

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

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Screenshot/IMB photos

The International Mission Board plans to engage the Japanese during the Summer Olympics in Tokyo, originally slated for 2020. Some of the missionaries helping include (from left): Rick and Hiromi Price; Scott and Julie Bradford; and Daniel and Tara Rice.

Going for the gold

Southern Baptist missionaries serving in Tokyo set for Summer Olympics

By Margaret Colson
TAB Media

In spite of numerous setbacks related to the Summer Olympics, Southern Baptists in Japan are going for the gold as they seek to engage the Japanese with the gospel.

The Tokyo Games, originally slated for the summer of 2020, will be held July

23–Aug. 8. The International Olympic Committee is still referring to these games as Tokyo 2020, despite a year-long postponement because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year's Games will feature 33 sports at 339 events across 42 venues. Most events will be in the Greater Tokyo area, with a few events slated for Sapporo. And due to the pandemic, this year's Olympics will be vastly different than previous years.

In Tokyo, a current state of emergency running from July 12 until Aug. 22 means that spectators, even Japanese nationals, will be banned

from nearly all Summer Olympics venues to control the spread of COVID-19.

Numerous regulations will be set in place at Olympic Village to ensure the health and safety of the thousands of athletes expected to participate in the Games.

Historic change

One historic change: Athletes at the Tokyo Olympics will put their medals around their own necks for another layer of protection, according to a July 14 statement by organizers.

As many as 11,500 athletes are expected to travel to Japan

to compete, in addition to an estimated 79,000 journalists, officials and staff who will also be in attendance, NPR reported. All will be expected to follow current protocols, such as masking and social distancing. Vaccines are not required, but international athletes and staff traveling with them will be tested before departure and upon arrival in Japan.

These changes and regulations are set against a backdrop of general Japanese skepticism about holding the Olympic Games with the pandemic still claiming lives (See 'Protocols,' page 17)



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Screenshot

Blake Kersey, lead pastor of First Baptist Church, Decatur, plans a new format for this year's Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference to be held Nov. 15.

2021 Pastors Conference
format allows interaction

Blake Kersey says this year's Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference is going to be different.

For one thing, it's going to start later. It's only going to have four sermons instead of eight. It's going to include both lunch and dinner. And it's going to have scholarships available for hotel stays and mileage.

All of these changes have a purpose, said Kersey, this year's conference president and lead pastor of First Baptist Church, Decatur.

"I have a heart for two separate groups of people I'm hoping that as Southern Baptists and as

Alabama Baptists that we can wrap our arms around and say, 'We see you, we see you working in the fields, and we value you,'" he said.

Those two groups are small church pastors and bivocational pastors, both of whom have faced a lot of difficult, exhausting days over the past year and a half during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The revamped format — four sermons that address topics relevant to pastors, each followed by a 45-minute question-and-answer time — aims to equip pastors and cut down on sermon fatigue, he said.

The conference will start Nov. 15 at 11:30 a.m. with a lunch workshop on sermon preparation led by Robert Smith, the Charles T. Carter Baptist Chair of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School. Smith will then lead the first afternoon session on the topic of finding your identity in Christ, not as a pastor.

Over the rest of the day, three others will share. Kevin Ezell, president of the North American Mission Board, will talk about how to protect your family while serving in the church.

Traylor Lovvorn, executive director of Undone Redone, will talk about how to have conversations in your church about pornography. And evangelist Junior Hill will talk about how to deal with criticism and discouragement in the church.

The format might change again next year, Kersey said — each year the president charts the course of the conference. But he felt "we needed to take a deep breath and just encourage our pastors" this year, he said.

Pastors can use the contact form at albaptistpc.com to ask about the 100 scholarships available, provided by generous donations from churches, Kersey said. (Grace Thornton)

For more about the event, visit albaptistpc.com. To watch the Special Report, go to tabonline.org/blake-kersey.

The Alabama Baptist

"If ye continue in My word, then ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:31-32

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The crossword puzzle
can be found on page 15.

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash

President and Editor-in-Chief



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What we're learning about the critical race theory debate

Members of the Alabama Board of Education are in a debate about how to best handle allegations related to critical race theory and the state's schools, according to the team at Alabama Daily News.

Some claim the concept is showing up in educational teaching plans, but State Superintendent Eric Mackey assured board members and the public during the July 13 meeting those accusations are not true.

"Critical race theory as it exists is a graduate-level concept. But it is not taught anywhere in any of our courses of study," Mackey said, according to the July 15 Daily News.

The news about the school board's dilemma reminded me of the current discussions surrounding CRT and the Southern Baptist Convention.

A growing number of Southern Baptists are concerned about the potential of any version of critical theory invading our denomination, and with the concern comes the potential for misinformation and mistrust.

You have likely noticed that The Alabama Baptist has done very little on the CRT debate, and that has been on purpose.

We are committed to provid-

ing clarity to situations and informing with only the facts and in proper context, not with emotion-packed phrases to influence your thinking.

And to be fully transparent, our team has had a difficult time truly understanding not only the full concept of CRT, but also the accusations surrounding its alleged role in the SBC.

Our concern has been that attempting to report on an issue we do not fully understand would do more harm than good.

As we continue to listen and learn, I can share what I think I understand so far.

► The current SBC leaders

— of all ethnicities, including our black leaders — have stated publicly that they do not advocate for CRT as a worldview.

Marshal Ausberry, previous past president of the National African American Fellowship, shared that "no one" he knows "fully embraces all of CRT."

All six seminary presidents contend CRT is not being taught in the seminaries as a worldview but some noted the concept is explained as part of classwork related to understanding today's culture and how those areas fit or don't fit with the gospel.

► Having a heart for finding unity among all races within our denomination, nation and world

is not the same thing as CRT.

We are sensing the initial reasoning behind the mention of CRT in SBC circles could have caused some to draw lines and pick sides over semantics rather than a true reason of concern.

► The past two years of confusion and accusations have been difficult, but the journey also has helped us realize we need to have real conversations related to race and learn to hear each other's stories.

It has been encouraging to hear from many of you who are ready for us to report on CRT — to know you want to make an informed decision on how to respond based on fact, not fear.

TAB Media staff honored by Alabama Press Association for reporting, video production, podcasting work

TAB Media brought home three awards during the 2021 Alabama Press Association Media Awards presentation in late June.

The awards are for work done in 2020 and were presented at a banquet on the final evening of the APA summer conference.

Competing with newspapers of similar size and scope across the state in APA's Division C, TAB Media's staff and correspondents earned awards for reporting, video production and podcasting.

► **First place for Best Podcast Series** (division C) —

TAB Talks weekly talk show-style podcast by Jennifer Davis Rash and Debbie Campbell

► **Second place for Best In-Depth News Coverage** (division C) —

In-depth report on Nigeria by Martha Simmons

Simmons developed a thorough report on persecution happening in Nigeria.

► **Second place for Best Use of**

Video, Shorter than 2 minutes (division C) —

"Special Report on Disaster Relief" by Sam Evans

TAB Media sent a team of four reporters to Louisiana after Hurricane Laura devastated several areas in the state in 2020.

The team provided coverage for The Alabama Baptist and several other state Baptist papers.

Evans produced the special video report from footage captured while there. —JDR

Your Voice



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

'Passion for prison ministry' continues

By Pastor Daniel Atkins
Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery

In 2016, Billy and Linda Arrighi joined our church. Billy had served in prison ministry for over a decade and soon began casting the vision of Taylor Road Baptist Church beginning a prison ministry.

Fast forward a couple of years and a team of four men from our church, including Billy and myself, began a monthly worship service and weekly Bible studies at Bull-ock County Correctional Facility.

To be honest, I had no idea what to expect out of prison ministry, but I knew God was calling me to be part of it. It didn't take me long to fall in love.

Each month, I stood before men who were hungry for the word of God and who, for those two hours, seemed to forget they were incarcerated and worshipped in the freedom they had in Christ.

Quickly, the passion and excitement the four of us had for prison ministry spread to more people in our church.

In 2019, the Lord led us to We Care Prison Ministry Program, and through them our ministry increased to six more adult facilities and two juvenile facilities.

We had over 30 people trained and ready to begin ministry.

Then the unthinkable happened, and the world came to a screeching halt due to COVID-19. We had built up so much momentum and then nothing, or so we thought.

But God. An idea was born in our partnership with We Care to hold outdoor services at prisons.

We began pulling a flatbed trailer up to the prison yard fences, leading worship music and preaching at different facilities multiple times a week.

We were able to preach the gospel to more inmates than previously because all the inmates were in the yard for recreation as opposed to the 100 or so that chose to attend chapel service. I share all of this with you as a testimony to God's

work in our lives and in our church as we joined Him in His work behind prison bars.

God has birthed a love and a passion for prison ministry in my heart, and I have witnessed firsthand how contagious it has been for many other members of our church.

