



P R E S I D E N T ' S P A G E

J. Cole Portis

*cole.portis@beasleyallen.com or
bar.president@beasleyallen.com*



A Commitment to Transparency And Communication

Jesus was asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" Jesus replied, "Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. And, love your neighbor as yourself." Somebody in the crowd raised their hand and said, "Well, who is my neighbor?" In response, Jesus told them a parable.

According to the parable, as a guy was walking along the road, he is robbed, beaten and left for dead. Two religious leaders see him, but they pass by on the other side of the road. You would think these religious leaders would love this particular neighbor because this man who was beaten and left for dead held the same religious beliefs and cultural heritage as the religious leaders. Instead

of stopping and rendering aid, however, they purposely ignored the hurting man.

And then along comes the very good Samaritan. The Good Samaritan notices this Israelite, who has been left for dead. Typically, the Samaritans and Israelites were enemies, but instead of hatred, the Good Samaritan displays selfless love to a stranger. He painstakingly cares for and nurtures this man until his needs are met. Jesus asked, "Who was this man's neighbor?"

Who are our neighbors? As lawyers in the Alabama State Bar, everything that we do as a bar must pass through a prism of our values: **trust, integrity and service**. These values guide the Alabama State Bar.

Further, as we practice trust, integrity and service, we believe that lawyers in our bar are advocates of the profession and for the public. In other words, we must love our fellow lawyers and folks in our communities and state. What does that look like?

Most often, the Alabama State Bar is associated with discipline. I hear the comment often that the state bar is only about discipline. It is true that discipline is one of the tasks of our bar, but know this—discipline can and should be about love. Many of you have children, and so do I. Sometimes I have to discipline my children. Why do I do that—because I hate them? No. Because I love them. Our discipline system is designed to love our members and the public enough to discipline lawyers who violate our rules. If we do not discipline out of love, then we have failed.

We as a bar are far more than an agency that disciplines lawyers, however. What should we do to love our neighbor? I have given this a great deal of thought. One of the ways that I want to love you, love our bar, is to let you know that this is *your* bar. You have entrusted many leaders to work hard on your behalf and we gladly do so, but I want you to know that I am committed to **transparency**. I am committed to **communication** with our members. Not only do I want to speak to our members, but I want to hear *from* our members. Because, you see, we have a great resource in our state bar and those resources are members who are bright, who maintain integrity, who possess great ideas and who love our profession. We want to listen to our lawyers and help them.

I recently sent a letter to you as a member of the bar to let you know that this is your bar. You should have received it by the time you read this message. The letter gave you three ways to contact me: the state bar website (click on the “Better Bar” banner on the home page, www.alabar.org), my

email (Cole.Portis@beasleyallen.com) and my personal cell phone number (334-451-0856). **I want to hear from you.** I want to hear the good and the bad. I want to hear praise. I want to hear criticism. And, mostly, I want to listen to your ideas about how we can improve our bar.

We must strive to improve because there are many members of our bar who are hurting. I have been blessed over the last two years to travel the state and to listen to lawyers. You know them. They are in your communities. They are in your local bars and they are hurting. We need to listen to them. How can we as a state bar love them? How can we meet their needs?

In addition to building relationships with lawyers across the state, we are going to help love our lawyers in other ways. One of the initiatives that we will move forward with this year has to do with health and wellness.

We have a great **Alabama Lawyer Assistance Program** (ALAP). We have lawyers who, because of stress and many other reasons, have gone into a deep, dark place in their lives. They have not dealt well with stress. They have not dealt well with life. They have made poor decisions. Within ALAP, we have a great staff and volunteer lawyers who address the needs of these hurting lawyers. They display love to the lawyers and others. The lawyers’ poor choices do not just affect that lawyer. Their conduct affects their clients, families and all other relationships. So what else can we do to help lawyers before they make poor decisions?

We will lay the foundation and the process for a health and wellness initiative. This initiative will deal with mind, body and spirit. Already, I have had many people volunteer, who know much more than I. They exercise more than I do. They engage their minds more than I do. They are much more faithful in their faith than I am. These volunteers will love us enough to encourage our growth in mind, body and spirit.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



Hawley

I am pleased to report that *The Alabama Lawyer* Editorial Board has surveyed Alabama State Bar members about the usefulness of the digital publication, the *Addendum*. Over the last 18 months, board member **Allison Skinner** chaired a committee of the Editorial Board, during which she and her committee developed the survey and led a discussion of the results with the entire board. In general, members of our bar place great value in the *Addendum* and would like to see more information set forth in it.

