

# The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.



## FREEDOM

H A P P Y I N D E P E N D E N C E D A Y

A TIME TO REFLECT ON OUR FREEDOM AND THANK GOD FOR IT



### Roe overturned; people of faith take next steps

**P**ro-life advocates are simultaneously celebrating and calling supporters to prayer and humility following the Supreme Court's historic decision overturning federal protections for abortion rights in the U.S.

Southern Baptist Convention President Bart Barber said, "Southern Baptists rejoice at the (June 24) ruling ... in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*.

"As we stated just days ago in a resolution at our 2022 Annual Meeting, in a post-Roe United States, 'We commit to stand with and pray for abortion-vulnerable women, to eliminate any perceived need for the horror of abortion,'" Barber noted.

"State-by-state, mother-by-mother, heart-by-heart we will continue our sacred work."

#### 'Significant'

Elizabeth Graham, vice president of life initiatives for the SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, added, "There will still be many women who will face an unplanned pregnancy. ... The Church has a significant opportunity to serve and support these women in crisis and their preborn children."

Lisa Hogan, executive director of Sav-A-Life in Birmingham, echoed that sentiment.

(See 'Historic,' page 6)



# Providing complete coverage

## TAB Media Group covers SBC Annual Meeting in Anaheim

A team of 12 from TAB Media Group traveled to Anaheim, California, to provide coverage of the 2022 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting in June. They released live updates from the meeting and related events through outlets such as tabonline.org, tpbonline.org, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. The team included Editor-in-Chief Jennifer Davis Rash, Carrie McWhorter, Shawn Hendricks, Debbie Campbell, Susan Stevens, Jessica Ingram, Maggie Evans, Sam Evans, Pam Holt, Grace Thornton, Van Payne and Taylor Mitchell. (TAB)



Photo by Debbie Campbell/The Alabama Baptist

**Above:** Susan Stevens shares with vendors at the convention how they can partner with TAB Media Group. **Right:** Van Payne helps cover the Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

Part of the TAB Media Group coverage team heads to baggage claim in the John Wayne Airport. Team members flew from three different states on their way to Anaheim, California.



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist



Photo by Van Payne/The Alabama Baptist

**Above:** Shawn Hendricks talks with a volunteer at Friendship Baptist Church's Crossover block party in Yorba Linda. **Below:** Debbie Campbell enjoys The Baptist Paper during her downtime in Anaheim.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

### 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 crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.**

**The Alabama Baptist will not publish a July 7 issue. The next issue will be July 14.**



# 'TOOK OUR HAPPY PLACE'

## 'Scene plays over and over in my mind,' church shooting survivor shares

By Jennifer Davis Rash  
The Alabama Baptist

Martha lost three friends June 16 when the lone guest attending a "Boomers Potluck" evening gathering pulled out a gun.

The routine senior adult fellowship at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in the Cahaba Heights neighborhood of Vestavia Hills turned deadly as the guest, 70-year-old Robert Smith, allegedly shot and killed Bart Rainey, Sarah Yeager and Jane Pounds.

Martha never saw any of it, and she's thankful.

"I'm not sure I could have handled it," she said. "I still hear the boom, boom ... boom, and I can still smell the smoke. The scene plays over and over in my mind."

With her back to the shooter, she initially wondered why someone was shooting fireworks nearby — that is until she saw the look on a friend's face sitting across from her, a friend who was looking directly at the shooter.

After the third shot, a group member — Jim Musgrove — knocked the shooter to the floor with a chair and subdued him.

St. Stephen's is located catty-corner across Overton Road from Cahaba Heights Baptist Church. John Burruss serves as rector.

The remaining members of the group scattered, hiding wherever they could. Linda Rainey sat on the floor lovingly holding her husband, Bart, in her lap as he passed.

A group of seven slipped out near the kitchen, down a long, dark hallway and out into part of the wooded area nestling the campus.

The two men and five women maneuvered their way to Overton Road and crossed over to an apartment complex. Residents walk-

ing their dog helped secure the group in the clubhouse until authorities cleared the scene four to five hours later, Martha recalled.

Both men in the group stayed on the phone with 911 as they escaped Parish

Hall (the all-purpose gathering space at the church).

"Our instinct was to run, but we didn't know if he might be behind us or if there might be more shooters outside," Martha said.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

Martha (shown here during a June 21 visit to The Alabama Baptist office in Homewood) shares how she is coping following the June 16 shooting at her church in Vestavia Hills.

Once safe, all they could do was wait and pray. "We circled up and prayed several times," she noted.

And while most of the seven were contacting family members, Martha found herself in a bit of a quandary.

Not only did she have to leave her phone behind, but she also didn't have any of her family members' numbers memorized.

"They were all in my phone so I had not worried about knowing them," she said.

However, as her phone sat unanswered inside her handbag in Parish Hall, Martha realized the number of media outlets on the scene

was growing and news was spreading quickly.

A police officer helped her contact her family, but she vowed to know a family member's number by heart

from here on out — and to always keep her handbag within reach. She's also packing up her strappy sandals, not the best shoes for a quick getaway, she said.

Martha and the other six runners went through an initial group counseling separate from the eight who watched it all play out, but now the two groups have come together as one to work through the tragedy.

And while they all have a long journey of healing ahead of them, they are determined to "take back our happy place," Martha said.

"He took our 'happy place' away from us," she said. "He took it from us, so we are going to take it back from him."



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/TAB

Funerals for Bart Rainey and Sarah Yeager were June 22 and Jane Pounds on June 23.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

Green bows can be found around the campus of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church as well as on mailboxes in the surrounding community. Here, they lead up to the entrance of Parish Hall.



# Your Voice



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

## Reflections on the 2022 SBC Annual Meeting in Anaheim

By Pastor Mat Alexander

First Baptist Church Gadsden

**T**hank you for making it possible for me to attend the Southern Baptist Convention in Anaheim last week. It's important [that] we are represented in the SBC as we continue to joyfully cooperate with other Baptist churches to get the gospel to the nations. ...

We all owe a debt of gratitude for the Sexual Abuse Task Force for the difficult work they have done over the last year. ... Our response to this

sin is of the utmost importance to me, and I believe we made some excellent first steps regarding this situation.

### Our convictions

The media and others have presented many of the issues at hand in SBC life as a crisis of convictions. Like many other denominations and organizations in our country, we certainly have our fair share of issues arising from the pressures and crosswinds that an increasingly secular

society presents to people of faith.

Some are saying the SBC is in the process of a "liberal drift." Bear in mind that in this particular context, "liberal drift" means large swaths of the convention are abandoning convictions rooted in biblical fidelity for the sake of compromise with secular thought or worldly ideals.

From my perspective, the SBC remains strongly tethered to our shared convictions as represented in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. I think much of the pointed critique

of liberal drift is unfounded, and that the accusers tend to be misguided at best and intentionally slanderous for the sake of personal gain at worst.

The misguided critique (in my estimation) comes from a wing of the SBC that tends more toward hard-line fundamentalism. Their understanding of a suite of theological and social issues is much harder and further to the right of where most Southern Baptists are.

I believe those convictions are sincerely held, and I am glad to partner with churches who disagree with me on certain issues to send missionaries to the nations, so long as we are within the bounds of the Convention's confessional statement. However, I think it is unwise to tighten our confessional framework down to our lowest common denominator.

We are intentionally confessionally broad because the nature of our cooperative work does not require a narrow confessional identity. Individual churches are welcome to make their confessional identities and positions on social issues as narrow as they please, but accusing others who disagree of "liberal drift" is disingenuous and, again, misguided.

### Holding fast to the faith

Southern Baptists are continuing to hold fast to the faith once for all delivered to the saints. ... [We] are better in person than [we] are on Twitter.

While there were some shameful moments, the general spirit of the convention was one of unity and cooperation. I am glad to be a Southern Baptist and believe good days are ahead for our churches and entities.

## Letters to the editor related to gun violence

In the wake of the tragic murders at a Texas elementary school, the president rushed out to invoke "God's name" for us to do what we know we need to do. I find it odd that while invoking "God's name" over the lost children and faculty, he simultaneously supports the wanton killing of children in the womb, including with our tax dollars. I believe it is further doubtful you would see the president or his supporters in Washington and in the media establishment, call on a return to prayer in school, daily Bible readings in the classroom, and posting of the Ten Commandments so children can be taught to respect life and the Creator of that life.

If the president wants to run

out invoking "God's name" for us to do something, I suggest he could start by calling on his party to reject its radical abortion platform, to embrace life and biblical family values that children need, so they don't grow up confused, lost and angry.

Whether it's use of guns at a school or grocery store, driving vehicles into a crowded parade or sidewalk or flying planes into buildings in order to kill innocent people, the common denominator is that of a heart problem.

As the song says, we cannot demand God to intervene in these times of tragedy, when as a society we "have asked Him to leave."

**Don Wallace**  
Tuscaloosa, Ala.

A proper initial response to mass murder in classrooms is to require every student to memorize and recite the 10 Commandments.

This is a spiritual problem, a human behavior control problem, not a gun control problem, and requires a spiritual solution.

Why not murder your family, students, coworkers and anyone else you choose?

The reason is because God has commanded against it.

Without recognizing God's existence, authority and commands, we have no basis for avoiding any sin. Love is a choice. Every friend was once a stranger you chose to love.

**Bob Cosby**  
Birmingham, Ala.

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“If God is calling you, He will provide the resources.”

