

The Alabama Baptist

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November 28, 2024

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

Craig Carlisle, Alabama Baptist State Convention president, assesses the vote on special offering goals during the Tuesday afternoon session Nov. 12.



Photos by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist

Re-elected

Alabama Baptist State Convention officers set to serve second term

Messengers to the Nov. 12–13 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting at Eastern Shore Baptist Church in Daphne approved the 2025 Cooperative Program allocation budget (see page 9) and re-elected all current officers to a second one-year term.

State convention president Craig Carlisle, who serves as director of

missions of Etowah Baptist Association in the Gadsden area, was re-elected without opposition as were the two vice presidents.

Jarman Leatherwood, pastor of House of Hope and Restoration Church in Huntsville, was re-elected first vice president.

Ryan Whitley, pastor of CrossPoint Church in Trussville, was re-elected second vice president.

Also re-elected to the other offices

were Debbie Oliver as recording secretary and Mike Jackson as statistical secretary and registration secretary. Oliver and Jackson both serve on staff of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

The 201st annual meeting featured the theme: DifferenceMakers.

A total of 830 people representing 358 churches were present for the state convention annual meeting — 660 messengers and 170 guests.

Alabama Baptist State Convention officers for 2024 were re-elected to serve a second one-year term. They are: (l to r) Craig Carlisle, president and director of missions for Etowah Baptist Association; Jarman Leatherwood, first vice president and pastor of House of Hope and Restoration in Huntsville; and Ryan Whitley, second vice president and pastor of CrossPoint Church in Trussville.



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Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions — One Mission, The Great Commission; One Program, The Cooperative Program; Many Ministries, Great Commission Ministries



Entity reports



Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist
Rick Lance (right), SBOM executive director, talks with Ken Schroeder (left), president of the Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers, and Rod Marshall (center), president of the Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries.



Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist
Rick Lance interviews University of Mobile President Charles Smith (center) and Samford University President Beck Taylor.



Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist
Debbie Campbell (left) gives The Alabama Baptist report featuring a video and message from Jennifer Davis Rash.



Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist
Russell Klinner, executive director of Shocco Springs Conference Center, shares how the Lord is working at Shocco.



Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist
Candace McIntosh (center), executive director of Alabama WMU (an auxiliary of the state convention), and Greg Davis, president of ALCAP, also share reports.



Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist
John Ashworth (left), president of The Baptist Foundation of Alabama, shares how TBFA is making a difference in Alabama Baptist life.



Photo by Tracy Riggs Frontz/The Alabama Baptist
Wendy Westerhouse (center) delivers her first report as executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and enjoys a moment with the audience alongside The Alabama Baptist’s Debbie Campbell and SBOM’s Rick Lance.

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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JENNIFER DAVIS RASH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF


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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 14.

CONVENTION SERMON

Advancing the Kingdom

Bowden challenges messengers to make a difference for Christ, be bold

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Ben Bowden said he felt inadequate the day his wife looked at him in the eyes and yelled these words — “Catch the baby!”

Seconds before, she had told him she was having contractions and needed to go to the hospital, but things had quickly escalated.

“So I went down on my knees and you know what — I caught the baby,” said Bowden, pastor of First Baptist Church Enterprise. “I wrapped the baby not in swaddling clothes but in a towel and placed him not in a manger but in a mini-van, and we drove to the hospital.”

In his convention sermon Nov. 13, Bowden told messengers to the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting that followers of Jesus might also feel inadequate to make a difference in the world, but they’re the right people for the job.

“You’re the only one living your life,” he said, similar to how he was the only one present to catch the baby that day.

‘Only you’

“There are some hands only you can hold, some hearts that only you can mend. There are some situations and conversations that only you



Photo by Tracy Riggs Frontz/The Alabama Baptist
Ben Bowden, pastor of FBC Enterprise, preaches the convention sermon during the Wednesday morning session of the 2024 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting held at Eastern Shore Baptist Church in Daphne.

will have,” Bowden said. “There are some lives that only you can touch.”

God intends to use your life to make a difference in the world for the glory of Christ, Bowden said. “But if that’s going to happen, you’ve got to be bold.”

He pointed to Acts 4:13 to answer three questions about boldness.

1. What is boldness?

This verse points out the boldness of Peter and John, but it doesn’t say

that they were loud, and we know that they weren’t well-educated or of a high social standing.

Boldness doesn’t mean any of those things, Bowden said. Instead, it is standing firm in the mission of the gospel.

Bowden asked messengers what they were living for, then he asked if that thing is something that would last. “What God has invited us to is something that will last forever, and

that is to stand firm for the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ,” he said.

2. How do we get boldness?

In Acts 4, when leaders were astonished at the boldness of Peter and John, they recognized that the two men had been with Jesus.

“He gives us boldness horizontally because He has first reconciled us vertically,” Bowden said. “Salvation, redemption, justification, experiencing the smile of God in our lives.”

3. How do we maintain boldness?

Bowden said maintaining boldness comes from being with Jesus, and “to be with Jesus means that we are consistently engaged in three simple rhythms: the Word, prayer and church.”

The Book of Acts shows that the Word does the work, he said. It also shows God’s people praying before and after Peter and John’s powerful moment of boldness.

“They prayed for boldness, and God answered that prayer,” he said.

It’s also important to be in community with the body of believers, he said.

“Christianity is not a solo mission. ... To be all that God has meant for us to be, we need friends.”

Bowden noted that having boldness doesn’t mean you can’t have weaknesses — it might just be that God intends to use your weakness.

Coverage of state convention related meetings such as the **Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference** and the **Alabama Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders** annual meeting as well as features such as the Paul Stewart Music Ministry Service Award recipient will be in the **Dec. 5 edition of The Baptist Paper**. As a subscriber to The Alabama Baptist, you may add a subscription to The Baptist Paper for only \$10 per year. The two papers alternate weeks, which means you’ll receive weekly news coverage in your mailbox. Call 800-803-5201 to request a complimentary copy of the Dec. 5 edition (while supplies last).



Responding to the call of ministry

Calling Out the Called Alabama effort seeks to help identify, mentor future pastors

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

An estimated 500 Alabama Baptist churches are currently without a pastor, with fewer and fewer candidates to consider. A new initiative, Calling Out the Called Alabama, hopes to encourage more people to respond to God's call to ministry and to help them develop as future leaders.

Kevin Blackwell spoke on behalf of the Calling Out the Called Alabama launch team during the Nov. 12 afternoon session of the state convention annual meeting.

'Game changer'

Blackwell, disciple-making/teaching pastor at The Station Church in Bessemer, is part of a team of Alabama Baptist leaders who have been working on the new initiative under the leadership of Alabama Baptist State Convention President Craig Carlisle, director of missions for Etowah Baptist Association.

Blackwell hopes the new strategy will be a "game changer for our churches," many of which are congregations that average less than 75 in worship and are seeking bivocational pastors.

"There is a growing number of open ministerial positions, particularly bivocational [ones], and a diminishing number of people responding to a call to ministry," Blackwell said.

Blackwell said Carlisle and other associational leaders, pastors from



Kevin Blackwell, disciple-making/teaching pastor at The Station Church in Bessemer, speaks on behalf of the Calling Out the Called Alabama launch team during the team's report at the 2024 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting.

Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist

around the state and Alabama Baptist state missionaries have met regularly over the past 18 months to "think deeply" about what they consider "an impending crisis in the Alabama Baptist Convention."

He noted several reasons for the current situation, including efforts to return to normal following the pandemic and a lack of mentoring and discipling new believers. Another recent trend is that young people called into min-

istry often seek church planting or parachurch roles rather than pastoral paths.

Stem the crisis

Blackwell shared how Calling Out the Called Alabama is intended to be a strategic effort to stem the crisis and is centered around four essential priorities:

- ▶ Praying for the Called.
- ▶ Petitioning the Called.
- ▶ Preparing the Called.
- ▶ Pursuing the Called.