One church member in her late 80s prays for inmates by name every day and corresponds with them through letters. One man attended our first

outdoor service and was so impacted that he raised more than \$2,000 to buy a sound system.

One of the main things the Lord has taught me is that Jesus died for and has not forgotten the incarcerated.

So many of the men and women we have met over the last few years have shared with us they feel forgotten. For many of these men, their family, friends and society as a whole have indeed forgotten them.

While the world wants to forget them and they are just a number in the "system," God knows their names. He hasn't forgotten them, and His love for them drove Him to send His Son to the cross for them.

Fellow Alabama Baptists, if your church isn't involved in prison ministry, I want to encourage you to pray about taking that step. Taylor Road's prison ministry has impacted not only those behind bars but those within our church.

I, or others on our prison ministry team, would love to speak to you and your church about taking your next steps. I would also encourage you to reach out to We Care's recruitment director, James Smoker (james@wecareprogram.org), to find out how you can serve inmates in your area.

I will warn you, though, be prepared to get hooked!

EDITOR'S NOTE — Contact Taylor Road Baptist Church by phone at 334-271-3363, email at trbc@taylorroad.org or through the church website, taylorroad.org.



Facebook photo

When you get old, there will be many things you cannot do any longer. But you can still serve God, which you'll discover was always the biggest thrill, anyway! So start now.

Bob Cleveland
Member of FBC Pelham
via Facebook

Most of the true privileges in life are joyful and also costly. Caring for your parents ranks high among them in all categories.

Pastor Bart Barber
First Baptist Church
Farmersville, Texas

If we want to see God move in North America, we should pray.

North American Mission Board
"3 Ways to be Together on Mission today"

Christianity that is not visible in the home will likely not be visible outside the home.

Morris Murray Jr.
Jasper, Ala.

When it comes to the make-up of your leadership team, a little bit of creative friction creates energy to help fuel the mission. However, if the friction festers into faction, then it will drain energy and distract from the mission

Nathan Finn, provost, dean
North Greenville University, South Carolina

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“When you are known as a follower of Jesus, people expect you to live up to His standards.”

JEFF IORG

President, Gateway Seminary

This may sound elementary, but regardless of whether you are a church planter, doing church revitalization or at an existing church, the unspoken expectation or benchmark for effective growth is the 4 Bs: Bodies, Budget, Building and Baptism. Somehow, I believe this has become and remains the standard by which we measure for healthy ministry.

The question is how do we pivot to help the congregation rethink and to take responsibility for personal evangelism beyond the pew to reach the lost post-pandemic? The simple answer is that church members must see themselves as vital entities and be intentional about sharing the gospel and reaching the lost. ...

How does the congregation own their role as a disciple through evangelism? They must:

- ▶ Have a heart for the lost.
- ▶ Be willing to share their faith.
- ▶ Find opportunities to serve.

Richard Bumpers
Evangelism consultant
Georgia Baptist Mission Board

The difficult truth of life is that every word comes from our greatest momentary heart desire. Words are external indicators of the internal affections of the heart.

When speaking to the Pharisees, Jesus warns that words reveal the heart: “For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart” (Matt. 12:34b). A few chapters later, Jesus again affirms this connection

between words and the heart saying: “But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart ... for out of the heart come evil thoughts ...” (Matt. 15:18–19). Drawing from Proverbs 4:23–24, Jesus teaches that God cares about what our words say of our hearts. God wants to transform hearts, not merely behavior.

The ultimate human problem is wickedness in our hearts. Unkind words flow from sinful hearts. Uncharitable speech results from ungodly desires rather than circumstances. Our greatest problem is first the desires of our hearts not our tongues.

Pastor Jeremiah Greever
First Baptist Church
Sedalia, Mo.

Live in truth, speak with grace

The historic Christian sexual ethic challenges today’s cultural narratives on many fronts.

You can choose to reject the Christian view, but attempting to rewrite it as though Christians have misunderstood the Bible for 2,000 years is belittling to Christians all over the world.

This does not mean Christians have always perfectly kept a biblical sexual ethic, nor does it mean Christians have grounds to mistreat anyone who rejects their view.

It does mean that practicing biblical Christianity should not be treated as inferior or invalid.

Some insist Christians need to change our beliefs about sex because Jesus commands his followers to love our neighbors or because Jesus dined with sinners.

Both are true statements about Jesus, yet He also lovingly called sinners to repentance.

Jesus’ command to love our neighbors then cannot mean that Christians must affirm all the beliefs of our neighbors.

That would be impossible, and it is not Jesus’ message.

To be clear, Christians should never act with bigotry toward anyone who rejects what the Bible teaches about sex.

In fact, Christians should love, serve and seek justice for our neighbors, even if our neighbors reject the gospel.

Yet Christians are commanded to live in accordance with our beliefs and to speak about our beliefs with grace, even lovingly calling our neighbors to turn away from sin and to follow Jesus, just as He did.

Jake Brown
Huntsville, Ala.

From the *Twitterverse*

@claysmith79

Doctrine matters!
The Great Commission matters!
Let’s fight for both!

@DianeLangberg

Every time you leave your place of comfort and enter into the suffering of another, you are living and loving as God. A healing touch to the least, He says, is a healing touch to the Highest.

@jaredcwilson

Preachers, don’t forget many of your people will come to church Sunday feeling like they’ve been suffocating all week (or all their life). Don’t load their backs up with the bricks of to-do’s. Fill their lungs with the oxygen of “it is finished.”

@CharlieDates

‘People have no trouble choos-

ing heaven over hell, but they have a hard time choosing heaven over earth.’ —@DeanInserra Wow! Preach, man!

@SamAllberry

Half-hearted Christians are the most miserable people of all. They know enough about God to feel guilty, but they haven’t gone far enough with Christ to be happy. —Ray Ortlund Sr.

@stusheehan

There is something very wrong when those who know much of Jesus look so little like Him.

@bellevuepastor

One of the best ways to “hide God’s Word in your heart” is to memorize Scripture.

There’s no substitute for this foundational discipline.

Sow this good seed & reap the good harvest.

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” Psalm 119:11

@haines_matt

The problem of the human heart is usually not that it doesn’t know what’s right in God’s eyes. The problem ... is that it usually cares more about something else than what is right in God’s eyes.

@drjamesmeritt

Another thought on science and biblical truth: “Scientific statements of facts and relations cannot produce ethical directives.” —@AlbertEinstein

Science can tell us how a life comes to be; it cannot tell us how that life should be lived. The Bible fits that role perfectly.

@OtisCorbitt

Jesus is the Good Shepherd, but are we good sheep?

TRAUMA IN AMERICA: THIRD IN A SERIES

Teens' struggle with anxiety very common

Parents, youth leaders may be first to see signs, be able to recommend help

By Tracy Riggs
TAB Media

Between 2007 and 2012, anxiety disorders in children and teens went up 20%, according to the National Institutes of Health. The rate of hospital admissions for suicidal teens has also doubled in the past decade.

With nearly 1 in 3 of all adolescents ages 13 to 18 suffering from anxiety, youth and student leaders are working in a challenging environment. Youth ministry in an age of increased anxiety was the focus of a recent webinar, "Conversations with the Expert: Mental Health in Teenagers," hosted by Scooter Kellum, youth ministry strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Al Saunders, a psychologist at Wellspring Christian Clinic in Birmingham, explained that anxiety is the mental health issue teens currently struggle with most.

"I've been working [in mental health] 25 years now and I have seen anxiety just explode. ... We can talk about pandemics all day long, but anxiety is really an epidemic amongst our teenagers. ... If you walked into any high school, anyone age 13 to 18, about 25% of those people have an anxiety disorder, and that number is going up about 4% a year," Saunders said.

Many possibilities

Sexual and gender issues, drug and alcohol abuse and a general loss of identity often are rooted in anxiety, he said. Furthermore, the leading cause of depression is anxiety.

Among mental health disorders, "anxiety and depression are number one and two," Saunders said.

The difference between the two is



Jon LaMarque (clockwise from top left), Scooter Kellum and Al Saunders talk during a recent webinar on mental health in teenagers.

fear. Saunders described how anxiety relates to fear and worry, using an example of a snake lunging out of a bush. Fear is a normal response to a major threat, and jumping out of the way, escaping or fighting back would be useful in that situation.

However, one who has anxiety continues to look for a snake for weeks. The fight or flight response lingers.

"So anxiety is more of a diffuse, generalized, nonspecific thing with a fight or flight response that's always on, and that's very bad for [a] body," Saunders explained.

Anxiety isn't always a reason to obtain professional help, he said, but sometimes counseling can help.

"Occasional anxiety is not unusual, and it's not really even

treatment worthy, but if a kid's feelings of anxiety are extreme, they're lasting more than a month and they're really causing them to suffer in a lot of different areas — school, social relationships, athletics, whatever — that's when you're starting to think, 'OK, this may be a disorder, an anxiety disorder,'" he said.

