s status as a hit defies logic,” Foust said, noting how supporters of the film and pro-life advocates came out in droves for opening weekend. (BP)



Photo by Unplannedfilm.com

News near you

CALHOUN ASSOCIATION

► **Nances Creek Baptist Church, Jacksonville**, will host a revival April 14–17. Sunday services will be at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m., and Monday through Wednesday services will be at 7 p.m. Eugene Burgess will be the guest evangelist. For more information call 256-310-7216. Garry Brown is pastor.

CLARKE ASSOCIATION

► **First Baptist Church, Jackson**, will host a drama presentation, “Living Last Supper,” on April 14 at 6 p.m. They will also present the drama at First United Methodist Church, Jackson, on April 18 at 6 p.m. Ben Stubblefield is pastor. ► **Pineview Baptist Church, Thomasville**, will host Jason Crabb in concert April 14 at 6 p.m. Call 334-636-2405 for tickets. Mitch Thrower is pastor.

COOSA RIVER ASSOCIATION

► **Westview Baptist Church, Sylacauga**, will host a cruise-in at Noble Park on April 27 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. It is open to classic cars and trucks, hot rods, new cars and trucks and motorcycles. There will be door prizes, hot dogs and more. For more information call 256-487-1410 or visit www.wherethefriendsbecomefamily.com. Jimmie Roberts Jr. is pastor.

COFFEE ASSOCIATION

► **Coffee Baptist Association's 27th annual**

Heroes' Banquet was hosted by Bethany Baptist Church, New Brockton, on March 14. This event is an opportunity to recognize and honor those serving our community.

► **Newbia Baptist Church, Elba**, will host its Easter egg hunt April 20 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. There will be food, drinks, games and more. Will Jordan is pastor.



Photo courtesy of Coffee Association

MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATION

► **Nathan Nowell** is the new minister of students and recreation at **Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery**. He previously served as student ministry associate at Calvary Baptist Church, Dothan. He also has served at First Baptist Church, Notasulga; and First Baptist Church, Dothan. He holds a degree in ministry studies from Auburn University. He is married to Sarah.



NOWELL

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION

► **Mount Vernon Baptist Church, Collinsville**, will host the annual Lookout Mountain Baptist Association Evangelism Rally on April 28 at 5 p.m. The service will feature testimonies from individuals who were led to Christ through the evangelistic efforts of others. A combined choir

will be led by DeWitt Cox, associational music director. Terry Burke is pastor of Mount Vernon Baptist. James Maples is associational evangelism director and Lloyd Borden is associational missionary.

TALLAPOOSA ASSOCIATION

► On March 17, **Old Providence Baptist Church, Goodwater**, celebrated 175 years of service. Former pastor Carlton Amason was the guest speaker, Lacreia Jones Thomas sang a solo and the choir sang.

Calvin Milford presented the church with a certificate on behalf of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. Old church photos and certificates were on display.

“It was a wonderful God-filled day,” said church member Patricia Jones. “It is amazing to watch what God can do.”

Lunch followed the service. The 175th celebration will continue Aug. 4 with an all-day, old-fashioned singing. Clinton Branch is pastor.



Photo courtesy of Douglas Jones

OTHER

► **The Johnny Williamson Good Shepherd Foundation** will host the 6th annual Legacy of Love festival April 20 in Samantha from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Food and family activities will include live music, clogging and face painting. A concert featuring 11th Hour will be held immediately following the festival at the Shepherd Hill Opry. For more information call 205-872-4719. 🇺🇸

— NEWSBRIEFS —

Rise in attacks on French churches reflects ignorance of religion



Sometimes it's a cross of human excrement smeared on a church wall with stolen Communion hosts stuck at the four corners.

Other times a statue of the Virgin Mary lies shattered on the floor. Now and then a fire breaks out in a house of prayer.

Roman Catholic churches have increasingly come under attack in France, a country so long identified with Christianity that it used to be called “the eldest daughter of the church.”

A recent fire at St. Sulpice, the second-largest church in Paris, has shed light on a trend that has become commonplace in many smaller towns.

Among attacks on churches in February a cross of human excrement was found in the southern city of Nimes, a statue of Mary was



RNS photo by Laurent Cipriani/AP

smashed in a Paris suburb and a statue of Jesus decapitated in an Atlantic seaside resort with the very Christian name of Saint Gilles Croix de Vie (St. Giles, Cross of Life).