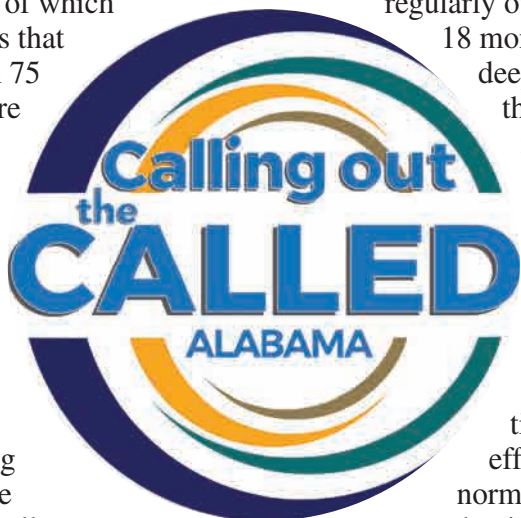
A new website, callingoutthecalledal.org, will be an online hub for video content, events and other useful resources for pastors and fu-

ture pastors, Blackwell said.

In addition, the effort will include a new emphasis Sunday, Calling Out the Called Sunday, set for Aug. 10, 2025, in which churches are urged to focus on the topic.

Calling Out the Called launch team members asked Alabama Baptists to pray for the effort, for those who are currently discerning a call to ministry and those who are mentoring them, and for those who God will call in the future.

"Ask the Lord to grant to our convention success in increasing the number of people responding to the call of ministry," Blackwell said.



For more information and resources, visit callingoutthecalledal.org.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Now is the **time**

Carlisle urges churches to reach communities, pray for workers for the harvest

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Craig Carlisle said the Alabama Baptist State Convention is “strong, healthy and unified.” “There are positive things happening all across our convention,” he said.

But as Carlisle, who serves as ABSC president, delivered his presidential address to the convention’s annual meeting Nov. 12, he said there is one “situation that is of great concern and must be addressed” — the pastor shortage.

“Here in Alabama, we have 3,162 churches, and presently 501 of our churches do not have pastors. That represents 16% of our churches,” said Carlisle, who also serves as director of missions for Etowah Baptist Association. Nearly 90% of pastorless churches are smaller congregations that need bivocational or part-time ministers, he said.

Preaching from Matthew 9:35–38, Carlisle offered some suggestions to turn the tide, starting with reaching the people who could be the next generation of pastors.

1. We must reconnect to our communities.

Jesus went, Carlisle said. He went to small towns and urban centers. He didn’t wait for people to come to Him.

Get to know community

“We must get out and learn who is living around our community. We must get out and find out what the people in our community need,” Carlisle said. “Don’t presume to know what they need and offer them what you think they need. Ask them.” It’s time for churches to “surrender our allegiance to the way things used to be and prioritize the way things are now and go and tell our communities that Jesus saves,” he noted.

2. We must know the condition of those who live in our communities.

Jesus described the people He met

as “distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd,” Carlisle said. “Perhaps it has been because they have been pursuing the lure of the world and they have come up empty in their search for fulfillment and truth,” he said.

“Perhaps they have been living life in their own strength and there is no amount of self-sufficiency that will get them where they want to be. The ultimate reason they are weary and worn out is because they are lost and they need Jesus.”

‘Speak of Jesus’

As Christians work, they must witness, Carlisle said. “If we want to make a difference and diminish the weariness and take away the fatigue of futility in the lives of our community, we are going to have to speak of Jesus.”

3. We must become burdened about the eternal destiny of those who live in our communities.

Jesus said the harvest is plentiful, so Carlisle said the problem is not with the harvest.

“Jesus was longing for action to be taken,” he said. “If we are going to make a difference, we must realize



Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist

Craig Carlisle, who served as the 2024 state convention president and was re-elected to serve in 2025, delivers his presidential address at the annual meeting Nov. 12.

the urgency of the time. We must be a going church for a coming Christ.”

4. We must pray for workers to be called out to serve the churches and people in our communities.

Jesus told His disciples to pray for workers to be sent into the harvest, and Carlisle said that’s what Christians today should be doing also.

“Why is there a shortage? Perhaps it is because we would rather be leaders, not laborers. Perhaps we would rather be served, not serve,” he said. “Perhaps some are looking for a ministry path that is easier than pastoring an established church.”

If laborers aren’t called out and sent out, “people will die and go to hell because no one introduced them to the truth and love of Jesus,” Carlisle said. “If more pastors, and particularly bivocational ministers, are not called out, churches are going to die and close their doors. We can’t reap the harvest without the workers. Churches, small and large, will struggle to be the church without leadership.”

Pray fervently

Carlisle suggested Christians should pray fervently and specifically for God to call out workers.

“In Matthew 10:1, in response to the plea to pray, Jesus gathered His disciples and gave them authority to do what He had been doing and sent them out,” he said.

“Don’t be afraid to be an answer to the prayer.”



Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist

At the end of his president’s address Nov. 12, Craig Carlisle (top, right) asked bivocational pastors and campus ministers to line the stage so Tyler Armstrong (at podium), pastor of Woodward Avenue Baptist Church in Muscle Shoals, could pray over them as they were recognized for their ministry work.

‘Changing lives’

Familiar story in Scripture showcases power of Jesus’ purpose, Allen shares

By Grace Thornton

The Alabama Baptist

Jason Allen promised he wouldn’t sing the song, but he said he knew everyone in the room knew a few things about Zacchaeus, the short tax collector who climbed the tree to see Jesus.

It’s such a familiar story that it’s “easy to miss the power of what takes place,” said Allen, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri.

Preaching from Luke 19:1–10, he shared with those present at the Tuesday evening session of the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting Nov. 12 that “in this text we celebrate anew our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who goes about His ministry ... changing lives.”

Allen challenged his listeners to reflect on three parts of the passage.

1. The sinner Jesus sought.

What about Zacchaeus commends him to Jesus? What makes him particularly attractive?

Zacchaeus was in a job that made him one of the least-liked people in any room, Allen said. In his job as



Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist

Jason Allen, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, reminds Alabama Baptists of the power of the story of Zacchaeus.

chief tax collector, he dealt corruptly and cheated people out of money.

But “something was stirring in him,” Allen said. He was curious and determined to run ahead and climb the tree so he could see Jesus.

“The work of the Spirit is drawing him to Christ, it’s drawing him to take a closer look,” Allen said.

“But Jesus is a Savior of affection and compassion. And He sees this man and He loves this man and He knows that he is hopelessly lost, but He sets His affection on Him.”

2. The salvation Jesus wrought.

The next scene details Zacchaeus’ quick obedience — he comes down from the tree, joyfully receives

Jesus and begins publicly confessing his sin. “We see Jesus bringing about salvation in the heart of this sinner,” Allen said.

It’s happy obedience, he said. “There is a joy welling up in his heart and a happiness flourishing because all the corruption, emptiness, deceit and hatred, all of it in a moment is going away, and Zacchaeus is there and he’s wanting it.

“When the Spirit gets ahold of a sinner, they’re no longer negotiating,” Allen said.

3. The sermon Jesus brought.

At the end of this passage, Jesus gives a brief sermon starting with, “Today salvation has come to this house.”

In a time when Jews were preoccupied with the purity of their people, He said Zacchaeus was the only kind of son of Abraham that really mattered.

Then Jesus told them that “the Son of Man had come to seek and save that which was lost.”

“He said, ‘This is not an aberration of my ministry, this is not a distraction, this is why I exist. This is what I’m about.’”

Church sees God move following new rhythm of intentional prayer

Pastor Seth Hood said he could hear the enemy whispering doubt in his ear Sept. 29. His church — First Baptist Colbert Heights — had celebrated 12 baptisms that day but prepared 15 towels.

He prayed for God to bring just one more, and by the end of the service, they had baptized 26. Since then, the church has baptized 65.

Hood shared his testimony Nov. 12 during the first DifferenceMakers theme interpretation of the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting. He was invited to share by state missionary Rob Jackson.

Hood said the growth at FBC Colbert Heights has everything to do with what God is doing through weekly prayer services, during which the church prays for personal, corporate and national revival.



HOOD

“We ask God to help us to love Him more deeply ... and pursue Him more passionately than we pursue anything else,” he said.

“We pray for the lost. We pray for God to do incredible, epic things. We pray for God to do something so incredible that only He can get the glory for it.” (Grace Thornton)

Williams: Live a life worthy of mimicking

The first step toward discipleship is to fix your eyes on Jesus and have a right relationship with Him, Albert Williams shared with messengers during his Nov. 13 DifferenceMakers theme interpretation sermon at the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting.

