



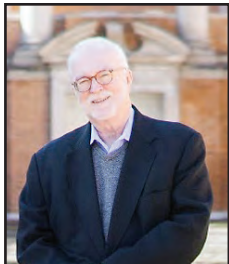
The Alabama Baptist

Toll free 800-803-5201
www.thealabamabaptist.org

May 23, 2019

Vol. 184, No. 21
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



Beeson Divinity
Dean George transitions to new role

◆ Pages 6–7



Pregnancy centers
consolidate to provide services across Birmingham

◆ Page 9



Smoke Rise
Baptist reaching out to homeless

◆ Page 15



Debating chaplains in the chamber

123rf.com

Non-Christian death row inmates want their own spiritual advisers at executions

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

When Michael Brandon Samra was executed at Holman prison in Atmore May 16, his last words were a prayer but no spiritual adviser was present in the chamber.

Samra's spiritual adviser observed Samra's death from a witness room, a change in protocol resulting from two recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions involving prison chaplains, executions and re-

ligious freedom. The cases involved two death row inmates — one in Alabama, the other in Texas — both of whom turned to the Supreme Court with requests to stay their executions until the states agreed to allow a spiritual adviser of each inmate's own faith to accompany him to the death chamber.

Stay of execution

In Alabama, the inmate was Muslim. Domineque Ray was scheduled to die by lethal injection for the 1995

rape and murder of Selma teenager Tiffany Harville. His request to have his imam by his side ran afoul of the state prison system's protocol that, in effect, required a Christian chaplain in the death chamber. Although they must work with a wide variety of faiths on a daily basis, all of the chaplains employed by the Alabama Department of Corrections are Christian.

The state's execution protocol required a state-employed chaplain to be present in the death chamber but did not al-

low non-employees such as Ray's imam to be present.

Claiming that his constitutional rights to freedom of religion were being violated, Ray was granted a stay of execution by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit, which ruled unanimously that "it looks substantially likely to us that Alabama has run afoul of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment."

The three-judge panel went on to say, "The central (See 'Freedom,' page 8)

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



TAB wins variety of national awards

For more than 20 years *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) has been an award-winning newspaper. The most recent award season — for work done in 2018 — resulted in TAB again bringing home numerous honors including being named top among Associated Church Press’ (ACP) Best in Class for regional Christian newspapers.

TAB also received an award of excellence in regional newspapers from Religion Communicators Council (RCC).

TAB was awarded second place in state Baptist newspapers by Baptist Communicators Association (BCA) and earned an award of merit in print newspapers from Evangelical Press Association (EPA).

The Dec. 13, 2018, issue received awards of excellence from RCC and ACP. The special issue, *Celebrating 175 Years*, published March 15, 2018, won first place in its category from BCA and won awards of merit from RCC and ACP. The Alabama Baptist State Convention Report, published Nov. 22, 2018, also received honorable mention from ACP.

The TAB News podcast won awards of excellence from RCC for

radio program or series and podcast series, and won third place for overall show from BCA.

TAB News for Dec. 20, 2018, featuring Tray Lovvorn of Undone Redone received an award of excellence from RCC, and TAB News for Aug. 28, 2018, eSports Ministries and Christian Higher Ed, was awarded second place by BCA.

TAB also won an award of merit from RCC for social media, single posting for the Burns family update on July 9, 2018. TAB’s social media is managed in partnership with Dogwood Media Solutions.

TAB’s website, thealabamabaptist.org, was awarded honorable mention by ACP, and individual staff members also won awards:

► **Grace Thornton**, special assignments editor, is the BCA Leonard Holloway Award Winner for her portfolio of work for Baptist Press and TAB. She also won first place in feature writing, single article, more than 1,500 words for “Kingdom legacy,” in the Oct. 11, 2018, issue, and second place in feature writing, single article, less than 750 words

for “Covered in mud, washed in the blood” in the Oct. 18, 2018, issue, both from BCA.

EPA awarded Thornton fourth place in personality article for “Leaving a legacy” in the Dec. 6, 2018, issue.

► **Carrie Brown McWhorter**, content editor, was awarded second place in feature writing, single article, 750–1,500 words for “Gaming: a new missions field” in the July 26, 2018, issue by BCA and EPA.

McWhorter also received an honorable mention from ACP for her article “Rolling Billboard” in the Aug. 30, 2018, issue.

► **Jennifer Davis Rash**, editor-in-chief, was awarded first place by BCA for her blog post “Live a life worthy of the sacrifice.” She also received an award of excellence in photography, single photo from RCC for “Snowy TAB” featured on the front page of the Dec. 20, 2018, issue.

► Writer **Martha Simmons** received an award of excellence for the series “A look at mass incarceration in Alabama,” which can be viewed at www.tabonline.org/prisons.

► Editor-emeritus **Bob Terry** also earned several awards for his work in 2018 as detailed on page 2 of the May 2, 2019, issue. (TAB)



Consider serving at upcoming SBC meeting

Many Alabama Baptist churches work hard to perfect their greeter and usher ministries.

If your church is one of those churches then the upcoming Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting needs your ministry team — and it doesn’t matter whether you have three trained greeters/ushers or 300.

The goal for the June 11–12 SBC annual meeting at the Birmingham-

Jefferson Convention Complex (BJCC) is 240 people willing to serve those attending the meeting. Morning and afternoon sessions will be conducted each day but there are no evening sessions. The greeters and ushers will be assigned a specific session to cover.

Consider making a day trip out of the opportunity. A group from your church could travel together to the BJCC, serve together during one session and attend the other session.

You don’t have to currently serve as a greeter/usher to participate. Individual church members with a cheerful heart and a willing spirit are also welcome.

Michael Ethridge, director of

operations for Birmingham Metro Baptist Association (BMBA), is coordinating volunteer efforts. He is available to answer your questions by contacting him at 205-599-3245 or michaele@BMBAOnline.org.

To register as a volunteer visit www.tabonline.org/volunteer.

Another way to volunteer is to participate in Crossover prior to the annual meeting.

June 3–8 door-to-door visitation opportunities in a variety of neighborhoods throughout the Birmingham metro area will assist local churches in efforts to reach their communities. To find out more, visit www.namb.net/events/crossover-birmingham. (TAB)



Special thanks

Special thanks to the **Warrior Senior Center** for hosting TAB Digital on May 1. TAB’s Carrie Brown McWhorter and Haley Piersol shared tips about smartphone use and security with those who attended.



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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)

© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.

is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 800-803-5201.

Website: www.thealabamabaptist.org

Email: news@thealabamabaptist.org or subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org
Periodicals postage paid at Hattiesburg, Miss.

ANNUAL TAB SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Includes print, digital and full web access

Group Rate per issue — \$16.25
(Need at least five in your group to qualify)
Individual — \$24.95 per year with 3-year plan

JENNIFER DAVIS RASH EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Cynthia Watts Executive Assistant	Janet Erwin Executive Editor
Carrie B. McWhorter Content Editor	Debbie Campbell Director of Communications
Lauren C. Grim Creative Services Manager	Bill Gilmore Director of Sales
Jessica Ingram Production Manager	Melanie McKinney Advertising Manager
Grace Thornton Special Assignments Editor	Pam Holt Sales Representative
Hannah Muñoz Digital Editor	Susan Stevens Sales Representative
James Hammack Digital Services Manager	Linda Harrison Financial Administrator
Haley Piersol Digital Services Associate	Deb Lowery Financial Assistant
Sarah Gill Customer Relations	Richard Maddox Computer Services
Amy Hacker Customer Relations	Correspondents and Interns

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

POSTMASTER

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

ADDRESS CHANGE

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

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

Full member of Alabama Press Association

Accredited member of Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability



‘Nation’s Top Regional Christian Newspaper’

1999, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018
as judged by Associated Church Press, Baptist Communicators Association, Evangelical Press Association or Religion Communicators Council

MY RASHIONALE

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

jrash@thealabamabaptist.org
@RashionalThts



Better management of ourselves allows God to use us more

Found yourself or someone you know ruminating lately? Has the consistent agonizing led to negative emotions and a feeling of spiraling out of control?

If the answer is yes, then that may mean you or your friend also would answer yes to a feeling of paralysis when it comes to daily activities.

While we all experience life pressures, some days are more intense than others. How we choose to handle those pressures will determine how resilient we are as we attempt to survive and thrive in this crazy world.

When I'm feeling overwhelmed I clean, organize and pray — not necessarily in the same order each time. I also run to God's word to feed my soul and rediscover my center, my strength and my purpose.

The cleaning and organizing part helps put a bit of order and calm back into my day which in turn gives me energy to tackle the harder assignments.

The prayer time typically takes time and effort. It is an intense pouring out of my heart, sharing with God all the messy emotions that sometimes surface. Deep breaths and intentionally quieting my surroundings and my mind also help.

From there I can leave my frustrations and exasperations with Him. I can let go of the situation that has me tempted to talk repeatedly about it, venting to anyone who will listen.

And when it comes to being overwhelmed because of a long to-do list that seems impossible

to accomplish I'm learning how to be properly prepared rather than living in reaction mode.

Taking two to three minutes to brain dump everything I am trying to remember to do today or this week removes a lot of pressure. I make a list and highlight the items that are vital.

From there I prioritize this week's have-to items based on what needs to be done by certain days/times. Then I attempt to focus on the first item and take it as far as I can that day.

I move to the other items on the list and do the same thing.

Another helpful routine for me is to take a quick break between each project to check email, get a snack, walk around, etc.

Once I complete that particular day's have-to items (on those fabulous days that I actually do complete them), then I brain dump again to see if anything urgent has surfaced since the original list was made. I also spend a few minutes mapping out the days ahead.

When I'm feeling extra energetic I schedule a day and time to complete one of the projects that is weighing me down or making me feel guilty because

I've not gotten around to it yet — you know the ones we try to ignore day after day.

While these are a few basic tips for those of us who are learning how to properly apply and involve ourselves in the various opportunities around us, we also should remember to look up from time to time.

Lending a hand to someone besides ourselves each day keeps us from getting too self-absorbed — a natural side effect of a perpetually overwhelmed and exhausted life. God will show us who needs our help if we give Him the opportunity. 🙏

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

Difficulty of the darkness hovering around us, pressing in on us has no chance against the Light within us

At press time for this issue of *The Alabama Baptist (TAB)*, an endless stream of concerns, debates and ideas circled nonstop in my mind as I attempted to pinpoint the most timely news or life issue to cover.

Nationally, a fresh and fierce debate over abortion has erupted and Alabama is among states at the center of the strategy.

Statewide, the thoughts of a lottery and other possible gambling expansions have several people and entities wanting a piece of the pie. At the same time opposing forces are working endlessly to remind citizens of the social ills that come with any form of gambling.

Politically, the rhetoric between the two main parties continues to provide a daily dose of hate and

anger — almost as if they think we enjoy the ugliness.

Denominationally, internal conflict is brewing — and unlike the major fight 30 years ago, the current arguments are playing out over social media and blog posts.

