

The Alabama Baptist

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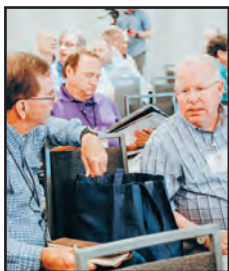
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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



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Associational leaders urged to keep gospel top priority, care for pastors

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Southern Baptists celebrate appointment of 64 new IMB missionaries

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Photo by Sam Evans

Messengers to the 2021 SBC Annual Meeting vote to shift oversight of the investigation into allegations of mishandling sexual abuse cases by the EC to a task force appointed by SBC President Ed Litton.

‘I hear you’

Messengers vote to shift investigation oversight

While board members of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee chose not to discuss its coming investigation during a June 14 meeting, more than 15,000 messengers meeting the next two days at the SBC Annual Meeting in Nashville forced the issue.

EC president and CEO Ronnie Floyd announced

June 11 his team had hired Guidepost Solutions to do an independent, third-party investigation into recent allegations made against the EC’s handling of sexual abuse cases within the denomination and other alleged concerns.

During the June 14 EC meeting and during the June 15–16 SBC meeting, Floyd was commended for the action but

criticized for maintaining oversight.

Some EC members wanted to discuss the issue but did not have the votes to bring it up.

Messengers did have the votes, however, and approved a motion for Ed Litton, the newly elected SBC president, to appoint a task force to assume oversight.

“I hear you,” Floyd responded from the platform. “The Executive Committee (See ‘Messengers,’ page 6)

Alabama pastor Ed Litton elected SBC president

Ed Litton, pastor of Redemption Church, Saraland, was elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention June 15 during the SBC Annual Meeting in Nashville.

Litton received 6,834 votes, gaining 52% of the votes cast in a runoff between him and Mike Stone. Stone received 6,278 votes, or 47.81% of the ballots cast.

In the first vote, 14,300 ballots were cast out of 15,678 messengers.

The first ballot vote totals were Randy Adams, 673 votes (4.71%); Litton, 4,630 votes (32.38%); Al Mohler Jr., 3,764 votes (26.32%); and Mike Stone, 5,216 votes (36.48%). Seventeen ballots were disallowed in the first vote.

That sent Litton and (See ‘Third,’ page 7)



FLOYD



LITTON

HIGHLIGHTS



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Southern Baptist Convention
Business meetings coverage
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The crossword puzzle
can be found on page 15.



Photo by Sam Evans

Resolutions Committee member Dana Hall McCain, a member of First Baptist Church, Dothan, speaks against an amendment to a resolution that would, in effect, have regarded women who obtain abortions as “murderers.”

Alabamians elected to serve on SBC boards, committees

There are many ways Alabama Baptists can serve in the Southern Baptist Convention. Because of COVID-19, the SBC Executive Committee wasn’t able to approve the 2020 nominees, so this list includes both 2020 and 2021 lists as approved by the messengers at the annual meeting in Nashville on June 15–16.

2020 nominees

▶ Executive Committee — James W. “Jim” Averett, Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, rotates off the committee with L. Melissa Carlisle Golden, First Baptist Church, Prattville, rotating on (term expires 2024)

▶ International Mission Board — Kenneth J. “Ken” Burnham, Meadowbrook Baptist Church, Oxford, rotates off and is replaced by Donna L. Garner, Woodmont Baptist Church, Florence (term expires 2024)

▶ Lifeway Christian Resources — Clayton K. Speed, First Baptist Church, Hartselle, returns for another term (until 2024)

▶ Southwestern Seminary — Timothy M. “Mark” Hindman, First Baptist Church, Prattville, returns until 2025

2021 nominees

▶ Executive Committee — Benjamin F. “Ben” Kelley Jr., First Baptist Church, Montgomery, rotates off with Timothy M. “Tim” Cox, Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea, rotating on (term expires 2025)

▶ Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission — William R. “Bill” Morgan, First Baptist Church, Prattville, is being replaced by Joseph C. “Joe” Godfrey, Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Birmingham

▶ Credentials Committee — James W. “Jim” Averett, Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, will serve until 2024

▶ Committee on Nominations — Brett Pitman, senior pastor, Highland Park Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals; and Guy Phillips, a layperson, Highland Baptist Church, Florence

Several served at the meeting too:

▶ Registration Committee — Tracey Adams, Montgomery

▶ Teller — Keelan Adams, Montgomery

▶ Committee on Committees — Salvador Blanco, Florence; and Demetrus Coleman, Saraland

▶ Committee on Resolutions — Dana Hall McCain, Dothan

▶ Committee on Nominations — Craig Carlisle, Gadsden; and Jarman Leatherwood, Huntsville

The Alabama Baptist

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

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The Alabama Baptist
will not publish a July 1 issue.
The next issue will be July 8.

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash
President and Editor-in-Chief



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SBC meeting therapeutic for many, opportunity to hear from each other

More than 15,000 Southern Baptists managed to squeeze into the recently reopened and wildly popular downtown Nashville area, and they definitely got a good dose of sensory overload.

Along with tossing us back into the deep end of a shoulder-to-shoulder mass crowd experience at every turn, we also may be suffering a bit from information overload.

You'll find brief summaries of what took place throughout this issue, but it is nowhere near all that could have been included.

And even with the tense debate moments, unkind comments swirling around on social media and a few pointed jabs from various platforms, the excitement of being back together after a year break because of the pandemic was undeniable.

Smiles beamed across corridors, hugs were tight and nonstop chatter and laughter could be heard throughout the Music City Center and hotel lobbies.

The press room had a similar feel. Reporters from across the country didn't have much time to look up from their laptops, but we all took a few minutes to catch up with peers.

I ended up in a few conversations where reporters from the mainstream media were attempting to explain what was happening to a general audience who for the most part doesn't understand the Southern Baptist structure.

They shared how they work to understand what all is taking place themselves and then try to put it in terms their audience can understand.

They do a lot of comparisons and use words that sometimes frustrate those of us who understand the lingo of Baptist life.

For instance, one major newspaper headline and a cable news outlet described newly elected SBC president Ed Litton as the "moderate" candidate and in turn upset a lot of faithful Southern Baptists who don't know him personally.

But back to the reporters who are attempting to write in a context that makes sense to a non-Southern Baptist audience, is it possible the description was the reporter's attempt to explain the differences between Litton

and the other candidates within the outside world's view of who Southern Baptists are?

Also, when a media outlet uses labels not fairly attributed, then we would urge caution in jumping to conclusions.

We all have different understandings of most labels used to describe people, so we can't assume the writer has the same understanding the reader does.

For the most part during the SBC Annual Meeting, we heard from countless Southern Baptists going the extra

mile to understand the issues, learn about the candidates for president and make informed decisions as they voted.

Addressing concerns directly with the person involved rather than venting about it on social media is a much more productive way to work through the process.

Southern Baptists definitely showed up ready to be heard and now have an opportunity to find common ground if we truly are seeking to work together.



Photo by Pam Henderson

TAB Media covers the SBC annual meeting with onsite staff (front row, l to r) Van Payne, Sam Evans, Jessica Ingram, Grace Thornton, (back row, l to r) Dianna Cagle, Jennifer Rash, Margaret Colson, (not shown) Shawn Hendricks and Art Toalston. And while every staff member back at home also had a role, Carrie McWhorter took the lead in managing all the content for both online and print coverage coming from the onsite team.



Photo by Margaret Colson

Sam Evans (left), videographer for TAB Media, produced daily news video recaps of SBC 2021 activities, with Jennifer Davis Rash reporting and photography by Evans and Van Payne.

Your Voice



SBC at crossroads, Greear says in president's address — 'Why do we exist?'

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

J.D. Greear, in his final address as president of the Southern Baptist Convention, told messengers he wanted to put his cards on the table “right up front.”

“I believe we are at a defining moment in our convention — a crossroads,” he said June 15. “If I may be so bold, it might be the most important crossroads in our generation.”

Greear said the defining moment of the previous generation was the Conservative Resurgence in the 1980s and 1990s, when “God in His faithfulness” raised up a generation of courageous men and women “who called us to hold true” to the authority and sufficiency of Scripture when some, including many seminary professors, were departing from it.

God used their courage “to save our future,” Greear said.

And now, “our defining moment is about whether or not we will let the gospel that our forefathers preserved for us define the identity and mission of our convention,” he said.

In short, Greear asked messengers who the SBC is and what holds it together.

Gospel witness

“Is the Baptist Faith & Message 2000 still the basis for our unity? Is the Great Commission a rallying point? Why do we exist? Why do we come together? Are we primarily a cultural and political affinity group,” Greear asked, “or is our primary calling as a gospel witness for all peoples and all places at all times?”

He said Jesus warned that there is more than one way to lose the gospel — liberalism may be a very real one, but the “leaven of the Pharisees” is another.

“I want to make clear, please hear me, I am not saying that anyone who disagrees with me on something is a Pharisee,” Greear said. “No, for sure, I see some of these qualities present in me also.”

The danger is for Baptists to create a hedge around the law like the Pharisees, confusing tradition with God’s command. This type of leaven can grow in the soil of orthodoxy, he said.

“What does that look like today? It happens when we take a gospel nonessential like a cultural or a stylistic preference, or our application of wisdom in an area where the Bible does not give a direct command ... and we give it the same weight,” Greear said.

That can look like insisting on accountability in our leadership while allowing gossip and slander to go unchecked in

ourselves, he said. It can also look like an institution creating unnecessary obstacles for victims of sexual abuse to seek justice by hiding behind legal smoke screens or non-disclosure agreements.