“I don’t want to multiply people who look like me, talk like me, act like me if I’m not in the right relationship of obedience to God myself,” Williams said.

“I am the disciple-making tool

that God has made me to be if I live the Word of God like I’m supposed to.”

The second step is to start building relationships with others and walking with them through life, explained Williams, who serves as pastor of St. James Baptist Church in Dothan.

Preaching from 2 Timothy 4:7–8, Williams

noted that loving people must precede discipling them.

“There’s nothing more important in discipleship than relationship,” he said. (Grace Thornton)



WILLIAMS

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS AND LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING

DECEMBER 1-8 -- [ALSBOM.ORG/LOTTIEMOON](https://alsbom.org/lotziemoon)



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For more information about field personnel from Alabama serving around the world, please visit a18c.org.

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Messengers approve \$37.5M budget, celebrate variety of DifferenceMakers

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Messengers to the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting at Eastern Shore Baptist Church in Daphne approved a \$37.5 million Cooperative Program allocation budget for 2025.

The budget is up \$500,000 over the 2024 budget and was presented during the report of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions on Nov. 12.

Funding missions

It maintains the 50–50 percentage allocation between Southern Baptist Convention Great Commission ministries and state convention-related Great Commission missions.

Messengers also approved the following 2025 special

offering goals, all of which were the same amount as last year:

► Lottie Moon Christmas Offering: \$12 million

► Annie Armstrong Easter Offering: \$6 million

► Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries: \$3 million

► Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering: \$1.2 million

► World Hunger Offering: \$800,000

In other updates, Rick Lance, SBOM executive director, said Alabama Baptists will give Mission:Dignity recipients three extra checks in 2025 funded by interest income, similar to what was done in 2024.

Mission:Dignity helps retirement-age Southern Baptist ministers and widows who are struggling to



Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist
Rick Lance, executive director of the State Board of Missions, speaks during the SBOM report at the 2024 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting.

pay for their basic needs, like housing, food and medication.

The SBOM auditor's report for 2023 financials also was approved by messengers, and Lance announced that Alabama Baptists had given \$1 million toward

Disaster Relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

Also, during the report, messengers celebrated missions and DR volunteers who are DifferenceMakers.

► Mark Wakefield, state DR strategist, presented the

Tommy Puckett Award for Excellence to **Dan Wiggins**, associational missionary for Pleasant Grove Baptist Association and state DR chaplain coordinator.

Wakefield also shared that Alabama Baptist DR volunteers have seen 38 people profess faith in Christ since the beginning of June.

► Scotty Goldman, director of the SBOM office of global missions, presented the Volunteer of the Year award to two missions volunteers — **Debra Abston and Kimberly Posey**, who are both members of Highland Baptist Church in Gordo.

The two have served together in many missions endeavors locally and globally and were nominated by Pickens Baptist Association's Claren Dease.



STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

Sunday-Monday, January 26-27
Lakeside Baptist Church
Birmingham

2025
EVANGELISM EVENTS
from the State Board of Missions

*New Names,
Same Life-Changing
Encouragement*

*Senior Adult
Evangelism
Conference*

ENCOURAGE

Monday, May 5

9:30 a.m.–Noon

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Visit EvangelizeAL.org/events or contact Kirstin Goldwire,
kgoldwire@alsbom.org, 334-613-2245.



Alabama Baptist
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

Trustees, board members elected to serve State Board, other entities

EDITOR'S NOTE — *Messengers voted to elect or reelect the following during the 2024 Alabama Baptist State Convention. An asterisk (*) before the name indicates a layperson. The executive committee and State Board of Missions members are grouped by associations. Board members of convention entities are designated by church membership.*

Executive Committee

Chair 2024–2025:

Craig Carlisle

(state convention president)

Cecil Sanders, Nathan Carroll, Derek Allen, James Watkins, Jim Cooley, Neal Hughes

State Board of Missions

Terms to expire 2027: Clay Crum, Alabama-Crenshaw; Pete Chadwick, Autauga; Chris Wilkinson, Barbour; Carl Williams, Bethel; Micah Gandy, Bethlehem; *Lisa Hogan, Birmingham Metro; Buddy Champion, Birmingham Metro; Blair McBride, Butler; Kris Henderson, Cleburne; Heath Harrelson, Colbert-Lauderdale; Neal Butler, Conecuh; Max Buttram, Coosa River; Kevin Wilburn, Covington; Brian Smith, Covington; Kevin McCreless, DeKalb; Scott Ferguson, East Liberty; *Beth Baldwin, Elmore; Jim Graham, Elmore; Jonathan Hill, Escambia; *Julia Ford, Etowah; Scott Davis, Fayette; Mark Smith, Friendship; Steven Sanderson, Lamar; Joe Barnes, Limestone; Adam Mikel, Limestone; *Andrea Dyess, Madison; Kevin Moore, Madison; Darryl Craft, Madison; Ben Stubblefield, Mobile; Eric Sexton, Mobile; Derek Allen, Mobile; *Charlotte Cearley, Montgomery; Tommy Fike, Montgomery; Clayton Speed, Morgan; Mark Milwee, Muscle Shoals; Lyle Dease, Pickens; Clay Duck, Russell; *Karen Melton, Russell; Andrew Knick, Salem Troy; John Thomas, Southeast Alabama; *Amy Thompson, Southeast Alabama; Roger Kendrick, Tallapoosa; Shandy Dill,

Tennessee River; Herb Thomas, Tuscaloosa; Kris Sullivan, Tuscaloosa; Robert Blankenship, Walker; Caleb Winningham, West Central; *Rita Nielsen, West Cullman

— Convention entities —

The Alabama Baptist

Terms to Expire 2028: Stan Albright, First Baptist Talladega; *Melissa Golden, FBC Prattville; *Bob Maddox, FBC Montgomery; *Caris Snider, FBC Cullman

Board of Aid for students in church-related vocations

Terms to Expire 2028: Mike Bedford, Dauphin Way, Mobile

Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries

Terms to Expire 2028: *Loni Floyd, FBC Cullman; Chad Hess, Woodmont, Florence; *Kelly Monk, FBC Opelika; *Wes Talley, Shades Mountain, Birmingham

Christian Life Commission

Terms to Expire 2028: *Tina Fuller, Rockford; Robert Smith, Enon, Danville; Daniel Wilson, FBC Jemison

Education Commission

Terms to Expire 2028: *Laurie Barnett, FBC Prattville

Alabama Baptist Historical Commission

Terms to Expire 2028: *Jimmy Austin, Highland, Florence; *David Nelson, FBC Tuscaloosa; *Susan Walker, Peniel, Jackson; *Sue McWhorter, Church on the Hill, Huntsville

Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers

Terms to Expire 2026: *Jane Boyesen, FBC Prattville

Terms to Expire 2028: *Butch Busby, FBC LaFayette; Bill Carr, FBC Alabaster; *Gail Minshew,

Meadow Brook, Gadsden; *Ronnie Porter, FBC Clanton; *George Turnipseed, FBC Clanton

The Baptist Foundation of Alabama

Terms to Expire 2028: Robert Mullins, Crossroads Community, Elmore; Danny Terral, Mount Zion, Huntsville

University of Mobile

Terms to Expire 2028: *Kelly Burdette, FBC Killen; *Robert McGinley, Springhill, Mobile; *Lawson Swearingen, FBC Fairhope

Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center

Terms to Expire 2025: Corey Sizemore, CrossPoint, Trussville; Terms to Expire 2026: *Julian Stephens, Spring Hill, Mobile Terms to Expire 2028: Andy Frazier, FBC Jasper; *Jennifer McCracken, Parkway, Auburn; Eric Taylor, Bethel, Pleasant Grove; *Deena Weston, Cloverdale, Montgomery

— Report of Committee —
on Committees

Audit Committee

Chair 2024–2025:

*Rick Gibson, FBC Tuscaloosa

Terms to Expire 2027: *Jody Singleton, FBC Headland; Jeff Senkbell, Valleydale, Birmingham

Committee on Boards and Commissions

Chair 2024–2025:

Tim Cox, Liberty, Chelsea

Terms to Expire 2026: *Renee Chambers, Fairview FBC Cullman; Larry Gibson, FBC Oneonta; *Heather Koltz, FBC Talladega; Ben Hayes, FBC Dadeville; *Martha Kent, FBC Enterprise; Kevin Wilburn, FBC Andalusia; Eric Sexton, FBC Semmes; *Cynthia Fuller, Centerville, Centerville; Tim Mathis, FBC Selma; *Nikki Davis, FBC Fayette; Nahan Carroll, FBC

Haleyville; *Wanda McLemore, Lakeside, Birmingham; *Laurie Cox, Coosada, Coosada

Insurance Committee

Chair 2024–2025: *W. Robert DuBois, Heritage, Montgomery*

Terms to Expire 2027: *Cliff Slaten, Taylor Road, Montgomery; *Reyn Norman, FBC Montgomery

Committee on Time, Place, and Preacher

Chair 2024–2025:

Jay Wolf, FBC Montgomery

Terms to Expire 2025: Jay Wolf, FBC Montgomery; Teman Knight, Heritage, Montgomery; Chris Jones, Meadow Brook, Birmingham; Tim Coleman, FBC Winfield; DeWayne Rembert, Flatline, Montgomery; Zac Gardner, Pepperell, Opelika; Spencer Bell, Mount Zion, Hartselle

Memorials Committee

Chair 2024–2025:

Rex Kent, FBC Enterprise

Terms to Expire 2025: Guy Anderson, Elkdale, Selma; Danny Courson, Cropwell, Cropwell; *Trish Jackson, Glynwood, Prattville; Edwin Jenkins, Mount Zion, Huntsville; Rex Kent, FBC Enterprise

Committee on Order of Business

Chair 2024–2025: *Rusty Sowell, Providence, Opelika*

Terms to Expire 2027: Mike Foreman, FBC Arab; Neal Hughes, Heritage, Montgomery

Committee on Resolutions

Chair 2024–2025:

Mat Alexander, FBC Gadsden

Terms to Expire 2025: Mat Alexander, FBC Gadsden; *Lindsay Allen, FBC Tillman's Corner, Mobile; *Judy Gay, FBC Headland; Gary Hollingsworth, FBC Trussville; Clayton Speed, FBC Hartselle; Will Spivey, FBC Opelika; Kyle Sullivan, Pleasant Ridge, Hueytown

Update on sexual abuse prevention measures

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Craig Carlisle and Melissa Bowen have been central figures for Alabama Baptists in the effort to help guide churches in sexual abuse prevention measures.

During the Nov. 12 afternoon session of the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting in Daphne, Carlisle and Bowen shared updates from the past two years of work in the area.

Prevention guide

Carlisle, state convention president and director of missions for Etowah Baptist Association, reminded mes-

sengers of the sexual abuse prevention guide available at safe.alsbom.org.

As chair of the Alabama Baptist Sexual Abuse Task Force (November 2021 to January 2023) and its follow-up advisory group since January 2023, Carlisle said, "I wish that I could stand before you today and tell you that we have eradicated the threat of abuse in our churches, but I cannot. The threat is still there in our communities.

"I also wish I could tell you that we have had 100% participation from our churches in taking the necessary precautions to protect those who are vulnerable,



Photo by Travis Frantz/The Alabama Baptist

MELISSA BOWEN

but I can't say that either," he added. "Statistics say that approximately 90% of larger churches have taken at least some measure of prevention in their churches, but only approximately 60% of nor-

mative size churches have taken any measures of prevention.

"The good news is that the awareness of our churches has greatly increased. I know this because over the last two years I have averaged calls every other week from churches wanting guidance on if they should respond or how they should respond to an incident. I am glad to receive every call, but I regret the call is having to be made."

Carlisle also urged church leaders not to become complacent.

"Take action if you haven't and keep your guard up if you have," he said. "We are

available to assist you in any way we can so that our churches are as safe as they can possibly be from those who may desire to do harm to those who are vulnerable."

Previous experience

Bowen, retired attorney and member of First Baptist Church Prattville, has served as vice chair of both Alabama Baptist task forces and served on the two Southern Baptist Convention task forces related to sexual abuse prevention.

She shared updates from the national level, explaining that the work of the volunteer-led task forces have wrapped up their work.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

Place a classified ad below for \$1 per word. For more information, call 205-870-4720, ext. 200, or email ads@thealabamabaptist.org. To place an online classified ad for \$9.99/month, visit thealabamabaptist.org/classifieds.

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

FBC McIntosh, located in McIntosh, Alabama, is a traditional church seeking a pastor who is a servant leader with vision and passion for people, God's work and Word. The pastor should have a heart for evangelism and seek to grow and guide a small congregation needing revitalization. Send resumé to: FBCMcintosh1953@outlook.com

PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Uriah, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a full-time or bivocational pastor. Please email resumé to Larry Boles at Wb4cva@yahoo.com or mail via USPS to: FBC Uriah, P.O. Box 337, Uriah, AL 36480.

PASTOR

Pineview Baptist Church, Brent, Alabama, is seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumé to: Pineview Baptist Church, 10291 Highway 5, Brent, AL 35034 or email: pineviewbaptist@yahoo.com

PASTOR

FBC Shawmut, located in Valley, Alabama, is a traditional church seeking a pastor who is a servant leader with vision, and passion for people, God's work and Word. The pastor should have a heart for evangelism and seek to grow and guide a small congregation needing revitalization. Send

resumé to: sfbc.psc@yahoo.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

New Life Baptist Church located in Bay Minette, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor who unashamedly preaches the Word of God. We are prayerfully seeking the pastor God has chosen for our church to help lead our congregation into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Please email resumé/profile to: newlifebaptistch@att.net or mail to: Pastor Search Committee, 15011 Glasgow Lane, Bay Minette, AL 36507.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Enon Baptist Church, located in Wilcox County, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Send inquires/resumés to: enonbccamden@gmail.com or mail to: Enon Baptist Church, ATTN: Search Committee, P.O. Box 4, Camden, AL 36726.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

New Beginnings Baptist Church, a small congregation in Hayden, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Send inquiries/resumés to: sonyahumber@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Paden Baptist Church, Gadsden, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Mail resumé to: Paden Baptist Church, 900 Padenreich Ave., Gadsden, AL 35903, or Bruce Ragland,

Chairman, Search Committee at Padenbaptistchurch@yahoo.com.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR

Buhl Baptist is seeking an associate pastor with experience in all areas of pastoral responsibilities and some availability during the work week. Send resumé to: dmhicks630@gmail.com or Buhlchristchurch@gmail.com.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF WORSHIP MINISTRY & SENIOR ADULTS

Mexia Baptist Church of Mexia, Alabama, is seeking a full-time associate pastor of worship ministry and senior adults to lead all aspects of the church worship ministry, including children's choir. Applicants should have a bachelor's degree in a related field, and a seminary degree is preferred. Please submit resumé to: office@mexiabaptistchurch.com or call 251-575-4398.

MUSIC MINISTER

Bell Lane Baptist Church, Clanton, Alabama, seeking music minister for blended services. For more information or to submit a resumé, email: sheila.bolton@att.net.

BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER/DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

New Market Baptist Church, NE Madison County, Alabama,

is seeking a bivocational worship leader/director of music. Request all interested candidates submit resumé to: newmarketbaptistchurch@gmail.com.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC

First Baptist Church Rogersville, Alabama, is seeking a part-time minister of music responsible for overseeing the music ministries of the church, including planning and conducting blended worship services, directing the choir/praise and worship team and coordinating volunteer musicians. Request interested candidates submit resumé to CorwynTiede@tiedein@aol.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PART-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTER

Pineview Baptist Church, Brent, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational part-time children's minister. Send resumé to: Pineview Baptist Church, 10291 Highway 5, Brent, AL 35034, or email: pineviewbaptist@yahoo.com.