If all of that weren't enough, then news reports from a variety of faith-based media outlets (including *TAB*) and the mainstream media have us thinking about topics such as: believers being persecuted for their faith, religious liberty fights nationally and internationally, how to handle illegal immigration in the U.S., how Christians can exist godly and neighborly in a society with same-sex couples and families, strife in the Middle East, random plane and helicopter crashes, flooding, tornadoes, drive-by shootings, college bribery scandals, etc.

I'm confident you can fill in the blank with a dozen other situations happening all around us.

Some days it seems impossible to push through all the darkness, but I hope your partnership with *TAB* and Alabama Baptists in general will help you stay encouraged. We need each other for support and to be reminded light will always pierce the darkness.

For those of us who know Jesus as personal Lord and Savior, we can have confidence that no matter how difficult or discouraging the world around us becomes, we possess the ultimate Light.

And there's no defeating Him — now or ever.

If you don't know Jesus, then let us tell you about Him. There's plenty of room to join us.

—Jennifer Davis Rash

Your Voice



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

America's greatness begins in her churches

By **Willis B. Kelly**
Retired pastor, Solitude Baptist Church

We are hearing today about the greatness of America. Some are saying, "Let's make America great again." Others say, "America is already a great nation." What makes America great? Is there a clear and perfect answer to what makes America the greatest country in all the world?

In 1831, French political scientist Alexis de Tocqueville came to America, then a young nation of 24 states. He spent nine months searching for what makes America tick. He traveled in the cities and the countryside and in our factories, farm lands, schools and

churches. He also spent much time in Washington to get to know how democracy works. You will find his book "Democracy in America" in your local library.

De Tocqueville gave credit to many areas, but he concluded that America's greatness was found in her churches. He heard powerful preaching from the Bible that changed lives and sent them out making an impact for God in America. De Tocqueville was right about the greatness of America.

Some years ago a prominent pastor was asked what priority he gave to his preaching. He said, "I preach as a dying man to dying men, I preach as never to preach again!"

William P. Kelly, my grandfather, preached for 50 years up and down Sand Mountain. In 1940, at the age of 67, he preached 10 revivals and 102 people were saved. *The Alabama Baptist* reported 72 of those converts were baptized in Town Creek. I have a picture of him baptizing 37 at one time.

In America today de Tocqueville would find tens of thousands of churches with people worshipping, serving the Lord and giving a witness that Jesus saves.

Yet the Bible, God's word, may be saying to many churches today, "Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead and Christ shall give the light" (Eph. 5:14). And to others the word in Amos 6:1 to the people of God: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion." Are we pleased in our comfort zone — living in luxury and having need of nothing? We have more than 300 churches in Marshall County alone. Let us all without fail make a lasting impact for Jesus Christ all across this county.

We are the Church. We love the Church. Jesus loves the Church. He gave Himself for the Church. He is coming back for His Church. It may be soon. Let us all be ready!

EDITOR'S NOTE— Willis B. Kelley retired as pastor of Solitude Baptist Church, Albertville, in Marshall Baptist Association. He also has served on the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) executive committee and on the state Christian Life Commission.

Each generation must remind the next that God's faithfulness, forgiveness and favor are forever.

Mark Croston
National director
of black church
partnerships
LifeWay Christian
Resources

The Southern Baptist Convention got off to a horrible start. In part, it was created as a defense of slavery. Could there be a more horrible moral and ethical decision?

Chuck Kelley
Chancellor
New Orleans Baptist
Theological Seminary

The most powerful antidote to a 'me-centered' faith is a clear understanding of who Jesus really is.

Richard Ross
Professor of student
ministry
Southwestern Baptist
Theological Seminary

Evangelism is something we have to be intentional about, or it doesn't happen.

Pastor Steve Horn
FBC Lafayette, La.

Letters to the Editor

Recidivism is the tendency of a criminal to commit a crime and return to prison.

According to the National Institute of Justice, 68% of 405,000 prisoners released in 30 states in 2005 were arrested for a new crime within three years of their release from prison.

According to a 2018 report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, in 1960 the U.S. prison population was about 46,000, today it is nearly 2.2 million.

What we are doing is not working in my opinion. Rising prison populations and increasing crime

are crowding the agendas and pressing budgets for legislators.

I believe we are moving the reform needle in the wrong direction — we are going softer and we should be going harder.

Our current system is not working; we need to go back to some serious deterrents invoking fear.

Let's erase the 60 years of jurist activism that have incrementally turned our prisons into summer camps and get serious about reversing the escalating recidivism rate in our country.

John Giles
Luverne, Ala.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“SBC churches need to improve our current ordination practices.”

JASON LOWE

Author of “Above Reproach: A study of the ordination practices of Southern Baptist churches”

Trust God with tomorrow. Worrying about tomorrow doesn't ... take the strain out of tomorrow; it just takes the strength out of today. God promises to provide what you need when tomorrow comes.

Pastor Willy Rice
Calvary Church
Clearwater, Fla.

Excerpt from “Living in the Light” devotional book

I can control what my children see and hear — most of it, anyway. I exercise this kind of control not because I'm interested in producing adults who can't discern right and wrong on their own but because I am. I and every other Christian parent have the terrible honor of shielding little ones from a diseased

culture that calls good evil and evil good, and will use any means of enlisting them. We shield them not in order to raise weak adults but to raise strong ones — Christians who have developed the immunity necessary to see and hear lies and reject them with confidence.

G. Shane Morris
BreakPoint.org

I could see that God answered my prayer by preparing each precious soul in my life so that I could enter the gospel ministry.

Paul Kim, Asian-American relations consultant
SBC Executive Committee

Many times, summer camp is the place where God causes children

and students to have “lightbulb” moments about concepts parents and church leaders have been teaching them all year. These spiritual moments can become faith markers we look back to for the rest of our lives.

Logan Meek, team leader
Student Life For Kids

When we see issues as problems, we only recognize the negative effects on the surrounding people and environment. On the other hand, when we recognize issues as opportunities, we accentuate the positive, which drives us to seek resolutions.

George Yates
Church health strategist
Alabama Baptist
State Board of Missions

From the *Twitterverse*

@willainsworthAL

Alabama's state motto is “We Dare Defend Our Rights,” and today we have taken a strong step toward defending the rights of the unborn. With liberal states approving radical late-term and post-birth abortions, Roe must be challenged, and I am proud that Alabama is leading the way.

@scottdawson

Alabama Senate passed the most aggressive Pro-Life bill in the nation! This could be the first step in challenging Roe v Wade!

@kylebeshears

How do Paul and Jude describe people who stir division in the church? They do not serve the Lord Jesus; deceive the hearts of the naive by smooth talk; are warped, sinful, and self-condemned; are

worldly and devoid of the Spirit

“As for a person who stirs up division ... have nothing more to do with him” (Titus 3:10). Push the block button. Take away their platform for their own good. Our curiosity to follow the story of dividers on social media is only deepening their warped, sinful, worldly, spiritless self-condemnation. Do them a sincere favor and have nothing more to do with them.

@macbrunson

There is an awful lot happening in Baptist churches that has never happened before — and the world is still lost and headed to hell.

@edstetzer

I'm struck by the cruelty of some Christians social media this week, all being cruel because they think someone else said something cruel,

so they can be cruel, then people respond to that, etc. It is not right. It does not honor the Lord. End the cycle. Jesus shows a better way.

@Franklin_Graham

I'm grateful for the men and women who selflessly confront danger to defend and protect us every day. They need our constant support, encouragement, and prayers. #NationalPoliceWeek #PeaceOfficersMemorialDay

@GoBGR

Today we celebrate International Day of Families. And remember those families who are separated from theirs. Will you join us in praying for those families who are far from home, displaced and disjointed. Pray that they find a refuge where they can know peace, safety, and hope.



Photo by Alabama WMU

Candace McIntosh is executive director of Alabama Woman's Missionary Union.

The impact of camp

According to my mother, I begged her until she gave in. I was 12 years old and had begun attending a small rural church near my home. I was part of Acteens and my leader was preparing us to head out to missions camp at Lake Yale Baptist Assembly in Florida.

I had not traveled much and the prospect of going away with friends was exciting. However, God wanted to teach me more about Himself and those He loved.

My cabin leader, Ms. Shari, taught me how to read my Bible and what it meant to spend time alone with God daily — all new concepts to me. My experiences at missions camp taught me to love beyond myself and expanded my Kingdom understanding.

I have fond memories — the campfires, singing to the sound of the guitar and the vespers cross in the background. God would use these experiences to mold my heart to His. He would give me a passion for the Great Commission that compels me still today.

Missions camp is a valuable experience which is why Alabama WMU continues to offer Missions Adventure Camp (MAC) for children in grades K-12 at WorldSong Missions Place. To register visit www.worldsongretreat.org.

—Candace McIntosh

‘Well done faithful servant’

Founding dean of Beeson Divinity School transitioning to new role

By Kristen Padilla
Editor, Beeson Magazine

Timothy George did not apply for the position of dean of a brand-new divinity school on the campus of Samford University in 1987. In fact he never wanted to be a dean and even once joked he didn't especially like them.

“No offense to the deans reading this,” he said with a smile.

Leaning back in his leather chair in the inner part of his office where his day-to-day work happened George confided he didn't think he would be very good at being a dean.

Yet after being persuaded by then-Samford President Thomas E. Corts 32 years ago to come meet the divinity school's benefactor Ralph Waldo Beeson, George began to seriously consider the prospect.

Beeson's vision for this divinity school, that it would be Protestant, Christian, evangelical and interdenominational, matched George's sense of what theological education should be.

As George listened to Beeson talk he thought, “Well here's something that's worth giving your life to.”

George came from the most unexpected of places. Born to an alcoholic and abusive father who later died in prison and to a mother with polio, George was raised for many years by two great aunts who lived in a section of Chattanooga, Tennessee, called Hell's Half Acre.

Those who were the poorest of the poor lived in Hell's backyard. George remembers what it's like to go to bed hungry and to go to school wearing raggedy clothes.

But despite these difficult circumstances God met George in a little Baptist church near his home. In this church through worship, prayer and preaching, George heard about and experienced the love of Jesus Christ.



Timothy George has served as dean of the interdenominational Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham since it's founding in 1988. He is set to retire at the end of the 2018–2019 academic year.

Photo by Kyle Thompson/Beeson Divinity School

As he grew George began to sense God working in his life. On Aug. 6, 1961, he gave his life to Jesus Christ. Three months later on Nov. 18 he felt called to preach after reading Romans 10:15 in a missions magazine: “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace.”

‘Whoever would listen’

“That was the passage that gripped my heart and I felt that was meant for me — that I was to be the one to go over the hills and the mountains preaching the gospel,” George said.

From that moment forward George began preaching to whomever would listen. He preached a bird's funeral, during recess at school and to Coke bottles while chopping wood. He would eventually move up to preaching at his church on youth

Sundays and at youth revivals. All these years later and through the many positions he has held the call to preach the gospel has remained at the core of everything George has done. He is first and foremost a preacher of the gospel.