“I can assure you it happens when we care more about our reputation than the victims’ safety or defer to protection of the institution rather than the protection of the vulnerable for whom Jesus died,” Greear said.

Phariseism today also can look like “an SBC that expends more

time decrying things like [Critical Race Theory] than lamenting the years of racial discrimination and bigotry,” he said.

“Let me state this clearly and for the record,” he said. “For something as important as to what justice in society looks like, we need robust, careful, Bibles-open, on-our-knees discussions about it.”

Justice is a major theme in the

Bible, so of course Satan is going to use counterfeits of it, Greear said.

“The vast majority of Southern Baptists and all of your convention’s leaders both black and white recognize that CRT is an ideology that arises out of a worldview at odds with the gospel,” he said.

It’s clear the SBC needs to clarify and strengthen its position on CRT, Greear said. But it’s also important to do that while listening to the counsel of the

convention’s leaders of color who say “our denunciations of justice movements fall on deaf ears when we remain silent on the suffering of our neighbors,” he said.

Southern Baptists’ opinion of CRT should be “accompanied by a pledge to fight with them against all forms of discrimination,” he said.

Matthew 23 shows Jesus’ anger at the Pharisees who were not only off base in their worship — they also were blocking Gentiles’ path to the temple with all of their money-

changing tables. They’d forgotten to live out their worship in a way that made the gospel accessible and attractive to outsiders, he explained.

Phariseism today “might look like us not considering how outsiders perceive our statements and resolutions,” Greear said.

Servants of Christ

“Let’s be clear, we don’t ever bend the truth to please anybody,” he said. “If we sought to please men, we would not be the servants of Christ.”

But servants of Christ should try to build bridges to nonbelievers, Greear said, who have seen Southern Baptists instead employ “character assassinations and baseless accusations.”

Jesus looked at the Pharisees’ hearts and behavior and called them “whitewashed tombs,” Greear said. “They used concern over theological rectitude to cloak divisive self-promoting spirits.”

That sort of behavior doesn’t draw nonbelievers to the gospel, he said. “It makes us smell like death even when our theology is squeaky clean. Why would they be a part when it smells like dead men’s bones?”

Great Commission Baptists are in large part ready to walk into the future, Greear said, if they would stop tearing each other apart from within.

“The gospel is the North Star of our convention. For 175 years it has guided us, exposing our errors and correcting our faults,” he said. “If we keep that center, we will become the people He wants us to be.”

Gospel maturity, he said, is “knowing which things should divide us and which ones should not. ... A convention constantly at war with itself cannot complete the Great Commission.”



Photo by Sam Evans

J.D. Greear, pastor of The Summit Church, Durham, North Carolina, speaks to messengers June 15 during his final address as SBC president.

“You don’t give to the Cooperative Program.
You give through the Cooperative Program.”

PASTOR VANCE PITMAN

Hope Church, Las Vegas

We know that the ultimate place of power is in local churches. It is not in the halls of Congress and not even in the White House — that the Church is God’s witness in the world and everything we do ultimately is to have the Great Commission in view.

David Prince

Chair, ERLC trustees, Southern Seminary professor and pastor of Ashland Avenue Baptist Church in Lexington, Ky.

Vacation Bible School ... is a really important part of what we do. Hopefully, it is an important part of

what you do at your church too. It still remains one of the main ways, one of the most strategic ways, the important and effective ways, that a church can actually reach their community. It is remarkable in a room this size how many people actually came to know Christ because of VBS.

Ben Mandrell

**President
Lifeway Christian Resources**

When growing up, many of us learned about missions, and it changed our worldview and it changed our view of the world.

As a child from my small church in southern Illinois, I experienced God’s heart for the nations. Every week, I traveled around the world to learn what God was doing. I was taught to pray, to give sacrificially, to do missions, to tell others about Jesus and, maybe most importantly, to take my part in God’s plan. Our kids still need us now more than ever. If we do not teach our kids the value of missions, who will fulfill the Great Commission when we are gone?

Sandy Wisdom-Martin

**Executive director
National WMU**

The Scripture tells us to rescue those who are being taken away to death, hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, “Behold, we did not know this,” does not He who weighs the heart perceive it?

**Pastor William Ascol
Bethel Baptist Church
Owasso, Okla. (sponsor of
a resolution urging an end
to abortion in the U.S.)**

If we use this moment to leverage our energy and work together to save lives and serve women, one thing we could do is something bold — one thing we could do is something with life-saving implications. And that’s exactly what your Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission is planning to do, so our goal is to place ultrasound machines around the country ... and I want to encourage you to go with us.

**Daniel Patterson
Acting president
ERLC**

From the *Twitterverse*

@CalebGentry8

I’m sure that there are some who want to see more from the SBC on various issues, but as someone who has grown up in the SBC I am so encouraged by the vast majority of what I have seen during the #SBC21. We’re making progress and that is to the glory of God! Keep it up y’all!

@davidtark

Just to be clear, from my perspective, I’m more concerned that God is watching how we conduct business at #SBC21 than that the world is watching. Please God. Serve God. Love Him. Love ALL people. Be His church. Show grace.

@simpleman52

After a good night’s sleep and thinking a lot about #SBC21, I think the existential question facing Great Commission Baptists is: Can we be conservative in our convictions and liberal in our love?

@MrN8Varnadore

How could you not admire the love and genuineness of @DannyAkin? Thank you for leading well! #SBC21

@brandonewatkins

“Racism is a sin that will send souls to hell.” —@albertmohler #SBC21

@antmar96

Very excited to see what God is doing through @sendrelief as they continue to help those in need around the world. #SBC21

@dougmunton

There are a lot of really nice, kind people at the #SBC21. Good to meet so many people like that from all over the country and world!

@Natdavewilliams

“There are some things you can only learn in the refining fires of

the local church.” —@DannyAkin #SBC21 Amen. Seminary education without local church participation will produce malformed and incomplete pastors.

@zvangieson28

@jasonkeithallen just gave us a master class in humble leadership with convictional clarity. The Lord is honoring his work @MBTS #SBC21

@scottagilbert

I cannot imagine better leadership than exhibited by @jdgrear during the #sbc21. He has been winsome, clear, and convictional throughout the convention.

@DL_Staples

#SBC21 highlight for me is the IMB appointment of 64 new missionaries going to the unreached and underserved parts of the world. Thankful for the exceptional leadership of @DrPaulChitwood

You know, being a good Samaritan to make people feel better on their road to hell has not met their greatest need. Send Relief is all about showing compassion and meeting people’s physical needs, while meeting their greatest need that they don’t often realize — salvation from sin and a meaningful, eternal, abundant life through God in Jesus Christ. We have no desire to be merely a humanitarian relief organization. Our passion is for people from all walks of life to come to know Jesus personally.

**Bryant Wright
President
SEND Relief**

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

Tennessee pastor Grant Gaines advocates for the motion calling for the newly elected SBC president to appoint a task force to oversee the recently announced third-party investigation of the Executive Committee's handling of sexual abuse allegations within the denomination.

Messengers speak up



Photo by Sam Evans

Executive Committee plans for oversight in two areas; Lifeway request voted down

(continued from page 1)

respects the messengers. We need this deliberative process. We know this will make our convention stronger. That is what I want.”

Tennessee pastor Grant Gaines and North Carolina pastor Ronnie Parrott submitted the motion, noting concern of the EC overseeing its own investigation.

“Serious allegations have been made,” Grant said from the convention floor. “An investigation does need to be done but it needs to be done in the right way.”

Business/financial plan

Concerns over the ability to assume any new assignments as it enters an investigation also resulted in a rejection of its request related to the SBC business and financial plan.

The recommendation coming from the EC would have allowed its leaders more oversight in order to “strengthen the financial accountability” of SBC entities.

Vance Pitman, pastor of Hope Church, Las Vegas, was one of six messengers who stood to speak against the recommendation.

“This proposal would be an unprecedented expansion of the EC’s powers and would put itself between the local churches and the entities we are trying to support with the CP.

“There are so many questions ... and it doesn’t have to be done this year,” he said. “Let’s wait and allow everything to come out before accepting a recommendation like this.”

EC member Robyn Hari of Tennessee reminded messengers the recommendation was in response to previous messengers’ request “to have some method to make sure all

things outlined in the business and financial plan have been met and addressed.”

The plan, if it had passed, also would have empowered the EC to escrow Cooperative Program funds from any entity not complying with the 10-point checklist.

Southeastern Seminary president Danny Akin said, “I am chair of the council of seminary presidents and speak on behalf of all six of us opposing this recommendation.

“This would jeopardize our standing with our accrediting agencies ... because they already wonder about oversight (related to Cooperative Program funds gifted to the seminary),” he said. “They ask, how does this [prevent] outside interference? And we always say the money comes from our churches who hold us accountable through our trustee system.”

Lifeway assignments

Also voted down was a request for Lifeway Christian Resources to amend its ministry assignments to reflect the role it now plays, 25 years after the current list was drafted.

The reasoning behind the rejection was not clear, but messengers at varying points expressed concern over Lifeway’s decisions to sell property and adapt some of its assignments prior to the SBC meeting.

Messenger James Watson of Arkansas asked about “getting the cart before the horse” in relation to decisions being made prior to receiving approval from messengers.

In response, Lifeway president Ben Mandrell asked for grace.

“I do want to respect the process,” he said. “I was in a position where it was Ridgecrest (Baptist Conference Center in North Carolina) or it was Lifeway. I went to the board of trustees and showed them where we were with the greatest challenge Lifeway would ever face with the closing of churches for a prolonged period of time (during the pandemic).”

