

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

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Photo by Van Payne

During the Sept. 20–21 meeting in Nashville, members of the SBC Executive Committee struggle to find consensus about whether to waive attorney-client privilege for the coming investigation.

On the clock

SBC Executive Committee extends negotiations

By Jennifer Davis Rash
TAB Media

By the time you read this article, a decision related to the parameters of the investigation into how the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention handled sexual abuse cases brought to its attention during the past 20-plus years will have been announced.

That is, assuming the Executive Committee officers adhere to the Sept. 28 deadline

mandated in the motion approved by the full body Sept. 21 (see full wording of the motion, page 6).

The two-day meeting beginning Sept. 20 brought a full house of guests and almost all of the 86 EC members to Nashville in anticipation of historic action.

Tension among members

But the group's inability to make a definitive decision about whether to waive attorney-client privilege drew anger and confusion from some members of the group as well as Southern Baptists across the nation.

Backlash traveled quickly across social media channels, and by the next morning several groups and individuals were releasing statements

clarifying their stands and/or explaining their reasoning behind decisions made or not made.

It likely took everyone getting some food and a few hours sleep to be able to process what took place before preparing those statements because by the time the marathon meeting was adjourned, expressions of “wiped out,” “exhausted” and “emotionally spent” could be heard from several in the room.

But even before the intense sense of fatigue at the end, the group walked in with an immense heaviness. The 27 new members attending their first meeting especially felt overwhelmed with the decisions in front of them.

(See ‘Difficult,’ page 6)

Greg Davis named next ALCAP leader

By Carrie B. McWhorter
TAB Media

Greg Davis has been selected to succeed Joe Godfrey as head of ALCAP and American Character Builders, which represent Alabama Baptists on moral issues in the legislative and public sphere.

Davis' selection was announced Sept. 24 following a called joint meeting of the boards of Alabama Citizens Action Program and ACB.

The boards of directors conducted a joint search for a new executive director following Godfrey's retirement announcement in March.

John Killian, director of missions for Fayette Baptist Association and chair of the search committee, said the team began with the determination to “seek the leadership of the Holy Spirit” to find a leader “who could relate well” (See ‘ALCAP,’ page 13)



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Photo by Michael Brooks

Morgan Bailey of Macedonia Baptist Church in Ranburne, teaches a conference titled "Moving Forward: A Post-COVID Conversation."

2021 Pinnacle Conference focuses on discipleship

After moving to an online-only format last year, Pinnacle Alabama was able to meet in person in August at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center, offering training in a range of topics for church leaders.

We at TAB wanted to share a snapshot of that training with our readers who weren't able to attend — a look at what life looks like for churches moving forward in the current COVID-19 situation.

"The pandemic isn't just a moment, but it is indeed a change agent. We face a new reality," said Morgan Bailey, pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church in Ranburne, who led the workshop.

Bailey shared research suggesting churches are now at 60–70% of their pre-pandemic attendance, but the latest information about the Delta variant has created further unrest.

He cited suggestions from "Moving Forward in a Post-COVID World" by former Lifeway Christian Resources CEO Thom Rainer.

"[He] said simplicity will be vitally important as we move forward," Bailey noted. "Anything we do must be intentional and purposeful. We must streamline our church schedules for what is essential."

Bailey suggested leaders "turn the church inside out."

"In our church we've begun to ask members to come and pray at our altar once each month specifically for the unsaved they know," he said. "I propose an emphasis each month, such as family, friends, neighbors and the like. We also sponsored a Freedom Fest this summer with fireworks and hot dogs for the community."

Though people feel freer to return to in-person worship, an online presence will continue to be

necessary as one of the "hooks we have in the water," Bailey noted.

"We must have digital proficiency, though of course, many of us struggled to get on board last year," he acknowledged. "Digital is

now the 'front door' people walk through, and we've had people come to our church who found us first online."

Bailey added he's begun to greet online worshippers with phrases such as, "Thank you for inviting us into your house. Now we invite you into His house."

During discussion following Bailey's presentation, one attendee used the legal term "due diligence" to describe how churches must follow guidelines through the pandemic.

"We do everything we can do to make people safe," he said. (TAB Media)

For more
information or
to view past
webinars, visit
pinnaclealabama.
org.

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 19.

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash

President and Editor-in-Chief



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Quiet presence of sexual abuse survivors leads to increased understanding

When Rolland Slade, chair of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, welcomed the survivors of sexual abuse who attended the Sept. 20–21 EC meeting in Nashville, they received a standing ovation.

“We are praying for you and thank you for being understanding and patient with us as we do our best to glorify God and protect you,” he said to them from the podium.

The next day he tweeted: “The heroines of the last two days at our SBC EC meeting were the SA survivors who sat voiceless in the gallery. Saw you, want you to know you matter and are loved. May GOD continually bless, comfort and keep you in the hollow of HIS hands.”

Survivors indicated their goal for attending the meeting was to make sure EC members could see them as real people with real hurts.

Among those present was Hannah Kate Williams, who stood beside Tennessee pastor Grant Gaines in June as he proposed the motion (see page 7) that led to the current debate about attorney-client privilege (see story, page 1).