TOM BOSTON

*Former International Mission Board field support missionary*

“In many ways it’s harder to be an evangelist than a pastor. It requires solid faith, trust that God will provide everything, from finances to speaking engagements to effectiveness in ministry, and to a spiritually, mentally and physically healthy family,” said **international evangelist** and Southern Baptist **Sammy Tippit** of San Antonio.

“Native people are still here; they’re still strong; they still have a voice. We may be an insignificant population numbers wise, but we’re not insignificant in the eyes of God. He sees every single one of us, no matter what our background is,” said **Josh LeadingFox**, **pastor** of Immo-kalee First Seminole Baptist Church in Florida.

“What we’re seeing is a hunger for God’s word. They respond to authenticity. They’re hungry for the truth,” said **Garrett Wagoner**, who has served in ministry 18 years, the last two as **pastor of discipleship and spiritual formation** at Five-Stone Community Church in Garland, Texas.

“There is no greater honor than to live like Jesus, even in our suffering,” said **Chad Murrell**, **pastor** of First Southern Baptist Church in Scottsdale, Arizona.

“While Paul urges believers to keep away from those leading unruly lives, we must not lose sight of his caution in verse 15: ‘Yet do not regard him as an enemy but admon-

ish him as a brother.’ The object is restoration, not judgment,” said **Joe McKeever**, **pastor, writer and cartoonist** from Ridgeland, Mississippi.

“While we can, and should, encourage others to prepare for Christ’s return, we cannot prepare for them,” said **Will Kynes**, **associate professor of biblical studies**, Samford University.

“I’ve traveled with students all over the world, and I’ve loved seeing them understand their role in God’s world, that God can use them in ways they didn’t think they could ever be used,” said **Mike Nuss**, retiring **director of collegiate and student ministries** for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

## What we do matters more than we know

We as a society have gotten really good at being “fine.” Honest? Not so much. But definitely reluctant to show weakness. We see someone visibly upset or even angry, and we consider them to be more unstable than someone who is calm, quiet and collected. The truth could be the battle they are fighting is internal and the pressure is building every day.

I envision someone with three sealed buckets. Two are leaking and one is sealed tight. The owner sees the leaks and tends to them assuming all is well with the one that isn’t leaking. Until one day there is a great explosion, and his shop where he stored the buckets is destroyed.

What the owner didn’t understand was that the pressure was building in all three buckets. Two were trying to let it out by leaking. The third was desperately trying to contain the pressure, until one day it was too much and overcame the bucket.

The story is not to blame the owner. It is to remind us that just because things seem fine, they may not be. I fear many of us are too caught up in our own worlds to see those reaching out or maybe not reaching out, all around us.

What can we do? Love others. Pray for wisdom and sensitivity toward others. Think about those who were once in your circle and may have fallen out somewhere along the way, or someone who isn’t in any one’s circle.

Maybe you can invite them to be in yours. Or, just look people in the eye and speak, letting them know that they are noticed by someone.

We won’t know this side of heaven how much what we do matters, but I have no doubt it matters more than we could ever imagine.

**Jason Davis**  
Spruce Pine, Ala.

## From the Twitterverse

### @DanielDickard

There is a false notion that assumes prayer is an exhibition to the real game of preaching and teaching. When prayer is ineffectual, the pulpit is impotent.

### @SpenceSpencer01

The more time I spend reading my Bible (not studying to dissect; just reading it through) the more I see the continuity of all of Scripture. It is one huge story with one great God from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22.

### @ethicist

God’s moral laws are fulfilling, for they are the song you were created to sing.

### @brocraige

I haven’t gone to Disneyland or taken in a ballgame, but I have attended a gathering of brothers and sisters who’ve made some crucial

decisions that are going to take us forward. I have enjoyed immensely the fellowship of friends I only get to see in June of every year.

### @JaredCBurt

Here’s how I would describe the @SB CPastorsConf: a humble focus on the Word.

It’s not about impressive personalities, but about the power of Scripture & us humbling ourselves before God as students of His Word. My understanding & love for Colossians has grown.

### @philpnation

Grateful for the work God is doing through @IMB\_SBC missionaries. We are blessed to have you serving around the world. May the Lord bless you and @DrPaulChitwood as he leads IMB.

### @dandarling

God calls sinners. God saves sin-

ners. God moves in the world through sinners. That’s good news for us.

### @CatherineRenfro

Many of us have a desire to lead people to Jesus, but a fear of starting gospel conversations. Be bold. Be courageous. Be willing. And watch Jesus do what only He can do in and through you. #Jesus-ChangesEverything

### @jasonkeithallen

“A time will come when instead of shepherds feeding the sheep, the church will have clowns entertaining the goats.” —Charles Spurgeon

### @claysmith79

I don’t believe in karma. But I do believe in sowing and reaping.

### @richardblackaby

Never underestimate the power of prayer. It can enter any distant war zone, president’s office or hospital room.



# 3 stories you should know

## Historic Supreme Court decision

(continued from page 1)

Hogan urged continued prayer for staff and volunteers at pregnancy resource centers and for the clients they serve.

Some pro-choice groups were calling for protests and even violence following the court's ruling.

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall said in a statement that any act of vandalism or violence against any crisis pregnancy center, church or other pro-life entity in retaliation for the Dobbs' decision will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

### Mississippi response

Mississippi Attorney General Lynn Fitch, who oversaw her state's pursuit of a high court ruling in the Dobbs case, said in a statement pro-life support-

ers will play a "crucial" role in shaping the conversation and re-action in a post-Roe world.

"We know the life movement supports mothers. But abortion advocates do not want the American people to hear that," she said. "We must put our concern for the dignity of the woman front and center. Especially those who are in the most challenging circumstances — abusive relationships, without family support, in poverty, without job skills or education.

"[H]ow we talk about life in these crucial weeks following the opinion matters too. We need to react ... with humility, hope and respect. ... We need to show that we are ready to lead with civility ... in building this new culture of life that will ... promote life." (Carrie B. McWhorter)

## University of Mobile works to help nursing shortage

The University of Mobile is enrolling students now for a fully online master of science in nursing education. The program prepares registered nurses to meet the critical need for nursing educators who will train the next generation.

The four-semester program is 100% online and may be completed while students work full time.

Students may select the focus of their practicum experience, allowing them to apply current work experience to meet degree requirements for clinical hours.

Nursing educators who complete the program will be qualified for positions in various health care and academic settings.

The deadline to apply for the 2022 fall semester is July 15.

Learn more at [umobile.edu/msneducation](http://umobile.edu/msneducation). (UM)

## High Court rules public funds OK for religious education

In a 6–3 decision, the Supreme Court ruled June 21 that state programs providing money for public school tuition cannot discriminate against religious schools.

The case, *Carson v. Makin*, asked justices to decide whether a state program in Maine that made taxpayer money available to families who live in remote areas without public high schools could continue to exclude sectarian schools, defined as those promoting a particular belief system and teaching "through the lens of this faith."

Writing for the majority, Chief Justice John Roberts said Maine's program "promotes stricter separation of church and state than the federal Constitution requires."

The tuition program is not neutral, he said, and "is discrimination against religion." (Compiled by TAB)

# Persecuted church

## Ugandan father slays daughter on day she accepts Christ

KAMPALA, Uganda — A woman who accepted Christ as her Savior was killed by her father for leaving Islam.

Hawa Amoti, 28, of Nansana in Wakiso District had been having dreams about Jesus Christ and asked a Christian neighbor for information May 29, Morning Star News reported.

Amoti accepted Christ as her Savior and went to church that day with the neighbor.

She returned home to discover her family had heard she was seen worshipping Jesus at church. Amoti's father, Haji Shariifu Agaba, stabbed her in the eyes.

Neighbors rescued her and took her to a hospital, where she died, Morning Star reported.

Approximately 12% of Uganda's population

is Muslim. Its constitution and laws allow for freedom of religion, including converting from one faith to another, but Christian churches increasingly have received threats of violence, and some converts have been attacked, killed or excommunicated by Muslim family members, World Atlas reported.



Photo courtesy of Morning Star News

## Burmese military nearly destroys at least 320 houses in Christian village

NAY PYI TAW, Burma — The Burmese military burned almost all residences May 20 in a predominantly Christian village in the country's Sagaing region.

In the raid that lasted more than four hours, the Tatmadaw (Burmese military) torched at least 320 of the 350 houses in Chaung Yoe village, reported the relief group Barnabas Fund.

Two neighboring communities also were targeted.

About 1,500 Christians lived in Chaung Yoe. Hundreds fled to safety, and two villagers were beaten, according to sources.

Open Doors, a ministry serving the persecuted church, said government forces target Christians and churches and have slain some pastors and Christian aid workers.

Attacks on Christians have increased since a military coup in February 2021.

Burma (also known as Myanmar) is No. 12 on Open Doors' 2022 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

# Alabama news

## OBITUARIES

► Leader of student ministries at **White Springs Baptist Church, Rainbow City, Randolph “Randy” Eugene Smith**, 46, died unexpectedly June 10.

A Birmingham native, Smith was a graduate of Hewitt-Trussville High School (1994), University of Mobile (1997) and Southwestern Seminary (2001).

For the last 21 years Smith has served in collegiate and student ministry in Texas, Tennessee, Florida, Mississippi and Alabama (including six years at First Baptist Church Hokes Bluff). He was active in Etowah Association and played bass in a praise band.

He is survived by his wife of 22 years, Tiffany; two children; his mother, Cecilia Smith; two brothers; and grandmother Joy Morris.



