

ABN Digest

Stories of interest
to Arkansas Baptists

NAMB chaplain faces discrimination charge

WASHINGTON (BP) – Southern Baptist chaplain Jerry Scott Squires is fighting a U.S. Army investigator's charge of unlawful discrimination for refusing to preside over a marriage retreat including same-sex couples.

But Squires followed federal law and Army and Southern Baptist Convention chaplaincy protocol when he rescheduled a Feb. 9 Strong Bonds marriage retreat in order to involve a non-SBC chaplain, thereby accommodating the attendance of a lesbian couple, First Liberty Institute said in an April 17 letter to the Army in Squires' defense.

First Liberty attorney Michael Berry said Squires followed the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message in protocol established by the North American Mission Board (NAMB) as an SBC-endorsed chaplain.

"I hope the Army sees that I was simply following Army regulations and the tenets of my church," Squires, a decorated major with more than 25 years of military service, said in a First Liberty press release April 17.

NAMB executive director of chaplaincy Doug Carver, a former Army chief of chaplains, defended Squires in a statement April 18.

"The relationship between endorsed military chaplains and their ecclesiastical authority is sacrosanct and protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution," Carver said.

The lesbian soldier who filed an equal opportunity complaint against Squires attended the event with her wife on the new date, while some heterosexual couples could not amend their schedules to accommodate the change.

For more ABN Digest, go to
arkansasbaptist.org/abn-digest

Historic Williams chapel to be named for Startup

WALNUT RIDGE – As Williams Baptist College becomes Williams Baptist University, one of its most prominent buildings will also take on a new name. The historic, World War II-era chapel at Williams is to be named for longtime professor and administrator Kenneth Startup.

Startup is retiring after 35 years at Williams, where he served as history professor and academic dean before rounding out his tenure as interim president. The university's Board of Trustees recently voted to name the chapel in his honor.

"It is an understatement

when I say how grateful I am to have my name associated with this historic structure. It is a humbling recognition, something I could never have imagined," said Startup.

The chapel dates back to the Walnut Ridge Army Flying School, which became the site of the Williams campus after World War II. In recent years, the structure was dubbed the Old Chapel.

"Over the years, I've developed a deep, profound appreciation for the dramatic and inspiring history of Williams. The Old Chapel has been at the very heart of much of that story. And, of course, the history of the Old Chapel stretch-

es back to days of the flying school and reminds us of that extraordinary generation," said Startup.

Startup, as professor of history at Williams, was known especially for his Civil War classes. He also wrote the official history of the university, "The Splendid Work," in 1991.

"It seems only appropriate that the man who wrote the definitive history of this institution is now firmly established in its history himself. Dr. Startup's legacy as a riveting professor and a steadfast administrator merits the recognition of generations still to come at Williams, and this



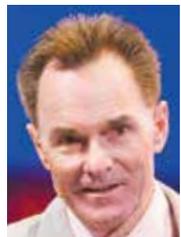
Startup

beautiful, historic chapel is a very fitting place to bear his name," said Stan Norman, president of Williams.

The Startup Chapel will be officially dedicated in coming months. Williams Baptist is transitioning its name to Williams Baptist University, a process which is expected to be completed this summer.

Floyd urges prayer for unity on NDP May 3

SPRINGDALE – "I pray that today will be the day that God will begin to usher in a move-



Floyd

ment of prayer that will literally permeate this nation eventually with the spirit of unity," said Ronnie Floyd, presi-

dent of the National Day of Prayer Task Force.

Speaking to *Arkansas Baptist News* Podcast host Bill Bumpas in an interview for American Family Radio, Floyd, pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, said, "Everyone is more than aware ... that this country is divided ... in trouble and that we need to find a way to come together. There's not a politician ... not a political party ... not somebody's

persuasion that can do that. Only God alone can do it. That's why we're calling upon the Church of America, the churches in America as well as all of America to come together to pray for unity in our country."

The scriptural focus for the National Day of Prayer is Ephesians 4:3, and Floyd noted, "A divided Church cannot call a divided nation to unity," adding, "the Church needs to come together in unity."

Floyd further called on individuals to pray for unity in workplaces, communities, cities, schools, among ethnicities and among all people in America, drawing particular attention to schools, churches and other public venues where security "has now become so threatened."

Observances of the National Day of Prayer will occur

in communities throughout America, including many observances in Arkansas. A list of various Arkansas events planned for the National Day of Prayer is available at nationaldayofprayer.org.

Floyd will lead in a national observance of the National Day of Prayer in Washington D.C. That observance is avail-

able for live viewing on nationaldayofprayer.org as well as on Daystar TV, which provides live streaming.

"Ultimately I pray that we will be able to pray in agreement, all across this nation, for the next great spiritual awakening in America, which is the ultimate need that we have," Floyd said.



SOUTHSIDE ORDAINS MARSHALLESE MINISTERS – Southside Community Church, Paragould, recently ordained two Marshallese ministers: preaching pastor Ermi Drike, shown with his wife, Maybelyn (left), and associate worship pastor Joe Lajabnil, shown with his wife, Risa (right). "Southside is committed to the Great Commission as well as the Great Commandment," said Charles Stoddard, pastor of Southside Baptist. When church leaders discovered more than 1,000 people from the Marshall Islands were living in their area and that Drike and Lajabnil had planted a house church for the Marshallese, Southside invited the young church to use its facilities for six months. "It became clear that these two men are called and gifted by God to be pastors and should be ordained and brought onto our pastoral staff. The people who are attending the Marshallese service are now a part of Southside so we can be the Church together," said Stoddard.

Master'Singers scholarship applications due June 11

LITTLE ROCK – The Arkansas Master'Singers Memorial Scholarship, established in memory of deceased members, is awarded annually and designed to support a college or seminary student who is preparing for some type of vocational ministry through music. Online scholarship application guidelines and forms are

available on the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) website at absc.org/music-scholarship.

Contact the ABSC evangelism and church health team at 800-838-2272, ext. 5121, for assistance or questions about the scholarship process.

Applications must be received by June 11.

Bible highlighted, gospel spread in Washington

Caleb Yarbrough
Arkansas Baptist News

WASHINGTON - When most people think of our nation's capital, they think of politics and government bureaucracy, but amid the legislators, lobbyists and talking heads, a new museum is shedding light on the Good Book and Southern Baptists are creatively sharing their faith.

Ask five people their thoughts on the state of American politics, and you'll get five different answers - but statistically four of the five will be negative.