Signs of someone in need of help may include persistent worrying, irritability, avoiding activities or changes in grades. Other symptoms include poor concentration, substance abuse and physical symptoms like stomachaches, headaches or fatigue.

"Kids are pretty good about hiding it though, and they're desperately searching for something to medicate

it, so that's where alcohol and drugs come in," Saunders said.

He noted there is a difference between the depression or sadness everyone sometimes feels and clinical depression, which is severe and includes feeling sad for at least two weeks with other specific symptoms, such as major changes in sleep patterns, loss of interest in things normally enjoyed, feeling guilty and worthless, changes in energy, concentration issues, lethargy or agitation, appetite changes and thoughts or attempts of suicide.

If a teenager exhibits at least five of those symptoms for more than two weeks, Saunders said that is "definitely when someone like me needs to get a call."

Youth pastors and volunteers may recognize the signs, Saunders said, and if so, they can help by pointing them to professional resources.

The stigma

The webinar touched on other subjects affecting teens, including the stigma of mental health needs and unhealthy coping methods like substance abuse and self-harm.

Saunders said youth leaders can begin by listening to what's going on in the teen's world and suggesting positive ways to cope.

"You guys in youth ministry, man, y'all are doing so good, so much more good than you even realize," Saunders encouraged. "And it goes way beyond the spiritual; just the relationships that you guys are providing for these kids. It really [provides] a healthy connection."

"But there is a point where we need to make that phone call, try to get them some help ... when it's significantly hurting their performance in some area, or certainly when their safety is jeopardized."

To listen to the entire webinar, go to tabonline.org/teens-mental-health. For more resources, visit pinnaclealabama.org.



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Culture of violence

Parents can help children by limiting exposure, reminding of God's promises

By Denise George
TAB Media

A recent survey by security company SafeWise found 82% of Alabamians are fearful of rising violent crime. Trends suggest those fears are well-founded.

While overall crime in Alabama has declined by 17% since 2005, that drop is driven primarily by a drop in property crimes, including burglary and larceny.

The number of violent crimes in the state has increased by 9% since 2005, led by a general upward trend in assault, rape and homicide, according to statistics provided by the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency.

Alabama ranks No. 8 on the list of America's most dangerous states based on FBI data.

Ripple effects

Fears about violent crime have ripple effects through families, schools and churches.

While Christian parents and grandparents themselves struggle to adjust to rapidly increasing crime rates, they are intensely concerned about the negative physical, mental, emotional and spiritual impact heightened crime is having on their young children.

Little ones are feeling unsafe in their homes, schools, cars, churches and neighborhoods. Children lack mature understanding, and witnessing or hearing about escalating violence makes them feel vulnerable, afraid and often unprotected.

Parents worry about the long-lasting effects of high crime.

With Alabama's status as one of America's most dangerous states, Christian pastors and parents are needed now more than ever to help vulnerable, frightened children feel safe in the midst of rising crime and to instill God's secure promises into their young hearts.

Practical suggestions

What can Christian families do to help young children feel safe, secure and protected? Here are some practical suggestions:

► Pastor Jacob Simmons (Hope Community Church, Birmingham) advises: "Teach children the promises of God. Violence, death, pain and suffering are real,

but God is near to us, He will not leave us, and He promises to restore us.

"The violence we see is ultimately temporary, and the peace of God will reign forever."

► Keep young children away from media violence, including television news reports, violent movies, video games, etc.

Be aware of friends and family members who may allow exposure to media violence.

Discuss news of violence only when children cannot overhear the conversations.

► Invite children to talk about their fears, and listen closely to their comments.

► Be alert to your children's body language, which often indicates excessive anxiety or fear.

Signs to watch for include abnormal behavior, aggression toward others, insomnia, self-destructive behavior and/or eating problems. If necessary, seek professional help.

► Pastor Al Jackson (Lakeview Baptist Church, Auburn) says: "Even young children can be taught [the promise of Scripture]: 'When I am afraid, I will trust in you.'"

► Spend devotional time together as a family, praying and reading scripture.

► Reassure children that home and school are safe places.

► Pastor Daven Watkins (First Baptist Church, Pelham) suggests parents talk directly with children, telling them: "Certainly, there is a lot of fighting, violence and chaos all around us. ... There are a lot of people with a lot of opinions, but we want to always trust Jesus and think biblically.

"I want to encourage you to never be afraid, and in all things trust Jesus with unwavering faith. God and His word are always trustworthy and sufficient for us. We can count on our God, Who is bigger than our problems and stronger than our fears.

"There are some things in this world that money can't fix, the military can't fix, the president can't fix, Congress can't fix, doctors can't fix, lawyers can't fix, coaches can't fix, teachers can't fix, your parents can't fix, but there ain't nothing Jesus can't fix!

"He is our able, sufficient Savior."



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Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

'I Surrender All' writer sings hymn on deathbed

Judson Wheeler van DeVenter (1855–1939) was a hymn writer, evangelist, teacher and musician.

Van DeVenter was born Dec. 5, 1855, to Christian parents — John Wesley and Eliza Ann Van DeVenter — on a farm near Dundee, Michigan.

When he was 17, he became a Christian.

Educated in village schools, he graduated from Hillsdale College in Michigan. He was an art teacher and supervisor of art in the public schools of Sharon, Pennsylvania, for 15 years.

During that time, he was active in the Methodist Episcopal Church doing evangelistic work.

In 1880, he married Malissa Miller. They had two sons and a daughter.

Life decision

He struggled for five years between continuing his career in art or going into full-time evangelistic work. He finally surrendered to full-time ministry.

While at the home of evangelist George Sebring, he wrote the

words of "I Surrender All," based upon his surrendering to God's plan for his life. Sebring put the words to music in 1896. The same year it was published in "Gospel Songs of Grace and Glory."

The words to "I Surrender All," — "All to Jesus I surrender/ All to him I freely give/ I will ever love and trust him/ In his presence daily live" — have resonated for generations of Baptists.

Van DeVenter went on to write more than 60 hymns and songs. Also a musician, he played 13 different instruments.

Van DeVenter evangelized throughout the United States and Great Britain, and numerous people were converted.

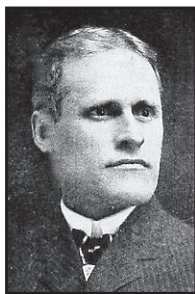
In the 1920s, he served as a professor of hymnology for four years at Florida Bible Institute near Tampa. After teaching, he continued to live in Tampa.

Ties with Billy Graham

Evangelist Billy Graham later attended Florida Bible Institute and met Van DeVenter. "We students loved this kind, deeply spiritual gentleman and often gathered in his home for an evening of fellowship and singing," Graham related in "Crusade Hymn Stories," written by Cliff Barrows, who frequently sang at Graham's crusades.

Graham was with the hymn writer when he died on July 17, 1939. "He went to be with Christ with a smile on his face, looking forward to seeing Jesus," Graham said, recounting that Van DeVenter sang "I Surrender All" on his deathbed.

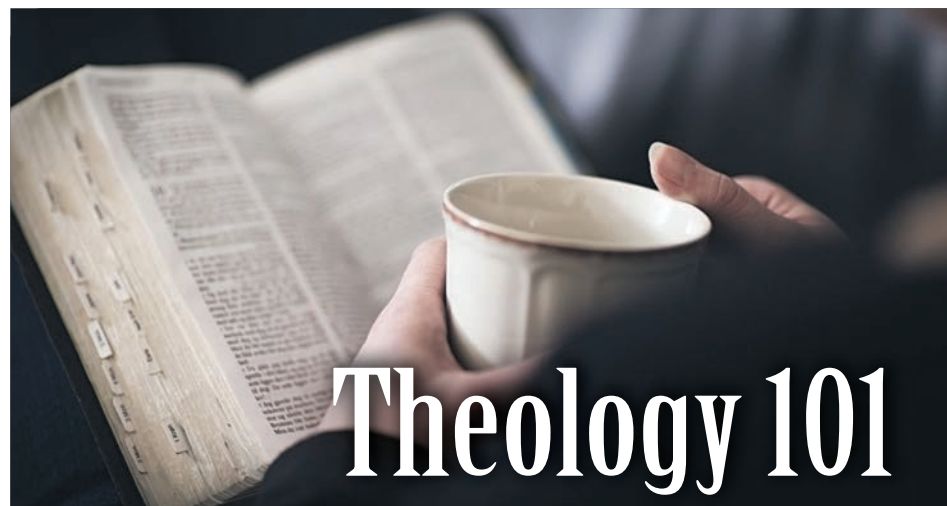
Van DeVenter was buried in Dundee's Maple Grove Cemetery in Michigan.



VAN DeVENTER

By Joanne Sloan

Joanne Sloan, a member of First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, has been a published writer of articles and books for 30 years. She has a bachelor's degree double majoring in history and English from East Texas State University (now Texas A&M—Commerce) and a master's degree specializing in English from the University of Arkansas (1978).



BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Christ's Power

Enabling Power

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
TAB Media

There is something intriguing and even mysterious about the term "power." In the natural or physical realm, for example, we encounter "atomic power," "nuclear power," "military power" or "political power." Sometimes we have occasion to speak or read of the power of tornadoes or hurricanes, as well as floods or undertows.

Jesus spoke of another kind of power in the closing words of the Gospel of Matthew, in a passage we commonly refer to as the Great Commission.

Great Commission

Christ's commission is for His followers to take the gospel into all the world to make disciples, then teach them all He commanded. The preface to this climactic commission is the comprehensive claim of Christ that "all power" or "all authority" has been given to Him "in heaven and on earth" (28:18).

Later, based on years of experience, Paul declared, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).

One aspect of the power of Christ is "enabling power."

Human plans or strategies alone are not sufficient.

Disciples who would make other disciples must be enabled by divine or supernatural power.

To that end, Christ left followers in every generation the promise of the Holy Spirit. His departing promise to His earliest disciples was, "You shall receive

power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Transforming power

Christ's enabling power also is transforming. It made Paul, the self-confessed chief of sinners, into a proclaimer of the gospel, a founder of churches and a writer of Holy Scripture.

Christ's power took ordinary humans and made them into extraordinary gospel servants. Only eternity will reveal the extent to which Christ's enabling power has through the centuries taken ordinary or even unlikely people and made them His winsome and fruitful witnesses.

Christ's enabling power also is cleansing and sanctifying. Ephesians contains the good news that "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish" (5:25–27).

Jerry Batson is a retired Alabama Baptist pastor who also has served as associate dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and professor of several schools of religion during his career.



'Confident in CHRIST'

Campus ministry helps Samford player 'know God and make Him known'

By Bill Sorrell
TAB Media

When Nelson Jordan Jr. was five months old, his father, Nelson Sr., was at his job in Starkville, Mississippi, cutting down trees. One of them fell and hit him on the head, and he died from his injuries.

Later Jordan found a father — Jesus.

"I never had a father growing up. I needed the guidance, leadership and discipline of a father. I didn't find that until I started to seek Jesus," Jordan said. "Being that I was an athlete, I sought for that leadership through different coaches and men that were in my life.

"It never could equal up to what Jesus had for me. Jesus filled the void of me being fatherless," he continued.

"Out of all the times I yearned to fill the void with other things, I never was able to be complete until I met Jesus."

When Jordan, a redshirt junior, goes on the field as a starting defensive end for Samford University in Birmingham, he writes, "4 You Pops," on his wrist tape.

"In games, [my father] is there in spirit," the 22-year-old said.

Spiritual growth

Jordan has grown spiritually through the campus ministry Ransom (Radical Athletes and Student Oasis Ministry), designed to provide mentorship and leadership training on college campuses.

"Ransom has pushed me so hard in my faith, in my relationship with



NELSON JORDAN JR. (94)

Samford University photo

God," Jordan said, "and pushed me to be bold, to be unapologetically confident in Christ."

He is very involved in the ministry, leading Bible studies and preaching "strictly from the Bible," he said.

Samford running back Ty Boles, a senior academically but a sophomore on the field because of NCAA regulations involving COVID-19, was invited to Ransom by Jordan after he transferred from William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri.

"He is always inviting teammates to come to Ransom," Boles said. "Students grow tremendously in their walk with Christ. Through this multiple players have been led to Christ.

"Nelson has had a huge impact on my life [and] has an incredible

spiritual impact on the team. He is always stepping up to lead our team in prayer after practice or workouts and continually encourages teammates to grow in their faith. Nelson has helped my faith grow immensely."

'Big brother'

Jordan took Boles, who is from Panama City, Florida, under his wing at Ransom and became "my big brother," Boles said.

"He has guided me through life and helped me in areas where I struggle and has given me courage to step out and share my testimony at Ransom when I used to be terrified of public speaking," Boles said.

Jordan distributes flyers on Samford's campus, encouraging people to attend Ransom.

"To do that showed the boldness I needed to have for God," Jordan explained.

He said his faith has grown as he has studied the Bible.

"I truly feel there is nothing that I can pour out that I don't have. I read ... in the Bible where it says Scripture is like milk to a baby. Starting off my faith, I was in baby mode.

The more I fed, the more I was able to get into God's face and see my faith grow," Jordan said.

It also grew when he realized he needed to change the crowd of people he was hanging around.

"It got to a point I didn't have any control over my life. I would do whatever the crowd was doing. It was a turning point when I realized that God consecrated me, that He set me apart and made me to be special," Jordan said.

"One of the toughest things of being a college athlete and being a Christian is not conforming to the culture. You have to have discernment [about] what you can get into and what you don't need to get into."

Ransom was founded by former Samford and NFL defensive lineman Jeremy Towns, who played for the Washington Redskins, Philadelphia Eagles and Buffalo Bills.

Towns graduated with honors from Samford with a degree in sports medicine in 2013 and later graduated from the University of South Alabama medical school. He will finish medical residency at the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 2023.

Jordan earned a bachelor's degree in May and is now working toward an MBA.

He was a freshman All-American in 2018. At Starkville High School in Mississippi he played on a state championship basketball team in 2014 and a state championship football team in 2015.

Jordan graduated from Starkville High in 2017 and was redshirted his freshman year at Samford. He didn't know he had earned freshman All-American until a teammate told him.

Along with playing in the NFL and later being an athletic director, he has another goal.

"My ultimate goal is to know God and make Him known. I want to use sports as a tool to make God known."

"My ultimate goal is to know God and make Him known. I want to use sports as a tool to make God known."

Nelson Jordan Jr.
Samford University football player and graduate student



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Platform for missions

Ms. Senior Alabama pageant gives winners unique opportunity to share Christ

By Lanell Downs Smith
TAB Media

As a young girl, Penny Ruth Njoroge never dreamed of competing in a pageant. Growing up in Kenya, where only male children attended school, her greatest desire was to get an education.

And last year, on the third anniversary of her American citizenship, Njoroge competed in the Ms. Senior Alabama pageant and received awards for First Runner Up, Miss Congeniality and People's Choice.

'Inspiring stories'

Njoroge earned a doctorate in clinical Christian counseling at the age of 62, and decided to enter the pageant, she said, to inspire other seniors "not to quit on life."

"Ms. Senior Alabama is not just about a pretty face, but mostly about beautiful and inspiring stories that build, encourage and empower others," Njoroge said.

Her story is one of hard-

ship, but also victory — overcoming domestic violence, divorce and poverty.

As the granddaughter of a clan chief who forbade educating girls, she and her family were shamed and then banned from their village because of her pleas to attend school.

After that, they struggled for survival in the slums of Nairobi, but she and her nine siblings all went on to graduate from high school.

As a young woman, her marriage seemed perfect from the outside. No one knew what she was too ashamed to tell — she was beaten every day, battled severe depression and had twice attempted suicide.

"When I attempted suicide and [lived] the second time, I knew God had a reason for this," Njoroge reflected.

"That is when I woke up to the realization that my life was not just about me, and then I knew I had to use my own experiences to encourage somebody else."

That's when her community work with the Chris-



Photo courtesy of Kim Crawford-Meeks

Neither Penny Njoroge (left), first runner-up, nor Cindy Dixon, Ms. Senior Alabama 2020, had ever competed in pageants before winning last year.

tian organization Servants in Faith and Technology opened doors for Njoroge's immigration to America.

Today, 74-year-old Njoroge shares a message of hope. Through speaking opportunities and also in her own Christian counseling practice, Angel Counseling Services in Birmingham, she works to unmask mental illness and help hurting people discover the God who heals.

'Vibrant illustration'

"Let us look beyond our pain because there is a better life out there," she tells clients.

"That is the only reason why God has kept us through the pain, through the scars, through the struggles — so that we can be a vibrant illustration for others."

Similar to Njoroge, Cindy Dixon, Ms. Senior Alabama 2020, also hadn't planned on entering a pageant. The high school teacher recalls laughing when a student suggested she should compete at almost 60 years of age.

But on a missions trip to Tanzania, she celebrated her 60th birthday, and the

people there "marveled" at her "advanced age."

On the flight home, Dixon considered the blessings of her life and reflected on all the things she had promised to do but had never done. Pageants came back to her mind.

At Tuscaloosa County's GRAD Academy, Dixon works with high school students who have committed class-three offenses like assaulting a teacher or selling drugs. Competing in the pageant became an opportunity, she said, to teach her students the value of making good choices.

"[Students] can't believe that I'm as old as I am because their grandparents are younger than me, but they look older," Dixon said. "But when we talk about it, I say: 'Well, it's possible that it's genetic. But it's also possible that it's [positive] life choices.'"

Dixon tells students about her faith in Christ and uses Bible stories and literature to help students see the

impact of their own life choices.

Dixon's missions experiences also provide teachable moments, she said.

"They are fascinated [about] the work that I do in Tanzania," she explained. "They don't understand why [Tanzanians] want to hear about Jesus so much."