SMITH

## BALDWIN ASSOCIATION

► **Jeff Gardner** has been named replanting pastor of **Daphne Baptist Church**. He previously served as pastor of St. Elmo First Baptist Church for almost 12 years. A Mississippi native, Gardner holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Mississippi State University and a master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary.



GARDNER

He has spent eight years as a minister of education in Alabama; 18 years as a pastor in Mississippi, Florida and Alabama and seven years in part-time youth and music ministry. His wife, Beth, serves as Baptist campus minister at the University of South Alabama. They have two children.

## BLOUNT ASSOCIATION

► **Pleasant View Missionary Baptist Church, Holly Pond**, will host the Dixie Echoes from Pensacola, Florida, on Sunday, July 10 at 5 p.m. Summer revival begins Sunday, July 17 at 5 p.m. with the Kellys from Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, singing. Services will be held Monday, July 18 through Friday, July 22. Morning services will begin at 10:30 a.m. followed by lunch. Evening services start at 7 p.m. There will be a time for prayer at 6:45 p.m. each evening during the week. Andrew Allred is the guest evangelist.

## CLARKE ASSOCIATION

► **Peniel Baptist Church, Jackson**, celebrated its 150th anniversary June 12. Jerrol Hare (right) of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a plaque to Pastor Fred Odom

(left). Following the worship service the church enjoyed a fellowship meal. Peniel hosted the first associational annual meeting when Clarke Association was formed in 1884.

Photo courtesy of Jim Cox/  
The Clarke County Democrat

## COFFEE COUNTY ASSOCIATION

► **Bethany Baptist Church, New Brockton**, will host community fireworks July 3 at 7 p.m. There will be music, food and games. Participants are encouraged to bring lawn chairs.

## CONECUH ASSOCIATION

► **Belleville Baptist Church** will host a revival Wednesday, July 13, at 6 p.m. Dale Brown, pastor of Danielville Baptist Church, Honoraville, will preach.



ADAMS

The youth group will provide music.

## COVINGTON ASSOCIATION

► **Kyle Adams** is the new pastor of **Mill Creek Baptist Church, Andalusia**, where he served as deacon for 10 years. He and his wife, Tori, have three children.

## FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

► **County Line Baptist Church, Trafford**, celebrated its 125th anniversary May 22.

Pastor Brandon Burroughs preached, and Vickie Wallis provided a presentation of church photos.

Mark209 from Nashville provided special music, and worship leader, Joe Wallis, led congregational singing and shared a solo. Steve Sellers, interim director of missions, presented plaques from the association and the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. He also delivered greetings from the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes and thanked the church for its giving.

“As I told the congregation I am standing on the shoulders of all the faithful pastors that have come through County Line Baptist Church, and that is something that humbled me as we celebrated this event,” Burroughs said.

“We have members that have only been with



Facebook photo

the church for two months and we also have members who have been with the church for over 70 years. It was amazing seeing both groups come together and celebrate what God has done in the past, but also looking forward to what God has for our church in the future.”

Families of former pastors were welcomed, and long-time members were recognized. Lunch followed the service.

## ESCAMBIA ASSOCIATION

► **Moyeville Baptist Church, Brewton**, celebrated its 100th anniversary June 5. Pastor Bill Stuckey (right) preached and shared some of the church's history. Former pastor Mike



Photo courtesy of Lonette Berg

Hutto shared memories of his time at MBC. Hutto along with his family shared a song with the congregation as did Stuckey. Congregational singing was led by Jessica Easterling.

“The celebration went very well,” said Stuckey. “It felt like a family reunion where people got to see friends and how the church has changed and grown over the years.”

Lonette Berg (left) of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and Larry Patterson, director of missions for Escambia Association, presented plaques.

## WALKER ASSOCIATION

► **Parrish First Baptist Church** recognized longtime minister **Charles Underwood** on May 15. He was ordained at FBC 60 years ago on May 6, 1962. Since that time he has led 14 churches in three states, including FBC. At age 88 he continues to preach.

Underwood said he had preached at more than 50 churches in the association and led revivals at more than 30 of the association's congregations. He served in the U.S. Army during the end of the Korean War and was living in Arlington, Virginia, when he was saved and baptized. He holds a degree from the University of Alabama.

The deacons presented a plaque from the church, and Pastor Mark Kimbrell read certificates from Walker Association and the State Board of Missions.

He has three children, four grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.



Photo courtesy of Parrish FBC



Willie McLaurin speaks during the Executive Committee report at the 2022 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting.

# 'Great Commission mandate'

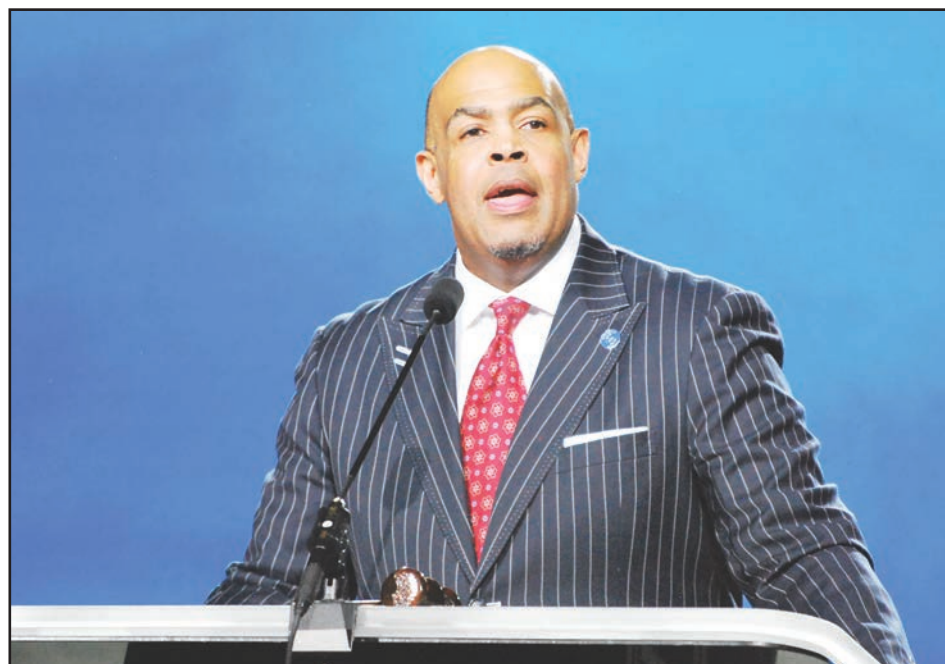


Photo by Taylor Mitchell/The Alabama Baptist

## SBC EC leader urges unity, love 'despite our disagreements'

By Jennifer Davis Rash  
The Alabama Baptist

In his first report to messengers as interim president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, Willie McLaurin urged Southern Baptists to guard the denomination's calling.

"Southern Baptists, I believe Jesus Christ is telling us that our orders remain as directed, clear orders that define a clear mission, the Great Commission," he said.

"Our Great Commission mandate is just as real today as when Jesus proclaimed it," said McLaurin, who added that partnership is key.

"We are called to discover God's plan and join God in His work [and] we can accomplish so much more for the glory of God when [we] walk together in unity.

"Throughout the Bible we see God's people working together," he noted.

"We ... live in a time of uncertainty and deep hurt over a large range of issues, [but] are we willing to move toward each other and not away from each other ... to lay aside our arguments and choose

to love each other despite our disagreements?

"We are not competitors ... we are colleagues pulling together in the same direction on the same side of the road," he said.

"We have one enemy, not our brother or sister, but Satan, and he's already been defeated on Calvary's cross."

Encouraging Southern Baptists to work to build trust within the denomination, McLaurin said, "It takes all of us working together,

takes a faith and focus on God. ... Trust within our denomination can be built."

### 'Be concerned'

"We must be concerned with loving God with all our hearts, concerned with how we love one another, how we love a lost world, that we confess our sins against God and confess our sins against one another," McLaurin added.

"It has been a great joy serving as your interim president and CEO. I've sought to lead with a basic philosophy that every decision will be Scripture fed and Spirit led."

Part 2 of the 2022 SBC Annual Meeting coverage.

To read part 1, see the June 23 issue and read more online at [tabonline.org/sbc2022](http://tabonline.org/sbc2022).

## Mark Clifton to bivocational pastors: Don't 'tap out'

Mark Clifton, senior director of replanting at the North American Mission Board, said he knows those moments are going to come.

"We all have those times, those seasons, when we question everything," Clifton said to those at the Bivocational and Small Church Leadership Network luncheon held June 15 in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting in Anaheim.

"One of the strongest things we can do for one another is just encourage

each other not to tap out, not to quit, not to give up," he said.

### 'Look to the cross'

In the face of unrealized expectations, disappointment or depression, "look to the cross," Clifton advised. "Don't look to a denomination. Don't look to your strength. Don't look to anything other than the resurrected Christ."

Willie McLaurin, interim president of the SBC Executive Committee, echoed Clifton's point

of the importance of encouragement, adding that church leaders who want to see growth must get outside the walls of the church and into their zip codes.

Every pastor, "whether he is bivocational, trivocational or quadrovocational ... is called and commanded to move beyond the walls of the church," McLaurin said, urging leaders to serve the community

where God has put them regardless of the circumstances.



CLIFTON

Outside the walls of the church, "There's a teenage girl who is pregnant and she's thinking about aborting that baby," he said. "[There's] somebody who is addicted to drugs and thinking about taking their own life, a couple who is struggling and talking about divorce.