According to a Pew Research Center poll, in 2017 fewer than 20 percent of Americans said they trusted the federal government to do what is right most of the time.

Public opinion regarding trust in the government "always or most of the time" has fluctuated from 1958-2017. Notably, it has been on a steady decline over these years - from a high of 77 percent in 1964 during the Lyndon B. Johnson administration to the recent low of 18 percent in 2017, according to the Pew Research Center.

'Full-time' ministry

Members of the Baptist Communicators Association (BCA), a professional development organization for Southern Baptist communicators, media professionals and journalists, heard from U.S. Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma at the Russell Senate Office Building in Washington D.C. April 19 as part of the organization's recent annual workshop, held in Alexandria, Va., April 18-21 (read related story on page 6).

Lankford is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and a former youth minister and former program director for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma's Falls Creek camp, the largest Christian camp in the country.

Sharing how God called him to leave his position at Falls Creek to pursue running for political office, Lankford said that he never left "full-

time ministry," as he considers his political office simply a different platform for living out his faith and sharing the gospel.

Lankford's communications director, D.J. Jordan, is also a Christian and led a breakout session during BCA's workshop (read related editorial on page 4).

During his breakout Jordan shared about some of the initiatives that Sen. Lankford has worked on during his time in office. Jordan said that often Sen. Lankford's initiatives "talk about biblical values without calling them biblical values."

By intentionally legislating with a biblical worldview and attempting to live out biblical values, Jordan said Sen. Lankford has been able to build bridges across the political aisle.

In response to recent highly publicized police shootings across the country, the senator brought together people from different backgrounds to have



BCA members pray for Washington D.C. Jon Spallino (above), church planter of Mercy Hill Church. Zack Randles (right), lead pastor of Waterfront Church, shares a message with BCA members during a visit to his church April 19 in which the members took part in a mission project.



civil conversations about race and policing in America.

"We actually got attacked on the right for that - for being too liberal," said Jordan. "A lot of people on the left respected him even more. He was able to have more conversations on other policy issues because they perceived and saw his love and compassion."

Museum of the Bible

Washington is the heart of the American political universe, but it is also home to many of the nation's most notable monuments, historic

landmarks and museums.

The Museum of the Bible, founded by the Green family of Hobby Lobby, opened in November 2017.

Located two blocks from the National Mall, a day before the museum's grand opening its (now former) executive director Tony Zeiss said, "Our purpose is this: to invite all people to engage in this wonderful book we call the Bible. Its history, its narrative and its impact," according to the Religion News Service.

Members of BCA toured the Museum of the Bible April 19.

Each floor of the museum is home to biblical artifacts and exhibits; some of the museum's floors offer varied content while others focus on specific themes. Floor two explores, "The Impact of the Bible"; floor three highlights "The Stories of the Bible" and floor four showcases "The History of the Bible."

Christianity Today magazine called Steve Green, the museum's founder, "arguably the most influential cheerleader for the Bible in America today." While the museum's leaders have repeatedly stated that it "is nonsectarian and does not espouse a faith perspective," according to *Time* magazine, it is obvious that the Green

family's evangelical Christian faith and its emphasis on the written Word have informed their efforts in bringing the organization to fruition.

The fact that the Museum of the Bible was constructed amid some of Washington's most notable landmarks, government buildings and museums was no coincidence, according to Green, who said he hopes the museum will engage all kinds of people - including lawmakers - with the foundational role the Bible has played in America's development.

"Our nation is built on a worldview," Green told *Time*. "Our founders built that on



The Museum of the Bible opened in November 2017 in Washington D.C. Located only blocks from the National Mall and U.S. Capitol, museum founder Steve Green hopes the museum will engage all kinds of people - including lawmakers. Photos by Caleb Yarbrough

concepts they found in the Bible."

Reaching D.C.

Washington D.C. is one of 32 North American Mission Board (NAMB) SEND cities located across the United States and Canada.

According to NAMB, 83 percent of North Americans live in metropolitan areas. SEND cities represent the group of cities where NAMB has decided to prioritize mission focus based on "greatest spiritual need and potential influence."

As the capital of the United States, Washington D.C. is one of the most influential cities in the world. It is also an incredibly diverse city - ethnically and economically.

Washington D.C. is home to some of the country's richest and poorest citizens. According to the Brookings Institute, in 2016 the city showed one of the highest rates of economic inequality among big cities in the U.S.

During the recent workshop, BCA members toured Washington D.C. with local church planters who shared about what God is doing in and through Southern Baptists in the city.

Jon Spallino, pastor and church planter of Mercy Hill Church, shared about how through a relationship that his family has built with a local woman, she subsidized their rent, allowing the family to move into a home in the heart of their ministry area.

The Spallino family now lives down the street from a failing elementary school, which their children will attend, and in between large, newly constructed multi-mil-

lion-dollar buildings housing upscale restaurants and apartments and low-income housing facilities where many of the elementary school's students live - a perfect microcosm of the city as a whole.

Zack Randles, lead pastor of Waterfront Church, shared a message with BCA members during a visit to the church April 19.

Speaking from Esther 4, Randles said that many believers see their relationship with God like the plot line of many cop TV shows and movies.

"God desires to use you, but He is not limited to you," said Randles. "That is a tough line to walk. ... We like to sway from one side to the other. One side seems like great humility in realizing that God wants to use you, but it drifts into this cocky, 'swaggery' arrogance that makes for great television."

During Waterfront Church's Sunday worship service April 15, Randles said he saw a picture of the willingness of Christians to be humbly used by God.

Before the service, Randles said the church had homeless people who volunteered to help set up. Following the service a Texas congressman rolled up his sleeves and carried sound equipment out to the church's van.

"He (the congressman) stepped down from the seat of power and leadership and jumped in with the mission," said Randles. "We had a congressman who was carrying these speakers working right next to a homeless person."

Contact Caleb Yarbrough at caleb@arkansasbaptist.org.

Editorial & Opinion

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have..."

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

Are Christians known for being Christ-like?

Every day thousands of commuters flood our nation's capital.

Some drive hours from across Virginia, Maryland and beyond.

In an effort to cut their lengthy commutes by precious minutes, many people participate in "slugging," a form of carpooling in which drivers pick up passengers who are headed to their same location in order to gain access to the high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane(s), which usually means a quicker trip.

While attending this year's Baptist Communicators Association workshop in Alexandria, Va., right outside of Washington D.C., I took part in a breakout session led by D.J. Jordan, communications director for U.S. Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma.