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RESOURCES

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This new book by veteran Baptist pastor and cartoonist Joe McKeever is a resource pastors will want to keep on their shelf. And for those new to the pastorate, McKeever's insights will be a true gift. Order your copy straight from the author today for \$24.95. Email joe@joemckeever.com, Venmo @ Joe-McKeever-7 or send a check and your mailing address to: 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Sunday School Lessons

By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D.
Professor of Biblical Studies, University of Mobile



For December 1

SEEN AND HEARD Exodus 2:23–25; 3:7–15

Our study this quarter focuses on God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt through Moses — but ultimately through Jesus. In Exodus and Leviticus, God calls Moses to lead His people out of slave labor and into sanctified living.

In this lesson, the theme is God’s watchful care over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Exodus continues the Genesis narrative, but the Israelites’ political favor quickly devolved from being a curious and protected group to being seen as a clear and present danger.

Heard (2:23–25)

Some 40 years passed between Moses’ exit from Egypt and God’s call for him to return. In the meantime, Israel continued to suffer under the brutality of slavery. They called out to God but was He listening?

Unfortunately, we live in a time when feelings trump facts, psychology trumps biology and sociology trumps theology. We often wonder why God is not listening, why our prayers go unanswered or how a good and loving God can allow bad things to happen.

One of the greatest lessons we learn from Joseph’s years of slavery and imprisonment is that God plans for good what others intend for evil (Gen. 50:20). God’s timing is perfect.

In the fullness of time, God answered the prayers of the Israelites in a way that no one would expect, not even the deliverer himself. Moses was about to be taken off guard when he saw a bush that burned without being consumed.

Called (3:7–10)

God was calling Moses to combine his training in Pharaoh’s court with 40 years of shepherding in Midian to confront Pharaoh and to rescue and lead Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land.

“I have observed the misery of my people ... and have heard them

crying. ... I know about their sufferings, and I have come down to rescue them. ... Go. I am sending you to Pharaoh.” God was calling an 80-year-old man and his 83-year-old brother (7:7) to the impossible task of confronting Pharaoh and convincing him to release his Israelite workforce.

Promised (11–12)

“Who am I?” Here, Moses gives the first of several objections. He was comfortable where he was. By the time he presents his final objection, he asks if someone else could do it.

God’s response is basically, “It’s not about you, Moses. I will be with you, and I will make you successful.” After all, Pharaoh was not going to allow the Israelites to go unless a mighty hand compelled him to release them (v. 19).

Revealed (13–15)

Israel was living among the gods of Egypt. Which deity should Moses tell them was sending him? Moses was asking a legitimate question. God gave a two-fold response. First, He introduced Himself as Yahweh. (See also 6:2–3, 5). Then He referred to Himself as “I AM” and “I AM WHO I AM.” He is the ever-present God.

In John’s gospel, the evangelist points back to God’s revelation to Moses. John highlights the “I am” revelations of Jesus: Bread of Life; Light of the World; Door (or Gate); Good Shepherd; Resurrection and the Life; true Vine; and the Way, the Truth and the Life. The most blatant “I am” self-revelation is found in John 8:58: “Before Abraham was, I am.” The immediate response of the Jews was to attempt to stone Him for blasphemy for equating Himself with the God of the Torah (8:59; 10:31–33).

It’s not about you and it’s not about me. The message of salvation and redemption is all about Jesus.

EDITOR’S NOTE — The Sunday School lesson outlines are provided by Lifeway.

For December 8

FREEDOM PROMISED Exodus 5:1–4; 6:2–9

Confronted (5:1–4)

Moses and Aaron confronted Pharaoh in the name of Yahweh, demanding freedom for His people. Pharaoh refused. After all, he was not familiar with the name of their God, nor did he see any need to release God’s people. Pharaoh had the gods of Egypt to protect him, so he thought. Little did he know that the One true God would bring judgment upon his family (4:22–23) and upon all the gods of Egypt (12:12).

Like the Pharaoh of Moses’ day, many leaders today have no fear of the God of the Bible or the authority of Jesus’ name. They may invoke His name generically when campaigning or currying favor with Christians, but these leaders do not consider God’s power over them.

Reminded (6:2–5)

God revealed His divine name to Moses at the burning bush. While this name was recorded in the Genesis account, it was not utilized exclusively by God or the patriarchs. El Elyon (God Most High, Gen. 14:19), El Shaddai (Almighty God, Gen. 17:1) and El Olam (Eternal God, Gen. 21:33) were among the names by which they referred to Him.

By contrast, the instructions Israel received at Mount Sinai were often accompanied by the phrase “I am the LORD” or “I am Yahweh.” In addition, Moses later instructed Aaron and his sons to invoke this divine name before the people in order to establish His name among them (Num. 6:22–27).

The divine name “YHWH” is called the Tetragrammaton (“the four letters”) by scholars. This name would become so revered by Jews that they went to great lengths not to misuse it (the third commandment), miswrite it (using older

forms of writing or a separate quill) or misspeak it (reading aloud other names for God as replacements).

Christians follow suit in our modern translations of the Hebrew Old Testament, identifying this name with capital letters while substituting another name for it (LORD God in Gen. 2:4; Lord GOD in Gen. 15:2).

This exaltation of His name is a stark contrast to the misuse and abuse of it in the days of Jeremiah when false prophets offered their own imaginings as words from Him (Jer. 14:14; 23:31–32). What if Christians today had the kind of respect for the name of Jesus that scribes had for the divine name? Must we be reminded that God has given Him the name that is above every other name (Phil. 2:9)?

Promised (6–9)

God reiterated the covenant He made with Abraham and the deliverance He promised to Moses at the burning bush once Moses and Aaron arrived in Egypt. With a “strong hand” and an “outstretched arm,” God would rescue Israel from the grip of Pharaoh. Why did He use this phrasing?

There is a recurring motif in Egyptian artwork beginning around 3100 B.C. in which the depicted pharaoh stands over his adversary. With his left hand, he grips the enemy’s hair. His outstretched right arm is lifted up, and he holds a weapon in his hand to kill his enemy.

In this artwork, Pharaoh is the powerful victor with hand and arm raised. In God’s scenario, Pharaoh will be the one kneeling under God’s mighty hand and outstretched arm. The plagues that followed demonstrated the powerful hand of God that compelled Pharaoh to free His people.

Though God used Moses to free Israel from Egypt, it is Jesus alone who makes us free indeed.

“I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God.”

Exodus 6:7

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Sunday School Lessons

By Adam Winn, Ph.D.

Chair and Professor, Department of Biblical and Religious Studies at Samford University



For December 1

LOOKING FORWARD TO HOPE Isaiah 40:1–5, 9–11

We can have a sure hope of comfort and forgiveness. (1–2)

Isaiah 40:1–11 has tremendous significance for Christian hope as we approach the celebration of Christmas. Correctly understanding this hope takes us back long before the first Christmas to the time of Israel's exile in Babylon.

God speaks a message of comfort and hope to the people, namely that their time of punishment in exile has come to an end. In the following verses, this hope is described in further detail.

On one level, there is a specific hope of Israel returning to the promised land, yet on another level there is an even greater hope — one that we remember and celebrate as we approach Christmas.

We can have a sure hope that we will see the glory of God. (3–5)

These verses describe the God of Israel paving the way for His people to return to the promised land. God will go before them and prepare a wilderness highway to their home.

In raising every valley and lowering every mountain, God promises to remove all obstacles for their return and He will be glorified.

Israel's return to the land is only the beginning of the future blessings that God has promised both Israel and the rest of the world through Israel. For the next 500-plus years, Israel will live under foreign occupation that is often oppressive.

The Jews who live in these times will see in this text of Isaiah a greater meaning and hope — a hope of a future glorious age in which God will be fully present with His people.

In this time, all the valleys and hills (troubles and difficulties) of

the broken creation will be made level in a new creation.

It is from just such an understanding that the earliest Christians connected this text to the resurrected Messiah.

The voice calling in the wilderness is understood as the voice of John as he prepares the way for Jesus.

The earliest Christians understood that the God of Israel is fully present in the person of Jesus.

They also understood that in many ways, Jesus has begun filling the valleys and lowering the hills of our world through the forgiveness of our sins and the sanctifying work of God's indwelling Spirit.

Yet they also understand that Jesus will fully complete this work when He comes again to bring a new heaven and a new earth!