“Even when I went to college and then went on to earn a doctorate at Harvard I was not single-mindedly focused that I wanted to be a professor. I was called to be a preacher of the gospel,” George said. “But along the way the opportunity came to teach at a seminary, to train other ministers of the gospel, and I saw that as an extension of my calling as a preacher of the gospel, not as contrary to it.

“To this day I would say the same thing about my job here. I would not want to be an administrator, dean or anything like that if I could not at the same time, in and through that

work, advance the cause and proclaim the gospel. That's what I was called to be and these are jobs I've had in service of my calling.”

When George accepted the charge to start a new divinity school on the campus of Samford he started with nothing except for Beeson's generous gift and a mandate: serve the whole body of Christ, remain faithful to God's word and prepare men and women to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world.

“As a friend of mine remarked, ‘Timothy, you must be either crazy or really called of God to attempt such an undertaking!’”

Pilgrimage of faith

But like Abram and Sarai, who set out on a pilgrimage of faith to an unknown destination, George felt impressed upon by God to move to Birmingham with his wife, Denise,



Photo by Kyle Thompson/Beeson Divinity School

A special moment for Beeson Divinity School graduates through the years was to be prayed over by Dean Timothy George and each faculty member during the school's consecration service prior to Samford University's graduation day.

and their two children, Christian and Alyce, to undertake something few had done before.

George's vision, in line with Beeson's, was to carve out a Baptist university-based divinity school that was conservative and evangelical in its theology; unashamedly confessional in its commitment to the historic, orthodox Christian faith; intentionally interdenominational; academically superb; devoted to missions and evangelism; and committed both to classical theological education and practical ministry training.

But George knew this experiment would fail if Jesus Christ wasn't at the center.

"The spiritual vitality of this place has always depended on prayer," he said.

"I remember in the very early days, when we were meeting across campus in a basement, we would gather together for prayer. It was a small group, very intimate, and those were very powerful times that helped gel the school in a spiritual way."

In 1994, six years into this experiment, George wrote for *Beeson* magazine (previously called *Vocatio*) that "something extraordinary" was happening at Beeson. "There is a hunger and thirst for the things of God."

Reflecting on those early days of building the divinity school from

scratch George said he is indebted to many people who came alongside him to work toward a common goal.

"Leadership is not dictatorship," George said. "Rather good leadership is about having a vision that grabs you, that constrains you, and then finding others who share it or

can catch it and feel an investment in and an ownership of it, and who will walk together toward the goal.

"It's kind of like a marriage or being in love," he added. "Being in love or being married is not gazing into one another's eyes endlessly. It is clasping hands and walking together toward the horizon. That's

what leadership is and we've had that here

at Beeson Divinity School because we've had a community of people who caught the vision — people who genuinely loved Jesus Christ and cared deeply for one another."

George could point to any number of his many accomplishments as his greatest legacy: founding Beeson Divinity School, construction of Andrew Gerow Hodges Chapel, Evangelicals and Catholics Together, meeting three popes, speaking at the Vatican, chairing the drafting committee of the Amsterdam Declaration 2000, serving as senior editor of *Christianity Today* or general editor of the "Reformation Commentary

on Scripture" (InterVarsity Press), writing the "Manhattan Declaration" with Chuck Colson and Robby George or his more than 25 books.

Yet when asked about his greatest legacy he was quick to answer: "Beeson alumni and students."

"Our legacy is the people we've invested our lives in," George said. "The students are the heart and soul of any school and to see our graduates, who have gone out and done such wonderful things in the Lord's work all around the world, brings me the greatest joy of anything in my job."

One gift he hopes he has given to each Beeson alum through the school and Hodges Chapel is a sense of solidarity with the saints and martyrs who have gone before them.

"We have six martyrs remembered in statuary, one from each of the six inhabited continents of the earth, displayed very prominently in our chapel. But above the martyr statues and below the dome, where the great heavenly host surrounds the risen Christ, there are a number of empty niches," said George.

'Call of Christ'

"At one time we thought about putting something there, but we decided against that because we knew our students over time would be filling in those statues as they surrendered their life to the call of Christ, a discipleship which could lead to martyrdom.

"So I sometimes say to our students, 'Those niches are for you. You follow wherever the call of God will lead you,'" he said.

When George chose the hymn

"For All the Saints" to be Beeson's anthem he did so with a recognition that in the New Testament sense we are all sinners who are forgiven and made holy by God in Jesus Christ.

'No higher praise'

"What's interesting is that a lot of the people we call saints today were not acknowledged as saints in their own lifetimes," George said. "Take for example Patrick, one of the most famous saints. Nobody in his day went around saying, 'Oh, St. Patrick, how are you today?' No. He said, 'I felt like a rock, a stone sunk in the mud until God picked me up ... and gave me meaning.'"

George said he wants to be remembered as "a person who was touched by God in a special way in his life, who did not deserve all of the wonderful things that came his way, but someone who tried to follow that calling as best he could for as long as he could.

"If Jesus were to say, 'Well done, faithful servant,' no higher praise could be given to me in this life or the one to come."

Now that he is ready to close this chapter and open the next — George is transitioning from dean to research professor — he says he is ready to pass the vision to a new dean.

"We want to advance the cause of Christ," said George. "We want to see the kingdom of God flourish in this world, and we'll do what we can to take it as far as we can. Then we will do our very best to pass the task on to somebody else who can run further than we can, faster than we can and who will one day cross that finish line." 🌈



Photo courtesy of Beeson Divinity School

Before Beeson Divinity School, Timothy George taught church history at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, for 11 years.



Photo by Kyle Thompson/Beeson Divinity School

Timothy George and his wife, Denise, met at Flintstone Baptist Church, Chickamauga, Georgia, in 1968 when he was preaching at a youth revival. They married in 1970 and have two children, Christian and Alyce.

'Freedom of religion' issue in state execution chambers

(continued from page 1)
constitutional problem here is that the state has regularly placed a Christian cleric in the execution room to minister to the needs of Christian inmates but has refused to provide the same benefit to a devout Muslim and all other non-Christians."

Ray's Feb. 6 victory was short-lived, the stay of execution overturned the very next day by the U.S. Supreme Court on a 5-4 vote. The court sidestepped ruling on the constitutionality of the protocol, however, deciding on Feb. 7 that Ray had not challenged the protocol in a timely enough manner. Ray, 42, was executed that same night with his imam watching from the viewing room and, in a concession by the state, no Christian chaplain present in the death chamber.

Criticism came swiftly and strongly from both the political left and right, as liberal law professors and conservative commentators alike proclaimed the decision a grave violation of the

First Amendment. "Ray's execution was just. The circumstances were not," wrote David French in *National Review*. "The state's obligation is to protect and facilitate the free exercise of a person's faith, not to seek reasons to deny him consolation at the moment of his death."

Different decision

Apparently stung by the criticism coming from all sides, the Supreme Court came to a very different decision in a very similar case just seven weeks later.

This time, the condemned man was Patrick Henry Murphy Jr., 57, a Buddhist in Texas.

Murphy was scheduled to die the evening of March 28 for his part in a seven-man prison escape followed by multiple robberies and the killing of 31-year-old Dallas police officer Aubrey Hawkins. By a 7-2 vote, the Supreme Court

granted an eleventh-hour stay of Murphy's execution because Texas would not allow his Buddhist spiritual adviser to be at his side.

Like Alabama, Texas prison officials would allow only a state-employed chaplain to be in the death chamber. Both Christian and Muslim chaplains were available, but not Buddhist.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh, who voted with the majority to overturn Ray's stay of execution in Alabama due to the timing of his appeal, indicated that his support for Murphy's stay was about freedom of religion. "As this Court has repeatedly held," Kavanaugh wrote, "governmental discrimination against religion — in particular, discrimination against religious persons, religious organizations, and religious

speech — violates the Constitution."

Texas responded to the Supreme Court decision a week later by changing its policies to no longer allow any chaplain at all in the death chamber but allowing the condemned inmate to designate a spiritual adviser who

may be present only in the witness room.

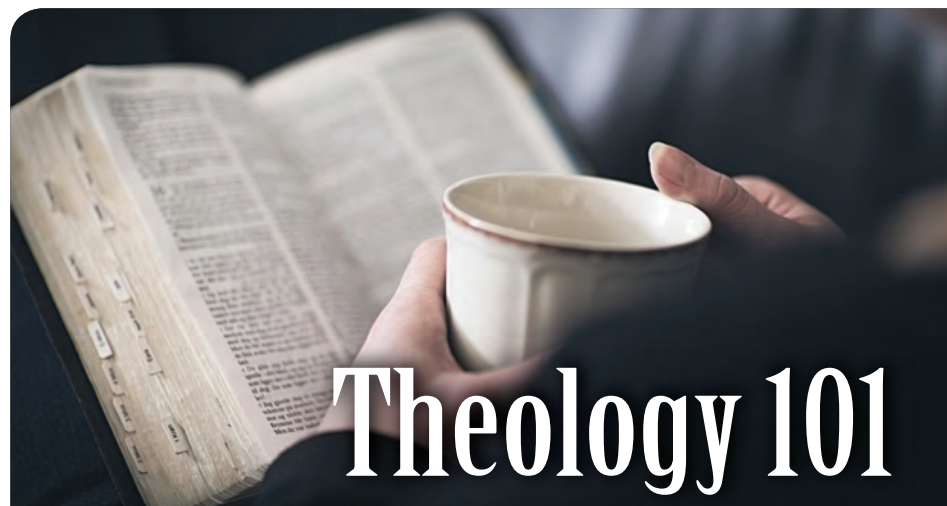
However, since the Supreme Court decision specifically called for allowing Murphy's Buddhist spiritual adviser to actually accompany him in the death chamber, Murphy's execution remains on hold.

Samra's was the first execution in Alabama since the Court ruling in the Texas case. Previously ADOC said its policy on chaplains in the death chamber was under review.

Following the Supreme Court decision in March, Stanford law professor James A. Sonne, founding director of Stanford Law School's Religious Liberty Clinic, said most of the 30 states in which the death penalty is legal allow a chaplain of the inmate's choice to be present at the execution, though that doesn't necessarily mean in the death chamber. ✠

"Governmental discrimination against religion ... violates the Constitution."

**Justice Brett Kavanaugh
U.S. Supreme Court**



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Eternal security

Divine Decree, Divine Intercession

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

For several weeks attention has been given to various ways the Bible expresses the truth of the eternal security of believers in Christ. The analogies are all anchored in the omnipotence of God Himself. Hence we have thought about eternal salvation in terms of a divine birth, a divine gift, a divine grip, a divine seal, a divine guard, a divine union and a divine anchor.

This week attention focuses on divine decrees and divine intercession. A dictionary definition of a decree would call it an official order issued by a legal authority. We naturally and appropriately think of kings and rulers issuing decrees, such as the one issued by Caesar Augustus prior to the birth of Jesus.

'God's authoritative decree'

This decree is remembered due to our familiarity with the Christmas story. According to Luke 2:1, the Roman emperor decreed people should be taxed. That decree served to place Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem at the time she brought forth her firstborn son.