Williams said, “I hope my

presence speaks to the fact that while some of these people have hurt me, I am their family. We are the family of God, and we don’t get to abandon each other when it gets hard.

“I hope my presence here casts for them the vision I see — all held accountable at the foot of the cross but also our eternity of all being fully reconciled to Christ and each other at the table of the King.”

‘Standing up for us’

Jessica Alldredge of First Baptist Church Oregon, Ohio, said she was “overwhelmed when they recognized us.”

“We are frequently ignored or belittled, and it was a surprise to be acknowledged. I was also struck by the number of people who thanked us for coming,”

she said. “Some even had tears in their eyes while telling us they were working hard on our behalf to make things right. There are good people standing up for us in the process and that should be recognized.”

Tiffany Thigpen also attended the meeting. “I’m glad I went. I felt it was important for there to be a presence by more than just the committee members.

“I felt that having a survivor in the room might bring extra clarity to the need for this decision, as I knew waiving privilege would be a major sticking point.

“I didn’t hold much hope that there would be a unilateral passing vote,” Thigpen said.

“Micah 6:8 is my continued hope for the leaders and pastors in regards to this crisis of sexual abuse in our churches.

“I’d like to remind [the SBC leaders] that we are the Church, each of us,” she noted. “If the whole institution were to crumble or the finances were to stop pouring in, if they lost their ‘jobs’ — what would be left is still the Church because it is us!”

As Thigpen listened to the discussion taking place during the EC meeting, she said she believed the wrong questions were asked.

“They have the wrong concerns. But this isn’t new to us. You’re all just getting to witness what we’ve seen over and over.”

Questions to ponder

The questions Thigpen says should be asked are:

▶ “How can we provide the transparency that is needed for an investigation into what has happened (and not happened) and how do we cooperate?

▶ “What are the best ways to support changes so there aren’t more victims? How do we make sure this is properly funded to get to the truth?

▶ “How can we best help survivors and assure changes will take place? How do we accomplish what is asked versus ‘here’s all the reasons we can’t or shouldn’t?’”



Hannah Kate Williams (center) demonstrates her appreciation to the crowd for acknowledging the survivors of sexual abuse. Jessica Alldredge (to the right of Williams) said she was overwhelmed by the show of support.

Photo by Van Payne

Your Voice



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

The Lakeview Connection: A tribute to Pastor Al Jackson

By Pastor Barry Holcomb

Special to The Alabama Baptist

For the 300-plus “preacher boys” who call Al Jackson their pastor, the Lakeview Connection is a unique brotherhood.

I am one of many whose life is forever touched by the ministry of Lakeview, and our pastor, Al Jackson. We all call him by the affectionate title of “Brother Al,” and we serve the Lord as pastors, missionaries and in various church roles throughout the world.

Our connection is the same: We were all disciplined as young men by Al Jackson.

In Auburn, Alabama, my connection with Lakeview Baptist Church began in 1984 when I was led to faith in Christ by Lakeview deacon and Auburn University professor H.T. Ford Jr.

Tom Ford was a relentless soul-winner and led me to Christ on a Thursday afternoon. I met him for church at Lakeview the following Sunday morning and made my profession of faith public that same day.

I was called to preach not long after I was saved and have been connected to Lakeview ever since.

You probably attended what Brother Al calls his preaching class if you are a part of the Lakeview Connection.

Training others

I began attending this 6 a.m. gathering early in 1985 and preached my first sermon at one of these early morning classes. Brother Al has convened this class on Thursday mornings since 1980. His first group had four in attendance. His latest class averages 15 each week of the more



Photo courtesy of Barry Holcomb

The weekend of Sept. 2–4, Barry Holcomb (left) attended Brother Al’s last official Lakeview Connection Reunion before he retires Oct. 31.

than 25 participating this semester.

Brother Al is passionate about training others for the gospel ministry and is as excited about this new class as he was about his first many years ago.

In spring 1994, Brother Al hosted his first Lakeview Connection Reunion. We gather at Lakeview on the first weekend of September each year for fellowship, food and a time of learning together with our mentor.

We usually read a book Brother Al selects and discuss it at our reunion.

I remember the first book I read as a member of the preaching class in 1985 — “Trumpets in the Morning” written by Harper Shannon in 1969 when he was pastor of First Baptist Church Dothan.

The book chronicled Shannon’s experiences, observations and conclusions about the gospel ministry,

and he was a guest at one of the early morning preaching classes to lead our book discussion.

Those memories of rising early and learning from Brother Al will always hold a special place in my heart, as will all the reunions I have attended.

Upcoming retirement

The weekend of Sept. 2–4, I attended Brother Al’s last official Lakeview Connection Reunion before he retires Oct. 31.

This year, we did not read a book in advance.

Instead, Brother Al preached to us about two issues that have driven his ministry over the last four-plus decades at Lakeview: the preacher’s sacred calling (to preach God’s word) and the strategic role of the pastor in global evangelization.

Brother Al used Ezra 7:10 to

remind us to study, obey and faithfully teach the word of God.

Regarding the job of preaching, he said, “Our responsibility is not to fill the pews. Our job is to fill the pulpit. If you fill the pulpit, the Spirit of God will take care of the pews.”

Brother Al also noted the sufficiency of Scripture, saying, “The preacher’s job is to afflict the comfortable and to comfort the afflicted. If you preach the Bible, it is sufficient for both works.”