The attacks on Catholic churches reflect the complex role France's once dominant faith plays in a society that has changed so much that ignorance of religion — not only Christianity but others as well — is widespread.

Attacks on other religious sites, especially Jewish and Muslim properties, have also risen, but are far fewer than those on Catholic churches because of their minority status.

Protestants, who make up only 2 percent of the population, have seen few attacks on their churches, possibly because they lack many symbols distinct to Catholicism. (RNS)

Christ's light shines amid physical, spiritual darkness in Venezuela



Representatives of Baptist Global Relief (BGR) and the International Mission Board are seeking ways to help Venezuela as most parts of the country are coping with the nation's second

round of power outages in less than a month.

After a week with no electricity, water shortages and food spoilage is a way of life, while hospitals, businesses and schools are closed.

For the vast majority of Venezuelans, believers and nonbelievers alike, life is strictly about survival. Yet Baptists in the devastated nation are looking for and finding ways to share the light of Christ as they minister to those around them.

Baptist work is going forward in 23 of the nation's 24 states. At an associational/regional level programs have been in place since last year to help pastoral families with basic pantry items once a month through The RaVenz Project. Additional programs are providing food for church feeding centers directed to the most vulnerable in the community such as children, pregnant and nursing mothers and the elderly.

To give to help relief efforts in Venezuela go to gobgr.org. (BP)



Screen capture from CNN



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- 17-21 MAC for Girls
- 17-21 MAC for Teen Girls
- 24-28 MAC for Girls
- 24-28 MAC for CITs (teen girls only)

JULY

- 1-3 Mini MAC for Girls, Boys and LEADERS NEW
- 1-3 Mini MAC for Teen Girls
- 5-6 Family MAC (one-night option)
- 4-6 Family MAC (two-night option)
- 8-12 MAC for Girls and Boys
- 8-12 MAC for CITs (teen girls and boys)
- 15-19 MAC for Girls and Boys
- 15-19 MAC for CITs (teen girls and boys)
- 22-26 MAC for Boys
- 22-26 MAC for Teen Boys
- 26-27 Lad & Dad



TO REGISTER

Visit WorldSongRetreat.com and follow the registration link. (Returning campers, log into your Campwise account.) Questions? Contact Kathryn Helms at (334) 613-2223 or khelms@alsbom.org.

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The camp is open to any student in Alabama who has completed the 8th-12th grade and exemplifies solid spiritual leadership in his or her church.

For more information or to register, visit supersummer.ymlink.org or contact Scooter Kellum at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 280, or (334) 613-2280, or skellum@alsbom.org.

‘A glimpse of God’

Renowned geneticist encourages strength of faith alongside science

On top of his duties as the director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Francis Collins takes time to answer letters from Christians trying to reconcile their faith with science.

At a conference in March of BioLogos, the nonprofit he founded more than 10 years ago to bridge science and faith, Collins told an audience of 360 scientists, pastors and educators about an email he received recently from a man in Nigeria named Emanuel.

Room for faith

Emanuel was raised in a conservative Christian home, but was studying to be a nurse and wrestling with whether he could hold on to his faith.

Collins told him he didn't need to abandon his faith in order to understand what he was learning.

A renowned geneticist,

Collins is recognized in faith circles not only for his scientific accomplishments — among them piloting the Human Genome Project — but for his seemingly unshakable faith in God.

That dedication to Christianity has earned him star power among a segment of evangelicals who are eager for a more nuanced approach to science — one that accepts the findings of evolution, for example, while also regarding the Bible as a source of ultimate authority.

BioLogos takes concrete steps to educate evangelicals about science in a way that makes room for their faith. It has recently launched a podcast and is working on curricula for homeschoolers and Christian schools that are scientifically rigorous and true to the Christian faith.

Collins may be the best Protestant diplomat for bridging the science-faith divide as Christians wrestle with modern technology such as CRISPR, the new tool for gene editing.



COLLINS

In an interview with Religion News Service, Collins said CRISPR has “moved to the top of the list in terms of its ethical consequences, that is gene editing in terms of modifying the germline, the part of the DNA that gets passed on from parent to child.”

