



The

Alabama Baptist

CONVENTION REPORT 2019

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



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Theme interpretation — Fruitful in Christ

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Pastors Conference addresses how the cross shapes lives, destinies

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IN HEART AND IN VOICE

Photo by Tracy Riggs

Voices of Mobile, a student vocal ensemble from University of Mobile, leads messengers in worship during the Tuesday evening session of the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting at Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne.

Alabama Baptists gather for 'fruitful' annual meeting

Every four years messengers to the Alabama Baptist State Convention have traveled to the milder clime of south Alabama to gather together with friends and colleagues to worship, fellowship and conduct business.

This year the outside temperature dropped to record lows during the annual meeting Nov. 12–13, but inside

Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne, hearts were warmed by stories of what God is doing in Alabama Baptist life.

Led by the Voices of Mobile and other Alabama musicians, messengers and guests worshipped together in song and heard powerful messages on this year's theme of "Fruitful" centered on John 15:5.

Pastors from legacy churches joined pastors of recent

church plants to celebrate what Rick Barnhart called miracles — new congregations of all sizes, cultures and styles in a variety of geographic locations.

'Doing it right'

Alabama is the leading state in the nation in "doing it right" in church planting with a greater than 90% success rate, said Barnhart, director

of the office of associational missions and church planting for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

But church planting is just one of the many facets of Alabama Baptist life celebrated in gratitude at this year's annual meeting.

See inside for reports on the meeting and more stories on church plants in the state. (TAB)

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

Tuesday night's featured speaker Jason Allen

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Thank you to those serving on committees related to this year's state convention annual meeting

Credentials Committee

The credentials committee is appointed by the state convention president in consultation with the vice presidents at least 30 days prior to the annual meeting. Its purpose is to assist the registration secretary in problems regarding registration and seating of messengers.

This year's committee was chaired by Pastor Britt Green, FBC Eclectic.

Other members were Pastor Rob Burns, East Pointe Baptist Church, Spanish Fort; Pastor Eric Hankins, FBC Fairhope; Pastor Paul Matthews, Jubilee Baptist Church, Daphne; Pastor Dee McGuire, Greensboro Baptist Church; and Pastor Rusty Sowell, Providence Baptist Church, Opelika.

Tellers Committee

The tellers committee is appointed by the state convention president in consultation with the vice presidents at least 30 days prior to the annual meeting. Its purpose is to assist the presiding officer and registration secretary in determining voice or standing votes and handling ballot votes.

This year's committee was chaired by Barry Cosper, a messenger from The Baptist Church at McAdory, McCalla, and associational mission

strategist for Bessemer Baptist Association.

Other members were Pastor Chase Clower, FBC Greenville; Pastor Ollie Gunn, Christian Walk Baptist Church, Midfield; Pastor Morris Johnson, Integrity Church, Hueytown; associate pastor Chad Middlebrooks, FBC Andalusia; Pastor George Smith, Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Eclectic; and journey pastor Charles Teague, Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer.

Order of Business

The committee on order of business is recommended by the Committee on Committees and requires approval by convention messengers.

This year's committee was chaired by Rob Jackson, a messenger from Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne, and interim pastor of Spring Hill Baptist Church, Mobile.

Other members were Pastor Derek Gentle, FBC Tallassee; Pastor Buddy Gray, Hunter Street Baptist Church,

Hoover; Pastor Jeff Redmond, Parkway Baptist Church, Auburn; Pastor Chip Starnes, FBC Bay Minette; and Pastor Ryan Whitley, CrossPoint Baptist Church, Trussville.

Resolutions Committee

The resolutions committee is recommended by the Committee on Committees and requires approval by convention messengers.

This year's committee was chaired by Craig Carlisle, messenger from Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Rainbow City, and associational missionary for Etowah Baptist Association.

Other members were Pastor Michael Brooks, Siluria Baptist Church, Alabaster; retired pastor Travis Coleman, FBC Prattville; Rosemary Colvin, FBC Jackson; Bill King, Providence Baptist Church, Opelika, and associational missions director for Tuskegee Lee Association; Pastor Matt Simmons, Henderson Baptist Church, Troy; and Karen Watkins, West End Baptist Church, Clanton. 🌈



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

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New feature added to Pastors Conference

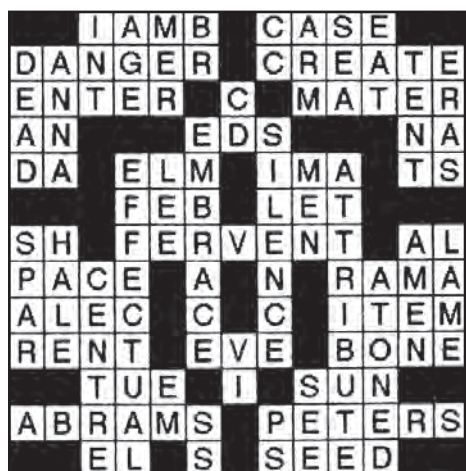


Photo by Hannah Muñoz

TAB News host Debbie Campbell (left) and guest host Terry Wilhite (right) interview Brian Strickland with American Steeples during the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference on Nov. 11 at Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne. Taking the TAB News podcast on the road was a new feature for the Pastors Conference and a first for the TAB staff. Several exhibitors and other guests were interviewed in the exhibit hall area for upcoming podcasts and three of the interviews were broadcast on Facebook Live.

View the full gallery of photos from this year's Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting and Pastors Conference at www.tabonline.org/ABSC19. Watch videos of the annual meeting sessions at www.alsbom.org/convention and the Pastors Conference at www.tabonline.org/ESBC.

665 messengers from 328 churches registered for the 2019 state convention annual meeting held at Eastern Shore Baptist Church in Daphne.



The crossword puzzle can be found on page 17.

MY RASHIONALE

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

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@RashionalThts



'You never know how God will use' the work you do for Him

His grandmother's diligent prayers and a letter to the editor in *The Alabama Baptist* changed the course of his life.

Pastor John shared his powerful personal redemption story as we sat in the quiet sanctuary at Eastern Shore Baptist Church in Daphne last week.

We were in between the morning and afternoon sessions of the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting and only a few people milled around as they prepped the stage for the next items on the agenda.

Pastor John's story captivated me on several levels so we'll try to share it in *TAB* soon but for now I want you to know the why behind his diligent attempt to chase me down to explain about that letter to the editor from a few decades ago.

"I just needed to share this with you to let you know what you do matters," he said. "You never know how God will use the words and the stories you choose to put in *The Alabama Baptist*."

My mind jumped quickly to another life changed — and actually saved from suicide — when a front-page photo overlaid with a Scripture verse caught Doris Harris' attention during the late-night hours leading up to what she intended to be her final moments on earth.

I wasn't in the editor's chair for either of these two particular life-changing moments connected to *TAB*, but they serve to remind me of the tremendous legacy on which I have the honor of standing.

I hope Pastor John's story encourages the entire *TAB* team as staff members work hard each day to tell the story of what God is doing through His people, serve as a central communications hub to connect people with resources and provide insight into the culture at large.

I also hope Pastor John's words encourage and empower you in your many responsibilities and spheres of influence.

Life can become discouraging at times when we aren't seeing the results we have hoped and prayed for — but focusing on the journey and the important

small steps needed to move forward might help.

What if we focused our energy on discerning where, when and how God is leading us to serve?

What if we could consistently and diligently invest in the lives of others without growing weary even when it seems to be a constant one step forward, three steps back kind of routine?

What if we paused and prayed for each person and situation as they pop in our minds throughout the day?

What if we stayed in our lane

and provided top quality effort and results for what we've been called to do?

It's such a fulfilling moment when team members discover the slot made for them (or seat on the bus as Jim Collins calls it in "Good to Great") and decide to truly own it, taking it to a new level.