Of higher authority than a human ruler is the divine authority possessed by our Creator God. We get a glimpse of God's authoritative decree in the poetic and prophetic words of Psalm 2:7: "I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, you are My Son, today I have begotten You."

Later Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5 join to make it clear this divine decree

was given ultimately concerning Mary's child born in Bethlehem. It was a decree not made with reference to any angel (Heb. 1:5), but made of God's Son who would become our great High Priest (Heb. 5:5).

'No condemnation'

In relation to the eternal security of believers consider these divine decrees or declarations:

▶ "I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish" (John 10:28).

▶ "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

Coupled with the divine decrees is the matter of the divine intercession. If a person of unlimited authority intervenes on behalf of others they enjoy unlimited support and assurance. On the cross Jesus intervened on behalf of sinners.

Because of that intervention sinners can become children of God. The resurrected Christ lives forever to make intercession for God's children. As the divinely appointed High Priest, Jesus is "able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). ✠

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.



'You're not alone'

Pregnancy centers consolidate to provide services across Birmingham metro area

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

An ultrasound performed early in pregnancy has great potential to persuade an abortion-minded woman to carry her baby to term. So the gift of a new ultrasound machine to North Jefferson Women's Center (NJWC) in Fultondale means lives will be saved.

Julie McLendon, NJWC director, says 50% of the time a woman or couple determined to have an abortion decides against the procedure after viewing an ultrasound. An estimated 90% of couples who are undecided choose life following an ultrasound.

"One machine makes a difference," McLendon said. And two machines — that's even better. Now thanks to the gift of the new machine to NJWC more ultrasounds can be performed in the Birmingham metro area because the center's old machine has a new home at St. Clair County Sav-A-Life.

The gift of the ultrasound machine was the answer to years of prayers, said Angie Cantrell, executive director of St. Clair County Sav-A-Life.

"About two years ago we started the process of investigating how we could start an ultrasound ministry in our pregnancy center," Cantrell said. "We didn't know where the machine was going to come from."

A few miles away in Fultondale, NJWC was contacted by the Psalm 139 Project, an initiative of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) to provide ultrasound machines, which can cost as much as \$25,000, to pregnancy resource centers.

Chris Crain, executive director of Birmingham Metro Baptist As-



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

The new ultrasound machine provided for North Jefferson Women's Center (NJWC) in Fultondale by Psalm 139 Project was dedicated April 26. Participating in the dedication were (l to r) Angie Cantrell of St. Clair County Sav-A-Life, Julie McLendon of NJWC, ERLC President Russell Moore and Lisa Hogan of Sav-A-Life Vestavia.

sociation, helped connect Psalm 139 Project and NJWC for the gift of a new ultrasound machine.

Since Crain had previously served as director of missions in St. Clair Baptist Association he knew St. Clair County Sav-A-Life could use the NJWC's machine.

"We were excited to support Angie's vision for families and for keeping the unborn safe," Crain said. "The stewardship of

ERLC in finding a way to bless two centers was a remarkable example of Kingdom partnership. It was really special to be part of that."

Common mission

Following the dedication of the new ultrasound machine on April 26, Russell Moore, president of ERLC, said the cooperation between the two ministries was impressive.

"One of the really exciting things to me is there's not just one pregnancy resource center involved

— there are multiple ministries involved. I've really been impressed at how they're working together," he said.

Pregnancy centers around the state differ in the services they offer, but all have a common mission — to save one baby at a time from abortion by helping mothers and fathers face the issues that make abortion seem like their best option.

The recent merger of NJWC and Sav-A-Life Vestavia means Sav-A-Life now has strategic locations on both sides of the Birmingham metro area.

Sav-A-Life Vestavia executive director Lisa Hogan said the partnership is especially important as construction of a new Planned Parenthood location continues in Birmingham.

The clinic is expected to open in 2019, according to representatives of Planned Parenthood Southeast. Hogan said Birmingham metro area pregnancy resource centers must be ready.

"We're very fortunate [to have]

six different centers in the Birmingham area proper so we do all try to work together," she said. "We get together regularly as directors, share resources and share ideas the best we can. We see how God is at work."

Helping women choose life is just a portion of the work. Volunteers also provide parenting classes for mothers and fathers and help connect clients with prenatal care.

The work also includes providing compassionate care to women in crisis, Cantrell said. When a woman or couple comes into a pregnancy resource center they are afraid, she said.

"It's so important that they are met immediately with love, compassion and mercy," Cantrell said. "So many times they're faced with rejection and broken relationships. We want to be the hands and feet of Christ when they walk through the door."

Those seeking help may receive a free pregnancy test, undergo an ultrasound or just converse with a volunteer who will listen.

Forgiven by God

"Our goal is to take away their fears and concerns and say it's okay. We've got this. You're not alone," Cantrell said. "We're going to give them those resources to go forward."

And for those who have already chosen abortion volunteers are ready to help them too with post-

abortion peer counseling. Statistics suggest 1 in 3 women has had an abortion and the grief doesn't go away with time, Hogan said.

We still want to be there for

them," Hogan said. "Many women are in church, are Christians and they say, 'I know God has forgiven me.' They just can't forgive themselves. It is neat to see women who have been through that experience and the transformation they go through. It's a remarkable journey." ✝

"It's so important that [clients] are met immediately with love, compassion and mercy."

**Angie Cantrell
executive director
St. Clair County Sav-A-Life**

To listen to TAB News' full interview on the ministry of pregnancy resource centers go to www.thealabamabaptist.org/podcast/pregnancy-care-ministries.

Representing Alabama

Alabama ministries, companies among exhibit hall booths at SBC

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

When it comes to Baptist life Alabama has made a name for itself — and some of those well-known ministries, organizations and companies will be hosting booths at the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Birmingham this June.

Here's a list of the exhibitors from the state, along with their booth number on the exhibit hall map, which is accessible in the SBC Annual Meetings app (see 'SBC,' page 11) or the meeting program.

▶ **Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) — booth 2205**

This is SBOM's first opportunity to launch a booth at the SBC annual meeting, and Executive Director Rick Lance invites you to stop by and say hello. The booth will contain various resources, and state missionaries will be there to network and fellowship with Alabama Baptists and others who stop by. Visit alsbom.org to learn more.

▶ **Alabama Baptist Children's Homes (ABCH) — booth 1400**

For those interested in exploring what foster care and orphan ministry looks like in the church ABCH will be showcasing personal experiences, insights and encouragement from SBC and ministry leaders through a series of interviews throughout the annual meeting. To view a schedule of who is speaking when visit alabamachild.org/SBC19.

▶ **Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center — booth 2015**

Shocco's booth will be near the exhibit hall entrance, and Wendy Westermouse, Shocco's sales/public relations associate, said they are looking forward to show-

ing some Southern hospitality to the SBC family.

"We will have several staff who will be delighted to hear Shocco stories from friends all across the country and share about Shocco with those who may not know us yet," she said. To learn more about Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center, located in Talladega, visit shocco.org.

▶ **Samford University/Beeson Divinity School — booth 415**

If you're looking for a place to charge your phone the staff of Sam-

ford and Beeson invite you to drop by. They've got that plus complimentary snacks, coffee and other drinks at their seating area.

They will also host a series of live interviews throughout the day with Samford alumni, faculty, staff and friends of the university.

▶ **National WMU/WorldCrafts — booths 2209 and 2309**

The exhibits for national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) and WorldCrafts will be combined this year, highlighting ways to be involved in missions discipleship, leadership development and compassion ministries of WMU.

Several conversation areas will provide a backdrop for scheduled features such as hearing from WorldCrafts artisans; Pure Water, Pure Love water filter demonstrations; and more. Sandy Wisdom-Martin, national WMU executive director-treasurer, and Linda Cooper, national WMU president, also will sign copies of their 30-day devotional, "On the Journey."

▶ **Youthministry360 (YM360) — booth 449**

Youth leaders wear many

hats. So the staff of YM360 say their goal is to make those leaders' lives simpler. The Birmingham-based ministry partners with churches to provide resources such as curriculum and events like summer camps. Check them out at youthministry360.com.

▶ **Courage to Lead — booth 445**

If you're looking for a café stop during the meeting Courage to Lead has got you covered. The Trussville-based coaching ministry will

have a café set up at its booth, and while you're there find out more about coaching for church and nonprofit ministry leaders. Learn more at couragetolead.com.

▶ **Lifeline Children's Services, Inc. — booth 301**

Lifeline Children's Services — a Birmingham-based adoption, orphan and foster care ministry — will host a lemonade stand to collect money for orphaned and vulnerable children.

You also can visit one of several information meetings at their booth if you'd like to learn more about international adoption, family reunification through foster care and ministry to women in crisis pregnancies. To learn more visit lifelinechild.org.

▶ **LIVE Design Group — booth 224**

LIVE Design Group is an architecture and interior design firm specializing in

worship, theater and academic facilities — and they invite you to dream with them, even undergo a simulated 3D goggle experience. To learn more visit livedesigngroup.com.

▶ **Matt Adams, Illusionist — booth 447**

Like sleight-of-hand illusions? Stop by Matt Adams' booth. Adams, who lives in Harvest, is a master illusionist and evangelist who loves sharing Jesus with local communities through entertaining magic shows. Visit mattadamsmagic.com to learn more.

▶ **The ESB Group — booth 226**

The ESB Group's motto is to provide clarity in sound and vision so the Word can be communicated to the world. That's what they do through the design and integration of audio, video, screens, speakers and theatrical lighting. In 16 years they have served more than 300 churches. To learn more visit esbgroup.net

▶ **Auburn AV — booth 352**

J.M. Anderson said his company's goal is to offer top quality audio, video and lighting system design, installation and programming, as well as equipment rental and event production. Learn more at auburnav.com.

▶ **Quality Counts, Inc. (Background Checks) — booth 323**

Times are scary for the church and other ministries, said Sam McLamb of Qual-

ity Counts, a Tuscaloosa-based organization that conducts background checks.

"We recognize that hiring new staff members and enlisting volunteers is one of the most important responsibilities within a faith-based organization," he said, noting their services are comprehensive and affordable with unmatched support and unsurpassed quality.

▶ **Alabama Army National Guard Chaplaincy Recruiting — booth 2906**

Have you ever considered being a chaplain? The Alabama Army National Guard presents "a unique ministry and service opportunity," said Gary W. Riddle Jr., battalion chaplain and specialty recruiter for the Alabama Army National Guard. Stop by the booth to discover ways you can invest in ministering to the state's soldiers.

▶ **Complete Signs — booth 541**

This Dothan-based company designs, manufactures, installs and services signs of all kinds nationwide. They're a nationwide leader in LED displays. Learn more at completesigns.net.



LEEDS STAINED GLASS & CHURCH FURNITURE
SINCE 1995

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



Lease Options
FROM
\$698 A Month



THEBUSCENTER.com
Endorsed by LifeWay/OneSource



**Need to
download
the app?**

**Scan this
QR code.**



SBC app offers annual meeting resources

Getting things ready for the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Birmingham this June?