Based on the survey, the Editorial Board has decided to develop a standing committee of the board—the *Addendum* Committee. The primary function of the *Addendum* Committee will be to work with the director of publications in developing and publishing a more robust and informative *Addendum*. Allison has graciously agreed to chair this committee, and Linda Flippo has agreed to serve as vice chair.

Over the next few months, you will see changes in the *Addendum*, both in content and style, which will be the result of the work of this new committee. If you have suggestions about the *Addendum* and how it can help you and your law practice, feel free to share your thoughts with Margaret Murphy (margaret.murphy@alabar.org), Allison Skinner (askinner@acesin.com) or Linda Flippo (lflippo@whitearnolddowd.com). ▲

—Gregory H. Hawley, ghawley@joneshawley.com

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We are also going to begin the process of looking into what I call **Lawyer University**. Within Lawyer University, there will be three tracks. First, there is a track related to *technology*. I want lawyers to understand the scope of the technology that is available to them, and to be enthusiastic about discovering technology that is available to them to help them in their practice.

The second track is related to *business operations*. I want speakers to come in and engage with our members to say, "Listen, I know that you love practicing law, but this is also a business. Let me tell you about the latest and greatest business ideas. Let me tell you about the foundational business principles that you need to consider. Let me tell you about the latest marketing principles that you need to consider. Let me allow you to understand you are part of the fabric of your community. Thus, you need to be engaged in your community and love your neighbor in your community. As a result, when they do need your help and they need you to advocate for them, they know who you are."

The third track is going to be *emerging areas of law*. These emerging areas would be related to current practice areas as well as new areas of law that exist that most lawyers have never considered.

Also, we will meet the needs of our members by increasing member benefits. The bar already has some amazing benefits (click on the homepage banner at www.alabar.org to see the many benefits), but we will bring greater value by offering unique items to help our members practice law.

Monet Gaines is the new vice president of the Alabama State Bar. She is an amazing and capable woman who will help the bar tremendously. She will be leading the charge to address increasing minorities in Alabama law schools, and in helping our local and state bars increase minority participation. I am looking forward to working with Monet.



Gaines

Additionally, our state bar has not implemented a **long-range strategic plan** since 2005. It is hoped that by the end of this year, we will have such a plan in place. This is vitally important because we will have a new executive director in place in mid-2017. The strategic plan will assist the incoming executive director, future presidents and future bar commissioners in helping lead our bar.

Our love, though, must not stop with helping one another. As I mentioned, we must also love the public. One way we can love our neighbors is to continue to improve our **Access to Justice** efforts. Equal justice under the law is not attainable for far too many of Alabama citizens. Poverty levels continue to increase and our legal funding continues to be woefully insufficient. This is exacerbated by our state's failure to properly fund our judiciary. We have many lawyers who sacrificially serve. They are small-town lawyers who do this every day for no credit. They do it out of love for their neighbor. There are lawyers in large and small firms who donate thousands of hours, but we must improve, and we will do so.

Another way that I envision our bar loving our neighbor and that is through the **foster care system**. My wife and I are foster parents and we have had amazing opportunities to impact the lives of more than 30 children in Alabama's foster system. This year our bar will engage with the Department of Human Resources and with the court system. Lawyers, judges and DHR have asked for our assistance and we will help them and the innocent children they serve.

It is also critical that we, as lawyers, engage the public in the political realm as **public servants**. I do not care if you are Republican or Democrat. During this election season, I do not care if you are a proponent for Donald Trump. I do not care if you are voting for Hillary Clinton. I do not care if you are a Libertarian. I care if you are a lawyer. I pray that you will consider being engaged as a public servant in the legislative process. Love your neighbor enough to become a public servant. We are a nation of laws. Yet, our legislative body has very few lawyers. Engage yourself in public service and love your neighbor.

And, there is so much more to do: legislative help, court funding, solo- and small-practice issues, lawyers helping Alabama citizens during state emergencies, the unauthorized practice of law, young lawyer education and mentoring, and engaging our state law schools. The plate is full and the agenda is aggressive. We will move forward, but I greatly need your help. In order for us to love our neighbors and be a better bar, we must work together to meet the challenges that we have before us. We have a great foundation. We have a wonderful group of lawyers who have dedicated themselves to loving others through service. I hope that our love for others will be both constant and consistent.

I look forward to serving you. ▲