As brothers and sisters in Christ we also have the opportunity to pour our lives into the roles made for us through glorifying God and enjoying Him forever. We truly never know how God might use what we say or do to change another's life. 🌈

OFFICERS RE-ELECTED



Photo by Tracy Riggs
Jennifer Davis Rash of *The Alabama Baptist* captures her signature selfie with newly re-elected officers of the Alabama Baptist State Convention (from left): President Tim Cox, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea; First Vice President Buddy Champion, pastor of FBC Trussville; and Second Vice President Morgan Bailey, pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church, Ranburne. All three were re-elected for a second one-year term without opposition. Also re-elected were recording secretary Billie Davis and statistical/registration secretary Bobby DuBois.

Your Voice



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

Confessing, professing, commissioned: Simplicity of gospel

By Rick Marshall
Longtime Alabama Baptist pastor

Toward the latter days of His ministry Jesus took His disciples on a retreat to a northern city in Galilee called Caesarea Philippi. This was a Roman city built on the side of a huge rock mountain. It was known for pagan worship including a temple dedicated to the half-man, half-goat god named Pan. A spring gushed from a cave in the side of a massive mountain and a temple was built over it which was known as the Gates of Hades. No doubt Jesus pointed toward it when He spoke to them about the power of the church He would build.

Against this backdrop Jesus asked His disciples who people thought He was. Various answers were given. Then He inquired more directly, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ.”

Jesus was not asking the disciples for information. He was interested in transforming men who had been followers into those who would soon take the gospel to the world. Without the truth firmly instilled in their hearts and minds about who He was, the disciples would not have been prepared to face what was ahead for Jesus or to effectively take the gospel to the world.

From that day until now discipleship is first and foremost dependent upon a confession of who Jesus is and receiving Him as the anointed of God who died for our sins. We are a convention of messengers from churches where people are asked week after week to make a profession of faith as a sign of their be-

coming a Christian. It is essential we help them understand who Jesus is and why they are following Him.

If the confession is not based on possession of the truth, their decision will be about as valid as putting a Band-Aid on cancer and expecting healing.

Work of the Holy Spirit

The faith we profess is not about an accomplishment we have achieved but something which has happened to us, not of our doing, rather the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. The result is an abiding presence of Christ in our life which touches every fiber of our being and every relationship we have.

From the confession of Peter move with me to the commission of our Lord. In the Acts passage Jesus gave a command which must find a home in the heart of every believer.

CONVENTION SERMON

“From Confession to Commission”

Matthew 16:13-18, Acts 1:6-8

The gospel is not ours to keep but to share with the world. As Dr. (Rick) Lance reminds us, “We have one mission, the Great Commission.”

When the disciples heard this they may have understood they should reach their own kind

in Jerusalem or perhaps the Jews across Judea. But Jesus surprisingly added Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth. These people were different. They were considered enemies, unclean and a threat to their culture. In other words the commission of our Lord means we don’t get to choose our witness location or people group, only what kind of witnesses we will be. Let us never forget that the word commission means “co-mission,” something done together.



Photo by Tracy Riggs

Longtime Alabama Baptist pastor Rick Marshall delivers the convention sermon during the final session of the annual meeting on Nov. 13.

The truth is the world is becoming more lost around us. The enemies of the gospel are not over there somewhere but are right here among us. We live in an increasingly anti-Christian culture. Christianity was born into a counter culture of opposition 2,000 years ago. Those early disciples expressing the gospel did not “turn the world upside down” through compromise or fear.

‘To live is Christ’

Our need is not for new programs but a return to the simplicity of Paul’s statement, “To live is Christ.” If that is not the theme of every sermon, the heart of every lesson and the reason for every budget or building we shortchange the gospel with pseudo-discipleship. As leaders of the church we must pay attention to what we are paying attention to. The only thing which justifies the church is our passion for Christ for the

world. We are not only a confessing people and a professing people, we are a commissioned people. Jesus did not send us out to recruit volunteers but to build His church with “sold-out and sent-out servant believers.”

Let us look to those who launched the church in the book of Acts to find our way in fulfilling the Great Commission. They were pioneers taking the name of Jesus with them in spite of cultural boundaries or community location. They were proclaimers unashamed of the gospel and unafraid to share it. They were patterns, examples of how the Spirit of God operates through men, how God penetrates a community, how He moves to change His people and transform them. They connected people from their decision to follow Christ to become commissioned witnesses.

May God bless you and all Alabama Baptists as you go forth and do the same.

“ My favorite session is always Tuesday night. No business to discuss. Just an opportunity to worship. ”

CHAD MANION
Pastor, Salem Baptist Church, Brundidge

Enjoyed preaching today in Mobile at the [Alabama Baptist] Pastors Conference. ... Brought back great memories from 20 years ago (1999) when I was president of the same Pastors Conference and it was also in Mobile. Grateful for the privilege of encouraging new pastors.

Pastor Steve Gaines
Bellevue Baptist Church
Memphis, Tenn.

Every year it's a joy to hear about what God is doing through @alsbom. Grateful for the leadership of all of the folks who make it possible to share this time together at #ABSC19.

Pastor Clint Landry
FBC Foley

“Some are gonna have to change their name from missionary to stationary because they haven't gone anywhere in a long time.” Ouch! Jarman Leatherwood is plowing close to the corn! A message that we need to hear!

Daniel Wilson
Co-director of evangelism
Alabama Baptist State Board
of Missions

I hope every year we have “boring” conventions because that allows us to focus on advancing the gospel of Jesus Christ — the most exciting thing in the world! #absc19

Pastor Mat Alexander
FBC Gadsden

Praying for Alabama Baptists as we begin our convention. If we leave this gathering unaware of the Lord's presence, all we have done is met. If we leave aware of His presence, we will leave speechless, broken and hungry for revival.

Steve Sellers, chaplain
Alabama Baptist Children's
Homes & Family Ministries

@ricklance just shared that Alabama Baptists may use the code “ALSBOM-safer” at this link <http://ministrysafe.com/alsbom> and your church will only pay \$50 for its first-year annual fee. This includes access to the @MinistrySafe documents library. #ABSC19

@alsbom via Twitter

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS



Photo by Tracy Riggs

Tim Cox is president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

Strengthened by the Spirit

Thank you, Alabama Baptists, for allowing me to serve you. I am grateful for this opportunity and encouraged by your faithfulness to the Great Commission.

I pray I can encourage you through a powerful prayer for enablement from the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 3:14–21.

Alabama Baptists, what we need in the changing times in which we live is to be strengthened daily by the Holy Spirit who provides power for our lives to bear spiritual fruit for His glory. Anything less than the spirit-filled life of the believer is less than what God desires for you.

Paul also was compelled to worship because the love of God continued to grow in his heart and mind. The more we grow in our understanding of God's love toward us the more we grow in our love for Him. The more we grow in our love for Him the more His love is reflected toward others — making disciples who make disciples.

Alabama Baptists, as we are strengthened by His Spirit and as we lay hold of the love of God toward us we will be fruitful. But we have to do it God's way. This is my prayer for us.

—Tim Cox

Ministries, partnerships producing fruit in Alabama Baptist life, Lance says

Alabama is known for having great soil for some specific kinds of fruit — a drive on I-65 past Clanton's giant peach water tower will tell you that, said Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM).

But peaches aren't the only fruit that thrives here, he said. State Baptists are seeing God do a lot through church planting efforts both here and beyond thanks to the support of Alabama Baptist churches.

“Today we want to give some glimpses into the fruitfulness of Alabama Baptist life,” Lance said during his report to the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting Nov. 12.

He told the story of five thriving Baptist ministries and partnerships — in a changing community, in a trailer park, among international students, in Alaska and in Scotland.

The first — a partnership in the

Montgomery area — paired the aging Chisholm Baptist Church with a new church planter, Dwayne Rembert. The small church didn't want to shut its doors so pastor Daniel Edmonds led them through the process of working with associational and state leadership to partner with Rembert.

Now the new congregation — Flatline Church at Chisholm — is “seeing much fruit” in the community, Rembert said.