In his presentation titled, "Communication that Breaks Through Culture," Jordan shared his thoughts on how

Christian communications professionals can break through today's difficult cultural landscape by "effectively communicating the transformational love of God."

Jordan said that he is a regular slug driver and described a memorable exchange he had with one of his passengers.

There is a whole unspoken code of etiquette observed

by regular sluggers, said Jordan. Passengers are never to adjust the radio, air conditioning, sun visor or generally touch anything within their host's vehicle - without first asking for permission.

However, sometimes a passenger wants to chat. Jordan said he uses these opportunities to talk with his passengers about Jesus.

One day Jordan said he had a chatty passenger who shared with him about his church. When Jordan asked what church he attended, he found out that the man attended the Mormon church located close

to where he lives.

The man said he worked at the U.S. Department of Energy and told Jordan, to his surprise, that the department actively seeks out Mormons when hiring for their positions.

The man said Mormons have a good reputation, throughout the federal government, for having a good work ethic and having few ethics violations or HR issues.

Jordan said that after speaking with the man he wondered what kind of reputation Christians have within the government and society in general.

"Wouldn't it be amazing if Christians had that reputation?" asked Jordan. "Today, I don't know if we have that



reputation in a lot of our communities. We definitely don't have it here in D.C."

I think Jordan's interaction with the Mormon man is telling.

In an age when all kinds of messages and information fly around us constantly, it is easy to focus on things that are passing away and less on being Christ to those we come in contact with each day.

If Mormons are known as

dependable, hard-working people in Washington D.C., it is because they, as a group, have forged an identity that values and lives out certain attributes.

How does the world see Southern Baptists or, for that matter, evangelical Christians in general?

What are we known for?

Caleb Yarbrough is associate editor of the *Arkansas Baptist News*. Contact him at caleb@arkansasbaptist.org.



Call & Response

Caleb Yarbrough

Phil. 2:12

The purpose and mission of the Arkansas Baptist News

The *Arkansas Baptist News (ABN)* exists to assist Kingdom work by informing, inspiring and involving Arkansas Baptists through meeting needs of people, spreading the gospel, making disciples and growing God's work in Arkansas and beyond.

As the largest religious publication in the state, the *ABN* strives for journalistic integrity, fairness and balance in its reporting of Baptist and evangelical news.

We advocate for the cause of Jesus Christ.

We report the news based on our Christian worldview.

We uphold high standards of journalism and Christian ethics.



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Tim Yarbrough, editor/exec. director
Jeanie Weber, administrative assistant
Caleb Yarbrough, associate editor
Margaret Colson, writer/copy editor
Barbara Vick, circulation coordinator
David Vick, strategist
Advertising: ads@arkansasbaptist.org
Phone 501-376-4791, ext. 5161

Toll-free 800-838-2272, ext. 5161
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Advice on defense

I am sometimes asked: What is the best book to help one better defend the faith? That is a great question, one that I wish more would ask. I have a two-part answer to this question. My answer may surprise some, but with a bit of explaining, it will make sense.

First, I think the best book to read to help one defend the faith is the Bible. I know, I know: This sounds like some pseudo-pietistic caterwauling, but I'm serious. In my experience, most of the critiques of Christianity have come from those who know little or nothing about Christianity. Furthermore, any impact from the critiques comes as a result of ignorance. For example, it is common to hear a critic say something like, "It just seems ridiculous



Deep Waters

Chad Meeks

to believe in some magical being in the sky." Well, such a claim is a gross misrepresentation of what Christians believe. The claim reflects more of a

Looney Tunes concept of God rather than the Christian belief. If someone were new to the faith or simply a casual observer, such an egregious error may cause some conflict, but those who are solid in the faith can easily defend against such a falsehood.

Therefore, I think the most apt defense of the faith is a robust, solid biblical understanding. If a believer is firm on the basics, most criticisms will seem as silly as the one above. That's not to say all criticisms of Christianity are this simplistic and petty, but most of the negative analysis I have encountered – on social media, YouTube and with popular books – are.

The second part of my answer is usually "Mere Christianity" by C.S. Lewis. Why? To be honest, this is the book that got me thinking more deeply about my faith. It's hard to let go of a book when it has had such a strong influence. I still remember sitting in my college library reading "Mere Christianity" for the first time. One of my first thoughts was, "I wish I'd read this five years ago!" Is it a robust defense of the Christian faith? No, but Lewis never really presents his ideas in that way. "Mere Christianity" is simply an easy-to-read, succinct thesis on the basics of the Christian faith. It is meant to help those struggling with their belief or those who are skeptical of basic Christian tenets.

If you have already read "Mere Christianity," then I would recommend "The Reason for God" by Tim Keller or "A Reasonable Defense" by William Lane Craig. Of these two, Craig's book is more difficult. There are many great books in this area; it is hard to pick just one or two. Ultimately, my advice to those new to such readings is: Stick to the basics; focus on areas of general Christian agreement. For example, don't try to defend your specific eschatological understanding of Revelation to a Christian skeptic; such a venture is not only unhelpful, but may be harmful to your ultimate goal. Look for material to help you better understand arguments for the existence of God, the resurrection, basic doctrines and scriptural veracity.

Chad Meeks is associate pastor of youth and discipleship at Cedar Heights Baptist Church in North Little Rock.



Baptists and gambling

As I write this article, two different groups are attempting to craft constitutional amendments to be placed before Arkansas voters this November to create multiple casinos. Some suspect the two attempts will merge at some point, which would create one amendment authorizing eight casinos in the state.

Of course, I know that everyone expects Christians to be against such forms of gambling. Right?

Unfortunately, based on the lottery amendment approved in 2008, that may no longer be a safe assumption. And that's potentially tragic for our state.

Casinos – even these eight that are proposed as "road building" mechanisms and as "economic stimulants" – are little more than ground-zero locations for poverty, prostitution and other social ills. There's no denying that casinos attract sex trafficking, prostitution and petty crime. There's also no denying that casinos create compulsive gamblers, aid alcohol addic-

tion and lead to an uptick in personal bankruptcies in nearby regions.

If you were to drive through the cities in our neighboring states that host casinos, you might see pretty buildings and broad parking lots on the casino sites. But if you venture far from the casino itself, you'd encounter the inevitable wreck of the industry. Most



President's Perspective

Greg Sykes

local businesses eventually fold; no local hotel or restaurant can compete with the casino's

hotel and restaurant because their services are inevitably underwritten by the money won by the gaming. So respectable businesses close, and pawnshops and payday lenders take their place.