The past year the pandemic “forced this organization into a self-protection season,” he explained.

Curriculum sales declined; summer camps were canceled and all conferences moved to an online format.

By the end of the fiscal year, Lifeway had missed its revenue by \$45 million but Lifeway is now moving forward, he added.

In other business, a request to review whether Saddleback Church, a prominent California congregation led by bestselling author Rick Warren, can continue in fellowship with the SBC was sent to the Credentials Committee. The church recently ordained three women to serve in staff positions with pastor in the titles — such as children’s pastor.

Southern Baptists limit the office of pastor to men, but confusion surfaces because some see it as the senior pastor role while others see it as any position with pastor in the title.

A total of 32 motions were proposed during the meeting and 22 were referred to specific entities:

Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission — five motions, including ones relating to investigating its board and staff as well as hiring an

outside organization to investigate sexual abuse within the convention.

International Mission Board and North American Mission Board — one motion referred to both entities, and NAMB received one on its own.

SBC Executive Committee — 12 motions.

All SBC entities and EC — two.

A few motions requested rescinding previous years’ resolutions, specifically in regards to race, but it was later ruled out of order with an explanation from parliamentarian Barry McCarty. Resolutions are the opinion on a matter expressed by a particular set of messengers in a specific year and are nonbinding, so they cannot be rescinded by future messengers, he said.

\$190 million CP budget

Messengers also approved a \$190 million Cooperative Program Allocation budget and \$8.6 million EC and SBC operating budget.

The CP budget is an increase of \$3.125 million over the 2020–2021 budget but \$6.5 million less than the 2019–2020 budget.

Also adopted:

▶ Floyd’s Vision 2025 plan for boosting Southern Baptists’ evangelistic and discipleship efforts

▶ A change to the SBC constitution to expand the definition of a cooperating church regarding sexual abuse and racial discrimination

▶ A change to the SBC constitution related to the timing of officer elections during the meeting. It also adds that “no person may simultaneously be a candidate for two offices”

▶ An amended missions and ministry statement for the EC. (TAB Media)



MANDRELL

Third SBC president in history from Alabama

Litton seeks to ‘help us remember why we are a family,’ ‘build bridges’

(continued from page 1)

Stone into a runoff, since more than 50% of votes are required for election.

Former SBC President Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans and the SBC’s only black president, nominated Litton.

“The SBC has reached the tipping point. Our numbers are down matched only by decline in trust in one another,” Luter said. “We need strong yet humble, bold yet kind leadership. ... We need a uniter and Ed is uniquely qualified to do that.”

‘Shepherding heart’

“Ed Litton brings a compassionate and shepherding heart. We need a pastor who has a love for God and God’s people. We need a pastor who can help us refocus on the biblical principles of what this convention is all about,” Luter said, concluding with a lighthearted, “Take it from Fred, vote for Ed.”

Litton has served as a pastor for 34 years. He also served 7 1/2 years as a church planter in Arizona.

In announcing his agreement to

be nominated back in January, Litton said he and his wife, Kathy, had prayed about the opportunity and sensed God’s leading to say yes.

Since 1994, Litton has been pastor of Redemption Church, Saraland — known as North Mobile Baptist Church until 2014.

A Southwestern Seminary graduate, Litton served at First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas, in the college and career ministry and in the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention evangelism department. In 1987, he planted Mountain View Baptist Church, Tucson, Arizona.

He also has served in numerous roles in SBC denominational leadership, including as president of the SBC Pastors Conference and on the boards of various seminaries.

During Litton’s pastorate at Redemption, the church has averaged nearly 152 baptisms annually since 1994 with resident membership growing by 27.3% over the last 10 years. From 2018 to 2020, the church averaged 3.66% of undesignated gifts given through the Cooperative Program. From September 2019 through August 2020, it also

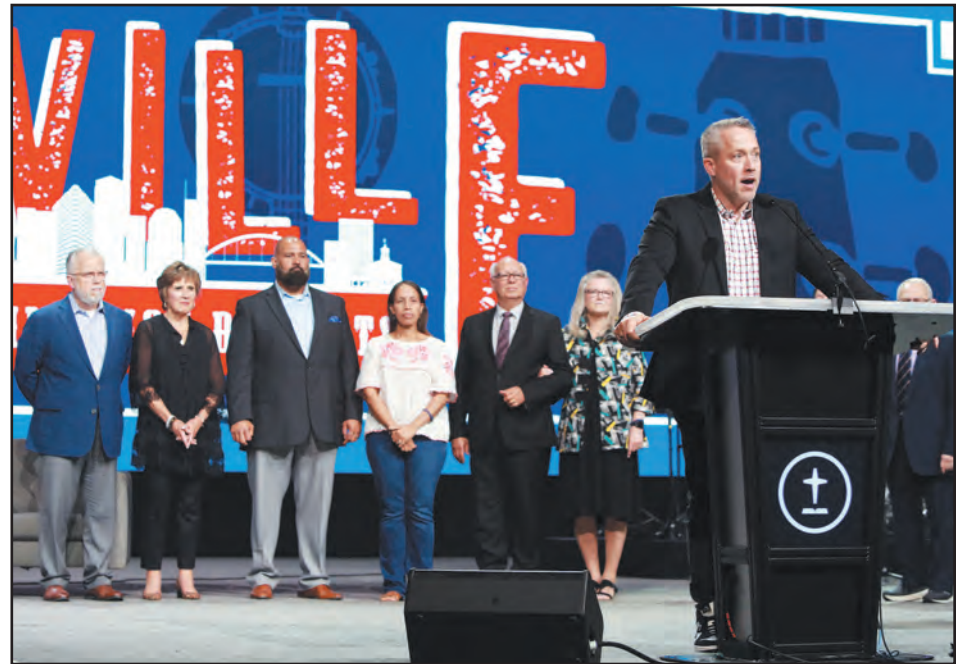


Photo by Van Payne

contributed 12.33% of its undesignated budget through Great Commission Giving.

Kathy Litton currently serves as director of planter spouse development for the North American Mission Board.

During his presidential press conference the evening of June 15, Litton said he plans to focus on uniting Southern Baptists.

“My goal is to build bridges and not walls, help people connect and talk through things, have open and honest conversations,” he explained.

“What God has called me to do is help us remember again why we are a family — to get good news to as many people as can hear it, welcome it, receive it and know it. That’s why we choose to cooperate together.”

Litton acknowledged he realizes to rebuild trust among Baptists means he will need to help lead those cooperating with the SBC to work out differences currently causing friction within the denomination.

“Our unity ultimately is the gospel,” he noted. “The gospel calls us to be reconcilers. We are always looking out for His interest above our own. Our mission is reconciliation to connect us to God and to one another.”

J.D. Greear wraps up his time as SBC president and passes the gavel to the newly elected president, Ed Litton (far left), standing with his wife, Kathy. Also

elected were Lee Brand (third from left), of Mid-America Seminary, as first vice president, standing with his wife, Tiffany; and John Yeats (second from right), executive director of the Missouri Baptist Convention, as recording secretary, standing with his wife Sharon. Not pictured are newly elected second vice president Ramon Medina, a pastor from Texas, and reelected registration secretary Don Currence.

Stance on hot topics

Responding to a few hot button topics, Litton said he believes:

▶ The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 is a helpful tool “broad enough for interpretations.”

▶ The primary teaching pastor of a church “has to be a male, but I also believe in the autonomy of the local church.”

▶ Critical Race Theory is a reality in culture but not in the SBC. “I think people are afraid but don’t need to be.”

Litton is the third SBC president from Alabama.

Jonathan Haralson served from 1889 to 1898 and Jaroy Weber served from 1975 to 1976. (TAB Media)



Photo by Van Payne

During his presidential press conference June 16 after election results were announced, Ed Litton said his goal is to “build bridges and not walls, help people connect ... and have open and honest conversations.”

Crossover Nashville results in 176 salvation decisions

By **Dianna L. Cagle**
TAB Media Group

Richard Hamlet was saved at age 10 at a Billy Graham Evangelistic Association event. Now he and his wife, Ginger, travel to lead such events, which is why they were in Nashville as part of Crossover 2021.

Holding a festival takes time and volunteers, and “the key is faithfulness,” said Hamlet, who is president and CEO of Global Ministries Foundation and serves as president of the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists.

The COSBE partnered with New Season Church in Nashville to reach its neighborhood June 12.

“We’re praying the Holy Spirit reaches people,” Hamlet said.

Around 2,000 cards were distributed within three to four blocks of the event, which was held at East Park and was a part of the greater Crossover Nashville efforts held prior to the Southern Baptist Convention.

Face paint, bouncy houses as well as music and food were available to the community.

More than 6,000 participants in this year’s Crossover represented 43 churches in Tennessee and several Southern Baptist seminaries.

Gospel conversations

Johnny Hunt, senior vice president of evangelism and leadership for the North American Mission Board, said 176 people made salvation decisions, and volunteers engaged in 6,300 gospel conversations during Crossover events.

Volunteers at East Park were organized by New Season member Deidre Childress.

“A lot of people were working behind the scenes to get the tents

and chairs and arrange the bouncy houses and the stage/sound system,” Childress said.

At least 20 volunteers from the church manned tents and helped children on/off the inflatables.

Community effort

“Eight churches were hosting events around Nashville,” said Rusty Sumrall, executive director and lead coach for Nashville Baptist Association.

Churches hosted ice cream socials, food giveaways, block parties and festivals around Nashville. Sumrall expressed appreciation for the seminary students and church volunteers who were out in the days leading up to the events.