“We're averaging 80 to 100 people on Sundays,” he said. “As we bring them in we disciple them up and they go out and witness and bring others in.”

The second “fruitful” ministry Lance mentioned was Faith Community Church in Coffee Baptist Association, a congregation planted in a trailer park.

John Gunter, who leads the church, views the more than 100 mobile homes behind the church as



LANCE

The first — a partnership in the

'Vitaly important'

SBOM report emphasizes available church resources, recognizes 'key leaders'

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Baptists reviewed their commitment to preventing abuse in churches, renewed this year's budget and reaffirmed their long-range vision at this year's Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting Nov. 12-13.

During the report of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), Executive Director Rick Lance gave a presentation on how the SBOM aims to help churches be safer places for all people, starting with a task force working to "provide the best resources possible."

Though the SBOM is "not a governing body," he said they have three main aims on this topic — "reducing the risk," "responding to victims" and "respecting our values."

The SBOM is partnering with MinistrySafe, an organization that advises churches and ministries of best practices to prevent sexual abuse and provides training and workshops for churches.

Nearly 1,000 Alabama Baptists have been trained so far, with the next training set for April 7, 2020, at First Baptist Church, Decatur.

The SBOM will background check its new trustees and continue to background check all employees, Lance said. He asked churches to



Photo by Tracy Riggs
Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, demonstrates the "fruitfulness" of Alabama Baptist ministries and partnerships.

"underscore" the "vitaly important" need for reporting suspected abuse immediately to the county's DHR, law enforcement or the district attorney. The first priority should be the well-being of the victim, he said.

Various resources

Lance also noted that other resources of various kinds are available to churches through the SBOM.

"This is just a report but it is more than a report in terms of its immense necessity of being taken

very seriously," Lance said. "We need to do what we can to make our churches safer places, and we need to grieve with those who have been hurt and harmed, and we need to pray that what has been happening in our churches will not happen in the future."

Alabama Baptists also unanimously voted to approve a \$37.5 million budget for 2020 — the same as 2019 — with a 50/50 split of Cooperative Program funds between the state's budget and the Southern Baptist Convention

(SBC). It's the second year for an even split.

Lance also announced that state Baptists have made it over the \$1 million mark in Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering giving on their way to meeting this year's \$1.2 million goal.

Ministry recognitions

Taking a few minutes to look forward Lance reminded Alabama Baptists of Beyond 2020, an effort to vision cast for the future, which will transition to OneMission Alabama.

He read five "strategic reaffirmations" that underscored state Baptists' commitment to: spiritual preparation, evangelism and discipleship, church revitalization and planting, prayer, and giving through the Cooperative Program.

"Next year you will receive some strategic initiatives that will reflect those strategic affirmations," Lance said.

Also during the report Mike Jackson, director of the SBOM office of leadership and church health, presented the Troy L. Morrison Leadership/Church Health Award to Craig Carlisle, associational missionary for Etowah Baptist Association.

Jackson said the presentation was especially meaningful as Carlisle grew up under Morrison's ministry then served as Morrison's pastor at Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Rainbow City, before moving into the associational missionary role.

"Craig has taken it on in his personal life to minister to ministers and encourage us," Jackson said.

Mark Wakefield, SBOM disaster relief strategist, also presented the Tommy Puckett Award for Excellence to two "key leaders" — longtime disaster relief volunteer John Hayes, a member of Adamsville Baptist Church, and Becky Luther, a member of East Gadsden Baptist Church. Luther coordinated child care for the SBC annual meeting in Birmingham in June.

Two missions volunteers — Lenora Hamrick and Emily Stanford



Photo by Jessica Ingram

Lenora Hamrick (right), a member of FBC Livingston, is recognized by Scotty Goldman, director of the SBOM office of global missions, for her work with international students.



Photo by Jessica Ingram

Scotty Goldman (left), director of the SBOM office of global missions, recognizes Emily Stanford, a member of FBC Pleasant Grove, for her work with children in VBS ministry.



Photo by Tracy Riggs

Craig Carlisle (right), associational missionary for Etowah Baptist Association, receives the Troy L. Morrison Leadership/Church Health Award from Mike Jackson, director of the SBOM office of leadership and church health.

— also were recognized for their outstanding missions volunteerism.

Hamrick, a member of First Baptist Church, Livingston, has worked with children and college students for more than 50 years, serving both locally and internationally.

“At 80 she went to a closed country and taught at a school where there were no children who had ever been exposed to the gospel,” said Scotty Goldman, director of the SBOM office of global missions. “She is very diligent in praying for missionaries and in her own family has a missionary granddaughter.”

Stanford, a member of First Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove, has taught Vacation Bible School (VBS) both at her own church and in Guatemala.

“You could call her ‘Miss VBS,’” Goldman said, noting the person who nominated her for the award tallied up how

many children he personally had seen her minister to and the number topped 8,000 in Guatemala alone.

Also during the SBOM report:

► Messengers approved the 2018 auditor’s report of SBOM.

► Messengers affirmed the special offering goals for 2020 — Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, \$12,250,000; Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, \$6,250,000; Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries, \$3 million; Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering, \$1.2 million; and Global Hunger Offering, \$800,000.

► Leadership announced the formation of a task force to organize the SBOM’s bicentennial celebration in 2023 with Greg Corbin, pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, serving as chair.

► Leadership unveiled the SBOM’s updated mission statement: “The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions ministers in partnership with our Alabama Baptist family and other Southern Baptists

by seeking to obediently fulfill the Great Commission through an Acts 1:8 missional strategy.”



Photo by Tracy Riggs

John Hayes, a member of Adamsville Baptist Church, was one of two disaster relief volunteers awarded the Tommy Puckett Award for Excellence.



Photo by Jessica Ingram

Becky Luther, member of East Gadsden Baptist, accepts the Tommy Puckett Award for Excellence from Mark Wakefield, SBOM disaster relief strategist.

ALABAMA BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION

Cooperative Program Budget for 2020

(Approved by convention messengers Nov. 12)

	2019 BUDGET	2020 BUDGET
SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION MINISTRIES		
SBC Executive Committee	18,750,000	18,750,000
Total for Southern Baptist Convention Ministries	18,750,000	18,750,000
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS MINISTRIES		
<i>EVANGELISM/DISCIPLESHIP (27 full-time employees)</i>		
Evangelism	108,383	108,383
Sunday School and Discipleship	312,022	312,022
Collegiate and Student Ministries	97,730	97,730
Evangelism/Discipleship Salaries/Housing	1,663,012	1,663,012
Evangelism/Discipleship Travel/Field Services	166,566	166,566
<i>LEADERSHIP RESOURCE (7 full-time employees)</i>		
LeaderCare/Church Health	376,891	376,891
Worship Leadership/Church Music	88,115	88,115
Leadership Development Salaries/Housing	530,536	530,536
Leadership Development Travel/Field Services	52,568	52,568
<i>MISSIONS MOBILIZATION (10 full-time employees)</i>		
Associational Missions & Church Planting	766,877	766,877
Global Missions	212,182	212,182
Missions Mobilization Salaries/Housing	688,668	688,668
Missions Mobilization Travel/Field Services	68,235	68,235
<i>MISSIONS SUPPORT (16 full-time employees)</i>		
Executive Director		
A. Director’s Office	23,041	23,041
B. Disaster Relief	1,014	1,014
C. Supplemental Aid	1,014	1,014
D. Strategic Initiatives		
E. Partnerships	1,014	1,014
Financial/Facility Services		
Director’s Office	356,757	356,757
Accounting & Human Resources	2,315,878	2,315,878
Facility Services	1,345,964	1,345,964
Cooperative Program & Stewardship Development	32,828	32,828
Communications & Technology Services	327,456	327,456
Missions Support Salaries/Housing	1,625,801	1,625,801
Missions Support Travel/Field Services	161,091	161,091
Subtotal for State Board of Missions Ministries	11,323,642	11,323,642
GuideStone Church Retirement Plan	801,140	801,140
GuideStone: Mission Dignity	9,000	9,000
Subtotal for GuideStone	810,140	810,140
Total for State Board of Missions Ministries	12,133,782	12,133,782
STATE CONVENTION ENTITY MINISTRIES		
Christian Higher Education Ministries		
A. A. Earl Potts Scholarship	113,271	113,271
B. Board of Aid to Students	358,895	358,895
C. Judson College	1,052,192	1,052,192
D. University of Mobile	2,663,238	2,663,238
Other Entities and Commissions Ministries		
A. Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries	257,052	257,052
B. Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center	552,307	552,307
C. <i>The Alabama Baptist</i>	560,141	560,141
D. The Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers	188,641	188,641
E. The Baptist Foundation of Alabama	134,038	134,038
F. The Christian Life Commission	24,806	24,806
G. The Education Commission	3,273	3,273
H. The Alabama Baptist Historical Commission	129,502	129,502
Auxiliaries and Other Ministries		
A. ALCAP	66,237	66,237
B. Alabama Woman’s Missionary Union	512,625	512,625
Total for Convention Entity Ministries	6,616,219	6,616,219
GRAND TOTAL COOPERATIVE PROGRAM BUDGET	37,500,000	37,500,000
SPECIAL OFFERING GOALS		
Lottie Moon Christmas Offering	12,000,000	12,250,000
Annie Armstrong Easter Offering	6,000,000	6,250,000
Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries	2,800,000	3,000,000
Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering	1,200,000	1,200,000
Alabama Baptist World Hunger Offering	800,000	800,000
Total for Special Offering Goals	22,800,000	23,500,000