We can have a sure hope of good news and care. (9–11)

Here the text continues to describe the future rule and restoring work of the God of Israel. The Christian knows that this text is pointing to Jesus. Of Him, the prophet says, "Here is your God!"

The text perhaps describes to some extent the earthly work of Jesus at His first coming (gathering and feeding His flock), but it more fully describes the work of Jesus at the Second Coming when He will rule over His righteous and renewed creation and gather all of His people to Himself, bringing both gifts and justice.

This text from Isaiah reminds us that as we approach the Christmas season we must look both backward and forward — backward 2,000 years to the presence of God in Jesus and the forgiveness and restoration He brings and forward to the time when He will return and establish a new heaven and a new earth. In these things we should have tremendous hope!

For December 8

LOOKING FORWARD TO PEACE Isaiah 8:20–9:7

Peace eludes us when we fail to look to God. (8:20–22)

This text describes darkness and suffering in Israel during the reign of King Ahaz. It is the culmination of a description of a wicked people who don't seek after the God of Israel but instead seek false gods and even the spirits of the deceased. In this darkness they will be trapped and even though they look to the heavens, they will not find light.

While the immediate referent is the darkness in Israel at the time of Ahaz, it could be applied to times of darkness of later generations, future times of oppression from foreign nations or the presence of rebellion among God's people.

And there is no reason why it cannot speak even of dark times in our own world and in our own lives. In such times, our hearts are in turmoil and peace is elusive.

Peace comes from Jesus, the Light of the World. (9:1–5)

Throughout Isaiah, there are repeated depictions of such darkness in Israel for which she will be judged and destroyed. Yet Isaiah continually promises that this destruction will not be the end of Israel and that a glorious restoration of Israel under a righteous king will one day arrive.

As we move into chapter 9, the text pivots from the former to the latter — from darkness and judgment to a promise of light and peace. It describes the land of northern Israel, which though it will soon be devastated by the Assyrians, will one day be made glorious again.

Its darkness will fade, and light will shine on it. This light will take the form of freedom from oppression, defeat of Israel's enemies and the expansion of the nation.

Early followers of Jesus did not miss that in this text such light will begin shining in the "Galilee of the nations," the region in which Jesus' messianic ministry began. Matthew quotes this very passage, noting Jesus as its fulfillment (Matt. 4:13–16).

Peace comes through Jesus, the Prince of Peace. (6–7)

The text now describes the source of this light, the birth of a child who will be the king of the future glorious Israel, one descended from David.

The text uses unprecedented language to describe this king, calling him "Wonderful Counselor," "Mighty God," "Everlasting Father" and "Prince of Peace." Such language describes a glorious king and is used of no other king of Israel. This king is marked as unique in his greatness. The reign of this king will be characterized by endless peace, justice and righteousness.

As Christians, we know that the king promised in this text is Jesus, who began his ministry as God's Messiah by proclaiming the in-breaking Kingdom of God in the region of Galilee.

He is the true King not only of Israel from the line of David but also of the entire universe. He is indeed the Prince of Peace.

Through His death, He has reconciled us to God, making peace between us and our Creator. Through the gift of His Spirit we have inner peace, and as adopted children of God we are called to be peacemakers. Yet we also await the Second Coming, which will bring about a new creation in which perfect peace will reign.

This Advent season may we celebrate both the first coming of Jesus that brought us peace with God and peace within our hearts and also the Second Coming of Jesus that will bring universal peace.

*"Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end..."*

Isaiah 9:6

Alabama news

BALDWIN ASSOCIATION

► **Bethel Baptist Church, Robertsedale**, will host a Walk Through Bethlehem event Dec. 13–15, 6–8 p.m. The free event provides an opportunity to “experience” Bethlehem. Groups of 20 or more are encouraged to make reservations at 251-947-5145. Harvey Earls is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Josh Cook**, church revitalization specialist of Birmingham Metro Association, is serving as interim pastor of Palmerdale Cross Baptist Church, Pinson.



COOK

ESCAMBIA ASSOCIATION

► **Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Atmore**, hosted a Lottie Moon Christmas Offering kickoff service Nov. 3 featuring retired International Mission Board missionaries Greg and Shelley Bruckert, who served 38 years in Southeast Asia.

A luncheon and shoebox packing party followed. Church members prepared 100 Operation Christmas Child boxes. Larry Beauchamp is pastor.

FRANKLIN ASSOCIATION

► **Ted Vafeas** is serving as interim director of missions for **Franklin County Baptist Association**. Vafeas has served churches in Alabama and Mississippi throughout his ministry. Since retiring in 2010 as pastor of Highland Park Baptist Church, Muscle Shoals (now Redemption Shoals), he has served as interim pastor of several churches including Lexington First Baptist and Faith Baptist Church, Midway, Moulton.



VAFEAS

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

► The Alabama Baptist reports on new church starts as well as when churches disband such as **Chelsea Village Baptist Church**, which disbanded in January 2024.

PICKENS ASSOCIATION

► **Ethelsville Baptist Church** celebrated its bicentennial anniversary Sept. 8. Rick Lance (second from right), executive director of the State Board of Missions, was the guest speaker, and special music was provided by Faithful Friends quartet. The church received recognition for its faithfulness from Pickens Association, presented by Lyle Dease (left); the state convention, presented by Lance; and the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented by David Nelson (not shown), a commissioner of ABHC. Also pictured are (from left after Dease) GERAL Tilley, Roger Schultz, Joey Brown, pastor Richard Trotter and (to the right of Lance) Mack Fuqua.

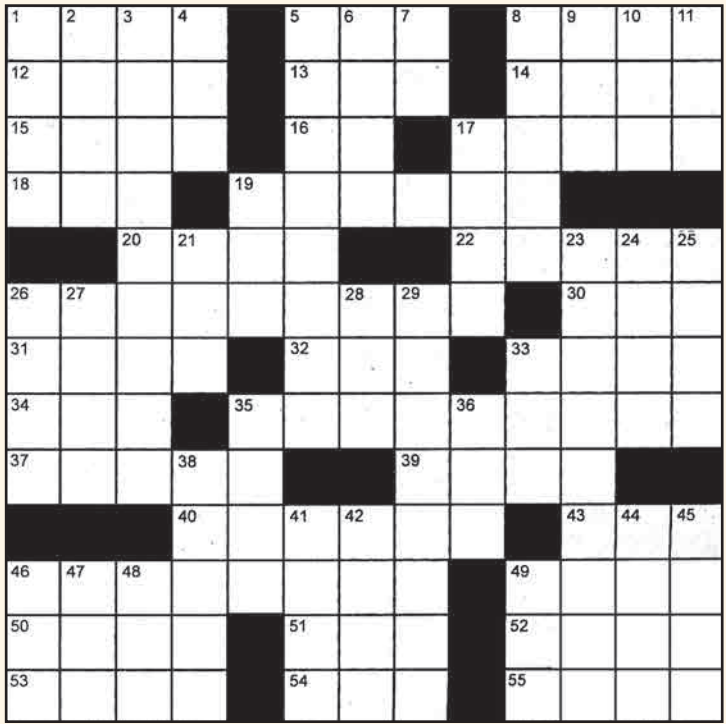


Photo courtesy of David Nelson

CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

- 1. Silas' cellmate. (Acts 16:25)
- 5. ____ aloud, spare not. (Isa. 58:1)
- 8. From whence come ____ and fightings among you? (James 4:1)
- 12. Straight mark.
- 13. Grassy meadow.
- 14. Against. (prefix)
- 15. Mine entrance.
- 16. Each. (abbr.)
- 17. Fork prongs.
- 18. Longing.
- 19. Documents.
- 20. There is a ____ for the silver. (Job 28:1)
- 22. Musical exercise.
- 26. All ____ of God. (2 Cor. 5:18; 2 words)
- 30. Nothing.
- 31. Ritual.
- 32. Environmental watch-dog. (abbr.)
- 33. Buddies.
- 34. Before. (poetic)
- 35. Acceptable. (as a proposed law)
- 37. Grassy plant.
- 39. Carbonated beverage.
- 40. Renew ____ spirit within me. (Ps. 51:10; 2 words)
- 43. Depot. (abbr.)
- 46. The Spirit of the Lord God _____. (Isa. 61:1; 3 words)
- 49. A Great Lakes state.
- 50. Thy ____ is as the tower of Lebanon. (Song of Sol. 7:4)
- 51. Golfer's requirement.
- 52. Display model. (abbr.)
- 53. Raced.
- 54. A Great Lakes