And the blight just grows. But, apparently, in our current culture – a culture that often seems to celebrate its new activism when it comes to social justice – the almighty dollar reigns supreme because too many individuals are willing to turn their backs on the inherent social damage and ills of casinos and simply

court a promised influx of cash. Never mind that the cash actually comes from within the same region as the casino – meaning there's no new revenue injected into the local economy. It's actually just revenue redistribution from other local businesses to the casino itself.

If we were truly concerned with "the least of these," we would understand that, in the high stakes world of casino gambling, only the house wins. The spouses of compulsive gamblers lose. The children of compulsive gamblers lose. The communities of compulsive gamblers lose.

I would suggest to you that it is the business of Arkansas Baptists to be at the forefront of opposing this massive expansion of gambling in our state – not because we're the moral police, but because we care about the spiritual, emotional and even economic future of every man, woman and child in our great state.

Greg Sykes is pastor of First Baptist Church in Russellville and president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

Maximize your summer's potential

Summertime is always great in Arkansas! Our beautiful state is blessed with a plethora of sights, sounds, events and places for you and your family to experience. But summer is also one of the most important times of the year for your church's ministry. Following are three suggestions to make your church's summer incredibly productive.

1) Focus on students! One of the top priorities for your summer calendar should be children and student events. Your church may have the means to conduct its own church camp, vacation Bible school, mission trip, sports camp, etc. If you do not, there are plenty of events like these that are happening in our state and in your association that you can join. Camp

Siloam, Super Summer, "Engage" at Camp Paron and associational camps have much to offer, with the program already planned and speakers lined up. Make it your goal to connect with every



Executive Directions

Sonny Tucker

unchurched student within your reach.

2) Fellowship and celebrate! One of the most pro-

ductive activities your church can conduct are fellowships. Don't allow your fellowships to be haphazard; rather, make them focused and intentional in celebrating friendships and God's blessings and hearing testimonies about how God has worked in the lives of your church members.

Fellowships are also an incredible outreach tool. The friendships that believers have to offer can meet significant needs in unchurched people's lives. By all means invite your

unchurched friends so they can experience what real Christian fellowship is.

3) Plan for the fall! It is essential to plan for this next season in the life of your church. For many churches the first Sunday after school begins is one of the highest attended Sundays of the year. Plan for an evangelistic emphasis that Sunday; prepare Sunday school classes and small groups to do follow up, and have your church and small groups trained to be ready for guests. Plan a commissioning service for one of the greatest missionary forces in Arkansas: School teachers and administrators. Join other believers the Sunday evening before school begins to prayer walk around the school grounds.

May God make 2018 one of your greatest summers ever!

J. D. "Sonny" Tucker is executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

Ark. Baptists noted for excellence in communications

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – Arkansas Baptist communicators garnered 21 awards in numerous categories ranging from design to writing to photography to public relations to videography at the annual Baptist Communicators Association (BCA) workshop held April 18-21 in Alexandria, Va.

“It’s an honor to be recognized among peers for excellence in communications. Southern Baptists have some of the greatest communications professionals in the world and it is on display at the annual Baptist Communicators Association awards competition. It was great to see so many Baptist communications professionals in Arkansas recognized for their excellent work,” said Tim Yarbrough, editor/executive director, *Arkansas Baptist News* (ABN).

ABN took home four awards, with Caleb Yarbrough, associate editor, receiving two awards for photography, including a first place award for his feature photo, “Second Chance Ministry,” and a second place award for his news photo, “Church Planting Vet.” He also won a second place award in writing for his article titled, “Moore: The ‘conscience of the SBC?’” ABN cartoonist Gary Thomas received a second place award for his editorial cartoon, “Church Shooting.”

The Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) received four awards, including a first place award for its Camp Paron website and another first place award in overall publication for “Missions + Ministry,” official newsletter for the ABSC. The Grind Podcast received a third place award in audio at the annual awards banquet. Nick Burt, media services director for the ABSC, won a third place award for his video, “Church Planting – Dixie Jackson Arkansas Baptist State Convention.”

Stella Prather, communications director, Arkansas Baptist Children’s Homes and Family Ministries, was recog-

nized with three awards. She received two first place awards, including one first place award for “A Lifetime of Hope” in the competition’s total public relations or development campaign category and another first place award for “I Care 5k/Kid’s Dash” in the public relations for special events category. She also took home a second place award for the “Outlook” newsletter in the overall publication category.

Communicators from Ouachita Baptist University (OBU) won multiple awards in the 2018 BCA awards competition, including one of BCA’s annual seven grand prize awards. OBU’s Office of Communications was honored with the Arthur S. Davenport Award for Exceptional Achievement in Public Relations and Development for its Texas Recruiting Campaign, which also garnered a first place award in the category of communications and/or marketing strategy, less than \$25,000 budget.

Additionally, the office received three more first place awards for its “Campus Highlights” promotional video, its university website template and its university “Viewbook.”

OBU’s René Zimny was recognized with a first place award in design for OBU “Viewbook” and a second place award in design for OBU “Invested in You” billboards. OBU’s Tyler Rosenthal won a first place award in social media for his single post, “Faculty, Staff and Snapchat.”

“It’s a privilege for Ouachita’s office of communications to be honored by our professional peers. We are especially grateful to be recognized with this year’s public relations grand prize for one of our marketing campaigns designed to encourage prospective students to explore Ouachita,” said Trennis Henderson, vice president for communications, Ouachita Baptist University.

For a complete list of Arkansas Baptist winners visit arkansasbaptist.org/arkbcawinners2018.



BCA AWARDS – Arkansas Baptists recognized with awards at the recent Baptist Communicators Association meeting are (from left): Nick Burt, Rachel Moreno and Marissa Pilcher, Arkansas Baptist State Convention; Stella Prather, ABCHomes; Caleb Yarbrough, *Arkansas Baptist News*, and Trennis Henderson, Ouachita Baptist University.

Ministry Opportunity

ARKANSAS BAPTIST HOME FOR CHILDREN

Campus Director:
Baptist Home for Children,
Monticello.

Responsible for oversight of a 48-bed residential facility in Monticello, Ark. This ministry provides residential care for boys and girls, ages 5 through high school, in six family homes. A master’s degree in a human services field is preferred.

Contact: David Perry at (501) 376-4791 ext. 5167 or dperry@abchomes.org.