"We are called to take the gospel to the nations and to our neighborhoods," he said. "If we don't, we will become keepers of the aquarium rather than fishers of men."

Joe Wright, BSCLN ex-

ecutive director, called the speakers "the best of the best" for a group that represents a large percentage of Southern Baptist pastors. The BSCLN does not require membership dues and is an auxiliary of the SBC.

In a brief business session, the group affirmed three new board members.

Wright noted the organization's website has many free resources for all leaders. (The Alabama Baptist)

For more information or resources, visit [bscln.net](http://bscln.net).



# ‘Sharing help and hope’

## Two Alabama couples among those commissioned during IMB Sending Celebration

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

For years, it was a “joy” for Ben Ward to serve as a missions professor and pastor who trained and sent missionaries to the nations.

Now he’s going himself. He and his wife, Lindsey, and their three children are headed to South America to serve in theological training and church planting.

“Please pray for our family as we adjust to new language and culture,” Lindsey asked Southern Baptist Convention messengers during the International Mission Board’s sending celebration June 14.

The family is being sent by Highview Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky.

### 52 new missionaries

The Wards were among 52 new missionaries sent out during the celebration which took place during the June 14 morning session of the SBC Annual Meeting.

“These 52 will join the roughly 3,600 missionaries and their 2,850 children who are living among the

nations and sharing help and hope in Jesus’ name as your missionaries,” said Paul Chitwood, IMB president. “They’re steadfastly present among peoples and in places where the good news has yet to be preached.”

### Alabama connection

Also commissioned were two Alabama couples, members of The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham and The Church at Shelby Crossings in Calera. They will serve in North Africa and the Middle East. Their faces, names and voices were concealed for security.

Chitwood said he couldn’t think of any better way to start the annual meeting “than to do what we’ve been doing for 177 years — sending out missionaries.”

Southern Baptists have sent out roughly 25,000 missionaries during IMB’s history. But the work is far from done, he said — 7,000 people groups around the world are still unreached, and 3,000 of those have yet to be engaged with the gospel.

“Every day 157,690 people will die apart from Christ and spend



Photo by Van Payne/The Alabama Baptist

A woman stands behind a screen to protect her identity in preparation for her service overseas with the International Mission Board and shares with convention messengers how the Lord brought her to commit her life to missions.

eternity in hell,” Chitwood said.

That number is “heartbreaking and almost paralyzing,” he said.

“They need us, Southern Baptists. They need you. This is why we came together. And this is why we must stay together,” Chitwood said.

“Were you to ask me why the Southern Baptist Convention exists, this is why the Southern Baptist Convention exists. The Lord in His kindness has allowed us to come to an understanding because of our belief in His Word that there is a solution to the world’s greatest problem, and we know what it is. It is the gospel.”

### Weight of responsibility

Wyatt Yaeger, one of the new missionaries who was sent during the celebration, feels the weight of that responsibility in a different way.

“I came to faith from Buddhism,” he said. He and his now wife, Wren, met while they were both serving with IMB in South Asia.

“We’re praying God uses those

experiences to draw people to the gospel,” he said. The couple, sent by Imago Dei Church in Raleigh, North Carolina, are moving with their son to open a coffee shop among a Central Asian people group with little access to the gospel.

For Sarah Bennett moving overseas will be going home in a way.

She’s taught English to refugees in sub-Saharan Africa for the past three years.

“One of my most memorable moments growing up was going to [Girls in Ac-

tion] camp and hearing about how God was using people around the world and how He also desired to use me for His glory,” said Bennett, who is being sent by Southcrest Church in Lubbock, Texas. “Please pray for my family and myself as I move back to Africa.”

**EDITOR’S NOTE** — Some names have been changed for security reasons.



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist

Eli and Ellie, members of The Church at Shelby Crossings in Calera, are two of 52 missionaries being commissioned at the IMB Sending Celebration, along with another Alabama couple from The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham.

To view a photo gallery from the IMB Sending Celebration, visit [tabonline.org/sending-celebration](http://tabonline.org/sending-celebration).



# Resolution calls for consistent laws on pastoral sexual abuse

By Eric Reed  
Illinois Baptist

**M**essengers to the 2022 Southern Baptist Convention called on lawmakers in all 50 states to enact legislation creating uniform definitions for pastoral sexual abuse, and they gave Baptists a tool for urging the legislation.

Resolution 5 “On Consistent Laws Regarding Pastoral Sexual Abuse” was part of a package of actions on the agenda. Other agenda items included the 288-page report from the Sexual Abuse Task Force on the Executive Committee’s handling of abuse claims and recommendations adopted by the messengers, including the creation of a database to track offenders and a season of lament and apology to abuse survivors.

## A movement

“We do see this as part of a movement that goes from state to state,” said newly elected SBC President Bart Barber regarding the development of consistent laws. Barber also served as chair of the 2022 Resolutions Committee.

While resolutions may not appear to carry the same weight as floor votes requiring specific studies and actions by SBC entities, Southern Baptists have used resolutions to state what they believe. And in cases such as this, resolutions sometimes give force to local movements seeking to bring change to the culture.

Barber was supportive of Resolution 5 based on his own experience as a pastor urging passage of a “shield law” in Texas to give legal protection to churches sharing information about cases of abuse. A bill he drafted was supported by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and a private school coalition. Texas lawmakers approved it unanimously.



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist  
Griffin Gullledge, pastor of Madison Baptist Church in Georgia and author of Resolution 5, speaks in favor of the resolution from the floor at the annual meeting in Anaheim, California.

He pointed out that a Southern Baptist wrote the bill, the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission “translated [it] from ‘preach-erese’ to ‘lawyerese’” and a state representative who is a Southern Baptist ushered it through the approval process in the Texas legislature.

“We would be delighted to see not just Southern Baptist churches, but people of good will across the country” join the movement

to create consistent legislation. That would prevent an offender in one state from moving to a state with lesser penalties without consequence, Barber said.

## ‘No exception’

The legislation would clarify the illegality of pastors engaging in sexual acts with people under their care, despite age or consent. The resolution says, “These laws make no exception for the consent of the victim since pastors and ministers are in

a position of trust which is broken when the one in authority engages in a sexual act with the victim.”

The resolution also advocates legislation to shield churches from civil liability

when they share information about alleged abuse with other organizations.

Such laws would also aid in the legal protection needed to contribute information to a national database of offenders in SBC churches and could assuage

concerns from some church leaders about legal exposure from sharing information on claims of abuse.

Barber said he hopes the government will come alongside church leaders to end “a patchwork [of] contradictory and inconsistent laws.”

“That’s advantageous for us to help prevent abuse,” Barber said, and as the resolution says, “to protect the innocent within the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention from wolves in shepherd’s clothing.”

# Southern Baptists approve 9 resolutions

By Shawn Hendricks  
The Alabama Baptist

**T**he Southern Baptist Convention Resolutions Committee considered 29 resolutions this year.

It submitted nine to messengers during the SBC Annual Meeting in Anaheim, California. All nine resolutions were approved.

The approved resolutions included the following:

## 1. On the Missions Field in Rural America

Messengers voted to express commitment to and recognition of the missions field “in rural places.”

## 2. On the Prosperity Gospel

Messengers denounced the teaching of the prosperity gospel.

## 3. On the War in Ukraine

Responding to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, messengers voted to “strongly condemn” Russia’s acts of war against a sovereign nation.

## 4. On Religious Liberty, Forced Conversion and the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative Investigative Report

Messengers voted to denounce the methods of “forced assimilation and conversion” of Native Americans, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiian children from 1819 to 1969. Messengers adopted this resolution in response to the Bureau of Indian Affairs Investigative Report released in May 2022 that documented and recorded that the United States “maliciously targeted” Native Americans in order to “dispossess these people groups from their native lands.”

## 5. On Support for Consistent Laws Regarding Pastoral Sexual Abuse

Messengers voted to encourage lawmakers in every state to “pass laws that would provide consistent definitions and classification of sexual abuse by pastors, as sexual abuse committed by pastors constitutes a clear abuse of authority and trust.” Southern Baptists agreed to “encourage lawmakers in every state to pass laws that would empower churches by shielding them from civil liability.”

## 6. On Lament and Repentance for Sexual Abuse

Messengers voted to publicly lament the harm to survivors of sexual abuse caused by the convention’s actions and inactions documented in the report released in May by the SBC Sexual Abuse Task Force.

## 7. On the Anticipation of a Historic Moment in the Pro-life Movement

Messengers voted to encourage all Southern Baptists “to pray for the overturning of the disastrous precedent set in Roe v. Wade and Planned Parenthood v. Casey.” The resolution also affirmed the work of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission on this issue.

## 8. On the Imago Dei and the Helpful Content Submitted in Several Resolutions

Messengers voted to “affirm the dignity and value of every person as created in God’s image.”

## 9. On Appreciation for the City of Anaheim

Messengers expressed appreciation to the meeting’s host city.



# Messenger's requests

## Complete list of motions proposed at SBC Annual Meeting and status updates

**S**outhern Baptists proposed 37 motions from the floor of the convention's 2022 Annual Meeting. Most were referred to various entities or groups for consideration, one even going to the soon-to-be named Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force.

Ten motions were ruled not in order because they directed an entity, were in conflict with the convention's governing documents or were submitted incorrectly (see column 4, this page).

Three of the 37 (not listed below) were not allowed and are different from being ruled "not in order."