Jason Allen, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, says 'we are called to guard our own hearts and to protect ourselves morally and spiritually.'

Guard your heart



Photo by Tracy Riggs

Glory of God, not just personal reputation at stake when ministers fail, Allen says

Jason Allen said he came to the Tuesday night service of the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting with a burden — a burden about how one day everything can look “clean and upright” with a Christian leader and the next day the leader may be out of his ministry post.

But for grace

“I see ministries imploding and I see ministers imploding,” Allen, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, told the crowd at Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne, on Nov. 12. “To open your social media feed all too often is to be scandalized by the next

pastor or minister or notable layperson who has fallen into scandal.”

Every Christian leader could be in that boat at any time were it not for the grace of God, but Allen said he believes more pastors and leaders are at risk of the “fizzle out” than the “tragic flame out.”

Preaching from John 15:1–11, Allen said the fizzle out can happen when your devotional life withers and you aren’t abiding in Christ,

enjoying His love and bearing fruit. For pastors in that category, the freshness of the word of God has “long since passed” and the urgency for evangelism left years ago, he said.

“The more visible a ministry we have, the more expansive the platform, the more heightened the stewardship.”

**Jason Allen
president, Midwestern
Baptist Theological
Seminary**

“We are called to guard our own hearts and to protect ourselves morally and spiritually, to be men and women who are given to the first things of following the

Lord Jesus Christ, lest our ministerial gifting take us places our character cannot

keep us,” Allen said.

The idea that Christians’ secret sins are like landmines just under the surface should “jolt all of us to renew ourselves to faithful and fruitful discipleship,” he said.

Stakes are high

Much is at stake, he said. “It matters for you, your ministry, your family and your life.”

Allen said the call of Christ demands that Christian leaders guard their hearts. To do that, he urged them to cultivate a desire to grow in Christ so that their passions are aligned with His passions.

He also challenged them to invest their lives in enjoying the “unmatched experiential love of a father and son” and

not to get caught in the “barrenness” that can lie in busyness. From a place of rest, Christians will bear much fruit that will bring glory to God because God as the vinedresser will lift them up, prune them, dress them and shape them, he said.

“The glory of God is at stake in your ministry,” Allen said. “The more visible a ministry we have, the more expansive the platform, the more heightened the stewardship. That is why the more opportunities God gives us for influence in the Kingdom, it should make us shiver in our shoes because we know that the more calamitous our fall would be for the reputation of God in our communities.” (Grace Thornton)

2020 location changed for IMB celebration

Alabama Baptists voted to change the location of the 2020 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting to First Baptist Church, Montgomery, in order to accommodate an International Mission Board (IMB) Sending Celebration to be held in conjunction with the event.

The Sending Celebration will be held Nov. 17, 2020, the first night of the two-day meeting.

Jeff Meyers, pastor of First Baptist Church, Opelika, was named convention preacher. Alternate preacher is Joel Carwile, pastor of First Baptist Church, Athens.

Messengers also ap-

proved Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne, as the site of the 2024 convention. Other future dates and locations for the annual meeting include:

► Nov. 17–18, 2021: Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville

► Nov. 16–17, 2022: Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Birmingham

► Nov. 15–16, 2023: First Baptist Church, Montgomery.

During the 2023 convention messengers will celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Alabama Baptist State Convention near the current home of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. (TAB)

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THEME INTERPRETATION

'JESUS IS ENOUGH'

A fruitful Christian walk requires abiding only, completely in Christ

What does it mean to be fruitful? How — as Christians and as Alabama Baptists — can we be fruitful? Those questions were at the center of this year's Alabama Baptist State Convention. The convention, held at Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne, focused on the fruitful ministries of Alabama Baptists and how everyone can be a fruitful follower of Christ.

Annel Robayna, who focuses on Hispanic ministry and church planting as an associate in the office of associational missions and church planting at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, preached from John 15:5 on abiding in Christ.

"Abiding in Christ means to remain," Robayna said. "You are not a visitor who leaves — you remain, you come, you stay, you walk, you do life. It's a life commitment. It demands your all."

Abiding in Christ is a holy pursuit of Jesus, a constant chasing after the will of God, Robayna said. But that's not where it ends.

"We abide in Jesus and He says, 'I abide in you,'" he said. "It's a reciprocal relationship."

Christians should be pursuing an encounter with God, waiting in expectation for Him, Robayna said.

"Every morning He dresses in holiness and righteousness and we are to dress in praise and worship," he said.

And why is abiding in Christ so important for fruitful gospel ministry?

"Abiding is the only way to do anything meaningful



Photo by Tracy Riggs
Annel Robayna preaches on producing fruit and abiding in Christ from John 15:5 for his theme interpretation sermon.

for the kingdom of God," Robayna explained. "There is no other alternative. We either abide or everything else we've done makes no sense."

Abiding in Christ changes people, Robayna said.

"Abiding is a humbling, knee-bending, life-changing experience to be in the presence of God."

It changed him

"God in His mercy and sovereignty and grace made me aware of His presence. And that changed things. He took over. He started leading the way," he said.

Abiding in Christ opens the door to opportunities and experiences that should shape the Christian walk, he said.

"When you abide in Christ and Him in you — those two things you cannot separate — three things are offered to you: an invitation to behold, an invitation to become and an invitation to belong."

Of the invitation to behold, Robayna said, "Are you amazed at God? Are

you beholding? When you see Him doing incredible things are you saying, 'That is the God I serve?' That is the God I believe in."

The invitation to become occurs because you cannot abide in Christ and stay the same, Robayna said. "Let go of your time, let go of your agenda and become someone who waits on God."

Finally, when we abide in Christ we receive an invitation to belong.

"If you have placed your faith in our Savior you belong — you belong on your knees, you belong on your face in front of your Creator. That's home for you and me."

Jarman Leatherwood, pastor of House of Hope and Restoration, Huntsville, built on Robayna's thoughts.

"What happens when God looks at the picture of His Church? Does He swell up with joy and say we look just like our Father?" he asked. "We are called to be fruitful in a society that is in moral decay. How do we become fruitful?"

Leatherwood offered three keys to answer that question.

First, we must have a relationship with Him.

"It is possible that we've been building God's church according to our standard and not God's standards," he said. "If we're going to be fruitful our first priority must be our relationship with God."