The issue of altering the DNA of an embryo with the intention to produce a child with a different DNA structure is “crossing a profoundly significant line,” Collins said.

“It has all kinds of issues of a practical sort: Can you do it, can you do it efficiently and is it safe? But it also

has deeply significant ethical, philosophical, theological issues,” Collins said. “If we are made in God’s image, if we are fearfully and wonderfully made, as Psalm 139 says, are we really ready to take on the role of changing that?”

Enhance each other

The scientific and spiritual worldview can enhance each other, he said.

“As a scientist I get a special privilege in the moment of discovery to say, ‘Oh wow. Look what I figured out and I can tell everyone

else I know it,’ but also, ‘Look at this glimpse I just got of God’s mind and what a gift that is.’ So I think Christians bring that sense of curiosity and vision and awe,” he said.

“Whether it’s adding to the body of knowledge of how life works ... or whether it’s more applied and prevents a child from suffering, that feels like a calling that every Christian deep down experiences, and here is a chance to play that out in this wonderful team spirit of scientific investigations of nature.” (RNS)

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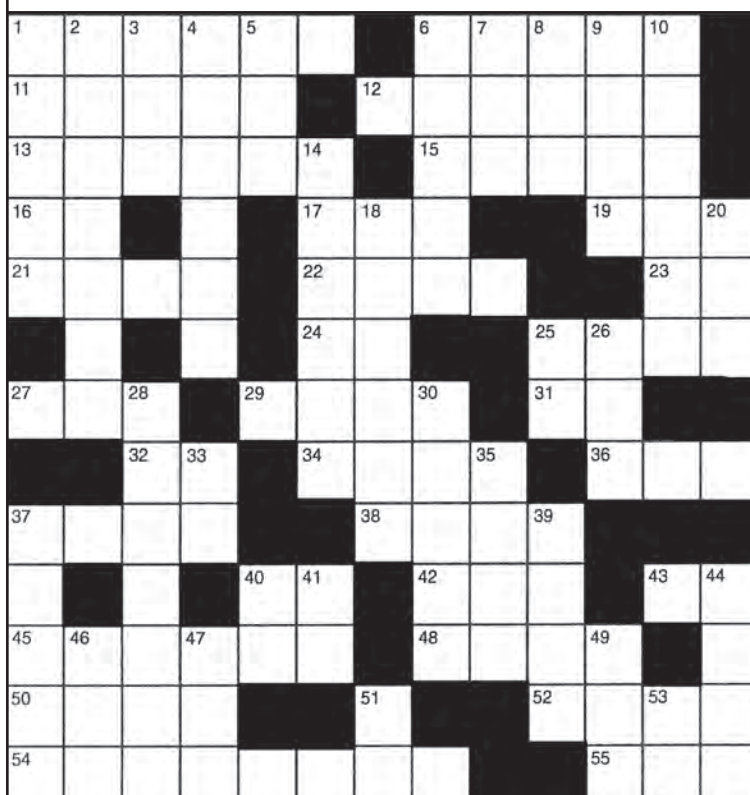
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Looking for the answers to this week's crossword? Those are now on page 2 so we can make the puzzle clues larger and easier to read. Happy puzzling!

Christian Crossword

By Udena McKee Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. Led the Israelites over the Jordan river. (Josh. 4:1)
6. Queen of the _____. (Matt. 12:42)
11. A crown of gold round _____. (Ex. 25:11)
12. Disciple and successor of Elijah. (1 Kings 19:16)
13. Marked with bands.
15. Part of the small intestine.
16. Overdraft. (abbr.)
17. Born in his ____ house. (Gen. 14:14)
19. The ____es saw a man coming forth out of the city. (Judg. 1:24)
21. ____ thou return unto the ground. (Gen. 3:19)
22. Loose outer garment worn by ancient Romans.
23. He built there an altar, and called the place ____-bethel. (Gen. 35:7)
24. The Lord your God, ____ it is that fighteth for you. (Josh. 23:10)
25. Spiral or twisted form.
27. Who heard ____ words of God. (Num. 24:4)
29. Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord, shall be _____. (Prov. 29:25)
31. ____ an earring of gold. (Prov. 25:12)
32. Los Angeles. (abbr.)