Two were ruled out of order, one because it related to a resolution and the other because the person making the motion had already made a motion and was supposed to wait until all others had a chance to present a motion. One was "not well received" because the subject was already under review — Saddleback Church.

► A motion by Joshua Scruggs (North Carolina) to abolish the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission was allowed to go to a vote but was defeated by messengers.

► The motion referred to the ARITF was made by Greg Davidson (California) and calls for full support of the sexually abused.

The following motions were determined to deal with the internal operations or ministries of convention entities.

Under SBC Bylaw 26B, these motions are automatically referred to the appropriate entities for consideration and to report to the 2023 annual meeting in New Orleans.

### Referred to seminaries

► *Referred to Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary* — A motion by Michelle Lesley (Louisiana) that an investigation be made into a case of mishandling sexual abuse by employees of Southeastern.

► *Referred to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary* — A motion by Dwight McKissic (Texas) that names of buildings, scholarships and other items at Southern connected to slaveholders be removed.



Photo by Van Payne/The Alabama Baptist  
Parker Roberts, pastor of Mount Moriah Baptist Church in Troy, makes a motion during the SBC Annual Meeting to amend the Baptist Faith & Message. It was referred to the SBC Executive Committee.

► *Referred to all the seminaries* — A motion by Ryan Ogle (Tennessee) that a seminary library science program be considered by the Council of Seminary Presidents.

### Referred to SBC EC

The following motions were referred to the SBC Executive Committee for consideration and to report to the 2023 annual meeting:

► Scott Smith (Indiana) requested an internal evaluation of SBC EC organizational structure.

► Parker Roberts (Alabama) moved to add a sentence to the Baptist Faith & Message about Scripture holding the ultimate authority.

► Timothy Livingston (Oklahoma) moved for a change in the bylaws relating to the resolutions committee.

► Bill Tackett (Oklahoma) moved Bylaw 26b be amended.

► Scott Frady (North Carolina) moved to require all churches to adhere to BF&M 2000.

► Craig Hartzog (Georgia) moved for messengers to be vetted and monitored at the local association for participation in SBC annual meetings at remote locations.

► Tom Rush (Georgia) moved that EC cease to use executive sessions.

► Michael Law (Virginia) moved the convention amend its constitution to read "does not affirm ... a woman as pastor of any kind."

► Matt Dunn (Missouri) moved a pro-Israel amendment be added to BF&M.

► Samuel Gilliam (Louisiana) moved trustees' contact information be published and accessible.

► Toby Brogden (Tennessee) moved EC help all cooperating churches have a voice and vote at the 2023 annual meeting.

► Nathan Stuller (Illinois) moved the SBC Constitution be amended to add a "transparency and accountability" section.

► Sherri Martin (Florida) moved that EC study the impact of waiving attorney-client privilege.

► Rob Collingsworth (Texas) moved a work group be formed to study the editorial independence of Baptist Press.

► Mark Spence (Colorado) moved the Resolutions Committee be suspended for the sake of unity.

► Jerry Watts (Massachusetts) moved a legal study be made about the polity and relationship of the larger body of messengers and the entity trustees.

► Jay Adkins (Louisiana) moved the position of recording secretary no longer have a seat on EC.

► Jason Sampler (Georgia) moved Bylaw 15 be amended regarding trustee selection and who can serve.

► Keith Myer (Maryland) moved a day be added to the SBC Calendar to raise awareness of abuse.

### Ruled not in order

Motions ruled not in order were:

► David Um (Massachusetts) moved that a task force be formed to audit use of funds by NAMB.

► William Hester (Oklahoma) moved a more transparent vetting process be developed for those nominated to serve as EC trustees.

► Mike Haines (Oklahoma) moved executive salaries from all SBC entities be made public.

► Corey Smith (Louisiana) moved Lifeway provide teaching resources related to the covenant sign of the rainbow to counteract the promotion of the LGBTQ agenda.

► John Jones III (Missouri) moved IMB provide a method for exempting missionaries from actions of conscience, such as receiving vaccines.

► Matthew Boyle (South Carolina) moved the convention develop and fund a mental health commission.

► Jacob Jackson (Virginia) moved that SBC "equip, fund and support sidewalk missionaries (for the unborn)."

The following motions were ruled not in order as they direct the president or make a request beyond the scope of the president's authority.

► Brant Frost (Georgia) moved for the formation of a task force to study all the governing documents of the convention and its entities.

► Christopher Whitney (Arizona) moved the new SBC president obtain all the records from Guidepost Solutions and turn them over to proper law enforcement.

Also ruled not in order because it wasn't in the form of a motion:

► Kirby Shepard (Montana) moved "we of the SBC boycott Disney Corp. and all affiliates." (TAB)



# 'Al's boys' raise money for Mission:Dignity

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

At the end of the Southern Baptist Convention Pastors Conference on June 13, Al Jackson preached about the significance of a group of not-well-known people at the end of Colossians.

Until recently, Jackson, pastor emeritus of Lakeview Baptist Church in Auburn, was similarly unknown to Matt Henslee, the man who invited him to preach at the conference. Henslee, associational mission strategist for Collin Baptist Association in Texas, served as president of the 2022 SBC Pastors Conference.

## Online campaign

"Al's boys" got online and "spammed our nominating form so that I would be introduced to this man that I did not know, a man who loves Jesus Christ, loves his church and has finished the race well as a pastor," said Henslee.

Al's boys — those are the "300-plus preacher boys who call Al Jackson their pastor," said Barry Holcomb, pastor

of Calvary Baptist Church in Belmont, Mississippi.

"I am one of many whose life is forever touched by the ministry of Lakeview and our pastor, Al Jackson," Holcomb wrote in a column in The Alabama Baptist in September 2021.

Jackson retired from Lakeview in October 2021 after more than 40 years.

During his time in that role he gathered weekly with what he called his "preaching class" — men he mentored and trained for the ministry.

To honor Jackson and his investment in young ministers, Holcomb and two other men who were part of those classes — Ryan Johnson, pastor of Agape Baptist Church in Scottsboro, and Scott Ferguson, pastor of First Baptist Church LaFayette — began raising money in his name for Mission:Dignity, a ministry of GuideStone Financial Resources, which assists retirement-age ministers and their widows in need.

The SBC PC collected money in Jackson's honor for Mission:Dignity.

For more information about Mission:Dignity, visit [guidestone.org/Mission-Dignity](http://guidestone.org/Mission-Dignity).

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Place a classified ad for \$1 per word. For more information call 205-870-4720, ext. 102, or email [ads@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:ads@thealabamabaptist.org).

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Ryans Creek Baptist Church seeks God's man to be our pastor. The church is located in Brushy Pond near Smith Lake. Baptist pastors interested may mail your resumé to the church at 24849 County Road 222, Bremen, AL 35033, or email to: [RCBC35033@gmail.com](mailto:RCBC35033@gmail.com). ATTN: Search Committee.

#### PASTOR

First Baptist Church Irvington, is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resumé to: [DARBREL59@gmail.com](mailto:DARBREL59@gmail.com).

#### PASTOR

Clayton Baptist Church, P.O. Box 4, Clayton, AL 36016 (Barbour County) is accepting resumé for pastor. Please email resumé to: [claytonbaptist@bellsouth.net](mailto:claytonbaptist@bellsouth.net) by June 30.

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Shelby (Shelby, Alabama) is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: [fbc141891@gmail.com](mailto:fbc141891@gmail.com).

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Northside Baptist Church, Selma, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please submit resumé to: [Northsidebaptist2021@gmail.com](mailto:Northsidebaptist2021@gmail.com).

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Paden Baptist Church, Gadsden, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please submit resumé to: [padenbaptist-church@yahoo.com](mailto:padenbaptist-church@yahoo.com) or to: Paden Baptist Church, 900 Padenreich Ave., Gadsden, AL 35903.

#### ASSOCIATE PASTOR — WORSHIP & EDUCATION

Linden Baptist Church is now accepting resumé for the position of associate pastor. This is a full-time position. The primary focuses of this position will be worship leadership and education, though there will be other responsibilities. For a complete job description and to apply online, visit [lindenbaptist.org](http://lindenbaptist.org) and click the "Assoc. Pastor Application" button. To apply by mail, send resumé and cover letter to: P.O. Box 480776, Linden, AL 36748. Applications will be received until July 15.

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#### FAMILY PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Atmore, Alabama, is seeking a full-time family pastor. He will serve as "second-chair" to the pastor with oversight of volunteers within age-group and small-group ministries, having direct responsibility over student ministry. Resumé may be submitted to: [keving@fbcatmore.org](mailto:keving@fbcatmore.org).

#### YOUTH PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Hokes Bluff is seeking a godly, dynamic part-time youth pastor. Interested applicants should send resumé to: [secretary@fbchb.org](mailto:secretary@fbchb.org).

### OTHER POSITIONS

#### IL BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOME AND FAMILY SERVICES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

IL Baptist Children's Home and Family Services (BCHFS) is looking for an executive director. See qualifications and standards at <http://www.bchfs.com/employment>. BCHFS is a Licensed Child Welfare Agency whose mission is to "Provide Christ-centered services that protect, heal and restore." The agency has a rich history of providing care for children and families in crisis for over 100 years. BCHFS has an annual budget of \$3.9 million and provides care for children and adults through various programs including residential care, maternity care, adoption services, counseling services and a pregnancy resource clinic. To apply, send a letter of interest and resumé to: Eric Bramlet, Search Committee Chair, [ericbramlet@kogerbramletlaw.com](mailto:ericbramlet@kogerbramletlaw.com).