As a volunteer with the fresh water well drilling ministry Bucket By Bucket, Dixon leads seminars for women who sometimes walk for miles to hear about Christ. Bucket By Bucket enables Dixon to help little girls, like Njoroge, receive an education by placing wells on elementary school property so all children can attend school, then help each other carry water home.

Raise awareness

Dixon uses her platform as Ms. Senior Alabama 2020 to raise awareness of the ministry's work and the need for clean water.

Speaking publicly as the pageant's reigning "queen" has given her opportunities to mentor and encourage other women, she added.

"It has built my confidence that I can talk about [Bucket By Bucket]. It's opened up doors for me and also helped me have a sisterhood. Everyone is literally a winner just by stepping out on that stage," Dixon said.

Ms. Senior Alabama 2021 is scheduled Aug. 27-28 at Springville Camp and Conference Center. No experience is needed and coaching is provided.

For more about Ms. Senior Alabama 2021, contact Kim Crawford-Meeks at 205-381-6767 or email mssenioralabama@yahoo.com.



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3 stories you should know



Steve Rhodes/Flickr

A recent poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds a majority (61%) of Americans support legal abortion in the first trimester, but majorities also say abortion should generally be illegal in the second trimester (65%) and third trimester (80%). Pro-life advocates say the poll helps counter the idea that the Roe v. Wade decision establishing national abortion policy enjoys widespread public support. (TAB Media)

BWA hosts thousands in virtual gathering

More than 4,000 Baptists from over 140 countries gathered virtually July 7–10 for the Baptist World Alliance's 22nd Baptist World Congress.

In the opening celebration, BWA General Secretary Elijah Brown called the gathering the “most globally diverse gathering of Baptists in the 115-year history of the BWA,” and “perhaps the most globally diverse gathering of Baptists in the 400-year history [of Baptists].”

Brown said in the past 10 years, the BWA family has grown 29% worldwide, led by expansion in the Asia Pacific region (20%), the Caribbean (48%) and Africa (134%) despite slight declines in Europe (3%), the Middle East (3%) and North America (6%).

Read the full article at tabonline.org/bwa. (TAB Media)

Judson College names first female president

Daphne Rudicell Robinson became the first female president of Judson College on July 19 following Mark Tew's resignation.



ROBINSON

Tew has accepted the position of vice president of academic affairs at Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, Tennessee.

An alumna of Judson and the Cumberland School of Law at Samford University, Robinson was the assistant attorney general for the State of Alabama from April 1995 until she retired in March 2020. She also has served as a Judson trustee.

Judson's last day as an institution is July 31. Read more at tabonline.org/daphne-robinson. (TAB Media)

Headline news from around the Southeast

Georgia

SURGE150, a summer camp for young musicians, provides children with an environment to not only grow musically but also grow spiritually. Being founded on Psalm 150, the staff embraces the call to “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord,” inspiring the campers to develop their skills, reports the Christian Index. A camper's mother expressed her gratitude, “[The kids] are our future church, and it is so important for us to set them up to succeed.”

Kentucky

Speak for the Unborn, a pro-life ministry that began as a local church ministry, is dedicated to preparing churches for holistic conversations with women considering abortion, Kentucky Today reports. The eight-part program includes “everything from the theology of it, all the way down to thinking about your vocal tone, body

language [and] facial expressions,” explains Lauren Muller, executive director. Muller explains that their staff aims “not just to save the babies, but to wrap our arms around [families] for the long haul.”

North Carolina

“I am going,” the motto at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, inspires not only the seminary students but also the staff. Sam Morris, the director of admissions, acknowledges the importance of staff members remembering the mission, reports the Biblical Recorder. He explains that to find Great Commission students, “we’ve got to be involved in it ourselves.”

South Carolina

The South Carolina Baptist Convention Collegiate Ministry Team sent 43 college

students to serve around the globe. A Muslim woman from Indonesia who had just arrived in Colorado to study needed some help. Her phone was dead, and she didn't have a charger. A South Carolina BCM student went to the store for supplies. Within 10 minutes, \$300 was raised to buy some items. That opened the door for prayer and weekly meetings.

Tennessee

As many churches across the country continue to adjust post-pandemic, Oak Grove Baptist Church, Covington, Tennessee, is finally beginning to see answers to their prayers for growth, reports Baptist and Reflector. Pastor Gary Stafford believes “God is moving in His church because God's people are praying and asking God to move.” Members are actively seeking to minister to their community by renewing their focus on discipling.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **Phillip Wayne Wright**, pastor of Spring Valley Baptist Church, Tuscumbia, died June 27. He was 54. Wright had served as pastor of Spring Valley Baptist since 2010. He also worked as a truck driver for the City of Muscle Shoals.

He is survived by his wife, Monica, and sons, Garrett and Collin.

► **Mary Johnston Shaw** — wife of Mike Shaw, pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church, Pelham — died July 10. She was 68.



SHAW

Shaw attended Samford University for a year, then finished her bachelor of music at Loyola University in New Orleans. For five decades, she served alongside her husband in ministry, including 35 years at First, Pelham. She was an accomplished pianist, clarinet player and vocalist and taught piano lessons for 20 years. She also served as a music teacher at Simmons Middle and Green Valley Elementary schools and on the board of trustees at Samford.

Shaw is survived by her husband; sons, Scotty and Jake; four grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Chuck Joiner** is the new student minister at the **Baptist Church at McAdory, McCalla**. He previously served churches in Georgia, Tennessee and Kentucky. He has a bachelor's degree from the University of Montevallo and a master of divinity in pastoral studies from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He is married to Jessica.



JOINER

CAHABA ASSOCIATION

► Though **Ocmulgee Baptist Church, Selma**, is technically 201 years old this year, it celebrated its two-century milestone June 27 after last year's celebration was postponed.

Pastor Bill Goodwin and Tommy Beach played trumpets accompanied by pianist Barbara Auburtin for the call to worship. Bob Edwards, Robby Persinger, Bryan Stevenson and Carolyn Jones provided special music, and the choir sang "This



Photo courtesy of Lonette Berg

is the Place" while a video of old church photographs played. Congregational music was led by Linda Collins, minister of music.

Tom Stacey, director of missions for Cahaba Baptist Association, was the guest speaker. He presented the church with a certificate, as did Lonette Berg, executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

A potluck lunch followed the service, with a cake made by Dawn Hamm depicting an earlier church building.

CLARKE ASSOCIATION

► **Marlon Brown** is the new pastor of **Pineview Baptist Church, Thomasville**. He previously served as associate pastor of worship and college ministries at Bush Baptist Church, Troy. Brown has a bachelor's degree from the University of Mobile and a master of divinity



BROWN

degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. He and his wife, Amy, have three children.



BEDWELL

► **Austin Bedwell** is the new youth minister of **Grove Hill Baptist Church**. He formerly served in that role at Emmanuel Baptist Church, Shreveport, Louisiana. He studied theology at the University of Mobile. He is married to Lindsey.

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

► **Ric Camp** is the new associational mission

strategist for **Shelby Association**. He comes to the position from Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Trussville, where he served as lead pastor. He previously served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Florence; as founding pastor of Sunrise Baptist Church, Mobile; and as student pastor for several churches. Camp has a bachelor's degree in religion from Samford University; a master of religious education degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; and a doctor of educational ministry from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Lisa, have two children.



CAMP

SOUTHEAST ALABAMA ASSOCIATION

► **Center Baptist Church, Webb**, gathered June 27 to celebrate 100 years in their community. "Our people were excited about the celebration," Pastor Charles Pierce said. "We praise the Lord for the way He blessed the day."

The celebration had originally been scheduled for August 2020 but was postponed.

During the special service, Pierce preached, and church member Alexie Littlefield sang a solo accompanied by church pianist Mollie Hayes. The Self Family provided special music. Dalton Campbell of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented the church with a plaque.



Photo courtesy of Dalton Campbell

Persecuted church

Indonesian police foil Islamist terrorist plot to bomb churches

PAPUA, Indonesia — Police in late May thwarted an Islamic terrorist plot to attack several churches and assassinate a leading church minister in Indonesia's Christian-majority Papua province.

On May 28, local police and members of the Densus 88 counterterrorism squad arrested at least 10 suspects believed to be linked to Jamaah Ansharut Daulah. JAD has ties to the Islamic State terrorist group.

A police spokesman said suspects not only revealed suicide bombing plans targeting

churches in four locations but also two previous suicide bombing attempts aimed at a particular church leader in Papua.

On Palm Sunday, 19 people were injured when two JAD suicide bombers blew themselves up outside a church on Sulawesi island.

Another terrorist group with ties to the Islamic State, Eastern Indonesia Mujahideen, killed four Christian farmers on a coffee plantation May 11 in Central Sulawesi province.