34. Thus you ____ify the word of God. (Matt. 15:6)
36. One who excels.
37. If a man have long _____. (1 Cor. 11:14)
38. Past participle of lie.
40. The men of Bethel and _____. (Neh. 7:32)
42. Where golf ball is placed.
43. Give ____ this day. (Matt. 6:11)
45. City where the Philistines took the ark. (1 Sam. 5:1)
48. First home of Adam and Eve. (Gen. 2:8)
50. A native of Thailand.
52. What hast thou ____? (Gen. 4:10)
54. A good king of Judah. (2 Chron. 29:1)
55. A male cat.

Down

1. A dress or shirt ruffle.
2. Shortest book of the Old Testament.
3. Hannah prayed for a _____. (1 Sam. 1:11)
4. To crowd together.
5. Indian tribe from western U.S.
6. His ____ was in his hand. (1 Sam. 17:40)
7. Her mouth is smoother than _____. (Prov. 5:3)
8. ____ them to fasten the curtains. (Ex. 26:6)
9. ____ shall ye say to David. (1 Sam. 18:25)
10. Your steps will not be ____ (ed). (Prov. 4:12)
14. Where Joseph found his brothers. (Gen. 37:17)
18. Full of sorrow.
20. Jonadab told Amnon to pretend to be _____. (2 Sam. 13:5)
25. Symbol for calcium.
26. United States of America (abbr.)
28. Job's friend. (Job 2:11)
30. To fill with joy.
33. Symbol for argon.
35. Thou hast not ____ unto men, but unto God. (Acts 5:4)
37. A tract of open land.
39. Your Father knoweth what things ye have ____ of. (Matt. 6:8)
40. Account of. (abbr.)
41. Part of the psyche.
44. All of a man's ways ____ innocent to him. (Prov. 16:2)
46. Female pronoun.
47. Give me children, or else I _____. (Gen. 30:1)
49. That which was torn by beasts I brought ____ unto thee. (Gen. 31:39)
51. Mother.
53. Before them there were ____ such locusts. (Ex. 10:14)

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For April 14

Explore the Bible

By Robert E. Jackson, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



COMMANDS

Mark 9:14–27

Powerless (14–18)

Life's mountaintop experiences often are followed by valleys. Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain is followed by the valley of His disciples' powerlessness, evidenced on numerous levels.

First and foremost, as representatives of Christ, they are powerless to heal the boy. Next they lack control over their emotions as they feud with the religious leaders while a father agonizes over his suffering child. Ultimately they fail because they don't seek the only source of real power through prayer.

Like the disciples far too often we neglect prayer and thus focus on things that have no eternal significance — such as the color of the carpet, the style of music, the order of worship and so forth. Is there any wonder why we experience so little power?

Hopeless (19–21)

The disciples lacked power and were hopeless over this evil spirit. The religious leaders armed with their law provided zero hope. In fact no human intervention could provide hope for this family. A fundamental problem with both the people and the disciples is their unbelief. Hope shows up in Jesus who reprimands them for their unbelief.

As soon as the spirit sees Jesus it causes the boy to roll around and foam at the mouth. Jesus watches the boy writhing on the ground while He asks the dad, "How long has this been happening?" We can understand the hopelessness of this parent who has watched his boy suffer since childhood.

Faithless (22–24)

Obviously the failure of the disciples was another disappointment as the father sought healing for his child. We sense the anguish in his voice as he explains that his boy has almost died by drowning and burning. This situation is grave and

all hope seems to be fading. From this hopeless and faithless mindset the dad asks Jesus to help — "If you can." The implied skepticism is met with a sharp comeback from Christ that everything is possible for the person who believes.

Make no mistake this statement does not mean if you have enough faith any sickness will be healed. Far too often this faulty belief leads to guilt when a person prays in faith and no healing comes. We ask, "Did I fail to believe enough?" No. Do not miss the point. Jesus must be the object of belief; faith in Jesus sets no limits to the power of God. In other words Jesus is challenging the man to put his faith in the miracle worker instead of the miracle.

With Jesus' unlimited power all things are possible. I love the dad's cry, "I believe, help my unbelief!" Confession of our unbelief is necessary for moving from faithlessness to belief.