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Terry Billings used to spend his life mud racing in his old drinking truck, until one day everything turned on a dime — in Walmart. Now he and his truck have both had a transformation — and have found a very different purpose. This season, the "Stories" podcast shares his story. TAB's Grace Thornton writes and produces the shows. Listen at [tabonline.org/stories](http://tabonline.org/stories) or wherever you listen to podcasts.

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TAB Highlights is an email newsletter delivered 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. To sign up, email [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org).



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The conference will be led by Ken Allen, director of LeaderCare; Rob Jackson, director of Church Health; and Ted Traylor, pastor of Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola, Fla. During the year following the conference, each of the topics (Person, Pastor, Preacher and Pathfinder) will have their own stand-alone day of training.

For more information, visit [alsbom.org/ilc](http://alsbom.org/ilc) or contact Kim Britton, [kbritton@alsbom.org](mailto:kbritton@alsbom.org), 334-613-2218.



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Ed Litton, pastor of Redemption Church in Mobile, introduces the Unify Project to messengers.

Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist

# Initiative seeks 'hope and healing' on racial reconciliation

By Carrie Brown McWhorter  
The Alabama Baptist

**M**ore and more voices are calling for the Church to show a better way forward on racial reconciliation, and a new initiative seeks to equip Southern Baptists for the task.

Outgoing SBC President Ed Litton announced the Unify Project during the June 15 morning session of the convention's annual meeting in Anaheim. He was joined onstage by members of the initiative's steering committee, which includes former SBC president Fred Luter, newly elected SBC first vice president Victor Chayasirisobhon and several other church, seminary and denominational leaders.

Tony Evans, pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, Texas, and founder of the Urban Alternative, is also part of the effort and explained the "three As" that are the foundation of the effort:

**1. Assemble:** Each year churches will gather for a "solemn assembly" to "reinvite God collectively into the well-being of their community."

**2. Address:** Churches will "speak with one voice to the issues in their community," providing God's perspective on those issues.

**3. Act:** Local church members will be challenged to do acts of kindness for strangers with the goal of pointing those individuals to the gospel.

"Kindness cards" will be available for churches to use as they make connections with individuals in their communities. The result is that "millions of people in a mean world [will see] the kindness of God."

Through the Unify Project, in partnership with the Urban Alternative's Kindness in the Culture initiative, Litton said Southern Baptists can be part of a grassroots effort to "cross barriers of race and ... offer a Kingdom solution for the divisions that exist."

"The gospel of Jesus Christ is the solution for the most damaging

wounds in our land," Litton said. "This is the moment for us to begin."

Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans, added "the Church should be on the front line of bringing hope and heal-

ing in our communities" and said he was "honored" to be part of the Unify Project initiative.

The Unify Project is set to begin this fall. More information and updates will be posted at [unifysbc.org](http://unifysbc.org).

To view a photo gallery from this business session, visit [tabonline.org/SBC-Business-Wednesday-Session-1](http://tabonline.org/SBC-Business-Wednesday-Session-1).



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist

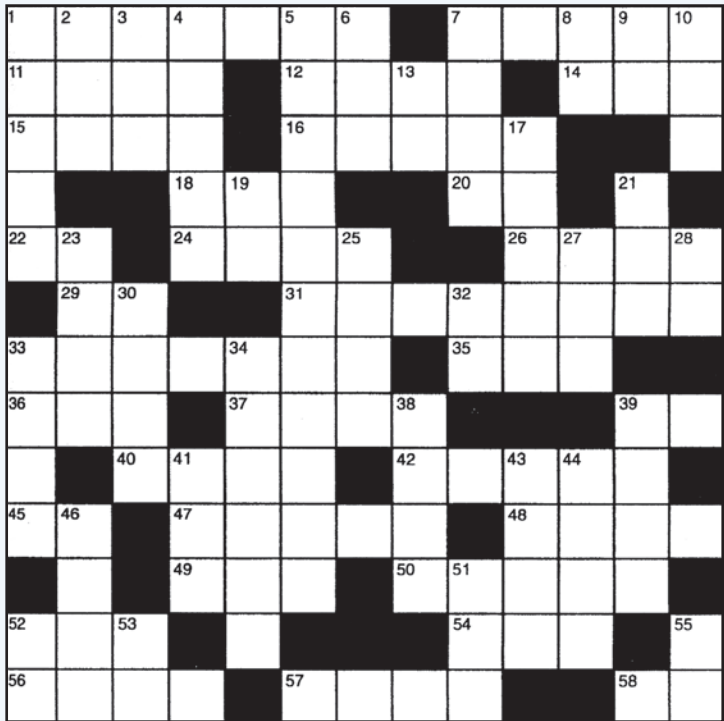
Former Southern Baptist Convention president Fred Luter (left) joins outgoing SBC president Ed Litton to present the new Unify Project during the June 15 morning session of the SBC Annual Meeting in Anaheim, California.



# CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

- 1. \_\_\_ is the man. (Ps. 1:1)
- 7. Of the same quantity.
- 11. Why do the heathen \_\_\_. (Ps. 2:1)
- 12. They shall deceive the \_\_\_ elect. (Matt. 24:24)
- 14. \_\_\_ brought forth her firstborn Son. (Luke 2:7)
- 15. Object of worship.
- 16. \_\_\_ into His gates with thanksgiving. (Ps. 100:4)
- 18. A bird of the \_\_\_. (Eccles. 10:20)
- 20. The ungodly are not \_\_\_. (Ps. 1:4)
- 22. Why \_\_\_ I mourning? (Ps. 43:2)
- 24. He is our \_\_\_ and our shield. (Ps. 33:20)
- 26. Make Thy face to shine \_\_\_ Thy servant. (Ps. 31:16)
- 29. Veterans Affairs. (abbr.)
- 31. Under the shadow of the \_\_\_. (Ps. 91:1)
- 33. Let go.
- 35. \_\_\_ word is a lamp unto my feet. (Ps. 119:105)
- 36. Thy right hand, and Thine \_\_\_. (Ps. 44:3)
- 37. Italic. (abbr.)
- 39. Associated Press. (abbr.)
- 40. Indian garment.
- 42. Thou shalt have none \_\_\_ gods before Me. (Deut. 5:7)
- 45. Printer's measure.
- 47. Commander of Saul's army. (1 Sam. 17:55)
- 48. Came down.
- 49. August. (abbr.)
- 50. Psalm writer.
- 52. Total.
- 54. Precious stone.



By Helen Walter Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

- 56. Army \_\_\_ hall.
  - 57. Arise, O Lord; \_\_\_ me. (Ps. 3:7)
  - 58. \_\_\_ are His people. (Ps. 100:3)
- DOWN
- 1. They shall still \_\_\_ forth fruit. (Ps. 92:14)
  - 2. Young boy.
  - 3. Id, \_\_\_, superego.
  - 4. Hebrew word in some Psalms.
  - 5. His mercy is \_\_\_. (Ps. 100:5)
  - 6. Animal home.
  - 7. Our \_\_\_ wait upon the Lord. (Ps. 123:2)
  - 8. ... the glory which shall be revealed in \_\_\_. (Rom. 8:18)
  - 9. Word of contentment.
  - 10. \_\_\_ God arise. (Ps. 68:1)
  - 13. Route. (abbr.)
  - 17. Not smooth.
  - 19. That is.
  - 21. The ungodly shall \_\_\_ stand. (Ps. 1:5)
  - 23. Above.
  - 25. \_\_\_ bargain.
  - 27. Physician. (abbr.)
  - 28. New York. (abbr.)

- 30. Do not your \_\_\_ before men. (Matt. 6:1)
- 32. \_\_\_ is a good thing to give thanks. (Ps. 92:1)
- 33. Rejoiceth as a strong man to run a \_\_\_. (Ps. 19:5)
- 34. A large plane.
- 38. O \_\_\_, rebuke me not. (Ps. 38:1)
- 39. Barren.
- 41. Automobile Association of America. (abbr.)
- 43. I \_\_\_ put my trust in the Lord God. (Ps. 73:28)
- 44. They came to \_\_\_. (Ex. 15:27)
- 46. It is He that hath \_\_\_ us. (Ps. 100:3)
- 51. Mine \_\_\_ is as nothing before Thee. (Ps. 39:5)
- 52. I \_\_\_ troubled. (Ps. 38:6)
- 53. District supervisor. (abbr.)
- 55. Judge \_\_\_, O God. (Ps. 43:1)

# 5 tips for improving your church bulletin

By Mark MacDonald  
The Alabama Baptist

Want to improve your church bulletin so your printed worship guide will be not only user-friendly but also in demand?

The vast majority of church attendees who receive a bulletin don't read it.

Most throw it away, and some churches conveniently provide recycle bins to save the planet from castaway printed items.

So why create them in the first place? It's a good question.

Digital, done right, keeps people informed and saves money in the long run. However, some churches use bulletins for service order or liturgy. If that's you, then members probably need it.

## What can you do?

Here are five tips to improve your church bulletin:

► **Make it smaller.** You (or your congregation) may not be ready to do away with it. The older the congregation, the more they'll rely on printed materials. If you're printing in-house, go to the next smaller paper size, cut the page in half or stop adding inserts.

► **Improve your website.** This seems like a weird way to improve the church bulletin, but it's essential. Improve your

website's events/calendar area so people can easily find what they're looking for. Then direct bulletin announcements to your website by showing web links or QR codes for more details.

► **Tier your events.** It's important that everything doesn't have equal volume or you'll end up with a lot of promotional noise that's ignored.