They went door to door throughout the surrounding neighborhoods sharing the gospel and inviting people to attend the event.

Ginger Hamlet shared her testimony from the stage. She told of being baptized after seeing how pleased her mother was when her sister went under the water.

But she didn’t become a Christian until later when she was out sharing the gospel with an

Evangelism Explosion team.

“I was sharing the gospel, but I didn’t know it myself,” she said.

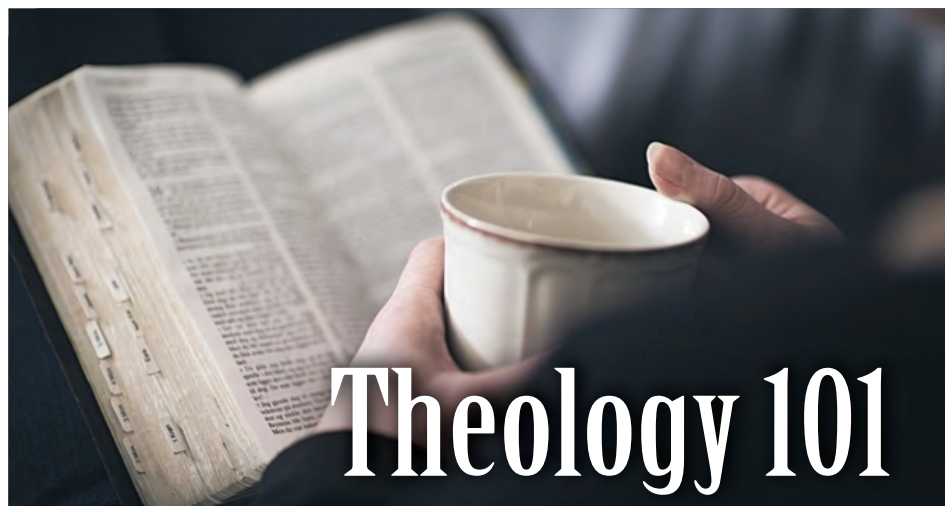
Roc Collins, director of evangelism for the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board, expressed appreciation for the hundreds of Southern Baptists involved in the evangelistic outreach.

He described Tennessee as a state that is approaching 7 million residents, with as many as 4 million nonbelievers among those residents. His prayer, he said, is that the evangelistic fervor evident in Crossover Nashville will “overflow across the SBC.”



Photo by Van Payne

Cornhole was one of the activities set up at events during the evangelistic Crossover Nashville, which was held June 12 leading into the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting June 15–16 at Music City Center.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

God's Word

Desirable

By **Jerry Batson, Th.D.**
TAB Media

God’s inspired Word is both effectual and enduring. Given its content and purposes, His word also is desirable. Hence, the admonition of 1 Peter 2:1–3 should command our attention: “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”

God’s word will refresh and nourish those who find themselves hungering and thirsting spiritually. As babies crave milk, so God’s children do well to crave His word. Babies that are nourished naturally grow physically. Christians who are regularly nourished grow spiritually. The Apostle Paul wrote Timothy about being “nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine ...” (1 Tim. 4:6). What Paul desired for Timothy, God desires for all who belong to Him.

‘Sure guide’

Specifically, God’s word is desirable as a sure guide for acceptable and praiseworthy behavior. He spoke in ancient times to Isaiah the prophet: “Your ears shall hear a word behind you saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it’” (Isa. 30:21). God’s inspired Word serves to help us know which way to turn as we face life’s choices.

God’s word is desirable for its work of revealing truth. In His extensive prayer in John 17,

Jesus declared to the Father, “Your Word is truth” (v. 17).

What Jesus knew, He wants us to know — look to God’s word to discover divine truth for life.

That Word faithfully works in its sincere readers to impart wisdom. God had Moses say to the people concerning His divine statutes and judgments, “Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding ...” (Deut. 4:6).

Divine truth

God’s word is desirable for its capacity to correct error in behavior or thinking. Divine truth is the antidote for human error. After all, God declares, “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (1 Cor. 3:19).

In a world filled with human foolishness, we do well to embrace 2 Timothy 3:16: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

In short, God’s word is desirable for its ability to mature believers into men and women of God who are marked by believing the truth, walking in that truth and sharing it with others.

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.



'CALLED TO SERVE'

National WMU elects Dixon president, honors others during Missions Celebration

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

National Woman's Missionary Union elected Connie Dixon of New Mexico as its new president during the WMU Missions Celebration and Annual Meeting held June 13 at First Baptist Church, Nashville.

It's the first time the organization has elected a new president since 2015. WMU's previous president, Linda Cooper, served six years — the normal five-year term plus a "bonus year" after the 2020 celebration was canceled in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I know God has great plans for Woman's Missionary Union, and I'm just so excited that I'm going to get to be part of that," Dixon said.

Dixon has served as New Mexico's WMU director for the past 13

years. She grew up in Girls in Action, and she felt called to missions in 1994 while attending the National Acteens Convention with her oldest daughter.

Dixon came home from the conference and started an Acteens chapter at her church, First Baptist, Elida, and within six months she was New Mexico's Acteens consultant. She has served in a state leadership role in WMU ever since.

"WMU has been richly blessed by an incredible heritage of godly women who have leaned into leadership when called to serve," said Sandy Wisdom-Martin, WMU executive director. "Every experience in Connie's life has led to this moment in

time, and she will embrace it with great courage guided by the Spirit of God, and we will all learn so much from her."

Shirley McDonald of Greens



Photo by Kevin Parker
Kina Bell-Jones of Tennessee was awarded the Sybil Bentley Dove Award, which honors a CWJC alumna.



Photo by Van Payne
Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director of National WMU, presents outgoing WMU President Linda Cooper with a gift from WMU's WorldCrafts collection, a limited-edition necklace named in Cooper's honor.

Creek Baptist Church, Dublin, Texas, was also elected recording secretary.

Throughout the event, WMU leaders heard messages and stories from missionaries, national Acteens panelists and others following the theme of Relentless Journey and highlighting 20 attributes of "relentless" leaders.

Also during the celebration, the Dellanna West O'Brien Award for Women's Leadership Development was given to Cindy Walker, a member of First Baptist Church, Minden, Louisiana, who has served in missions education for more than 50 years.

The first half she led Girls in Action, wrote GA curriculum and led camps for her church and association.

'Wonderful journey'

"My heart just kind of bled GAS for a long time," Walker said.

After that, she taught Acteens for more than 25 years. She said it has "been a wonderful journey" of getting to "pass on that passion" for missions.

David George, president of the

WMU Foundation, presented the award and called Walker a "servant who has touched the lives of countless people."

CWJC grad honored

The Sybil Bentley Dove Award winner was Kina Bell-Jones, a graduate of Begin Anew, a Christian Women's Job Corps site in Middle Tennessee. The Dove Award is the highest honor CWJC gives with a scholarship attached.

Jones said her family had been stuck in a cycle of teenage pregnancy and dropping out of high school for generations until she came to CWJC. She had struggled with drug addiction and been in abusive relationships, but then CWJC helped her get her GED at age 50.

All of her children have now graduated high school, and Jones has started her own cleaning business and is taking classes for medical transcribing.

"It was a trend thing, and my kids graduated, so it broke that chain," Jones said. "The Lord took me through all that to get me to where I am today."



Photo by Van Payne

Connie Dixon, recently retired WMU director of New Mexico, was elected president of National WMU on June 13. Dixon has served in missions since 1994.

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Associational leaders annual convention

Leaders urged to keep gospel top priority, care for pastors, stay connected

By **Dianna L. Cagle**
TAB Media

Focusing on the gospel and unity, associational leaders held their 61st Southern Baptist Convention of Associational Leaders on June 12–14.

The focus of this year’s meeting in Nashville was “The Gospel-Driven Association.” Around 400 leaders, wives and guests were in attendance.

Speakers included Ronnie Floyd, president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee; Paul Chitwood, president of the International Mission Board; Jared C. Wilson, assistant professor of pastoral ministry, author in residence, and general editor of *For the Church* at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; and Savannah Kimberlin, research director for Barna.

Sessions were offered on a variety of topics: theology and doctrine, building relationships, engaging culture,

unity and diversity, fostering healthy pastor transitions and more.

Tate Cockrell emphasized the importance of caring for the pastor’s needs well. Associational leaders have insight into their pastors and their churches, he said.

Times of crisis

Cockrell, associate professor of counseling and director of DMin studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, led a seminar on ministering to pastors in times of crisis.

“Pastors don’t trust easily,” Cockrell said, but he urged the leaders to have a plan and check on their pastors regularly. He encouraged them not only to get some training but also to pray for them and their families.

In sharing about unity amid diversity as Southern Baptists, Kevin Smith, executive director of the Maryland-Delaware Baptist



Photo by Dianna L. Cagle
Neal Hughes (right), director of missions for Montgomery Baptist Association, speaks with Jim Hill, director of missions for Dale Baptist Association, during the Southern Baptist Convention of Associational Leaders meeting.

Convention, said associational leaders have the connections state conventions and the larger SBC do not.

Leaders need to find pastors who have a high view of Scripture, confirm the Baptist Faith and Message, make the Great Commission a priority and fund the Cooperative Program.

Putting prayer and Scripture together works wonders on souls, Smith said. Other differences shouldn’t matter.

Salary increase

During the meeting, Asa Greear, director of missions of St. Johns River Baptist Association in Palatka, Florida, proposed raising the salary of SBCAL’s president and CEO by \$2,000.