Faithful (25–27)

As a crowd rushes together to witness the commotion Jesus commands the demon to leave and never return. As the evil spirit leaves the boy convulses violently and then becomes motionless. In fact many in the crowd murmur, "He is dead." Remember Jesus challenges the boy's father to believe in Him. Jesus has been here before with Jairus' daughter. Whether the boy is dead or not is of no consequence to Jesus because He is the life giver.

Using resurrection language Mark states Jesus "raised him" and "he stood up." Not only was the boy healed from the demon, but even more importantly he was raised by Jesus to a new life. This lesson should remind us to put our trust in the faithful Jesus. Belief in Jesus, not the miracle, is a necessary step as we grow in faithful obedience to Him. 🌿

Bible Studies for Life

By James Riley Strange, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of New Testament, Samford University



GOD WON'T FORGIVE THIS SIN

Matthew 12:22–32

Today we begin a seven-week series on some of the difficult sayings of Jesus. Most lessons will focus on difficult things Jesus told His disciples to do and most of those have to do with emotions and intentions. The first two lessons, however, look at difficult things to believe.

These lessons examine the cost of discipleship. We face no famine of messages that God intends to prosper Christians. If understood to mean wealth, health and ease such ideas leave us with no help during difficulties. A diet of lessons that emphasize the struggles of obedience will remind us that Jesus calls us to follow Him despite great cost.

The work of Christ points to the power of God. (22–23)

This episode occurs in a series of disputes with religious leaders and Jesus' own family. Demons (also "unclean spirits") often cause people to harm themselves. This one causes blindness and muteness.

In the Gospels these often stand for ignorance and refusal to proclaim the truth — or for proclaiming what is false. The demoniac is a foil for the Pharisees of verse 24.

The crowds who witness the miracle express doubt that Jesus is the "son of David," the Messiah (see Matt. 1:1). The Greek can be translated, "Surely this isn't the son of David, is it?" The Pharisees will go further than doubt.

The work of Christ points to the presence of God's Spirit. (24–29)

Beelzebul or "Ba'al-zebul" ("lord of the lofty abode") was the name of a Canaanite god who was ridiculed as "Beelzebub" or "Ba'al-ze-bub" ("lord of the flies") in 2 Kings 1:2–3:16. The Pharisees pick up the idea in some Jewish writings that Beelzebul is the arch demon.

Notice that they do not accuse Jesus of deception. They express no doubt He can cast out demons

probably because their own followers can do the same (v. 27).

Jesus points out that if the head demon is casting out his own slaves, then Satan's kingdom is about to fall. This statement oozes irony for Satan's kingdom is indeed falling because of the source of Jesus' power: the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Messiah who, with the power of the Spirit, has tied up the strong man to plunder his house.

Willful and persistent unbelief leaves no room for repentance, and forgiveness is absent when repentance is absent. (30–32)

It is one thing to "speak a word against the Son of Man." In context this probably refers to engaging in disputes with Jesus, a valued religious practice. One showed respect to another teacher by arguing about the correct interpretation of Scripture, especially when how to live it out was at stake.

Disputation showed that both parties agreed about the goal: living as God wants His people to live. It is something else to call God's work the devil's toil.

Like the crowds we may experience doubts. However, to witness God at work in our lives and in the world and to see instead the work of Satan reveals a relationship with God demolished by our choice.

Taking into account what Jesus says elsewhere about the breadth and depth of God's mercy and our forgiveness of others (Matt. 5:7 and 6:12; Luke 6:36 and 23:34), here Jesus suggests such a person refuses to seek forgiveness. C.S. Lewis said something similar in a number of writings (see "The Great Divorce" and "The Silver Chair"). If God takes human will seriously then there must be some who, even if they were to meet God face to face, would reject Him.

Let us be those who see clearly and proclaim. 🌿



Media reviews

MOVIES

‘Apollo 11’ is marvelous celebration of God’s creation

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

Apollo 11’s mission to the moon was among the greatest achievements in world history, but sadly it wasn’t captured with today’s high-definition video cameras.

Instead we’re left only with grainy footage showing Neil Armstrong stepping on the moon and Walter Cronkite describing the action.

Then again ... maybe not.

A new documentary, appropriately named “Apollo 11” (G), brings that 50-year-old mission to life thanks to a newly discovered batch of 65mm film and more than 11,000 hours of uncataloged audio recordings — most of which we’ve never seen or heard.