Consider getting all your resources in one place with the SBC Annual Meetings app. In 2018 nearly 6,000 people used the app, up 45% from 2017. It's a handy tool that offers you ways to plan your own schedule for the meeting and bookmark things you don't want to miss.

From the app's dashboard you'll be able to:

- ▶ Build a personalized schedule of the sessions and events you'd like to attend.

Personalized schedule

- ▶ Browse available sessions by date, type and more. From there you can add them to your personalized schedule if you like by tapping a star icon.

- ▶ Discover what exhibits you can visit in the exhibit hall. Browse them by name, category or location and bookmark them in the app if you like. (For more about Alabama ministries who will be there see 'Representing,' page 10.)

- ▶ Access maps of the exhibit hall and leave notes or pins if needed.

- ▶ Find PDFs of the annual meeting program and exhibit hall layout.

- ▶ Access a list of meeting attendees who have given the app permission to add them to a viewable list. You can send friend requests for your app from this list.

- ▶ View a live feed of tweets and Facebook posts relevant to the annual meeting.

- ▶ Browse a list of Birmingham-area churches grouped by local Baptist association.

- ▶ View SBC-related news alerts and alerts from friends.

- ▶ Apply the "Locate Me" feature to find out what's around you and how to get to each event.

- ▶ Retrieve content from Baptist Press, SBC Life and TalkCP.

- ▶ Use closed captioning during the meetings (available this year in 21 languages — Arabic, traditional Chinese, English, Filipino, French, German, Haitian Creole, Hebrew, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Polish,

Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, Thai, Ukrainian and Vietnamese).

From the settings menu you'll be able to do things like:

- ▶ Build a profile to engage with other attendees and help your friends find you.

- ▶ Sync your data (like your schedule and bookmarks) between multiple devices if needed.

You can download the app on your mobile device by accessing the App Store, Google Play or by visiting app.core-apps.com/sbc_am2019. You can also download it by scanning the QR code on this page with your mobile device.

If you've got the SBC Annual Meetings app already from a past year, you can download this year's update by going to the Home Dashboard in the app and click on the settings icon at the top of the page. Scroll down to option "Exit to Show List," then under "Upcoming Meetings," click on the 2019 SBC Annual Meeting and click download. (Grace Thornton)



JOIN US!

Caring for the "least of these" is a biblical call for every Christ-follower. What does that look like in your life and in the life of your church?

Join us at the Southern Baptist Convention in Birmingham this summer, as many SBC ministry leaders will be sharing their experiences, insights, and encouragement to help you engage in life-changing ministry to children and families. Some of our guests include:


Danny & Charlotte Akin
Paul & Michelle Chitwood
Kevin & Lynette Ezell

J.D. Greear
David & Tera Melber
David & Heather Platt

Kevin & Pat Smith
Todd Unzicker
Sandy Wisdom-Martin

These conversations begin Monday, June 10, and end on Wednesday, June 12. All interviews will be hosted by Jedd Medefind, President of the Christian Alliance for Orphans (CAFO) and Rod Marshall, President/CEO of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH).

For interview times, visit our booth or website at alabamachild.org/SBC19.

 Alabama Baptist
CHILDREN'S HOMES
& Family Ministries



3 stories you should know



Photo courtesy of Alabama Governor's Office

On May 15, Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey signed into law the Alabama Human Life Protection Act, a bill that criminalizes performing an abortion in Alabama. In a statement Ivey said the bill is 'unenforceable' because of *Roe v. Wade*, the U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion. She said supporters of the bill, who believe 'every life is precious and ... a sacred gift from God,' believe it is time for the U.S. Supreme Court to revisit the issue of legalized abortion and this act may be 'the best opportunity' for review.

New YouTube channel features ERLC's Moore

Russell Moore, Southern Baptist ethicist and president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), launched a YouTube channel May 7 to address a variety of theological and cultural issues.

The channel — youtube.com/drmoore — opened with a series titled "On the Issues," which will offer a weekly examination of significant ethical, social, political and theological topics. The subjects include anti-Semitism, fake news, the video game *Fortnite* and the meaning of life.

Moore said he would be answering questions on everything from animals in heaven to extraterrestrials to help Christians see issues from a biblical perspective and to provide a means for non-Christians and skeptics to be introduced to Christian teaching. (BP)

Church attacks leave many dead in Africa

A rash of attacks on churches in Burkina Faso is exposing the growing challenge of containing Islamist violence across Africa's Sahel region.

On May 12 militants attacked a Roman Catholic Church service in Dablo, a town north of Burkina Faso's capital, killing a 34-year-old Catholic priest and at least five worshippers. An estimated 20 to 30 attackers fired on the fleeing congregation and then returned to set the church ablaze.

Two weeks earlier the militants targeted a Protestant church in the town of Salgadiji, killing at least six people.

News reports said the militants asked those killed to convert to Islam before killing them. Four people were killed in an earlier attack in the same area. (RNS)

— NEWSBRIEFS —

Billy Lett, longtime Alabama Baptist pastor and DOM, dies at 84



Billy Joe Lett, a longtime Alabama Baptist pastor and director of missions, died April 15. He was 84.

A graduate of Mortimer Jordan High School in Birmingham, Lett earned his bachelor's degree from Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tennessee. Before entering into the ministry full time he taught history at Sardis High School.

Before he retired Lett served as pastor of a number of Alabama Baptist churches including South Gadsden Baptist; Mount Pisgah Baptist, Cropwell; Steele Baptist; Pisgah Baptist; Center Point Baptist; and Kelly's Chapel Baptist, Grove Oak.

He also served as director of missions for Sand Mountain Baptist Association.

Lett was preceded in death by his wife of 51 years, Shirley Annette Campbell. He is survived

by his son, Timothy, and four grandchildren. (Grace Thornton)

Texas representatives pass bill for churches to report sexual predators



The Texas House of Representatives has passed a bill shielding churches that disclose credible sexual abuse allegations from civil liability — but the bill only has until May 27 to pass the Senate this legislative session.

On May 8 representatives unanimously approved House Bill (HB) 4345, assigned May 10 to the Senate State Affairs committee. The House bill would protect charitable organizations, their volunteers and independent contractors from liability when disclosing such information to prospective employers, even when no criminal charges have been filed against the accused. A May 7 amendment extended protection to independent contractors, who previously were not included.

The bill was reported favorably out of committee May 16 and directed to local legislators for further action.

Southern Baptists at the state and national level initiated the bill, including Ben Wright, chairman of the Texas Ethics and Religious Liberty Committee of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (SBTC).

The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission helped draft the bill.

In April the SBTC Executive Board

removed from its roster New Spirit Baptist Church, San Antonio, for retaining a pastor listed on the Texas Public Sex Offender Registry, the *Southern Baptist Texan* reported May 2.

Wright believes the legislation would "make it less likely that abusers and exploiters will harm again" but has said the bill would not solve all problems related to abuse and sexual misconduct.

"It does help churches and organizations know that if they pass on information that they believe to be true, that they have good reason to believe is true, it helps them know that they will be



Wikimedia Commons



LETT

News near you

AUTAUGA ASSOCIATION

▶ **Mark Davis** is the new worship/associate pastor at **Prattmont Baptist Church, Prattville**. He previously served as music minister at Sweet Water Baptist Church. He and his wife, Sherri, have four children. Randall Tucker is pastor.



DAVIS

BIGBEE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Beulah Baptist Church, Lisman**, celebrated its 150th anniversary May 5. Johnny Doggett was the speaker. Pat Musselwhite presented a certificate from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, and Brad Campbell, director of missions for Bigbee Baptist Association, also presented the church with a certificate.



Photo by David Musselwhite

“We are proud to celebrate

150 years,” church member Ruth Tew said. “Many times we didn’t know how much lon-

ger we could hold on. It is a testament to the Lord that we are still here.”

ELMORE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Bethlehem East Baptist Church, Tallassee**, celebrated its 175th anniversary May 5. Former pastor Don Johnson was the guest speaker. Former member Hannah Pate and music director Jamie Bush sang solos, and the choir and congregational singing was led by Bush.



Photo by Ralph Foster

Ralph Foster presented the church with a certificate on behalf of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. The church received letters of commendation on its 175th celebration from Gov. Kay Ivey, U.S. Senator Richard Shelby, U.S. Representative Martha Roby and Alabama State Senator Clyde Chambliss. “It was a wonderful day in the life of the church,” Pastor John Sparks said. “A promise was made to be here another 175 years if Jesus tarries.”

COFFEE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Lee Street Baptist Church, Enterprise**, will celebrate its 50th anniversary with a homecoming service June 2. Worship will begin at 10 a.m. Former pastor Larry Doster will be the guest preacher. Lunch will follow the service. For more information call 334-347-4981. Slade Stinson is pastor. ▶ **Mount Olive Baptist Church, Elba**, will host a family fun day June 1

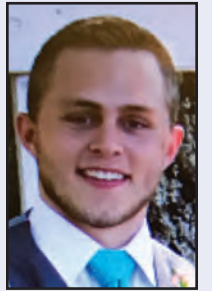
from 4 to 6 p.m. Food, games and music will be available. Olan Strickland is pastor.

COVINGTON ASSOCIATION

▶ **West Highland Baptist Church, Andalusia**, will celebrate its 79th homecoming June 2. Meet and greet fellowship will begin at 10:30 a.m. and worship will begin at 11 a.m. Leroy Cole will be the guest speaker, and music will be led by director of music Linda Hartin accompanied by Sue Reeves and Jane Graddy. Lunch will follow at noon. Larry Stewart is pastor.

GENEVA ASSOCIATION

▶ **Benjamin Crowson** is the new part-time music director of New Hinson Baptist Church, Slocomb. He will graduate from the Baptist College of Florida in December 2019. Bryan Klobe is pastor.



CROWSON

ST. CLAIR ASSOCIATION

▶ **Cook Springs Baptist Church, Pell City**, will celebrate its 161st anniversary with homecoming services June 2 at 10 a.m. Richard Robertson will bring special music. Joe Karr is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA ASSOCIATION

▶ **Corinth Baptist Church, Elrod**, will host a homecoming service May 26 at 10:30 a.m. Bob Sellers will be the guest singer. Lunch will be served at noon. More singing will follow lunch at 1 p.m. Roy Sanford is interim pastor. ☪

— NEWSBRIEFS —

shielded from potential lawsuits,” Wright said shortly after the bill was introduced in March.

The bill does not protect from liability nonprofits “acting in bad faith or with a malicious purpose,” according to the bill. (BP)

Pastor of Chapel Hill Baptist Church, James Nichols, dies at 62



James Nichols, pastor of Chapel Hill Baptist Church, Northport, for the last decade, died April 16. He was 62.

Nichols graduated from Woodlawn High School and Samford University, both in Birmingham. He went on to earn his doctor of ministry from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in 1988.

Over the years he has served in different ministry roles in addition to his pastorate at Chapel Hill Baptist.