Second, we must remain connected to Him. Leatherwood told a story of the Statue of Liberty burning bright during a New York City blackout because the statue draws its power from New Jersey. Christians likewise must draw their power

from a source that's "out of this world," Leatherwood said. "We must burn so bright that people come running to see what's lighting us up."

Lastly, we must go and do as Him.

"Why is there passion behind what we do? Because we are in the business of trying to reach broken men," Leatherwood said. "No matter where you are, the name of Jesus works. No matter what language you say it in, the name still works."

Opening up the final session of the convention annual meeting Ben Stubblefield, pastor of First Baptist Church, Jackson, discussed the final phrase of John 15:5: "Apart from me you can do nothing."

"We are in the business of raising dead people to life," Stubblefield said. "Our gospel is a resurrection power that we have no control over. Without Him we can do nothing."

We are not kings, governors or rulers of God's kingdom, he said. "We are priests and stewards."

Stubblefield spoke on three things believers cannot do apart from Christ.

'With Him'

First, we cannot save.

Jesus is the new vine. In the new covenant being a member of Jesus' family is all that is required for salvation. Nothing more, nothing less.

"You can have the perfect religious pedigree, you can know the Awana verses, you can vote conservatively, and you have just as much right

to inherit the kingdom of God as the Muslim jihadist on his way to Mecca," Stubblefield said.

Second, we cannot grow.

"You'll never yield fruit apart from Christ," he said. "Jesus is enough. With-

out Him we can do nothing, but with Him we can do everything. God could not love you more because we are connected through Jesus' vine. And He will never love you less. It is enough that Jesus died for you and me."

'There with us'

And finally, without Christ we cannot go.

According to Stubblefield, many churches want the reputation of being alive more than they want Him.

"What is the promised land without the promised One? What is the land of milk and honey without the God of that land?" Stubblefield asked. "We've got to want the Lord right there with us." (Jessica Ingram)



STUBBLEFIELD



LEATHERWOOD

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'Real conversations'

Three resolutions presented, adopted at 2019 state convention annual meeting

Three resolutions were presented and adopted during the Nov. 12 afternoon session of the 2019 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting.

The number was fewer

than normal, acknowledged Craig Carlisle, chair of the resolutions committee.

"I was surprised at the low number of resolutions," Carlisle said. "I've served on the resolutions committee several times and this is by far the fewest number."

The resolutions presented to and adopted by messengers addressed the value of human life, concerns about abuse and appreciation to the hosts of the annual meeting.

In keeping with the committee's policy, Carlisle declined to say how many resolutions were submitted but called the submissions "relevant and very helpful."

"They were commending in nature and not politically charged which was refreshing," Carlisle said.

As to the value of resolutions in a world where opinions can be shared immediately on social media and other online spaces, Carlisle said it is "hard to say."



Photo by Tracy Riggs

"It would be nice if we would engage in real conversations and deal with issues and work together to implement change and influence. Speaking for our committee and future resolution committees I'm sure we would all welcome this trend."

Safer places

Messengers adopted Resolution No. 2, On Making Our Churches Safer Places, in response to the church sexual

abuse crisis. The resolution affirmed that local churches should be safe from all forms of abuse and harassment and endorsed the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' (SBOM) partnership with MinistrySafe to make resources available to help prevent child sexual abuse.

The resolution also emphasized the importance of caring for the victim and immediate reporting of the abuse allegations to the

proper government authorities as required by mandatory reporting laws.

The resolution pointed churches to the SBOM office of LeaderCare and church health for resources related to best practices.

Two other resolutions also were adopted:

► Resolution No. 1, On Commendation for Passage of the Human Life Protection Act, recognized past affirmations of the sanctity of human life, affirmed Alabama's Human Life Protection Act and commended Alabama's leaders for enacting the legislation.

► Resolution No. 3, On Appreciation, acknowledged the host church and association, as well as other area churches who assisted in facilitating the annual meeting.

The full text of all resolutions adopted at the 2019 annual meeting is posted at alsbom.org/2019-resolutions. (TAB)

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CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Prospect Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Tenn., a conservative Southern Baptist church, is seeking a full-time senior pastor. Seminary education preferred but not required. 32 Prospect Rd., Fayetteville, TN 37334. rjones@fpunet.com.

PASTOR

The Flint Baptist Church in Decatur, Alabama, is accepting resumés for a pastor. Email resumé to: flintbaptistchurch@att.net or mail to: 4119 US Hwy 31 South, Decatur, AL 35603.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The Judson Baptist Association is now receiving resumés for the position of DOM. Resumés may be mailed to: JBA, ATTN: DOM Search Committee, 532 Ozark Road, Abbeville, AL 36310. Resumés may also be emailed to: jba4christ@comcast.net. Deadline to receive resumés is Dec. 1.

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

Sulphur Springs Baptist Association, consisting of 20 churches, accepting resumés for bivocational director of missions. Send to: DOM Search Committee, 4501 Greathouse Road, Dora, AL 35062, or email to: SSBAoffice@gmail.com.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Shelby Baptist Association, Columbiana, Alabama, is seeking an administrative assistant for CCM. Job description, application and submission information located at <https://shelbybaptist.org/job-opportunities>. Please submit by Dec. 6.

FINANCIAL MANAGER

Eastmont Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, is accepting applications for the full-time position of financial manager. Accounting background and experience in church financial management is required. Resumés should be submitted to: kbush@eastmont.org.

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Trustees, board members

Report of Committee on Boards and Commissions

EDITOR'S NOTE — *Messengers voted to elect or re-elect the following during the 2019 Alabama Baptist State Convention. An asterisk (*) before the name indicates a layperson. The executive committee and State Board of Missions members are grouped by associations while board members of convention entities are designated by church membership.*

Executive Committee

*Rhonda Grandstaff, Southeast Alabama; Guy Anderson, Selma; Greg Corbin, Birmingham; David Chambers, East Cullman; Jay Stewart, St. Clair; *Patti Shoemaker, Montgomery; Terry Herald, Madison

State Board of Missions

Terms to Expire 2022:
Tim Scarbrough, Autauga; Stuart Davidson, Baldwin; Bill McCall, Bessemer; Mike McKee, Bigbee; *Bobby Keith, Birmingham; Chase Clower, Butler; George Cardin, Central; Eddie Nation, Cherokee; Gary Jones, Chilton; *Nick Waugh, Clarke; Dee Pate, Cleburne; Kaleb Wimberly, Coffee; Larry Morrison, Coosa River; *Robin Hill, Dale; Bill Godwin, Elmore; *Jeanie Balding, Franklin; Jason Duckett, Hale; Otis Derrah, Judson; Byron Pickering, Lamar; James Maples, Lookout Mountain; Jeremy Sorrells, Marion; *Martha Hamilton, Jeff Martin, Marshall; Charles Brown, Mobile; Matt Haines, Morgan; Willard Davis, Steve Loggins, North Jefferson; Jay Stewart, Chip Thornton, St. Clair; Craig White, Sand Mountain; *Rebekah Parr, Shelby; *Donnie Wells, Southeast Alabama; John Foles, Sulphur Springs; Ben Hayes, Tallapoosa; Donnie Payne,

Tuscaloosa; John P. Gates, Walker; *Norma W. Blount, Washington; Stephen Brown, West Cullman

—Convention entities—

The Alabama Baptist

Terms to Expire 2023:
Teddy Gandy, Pike Road; *Melissa Carlisle Golden, Shades Mountain, Birmingham; *Rosalie Hall Hunt, First, Guntersville; *Jana Wyatt, Westview, Opp

Board of Aid

Terms to Expire 2023:
Michel R. Bedford, Dauphin Way, Mobile

Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries

Terms to Expire 2023:
*Douglas R. Bachuss Jr., Central, Decatur; *Paul Huckeba, Hunter Street, Birmingham; *Terry Wilhite, First, Cullman; *Kelly McMurry, First, Trussville



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elected to serve State Board, other entities

Christian Life Commission

Terms to Expire 2023:
Dave Burns, First, Prattville; Joel Carwile, First, Athens; Herbert Brown, Southside, Greenville; Jim Graham, Coosada; John Killian, First, Fayette