The result is a 90-minute movie that approximates modern film technology and makes you feel like you’re living in 1969.

It’s among the best documentaries I’ve seen and — minus two moments of coarse language — is squeaky-clean for the entire family.

“Apollo 11” was directed and edited by Todd Douglas Miller, who is best known for his work on another

documentary, “Dinosaur 13.”

Miller said he wanted to avoid using the popular, famous footage the public already had seen, and he succeeded.

For example, the iconic black-and-white film of Armstrong stepping down the ladder isn’t even in the movie. Instead, we watch a color film that was recorded inside the lunar lander by his crewmate Buzz Aldrin.

Never-before-seen

The rest of “Apollo 11” follows a similar pattern as we enjoy never-before-broadcast footage of event after event.

Instead of grainy television footage of the launch we’re treated to an up-close 65mm footage of the rocket lifting from the pad and piercing the clouds. That alone is worth the price of admission.

The movie also succeeds because it has no narrator. We only hear the astronauts, the Mission Control workers, and Cronkite. His booming, nostalgic voice sets the tone.

At the beginning of the movie we watch the mammoth Saturn V rocket make its way to the launchpad on the crawler-transporter.



‘Apollo 11’

Photo courtesy of Neon

Later we watch the astronauts donning their suits and climbing into the capsule.

The movie ends with the world celebrating their return.

It’s the miniscule details recorded on once-forgotten footage the day of the launch that makes the documentary entertaining: Americans drinking coffee on the beach, lining up at concession stands, waking up in a Florida campground and cramming together on a hotel balcony — all ready to see history being made.

The launch happened when coffee was 5 cents, beehive hairstyles were in and everyone wore crazy-looking glasses. (Yes, those details are in the film too.)

“Apollo 11” is a must-see film for those who lived through it and those who

are learning about it in school for the first time.

It’s inspiring and educational and it contains a few edge-of-your-seat moments that will surprise you.

The film celebrates achievement, teamwork and our shared humanity. It also raises a few worldview questions, led by Buzz Aldrin’s pronouncement that the mission was a symbol of the “insatiable curiosity of all mankind to explore the unknown.”

Imago dei

But why do we have this insatiable desire to explore?

Perhaps it’s because God planted within us a hunger to discover what’s out there. Perhaps it’s because God’s universe is so incredible it’s worth exploring.

Or perhaps it’s because we have the imago dei —

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.

the image of God — that gives us the ability to build rockets and learn more about God’s creation.

Whatever the reason, “Apollo 11” is worth watching.

Content warnings: The film contains no violence or sexuality and two coarse words (a muffled d--n by Collins from space and h-ll heard in the John Stewart song “Mother Country”).



‘Christ in the foreground’

Faith helps Milwaukee Brewers’ pitcher Suter through rough patches

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When teammates learn that Brent Suter, a left-handed pitcher for the Milwaukee Brewers, is a Harvard graduate, he says he gets “that look.”

“After a while I’m one of the guys

How to pray:

- ▶ Pray for Brent Suter and other Christian athletes who strive to live their faith on the field and in the locker room.
- ▶ Pray for sports ministries like Baseball Chapel and the Christian outreach they provide to players, coaches and sports organizations. (TAB)

again,” Suter said. “Baseball helped me get there. It’s been cool to be a graduate. There’s not a lot of history of Harvard players in the major league.”

Suter was part of a playoff team that in 2018 came within one game of going to the World Series.

The long months of the major league season are tough, but Suter says his faith helps him through the rough patches.

“Sometimes the grind of the season makes me not give all my effort for God, but I want to do my best for God every day. I want to put Christ in the foreground not the background,” Suter said.

Though Suter became a Christian in middle school it was during his rookie season that his words became actions.

“I started to walk the walk, trying to reform my character more and



Scott Paulus/Milwaukee Brewers

Milwaukee Brewers’ pitcher Brent Suter says tough outings are part of baseball, but faith in Christ helps him keep his career and life in perspective.

more. The last years have been some of the better years with my walk with Christ,” he said.

Off-season pursuits

Suter is active in Baseball Chapel, a half-hour service where players pray and discuss Scripture. During the off-season he tutors and works with homeless. He also loves music. He is a songwriter and plays the piano, drums and acoustic guitar.