He was preceded in death by his son, Jay. He is survived by his wife of 36 years, Susan, and daughters, Sharon and Grace. (Grace Thornton)



NICHOLS

Church ordination study finds ‘room for improvement’ in SBC churches



The ordination process of Southern Baptist churches is a weak spot when it comes to protecting congregations from sexual predators, according to a report released May 9.

The report, “Above Reproach: A Study of the Ordination Practices of Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Churches,” was conducted by Jason A. Lowe, an associational mission strategist in Kentucky, in response to a Feb. 10 *Houston Chronicle* report on sexual abuse among Southern Baptist churches.

Lowe began polling pastors and other Baptist leaders across the SBC on Feb. 20, two days after SBC President J.D. Greear presented 10 calls to action from the Sexual Abuse Presidential Advisory Study, one of which was to enhance the ordination screening process.

Ordination, a process that sets a person aside for ministerial service, is left up to each individual Southern Baptist congregation in keeping with the SBC’s policy of church autonomy. Churches may review a person’s salvation

experience, pastoral call, qualifications and potentially his experience or seminary training to determine if he’s an appropriate candidate, according to sbc.net.

In late February and early March, Lowe gathered 555 survey responses from pastors (60%), associational and denominational leaders (17%), deacons (9%), retired or former pastors (5%) and others (9%) across 34 states to find out how their own ordination processes were conducted. He released his findings in a 42-page report and noted five significant points of interest:

1. SBC ordination practices have significant room for improvement.
2. Discussions regarding a candidate’s sexual purity are sparse, but on the rise.
3. SBC ordination practices are changing in both positive and negative ways.
4. Ordaining churches in more populated areas set higher standards for their ordination candidates.
5. Larger churches are more thorough in their examination of ordination candidates.

The full report is available at www.tabonline.org/ordination. (BP)

Study: 41.6 million Bible-curious Americans ripe for gospel, church

A significant rise in the number of adults looking to the Bible for answers this year gives the church a prime opportunity to draw more people to biblical truth, according to the American Bible Society (ABS).

John F. Plake, director of the ABS ministry intelligence team, drew the optimism from the 2019 State of the Bible report which showed an additional 18.1 million people searching for wisdom in Scripture than last year.

“Those people are curious about the Bible and they’re often in our churches,” Plake said. “They have questions about how to face life’s challenges and they’re turning to God’s word for help. So I think that’s a great opportunity for everyone ... to realize that people are looking to Scripture for wisdom ... and all we have to do is close the gap.”

Categorized as Bible friendly and Bible neutral, the group totals 41.6 million Americans who are researching areas such as parenthood, relationships, grief and job loss, the study shows. Often new readers will use electronic Bible versions and Google searches, Plake said.

“I think our job as the church is to know the questions that our society is asking and make sure that we’re standing there to provide biblical responses that are full of grace and truth,” Plake said. “We don’t know in a quantitative way exactly what’s driving this movement to the middle, particularly people moving out of the disengaged and into these more exploratory phases of Bible engagement. But we’re very grateful for it.”

Key findings

ABS commissioned Barna Research for the study conducted Jan. 15–Feb. 7 with 2,013 interviews of adults. The findings were released in April. The study tracked Bible engagement, Bible impact, religiosity and spirituality, perceptions of the Bible, Bible penetration, Bible literacy, the Bible and technology, moral perceptions and social impact, experience with trauma, perceptions of churches and charitable giving.

While the study is expansive ABS considers among key findings:

▶ 81% of American adults see the church as a key place people can go to for help;

▶ 102.7 million adults interact with the Bible, often seeking practical advice in their modern lives;

▶ Nearly 60% of American adults believe the message of the Bible has transformed their lives.

Gauging Bible use

Barna divided respondents into six categories gauging Bible use, including Bible disengaged, who interact with the Bible infrequently if at all; Bible neutral, interacting with the Bible sporadically; Bible friendly, interacting with the Bible consistently and perhaps seeing it as a source of wisdom; Bible engaged, interacting with the Bible often and allowing it to transform their view of God and others; and Bible centered, interacting with the Bible frequently and seeing it shape their relationships and choices.

Barna determined 5% of Americans are Bible centered, 19% are Bible engaged, 19% are Bible friendly, 9% are Bible neutral and 48% are Bible disengaged.

Some 61.1 million Americans are engaged with the Bible, encompassing the Bible engaged and Bible centered categories. ABS desires to see 100 million American adults

engaged with the Bible by 2026, the nation’s 250th anniversary, Plake said. Churches can help attain that goal by reaching the 41.6 million seeking biblical answers.

“They’re not far from the church. They don’t hate the church. They’re not far from God,” Plake said of the 41.6 million which he describes as the movable middle. “In fact they might be sitting next to us on a Sunday morning. ... They’re movable because they’re already trying out the Bible, they’re curious to know more about what the Bible says and they’re in church.”

Engaging the movable middle could make America a better place, Plake said.

“We want to invite all of our partners in the church and the Bible cause to rally around this desire to see 100 million Americans, or 40% of American adults, actively engaged in the Scripture by 2026,” he said. “If we could by God’s grace see that happen America would be a different place for our 250th anniversary.”

The complete study is available at americanbible.org. (BP)



Unsplash.com

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

For information on placing a classified ad call 205-870-4720, ext. 102 or email ads@thealabamabaptist.org.

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Camellia Baptist Church, 201 Woodvale Rd., Prattville, AL 36067, prayerfully seeking God’s choice for a full-time pastor. All applicants should have previous senior pastor experience and have earned a masters of divinity. Resumés with photo may be mailed: ATTN: Pastor/Search. www.cbcprattville.org.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

South Mobile First Baptist Church is seeking a dynamic, spirit-filled man of God to serve initially as a bivocational pastor with the potential for transitioning to full time based on church growth. Send resumé to: 10575 Dauphin Island Parkway, Theodore, AL 36582 or email c/o Search Committee at vgnelson@bellsouth.net.

MINISTER OF MUSIC

Parkview Baptist Church in Decatur, Alabama, is seeking a minister of music. Candidates should have a strong passion and sincere calling to lead all ages in worship, disciple and mentor new Christians and advance the gospel of Jesus Christ. Candidates must have a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university. Please send resumés to: jenny.russell@parkviewdecatur.org.

PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER/WORSHIP LEADER

Grace Baptist Church is seeking a part-time music minister/worship leader. Please send resumés to: chuckoliver1@bellsouth.net or Grace Baptist Church, Music Search Committee, 1656 Temple Avenue N, Fayette, AL 35555.

MINISTER OF PRESCHOOL/CHILDREN

Sardis Springs Baptist Church, Athens, Alabama, is seeking a part-time minister of a growing preschool/children ministry. Please submit resumé to Cassandra Montgomery at sardissprings@gmail.com. Deadline to accept resumés — May 31.

BUSINESSES

ELROD MOBILITY — GREAT PRICES

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

Contact us at 1-800-682-0658.

NEED A NEW CHURCH SIGN?

Reliable Sign Services — a Christian operated, full service, lighted sign company located in Pelham, Alabama, for 23 years — is ready to help you expand your church sign ministry. From digital message boards to traditional signs, Reliable Signs will design, fabricate and install statewide. www.reliablesigns.com. 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955.

TRAVEL/VACATION

LOG CABIN RENTAL

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

AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE CONDOS

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

MINISTRIES

TAB PODCAST

The TAB News podcast provides content from *The Alabama Baptist* each week in a radio-show-style format for listeners to download and listen to at their convenience. A host will guide the show, along with several readers and guests who will be invited in to talk about some of the story topics in depth. Listen to the TAB News podcast anywhere you get your podcasts such as iTunes, Stitcher, etc., or visit www.thealabamabaptist.org/explore/podcasts. New episodes are released weekly.

TAB DIGITAL

In addition to the print edition *The Alabama Baptist* also releases a weekly digital edition of the newspaper to every subscribers’ email. The digital edition now comes complimentary with all subscriptions to TAB. The digital edition has the same content as the print edition — just in full color — and it can be accessed anytime and anywhere there is internet access. For information on the TAB digital edition, or to update your email address on file email subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org.

Right: Volunteers with Smoke Rise Baptist Church's Under the Bridge ministry distribute food to the homeless. **Bottom, right:** Every Monday, Bibles, shoes, socks, blankets, clothing and hygiene products are distributed in downtown Birmingham.

Meeting on 'common ground'

Smoke Rise Baptist feeds homeless of downtown Birmingham

By Lanell Downs Smith
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Ron Muir can rattle off a dozen reasons why he feels called to serve the homeless of downtown Birmingham. Topping the list — he and his wife Jolene were once homeless themselves.

"That's where I come from. I was saved off drugs in 1988," Muir said. "You've got to wear them shoes before you can really know what's going on with people."

Muir and a team of volunteers from Smoke Rise Baptist Church, Warrior, provide lunch for the homeless every Monday as part of a ministry known as Under the Bridge. The group meets at Linn Park in Birmingham where they share a gospel message, sing hymns, distribute sack lunches and pray with or just listen to anyone who shows up, offering a hug and the opportunity to talk with someone.

"We always deliver the Word first," said Muir, who alternates with other volunteers to deliver the message. "God has always been there before us. He's already prepared the way for us before we get there."

The church budgets funds for

food, but much of it is donated by volunteers, church members and community friends.

Bibles, shoes, socks, blankets, clothing and hygiene products are distributed during the gatherings. Each week 60 to 70 sack lunches and 25 to 30 packages of hygiene products are distributed. Most items are donated and some are purchased by the volunteers.

Occasionally people request specific items. "One man asked for a backpack and a pair of size 10 shoes," volunteer Ray Stubblefield said. "The next day a lady brought in two brand new pairs of size 10 shoes. Her husband had died and never had the chance to wear them."

At a local thrift store "Papa Stubbs," as he is affectionately called, found a like-new backpack. Fulfilling special requests is important, Muir said, because it provides an opportunity for people to witness God at work.

Refined calling

The ministry began under a bridge of Interstate 20 in 2013 as Muir realized the call to reach the lost by serving the homeless. Muir and his wife tried serving in other areas of



Photos by Ron Muir

ministry before God refined their calling. The Muirs volunteered with homeless ministries in other areas and when they moved back to Warrior and their home church, Smoke Rise, they approached the church about beginning a mission.

Diverse population

"I know where I've come from. I could have died out there on the streets if I did not know the Lord," Muir recalled. "People ask me why I want to help the homeless. If no one had reached out to me I would be in hell right now. Not everyone understands. It's a calling."

Muir and his team serve a diverse population. Many of those served by Under the Bridge draw disability or Social Security checks but are unable to afford permanent housing. Others possess a criminal record that hinders their ability to find work. Some have been homeless their entire lives.

"We don't discriminate. He (Christ) tells us to go to all nations," Muir said.

Often a distrust among members of the homeless community exists because many have been hurt by those offering aid.

"Everyone has given up on them," Muir said. "It's like they are in a war zone. They are in the drop zone behind enemy lines."