Commenting on the strategic role of the pastor in global evangelization, Brother Al had this to say: “If there is little passion on the part of the pastor to take the gospel to the nations, there is little passion in the church.”

The passion of the pastor is the passion of the church. The choke point for mission-sending is not missionaries on the field, it is pastors. Those of us who are called to pastoral ministry should feel the responsibility to mobilize our congregations to take the gospel to all nations.”

Speaking for myself, and I’m sure for my fellow pastors, missionaries and others who call themselves Brother Al’s preacher boys, I want to thank this dear man who has been a mentor and friend to so many.

Thank you, Brother Al, for the early mornings together. Thank you for enriching our lives with faithful, biblical wisdom.

Thank you for the constant example of studying and proclaiming the riches of the gospel of Jesus. Thank you for being a voice for the nations. Thank you for the reunions.

Thank you, Brother Al! To all your preacher boys, you are the Lakeview Connection.

“Be steadfast, immovable ... knowing that in the Lord, your labor is not in vain.”

1 CORINTHIANS 15:58

The statistics prove it. Right now, hundreds of pastors every month are quitting and walking away from years of ministry. Why? Because they are tired, experiencing burnout, are deeply hurt and even angry.

This season of life has been frustrating for all of us, especially church leaders. Politics, masks, vaccines, poor attendance, decisions about meeting in person or not, facilitating online options for members — all of these things coupled with the pain of loss are pushing some pastors out of churches, and even out of ministry altogether.

Being a pastor is tough, but it's really, really difficult right now. Pray for those in ministry!

For me personally, it's never been harder to be a pastor. I have been

criticized to others by people I love dearly for tough decisions that had to be made. Church members, whom I long to see gathered with their church family, just aren't coming back to church after being gone for over 18 months.

Brothers and sisters in Christ have acted like immature children attacking others for having a different opinion on things where freedom of conscience should be allowed. The pain of suffering and loss have sadly become part of daily life.

Yet, through all of this, I am genuinely thankful for God's grace and calling. The Spirit has provided strength, dear friends have given wise counsel, and God's word has been a balm for my weary soul during this tough season. In this morn-

ing's daily Scripture reading, I was reminded of the joys that outweigh the burdens of ministry. It is a delight to shepherd people. It is a joy to invest in those who want to grow. It is a blessing to pastor the precious people of Grace, who are a real faith family to me. It is an honor to share both the gospel and my life with these disciples of Jesus. I know that I am far from a perfect pastor, but I get to serve a perfect Savior.

“So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us” (1 Thess. 2:8).

Pastor Andy Frazier
Grace Baptist Church
Sumiton, Ala.

From the *Twitterverse*

@jt_english

... Almost every pastor I talk to is discouraged, tired and just trying to hold on. Encourage your pastor today. It'll be a sip of water in the desert. They are carrying a heavy, heavy load. Pastors: Jesus has you, and you're doing a great job.

@DannyAkin

I appreciate @BruceFrank1 and his call for a full, open and transparent investigation into the sexual abuse issues related to the @SBC-ExecComm. Let's clear the air, find the truth, get things right & move forward for the glory of God.

@claysmith79

I love pastoring a multigenerational church. We need both the zeal and idealism of the young,

but also the wisdom and historical perspectives of those who are older. We are better together.

@ArtRainer

“You can give without loving. But you cannot love without giving.” —Amy Carmichael

@jordaneasley

I'm extremely grateful for the men I've called Pastor over the years.

These men have each invested in me, taught me God's word and shown me what it looks like to love the Lord & His church.

@GaryFenton07

Instead of preparing your defense when you are expecting criticism, prepare your heart to hear it. Then

wait a few days and you may not need to defend yourself or if you still think you need to, you can do so calmly.

@daneortlund

A tidal wave of pastor resignations is coming in 2022. But that wave can be greatly lessened by the most powerful gift a congregation can give: the ministry of encouragement. ... ordinary, specific encouragement is what will keep him afloat.

@michaelcriner

The By-Laws of the church you serve are super important. Ensure you know them before you come, and become an expert into them while you are there. This will serve you well during your tenure.

Adaptive leadership skills needed

Chaos seems to be everywhere, and leaders are the ones working to make sense out of the chaos and bring order to it.

Utilizing the concept of adaptive leadership during these times is vital.

We can find types of adaptive leadership employed by the Apostle Paul in Titus 2.

Titus is facing hostility outside the church and apathy inside the church, and he may have wanted to leave.

But Paul explains the reason he left him in the role is so Titus might establish order and finish the unfinished business.

Paul is doing his best to encourage Titus, to stir up that passion he knows he has and teach him how to adapt and be an effective leader.

We will become exhausted similar to how Titus was fatigued, but we can learn from Titus 2:11–15:

► How to live in this present world.

► How to look at prospects of the future.

► How to be liberated from the past.

► How to lead people.

We are here for a purpose and are to be on mission for the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are on mission with the Great Commission. We live sent in a hostile, antagonistic world that has little or no concern about what the Christian message is. We should not be surprised but continue as faithful servants of Jesus Christ.