In the current July 2021–June 2022 budget of \$93,000, Ray Gentry, who serves in that role, would have received \$12,000. Gentry also serves as associational mission strategist at Southside Baptist Network in McDonough, Georgia.

Greear said his association would contribute \$1,200 of that amount. Rick

SBCAL also elected its officers for the next year at its business meeting.

Kevin Carrothers, associational mission strategist for Salem South Baptist Association in Mount Vernon, Illinois, will serve as chairman; Bob Lowman, executive director of Metrolina Baptist Association in Charlotte, North Carolina, will serve as vice chairman; and Philip Price, executive director of Jackson County Baptist Association in Pascagoula, Mississippi, will serve as recording secretary.

Association resource

One of the resources highlighted was “The Baptist Association: Assisting Churches, Advancing the Gospel,” a book edited by Gentry and written by and for associational leaders.

Read more from each of this year’s speakers at tabonline.org/sbc-al-21.

NAMB honors SBC chaplains



Photo by Sam Evans

Two Southern Baptist chaplains from Alabama, retired Rear Admiral Endel Lee (far right) and retired Commander Scott Morton (5th from right), were among those honored by the North American Mission Board on June 14.



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TOGETHER

ON MISSION

Nearly 10,000 gather for SEND Conference in Nashville prior to SBC annual meeting

By Shawn Hendricks
and Grace Thornton

TAB Media

Focused on the theme “Together on Mission,” a crowd of nearly 10,000 Southern Baptists gathered June 13 in Nashville for the opening session of the SEND Conference.

Christian musicians Michael W. Smith, CeCe Winans and Crowder joined Pastor Tony Evans and Southern Baptist missions board leaders Kevin Ezell and Paul Chitwood in urging those in attendance to overcome their divisions, politics and struggles to take the gospel to the world.

During his message, Evans challenged Southern Baptists to spend less time on issues they disagree on and more effort on making disciples, baptizing believers and teaching God’s word.

Evans said, “One of the theological, sociological, political and cultural reasons for the chaos we’re now experiencing” is that God wants to wake up the church.

From every nation

Referencing racial divisions, he said one of the reasons for racial issues among Christians is that “far too many whites are more white than Christian” and “far too many blacks are more black than Christian.”

But, he said, God is never in favor of “color blindness. ... Let’s get that straight,” he said. “People say I’m colorblind. God is not color blind if you read Revelation.”

John saw “people from every

nation, every tribe, every tongue,” Evans noted. “He says whatever they were here is the same thing there,” he said. “God is not colorblind, but neither is He blinded by color. He never wants your humanity to trump your Christian commitment.”

Following Evans’ message, Chitwood, president of the International Mission Board, and Ezell, president of the North American Mission

Board, spoke about unity and the importance of working together.

“We know the mission we’re in together is really founded upon our prayers,” Chitwood said.

Prior to the start of the conference, a crowd of some 1,200 attendees prayed prior to the 2021 SBC Annual Meeting.

Robby Gallaty, senior pastor of Long Hollow Baptist Church,

Hendersonville, Tennessee, led the prayer time.

On June 14, the SEND Conference continued with tracks for pastors, women, children, students and young adults. The Pastors Track focused on unity in the Spirit.

Preaching from Revelation 22, Gregg Matte, senior pastor of Houston’s First Baptist Church, reminded the audience that when the Spirit and the Church are unified and working together, “it’s powerful.”

So is unity in the Spirit between churches, said Jimmy Scroggins, lead pastor of Family Church, West Palm Beach, Florida, who served as the host for the morning.

Miguel Nuñez — pastor for preaching and vision at Iglesia

Bautista Internacional and president of Ministerios Integridad & Sabiduría in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic — said communion with God is vital to the mission.

Jesus prayed for the disciples to be one in John 17. “If we’re going to allow the Holy Spirit to do His work, we must surrender to Him,” Nuñez said.

Hershael York — senior pastor of Buck Run Baptist Church, Frankfort, Kentucky, and dean of the School of Theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky — spoke on Psalm 44, noting how God can feel far away.

Unified in heaven

God will keep believers until the day they are completely whole and unified in heaven, York said. Believers can count on that as they press into God and His work, even

if they don’t understand what He’s doing.

Preaching from Ephesians 4, Kevin Smith, executive director of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware, focused on how working together for the gospel takes effort — and help from the Holy Spirit.

Vance Pitman, senior pastor of Hope Church, Las Vegas, Nevada, began his message with a word of “discouragement,” noting that all churches are going to die.

“Today the church at Ephesus is a pile of rocks,” he said. The good news, he said, is that “the kingdom of God is alive and well.”

David Jeremiah, senior pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church, El Cajon, California, ended the afternoon session, advising younger pastors to “take a page out of the Billy Graham book and preach the gospel like never before.”

Read more on each speaker at tabonline.org/send21-pastors.



Photo by Sam Evans
Gospel recording artist CeCe Winans was a surprise guest during a worship session of the SEND Conference.

2022 Pastors Conference officers elected

Photo by Karen McCutcheon/Baptist Press

Officers for the 2022 SBC Pastors Conference were introduced at the end of the SEND Conference on June 14. They are (left to right): treasurer Sam Greer, pastor of Red Bank Baptist Church, Chattanooga, Tennessee; vice president Cam Triggs, pastor of Grace Alive Church, Orlando, Florida; and president Matt Henslee, pastor of Mayhill Baptist Church, Mayhill, New Mexico. The 2022 Pastors Conference will precede the SBC Annual Meeting to be held in Anaheim, California.



Photo by Sam Evans

“Our work has not been thwarted,” said International Mission Board President Paul Chitwood on June 14 during the IMB’s first in-person Sending Celebration since the coronavirus pandemic began in 2020.

Faithful to the call

Southern Baptists celebrate appointment of 64 new IMB missionaries

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
TAB Media

Emily grew up overseas, where she learned a second language and began to sense God’s call to the nations.

Serving as a journeyman with the International Mission Board, she felt a burden for Europe and learned a third language. Now the young Texan is taking those skills and experiences to the missions field where she will serve with the IMB’s European affinity group.

“Please pray that I would abide in Christ, and His word would abide in me,” she asked those gathered at the June 14 Sending Celebration that closed this year’s SEND Conference.

That plea was echoed as missionary after missionary took the stage to share their

hearts and publicly declare their call, even if security concerns in their soon-to-be homes required they do so veiled by a screen.

Sixty-four new missionaries were sent out during the celebration. They will join more than 3,600 Southern Baptist missionaries and their 2,700 children who are already serving around the world.

The sending of missionaries through the IMB has not slowed during the pandemic, said IMB President Paul Chitwood.

“More than 500 new missionaries have been appointed since the pandemic began,” he said. “Most have been able to deploy overseas. Others stand ready and waiting for the green light. Our work has not been thwarted.”

Sacred task

There is no more significant charge, no higher calling, no greater mission than to take the gospel to every nation, and we must be about that sacred task every day, Chitwood said.

“This afternoon we gather together to send 64 more to join the ranks of those who are on the front lines of gospel advance around the world,” he said.

Those sent out include:

► Brandon and Lisa Gregory of Reliance Fellowship, West Richland, Washington, who will serve as church planting partners among European peoples. The Gregorys said traveling to Europe sparked a passion for the people, and the support of their church was instrumental as they “respond in obedience to God’s call on our life.”

► Scott Bulp of First Baptist Church, Las Cruces, New Mexico, who will serve among American people groups to help mobilize believers to plant churches both nationally and abroad. Bulp said he was challenged to pray for a

different nation every night during college. “From that moment, I began to discover how God was equipping me for crosscultural ministry,” he said.

► Phil and Becca Bartuska, of The Summit Church, Raleigh, North Carolina, who will serve among European peoples in Austria. The Bartuskas served in Austria for a short time in the past when unexpected circumstances necessitated their return to the U.S. “We were uncertain if we would be able to return, but God

answered our prayers by providing a way back into Austria,” Becca said. “We are returning again to serve with brothers and sisters from multiple nations who are preparing ... to plant a church in an area ... where no evangelical church exists.”

The celebration also included testimonies from journeymen who were commissioned in 2019 when the SBC gathered in Birmingham.

The need for workers

“Now that my time is almost up, we will need more workers on the field,” one said. “Instead of saying ‘why should I go,’ consider, ‘why shouldn’t I go?’ ”

Kal Jones, who will serve among Southeast Asian people groups, said the decision to leave their comfortable life in Alabama was difficult, but in the end, necessary.

“Friends tried to discourage us,” he said. “We will knowingly miss Thanksgiving, Christmas, birthdays and many other holidays, and we readily accept the embarrassment that will come with mastering languages and cultures. ... [But] as we prepare to go, ... we know we are being faithful to God’s call on our lives.”

Among other requests, many of the new missionaries asked for prayer in the following ways:

► Language mastery

► The transition to their new homes, especially for their children

► Strategic partnerships as they make disciples and plant churches.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons.



Photo by Sam Evans

Phil and Becca Bartuska, of The Summit Church, Raleigh, North Carolina, will serve among European peoples in Austria.



Photo by Sam Evans

Brandon and Lisa Gregory of Reliance Fellowship, West Richland, Washington, will serve as church planting partners among European peoples.