Education Commission

Terms to Expire 2023:
*Mitzi L. Holladay, Benton; *Regina Washburn, Greensboro; *Laurie B. Barnett, First, Prattville

The Baptist Foundation of Alabama

Terms to Expire 2023:
Michael Hardin, Dawson, Birmingham; Katherine Webb, First, Montgomery

Alabama Baptist Historical Commission

Terms to Expire 2023:
*Jimmy Austin, Highland, Florence; *David Nelson, First, Tuscaloosa; *Jerrol

Hare, Thomasville; *Gerald Glenn, First, Trussville

Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers

Terms to Expire 2023:
*Gail May, First, Selma; *Elissa Kilpatrick, First, Montgomery; *Bobby Cook, First, Clanton; *Jimmy McKinney, First, Roanoke; William R. Carr, First, Alabaster

Judson College

Terms to Expire 2023:
*Arthur Britton, First, Montgomery; *Bruce Fuller, Pine Flat, Selma; *Gregg Morrison, Shades Mountain, Birmingham; *Joan V. Newman, First, Enterprise; *Lenora Pate, Dawson, Birmingham

University of Mobile

Terms to Expire 2023:
*Brynn Albreetsen, Highland, Florence; *Kelly O. Burdette, First, Killen; *Kenny Harris, Farmstead, Jasper; *Dorothy Savage, First, Fairhope; *Lawson Swearingen, First, Fairhope; Sammy Gilbreath, High-

land, Florence; *Robert McGinley, Spring Hill, Mobile

Shocco Springs Conference Center

Terms to Expire 2023:
*Scott Prater, EaglePoint, Jacksonville; *Bobby R. Austin, First, Athens; *Deena Weston, Cloverdale, Montgomery; Andy Frazier, Grace, Sumiton

Phipps, First, Gulf Shores; *Ashleigh Williams, First, Demopolis; *Mary Sue Bennett, First, Tuscaloosa; Jesse Reeder, Moulton Baptist; *Linda Peek, First, Trussville; *Patti Shoemaker, First, Montgomery

Audit Committee

Chairperson 2019–2020:
*Rick Gibson, First, Tuscaloosa

Terms to Expire 2022:
*Jamie Jackson, First, Prattville; Nathan Edwards, First, Gadsden

Insurance Committee

Chairperson 2019–2020:
*Mike Colquett, Mexia, Mexia

Terms to Expire 2022:
*Art Mosley, First, Jackson; Bob Frazer, Elkdale, Selma; *Ken Stephens, First, Montgomery

Committee on Time, Place, and Preacher

Chairperson 2019–2020:
Earl Mitchell, First, Attalla

Terms to Expire 2020:
Eddy Garner, Woodmont, Florence; Ray Jones, Ridgecrest, Dothan; Rex Kent, First, Jemison; Robert Klotz, First, Talladega; Earl Mitchell, First, Attalla; Derek Staples, First, Jack-

sonville; Mitch Thrower, Pineview, Thomasville

Memorials Committee

Chairperson 2019–2020:
Larry Cummings, Wayside, Alexander City

Terms to Expire 2020:
Randy Atkinson, First, Pelham; Larry Cummings, Wayside, Alexander City; Kenny Hoomes, First, Montgomery; *Mary Hughes, Heritage, Montgomery; Kenneth Loomis, Heritage, Montgomery

Committee on Order of Business

Chairperson 2019–2020:
Rob Jackson, Eastern Shore, Daphne

Terms to Expire 2022:
Buddy Gray, Hunter Street, Hoover; Jeff Redmond, Parkway, Auburn

Committee on Resolutions

Chairperson 2019–2020:
*Melissa Bowen, First, Prattville

Terms to Expire 2020:
*Whitney Alexander, First, Gadsden; *Melissa Bowen, First, Prattville; D'Linell Finley, Southlawn, Montgomery; *George Foust, Mt. Zion, Huntsville; Teman Knight, Heritage, Montgomery; John Nicholson, Siloam, Marion; Kyle Valaer, Liberty, Chelsea

—President's nominees—

Committee on Committees

Tim Cox, president of the state convention, nominated the following for three-year terms (expiring 2022):

Chairperson 2019–2022:
Travis Coleman, First, Prattville

Cecil Sanders, First, Headland; and Jay Stewart, First, Ashville

Report of Committee on Committees

Committee on Boards and Commissions

Chairperson 2019–2020:
Ben Bowden, First, Enterprise

Chairperson 2020–2021:
Craig Carlisle, Etowah Baptist Association

Terms to Expire 2021:
*Kenya Jernigan, Mt. Zion, Huntsville; Craig Carlisle, First, Gadsden; *Chad Young, Macedonia, Ranburne; Greg Hyche, Ladonia, Phenix City; *Andrea Fuller, Ozark; Chris Wells, Camden; Lawrence

PASTORS CONFERENCE

'Hallelujah for the cross'

Pastors Conference addresses how Christ's sacrifice shapes lives, relationships, destinies

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Johnny Hunt says he can't tell your story and you can't tell his. But he knows who he used to be — and that makes the cross of Jesus even sweeter.

"I'm shocked at how He's changed me. I really am," he said. "It's amazing how He can change a heart."

Hunt, senior vice president of evangelism and leadership for the North American Mission Board, told the crowd at the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference on Nov. 11 that he prayed he would "never get over getting saved."

He said he wants the memory of his old self — the man who ran the pool hall — to be fresh in his mind so he'll remember how desperate his need for Jesus was.

He wants that to fuel his passion



Photo by Tracy Riggs

Johnny Hunt said it's 'amazing' how Jesus' work on the cross can change a heart.

for sharing his faith with the lost.

This year's conference theme was "Hallelujah for the Cross," and all eight speakers at Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne, talked about how the cross changes both Christians' destiny and their relationships.

Like Hunt, Terrence Jones, pastor of Strong Tower at Washington Park, Montgomery, said Christians all too often have a hard time remembering who we were before Jesus found us and we encountered the cross.

"You and I can walk with God so long that we forget the beginning of the story," he said, preaching from Ephesians 2:11–22.

"Paul challenges (his readers) to remember because it's easy for us to forget."

Remembering is important so Christians never lose sight of the cross, but also so they never forget



Photo by Tracy Riggs

Terrence Jones, pastor of Strong Tower at Washington Park, Montgomery, said the gospel helps Christians love each other in spite of differences.

their common ground with people who might otherwise be different from them, Jones said.

"If we're going to be real partners in the gospel then we have to recognize that what we share in common is that at one time we had a nature that hated God," he said.

The cross sets all that right, he said — it reconciles Christians to God and to each other.

"Remember that at one time you were without Christ, without hope," Jones said.

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board

Pastors Conference, TAB collaboration fuels connections

For eight years *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) has partnered with the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference to put together a time that is both encouraging and informative for the state's pastors and their families.

And it's definitely a team effort, said 2019 Pastors Conference president, Stuart Davidson.

"The Pastors Conference would not exist if it were not for [*The Alabama Baptist*]," he said. "They help secure all the folks that come in as vendors and that in turn helps us fuel the speakers, the band and just all the technology that goes into making the Pastors Conference happen."

The main goal of the Pastors Conference is not to generate revenue but to "rejuvenate, refocus and reconnect," said Davidson, who also serves as pastor of Eastern Shore Baptist Church, Daphne, where the Pastors Conference was hosted this year. "As pastors there's a lot of things that pull for our attention — some of it's good, some of it's bad. It's very easy to take your eye off the ball. ... It's inevitable that the Pastors Conference is going to be an encouraging time because you get to see your friends again, but you also get to spend time in worship and really focusing

on the gospel message and that is huge."

The one-day conference isn't just a time to reconnect with old pastoral friends. It's also a time for pastors and ministry leaders to connect with new ministry opportunities and businesses serving churches.

