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Latest: Alabama Baptists Honor Rick Lance After 28 Years Leading State Missions

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"Worshipful, glorifying to the Lord, representative of all Alabama Baptists and a true family reunion feel"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Alabama Baptists honoured Rick Lance at their 203rd annual meeting in Trussville after more than 28 years as executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Lance, who retires on 31 January 2027, officially introduced his successor, Derek Allen, to the messengers and delivered his final executive director's report alongside him. The gathering at First Baptist Church Trussville drew 805 messengers and 122 guests, for a total of 927 registered.

Those who were there kept reaching for the same words to describe the four days. "Worshipful, glorifying to the Lord, representative of all Alabama Baptists and a true family reunion feel" - those were the descriptions repeated often after the meeting closed. The annual meeting itself ran 17-18 November, with dinners, luncheons and other activities filling the two days before it.

Lance's final report carried the title "Living a Compelled Life." He and Allen, pastor of First Baptist Church Tillman's Corner in Mobile and executive director-elect, delivered it together.

Allen takes over the role on 1 February. Together, the two men called for a renewed emphasis on "reclaiming Alabama for the Lord Jesus Christ."

The honour for Lance was formal as well as warm. Messengers adopted a special resolution honouring him for nearly three decades as State Board of Missions executive director ahead of his retirement.

It commended his Cooperative Program leadership and financial stewardship, and extended prayers to Lance, his wife Pam and their family. A reception for the couple was held on Tuesday afternoon, followed by an evening celebration of appreciation in the main sanctuary with musical guest Charles Billingsley.

The business of the meeting matched the mood. Messengers passed a $38.5 Million Cooperative Program budget and a goal of $23.3 Million in special offerings for 2027.

The budget maintains the 50-50 percentage allocation between Alabama and Southern Baptist ministries. They also adopted four resolutions, elected a slate of new board members and re-elected their officers.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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