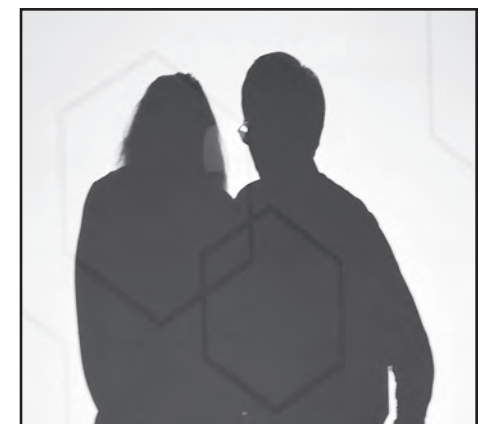


Photo by Sam Evans

Kal and Madalyn Jones of Alabama will serve among Southeast Asian people groups.



Photo by Sam Evans

Former SBC president James Merritt responds to messengers during the report of the Resolutions Committee, which he chaired.

10 resolutions approved by SBC 2021 messengers

Messengers to the 2021 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention adopted 10 of the 40 resolutions submitted.

► **Baptist Unity and Maintaining Our Public Witness** — the priority of Christians to “walk worthy of their calling” and “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit” (Eph. 4:1–3).

► **On the Sufficiency of Scripture for Race and Racial Reconciliation** — affirming that Scripture is “inspired by God” (2 Tim. 3:16–17) and that all people are “one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26–28).

► **On Taxpayer Complicity in Abortion and the Hyde Amendment** — affirms the sanctity of human life (Gen. 1:27; 9:6) and opposes the use of taxpayer money to fund abortion procedures.

► **On the Equality Act** — affirms that God created two distinct sexes (Gen. 1:27; Matt. 19:4) and opposes the Equality Act that “seeks to revise the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by adding a prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.”

► **On Abuse and Pastoral Qualifications** — affirms that Scripture teaches pastors, elders and overseers are to be “above reproach”

(1 Tim. 3:2) and states that any person who has committed sexual abuse should be permanently disqualified from holding the office of pastor.

► **On Sole Membership** — upholds the Southern Baptist foundational belief that each individual church member is in a “legal relationship” with the SBC and convention entities and that only the convention in session — not the Executive Committee — is the legal “sole member” of the various agencies and institutions of the convention.

► **On the Uyghur Genocide** — denounces atrocities inflicted by the Communist Party of China against the Uyghur people.

► **On the Coronavirus Pandemic** — expresses grief for the more than 3.78 million lives lost during the COVID-19 pandemic.

► **On Appreciation for the City of Nashville** — for hosting the annual meeting.

► **On Abolishing Abortion** — immediately, without exception or compromise.

To read all 10 of the resolutions in their entirety, visit tabonline.org/SBC21-resolutions.

And to read about discussions related to each resolution, the full version of the article can be found at tabonline.org. (TAB Media)

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CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Jemison is seeking a full-time senior pastor. He should possess a conviction to preach from the Holy Bible, teaching biblical truths and doctrine of Christianity, as stated in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. Must provide pastoral care and counseling; be engaged to all age groups; mentor and supervise church staff; and provide visionary leadership for the future of our church. He will shepherd our congregation in worship, Christian spiritual growth and community outreach as we strive to carry out The Great Commission. Mail resumés to: Jemison First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 760, Jemison, AL 35085 or resumes@jemisonfirstbaptist.com.

SENIOR PASTOR

We are prayerfully seeking God's man to be the under shepherd and spiritual leader of His church here at Farmstead Baptist Church in Jasper. We are seeking a man who loves the Lord unconditionally, is led by the Holy Spirit and has a heart for the people. Farmsteadpastorsearch@gmail.com. 265 Curry Hwy, Jasper, AL 35503. <https://farmsteadbaptist.church>.

PASTOR

Searching for full-time pastor. First Baptist Church Lanett. Submit resumé to: P.O. Box 365, Lanett, AL 36863 or email fbclanett@knology.net.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Verbena Baptist Church is currently seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: verbenabaptist@att.net.

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First Baptist Church of Dillon, S.C., is seeking a full-time associate pastor of worship. Applicants should have at least 2 years experience leading worship and a minimum of a 4-year bachelor's degree. For further information and job description, please visit <https://www.fbcdillon.com/associatepastor>. Please send

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CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP LEADER

First Baptist Madison, Ala., is seeking a part-time contemporary worship leader. For more information please go to: <https://bit.ly/3eQpu0p>.

PART-TIME YOUTH PASTOR

Vincent First Baptist Church is searching and praying for a part-time youth pastor. Please send resumés to ATTN: Pastor Robbie Weems at weems1969@aol.com. Praying for someone within a 15-minute drive from church. Great opportunity.

OTHER POSITIONS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The boards of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP) and American Character Builders are seeking a new executive director to succeed Joe Godfrey, who has announced his upcoming retirement. To apply and receive a complete job description and salary range information, send a cover letter and resumé to ALCAP.Search@gmail.com or mail to: ALCAP & ACB, 2376 Lakeside Drive, Birmingham, AL 35244. All information will be kept confidential. Applicants must be willing to submit to a background screening.

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TAB DIGITAL

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TAB HIGHLIGHTS

TAB Highlights is an email newsletter delivered to your inbox every Monday–Wednesday–Friday with the day's top stories from the world of faith-based news. The complimentary service is managed by the TAB Media team. Headlines come from international, national and Southern Baptist coverage, as well as one story that has been trending during the week. TAB Highlights also provides a link to the latest podcast released from the TAB Media team. To sign up, email news@thealabamabaptist.org.

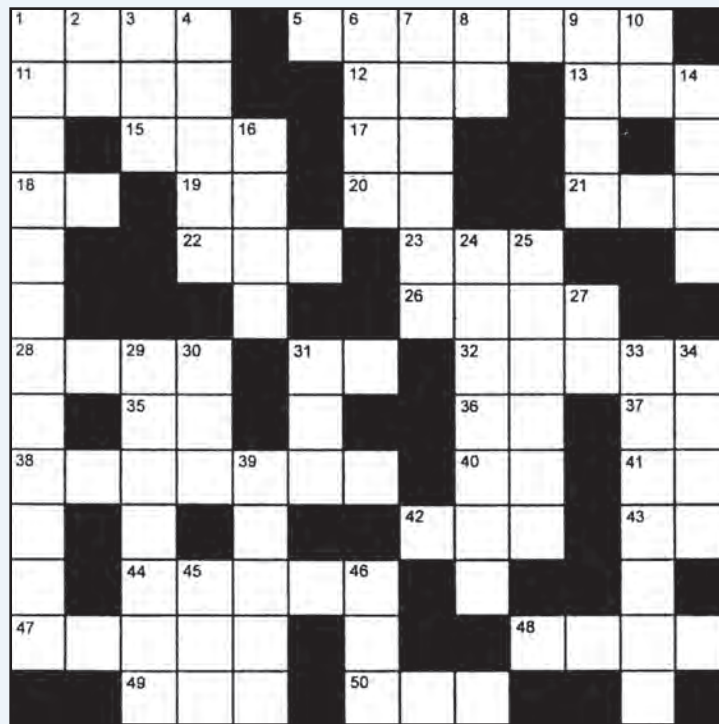
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CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

1. I would thou wert ___ or hot. (Rev. 3:15)
5. ___ us from evil. (Matt. 6:13)
11. ___ my voice. (Ex. 19:5)
12. ___ thou at my right hand. (Ps. 110:1)
13. Behold, ___ is the accepted time. (2 Cor. 6:2)
15. To make a hole.
17. Audiovisual. (abbr.)
18. District Attorney. (abbr.)
19. There is none righteous, ___ not one. (Rom. 3:10)
20. Not A, E or O.
21. A sharp, shrill bark or yelp.
22. In the beginning ___. (Gen. 1:1)
23. He hath put a ___ song in my mouth. (Ps. 40:3)
26. Rejoice, and be exceeding ___. (Matt. 5:12)
28. The mountain of ___. (Deut. 34:1)
31. The ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter.
32. Whom Sarah bare to him, ___. (Gen. 21:3)
35. Prefix meaning "in."
36. Purple Heart. (abbr.)
37. Bachelor of Arts. (abbr.)
38. Unto one he gave five ___. (Matt 25:15)
40. ___ that hath an ear. (Rev. 2:7)
41. Alabama. (ZIP code abbr.)
42. Not happy.
43. Football defensive lineman. (abbr.)
44. They were not



By Susan F. Weimer Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

47. Belly button.
48. The ___ of all evil. (1 Tim. 6:10)
49. Emergency Medical Service. (abbr.)
50. The ___ of joy for mourning. (Isa. 61:3)

DOWN

1. There is therefore now no ___. (Rom. 8:1)
2. Obstetrician. (abbr.)
3. For as many as are ___ by the Spirit. (Rom. 8:14)
4. As ___, and behold we live. (2 Cor. 6:9)
6. ___ said to Jacob, Feed me. (Gen. 25:30)
7. Lead them unto ___ fountains of waters. (Rev. 7:17)
8. And ___ repented the Lord that he had made man. (Gen. 6:6)
9. ___ thou not the oppressor. (Prov. 3:31)
10. Roseanna's nickname.