Indonesia, which has the world's largest Muslim population, is No. 47 on Open Doors' 2021 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian. (Barnabas Fund)



Barnabas Fund photo

New WMU missions curriculum debuts

If you've been looking for a flexible missions curriculum for the children at your church, national Woman's Missionary Union leaders say look no further.

This fall, Missions Journey: Kids will make its debut as the curriculum for Girls in Action, Royal Ambassadors, Children in Action and any other missions discipleship group for grades 1–6 who would like to use it.

With a balanced blend of missions discipleship and Bible study, it's a great fit for children's church or Christian schools.

"Focusing on missions work both here in the U.S. and throughout the world, Missions Journey: Kids will captivate your children's minds and hearts as they immerse themselves in a new culture each month and learn about the different avenues missionaries use to share the gospel with the nations," said Robin McCall, content and marketing manager, national WMU.

Missions Journey: Kids isn't a replacement for GA, RA and CA groups — it's simply a new curriculum for those groups.

"Missions Journey: Kids is a one-stop shop for every missions group," McCall explained. "Each month, leaders will find suggestions for extra activities for GA, RA and CA, ideas for earning badges and patches, tips for working through

individualized achievement plans and more. We will also continue to create and carry special resources for GA, RA and CA, including badges and patches, achievement plans and identity items."

But Missions Journey: Kids also broadens the reach of missions discipleship, offering a valuable

resource to other groups and classes that could benefit from learning about their missions heritage, she said.

According to McCall, Missions Journey: Kids was created directly in

response to requests from churches and missions discipleship leaders throughout the Southern Baptist Convention who asked for more robust Bible study and in-depth missions studies in a simple format.

'Tailored to fit'

"Written with every church in mind, Missions Journey: Kids gives leaders flexibility to create missions discipleship experiences tailored to fit their needs,"

she said. "Leaders can easily adapt every lesson to fit their context,

whether their group is large or small, or if they lead girls, boys or a coed group."

Every weekly session will include tips for teaching missions study and discipleship, and Scripture memory and application. The new fall materials will be in churches by August 2021. (TAB Media, WMU)



WMU photo

A free sample unit is available at wmu.com/missionsjourneykids.

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CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Jemison is seeking a full-time senior pastor. He should possess a conviction to preach from the Holy Bible, teaching biblical truths and doctrine of Christianity, as stated in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. Must provide pastoral care and counseling; be engaged to all age groups; mentor and supervise church staff; and provide visionary leadership for the future of our church. He will shepherd our congregation in worship, Christian spiritual growth and community outreach as we strive to carry out The Great Commission. Mail resumes to: Jemison First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 760, Jemison, AL 35085 or resumes@jemisonfirstbaptist.com.

PASTOR

FBC Loxley, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a full-time pastor to lead and shepherd our congregation. Under the Lord's leading, please send resumes to: fbcloxleypastorsearch@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL SENIOR PASTOR

Lakeview Baptist Church of Oxford, Ala., is seeking a bivocational senior pastor. Send resume with a link to sermons to: ChurchOffice@LBCOxford.com. Address: Lakeview Baptist Church Search Committee, 132 Central Ave, Oxford, AL 36203.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Moundville, Ala., has position available for bivocational pastor. Send resume to: jbshaw@mound.net or mail to: PHBC, P.O. Box 339, Moundville, AL 35474-0339.

FULL-TIME MUSIC & MEDIA PASTOR

FBC Alexander City, Ala. Full-time music/media pastor. Praise team, band and ensemble approach. Choir capabilities needed. Blended service. Oversee and develop audio/tech/video ministry. Send resumes to: info@fbc-ac.org.

CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP LEADER

First Baptist Madison, Ala., is seeking a part-time contemporary worship leader. For more information please go to: <https://bit.ly/3eQpu0p>.

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Seeking a bivocational worship

and/or youth pastor to lead a blended worship service as well as serve in our youth ministry. Position could be divided into two positions or one depending on qualifications. Please email resumes to: Ladonia Baptist, Phenix City, by Sept. 1 to: PastorGreg@ladoniabaptist.org.

PART-TIME YOUTH PASTOR

Vincent First Baptist Church is searching and praying for a part-time youth pastor. Please send resumes to ATTN: Pastor Robbie Weems at weems1969@aol.com. Praying for someone within a 15-minute drive from church. Great opportunity.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

West Cullman Baptist Association is currently taking resumes for the position of director of missions. Please send resumes to: perry@perryknightattorney.com. Resumes will be accepted until July 31.

DAYCARE DIRECTOR

Eastside Baptist Church. Responsibilities include planning, organizing and execution of all programs and care. Send resumes to the Personnel Committee at churchoffice@ebcbirmingham.org.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER DIRECTOR

A thriving child development center in metro Birmingham is looking for a qualified director. Over 100 children enrolled! This is a 40-hour/week job (Monday-Friday.) Job description includes administrative tasks as well as being a personable leader with the parents and for the staff. Hope Community Church, 4445 Montevallo Road, Birmingham. Please send your resume to: jbaker@hopebhm.org.

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DISCIPLE-MAKING

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The first D-Life boot camp for students will be Aug. 1 at NorthPark Baptist Church in Trussville, Alabama, from 5 to 11 p.m. Along with the training and onsite practice led by Bill Wilks, senior pastor of NorthPark, and a team of skilled student pastors, the students will enjoy a pizza dinner and ice cream social. The six-hour event will equip students with a simple, disciple-making process modeled after Jesus. The event is \$10 per person and is for student leaders who are upcoming juniors or seniors in high school, recent graduates and college students. To register, visit livedthelife.com/students.

MINISTRIES

NEW: STORIES PODCAST

Have you checked out TAB Media's new Stories serial podcast yet? If not, then you'll want to catch Season 2, the Flatline story. The full first season is also available featuring Sammy Gilbreath, state missionary in evangelism with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. TAB Media's Grace Thornton writes and produces the shows. Listen to the Stories podcast at tabonline.org/stories or anywhere you get your podcasts.

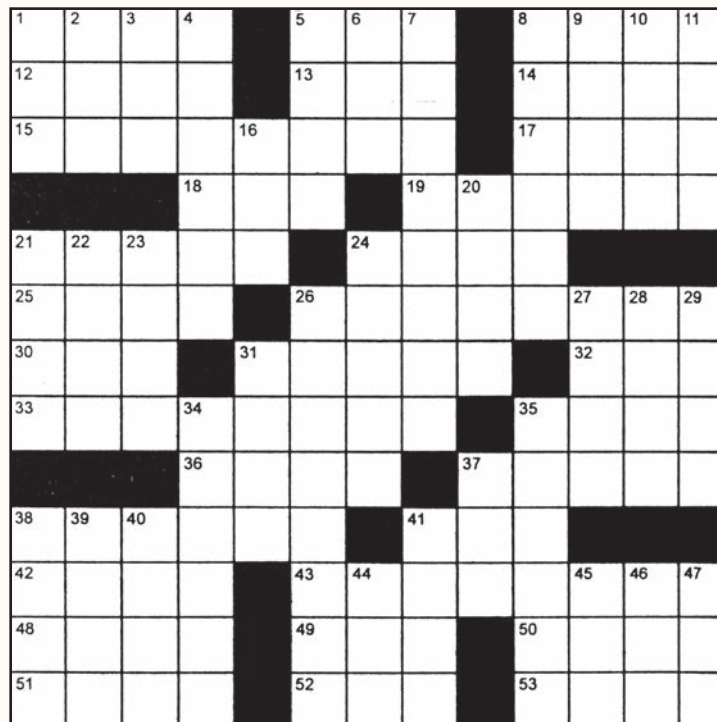
VISUALLY IMPAIRED READERS

Know someone who's visually impaired and finds it difficult to read? The Alabama Baptist is now offering a free way to listen to stories and news in a format that comes in the mail. For more information contact 205-870-4720, ext. 108, or email tabnews@tabmedia.group.

CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

1. In the beginning was the _____. (John 1:1)
5. I _____ rather be a doorkeeper. (Ps. 84:10)
8. Two of every _____ shalt thou bring into the ark. (Gen. 6:19)
12. One of the Great Lakes.
13. Come down _____ my child die. (John 4:49)
14. Between blood and blood, between _____ and plea. (Deut. 17:8)
15. God hath _____ the body together. (1 Cor. 12:24)
17. Thou shalt _____ this law before all Israel. (Deut. 31:11)
18. He loved them unto the _____. (John 13:1)
19. Figures of speech.
21. Signs, good or evil.
24. To glance at quickly.
25. Be ye _____ one to another. (Eph. 4:32)
26. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and _____ not. (Ps. 15:4)
30. Last book of the Bible. (abbr.)
31. Blackboard or roofing tile.
32. Confederate commander.
33. In any place.
35. Russian emperor.
36. The very hairs of your _____ are all numbered. (Matt. 10:30)
37. Your fathers _____ are they? (Zech. 1:5)
38. Middle.
41. To hasten.
42. Entrance.
43. Twirling.
48. He loved Rachel _____ than Leah. (Gen. 29:30)



By Evelyn M. Boyington Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

49. Give _____ to my sinners. (Prov. 23:17)
50. Applaud. words. (Ps. 5:1)
51. I am alive forevermore, 24. Broken pottery.
52. Tint. 26. His leprosy was _____. (Matt. 8:3)
53. Electrocardiograms. 27. He is God; there is none _____ beside Him. (Deut. 4:35)
28. His anger did _____ perpetually. (Amos 1:11)
29. _____ a little, and there a little. (Isa. 28:10)
31. Karite tree.
34. To bleach.
35. Thou shalt by no means come out _____. (Matt. 5:26)
37. That I may _____ Christ. (Phil. 3:8)
38. Mother.
39. Esau, who is _____. (Gen. 36:1)
40. Dreadful.
41. Weigh silver in the balance, and _____ a goldsmith. (Isa. 46:6)
44. For this cause _____ ye tribute also. (Rom. 13:6)
45. Kind, breed.
46. Old horse.
47. Gallons per second. (abbr.)