By meeting a physical need volunteers open a door to share the good news of the gospel, offering hope to the hopeless. They extend a listening ear, meeting the homeless on "common ground." Muir shows up with a three-day beard, wearing street clothes and speaking with common



Photo by Mary Stubblefield

Ron Muir (center) preaches to those gathered in Linn Park. Also pictured are Pam Lawrence (left) and Ray Stubblefield.

language to build rapport with the those who need to know the volunteers understand their situation.

"I'm just like they are," Muir said. "We have our own demons that draw us away from God. It's a choice you have to make. I'm not a pastor. I'm just being used by God."

'They're just people'

Some homeless are Christians who share the gospel with their friends. Numerous salvations have occurred but volunteers don't always see the fruit of the seeds sown.

"We get to know them and then sometimes we don't see them again," said volunteer Mary Stubblefield. "They're just people," she added. "It could be me or you."

Churches or individuals desiring to help with the ministry can contact Smoke Rise Baptist Church. Under the Bridge hopes to partner with other churches to make a greater impact and are available to coach groups who seek to begin a similar ministry. 🌿

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONEPROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANYMINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries



Myers-Mallory

State Missions Offering

WEEK OF
Prayer
FOR STATE MISSIONS

myers-mallory.org

SEPTEMBER
8-15
2019

YOUR GIFTS HELP SUPPORT
THESE
**GREAT
COMMISSION
MINISTRIES:**

ALABAMA WMU
DISASTER RELIEF
CHURCH PLANTING
PARTNERSHIP MISSIONS
CHURCH REVITALIZATION



Alabama Baptist Convention
State Board of Missions



Alabamians nominated to serve SBC entities; vote on June 11

As the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) comes to Birmingham for the first time since 1941, Alabama Baptists are among those nominated to serve on the board of trustees for the SBC Executive Committee, GuideStone Financial Resources, International Mission Board (IMB), North American Mission Board (NAMB), Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and Gateway Seminary.

Nationwide nominees for the SBC Executive Committee, the four denominational boards — IMB, NAMB, LifeWay Christian Resources and GuideStone — the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, the six seminaries and the Committee on Order of Business have been selected by the 2019 SBC Committee on Nominations.

Nominees will serve if elected by the messengers to the annual meeting of the SBC held June 11–12 at the

Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex (BJCC).

Messengers will vote on the nominees during the afternoon session Tuesday, June 11.

Alabamians nominated to serve are:

► **Executive Committee** — Paul S. Hicks, pastor

of Good Shepherd Community Church, Hayden,

nominated for a second term

► **GuideStone Financial Resources** — J. Rodney Bledsoe, member of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, and chief development officer at The Baptist Foundation of Alabama, term expiring in 2023

► **International Mission Board** — James H. (Jim) Cooley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Birmingham; and Charlotte B. Madison, member of Mount Zion

Baptist Church, Huntsville, terms expiring in 2023

► **North American Mission Board** — Erin S. Bounds, member of North Valley Baptist Church, Odenville, nominated for a second term

► **Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary** —

Harry Edward (Ed) Litton Jr., pastor of Redemp-

tion Church, Saraland, term expiring in 2022

► **Gateway Seminary** — Daniel Atkins, pastor of Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, term expiring in 2024.

To view the full list of nominees visit www.tabonline.org/nominees.

For more information on the SBC annual meeting in Birmingham on June 11–12 or to register for the meeting visit sbcanualmeeting.org. (BP, TAB)





WEEKDAY MORNINGS ON WXJC

ADRIAN ROGERS JIM DALY DAVID JEREMIAH
ROBERT JEFFRESS CHARLES STANLEY MICHAEL YOUSSEF
TONY EVANS JAMES DOBSON CHARLES MORRIS
JOHN MACARTHUR ALISTAIR BEGG J VERNON MCGEE

AND AFTERNOONS LIVE



THE JOE LOCKETT SHOW
WEEKDAYS 3-5P
FM 101.1 & AM 850



THE MARK WHITE SHOW
WEEKDAYS 5-6P
WXJCRADIO.COM

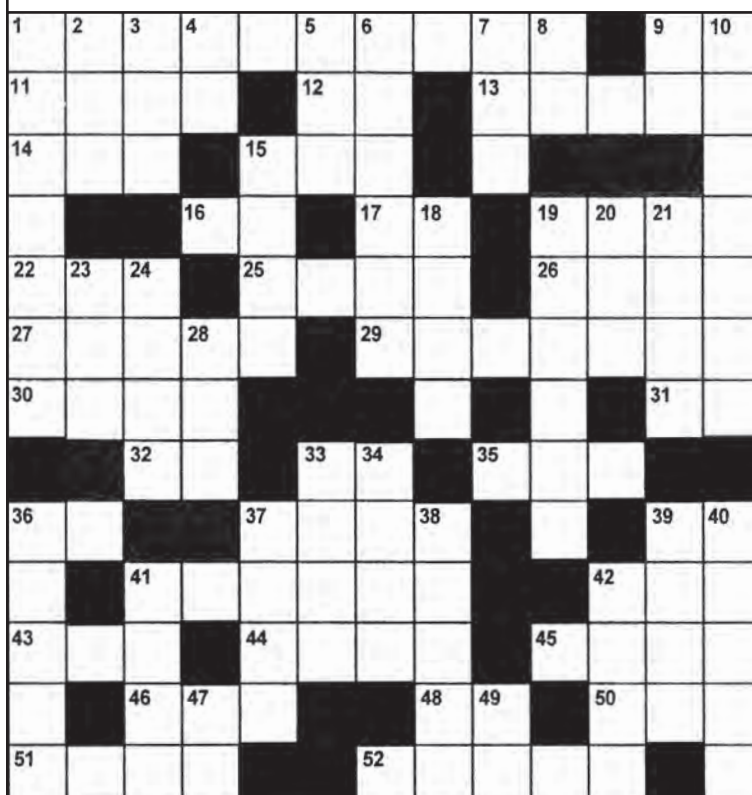
Follow us on
Twitter
@AlabamaBaptist



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

Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. Having to do with the Bible.
9. There ___ none good but one. (Mark 10:18)
11. The ___ of March.
12. ___ the money.
13. To utilize.
14. 1,400 in Roman numerals.
15. To drift off to sleep.
16. Your children ... received ___ correction. (Jer. 2:30)
17. Old Testament. (abbr.)
19. Whom the Father will ___ in my name. (John 14:26)
22. They ___ go the man. (Judg. 1:25)
25. Art not thou a ___? (2 Sam. 15:27)
26. One of the Great Lakes.
27. They came to him from ___ quarter. (Mark 1:45)
29. Paul, a ___ of Jesus Christ. (Rom. 1:1)
30. To raise a child.
31. Sound of satisfaction.
32. Manuscript. (abbr.)
33. Dad.
35. The harvest is the ___ of the world. (Matt. 13:39)
36. ___ Abram departed. (Gen. 12:4)
37. The one who gets to the finish line first ___ the prize.

Down

1. Less complex.
2. Centers for Disease Control. (abbr.)
3. God led them by the way of the ___ sea. (Ex. 13:18)
4. God ___ a Spirit. (John 4:24)
5. Also.
6. Does, then ___.
7. I took the little book, and ___ it up. (Rev. 10:10)
8. And, ___, the heavens were opened. (Matt. 3:16)
9. God ___ my strength and

10. And ___ rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matt. 5:45)
15. Someone who can't mind his or her own business is ___.
18. "Star ___."
19. Fives, sixes and ___.
20. Equal Rights Amendment. (abbr.)
21. ___, Pinta and Santa Maria.
23. Adam's wife.
24. Go, ___, go!
28. Railroads. (abbr.)
33. I will even make the ___ for fire great. (Ezek. 24:9)
34. Most-quoted author in the world.
36. He made the pure incense of ___ spices. (Ex. 37:29)
37. Clever coyote's name.
38. All the people shall ___. (Josh. 6:5)
39. For God is ___ to make him stand. (Rom. 14:4)
40. They bake unleavened ___ of the dough. (Ex. 12:39)
41. He made him to ___ honey out of the rock. (Deut. 32:13)
42. As the flower of the grass he shall ___ away. (James 1:10)
47. About. (abbr.)
49. Dad.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 26

Explore the Bible

By Robert E. Jackson, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



LIVES

Mark 15:42–47; 16:1–8

Buried (15:42–47)

It was evening. Darkness came upon the land. Jesus let out a loud cry and drew His last breath. The Messiah, the promised hope for all the nations, absorbed the bitter suffering we deserve and willingly gave His life in our place. Put simply, Jesus paid the penalty for our sins on the cross.

Romans would often discard the crucified in places where the bodies were exposed to both the elements and wild animals. It was risky and even dangerous for followers or friends to ask for the corpse of one who was crucified. Romans would view such persons as “supporters” of an enemy of Rome.

Therefore the disciples and the women were not bold enough to ask for Jesus’ body. But not so with Joseph of Arimathea. Even though he was a wealthy and respected council member with much to lose he approached Pilate for permission to bury Jesus.

The amazing power of Christ so touched a Sanhedrin member that he took the responsibility to take our Lord off the cross, wrap Him in fine linen and place Him in a new tomb. Jesus is buried. All hope seems to be gone. And the stone is rolled over the entrance to the tomb as Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph watch.

Grieved (16:1–4)

The last section ended in evening, darkness and death. Chapter 16 begins with light. The Sabbath is over and the sun rises to awaken everything from its nightly slumber. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome lead the way to the tomb with spices. We can only imagine the raw grief they feel.

They have no idea how they can roll away the massive stone but they go nonetheless. Motivated by love these women desire to anoint their Lord one last time. They

come to the tomb without hope, still living in the “darkness” of Friday and the crucifixion. When they arrive at the burial site they are amazed; the stone is rolled away.

Soon they realize this day is the dawning of the new beginning for all of humanity. Looking to Scripture we understand “weeping may remain for a night but rejoicing comes in the morning” (Pss. 30:5; 59:16; 90:14; 143:8). Yes, the sun was rising. The tomb was empty. Jesus’ resurrection brings light and hope to His followers in their grief both then and now.

Resurrected (16:5–8)

Mark’s Gospel began with God’s messenger announcing what God was about to do (1:2–8) and now it closes with God’s messenger announcing what God has done. The angel explains the meaning of the empty tomb: Jesus is risen! He also directs the women to tell His disciples and Peter to go to Galilee where they will see the resurrected Christ.

God was moving the disciples to a new realm where the kingdom of God will not be limited to one place or one people group.

Salvation is offered beyond the walls of Jerusalem and beyond the Jewish people. Overwhelmed with fear and astonishment the women initially keep this news to themselves — but eventually share the message.

We end our study of Mark with a few questions: Am I living on the right side of the empty tomb, serving in power and strength? Furthermore, what am I doing with this news of the resurrected Lord? Am I keeping silent? More specifically when is the last time I have personally shared the gospel with someone?

Jesus is alive and He has commanded us to be make disciples of all the nations (Matt. 28:18–20). Let us get busy sharing Him today. 🌟

Bible Studies for Life

By James Riley Strange, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of New Testament, Samford University



EXPLOIT YOUR FRIENDS

Luke 16:1–13

In our final lesson on Jesus’ difficult teachings we read a parable that seems to teach immoral behavior. Many commentators despair of finding an adequate interpretation and with good reason for the gospel itself appears to give the parable more than one application.