ARKANSAS BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOMES & FAMILY MINISTRIES

PARK HILL BAPTIST CHURCH

PRESENTS

JOSH WILSON

MAY 20TH

6PM

TICKETS - \$10

WORSHIP CENTER

Doors Open at 5pm

'Unity' the charge of new ABSC ministry

UNITY. At present, this word is the rallying cry of politicians and reporters, celebrities and athletes, and many other people of influence. Our culture is longing for understanding, despite differences, within a community.

What a testimony it would be for a community established by God — the Church — to model the true meaning of the word; what an example it would be if the church were to model unity even when there is disagreement or conflict.

A new Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) ministry is serving churches with the end goal of "putting unity back in the church community."

Consisting of a team of Arkansas pastors, church staff and associational missionaries with years of experience in ministry, the Conflict Reconciliation Ministry (CRM) is designed to help churches discover some proactive principles for unity and help churches in conflict work through their unique situations.

"Jesus told us, 'By this all

people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another,'" said Scott Miller, CRM team member and associational missionary for Faulkner Baptist Association. "If we (the church) can't live that, we don't have authority or influence to impact and reach out to the community around us ... and I think unity is the foundation of who we are."

Working alongside churches and their leaders, CRM team members serve as consultants in conflict mediation. This model allows the church to take responsibility for working through conflict with the guidance of two trained CRM team members.

"Every church, situation and pastor is different, and you can't come in with a pre-plan," said CRM team member Ricky Lee, pastor of First Baptist Church in Sherwood. "We have some proactive steps that we teach from Blake Coffee's book '5 Principles of Unity' to help a church be unified, and we also have reactive training to listen and evaluate."

"We are not trying to solve their problem for them," Lee said, "but helping them reconcile their situation by seeking God and the path He has for them." All CRM team mem-

bers have received about 60 hours of conflict resolution training and participate in a monthly conference call for ongoing training.

In May 2017 associations around the state co-hosted training events with the ABSC to be proactive by "promoting unity and preventing conflict." The Church Unified training events were based on Coffee's book. Coffee serves as founder and executive director of Christian Unity Ministries.

"The purpose (of this ministry) is to be facilitators: to try to bring two or more sides together in a way that they hear one another and value one another and come to the conclusion that God has for them," Miller said. "Having a method to have those conversations in a way that is not threatening and promises the value of being heard would have been valuable in every church that I've pastored."

To initiate conversation about a conflict situation, a pastor or church leader (a deacon chairman or other church officer) can contact their associational missionary or the CRM coordinator, Bob Johnson.

For more information about CRM, visit absc.org/ministries/conflict-resolution.



Fellowship of Retired Baptist Workers officers for 2019 are (from left): Charles Barfield, second vice president; Ken Barnard, president, and James McDaniel, first vice president. Not pictured is Ruby Kite, secretary.

Baptist retired workers gather

NORTH LITTLE ROCK — More than 1,600 years of combined service were represented at the annual Fellowship of Retired Baptist Workers meeting held April 17 at Park Hill Baptist Church in North Little Rock.

The annual gathering, which was attended by about 60 former Baptist workers, Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) representatives and agency personnel, included a time of fellowship, worship, food and a message from Don Moore, retired ABSC executive director. Moore leads the senior adult prayer task force for the ABSC and is a member of the state task force on prayer and awakening.

Presiding at the meeting was 2018 president, Ken Jerome,

interim pastor of First Baptist Church in Mayflower. Officers elected for 2019 were Ken Barnard, retired associational missionary of Central Baptist Association in Benton, president; James McDaniel, retired pastor of First Baptist Church in Brinkley, first vice president; Charles Barfield, retired pastor, second vice president, and Ruby Kite, retired church secretary, secretary.

Horace Gray, pastor of Lakeshore Heights Baptist Church in Hot Springs, and Ledell Bailey, retired associational missionary of Calvary Baptist Association in Judsonia, shared testimonies during the program.

Retired music minister Doug Moore and his wife, Kaye, pianist, led music.

Williams graduation May 5

WALNUT RIDGE - Williams Baptist College (WBC) is set to graduate nearly 100 students on Saturday, May 5. Commencement will be held in the Southerland-Mabee Center and will begin at 10 a.m.

The 2018 ceremony will mark the institution's final graduation as a college, as WBC will officially become Williams Baptist University this summer.

Sheri Midkiff, a professor of English at Williams, will deliver the commencement address. Midkiff is a 1971 graduate who has served at Williams for 43 years and will enter retirement at the end of the semester. Midkiff was recently named faculty emeritus by the Williams Board of Trustees. Her husband, David Midkiff, also taught at Williams and retired in 2015.

WBC's Golden Eagles, alumni who attended Williams 50 or more years ago, will march in with this year's graduates.



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Ark. DR helps Mountainburg recover following tornado

MOUNTAINBURG - Arkansas Baptist disaster relief (DR) teams assisted residents of the Mountainburg community after a devastating EF-2 tornado ripped through the mountain town Friday evening, April 13.

Authorities reported some residents trapped in buildings after the tornado, but people escaped with only minor injuries and no one was killed. In all, 160 structures in the small town were damaged by the tornado, which downed 200-year-old trees and ripped roofs from buildings and houses.

Numerous agencies initially responded following the tornado - including the

American Red Cross - but Arkansas Baptist DR was one of few organizations left the following Monday, said Ted Darling, DR chaplain and retired pastor of First Baptist Church, Ozark.

"It's one of these situations where you don't have a lot of initial help," said Darling.

Larry Horne, pastor of First Baptist Church, Mountainburg, since 2004, said it was the "first time we have had a tornado, at least in modern history."

Horne said the church had "minimal damage."

"We had a sign blow away and some shingles, and a couple of trees (were downed)," he

said, adding, "We were really, really blessed to have almost no damage."

A new building the church has occupied about three

years was not damaged, said Horne.

"(Our) new building was not hit at all, so that was a good thing, so for the most

part we were pretty fortunate."

Robert Thompson, unit leader from Northwest Baptist Association, said DR teams did chainsaw and recovery.

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Students reach out to Stuttgart through CONNECT

STUTTGART - Plan B doesn't mean second best.

When another church in the state was unable to host CONNECT, an annual student missions experience sponsored by the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC), First Baptist Church, Stuttgart, stepped up to host and help organize the event.

In all, 260 students from 21 churches from across the state participated in CONNECT April 13-15.

Participants completed 38 service projects, including providing free laundry services, a free car wash, a block party, a food and diaper drive and landscaping, light construction and painting at mul-

multiple homes, J.B. Bryant Park, John Cain Park, the Reinsch Sports Complex and the Holman Heritage Community Center.

CONNECT participants also prayer walked and visited shut-ins throughout the city.