Titus was encouraged to communicate effectively and faithfully the gospel of Jesus Christ, to stand on convictions with a Christlike attitude, to speak the truth in love fearlessly, unapologetically — Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord and the gospel is true.

Rick Lance

Excerpt from his Sept. 16 chapel sermon at Southern Seminary

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

Sexual Abuse Task Force chair Bruce Frank answers questions from Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee members. EC chair Rolland Slade (back, left) and EC president Ronnie Floyd (back, right) also addressed members during the two-day meeting in Nashville.

Difficult days



Photo by Van Payne

Fiduciary responsibility to protect entity clashes with will of SBC messengers

(continued from page 1)

Veteran members of the group referenced their concern for the freshman trustees several times, including Texas pastor Jared Wellman. “They are being baptized into all of this not by fire, but by nuclear bomb,” he said.

Wellman is the EC member who proposed waiving attorney-client privilege through a substitute motion to the officers’ original motion. Wellman’s proposal failed 55 to 20.

Pushback on votes

The vote on his proposal was a roll call vote, so those in the auditorium and any of the more than 200 people watching the livestream at the time knew how each member voted.

Wellman and others also released a document with the votes, and many of those who voted against the motion to waive privilege were pressed hard about their reasoning — so much so Wellman addressed it in an interview with Baptist Press the next day.

“There are a lot of good people on the Executive Committee,” he said in the BP article. “And just because they voted ‘no’ doesn’t mean they’re evil. ... A lot of them, I would imagine, probably needed more time and in the moment made the best vote that they could make with their conscience, and I can respect that. I can disagree with it, but I can respect it.”

Still, the intensity of the debate among EC members and the lines drawn left bystanders sensing three groups among them:

1. Those all in for full transparency and waiving attorney-

client privilege: a no question, “let the chips fall where they may” kind of response and the only way for a truly trustworthy report.

2. Those seeming to understand the need for the investigation but concerned about the potential for loss of insurance coverage or future litigation (even for other matters) if attorney-client privilege is waived.

The term “fiduciary responsibility” — trust and duty to act in the best interest of the entity being served — surfaced consistently among this group as a reason to find another way to accomplish the investigation goal without waiving privilege.

3. Those not yet in option 1 or 2 but genuinely wanting to make the right decisions and attempting to understand all the layers involved while analyzing the arguments from the two main opposing sides.

With the divisions only growing deeper by the minute, the group indicated a desire to make a decision — and “to not go home without a decision made.”

But when the EC officers’ long-anticipated recommendation was unveiled after a nearly two-hour delay for last-minute tweaks, frustration levels soared.

The stunned stillness and thick silence hung heavy in the air disrupted only by the sobs of sexual abuse survivor Hannah Kate Williams, who along with Jessica Alldredge and Tiffany Thigpen, sat through the full two days of proceedings. Survivor Jennifer Lyell also attended the first day, and friends of the survivors joined the young women in the audience.

‘Confused and upset’

EC members were snapped out of their stupor by Adam Wyatt from Mississippi, when he shouted, “What does this even mean?”

“This has been the elephant in the room for months. ... How does this do anything that the messengers demanded of us? I’m confused and upset. I’m not being facetious. I don’t know what this means.”

EC secretary Monte Shinkle of

Missouri replied, “What this means is that we are doing some extremely hard lifting. ... We want the investigation while also maintaining our fiduciary responsibilities.

“It’s our best-hearted effort to do both,” he said.

Wyatt countered: “If we don’t do what the messengers said, we are telling messengers they are no longer in charge.”

With Baptist polity calling for a bottom-up approach to authority and local church autonomy, could an Executive Committee decision to adapt what was mandated in a motion by messengers indicate a top-down concept and thus open the SBC up to lawsuits?

And the other question is: Does a decision not to waive attorney-client privilege in this situation actually go against what the messengers requested in June?

Some EC members say it doesn’t, that they found a way to capture the spirit of the motion through the recommendation they proposed.

They added that if the messengers had truly understood the potential for financial risk they would have worded the motion differently.

Wyatt added, “This issue is a substantial issue, but the messengers said to do it. We have a responsibility to do it. If this thing blows up, then we go to Anaheim and say this is a disaster, now what do you want us to do?”

North Carolina pastor Bruce Frank, chairman of the Sexual Abuse Task Force, advocated for waiving privilege but urged the EC members to make a decision one way or the other before leaving.

APPROVED BY EC MEMBERS 9-21-21

Resolved that the SBC Executive Committee authorizes funding the GuidePost Solutions budget of \$1.6 million from the source identified in the motion — through funds provided by the Cooperative Program — and requests the Task Force and EC officers to agree on a contract in 7 days without waiving complete attorney-client privilege at this time; and be it further

Resolved that the SBC Executive Committee continue negotiating legal means of accomplishing the goal of a public internal investigation and submit this agreement to the Executive Committee, Task Force, and GuidePost, by September 28, 2021; and be it finally

Resolved that, at this point, attorney-client privilege is not yet being waived but is being fleshed out through negotiation.”

MOTION PASSED BY MESSENGERS IN JUNE

That we ask the newly elected president of the SBC to appoint a task force within 30 days of the dates of this Convention that shall be comprised of members of Baptist churches cooperating with this Convention and experts in sexual abuse and the handling of sexual abuse-related dynamics.