We begin by noting based on the wealthy characters and the patron-client system implied in Luke 16:4 this parable assumes either an urban environment or the system of moderate-sized farm estates that dotted Roman Palestine.

We are held accountable for how we use our resources and opportunities (1–2).

In the previous section Jesus spoke to Pharisees and scribes (Luke 15:1–3). Now He instructs His disciples. “Manager” can also be translated “steward.” In verse 3 the manager refers to the rich man as his “master” or “lord,” which could imply that the manager is a slave.

However, the man’s dismissal and the possibility of being reduced to begging show he is a hired servant. Because Jesus is also “the Lord” in Luke, the parable invites comparison with Jesus and His followers.

We are to be wise in the way we use our resources and opportunities. (3–9)

It is clear the manager is guilty of the charge in verse 1 for he assumes he will lose his position rather than be found innocent. He devises a plan to place a group of wealthy people in his debt by reducing their monetary debt to his master. In the Roman world Jesus’ parable assumes the manager probably hopes to become a client to these people — now his patrons — who can afford to buy on credit 100 “baths” (over 600 gallons) of olive oil and 100 “kors” (over 20 tons) of wheat.

Patrons commonly invited their clients to dinner parties which helps to explain the manager’s plan in verse 4. The first part of verse 8

comes as a surprise. When the lord learns of the scheme he commends the manager for acting “shrewdly” or “prudently.”

When Jesus begins to draw out a moral in the second half of verse 8, He says the “children of light” (His followers) need to be as shrewd or prudent as the “children of this age” (nonbelievers). More striking, however, is Jesus’ instruction in verse 9 that His disciples “make friends by means of dishonest wealth” (NRSV) or “unrighteous wealth” (ESV).

Rather than talking about wealth gained by dishonest means Jesus is characterizing all wealth as “unrighteous.” The key comes in verse 11 where Jesus contrasts this kind of wealth not with wealth gained honestly but with “true riches.”

Perhaps because of the problems with which He must deal Jesus’ teachings about wealth are consistently negative in Luke (see 16:13–15 and 18:25), though some wealthy disciples endow His mission (Luke 8:1–3). Furthermore it is important to remember the lord doesn’t commend the manager for acting immorally. Rather the manager reduces debts. Despite his self-serving motives he does good by acting generously especially if the amount he forgives is his own commission (some commentators raise this possibility).

We are to be faithful to God in the way we use our resources and opportunities. (10–13)

The point of verse 10 is to be faithful even in little things in order to be entrusted with much. In verse 11 it is to be faithful with all wealth in order to be entrusted with what is of true value: the proclamation of the gospel.

In verse 13 we learn why Jesus calls all wealth “unrighteous” in this parable. It is because we so easily serve it rather than our true Lord. In all circumstances let us serve Christ and only Him. Amen. 🌟



Media reviews

MOVIES/TV

Faith-based film 'Like Arrows' tops May's streaming lineup

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

Filmmakers Alex and Stephen Kendrick are the names behind some of the most successful films in faith-based entertainment — including “War Room,” “Courageous” and “Fireproof” — but they’ve also had their hand in a few projects that didn’t gain such notoriety.

“Like Arrows,” one of the best films in that latter category, began streaming on Netflix this month.

It was made in partnership with FamilyLife Ministries and follows the triumphs and challenges of a young couple, Charlie and Alice, over the course of 50 years.

We see them get engaged, and then married and then have and raise children. Finally we watch the adult children return home for a 50th wedding anniversary. Alex and Stephen Kendrick served as executive producers. Alex also helped write it.

“Like Arrows” (2018) isn’t part of the “Kendrick Brothers canon” — that’s reserved for ones Alex di-

rects — but it’s still a good film with great messages for today’s society.

Among them: the blessings of children and family, the need to persevere during marriage’s storms and the grace and redemption found in Christ.

“This young couple that goes into parenting defaults to what the world teaches

you about parenting,” Alex Kendrick said. “They begin going down that path and using the world’s principles for their first child or two. And they begin to realize, ‘Wow, this is not bearing the fruit we had hoped.’ And

when they begin applying biblical principles you see a marked difference.”

Alan Powell (“Beautifully Broken,” “The Song”) stars as Charlie. Kevin Peeples directed it.

Also streaming this month:

For adults/teens

► **“No Good Nick” (Netflix)** — A family of four takes in a teenage girl who says she’s destitute. She then pillages them little by little.

This comedy series is a



Photo courtesy of FamilyLife

combination of a family-centric 80s show and a squeaky-clean Disney Channel program. The pro — no sex jokes. The con — one or two mild curse words each show.

Yet it’s about as clean of a program as you’ll find on Netflix. “No Good Nick” stars Sean Astin and Melissa Joan Hart. Rated TV-PG.

► **“Nailed It” Season 3 (Netflix)** — Regular folks like you and me try to bake and decorate professional-looking cakes. It always ends in disaster. Nicole and Jacques return as judges in this third season. Rated TV-PG.

► **“Our Planet” (Netflix)** — This eight-part documentary series includes breathtaking video of the planet that can be embraced by everyone but it has

dialogue that will frustrate some viewers.

“Our Planet” is a Netflix original that examines “humanity’s impact on the planet’s habitats and species,” according to the press release. The visuals are indeed splendid. But the worldview won’t match everyone’s.

For children

► **“Bernie the Dolphin” (Hulu)** — A brother and sister set out to protect a dolphin threatened by a

money-hungry businessman. Rated G.

► **“Nutcracker and the Four Realms” (Netflix, May 28)** — A timid teen girl named Clara grows up wanting to be her sister. She then discovers her place in the world when she becomes a princess in another realm. “Nutcracker” was panned by



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.

most critics but I enjoyed it. It’s family-friendly and has several positive messages. Rated PG for some mild peril.

► **“The Riot and the Dance: Earth” (Hulu)** — If you’ve ever wanted a PBS-like nature documentary with a biblical worldview, then this film is for you. Gordon Wilson — senior fellow of natural history at New Saint Andrews College — travels the globe to show viewers God’s amazing creation. Unrated. 🌿

Want your book considered for a review?

Mail a copy to:
P.O. Box 1504, Hartselle, AL 35640

TAB
THE ALABAMA BAPTIST



‘A new dawn’

‘Islam and North America’ event in Georgia urges hope, not fear

By the year 2050 the Muslim population in North America is projected to double. That figure might trouble some people in the United States, but Pastor Micah Fries believes Christians have no reason to be concerned.

The North American Mission

How to pray:

▶ Pray Christians will continue to show God’s love to Muslims and seize the opportunity to encourage them and start conversations about Christ.

▶ Pray Muslims across the country and the world will experience the hope of the gospel and turn to Christ. (TAB)

Board hosted an event May 2 in Alpharetta, Georgia, based on Fries’ and Keith Whitfield’s book, “Islam and North America: Loving our Muslim Neighbors.” Nearly 40 attended in person and roughly 300 individuals and locations joined by simulcast.

“If you ask the average American Christian to tell us what percentage of the U.S. is Muslim,” said Fries, pastor of Brainerd Baptist Church in Chattanooga, Tennessee. “The vast majority give you a number from 10, 15, even 20%. The truth is it’s 1%. Projections estimate it will grow to 2.1% by 2050.”

That statistic is one example of the misconceptions about Islam that tend to generate fear and confusion and prevent Christians from loving their Muslim neighbors well, Fries said.

The anxiety that regularly ap-

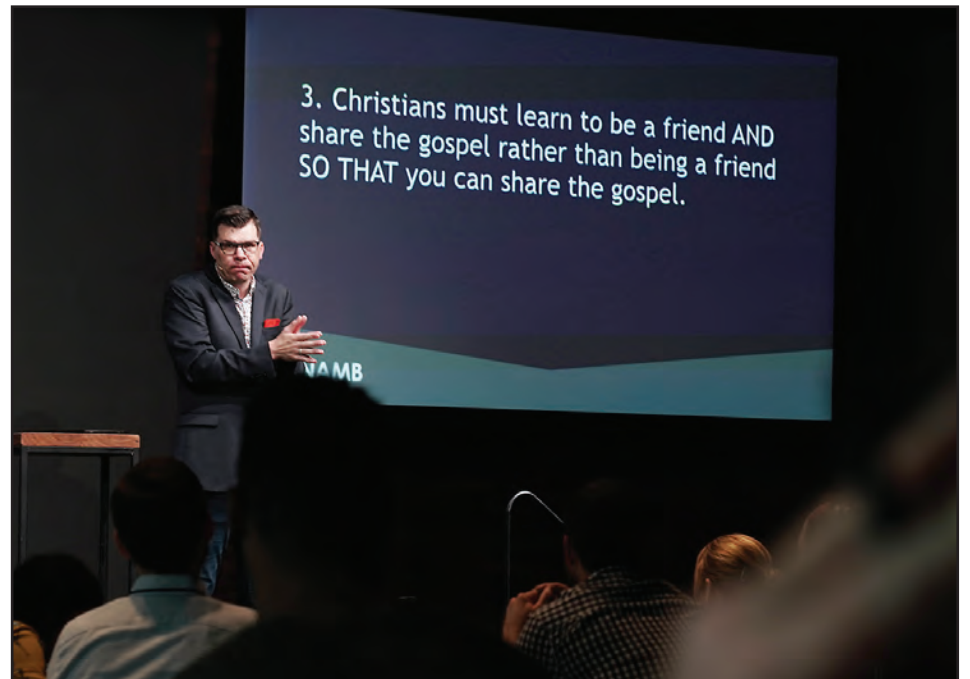


Photo by Micaiah Davis/NAMB

Micah Fries, pastor of Brainerd Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee, speaks May 2 during an event about ‘Islam and North America,’ which focused on equipping Christians to love and share their faith with their Muslim neighbors.

pears in the media spurred Fries and Whitfield, associate professor of theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, to compile their book.

‘Create a conversation’

“Our desire is to create a conversation to help people see and become aware of an opportunity” and encourage them to seize the opportunity to reach their Muslim neighbors, Whitfield said ahead of the conference.

Topics ranged from the benefits of more multi-faith dialogue, clearing

up misunderstandings about Islam, the need for religious liberty for all faiths and methods for sharing the gospel with Muslims.

Fries, who has led his church to reach out to the Muslim community in Chattanooga, has seen several Muslims come to Christ. He also emphasized Christians should not simply view the Muslim community as a project.

“We’re not doing this just because we want people to come to Christ. We value individuals whether they come to Jesus or not,” he said. “We want them to know that we value you as created in the image of God.” (BP)



Only 1% of the U.S. population is Muslim though the average American Christian guesses a number from 10, 15, even 20%. That statistic is one example of the misconceptions about Islam that tend to generate fear and confusion preventing Christians from loving their Muslim neighbors, Pastor Micah Fries said.

IMB photo