14. Jesus ___. (John 11:35)
16. None is ___, save one. (Luke 18:19)
24. Adah bare to Esau ___. (Gen. 36:4)
25. Have ___ their robes. (Rev. 7:14)
27. Doctor of Arts. (abbr.)
29. Unto all and upon all them that ___. (Rom. 3:22)
30. That they all may be ___. (John 17:21)
31. Delivered it from the ___ of corruption. (Isa. 38:17)
33. Whose name in the Hebrew tongue is ___. (Rev. 9:11)
34. I will ___ on the name of the Lord. (1 Kings 18:24)
39. In his hands the print of the ___. (John 20:25)
45. Democrat. (abbr.)
46. Hew thee ___ tables of stone. (Deut. 10:1)

WORD search

- | | |
|-------------|-----------|
| BELLY | PREACH |
| BILLOWS | RELENT |
| BREAKERS | SACKCLOTH |
| CALAMITY | SAILORS |
| CITY | SALVATION |
| CRIED | SEA |
| CURRENTS | SEAWEED |
| DELIVERANCE | SHADE |
| DRIVEN | SIGHT |
| EBBING | SPARE |
| FISH | SPEWED |
| FLEE | STORM |
| FLOOD | TEMPLE |
| FORSAKE | THREE |
| GREAT | THROW |
| IDOLS | VINE |
| JONAH | VOWED |
| LOYALTY | WATERS |
| NINEVAH | WAVES |
| OVERBOARD | WORM |





ONEMISSION:TheGreatCommission ONEPROGRAM:TheCooperativeProgram MANYMINISTRIES:GreatCommissionMinistries

STRONGER TOGETHER

WHY I BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

To the Ends of the Earth

I spoke to the WMU ladies in Jackson, Alabama, recently. During my research, I found some details that I believe are encouraging to all of us in Clarke County.

By Mark Presswood



Of every dollar we give through the Cooperative Program, 25.1 cents goes to international missions. Collectively, Clarke Baptists gave \$353,242.00 through the Cooperative Program in 2020. Of that, \$88,663.74 went to international missions.

In addition, our gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering were \$62,694.00. That means that Clarke Baptists gave \$151,357.74 to international missions last year.

That was a pandemic year. That's amazing.

If you were one of the givers – I pray you tithe since that's God's amount – God promises rewards.

As we individually are obedient to be cheerful givers, God's message of salvation goes to Jerusalem and all Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. Those are symbolic names for our towns and all of Clarke County, our United States and all of the world.

Mark Presswood, associational missionary for the Clarke Baptist Association, recently wrote this as his column for the CBA newsletter.

For more information about the Cooperative Program and resources to help promote it in your church, visit AlabamaCP.org.

International Missions

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering

Clarke Baptists

CP COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Event and location are followed by SBOM contact person and extension. For more information on these events, call 1-800-264-1225 or (334) 613 plus the listed extension, or visit alsbom.org/events. To register for virtual events, visit PinnacleAlabama.org.

JULY

- 4 **Citizenship and Religious Liberty Sunday**
- 6 **Financial Issues Conference**, SBOM, Prattville, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263
- 9-10 **Children's Music Summit**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, April Brewer, ext. 2279
- 11-16 **Super Summer Alabama**, Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Jessica Palmer, ext. 2262
- 12 **Financial Issues Conference**, Heritage Baptist Church, Dothan, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263
- 12-16 **MIX MusiCamp@Shocco**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Cindy Parrish, ext. 2230
- 13 **Financial Issues Conference**, Mobile Baptist Association, Mobile, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263
- 16-17 **SPEAK**, NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, Jessica Palmer, ext. 2262
- 18 **A Night of Encouragement and Evangelism**, Southside Baptist Church, Fayette, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 19 **A Time to Plant**, Etowah Baptist Association, Gadsden, Brian Harper, ext. 2332
- 19 **Financial Issues Conference**, Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association, Opelika, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263
- 23-24 **Connect** (formerly Equip), Shocco Springs, Talladega, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325
- 25-31 **YMLink on Mission**, New York City, Jessica Palmer, ext. 2262
- 31 **Called Conference**, Trussville First, Larry Hyche, ext. 2268

AUGUST

- 1 **Social Issues Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 2289
- 2 **Financial Issues Conference**, Calhoun Baptist Association, Anniston, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263
- 3 **Financial Issues Conference**, Huffman Baptist Church, Birmingham, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263
- 6-7 **Pinnacle Alabama@Shocco**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 2285
- 10 **Financial Issues Conference**, Woodward Avenue Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263
- 12 **UpLink on the Road**, Andalusia First, Jessica Palmer, ext. 2262
- 12 **discipleFIRST Forum**, CrossPoint Church, Trussville, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 2285
- 26 **UpLink on the Road**, Trussville First, Jessica Palmer, ext. 2262
- 29 **A Night of Encouragement and Evangelism**, Southside Baptist Church, Southside, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 30 **A Night of Encouragement and Evangelism**, Carrollton Baptist Church, Carrollton, Lori McGough, ext. 2245

SEPTEMBER

- 2 **Get Acquainted Day**, SBOM, Prattville, Amy Nelson, ext. 2231
- 9-10 **Alabama Singing Men Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, April Brewer, ext. 2279
- 9-10 **Alabama Singing Women Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, April Brewer, ext. 2279
- 12 **A Night of Encouragement and Evangelism**, Lusk Baptist Church, Gilbertown, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 12 **Single Adult Sunday**, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 2285
- 12-19 **Week of Prayer for State Missions & Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering**, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2235
- 14 **Senior Adult Singin'**, Southside Baptist Church, Greenville, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 2285
- 17-18 **Pursue**, Opelika First, Mike Nuss, ext. 2276
- 19 **Anti-Gambling Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 2289
- 21 **Senior Adult Singin'**, Northside Baptist Church, Jasper, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 2285
- 21 **Personnel Management**, SBOM, Prattville, Lee Wright, ext. 2241

B-21 panel shares opinions on current topics

By Dianna L. Cagle
TAB Media

The Baptist 21 luncheon June 15 tackled some tough topics for Southern Baptists including race, complementarianism, cultural worldview and sexual abuse.

“The greatest danger in the Southern Baptist Convention is the lack of discipleship,” said Juan Sanchez, assistant professor of Christian theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

Sanchez was on the panel alongside Donna Gaines, speaker, author and pastor’s wife; Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky; Danny Akin president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina; Ed Litton, pastor of Redemption Church, Mobile (and newly elected SBC president, see story, page 1); and Marshal Ausberry Sr., pastor and outgoing SBC first vice president.



Photo by Dianna Cagle

Danny Akin (with microphone), president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, is one of five panelists featured at the B-21 lunch meeting June 15.

Nathan Akin, executive director of B21 moderated the lunch panel held in the midst of the first day of the SBC Annual Meeting in Nashville.

“If we’re not grounded in Scripture, we’re going to be tossed about,” Sanchez said.

“Our life and our doctrine need to go together.”

In responding to recent attacks on his character and beliefs, Akin said, “It’s unfortunate when people who should know better misrepresent you.”

This age is one of social

media, “where everything is sound bites.”

Social media, which is in its infancy, does not have parents to police what is being released, he said.

“Those of us who follow Christ, we ought to be setting the pattern and providing the example for everyone else to follow,” Akin said. “We stand steadfast on the authority, the inerrancy, the sufficiency of the word of God, and we oppose with every fiber of our being any worldview, framework or

ideology contrary to orthodox Christianity.

“We deplore and we despise and we reject any and all vestiges of racism and bigotry,” he added.

Commenting on the SBC business sessions, Mohler said “any vote that passes on a narrow margin really fails” because it indicates the messengers — and therefore the convention — aren’t resolved on the matter.

The only woman on the panel, Gaines shared about her belief in complementarianism.

“Obviously our God is a God of order, and He established the order in the home prior to the fall, so I firmly believe in male headship in the home and the church,” said Gaines, a lifelong Southern Baptist.

While Gaines herself has never felt threatened, disrespected, dishonored or physically unsafe, she stressed that “if there is one woman who has been disrespected or abused, that is one too many, and we need to correct it.”

Talking to one another is key, said Ausberry.

“None of our seminary presidents are liberal,” he said, encouraging people to read what seminary leaders write and talk to the men.

Executive Committee board members debate concerns



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Rolland Slade (at podium), Executive Committee chairman, calls on an EC board member to share during the June 14 meeting in Nashville prior to the SBC Annual Meeting. Along with several minutes of debate about a desire to discuss oversight for the upcoming investigation of the EC (see story, page 1), officer and committee chair elections turned tense for the 79 members present. Slade was reelected for a second term as chairman as was vice chairman Tom Tucker, but not without confusion. Tucker was not on the SBC Nominating Committee’s list to serve again, but because he was a member during the June 14 meeting, he was eligible to be reelected, Slade explained.



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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For June 27

Explore the Bible

By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



WISDOM GAINED Job 28:12–28

Despite the wonderful glimpse of faith in chapter 19, the debates of Job with his friends have continued. And by the start of Job 28, we may be wondering if these heated debates are getting anywhere at all. But Job 28 feels rather different. It has no smooth connection with the immediate contexts before or after, no accusations, no complaints and no responses to anything said previously. In verse 12, Job asked, “Where can wisdom and understanding be found?”

Valued (12–19)

Job wants us to have no doubt of the priceless value of gaining a grasp of how this world fits together, how it works and what its foundational structure (moral and material) is.

Wisdom is at the root of all creation, set in place before the world was made (Prov. 8:22–31). If Job could only gain access to divine wisdom, then his question — Why? — would be answered. He would be able to understand why all of this had happened to him. He would not be suffering in the dark.

In verses 15–19, Job wrote of precious things this world affords. You can acquire all the gold and silver, the very best onyx, sapphire, wonderful jewels, coral, crystal and topaz. You can collect together all the riches of the whole world, and still you will have insufficient wealth to purchase wisdom or gain access to this understanding for which you long.

Hidden (20–22)

Job has piled motivation upon motivation to pursue the search for wisdom. And yet we know from verses 12–14 that this search is bound to fail. Wisdom cannot be found on the earth or in the lowest part of the ocean. In verses 20–22, Job poetically personified two realities that have been with humanity since Genesis 3, Abaddon and Death. If these longtime associates

of humanity could speak, they might have heard news of wisdom, but even these terrible personified powers would have to admit they do not know where wisdom can be found.