This task force shall either assume oversight of the third-party review announced previously by the Executive Committee or initiate a separate third-party review.

Said task force shall ensure that the third-party review includes an investigation into any allegations of abuse, mishandling of abuse, mistreatment of victims, a pattern of intimidation of victims or advocates, and resistance to sexual abuse reform initiatives.

The investigation shall include actions and decisions of staff and members of the Executive Committee from January 1, 2000, to June 14, 2021. This investigation should include an audit of the procedures and actions taken by the Credentials Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, which was formed at the Convention meeting in Birmingham, Alabama, June 11–12, 2019.

The review shall be funded by allocations from the Cooperative Program.

We further move that the task force agree to the accepted best-standards and practices as recommended by the commissioned third-party, including but not limited to the Executive Committee staff and members waiving attorney client privilege in order to ensure full access to information and accuracy in the review.

A written report on the factual findings of this review shall be presented to the task force 30 days prior to the SBC annual meeting in 2022, and made public in full form within one week of the task force's receipt of the report along with suggestions from the task force for actions to be taken by our Convention.

"Let's do what [the messengers] said or not and live with it," he said. "Don't push it down the road and hope it goes away."

EC chairman Rolland Slade explained in the opening session, "It is the intention and desire of our officers, staff and the Executive Committee to cooperate fully within the bounds of our fiduciary duties. We are not attempting to do anything but that."

After two long days of reports and debate, Slade pleaded with the group to make a decision.

"The frustration that we are facing is because this is a serious issue that we are all concerned about, and we are all on the same team. We are all in the same house, and we all know a house divided cannot stand. The original recommendation from the officers was to give us some time," he said. "No one here is trying to say we don't want to do this."

EC officers' motion

The original recommendation, rejected by the body stated:

"Whereas the SBC Executive Committee believes that there is a workable path to achieve a full and fair investigation that does

not sacrifice its responsibilities or jeopardize the future work of the Southern Baptist Convention; now, therefore, be it

"Resolved that the ... Committee authorizes payment equal to the budget as requested by the Sex Abuse Task Force subject to the achievement of an acceptable agreement on a way forward taking into account the Motion and the fiduciary obligations and will fund the review in a manner consistent with the source identified in the motion — through funds provided by the Cooperative Program; and be it further

"Resolved that the officers of the ... Committee are authorized consistent with the EC bylaws to work on behalf of the full board in order to expeditiously reach a path forward for the important work of the investigation; and be it finally

"Resolved that the SBC Executive Committee humbly appeals to the Sex Abuse Task Force to work in cooperation with us to expeditiously conduct a third-party review and provide the desired answers for Southern Baptists."

The original motion never gained

traction, and in the end EC member Melissa Golden of Alabama was able to word the compromise piece (see page 6) that was approved, allowing the investigation to get started.

Pending concerns

Related to the pending aspects of how the EC will work with the task force and Guidepost Solutions, the third-party firm selected to conduct the investigation, and what to do about attorney-client privilege, the EC was to have convened electronically no later than Sept. 28 to learn the results and vote.

Julie Myers Wood, chief executive officer of Guidepost Solutions, urged Executive Committee members to waive the privilege, as did Frank and the task force.

"A nonprofit that doesn't have the trust of either the messengers or the mission or the missions field is going to be impacted far more by not dealing transparently with any mess than if they deal honestly with it," Frank said. "There is a huge cloud over our convention right now. We can run away from it. We can pretend it's not there. But there is a huge cloud that alleges that some of our leaders have not cared for, not shepherded, not responded to efforts to improve how we care for survivors and best prevent sexual abuse in our convention."

Wood added that attorney-client privilege can be tricky. "In this context, the motion is talking about the Executive Committee's corporate privilege and ... there are many relevant documents not covered under this privilege.

"I encourage the Executive Committee to waive the attorney-client privilege. ... It was the will of the messengers. ... Waiving is the only way to ensure the investigation is purely credible," she said.

Wood also acknowledged there was no pending lawsuit when the motion was passed by messengers in June. That has changed, however.

Hannah Kate Williams filed a suit Aug. 16 alleging an attempt to defame her and shut down her requests. It names the EC along with Southern Seminary, Lifeway Christian Resources, her father and eight SBC figures.

The lawsuit was not discussed during the meeting, only referenced in the question about timing.

Wood noted, "I think the Executive Committee will look hard at anything they give to us because that will certainly be an item that is requested by counsel in a new lawsuit. I think that is certainly a fair thing to do to think through ... our potential exposure on really privileged facts."

'Important decision'

"This is a very important decision for the EC to make. ... I would ask you to think through what sort of transparency are you looking to have," Wood said.

The sexual abuse survivors attending the opening night plenary session were welcomed officially by Slade and received a standing ovation.

"We are praying for you and thank you for being understanding and patient with us as we do our best to glorify God and protect you."



Photo by Van Payne

Executive Committee member Melissa Golden of Alabama spends time during a break getting to know (l to r) Tiffany Thigpen, Jessica Aldredge and Hannah Kate Williams, who sat through the two-day meeting in Nashville to represent sexual abuse survivors.