Instead create a hierarchy for all church events. Choose only certain events to highlight and don't post repeatedly about the same event.

► **Segment by demographics.** Make it easy on members by creating a simple and obvious organization that's consistent each week so they can quickly see what's for adults, students or children.

► **Edit. Edit. Edit.** Get their attention by sharing the benefits of attending the event. Limit event details to those that will pique interest. Then point to the website.

**EDITOR'S NOTE —** Mark MacDonald is a communication pastor, speaker, consultant, bestselling author, church branding strategist for BeKnownforSomething.com. His book, "Be Known for Something," is available at BeKnown-Book.com.



Photo by Jessica Ingram/The Alabama Baptist



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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

- 3 **Citizenship and Religious Liberty Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 2289  
8-9 **Children's Music Summit**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, April Brewer, ext. 2279  
11-15 **MIX Music Camp**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Cindy Parrish, ext. 2230  
11-15 **Super Summer Alabama**, Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Jessica Palmer, ext. 2262  
15-16 **SPEAK**, Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Scooter Kellum, ext. 2280  
21-23 **'YOU' All Nations Youth Camp 2022**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Kimberly Sandoval, ext. 2244  
22-23 **Connect (formerly Equip)**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325  
26 **Intentional Leader Conference**, SBOM, Prattville, Kim Britton, ext. 2218

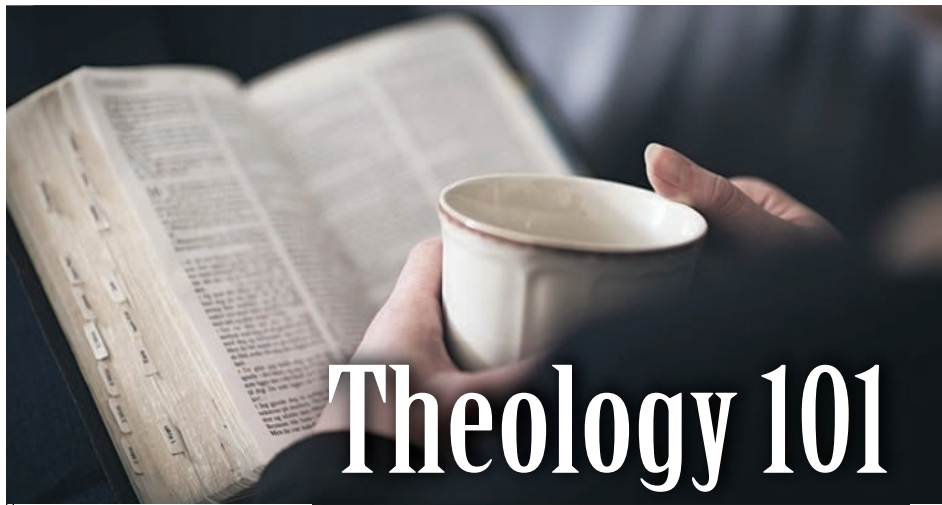
AUGUST

- 5 **SPEAK Tour**, Thorington Road, Montgomery, Scooter Kellum, ext. 2280  
5-6 **Pinnacle Alabama @ Shocco**, Shocco Springs, Steve Layton, ext. 2221  
6 **Called Conference**, Samford University, Birmingham, Mary Kelley, ext. 2227  
7 **Social Issues Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 2289  
9 **Ministers' Wives Connection**, ONLINE, Trish Jackson, ext. 2224  
11 **Uplink on the Road**, Bethany, Andalusia, Jessica Palmer, ext. 2262  
15 **North Region Disciple-Making Roundtable**, Westmeade, Decatur, Mark Gainey, ext. 2240  
16 **Great Commission Conversations**, ONLINE, Cindy Wilson, ext. 2225  
19 **SALT Conference**, Canaan, Bessemer, Ramona Noah, ext. 2312  
25 **Uplink on the Road**, First, Trussville, Jessica Palmer, ext. 2262  
25 **2022 SPARK Conference**, ONLINE, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 2285  
27 **Fortify Conference**, First, Trussville, Larry Hyche, ext. 2268

SEPTEMBER

- 8 **Get Acquainted Day**, SBOM, Prattville, Amy Nelson, ext. 2231  
8-9 **Alabama Singing Women Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Cindy Parrish, ext. 2230  
8-9 **Alabama Singing Men Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Karen Gosselin, ext. 2318  
9-10 **Financial Issues Tax Conference**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263  
9-11 **Ymlink Youth Ministers' Wives Retreat**, Pursell Farms, Sylacauga, Jessica Palmer, ext. 2262  
11 **Single Adult Sunday**, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 2285  
11-18 **Week of Prayer for State Missions & Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering**, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325  
12-13 **Critical Incident Stress Management Training**, SBOM, Prattville, Ana Raymundo, ext. 2356  
13 **Senior Adult Singin'**, Hillcrest, Enterprise, Frank Jones, fjm1117@gmail.com  
13 **Ministers' Wives Connection**, ONLINE, Trish Jackson, ext. 2224  
17 **Children's Missions Day**, Trish Jackson, ext. 2224  
18 **Anti-Gambling Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 2289  
20 **Personnel Management Conference**, SBOM, Prattville, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263  
20 **Senior Adult Singin'**, Mount Zion, Huntsville, Frank Jones, fjm1117@gmail.com  
20 **Great Commission Conversations**, ONLINE, Cindy Wilson, ext. 2225  
23-24 **Pastor/Deacon/Spouse Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Ken Allen, ext. 2210  
25 **Night of Encouragement and Evangelism**, Bethel, Snead, Lori McGough, ext. 2245  
25 **Student Choir Kick-Off**, First, Montgomery, Karen Gosselin, ext. 2318  
27 **Central Region Disciple-Making Roundtable**, Crossroads, Elmore, Mark Gainey, ext. 2240  
30-10/1 **International Friends Retreat**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Chris Mills, ext. 2379





# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Spiritual Blessings

### Walking in Good Works

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.  
The Alabama Baptist

In previous weeks we have considered God's great salvation in terms of Christ coming into one's heart in order to dwell within a believer's life with a view to being expressed outwardly. Last week we looked more closely at this great salvation and the differences it makes in the manner a person lives. This outward expression of the indwelling Christ might be summarized as walking in good works.

The Bible is clear we are not saved by good works, but unto good works. Ephesians 2:10 puts it like this: "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." The matter of walking in good works is repeated in the New Testament.

#### For God's glory

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus admonished His followers to let their light "so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

In Acts 9:36, we read about the example of Dorcas "who was full of good works."

In 2 Corinthians 9:8, Paul speaks of abounding in good work, saying, "God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work." God's abundance is not merely for enrichment but also is motivation for good works.

In Colossians 1:10, the Bible envisions us being fruitful in every good work, saying, "That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work."

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, this truth about walking in good works is expressed in the assertion, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." Immersing oneself in Scripture is not only for our advancement in spiritual maturity, but also for equipping us.

In Titus 2:14, the matter is again addressed when Paul declares Christ gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us and purify us to be "His own special people, zealous for good works." First Peter 2:12 cites the potential impact on others of believers' good works, saying by the "good works which they observe," they may glorify God.

Scripture is clear: Walking in good works is essential to an abundant life and an effective witness.

*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.*



## Big-hearted ministry helps those in need

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

Debbie Brasher said her daughter, Smantha, has a big heart. If she sees a need, she wants to meet it.

And over the past year that desire has only increased.

"It stems from her wanting to adopt a child," said Brasher, who noted Smantha, 29, has high-functioning autism. "I tried to explain to her how expensive it was and that it takes a lot to adopt or foster a child."

But Smantha knew she wanted to do whatever she could to help children in need. So Brasher suggested she meet with a local judge to talk about it, and the judge suggested Smantha could help children who were in the Department of Human Resources system.

"So she decided to do a toy drive at Christmas to collect toys for kids in foster care," Brasher said. "She did everything on her own — made T-shirts, got people to bring snacks for snack bags and recruited people to donate toys."

#### Filling a room

"They designated a room at DHR for Smantha because her toy drive filled that room up with toys."

Now Smantha is collecting school supplies and other items for backpacks to give to children in need at the beginning of the fall semester.

#### 'Real desire to help'

Dave Burns, Smantha's pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in Prattville, said she has a "real desire to help."

"Several times she's taken initiative for raising funds and raising food for the underprivileged. She's amazing. She looks for opportunities to serve," he said. "She has her challenges, but she doesn't let her challenges hinder her from serving the Lord."

Smantha's initiative has given others in the church an opportunity to serve, Burns said. "She'll put a box out (for donations) and the church will fill it up pretty quickly."

Brasher said Smantha "loves to volunteer, and this is her way to give back to the community," noting Burns and other friends have been very supportive.

"I tell her, 'You've got fire in your soul and grace in your heart,'" Brasher said. "We're so proud of her and everything she does. She's got a big heart."

**Smantha "loves to volunteer, and this is her way to give back to the community."**

**Debbie Brasher  
Smantha's mother**



Photo courtesy of Debbie Brasher

Smantha Brasher (center), member of Calvary Baptist Church in Prattville, started a toy drive at Christmas and is now collecting school supplies and other items to give to children in need at the beginning of the fall semester.



# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 3

## Explore the Bible

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



### RETURN 1 Kings 15:9–22

Rehoboam was succeeded on the throne by his son Abijam, who reigned over Judah three years. Abijam committed all the sins his father had done before him. We are not told the cause of his death, but we are given a diagnosis of his spiritual problem: “He was not wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord his God as his ancestor David had been.” Abijam’s son Asa succeeded him. Was there any hope for Judah? Would Asa’s reign be characterized by spiritual rebellion or spiritual renewal?