By Lee Esch Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

- province. (abbr.)
- 55. Biblical garden. (Gen. 2:8)
- 26. Three. (Spanish)
- 27. The labourer is worthy of his _____. (Luke 10:7)
- 28. Military address. (abbr.)
- 29. Police arrest record. (2 words)
- 33. Cushion.
- 35. Air. (prefix)
- 36. Child.
- 38. They ____ upon me with their mouths. (Ps. 22:13)
- 41. Reach hither thy hand, and thrust it ____ my side. (John 20:27)
- 42. Federal agents. (for short)
- 44. Brethren, the ____ is short. (1 Cor. 7:29)
- 45. Twelve o'clock.
- 46. ____ and outs.
- 47. He it is to whom I shall give a _____. (John 13:26)
- 48. ____ hospitality one to another. (1 Pet. 4:9)
- 49. Poem.
- DOWN
- 1. Can ____ well on an instrument. (Ezek. 33:32)
- 2. Assistant.
- 3. Not welcomed.
- 4. ____ down your nets for a draught. (Luke 5:4)
- 5. Immediately his leprosy was _____. (Matt. 8:3)
- 6. Thou knewest that I ____ where I sowed not. (Matt. 25:26)
- 7. Young adult. (abbr.)
- 8. Beltline.
- 9. Feminine name.
- 10. A set path. (abbr.)
- 11. Female sibling. (abbr.)
- 17. Every good ____ bringeth forth good fruit. (Matt. 7:17)
- 19. Swine.
- 21. Compass direction.
- 23. Not embarrassed.
- 24. A seasoning herb.
- 25. Otherwise.

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

Resolutions

Messengers to the 2024 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting adopted all five resolutions presented by the resolutions committee, which was chaired by Teman Knight, pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in Montgomery.

No additional resolutions were proposed from the convention floor. The resolutions read in part:

Resolution 1: On the centennial anniversary of the Cooperative Program

That Alabama Baptists continue to affirm the Cooperative Program as the primary method of funding “our Great Commission cooperation at home and abroad” and that “we ascribe ... glory to God ... and are grateful ... for all who promote and support [it].”

Resolution 2: On gender identity and Title IX

Affirms “God’s design that gender identity is determined by biological sex, irrevocably embedded in one’s DNA, from conception to the present ... (and) denounce the risk and unfairness to the privacy of restrooms and locker rooms being breached by persons whose DNA does not match the sex indicated on the facility entrance.”

Also, “we oppose ... altering Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ... (and seek to) extend love and compassion to individuals experiencing ... conflict between their biological sex and self-perception ... (and) commend all efforts by any governing official or body to stand for biblical understanding of gender identity.”

Resolution 3: On affirmation of Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief

Affirms and celebrates the work of Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief and encourages continued support.

Resolution 4: On affirmation for the Supreme Court of Alabama

Appreciation to the Supreme Court of Alabama “for standing for the sacredness and protection of human life” with the “human life begins at conception” ruling on Feb. 16, 2024.

Resolution 5: On appreciation

Expresses gratitude to the Lord and to all those who served Him during the 2024 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting held at Eastern Shore Baptist Church in Daphne.



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Alabama Baptists at convention



Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist
Scotty Goldman, SBOM director of the office of global missions, presents Debra Abston (center) and Kimberly Posey (right), both of Gordo, with missions volunteer of the year awards during the Tuesday afternoon session Nov. 12.



Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist
Mark Wakefield (left), who leads disaster relief and chaplaincy for SBOM, presents the Tommy Puckett Award for Excellence to Dan Wiggins, associational missionary for Pleasant Grove Baptist Association and state DR chaplain coordinator.

Veteran Baptist pastor and cartoonist Joe McKeever (left) sketches caricatures of annual meeting attendees as they stopped by his booth in the exhibit hall.



Photo by Reid Foster/The Alabama Baptist



Photo by Reid Foster/The Alabama Baptist

Left: Cupcakes were on hand in the exhibit hall to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Cooperative Program. **Right:** University of Mobile's RamCorps open up the Tuesday evening session with an instrumental praise presentation.



Photo by Reid Foster/The Alabama Baptist



Photo by Reid Foster/The Alabama Baptist
Volunteers from the host church Eastern Shore Baptist Church in Daphne welcome messengers and guests to the 2024 state convention annual meeting.



Photo by Reid Foster/The Alabama Baptist
Attendees could enjoy a cup of coffee as well as networking opportunities in the exhibit hall.



Photo by Tracy Riggs Frontz/The Alabama Baptist

Rick Lance (left), executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, recognizes former convention presidents in attendance at the 2024 Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting at Eastern Shore Baptist Church in Daphne.

‘Unchurched Christian’

By Dean Inserra
Lifeway Christian Resources

Lessons from ‘new normal’ of church attendance

According to Lifeway Research, among Protestant pastors in the United States, 3 in 5 consider someone in their congregation a regular churchgoer if they attend church at least twice a month. Come to church every other Sunday (26 times a year) and you’re now considered a regular in the American church. To say that infrequent is the new frequent is not an exaggeration.

The local church has lost its prominence and priority in the life of far too many professing Christians. According to Lifeway Research’s State of Theology report, 54% of evangelicals believe worshipping alone or with one’s family is a valid replacement for regularly attending church.

Believing one doesn’t have to go to church to be a Christian is as commonplace as believing Jesus was born in a Bethlehem manger. This is the new normal, and church leaders cannot pretend this is acceptable. The Scriptures have no category for the unchurched Christian.

I believe three factors are at play in creating the far too large category of “unchurched Christian.”

1. The “personal relationship with Jesus” emphasis of 1990s youth ministry

Growing up as a teen in the ’90s, it seemed every sermon was about a “personal relationship with Jesus.” It was centered on you and God. Your relationship, your “quiet time,” and Jesus functioning as your close friend. Certainly, the Bible communicates that the children of God have a relationship with their heavenly Father and should grow in that relationship.

This emphasis has had long-rang-

ing effects we’re experiencing as those 1990s teens are now adults, raising families of their own. If it’s all about a personal relationship, why not have church on the golf course, boat or Sunday brunch?

As Christians, we’re a corporate people who are not to neglect gathering (Hebrews 10:25). We have a personal faith we live out corporately as the family of God in the context of local churches. That’s the design and framework of the New Testament, and that sovereign plan has not changed.

2. Indifference

It’s easy to get out of the habit of regularly going to church, and before you know it, you’re not going at all. A shoulder shrug is one of the biggest obstacles to local church attendance today. Other happenings and the busyness of life take priority. With that indifference comes no longer believing the church is relevant or even needed for one’s faith.

Years of hearing, “You don’t go

to church; you are the church” and, more recently, that “circles are better than rows” — undermining the significance of the gathering and preaching and suggesting a small group conversation is more important — have aided the indifference.

3. Affluence

While church attendance being a priority goes beyond economic class, I’ve noticed in my context that when one moves up in income brackets and has more disposable money available, church commitment lessens. A local pastor once told me, “When someone gets a beach house, kiss ’em goodbye.” I’ve found this to be true.

In the state where I live, the beach, Disney World annual passes, and travel sports have made church an afterthought. For many, having the means to participate in those things changes the priority of formerly committed church members. More money often equals more options.

It’s easy to point to the hypocrisy

of Christian leaders and scandals in the church as to why church has become less of a priority. That doesn’t add up, however, because the study from Lifeway Research isn’t about leaving the church but rather about church being less of a priority and seldom attending becoming the new regular.

We must see church attendance as part of the discipleship process. There’s more to Christian growth and discipleship than being at church on Sunday morning, but there’s certainly not less. Pastors must preach and teach on why the gathering matters and how it’s part of the blueprint the Bible gives believers for their faith, relationship and witness to the world.

Yes, the church is people — but a people regularly gathered in worship. The local church may have lost her luster in the American eyes but not in God’s. The church was His idea, after all. How amazing that we get to participate in God’s grand design for His people, the local church.