DOWN

1. They are _____ with the showers. (Job 24:8)
2. Unrefined mineral.
3. Edge.
4. Rely.
5. Thou shalt kill of thy _____. (Deut. 12:21)
6. They _____ all plain to him. (Prov. 8:9)
7. King David did _____ unto the Lord. (2 Sam. 8:11)
8. _____ up, O well. (Num. 21:17)
9. Butter substitute.
10. A quantity of paper.
11. Urchins.
16. Dashes.
20. Great _____.
21. Vegetable.
22. Manner.
23. Let not thine heart _____

WORD search

ADDAX
APE
BAT
BEHEMOTH
CHAMELEON
COBRA
CORMORANT
COW
CRANE
DOG
DRAGON
FLY
GNAT
HERON
HOOPOE
HYRAX
KITE
LEVIATHAN
MAGGOT
MONITOR LIZARD

MOUNTAIN SHEEP
MOURNING DOVE
OSTRICH
PARTRIDGE
PEACOCK
PIG
PIGEON
QUAIL
RAM
RAVEN
ROE DEER
ROOSTER
SEAGULL
SHORT-EARED OWL
SPARROW
STORK
SWALLOW
TURTLEDOVE
VIPER
WILD GOAT

R S T O R K L J R A M B L C K N
L E V I A T H A N V T H G C M M
R X T V R E W R L O L C H H P P
E R P S R J W O G M O N Q A A H
P R K O O O T G C B Y P F M R F
I T N M R O A K R H E T G E T L
V K U R N M R A B A T L N L R L
T N A R O M R O C P I W A E I U
S P Z W T T K O Y A E I T O D G
S H M X W L C C U L N L K N G A
M R O O T K E Q K W A D P V E E
O O P R U R K D N N R G G Q P S
U D N Z T R Z W O C C O X A S R
N Y P I A E N K X V D A A L W H
T B M V T V A I J A E T D R A C
A T E B R O V R N T R K D N L I
I N K H F Q R L E G N Y A B L R
N T C Z E L R L T D D O H G O T
S H G I P M Y P I Z O O E N W S
H C F T N T O J K Z Q W V G R O
E D R A G O N T L K A F L E I M
E R E E D E O R H R T R L G N P
P R J Q E O P O O H G J D Q B K

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries



Saturday, July 31, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
First Baptist Church, Trussville

The call to ministry can seem like the most complex decision to wade through. We want to help! The Called Conference is a one-day event designed to help students (*high school through college*) who are dealing with the life-changing call to ministry.

Jeff Iorg, president of Gateway Seminary, will speak in three large group sessions, plus two breakout sessions will be offered to cover a variety of specific ministry areas.

For more information, visit alsbom.org/called.
Questions? Contact State Missionary Larry Hyche,
lhychel@alsbom.org, (334) 613-2268.

JEFF
IORG

PRESIDENT,
GATEWAY
SEMINARY



Protocols force IMB to adjust plan for Games

(continued from page 1)
in Japan and the relatively low percentage of Japanese residents who have been vaccinated to date.

The BBC reported July 11 that about 18% of Japan's population of close to 126 million

is fully vaccinated and further reported that a recent poll in the leading Asahi Shimbun newspaper suggested more than 80% of the population want the Olympic Games canceled or postponed.

"At this point there is a strong sentiment against having the Olympics because of fear of ... the thousands of athletes, coaches and limited media who will be attending and the potential to spread [COVID] during the Olympics," said

Scott Bradford, an International Mission Board missionary serving in Japan.

"That may change once it all begins but that is the general sentiment."

Historically, volunteer teams from U.S. churches have journeyed to the Olympics venues and played active roles in ministry to spectators, athletes and others attending the Olympic Games.

With that traditional strategy out the door, IMB

missionaries are adapting their evangelism and outreach plans, much like the plans for the Olympics have been adapted.

Focus on people

"Our vision, our focus as a Tokyo team, is first and foremost, the Japanese," Bradford said.

The Japanese are the

second largest unreached people group in the world, and Tokyo has a higher concentration of lostness than any other city in the world, Bradford stated.

Rather than focusing on the Olympic events specifically, IMB missionaries are focusing on planting churches and supporting Japanese believers and churches.

"We have had to rethink our Olympic strategies over the past six months. As a result, the Tokyo Global City team felt the best and most ideal thing to do was to utilize the Olympic time frame to strengthen and expand existing partnerships and engagements for the sake of bringing the gospel to those living in and around the Greater Tokyo area," Bradford said.

"During this time, our team will be engaged in several activities throughout the city," he said.

Activities include prayer walking along a heavily used train route that encircles Tokyo, five-minute English lessons and even dressing in cosplay (dressing in a costume as a character from a work of fiction).

More open to gospel

While the pandemic squashed many plans, Bradford believes it might make people more open to the gospel. "We have already seen that people have been 'stuck inside' for so much of the last year and a half," leading to increases in suicides, depression and loneliness, he said.

"We are praying that this



IMB photo

A Rugby World Cup viewing party at Tokyo Baptist Church in Tokyo, Japan, gives a Southern Baptist volunteer (right) the opportunity to meet area residents. Japanese churches and IMB missionaries have long used sporting events as opportunities to share the gospel.

will open doors for us to connect more deeply."

Although Southern Baptists won't be ministering in person alongside IMB missionaries serving in Japan, they are still a vital part of the ministry occurring during the Olympics.

"We need our SBC churches and supporters to continue to 'hold the ropes' for us. We cannot afford to have them let go! We cannot do this without their prayer support and encouragement," he said.

He asked for prayer "for God to prepare the places and soil where we will be doing ministry."

Additionally, he requested prayer "for God to use what we are doing to inspire Japanese Christian brothers and sisters to join in and this

will open more opportunities for partnership with our local Japanese believers and churches."

The Tokyo Global City team has prepared a "real time" prayer guide for Southern Baptists to pray

"alongside us as we are doing" the outreach in and around Tokyo.

IMB missionaries in Japan who

will be involved in outreach activities include Bradford and his wife Julie; Rick and Hiromi Price; and Daniel and Tara Rice.

After Japan reopens for international travelers, the missionaries will look forward to Southern Baptists from North America joining them again to build on all that God does during the Summer Olympics.

"People say that reaching the Japanese is tough, and I say it is not our job to reach them. It is our job to faithfully share and let the word of God and Holy Spirit reach out to them and penetrate their lives," Bradford said.

"All we can do is control what we do on a daily basis. We just need to position ourselves to let God use us." (IMB contributed)

NEW CONFERENCE FORMAT



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LOCATION: FBC Decatur
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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 25

Explore the Bible

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



WHAT'S THE USE? Ecclesiastes 1:12-15; 2:18-26

The main theme of Ecclesiastes is that life without God is absolute futility. Solomon used the word futility metaphorically to mean purposeless or meaningless. Nothing a person does “under the sun” has any real worth. From a purely human perspective, life is just a repetitive cycle of events; it neither possesses nor gives lasting value or satisfaction. Life lived on a purely human plane is unfulfilling, purposeless and worthless.

Limited Perspective (1:12-15)

At this point in his writing, Solomon turned his focus from general observations about nature and man to some specific conclusions about his own pursuits. While serving as king over Israel in Jerusalem, he applied his mind “to examine and explore through wisdom all that is done under heaven.” Solomon set out to research thoroughly every approach to life and then to immerse himself in each one.

This investigation sounds exciting to many people. But Solomon discovered that in reality, it was simply not so. He described it as a miserable task that God had given the descendants of Adam to keep them occupied. He concluded that all the things done under the sun were futile. In other words, if you could ever catch it, it would not amount to anything.

In verse 15, Solomon concluded this section with a proverb. The first part of the proverb means there are problems in life that cannot be solved. The second part means there is no end to a lack of information. There will always be aspects of life in a fallen world that remain mysterious because God has chosen not to reveal the answers to all of mankind’s questions. We live with a limited perspective.