"The vendors are there to connect with the leadership of the churches to see if there are needs and partnership opportunities for various things — youth camps, audiovisual services, seminaries, construction and remodeling companies, etc.," said TAB's director of sales Bill Gilmore. "It's always

refreshing to find local, like-minded companies to support and do business with."

And there's also ample opportunity for the vendors to connect with each other as well.

Opportunity to connect

"We try to connect not only those attending the conference but the vendors who are here among one another because they have ministries and services that can join together to further serve churches," he said. "Our mission at TAB is 'informing, inspiring, connecting' and the Pastors Conference is somewhere we get to do all three." (Jessica Ingram)



DAVIDSON



Photo by Tracy Riggs

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said if people know the true Way, they know Jesus has already pioneered the path ahead of them ‘and we can rely on Him pointing the way to live this life.’

of Missions, said there’s no greater cause than the ministry of reconciliation.

“The peace that can stabilize and solidify our lives is found in the person of Jesus Christ through His death on the cross,” he said. “He’s given peace to those who have their minds stayed on Him.”

Steve Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee, said the cross is “the epicenter” of hope, “ground zero” of the gospel.

“You can talk about gospel conversation all you want, but if you don’t mention a bloody cross or an empty tomb you have not shared the gospel,” he said. “You’ve got to come to the cross if you want to talk about salvation.”

The cross is what pulls people out of the miry clay, Gaines said. “When it’s preached it’s power.”

Jay Wolf, pastor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, said people need to be pulled up by the power of the cross.

“People are discouraged. People

are hurt, they’re beat and they’re broken. And encouragement is the Miracle-Gro of the soul,” he said.

Even pastors can be discouraged but Christ asks that they pick up their cross and press on, Wolf said.



GAINES

“We’re supposed to be a model for ministry,” he said, noting the Apostle Paul had faith that was tough like a rawhide boot. “He was made of the stuff that black boxes for airplanes are made of. He had a rugged faith and that’s our model for carrying our cross.”

Life is tough and ministry is hard, Wolf said, but pastors have to press on.

“The only way you can do that is if you keep your eyes fixed on Jesus,” he said.

Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, said sometimes Christians’ sin can get them down.

“How has Satan been so successful at getting Christians to do bad things, at getting holy folk to do unholy things?

I’m talking about saved folks,” he said. “Trained teachers, seasoned sisters, blessed brothers, commit-

ted couples, saved singles, trusted trustees — people like you and me. People who love God with all of their heart, might and spirit.”

Satan’s tactics are sophisticated and he aims them at committed Christians, Luter said. No pill can heal Christians of their sin problem — only the cross can do that.

“Friend, don’t ever let the devil tell you you’re not loved,” he said. “Everything about Calvary is because of God’s love for you. Jesus came, Jesus lived, Jesus suffered, Jesus bled and Jesus died on the cross just for you and me. Wow, what love.”

Dana Watson, COO for south Alabama at Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries (ABCH), agreed that God loves people right where they are.

“Come to Him in your sinful state and He can make you clean,” he said.

Watson grew up through the ministry of the ABCH and said he met Jesus there. And now as a ministry leader he works to introduce others to the same hope he found.

“We see people come in with these torn pieces and we can do everything we can through counseling and

stable homes ... we can proclaim Christ and show them love, but ultimately we can only do so much

with these torn pieces,” he said. “But when the cross is involved with the power of the Holy Spirit all that brokenness is gone and all that’s left is the cross.”

Robert Mullins, pastor of Crossroads Community Church, Elmore, said the cross excites him every time he sees it.

“I remember that there was a price paid for me,” he said. “Jesus loved you and me so much that He paid this price that we can’t even understand — because He loved us.”

During the conference Mullins was elected vice president of the 2020 Pastors Conference, which will be held Nov. 16, 2020, at Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery.

He joins Blake Kersey, pastor of First Baptist Church, Decatur, who moved into the president-

elect role; Nathan Daniels, pastor of Bethany Baptist Church, Andalusia, who will serve as president; and Richard Richie, who was re-elected treasurer. 🇺🇸



MULLINS



Photo by Tracy Riggs

Dana Watson of the Children’s Homes incinerates torn pieces of paper to illustrate how the cross conquers our brokenness.



“When Jesus started His ministry He took a bunch of ragtag fishermen and made them fishers of men. We too are to be people who go fishing for other people and we pull them into the Kingdom.”

Jay Wolf

Photo by Tracy Riggs

Jay Wolf, pastor of FBC Montgomery, said evangelism is often missing from Christians’ discipleship. He challenged them to get back to being ‘fishers of men.’



ANNUAL MEETING REFLECTIONS

BY RICK LANCE, STATE MISSIONARY



RICK LANCE

Since last week's annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, my heart has been filled with gratitude. I thank God for:

–Pastor Stuart Davidson, the staff and volunteers of Eastern Shore Baptist Church for their marvelous Christian hospitality.

– the musicians, preachers and other inspirational speakers who led us to worship the Lord together, both during the Convention and at the Pastors Conference.

– the Convention officers, working committees and State Board of Missions staff who worked,

often behind the scenes, towards a meeting to glorify our Lord and encourage our

fruitfulness in Great Commission Ministries.

– leaders of entities and auxiliaries

who provided inspiring testimonies about their

fruitfulness in the Great Commission.

– SBOM trustees who recommended the Great Commission Ministries budget



The Alabama Singing Men and Alabama Singing Women opened up the 2019 Annual Meeting with a meaningful time of worship.



and special offering goals. I am likewise grateful to Convention messengers who approved the budget, which provides strong support and financial parity for Alabama Baptist ministries and

Southern Baptist Convention ministries.

– Alabama Baptists who, at the time of the Convention meeting, had already given more than \$1 million to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering.

Your State Board of Missions is grateful to serve this remarkable family of more than 3,200 local churches in 75 Baptist associations.

Please let us know if we may assist your congregation as it seeks to fulfill the Great Commission.



Despite frigid temperatures, volunteers from Eastern Shore Baptist Church extended warm hospitality to all who attended.



The exhibit hall provided a spacious and comfortable environment for messengers to enjoy a time of "family reunion."

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For November 24

Explore the Bible

By Robert L. Olsen, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



WALKING TO BATTLE Ephesians 6:10–20

Aware (10–13)

In any battle the warriors need to be prepared and Paul likens the Christian life to a battle. Therefore Paul is preparing his readers for the Christian life.

Many Christians may be tempted to view various people or personalities as enemies of Christ and we may turn our attention to them. However, Paul points out that the real battle is against spiritual forces.

The West has undermined the idea of spirits and the supernatural, but anyone who has read the Bible knows that spirits are real. In many places our modern “sensibilities” no longer believe in the spiritual realm and Satan is fine with that.

Satan works in ways that reflect the culture. So to a people who do not believe in demons, for example, Satan is pleased to convince people no spirits exist, either good or bad, and there is no God. To people who believe in demons Satan raises up medicine men and witch doctors who work with satanic powers to convince the local people they need to appease the spirits or try to control them. This too makes Satan pleased because it takes the focus off God and on demons, spirits or us trying to control our own destiny.

Talk to missionaries who have lived in places like Africa and parts of South America and they will tell you about the demon possession they have seen.

Prepared (14–17)

Paul warns the Ephesians how to prepare for the attacks of Satan, beginning with the belt of truth. God is a God of truth but Satan is the father of lies. Jesus tells us that the truth will set us free (see John 8:32) because Satan uses lies to keep us from experiencing abundant life.

Satan is at work in our modern society attacking the idea that there is such a thing as truth. Our culture does not like Christianity because we claim to have truth and many Christians are dissuaded from believing the truth by seeing the Bible through the lens of the culture.

However, the Bible is the lens

through which Christians must evaluate the culture. The Bible has to be the foundation for all of our thinking. Once we ground ourselves in the truth presented in the Bible it provides us a firm grounding to distinguish Satan’s lies from truth.