Job is giving us time to reflect. We have been caught up in a terrible human tension. Job longs to know why he has experienced such suffering. To understand why would be to understand the radical structure of the universe, and no greater goal can be pursued by the human seeker. He must seek wisdom, yet he will never find it by himself. Thankfully, this poem does not end with verse 22.

Found (23–27)

We are not told the location of wisdom, but our eyes are directed to the One who alone knows that place. Job pressed home his point by focusing on the weather.

When God ordered the weather systems of the earth, He also “considered,” “evaluated,” “established,” and “examined” wisdom (28:27). The imagery may be of a skilled jeweler seeing a jewel, examining it, preparing it and probing it for flaws.

Wisdom is the centerpiece of God’s crown jewels, utterly flawless and of infinite value. And God alone knows its location.

Offered (28)

This is the first time God has spoken in the book since the drama of Job 1 and 2. God directs our attention away from our agonizing questions and toward Himself. God says: “The fear of the Lord — that is wisdom. And to turn from evil is understanding.” Back in chapter 1, we saw Job fearing the Lord and turning away from evil. Now Job knows that what he was doing at the start is what he ought to have been doing, and it is what he must do.

We are not created to understand the hidden order at the heart of the universe. We are created to live by faith not by sight, bowing before God and looking to Him alone.

Bible Studies for Life

By Roy E. Ciampa, Ph.D., S. Louis and Ann W. Armstrong Professor of Religion, Samford University



STRONG IN PURITY Revelation 2:18–29

The church in Thyatira reflected both strengths and weaknesses of many churches today. The purity of our own churches will be strengthened by paying close attention to Christ’s words of both encouragement and warning to the believers in that city.

Increase your love and service for Christ. (18–19)

Christ introduces Himself in language that reminds us He has supernatural insight and power to judge and to guide His Church. The church in Thyatira stands in contrast to the church in Ephesus: The latter had strayed from its first love and was no longer doing the works it did at first, but the believers in Thyatira are doing greater works than they had previously. Christ praises the virtues He sees in their midst: their love, faithfulness, service and endurance. In these things they are models for us today as we also are called to constantly grow in our love of and service to Christ.

Do not permit immorality in the church. (20–23)

The Lord confronts the church for its toleration of false teaching, including the practice of idolatry and sexual immorality. He compares a woman in the church (who mistakenly considered herself a prophetess) to Jezebel, the wife of King Ahab, who was known for “much prostitution and sorcery” (2 Kings 9:22). Jezebel promoted the worship of Baal and persecuted Elijah and other prophets of the Lord.

Jews and Christians recognized sexual immorality and idolatry as the two most egregious vices of Greco-Roman society. Those who followed the so-called prophetess’ teaching and participated in either idolatrous or sexually immoral behavior, summarized together at the end of verse 22 as “her practices,” needed to repent (and still do). They are guilty of having committed

adultery with the woman inasmuch as they have followed her teaching and assimilated to the moral and spiritual vices of the surrounding culture.

In our society today, we have our own predominate forms of idolatry (including the idolizing of family, power, materialism, libertinism, individual expression and various kinds of political idolatry) and of sexual immorality.

Many Christians and churches today are guilty of assimilating to our sexually libertine culture, and others are guilty of failing to respond appropriately when victims report sexual misconduct within the church.

The compromises of the church in Thyatira are ones found in some of our churches as well. The false prophetess and those who have followed her teaching (“her children” in v. 23) — in that time or our own — are given the opportunity to repent. If they do not repent, they will experience the discipline of the Lord. Christ’s judgment of rebellious believers will clearly reveal that He examines minds and hearts and is therefore able to recompense each one perfectly for their obedience or lack thereof.

Remain faithful to the gospel. (24–29)

Others in Thyatira have correctly rejected the false teaching of the so-called prophetess and have recognized they are not “deep things” of God but are actually from Satan. The Lord asks nothing more of them than what they are still doing. They have done well to recognize the error. They, and we also, are called on to continue to remain faithful to the Lord and to do the works to which He has called them and us.

Christ alludes to Psalm 2 (especially Ps. 2:8–9) and indicates He will share His authority over the nations with those who remain true to Him to the end, referring to “the Morning Star” (see Rev. 22:16).

'It is God who does the work'

Problem of disunity isn't new but needs to be addressed, Rice says

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

The problem of disunity is not a new challenge for contemporary Christ followers, Willy Rice said during the convention sermon at the Southern Baptist Convention on June 16.

"Even the disciples of our Lord were known to argue among themselves," said Rice, senior pastor of Calvary Church, Clearwater, Florida.

Preaching from 1 Corinthians 3, Rice said the passage shows a church divided by doctrinal confusion. They were divided into different tribes, professing allegiance to different leaders.

The Apostle Paul

addressed the reality of their dissension, the reasons for it and what they should do about it, Rice said.

The SBC needs to consider the same things, he said, noting that "our very future may depend on it."

He suggested three places to start.

1. Be clear about our identity.

The Corinthian church needed a reminder about where their allegiance should really lie, Rice said. They dealt with an unhealthy fixation on personalities.

"There was an emergence of a kind of celebrity culture, and Paul quickly condemned it," he said, noting that one of the factors of tribalism is an



Photo by Sam Evans

Willy Rice, senior pastor of Calvary Church, Clearwater, Florida, gives the SBC convention sermon on June 16. "There's work to be done," Rice said. "Work that lasts."

unhealthy exaltation of human leaders.

Southern Baptists don't need celebrities, they need to remember "we do not own the field, and we do not own the house," Rice said. "It is God who does the work."

And the real work doesn't happen on the convention floor, he said — "it's out there."

2. Be careful about our ministry.

Some ministry is built with gold, silver and jewels — things that last, Rice said. Other ministry is built with straw, hay and wood — temporary things that will burn up in the life to come.

"Today as in every day, in this generation as in every generation, the issue of truth must be confronted," Rice said.

It's important for Southern Baptists to guard their theology, he said. "We know

where the road to theological liberalism leads — to death. ... Theological compromise is just a halfway house on the road to unbelief."

But motives matter too, Rice said. "In the account of the woman caught in adultery, the angry mob was not motivated by righteousness. They knew the sin, they knew the Scriptures, but they didn't know the Savior. I don't want to be known as angry old men with rocks in our hands."

Southern Baptists need to be careful about the aroma given off to a watching world, he said, asking if messengers thought anyone listening this week would conclude that the convention was made up of people of love.

"If you do not mirror the character of Christ, your words and your work are nothing but wood, hay and straw," Rice said.

3. We need to be certain about eternity.

Rice said Southern Baptists know eternity is coming and with it a day of both reward and ruin.

"The humblest among us, the least known among us may with gold, silver and jewels do the work of the Lord," he said. "He who labors faithfully will receive a reward."

The church has many problems, but "woe be it to that person" who works to destroy it, Rice said.

"Be careful before you take a careless sledgehammer to the house of God just to build a name for yourself," he said. "Eternity is coming, and God is watching."

Southern Baptists have embarrassed themselves in the way they've treated each other before a watching world, Rice said.

He wants to think "we're better than this, but then again, maybe we're not."

"Maybe this is who we are, and that's what makes this so hard," Rice said. "But you know what? Jesus is better than this."

Because that foundation will hold, followers of Christ will continue to work, he said. "Let us gather up the gold of the gospel ... the silver of the Scriptures and the jewels of Jesus. Let us be done with the wood, hay and straw of posturing. Let us labor for the Master. There's work to be done — work that lasts."

Resourcing bivocational pastors



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Joe Wright (left), executive director of the Bivocational and Small Church Leadership Network, chats with new participant Carl Peyton of Virginia during the group's meeting June 16 at the Music City Center in Nashville. Peyton and others said the meeting was the highlight of the week for them.

OF THE 15,726 MESSENGERS REGISTERED FOR SBC 2021,
1,151 WERE FROM ALABAMA.

Alabama Baptists at convention



Photo by Doug Rogers

Edwin Jenkins (center), senior adult minister at Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville, and his wife, Joan, visit with Lee Dymond, minister of missions at Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover.



Photo by Doug Rogers

Will Faulkenberry (left), pastor of Mosaic City Church, Huntsville, and UAH BCM student Katie Weaver assist with messenger registration.

Chris Mills (left) and his son, Shepherd, assist with registration during the SBC Annual Meeting. Shepherd especially loved the escalators at Music City Center.



Photo by Doug Rogers



Photo by Doug Rogers

Left: Disaster Relief strategist Mark Wakefield (right) chats with Ben Hayes, pastor of FBC Dadeville. **Right:** USA campus minister Beth Gardner assists with registration.



Photo by Doug Rogers



Photo by Doug Rogers

Mark Gainey, pastor of Fultondale FBC (left), speaks with Taylor Seymour, associate pastor of worship at Concord Baptist Church, Salem, and his wife, Hannah.



Photo by Doug Rogers

Keelan Adams, associate pastor of Flatline Church at Chisholm, serves on the Teller's Committee during the 2021 SBC Annual Meeting.



Photo by Sam Evans

Lonnie Burnett (left), president of University of Mobile, mingles with guests at the alumni and friends dinner June 15 in Nashville.



Photo by Doug Rogers

Buddy Champion (left), pastor of FBC Trussville, participates in a panel discussion on "Rebuilding the Church Past COVID-19" on the SBC Exhibit Hall Vision Stage.



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