FBC Pelham helps The Port Church reach its community

By Grace Thornton
TAB Media

When Reid Guy and his wife, Lori, started The Port Church in late January, the couple set up eight chairs in their living room in Chickasaw.

"We thought we might have six, eight, 10 people there," he said.

But more and more came until there were 25.

"We ended up having to move to the backyard," Guy said.

Many of those have become key leaders in the church, and now — seven months later — they've outgrown the backyard and a local community center and are meeting in the fellowship hall of a Catholic church.

"We're enjoying where we are. We're reaching people and seeing people get saved and be baptized," Guy said. "We're seeing people come to church when they haven't been to church in 10, 15, 20 years. It's incredible."

Help of partners

This growth has happened with the help of partners like First Baptist Church Pelham, which brought a team to help The Port Church with outreach this summer.

"They reached out to me, and we began planning a sports camp and

block party that they do in different locations every year," Guy said.

It went better than he could have imagined — some 20 kids showed up each day for the sports camp, and the block party drew nearly 200 from the community.

Twenty-three professed new faith in Christ — 19 at the block party and four kids who accepted Jesus at the sports camp, Guy said.

"It was just incredible. We talked with their parents and were able to baptize them right there in front of their friends."

Matt Wright, student pastor at FBC Pelham, said seeing two churches come together to gather a diverse group from the community was "a beautiful picture of the body of Christ," adding his team was

grateful for the opportunity to come alongside Guy, who is "on top of things and passionate about reaching his whole community."

Guy said he's grateful to have a front-row seat to watch what God is doing.

"The Lord was definitely in what happened," he said. "We couldn't have done it without First Baptist, Pelham. It was a blessing to be there and be part of the story."

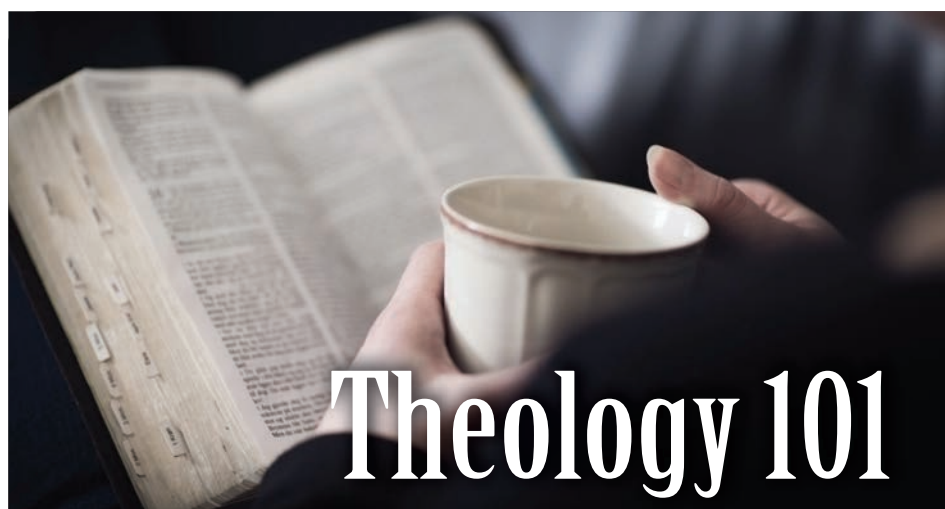
"We're reaching people and seeing people get saved and be baptized."

Reid Guy
church planter



Photo courtesy of Matt Wright

First Baptist Church Pelham helps The Port Church with outreach this summer. About 20 kids showed up each day for the sports camp, and the block party drew nearly 200 from the community.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The Spirit's Ministry

Supplicating and Strengthening

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
TAB Media

Over the past six weeks, Theology 101 has focused on the ministry of the Holy Spirit by calling attention to such topics as His work of convicting sinners and birthing them into God's family, as well as teaching and gifting, guiding and enabling, filling and controlling, sealing and sanctifying, and assuring and sealing.

As we continue the journey of thinking about the Holy Spirit's ministry on behalf of believers, we now focus on the incomparable promise of Romans 8:26–27: "The Spirit also helps us in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

Will of the Father

In the model prayer, Jesus taught His followers to pray, "Thy will be done on earth" (Matt. 6:10). However, we mortals do not always know what the will of the Father is. At this point in our human ignorance, the Holy Spirit intercedes.

On the heavenward end of prayer, the Spirit supplicates the Father on our behalf. We receive and rely on this ministry of the Spirit by faith since we are not party to communication that

takes place at the throne of God. By faith, we confess the promise that the Spirit is faithfully interceding or supplicating on our behalf according to God's will.

Secure platform

This truth is for us a secure platform on which to stand (or kneel) when we pray. Given that this level of praying is beyond our own understanding, we invoke faith to help us rely on the Spirit's work at the throne of God.

On our side of prayer, the Spirit helps us know what to pray for, and for whom, when we are not sure. When we do not see clearly, we take hope in the truth that the Spirit makes up for our lack by guiding us in choosing the focal points for our prayer. The Spirit ministers to our weaknesses and strengthens our infirmities.

How blessed it is to be able to confess with the Apostle Paul, "For when I am weak, then I am strong" by experiencing God's promise, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9–10).

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.