"We worked at J.B. Bryant and John Cain Park painting the playground equipment and

fixing a few structures," Brad Morgan, First Baptist Church, Stuttgart's pastor of students, told the *Stuttgart Daily Leader*.

"We painted the bathrooms and gates at the baseball field; we worked at the food pantry; we played bingo and (visited) with residents at the nursing home; at the Holman Center we built a wheelchair ramp, redid the garden, cleaned the

bleachers and painted lockers," said Morgan.

"There are churches that love Jesus and love our city, and First Baptist is one," Morgan told the *Daily Leader*. "We want people to know about the love, grace and mercy of Jesus Christ."

For more information on CONNECT visit absc.org/connect.



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Sam Moore is a vocational evangelist and a native of Arkansas. He has the gift of an evangelist and the heart of a pastor. He is available for Revivals, Crusades, Harvest Days and Witness Training. Now scheduling for 2018-19.

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Leadership Profile for 2018 ABSC Nominating Committee

Members of the Nominating Committee for the 2016 Arkansas Baptist State Convention invite Arkansas Baptists to submit names of persons to that committee to consider when they bring the convention nominations for state committees and boards. This recommendation will not insure nomination, but the committee will consider each recommendation. The committee will not contact any person recommended until they approve the nominations. The Nominating Committee will hold its first meeting in June and needs all recommendations no later than June 1. Members of the committee are: Brian Whitney, chairman; Erby Burgess, Dave Hughey, Chris Johnson, Ralph Mashburn, Tad Rogers, Phillip Smith, Mac Stroud and Paul White.

June 1 is the deadline for recommendations.

PLEASE PRINT

Nominee _____

Minister Layperson Occupation _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Member of what church? _____

Association _____

Current leadership responsibilities

Professional _____

Civic _____

Church _____

Association _____

State or SBC Boards _____

Past leadership experience (within last five years)

State or SBC Boards _____

Association _____

Local Church _____

Personal

This person's greatest contributions, based on his or her past record, knowledge and experience, should be in the area of: _____

Is this person currently active in a local church? Yes No

Is this person able to be away from family and work for at least one or two days, three times a year? Yes No

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rank this person's understanding of and commitment to the Cooperative Program? (Circle) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (10 being the highest rating)

Check the board or committee on which you believe this person could best serve.

Board of Trustees

- Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries
- Arkansas Baptist Foundation
- Arkansas Baptist News*
- Baptist Memorial Health Care System, Inc., Memphis, Tenn.
- Camp Siloam
- Executive Board of the ABSC
- Ouachita Baptist University
- Williams Baptist University

Committees

- Constitution and Bylaws Committee
- Convention Program Committee

Print Name _____

(Name of person making recommendation)

Signature _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

MAIL THIS FORM TO: Connie McCall, c/o Executive Director's Office,
10 Remington Drive, Little Rock, AR 72204
or fax to 501-410-1603.

Obituaries

Bill Storts, 85, of Havana, died April 7 in Russellville.



Storts served as a pastor for 58 years, including at First Baptist Church, Havana; Moore's Chapel United Methodist Church, Waveland; Pleasant View Baptist Church, Russellville; First Baptist Church, Plainview, and Grace Baptist Church, Belleville.

Storts was also a high school teacher and coach while serving in ministry.

A member of First Baptist Church, Havana, Storts was preceded in death by four brothers and is survived by his wife of 66 years, Glenna, two sisters, a brother, four chil-

dren, 10 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren.

On the move



Brett Lee is serving as associational missionary for Ouachita Baptist Association in Mena.

Lee has served as pastor of Board Camp Baptist Church, Mena, since 2013.

"This is my prayer for our association," said Lee, "that we would strive together as churches as we proclaim the gospel to our community and to the world."

Lee was elected as associational missionary at the association's April 16 executive board meeting.



CELEBRATING A MILESTONE — Members of Cabin Creek Baptist Church, Lamar, celebrate the paying off of a 34-year debt Sunday, April 22, with an official note burning as Pastor Lynn Garmroth (behind pulpit) looks on. "It has been a long, hard road for the church and we wanted to celebrate the accomplishment with a special day," said Garmroth, who has served as pastor of the church the past two years. A fellowship meal was held following the morning service. J.D. "Sonny" Tucker, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, and Tim Yarbrough, editor of the *Arkansas Baptist News*, were present for the occasion, along with numerous past members and guests. Cabin Creek Baptist is located at 1121 W. Main St. in Lamar.

Classifieds

PASTOR

Seeking **full-time pastor**. Send resume to Franklin Baptist Church, P.O. Box 12, Franklin, AR 72536. Call 1-870-404-3912.

First Baptist Church, Bells, TN, is prayerfully seeking a **full-time pastor**. A letter of interest, resume, references and statement of faith should be sent to Pastor Search Team, c/o Robert Gaines, 133 Robin Rd, Bells, TN 38006 or fbcbellssc@gmail.com.

Ard Community Bpt. Church is seeking a **f/t bi-vocational pastor**. Resumes and references to Pulpit Committee, ACBC, 13320 Ard Road, Dardanelle, AR 72834.

North Main Baptist SBC Church seeking **interim pastor**. Send resumes to jvance1@windstream.net or 707 North Main Sheridan, AR.

West Acres Baptist Church of West Helena is seeking a **bi-vocational pastor**. Please send resumes and references to West Acres Baptist Church, Attn: Deacon Larry Johnston, PO Box 2743, West Helena, AR 72390.

First Baptist Church of Lepanto, Arkansas, is seeking candidates for a **full-time senior pastor**. Preferred candidate will be an experienced pastor with a seminary degree that aligns with Southern Baptist theology and the inerrancy of Scripture. He will provide leadership, counseling and promote community outreach. Resumes and references should be sent to Tim Benton at tnrbenton@eritter.net.

First Baptist Church, Blue Eye, AR, traditional So. Baptist Church, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Send resumes to FBC, PO Box 126, Blue Eye, MO 65611, or call 870-654-6473.

Bi-vocational Pastor/Mary's Chapel Baptist Church, Blytheville, AR. Seeking a **bi-vocational pastor** for a small country church. Please email resume to juanitagreen69@icloud.com.

Southside Baptist Church in Hamburg is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Send resume to

PO Box 446, Hamburg, AR 71646.

Central Baptist Church, Marshall, Texas, seeking **pastor** candidates. Send resumes to rrobinette@cbcmrshall.org. Small, downtown congregation, affiliated with SBC and BGCT, supporting several local ministries, seeking to meet needs and share the gospel with surrounding community.