### Wholehearted (9–15)

By God’s grace, Asa was a person of different character. He reigned over Judah longer than anyone before him. During his 41 years as king, six different kings sat on the throne of Israel. What set Asa apart was not the length of his reign but his devotion to God. Asa was one of Judah’s good kings, putting him in an elite group of kings with Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah.

In addition to serving God personally, he attempted to end the pagan practices Solomon, Rehoboam and Abijam had allowed. He initiated some drastic changes in Judah.

First, he banished the sacred prostitutes his father and grandfather had ignored. These prostitutes had sexual relations with worshippers of false gods to induce agricultural or personal fertility.

Second, he destroyed all the idols his fathers made. This was no small feat. Solomon had 700 wives and built shrines on the high places where they could worship their gods (1 Kings 11:7–8).

Third, Asa deposed his grandmother Maacah, who held the important position of queen mother. She was involved in pagan fertility worship, and she had sponsored an Asherah pole. Asa cut the pole down and burned it in the Kidron Valley.

Asa initiated these necessary reforms because he “was wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord his entire

life.” He removed things that would get in the way of worshipping the One True God rightly and reverently.

### Cornered (16–19)

Asa’s main political and military concerns revolved around the border with Israel. Asa and Baasha, Jeroboam’s eventual successor in the north, fought throughout their reigns. Israel’s king, Baasha, fortified Ramah, a city four miles north of Jerusalem on the main road leading to Jerusalem from the north. If Baasha could successfully control Ramah, he could keep anyone from heading south to Jerusalem.

Baasha posed such a threat that Asa withdrew all the silver and gold at his disposal from the temple and the royal treasuries so he could bribe Ben-hadad, king of Syria, to break Syria’s treaty with Israel and come rescue him. God rebuked Asa for depending on the army of Syria rather than trusting in Him (2 Chron. 16:7–10). Asa’s actions violated his commitment to God. He had looked to Syria rather than to God for rescue. Whenever you feel cornered, remember to cry out to the Lord and trust in Him. Our God is faithful.

### Resolved (20–22)

Ben-hadad accepted the bribe and marched on upper Galilee. Baasha was forced to withdraw his troops from the southern border to fortify his capital city, Tirzah. Then Asa seized the opportunity to tear down the fortifications at Ramah. He fortified two other border towns. Asa’s quick response pushed the border several miles north, providing a larger defensive zone for Jerusalem.

Asa received a favorable judgment from the writer of Kings. He rose to the challenge and stopped Judah from spiraling downward into sin that had begun under Solomon and continued under Rehoboam and Abijam. Asa led the nation to repent of the sin of idolatry, and he set an example by being devoted to the Lord.

## Bible Studies for Life

By Roy E. Ciampa, Ph.D.  
Armstrong Chair of Religion, Samford University



### INTERDEPENDENT INDEPENDENCE 1 Corinthians 10:23–33

This is a time of year when Americans celebrate our national independence and literally thank God for the freedoms and rights we have in this country. It is good to recognize the special blessings we have experienced as a nation, but it is even better to recognize and reflect upon the blessings and freedom we have in our Lord Jesus Christ. In the first century some Corinthian believers exercised their rights and freedoms in unhealthy ways, causing harm to others. Paul explains the responsibilities that come with our freedom in Christ, leading us to focus on the well-being of others as much as on our own.

### Do what is beneficial to others. (23–24)

There are several places in 1 Corinthians where it seems likely Paul is quoting sayings that were popular in the church in Corinth but needed to be corrected or modified to some extent. Paul repeats the saying “everything is permissible,” and each time he quotes it, he immediately qualifies it. Even if “everything is permissible,” not everything is beneficial, and certainly not everything they did made them stronger in their faith. We must not focus on our rights and freedoms at the expense of the good of others.

### Don’t offend others unnecessarily. (25–30)

In Corinth the issue of freedoms and rights was tied to the issue of food offered to idols. Most of the meat at that time would have been offered to idols. Paul taught believers are allowed to eat all kinds of food because, according to Psalm 24:1, it all belonged to God and not to any idol. Christians could also accept invitations to dinner at a neighbor’s home and eat what was served without asking about the food.

But if anyone identified some food as having been offered to an idol,

Paul said the believer should refrain from eating it. The issue was not with the food but with the conscience of anyone observing a believer who knowingly ate food offered to an idol. That person could mistake the behavior for an endorsement of idolatry, leading him or her to denounce the Christian for hypocrisy and possibly to feel more justified in his or her own idolatry. It wouldn’t necessarily matter that the believer had given thanks to God for the food. The Christian might still be thought to have given in to idolatry.

What mattered to Paul was not whether the other person was right or wrong about the believer’s participation in idolatry, but the spiritual harm it might cause other people when they perceive the Christian to be engaging in idolatry rather than abstaining.

### Do what gives a witness for Christ. (31–33)

Eating and drinking are some of the most mundane, routine things we do each day. We are tempted to think these little things are insignificant.

But eating and drinking was a context where the people of God often got themselves into trouble in the Old Testament and in the early church. In all the little things we do each day, we have the ability to glorify God by prioritizing the well-being of those around us or to hurt God’s reputation by unnecessarily offending our neighbors. In Paul’s day, Jews or Greeks might marginalize each other, while today various minority groups often are marginalized.

We glorify God when we reflect His love for others, not offending them or putting our benefit ahead of theirs, but showing in concrete ways our desire to honor, respect and (as far as ethics allow) please those around us. This is part of what it means to witness of Christ’s love for our neighbors and of His work within us as we serve as His hands and feet to those around us.



# MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs  
The Alabama Baptist

## 'Neighborliness' challenges readers to cross race, economic barriers

**W**e all look alike,' I thought to myself. My heart raced as I looked around the room. Standing behind a simple metal podium in an elementary school auditorium, I was about to preach as I had done each Sunday for the previous five years. Looking at my congregation who had become family to me, I was not prepared for my heart to be broken. I was rendered speechless as tears filled my eyes."

These are the opening words of Chapter 1: The Day I Opened My Eyes, from "Neighborliness," a recent book by David Docusen, pastor, speaker, advocate and author.

Serving more than a decade as a pastor in Charlotte, North Carolina, Docusen says in the book that on the day he had his "revelation," he wrote two statements in a journal that would change his life and ministry:

► "Like people invite like people."

► "Our beautiful church looks nothing like our beautiful city."

### 'Crossing dividing lines'

"I was pastoring a church located directly on a dividing line between the rich and poor in Charlotte," Docusen recalled. "I noticed



DAVID DOCUSEN

Photo courtesy of David Docusen

that many white people in our church were uncomfortable crossing dividing lines of race and economics. Through the relationships formed in that unique context, I was confronted on a daily basis by the realities of racial and economic inequality in our community."

In the book, Docusen defines neighborliness as "the behavior of Christians to embody the love, understanding, curiosity, kindness and care of Jesus."

He goes on to say that Jesus would go out of His way to talk to those different from Him, either in looks or way of living.

Docusen knew if he wanted to lead his church to follow Jesus' example, something had to change.

"I was so moved that I decided to pursue a doctoral degree exploring how the church can respond

to generational poverty," Docusen recalled.

The book came out of research for his doctoral dissertation: "Neighborliness: A Call to Racial and Socioeconomic Equity in Charlotte, North Carolina."

Some have questioned Docusen's emphasis on social justice.

"My response is that social justice is embedded into the larger narrative of biblical justice," he said. "The greatest commandment calls us to love God and

neighbors, and we cannot fulfill this commandment if justice is not for everyone in our community."

Though writing a dissertation is similar to writing a book, Docusen said there is more collaboration with the latter.

"I loved working with my editor, going back and forth on ideas that

make the message stronger," he remembered.

"I was so nervous about that part of the journey before I wrote 'Neighborliness' ... but my editor pulls out the best in me and makes the message more concise and clear."

### Faith journey

Each chapter ends with a Bible verse or prayer, discussion questions and an action step. There is an additional 30-page guide that provides resources for a six-week sermon series and small group study. A video series has also been released.

Sharing the message of "Neighborliness" has been a family affair — his wife and four children have traveled with him to 31 states.

Though Docusen's ministry has changed a great deal, personal faith is still the most important aspect.

Docusen has worked with friends and colleagues to found two nonprofit organizations. The Neighborliness Center creates practical resources for churches, nonprofit organizations and businesses throughout the world. Freedom Communities provides equitable access to employment, health care and housing in Charlotte.

"My faith informs everything that I am and pursue in this life," Docusen said.

"Jesus captivated my heart and set me free from my sin, so I want people to know that same freedom and joy that I have found in Him."

"I want to be great at the greatest commandment. Loving God and neighbors can be hard when it includes loving people from different backgrounds than mine, but I have found so much joy in the commitment to explore and express the spirit of neighborliness."

### EDITOR'S NOTE

Reviews of films, books, music or other media that appear in TAB are intended to help readers evaluate current media for themselves, their children and grandchildren in order to decide whether to watch, read or listen. Reviews are not an endorsement by the writer or TAB Media.

For more information, visit [daviddocusen.com](http://daviddocusen.com). For free related resources for pastors, churches or other groups, see [neighborliness.com](http://neighborliness.com). For more about Freedom Communities, visit [freedomcommunities.com](http://freedomcommunities.com).



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