Headline news

from around the Southeast

ARKANSAS

Seeking a creative way to engage with students at the start of the academic year, Mark Parsley, student pastor at Mount Carmel Baptist Church in Cabot, conducted a “wipeout Wednesday” on the church’s 100-acre property, Arkansas Baptist News reported.

The event included bounce houses, obstacle courses, boxing rings with oversized gloves, jousting, a Velcro wall and more. About 180 students attended, resulting in 10 salvations.

In addition to the wipeout Wednesday event, the church hosts a weekly meal for the local high school football, dance and cheerleading teams. Already this year, seven football players have made professions of faith. The church provides meals for the high school men’s and women’s basketball teams in the spring, and end-of-the-year banquets for several other teams.

“It’s really just us trying to be effective ministers and do effective ministry for our community, and God is just really showing up and showing out,” Parsley said.

FLORIDA

What do demographic data and psychographic data have to do with reaching people for Christ?

Demographic data includes information on income, language, racial diversity, types of jobs and needs. Psychographic data is the study of personality, values, opinions, attitudes, interests and lifestyles. Josh Dryer, pastor of Fifth Street Baptist Church in Key West, believes the two methods provide pastors with insights into their communities and helps them develop an effective strategy to reach those around them, the Florida Baptist Witness reported.

Dryer has helped more than 300 congregations analyze community data, which can often be surprising to pastors. Studying the data has led to churches being planted in areas of projected growth, churches adopting people groups who live in their ministry contexts, churches search-

ing for a new pastor or churches starting child-care ministries for young families in their communities.

GEORGIA

In a spontaneous Sunday morning baptism service recently, 99 people were baptized at First Baptist Church Woodstock, the Christian Index reported. The baptisms coincided with the church’s kickoff of the Who’s Your One? evangelism initiative that was launched in 2019 by the North American Mission Board.

“Jesus talks about leaving the 99 and going after the one,” Pastor Jeremy Morton said. “I’m asking everyone at Woodstock to identify their one, to pray for their one and to come up with a plan to share the gospel with their one.”

Johnny Hunt, former pastor at the church who now serves as senior vice president of evangelism and leadership at NAMB, preached the Sunday morning sermon about the Ethiopian eunuch of Acts 8 who was baptized immediately after he understood the gospel and believed. The sermon triggered the 99 spontaneous baptisms.

KENTUCKY

It’s been 35 years and he has served five other churches as pastor, but Dave Dauwe is now serving in the church where his Christian journey began — Ludlow First Baptist Church.

When Dauwe accepted the pastorate of his home church in February 2020, the church was averaging fewer than 30 on Sunday mornings. Even when the pandemic resulted in the church closing for 10 weeks, the church has grown, Kentucky Today reported.

Within six months, the congregation reached 120 in one service and is now averaging between 80 and 90 in Sunday services — triple the pre-pandemic average attendance.

Dauwe is leading the church to share the gospel with its lost community, using the Gospel in Every Home initiative launched by the Ken-

tucky Baptist Convention. “We’re seeing God’s blessing,” Dauwe said.

TENNESSEE

She is a police officer, church trumpet player, mother to six children, church security team member, and, most recently, volunteer fire department chaplain. In those many roles, Danielle Cook, a member of Enville Baptist Church, said her highest calling is to be a servant.

“We’re called to be servants, and in all of these jobs I get to serve the people in my community,” she said.

Cook was ordained recently by Enville Baptist as a chaplain to the volunteer fire department so she can serve women who are experiencing difficulties, the Tennessee Baptist and Reflector reported.

Pastor Ron Davidson affirmed Cook, saying, “She’s faithful to the church, she’s a good servant in the community and she helps a lot of people.” How does Cook do it all? “One task at a time.”

VIRGINIA

After meeting in rented space for almost two decades, Northstar Church in Blacksburg now has a home of its own.

Northstar Church was launched in 2003 with most of its young congregation composed of college students from Virginia Tech. Several years ago, the church bought property close to the rented school it used as its home base for 18 years, the Proclaimer reported. At the time of purchasing the land, church leaders did not know development plans for the surrounding area.

In April 2021 the church completed its first-stage building, surrounded by two new neighborhoods, a welcome missions field for the church. Close to 1,000 homes are planned for construction in the next few years. With the new building right in the middle of a missions field, Pastor Jeff Noble has challenged the congregation with the mission — “Don’t go to church; be the church.”



Christian Index Photo



Baptist & Reflector Photo



Kentucky Today photo



Florida Baptist Witness Photo



Proclaimer Photo

Showing gratitude

Honor and encourage your minister during Pastor Appreciation Month in October

By Carolyn Tomlin

TAB Media

The role of the clergy has been vital to churches and their communities throughout the history of America, and there is a long record of churches supporting and encouraging those who lead them.

The history of honoring those called to serve as pastors goes back to biblical times. The Apostle Paul wrote that “elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching” (1 Tim. 5:17).

In 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13, he said “those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you ... hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work.”

In 1992, this idea became known as Pastor Appreciation Month, a time set aside to honor pastors and religious personnel. In 1994, Focus on the Family chose October for the purpose of church members financially supporting their minister.

Pastor Appreciation Day is celebrated the second Sunday in October and Pastor Appreciation Month throughout the month. Some interchange “pastor” for “minister” — Minister Appreciation Month.