Hatfield First Baptist is prayerfully seeking **full-time pastor**. Send resumes to fchpcsc17@gmail.com or FBC Hatfield, PO Box 108, Hatfield, AR 71945.

Saint Charles Baptist Church, Saint Charles, Ark., is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Send resume to Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 241, Saint Charles, AR 72140.

First Baptist Church of Hayti, Missouri, is prayerfully seeking a **full-time/bi-vocational pastor** who is Bible grounded and people oriented for blended worship services. Degree from a Southern Baptist seminary is preferred. Email resumes to: FBCHayti@gmail.com.

Floral Baptist Church of Floral, Arkansas, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Send resumes and references to Floral Baptist Church, P.O. Box 96, Floral, AR 72534.

Cedar Grove Baptist Church of Arkadelphia is seeking a **bi-vocational pastor**. Send resumes and references to Cedar Grove Baptist Church, 825 Cedar Grove Road, Arkadelphia, AR 71923.

OTHER STAFF POSITIONS

Concord Baptist Church, a vibrant and growing church in Anderson, SC, is seeking an **associate pastor for worship and music**. This person must have the calling, gifting, training and heart to lead a large and diverse ministry of worship. We are excited about our future! For a job description and/or to submit a resume/profile please contact jjames@concordbaptist.com. Please also visit concordbaptist.com for more information about our congregation.

First Baptist Marion, searching for a **full-**

time children's minister to oversee birth-5th grade. Will lead volunteers, disciple children and families, and serve in the Marion community. Send resumes to resumes@firstmarion.org by May 31.

Kern Heights Baptist Church in DeQueen, AR, is seeking **full-time youth minister**. Experience leading worship a plus. Send resumes to khbc@windstream.net.

First Baptist, Harrisburg, is looking for a **part-time music director** to lead blended services on Sundays. Contact Bro. Kelly Jones at kellyjones@harrisburgfbc.com.

FBC of Hardy, AR, seeking **full-time associate pastor to young adult families**. Send resume or inquiries to Search Committee, P.O. Box 27, Hardy, AR 72542 or to office@fbchardy.com.

Cocklebur Baptist, Ward, AR, is prayerfully seeking **part-time youth leader**. Accepting resumes through June 15, 2018. Email resumes to cbc4138@gmail.com, or mail to Attn: Youth Search Committee, 4138 Cocklebur Road, Ward, Arkansas 72176.

FBC Heber is seeking a **full-time student minister**. Send resume to phyllis@fbcheber.org.

STUDENTS: Grace Baptist Church of Rogers, AR, is seeking a **full-time minister of students**. The candidate must have a great love for the Lord and the willingness to set a Christ-like example. The position offers a competitive salary, benefits, and housing. Please send resume to Grace Baptist Church, 2409 W. New Hope Rd., Rogers, AR 72758. Fax 479-636-6448, Email: office@gbcrogers.com.

FBC Prescott is seeking an energetic **part-time music/choir director**. Please send resume to: FBC Prescott Personnel Committee, PO Box 447, Prescott, AR 71857.

Mountain Springs Baptist Church, a growing, dynamic church in Cabot seeking **youth pastor and drummer**. If interested, please contact Jeremy Holley at 501-681-4983.

Full-time worship/associate pastor

- Maple Avenue Baptist Church in Smackover, Arkansas. Send resumes online to benmc@mapleavenuebc.com.

First Baptist Church, Henderson, Texas, **full-time position for children's minister**, to minister to children and young families. Send resumes to David Higgs, 207 W. Main St., Henderson, Texas, 75652, or email dhiggs@thefbc.org.

East Paris Baptist Church, 725 N. Collegiate Dr., Paris, Texas is seeking God's man for the position of **worship/media pastor**. We run approx. 400 in worship, 325 in SS, 200 on Sunday nights, approx. 250 on our Wednesday night, Students, TeamKid Children, Nursery, Mother's Day Out Program. Pay benefits \$60-70,000+. If resumes are submitted to our office, please have them sent to pastordonnies@eastparis.org Web - eastparis.org.

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church / Bauxite, AR, is seeking a **worship leader**. Please send resume to Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, 24310 N. Sardis Rd., Bauxite, AR 72011 Attn: Steve Barnes.

Emory Baptist Church (70 miles east of Dallas) is seeking a **FT pastor of worship and senior adults**. This position will give leadership to a church-wide, comprehensive music ministry including but not limited to planning and leading two blended worship services each week and leading occasionally with an instrument and directing adult choir rehearsal. Additional responsibilities will include a comprehensive ministry to senior adults. Applicants can submit resumes to Pat McDanal at patmc-danal@aol.com or 1175 RSCR 3503, Emory, TX 75440.

First Baptist Church of Dumas is seeking a **full-time youth pastor**. Those interested should send a resume to FBC Dumas, 200 E. Waterman, Dumas, AR 71639.

Bi-vocational worship pastor for blended service. FBC Pea Ridge. 479-451-8192. To submit resume or request more info - al@prfbc.org.

Seeking **full-time children's min-**

istries pastor or director: East Side of Paragould is seeking the Lord's qualified candidate to lead a thriving children's ministry and to assist our families in parenting and disciple making. We are a loving and serving church in a growing community with quality schools. Send resume to Phillip Miller: pmiller@connect2eastside.com.

New Chapel Hill Baptist, West Monroe, LA, seeking **full-time children's minister**. Send resumes to melinda@nchbc.net.

Perryville FBC is seeking a **bi-vocational music director**. Send resumes to pvfb.church@gmail.com.

First Baptist Church of El Dorado, AR, is seeking to hire an **associate pastor of worship**. This full-time position is responsible for developing and leading a church-wide worship ministry, which promotes the development of fully devoted followers of Jesus. Interested candidates can submit a resume with cover letter by mail (200 W. Main El Dorado, AR) or email jonathan.kelley@fbceldorado.org.

MISCELLANEOUS

Pro-life ministry seeks **mobile nurse** 40 hours weekly; must have LPN license. Resumes: P.O. Box 1518, Pine Bluff, AR 71613.

Pro-life ministry seeks **nurse manager** 32 hours/week; must have RN license. Resumes: P.O. Box 1518, Pine Bluff, AR 71613.

Hospitality House Manager Position: HH located McAlester, OK. Seeking house manager (couple preferred and perfect for retired pastor). HH provides facility for inmate families in correction facilities in McAlester. Volunteer position but excellent housing provided. Contact Faye Durant (972-765-9717) or Mike Scifres (918-617-1504) or email scifresm@gmail.com.