Inheritance Blown? (2:18-21)

The teacher found no security and purpose in the rewards of his labor. A man may live wisely and accumulate wealth in a perfectly legitimate way. He may wear himself

out in the process. Then comes death and the leaving of one’s wealth to his children, friends or successors. Solomon considered this option and concluded that it also was futile.

We can burn the midnight oil, develop successful plans, risk hard-earned funds, skip much-needed vacations and worry about competitors, but death is inevitable. The wages we have earned are passed on to others, and we have no assurance that they will be used wisely.

The teacher concluded that not only is working hard and accumulating wealth a futile task, but it is also an injustice. A person can spend a lifetime working to think properly about an endeavor, learn all the necessary information, develop the skills needed to be successful, then lose everything to someone else who did nothing to earn it.

Enjoy Work (2:22-26)

What is the point of all our work and efforts if there is no God? Without a God-centered worldview, our days will be filled with grief, our occupation will only result in sorrow and our nights will be consumed with anxious unrest.

You can wear yourself out by trying to find the solution of life in nature and history. You can make the pursuit of luxury or money your chief aim. But you will end up in frustration because you are grounding yourself in this material world, which cannot satisfy your heart’s deepest longings.

Work originates with God. Our God is a God who works. Work has significance in the eyes of God. The ability to work and enjoy its fruit are gifts from God. Neither work nor the fruit of our work are the ultimate goals in our lives. If we look to our work to satisfy the deepest longings of our souls, we are simply chasing after the wind.

No one can enjoy life apart from God. The wise person lives a life of devotion to God through faith in Jesus Christ and experiences the joy of knowing God and living life as He intends it to be lived.

Bible Studies for Life

By Roy E. Ciampa, Ph.D., S. Louis and Ann W. Armstrong
Professor of Religion, Samford University



SERVE WITH COURAGE 1 Kings 16:29-33; 17:1-6

Courage is often required to serve God faithfully in a culture given over to various kinds of idolatry. Elijah serves as an example to us. We can rest assured God will be faithful to us as we seek to be faithful to Him in a world that considered such faithfulness offensive.

Recognize when others oppose God and His authority. (16:29-33)

Each king of Israel was supposed to honor God and read His law every day so they would “learn to fear the Lord his God, diligently observing all the words of this law and these statutes” (Deut. 17:19).

But the kings of that northern kingdom were consistently evil. Ahab’s father, Omri, was worse than most, and Ahab was worse than his father (1 Kings 16:25, 30).

These kings may have built up the infrastructure or provided greater military security or a stronger economy than in the past. But the prophetic author of 1 and 2 Kings judges leadership by spiritual criteria, not economic or military.

The ungodly leadership of these kings may have brought them and the kingdom some worldly benefits, but by rebelling against the Lord and embracing idolatry, they forfeited not only their own souls, but also the soul of the nation (see Luke 9:25).

Jeroboam (mentioned in v. 31) had made two golden calves and urged his people to worship them rather than going to Jerusalem (which would have meant going down to the southern kingdom of Judah).

Ahab went further (vv. 31-33). He married a Sidonian woman and joined her in promoting the worship of the pagan god Baal, setting up a pole that was used for the worship of the pagan goddess Asherah (usually understood to be the wife or female consort of a male god).

The Israelites either failed to recognize that their king was radically opposed to God and was defying His authority, or they didn’t care and were willing to sacrifice their theological and religious integrity

out of loyalty to their political ruler.

American Christians have often been tempted to fuse their love of country with their love of God so the two are sometimes confused.

In other ways our political or other allegiances may compete with or be improperly merged with our sense of faithfulness to our Lord. We are tempted to look back on the failures of the Israelites and fail to see ways in which our culture or subculture might be similar.

Stand against the lies and false beliefs of culture. (17:1)

The prophet Elijah was not about to go along with what Ahab was promoting even though the vast majority of his society was willing to follow Ahab into various forms of idolatry.

Baal, one of the gods who was being promoted by Ahab and Jezebel, was believed to die and rise again each year, bringing the rain (and thus the renewal of the agricultural cycle) when he came back to life each year.

When Elijah announced to King Ahab that there would be no moisture at all (no dew or rain) except by the command of the Lord’s prophet, he was declaring that Baal and Baal worship would be exposed as a fraud and the Lord would show that He is the one true God.

God sustains us as we obediently exercise courage. (17:2-6)

Having stood up to Ahab and challenged the political ruler of his nation, Elijah might have wondered how he would survive, having burned his bridges with all those around him who had committed themselves to various forms of idolatry. But God miraculously provided him with water, bread and meat.

God is the One who sustains us through whatever challenges we face. It is only by trusting Him that we can show the courage we need to stand up to an idolatrous culture and society and remain true to His calling on our lives, speaking His truth in love to all those around us.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs
TAB Media

Frank Jones does 'business for the Kingdom' through music ministry

One might assume Psalm 144:1, "Praise be to the Lord my Rock, Who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle," would be a perfect life verse for military personnel, but those words also have special meaning for pianist and worship leader Frank Jones.

"When I ran across this verse, I couldn't breathe for a bit," he recalled. "I realized that every time I play, especially at a church-type environment, I'm really doing battle with the enemy. I could easily be using the gifts I have in some other fashion, but God called me to do what I'm doing — train my hands for war, my fingers for battle."

"When I play, I'm doing business for the Kingdom."

Jones has been in ministry most of his life. After graduating from Samford University in Birmingham and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, Jones served for decades in various churches in Alabama and Texas.

He currently serves on staff at Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, and as senior adult event coordinator for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

In 2011, Jones was associate minister of worship and minister to



Frank Jones

Photo by Tracy Riggs

55-plus adults at Calvary Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa. He also was performing and leading worship at conferences and churches all across Alabama and the Southeast. Then he began to sense God leading him into something new.

New ministry effort

After much prayer and consultation with his wife, Margaret, Jones began Frank Jones Ministries in January 2012. He estimated he has ministered in more than 375 venues through the effort.

Each year, he hosts the OASIS conference for senior adults, to be held this year on July 29 at First Baptist Church, Trussville. Pastor-turned-comedian Dennis Swanberg, known as "The Swan" and "America's Minister of Encouragement," will be featured, joined by Paid in Full, a Southern gospel trio from Mississippi, and the FBC Pickers, a bluegrass gospel group from First Baptist Church, Guntersville.

Jones anticipates a large crowd, noting, "people are ready to go

somewhere! We could have as many as 600–700 people there, which would be a record for this event."

Through his years of ministry, Jones has had many unforgettable moments. Once while he was leading a senior adult "sing," a mother and daughter sat in front of him, and he thought they looked familiar but couldn't place them. Finally, during the last song, he realized who they were — the daughter was a childhood friend and the mother his first choir teacher.

'Time of fellowship'

"When I realized who that was, I thought, 'I'm standing up here on this stage because of what she implemented in my life as a first-grader,' and I went to pieces. We were still singing but I just stepped off the stage and walked down there. We had a sweet time of fellowship," Jones recalled.

While serving as interim worship pastor at Hunter Street, his choir and

the choirs from Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills and First, Trussville, sang — accompanied by a 40-piece orchestra — at Carnegie Hall in New York.

"[That experience] is something I will treasure and cherish for the rest of my life," Jones said.

Music outreach

Along with ministry events, Jones has released eight instrumental CDs. His favorites are "In Him and Hymn," his first recording, and "Moments," hymns specifically chosen for quiet times.

He also produced "One Mighty Voice," a three-CD collection of accompaniment tracks of hymns that can be used for congregational singing or personal worship. "One Mighty Voice — Songs for Advent" features Christmas songs suitable for use in caroling, small gatherings and congregational worship.

Calling it "COVID caroling," Jones and others from Hunter Street used these tracks and a portable sound system to sing in front yards during the 2020 Christmas season.

"That was a blessing for us during COVID, for us to be able to touch some lives," he said. "Some of those individuals went on to be with the Lord after that, so I'm glad that we had the opportunity to share that last, special time with them."

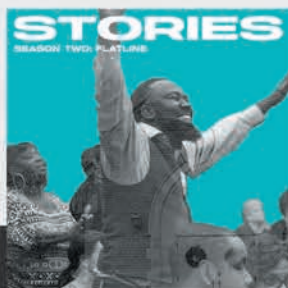
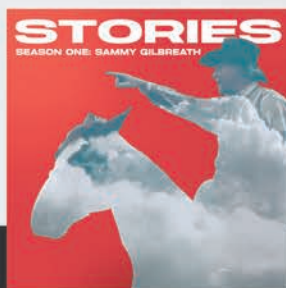
Even after decades of ministry, Jones said he still loves what he does. "It's great to be able to get paid to do something that you love to do so much," he said. "I am blessed because going to work at a church or doing my ministry, whatever that involves, it's not a job to me. It's my calling [and] it's something I really enjoy doing."

For more information, visit frankjonesministries.org.

EDITOR'S NOTE

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

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