The new normal for many Christians is to spend time with family on what was once considered God’s day. A Lifeway Research State of Theology report indicated 54% of evangelicals believe worshipping alone or with one’s family is a valid replacement for regularly attending church.

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MAKE DISCIPLES

College ready?

By Laura Lee Leathers

The Alabama Baptist

New book by Katherine Pasour helps students ‘Stay the Course’

At this time of year, former high school seniors are anticipating a new chapter. For parents, it seems like it was only yesterday when their child entered kindergarten.

Where did the years go? It is also a time of reflection, remembering and rejoicing.

But many times, there is a nagging thought in the parents’ minds: Have we taught our graduates the essentials they need to make it on their own? More importantly, are they firmly established in God’s Word?

“Stay the Course: A Devotional Handbook to Survive and Thrive in Your First Year of College (and Beyond)” offers real-world and spiritual guidance for college students. Katherine Pasour, a retired college professor, has taught at the college level for more than 20 years. She has taught and mentored thousands of students.

Student of students

Over the years, Katherine has found herself a student of the students.

She has much experience assisting new students in navigating the college journey. What she found are two different scenarios.

The student who comes prepared enters with confidence and is not as stressed.

Then there is the student who arrives unprepared. There is tension or fear, and the anxiety level increases until they find their bearings.

How can you help the new graduate navigate the uncharted waters?

“Stay the Course” can help. “From practical advice, motivation and encouragement, to tough love,



Photo courtesy of Katherine Pasour

KATHERINE PASOUR

this devotional handbook supports students as they thrive in their first

year and continue on to success,” the book jacket declares.

The summer months include various activities, such as employment, missions trips and vacations. A college-bound student has the months of June and July to prepare for the transition.

It would be just enough time for the recent graduate to read the 63 devotions, which are about 300 words each, and use Pasour’s suggestions to map out a plan to be prepared.

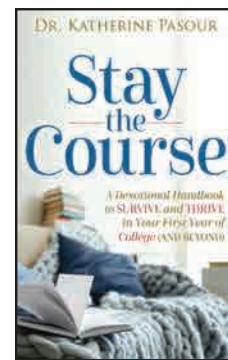
“These devotions are a practical and spiritual guide for your summer preparation and your first year of college,” says a summary in the introduction of “Stay the Course.”

“With God as your guide, you will meet challenges with confidence to survive and thrive in your first year of college and beyond.”

Helpful sections

The book covers nine helpful information sections:

- ▶ “Getting Ready”
- ▶ “Off to a Good Start”
- ▶ “Making Wise Decisions”
- ▶ “Resisting Temptation (For It Will Come)”
- ▶ “Relationships (Getting Along With Faculty, Staff and Students)”
- ▶ “Keep on Track”
- ▶ “When You Mess Up or Want to Give Up!”
- ▶ “Wellness”
- ▶ “Do Good”



Each day is a new day

Katherine Pasour shared a devotion from “Stay the Course: A Devotional Handbook to Survive and Thrive in Your First Year of College (and Beyond)”:

Let the morning bring me word of Your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in You. Show me the way I should go, for to You I entrust my life (Ps. 143:8).

Some days it will seem that nothing goes right, and everything bad that could possibly happen does.

You overslept.
You forgot an assignment.
You bombed a test.
You had an argument with your roommate.
Your boyfriend/girlfriend is mad at you.
The food in the cafeteria is terrible.
You’re coming down with a cold and feel rotten.
The list of stuff that can go wrong is endless. The only sure thing is that bad situations will happen.

There will be days that you wish you had stayed in bed. You may want to crawl under a rock and hide; retreat to your room and close the door; or get

in your car, drive home and never come back.

But in these circumstances, it’s your reaction that makes the difference. What did you learn? Can you avoid the same mistake in the future? Can you try again?

Remember, God is with you. His love is unfailing. You can trust Him with your fears, hopes and dreams. He is only a prayer away. When those terrible days surround you and steal away your self-confidence, pour out your frustration to Him. Ask for His guidance and the strength to go forward to another day. He will give you the courage to persevere through those hard days.

Tomorrow is a new day!

Each day is a new day

Prayer: Father, I know I will have challenges, but it’s hard when everything goes wrong. Help me learn from every situation, especially when I mess up and make mistakes. Help me keep trying.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Written permission of the publisher has been granted.

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Gospel growth

By Leslie Peacock Caldwell
International Mission Board

Health care opportunities, IMB services multiply in Indonesia

In Indonesia, there's a health care triad affecting more than the region of East Java. The network includes a Baptist hospital, rural clinic and nursing college and reaches far beyond the island's, and even the country's, borders. Together, Southern Baptists and medical professionals are investing in patients and students who are receiving and spreading the gospel to the nations.

The history of Southern Baptist work in Indonesia is long, dating back to 1951, when missionaries first went to the island nation. Medical work wasn't far behind, and it soon became a key strategy for gospel access.

By 1955, nurses Ruth Ford and Everly Hayes and Dr. Kathleen Jones had started the Kediri Baptist Hospital, and for decades medical doctors sent through the International Mission Board (formerly Foreign Mission Board) remained in leadership and service. To provide trained nurses to serve at the hospital, IMB missionary nurse Virginia Miles founded Kediri Baptist Hospital Health College in 1961.

Maximizing the gospel

Today, the medical facilities are led by Indonesian medical professionals who are committed to the gospel and the vision to use health care to make the gospel known to all nations. Indonesian Baptists work closely with the IMB to maximize the reach of the gospel and lead other Christian healthcare professionals to meet physical and spiritual needs.

IMB missionary Jacob Stanley serves as a liaison between the medical facilities in Kediri, Indonesian Baptists and health care pro-



IMB Photo

The Eternal Peace Clinic was made possible through generous donors to the Dr. Naylor Preach and Heal through Medicine fund.

professionals in the U.S. He explained how an emphasis on the Great Commission was woven into the history of the medical work in this area.

"More than 60 churches, still in existence today, can trace their roots to the evangelistic work of the Kediri Baptist Hospital," Stanley said. "Evangelism was part of the founding."

On a typical day at the Kediri Baptist Hospital, all beds are full, and expectant mothers eagerly wait for their turn in the newly renovated maternity ward. As is common in Indonesia, family members of patients wait at the hospital, sometimes days, resting on blankets laid out in hallways. Not all rooms are air conditioned, but the Indonesians do not seem bothered by the constant heat and humidity.

The hospital's director, Dr. Iva Yuana, takes time to greet family members warmly, as she steps

around them moving through the halls. She doesn't stay in her office for long, because she continues to practice pediatric medicine. Yuana considers the facility to be behind-the-times, according to world medical standards. Still, the hospital thrives as a trusted source for excellent care.

On one particular day, Yuana stops near a patient's room to greet her friend and colleague, Selvia, with a warm hug and bright smile. Selvia Richard is a registered nurse who serves as director of the health college and is also an instructor. She's brought a group of students to gain hands-on experience.

Approximately 500 students attend the health college, all with a goal to receive a degree in nursing. The college is open to men and women and students of all faiths. Half of the students are Muslim. All students participate in Bible study and chapel services.

The college has become a safe place to ask questions and read the Bible, even for those who would be forbidden from these activities in their homes. Indonesia remains the country with the greatest concentration of Muslims.

Intentional training

The college is also intentional to train Christian nurses as missionaries, who will be encouraged with opportunities to practice medicine in unreached areas. The nursing college intentionally presents requests from other countries to students who are willing to be trained in evangelism, in addition to their medical training.

Six students who passed a Japanese-language course are preparing for work in Japan. They will serve in health care facilities and will also be connected with IMB missionaries and Japanese churches to increase the reach of the gospel in East Asia.

Opportunities to serve in countries closed to the gospel or missionary presence are also increasing, as health care needs around the world continue to grow.

The most recent addition to Baptist health care facilities is the Eternal Peace Clinic. In 2020, the clinic opened its doors to rural community residents who can receive both medical and dental care. The clinic includes a pharmacy.

Staff at Eternal Peace Clinic are trained to pray with patients and engage them in gospel conversations while they wait to see the doctor or stand in line for prescriptions to be filled. Home visits provide opportunities for follow-up to physical and spiritual conditions.

Visit imb.org/healthcare for more information.