Submit your classified at
arkansasbaptist.org/ads

MAY 13, 2018

Have you ever bought a new car? Or maybe sat in a new car? If so, you know the new car smell. It cannot be replicated, but when you smell it, you know it. It is the smell of new.

Paul reminded the Corinthians that they had been reborn in Christ and were new creations. After a distressing visit to Corinth (2 Cor. 2:1), Paul wrote another letter to the church in hopes that his relationship with them could be healed. Of course, the Corinthians, living sinfully, did not like Paul's style of calling them out on their sin, and they chose to make him miserable. Nonetheless, Paul wanted to make an appeal to their soul and not their attitude. Paul wanted the gospel to transform their lives and inform their mission.

Paul reminded the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 5:16-17 of their new beginning. They were no longer who they once were; they were no longer dead. As believers, they were reborn in Christ and set in heavenly places (Col. 3:1).

Paul did not focus here on the history of Jesus in death, but the present and future aspects of the resurrected Lord who had saved each of them and shaped them in their sanctification. They were no longer who they were; they were who they were becoming in Christ.

Christ's death on the cross paid the penalty for the sins of all people and allows all people the opportunity to be saved. The church in Corinth needed to both rest and work in that truth. Our reconciliation (salvation) to Jesus creates peace and motivates our mission to kingdom expansion (2 Cor. 5:21).

Paul urged the Corinthian church to be in gospel service and not to take their calling in vain. The gospel calls all Christians, even the Corinthians, to make disciples. Paul's message is clear: "The call to reconciliation must happen now, and it can only happen through Jesus."

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Becoming new

2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-21; 6:1-2

In an age where the loudest person in the room or on the Internet seems to win the day, Christians must choose a different response. God's answer to evil was not more evil but sending His Son who became humble to the point of death, even death on a cross. Humility in the life of the believer is a fruit of becoming more like Jesus.

After prayer and fasting, Esther knew she had to act, and her action would start with her breaking the rules. No one was allowed to stand in the king's court unless he summoned that person. However, there was a "clause" in the king's rulebook that allowed him to choose, by scepter, to allow someone to enter his presence and live.

Smitten with Esther, the king allowed her to enter. The king would allow her to ask for anything she wanted, up to half of his kingdom. She requested Haman's presence at a banquet she would prepare. In essence, she was inviting Haman to his downfall.

Haman was on cloud nine, well almost. He saw pesky old Mordecai again

outside of the gate, and Mordecai did not rise. Haman had everything, but his pride would not allow him to look past what he considered to be blatant disrespect by Mordecai and the Jews. The world's view of happiness in this text is the destruction of other people - killing people who stand in the way of Haman and his happiness. Haman had everything, but he was not happy.

Haman was preparing for his own doom and did not realize it. He was so caught up in his own pride that he had become blind to the reality unfolding around him. Haman's

problem is a universal problem. It is not just arrogance, but sin. In Romans 2:5 (CSB) Paul wrote, "Because of your hardened and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself."

A former pastor of mine often said, "Sin will take you further than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay and cost you more than you want to pay." For Haman, this would become his epitaph.

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Stand with humility

ESTHER 5:1-14

MAY 20, 2018

Have you ever committed to buy something, perhaps for a fundraiser, and then were surprised when the purchased item comes in? I often do this around fundraising time and find myself with way too many cookies.

After stirring up the proverbial hornets' nest in the Corinthian church, Paul defended himself and called the church to a renewed commitment to the ministry. In these verses Paul dealt particularly with giving money to the "Jerusalem project." The church had promised a large gift, and Paul wanted to ensure the church kept its promise.

After all, it's for the church in Jerusalem, not him. Paul believed, as he stated in 2 Corinthians 9, that their generosity would prove their love.

In 2 Corinthians 9:6-11, Paul promised that God uses and blesses the gift of the bountiful giver. Paul did not mention what they have or don't have, but he encouraged them to sow into the ministry of the gospel cheerfully and abundantly. Paul didn't promise

that God would return the favor to the sower and make the sower rich. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 9:11 that God would increase the supply of the giver so that the giver could give more. The object of the gift is God's glory, not one's financial position. The gospel, Paul urged, is the motivation behind giving.

Supporting others in the work of the ministry is important. It was important to Paul, and it is important to the Lord. When the church at Corinth gave to the Jerusalem mission, they were displaying God's glory to

those in Jerusalem and displaying the work of Jesus in their own lives through their giving. Their actions became a testimony.

"You will be enriched in every way for all generosity, which produces thanksgiving to God through us. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God" (2 Cor. 9:11-12, CSB).

How would you like to dig your own grave? Most people would not want to do that. I certainly would not. But what if you didn't know that's what you were doing?

In his blind pride, Haman had a huge gallows built to hang Mordecai on so that he could not just kill him but humiliate him. In Esther 7, the story comes full circle.

Queen Esther had prepared a marvelous feast for the king and Haman. Their bellies were filled with food and much wine. The king once again said to Esther, "Ask whatever

you want, and I'll give it to you, up to half of my kingdom." I'm sure the king was shocked when the first words out of the queen's mouth were that her life was in danger. After all, it was his kingdom, and no one was killed unless he gave permission.

When Esther finally gave her request to have Haman killed, I'm sure there was an awkward silence. Not only that, but at this point it was revealed that

Haman had ordered the destruction of all of the Jews, and the king's wife was a Jew. The score is not looking good for Haman. Esther was stepping out in faith here, believing she and her people would be delivered.

The king had made a decree, under compulsion of Haman, to kill all of the Jews, which included his favorite wife. As you can imagine, the king was angry, and Haman was terrified. We

know he was terrified because he was literally on the ground, probably kissing Esther's feet, asking for forgiveness, begging for his life. The

king asked, "Why are you assaulting the queen in my presence?" This would not help.

The king decreed for Haman to be killed by the executioner. Esther did not have to tie the rope; she had to be faithful to God and allow Him to exact vengeance. The irony in this story is that Haman was killed on the gallows he had built for Mordecai.

Haman dug his own grave.

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Stand up and speak

ESTHER 7:1-10

Featured commentary writer



Matthew Duran

Matthew Duran is pastor of young adults at Indian Springs Baptist Church in Bryant. Duran earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Central Baptist College in Conway, a Master of Divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and is currently working on a Ph.D. through Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo. Duran is married to Aubri, and they have two children: Trent, 4, and Emily Ann, 1 ½.