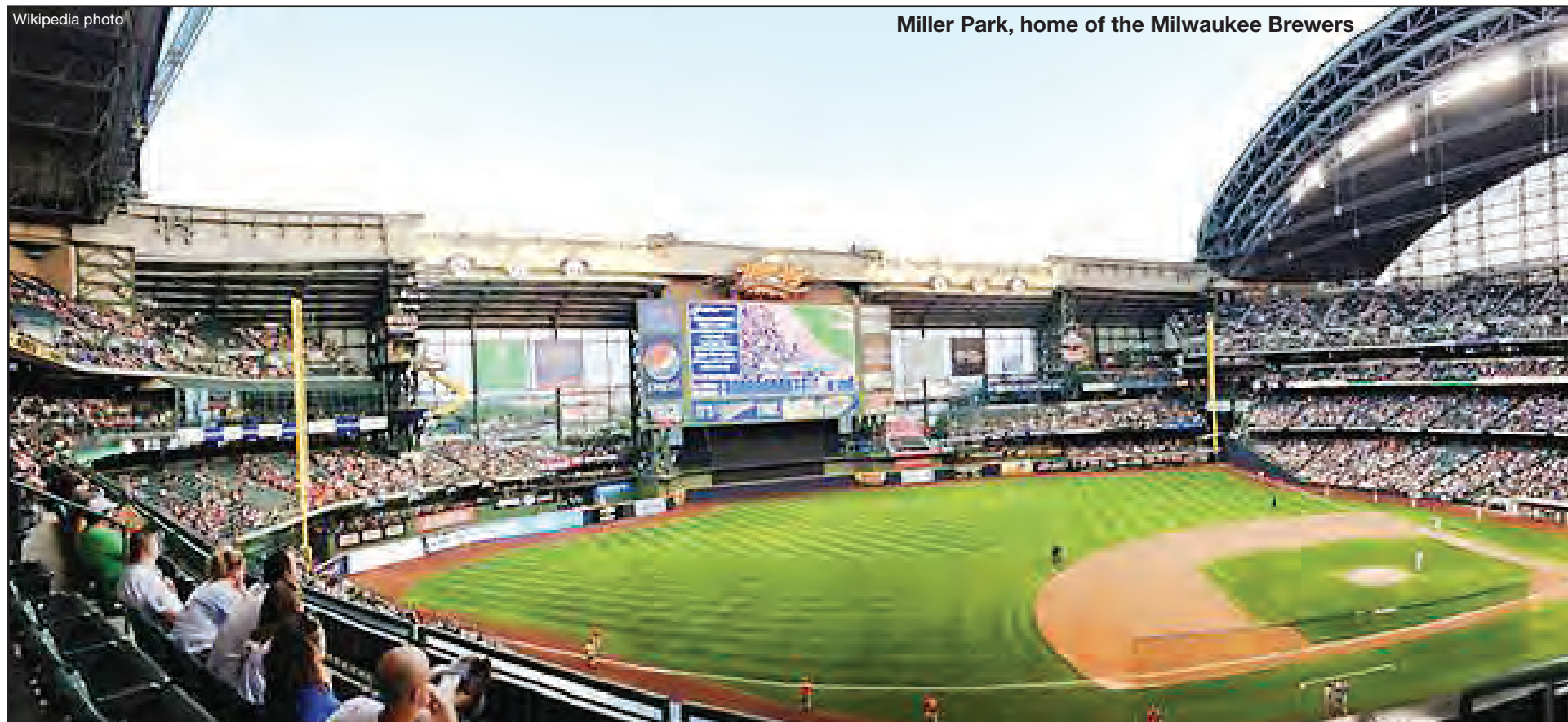
But during the season he is very competitive.

“Working fast and throwing strikes are good traits of mine,” said Suter, whose inside fast ball to a

right-handed batter is his favorite pitch.” His curve balls aren’t bad either, clocking in the 86-to-89 mph range.

Baseball is a big part of his life but Suter keeps it in perspective.

“It takes hard work. You are going to have tough outings, but you want to give your team a chance to win every night,” he said. “If you make the pitches you should come out with at least a couple of wins per month. I’ve been very fortunate. Every bad outing presents a different learning experience. ... We are here trying to give God glory with our efforts every day.”



Miller Park, home of the Milwaukee Brewers

Wikipedia photo