The breastplate of righteousness protects us from the condemning attacks of Satan. Because we are covered by Christ’s righteousness and not our own, Satan, who is the accuser, cannot shake our confidence in our salvation because our salvation is not dependent upon our own righteousness but on Christ’s.

Further, Paul speaks of Christians having sandals with the readiness for the peace of the gospel to share everywhere. The gospel is a message of peace between man and God and Christians need to be ready to share this with a lost and dying world.

A life of faith is required for the Christian just like a shield was required for soldiers facing arrows. The Christian faith is one to be lived out — we cannot claim to be followers of Christ if we do not follow the teachings of Christ. The security of salvation is what allows the Christian to live a life of true love, loving others because of God’s love for us in Christ (Rom. 5:8).

The Christian’s weapon is the Bible, God’s word. It is only in the Bible that we know who God is and what He wants and demands of us. When we are confronted with false teaching the Bible is our source of authority and the means by which we can assault it.

Field Support (18–20)

All of the armor of God is futile unless it is covered in prayer. This means we are to be in constant communion with God. Praying in the Spirit means we pray in harmony with the desires of the Holy Spirit. If we are walking with Christ and reading the Bible then our prayers will reflect God’s will.

Paul also confirms the importance of praying for other believers, that they would remain strong followers of Christ representing God well and living out the gospel.✠

Bible Studies for Life

By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



LIVING IN GRATITUDE 1 Thessalonians 5:12–22

Several years ago my sister was studying for a year in England and my parents offered to pay for the family to visit her for Christmas.

As my wife and I were newly married (and giving new meaning to the words “poverty stricken”) we jumped at the opportunity.

Unfortunately our trip turned out to be a roving comedy of errors.

We nearly froze to death in an icy bed and breakfast in Manchester. A traffic jam caused us to miss a train and left us with nothing but standing room only “seats” for a later departure. My brother and I risked daily injury carrying the luggage our beloved mother had brought.

We arrived in London too late on Christmas Eve to buy groceries and had to make do with leftover croissants and powdered soup packets for our Christmas dinner.

At every turn just about everything that could go wrong did. And yet we all look back on that vacation as the best our family ever had.

The reason we all look back so fondly on our trip to England is not hard to find.

Despite all of the misadventures we experienced each and every member of the family maintained a great attitude. We were all grateful to be enjoying the trip of a lifetime so we were able to dust ourselves off after each fall and even look back and laugh over everything that happened.

What was true of our family trip to England is true of almost every group experience.

It isn’t the weather or the itinerary or the food that makes for an enjoyable trip; it is the attitude of people who are traveling.

It isn’t comfy pews or nice new carpet that makes for a vibrant church; it is the attitude of the people who make up that church.

Express gratitude toward those who encourage you in your walk in Christ. (12–13)

In his first letter to the church at Thessalonica the Apostle Paul offers a series of instructions.

These instructions are intended to help the Thessalonian believers foster a generous attitude in their congregation.

At the heart of these instructions is Paul’s admonition that his readers be a grateful people (see v. 18).

Gratitude underlies Paul’s encouragement in this passage to show respect and esteem to those who lead the church.

Paul reminds his readers that those who lead the church “labor among you” and should be esteemed “because of their work.”

A grateful heart will recognize the hard work church leaders do and will respond with thanks and a commitment to living peaceably with others.

Encourage others in their walk with Christ. (14–15)

A grateful heart will also work to encourage others in their walk with Christ. Paul recognizes encouragement is not a “one size fits all” endeavor.

Because we meet each person at a different place in his or her own walk, each person needs a different kind of encouragement.

Some are idle when they ought to be making progress. For these Paul urges admonishment. Some are worn out from the journey and fainthearted. For these Paul urges a kind word. Some are too weak to go on. For these Paul urges a helping hand. For everyone Paul urges patience.

Express your thanks to God. (16–22)

As Paul begins to draw his letter to the Thessalonians to a close he leaves them with a roster of brief but important instructions.

Each one centers on the idea of showing gratitude to God. Rejoice always, Paul insists, and pray without ceasing.

Give thanks in all circumstances and always be open to the direction of God’s Spirit.

A body of believers guided by these instructions is a body of believers whose spirit of gratitude will be evident to all.✠



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Tempted and Tried

Tested or Tempted?

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

In the past two weeks we have taken notice how the same term used in the New Testament can contain multiple meanings, namely one that can mean tempted, tested or tried. The difference depends on the subject that is initiating the action and the outcome that is desired. The example of Job in the Old Testament offers a good illustration of how the same event can be either a temptation or a testing.

Different intentions

God allowed Satan to cause multiple sorrows and pains to come upon Job so Satan caused sickness, suffering and sorrow in Job's life. Satan's goal was to entice Job to sin by turning his back upon God and exchanging his trust in God with the cursing of God (Job 1:11). God's intention in allowing those same events was to demonstrate to Job and others the genuineness and tenacity of Job's trust in Him — same events but different intentions or outcomes expected.

While God's ways and thoughts are higher than ours, we can get a glimpse of His purposes in our times of temptation. The devil's intention is to cause us to sin. God's intention is to demonstrate to us and to others the genuineness of our trust in Him and devotion to Him.

The possibility of such a positive outcome is underscored by the promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13: "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is com-

mon to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape that you may be able to bear it."

It is the possibility of different results in times of temptation that allows us to conclude that temptation itself is not a failure or sin. Sin is the choice to respond in keeping with the devil's agenda and not God's. After all Jesus "was in all points tempted as we are yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). For our sinless Savior the temptations themselves were not sinful. Yielding to them would have been sin. Horatio Palmer expressed this idea in the opening words of a hymn that reads, "Yield not to temptation, for yielding is sin." To that sentiment he immediately added the observation, "Each victory will help you some other to win."

Temptations to sin that are turned by faith into tests when God's faithfulness is proved by our resistance can have a strengthening effect on our walk with God. Steel tempered by its fiery testing comes out stronger than ever. Are not we as God's people more valuable than tested steel? 🙏

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.



Messengers hear updates about entities, auxiliaries



Photo by Tracy Riggs

During entity updates Nov. 12, (l to r) Michael Brooks from the Christian Life Commission, Joe Godfrey from Alabama Citizens Action Program, Barry Bledsoe from The Baptist Foundation of Alabama, Lonette Berg from Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and Jennifer Davis Rash from *The Alabama Baptist* give updates on the ministries they represent.



Screenshot from SBOM

(L to R) Candace McIntosh from Alabama WMU, Ray Burdeshaw from Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers, Russell Klinner from Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center and Rod Marshall from Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries deliver brief presentations on the Alabama Baptist ministries they represent during entity updates Nov. 12.



Photo by Ann Tew

During the final entity update reports Nov. 13 (l to r) Bobby Hopper from the Education Commission, Mark Tew from Judson College, Andrew Westmoreland from Samford University, Lonnie Burnett from University of Mobile and Randy Johnson from Board of Aid to Students in Church-Related Vocations share about the ministries they represent.

Life at convention

EASTERN SHORE BAPTIST CHURCH, DAPHNE

Below: Judson College provides doughnuts for convention participants at its exhibit booth in partnership with Roger Willmore of Calhoun Baptist Association.



Photo by Tracy Riggs



Photo by Tracy Riggs



Photo by Tracy Riggs

Above: A praise team from FBC Prattville leads worship during the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference on Nov. 11.

Below: Participants of the Alabama Baptist State Convention 2019 annual meeting join together in prayer.



Photo by Tracy Riggs

Photo by Tracy Riggs



Left: Church planters from across the state are recognized during the Tuesday evening session of the state convention annual meeting.

Below: University of Mobile presents Alabama Baptist State Convention President Tim Cox with an honorary doctorate.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Right: TAB brings laughs and smiles with some surprise visitors to welcome participants to the Pastors Conference.



Photo by Melanie McKinney



Photo by Tracy Riggs

Above: Debbie Campbell (right), TAB's director of communications, shares about TAB with guests in the exhibit hall.