Enormous task

According to Lifeway Research, 314,000 Protestant churches are in the U.S. Each has leaders who commit themselves to the local church body, and each has faced an enormous task especially in the past couple of years, said Ronnie Floyd, president of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

“I urge churches to understand the difficult challenge pastors have faced since March 2020,” Floyd said. “I encourage them to honor both the pastor and his wife publicly, present them a special ‘thank you’ gift, and focus a prayer time for them.

“Individually, the members might honor their pastor with a personal



123rf.com

note or a personal ‘thank you’ verbally.

“A special gift each pastor needs is the gift of prayer. This could be given by 31 men, each who would promise to pray for the pastor with great intentionality on their assigned day during the month of October.”

Terry C. Terry, a former pastor who now works with Life-way Worship, echoed Floyd’s encouragement.

“Pastors need to be appreciated,” he said. “Not only does being recognized for their service help the pastor, but the church benefits in finding ways to express gratitude.

“For example, I would suggest individuals write a letter to their pastor. Has he been there for you during a health crisis of a family member? Did he perform a wedding celebration? Did he minister to you when a family member passed from this earth into their eternal home? Think of how your pastor has supported you and your family. Express your thoughts through a personal letter.”

Terry also suggested church members meet and pray over their pastor — for wisdom, rest and a deeper understanding of Scripture.

Church members should plan ahead. Start early in the calendar year to build a team so financial goals can be met.

If using the second weekend in October, plan a special Sunday service to recognize the entire church staff.

A minister’s family is a big part of his success. Pastors with children may need to skip sporting events, piano recitals and other things to meet church responsibilities.

The wife of a retired minister recalled a family event her

pastor husband couldn’t go to: “Our son was playing in a Little League baseball tournament, and my husband had an associational meeting he had to attend. The score was tied and our son came up to bat. He hit a home run, and his team won the game. His dad missed that important event in the life of our boy.”

As you recognize the pastor, include the pastor’s family in Pas-

tor Appreciation Month. Try these ideas:

1. Write a personal note. If each family in the congregation wrote a brief letter, telling the pastor and his family how much they are loved and needed in the church, think what it would mean to them. Start early and organize a team to contact families. Offer tips on what they might say. Set a date to return letters to the church. Present them along with a financial gift during Pastor Appreciation Day.

2. Promote your church in the community. Place an ad in the local newspaper or on the radio that includes a photo and the name of the staff (often a paper will provide this as a courtesy; if not, ask for sponsors in the congregation). Include the name of the church, address, website and service times. Promote your church in the community while honoring the staff.

Involve children

3. Involve children in honoring the pastor. In advance, give each child in preschool and elementary Sunday School a sheet of paper that says: “I LOVE MY PASTOR BECAUSE _____.” Collect these and place each in a plastic sleeve to place in a three-ring binder. Let the children make this a surprise presentation during Pastor Appreciation Day, a reminder of how they love their minister.

4. Organize a “text day.” Sunday School teachers can promote text day by asking everyone to send a brief text message on the same day. Include one way the pastor has been supportive during a time of joy or hardship.

5. Give a family trip. Often the pastor’s salary doesn’t allow for vacations and trips. Collect donations to provide a time away, perhaps at a vacation home owned by a member of the church and even airfare if it’s some distance.

Words of appreciation, gifts and acts of service will let your pastor and staff know how much you value them.

**“Not only does
being recognized
for their service
help the pastor, but
the church benefits
in finding ways to
express gratitude.”**

**Terry C. Terry
former pastor**



Photo by Sam Evans

Nathan Troost, founder of Lantern Vision, speaks during a Sept. 9 dinner to supporters about the organization's mission and vision to shine a light on the work of God through gospel-driven visual storytelling.

Lantern Vision celebrates 10 years of video ministry

By Maggie Evans
TAB Media

There's a lot of darkness in the world. And as believers, it's our job to take the light that's inside us — the light of the world — into the dark places and share the gospel message.

For the ministries and nonprofits that exist for that sole purpose, they need to be able to share their good work with the world, and that's where Lantern Vision shines. Lantern Vision, founded by Samford graduate Nathan Troost, exists to capture and communicate God's stories around the globe through visual storytelling.

Covering others

Troost's wife, Flori, describes it as "a ministry covering other ministries," helping people be more engaged with the work of a wide range of ministries.

Since its inception, Lantern Vision has partnered with organizations in the fields of

child advocacy, medical ministry, poverty relief, Christian education and evangelism.

'Our goal'

Nathan Troost said of Lantern's mission, "Our goal is to understand how the 'godlight' is working within ministries ... and share this with people who might never get to go to places like Liberia, Romania and West Africa."

For more information on Lantern Vision, visit lanternvision.org.

Since 2011, Lantern Vision has created more than 600 short films in more than 50 countries.

To celebrate those 10 years of gospel-driven storytelling, Lantern held a dinner Sept. 9 for ministry partners and supporters.

During the dinner, participants heard testimonials from Herbie Newell of Lifeline Children's Services, Anne Lucas of e3 Medical, Matt Letourneau of Neverthirst, Phaye Wilson of Restoration Academy and George Childs of OneHundredFold.

Annie Armstrong cumulative giving surpasses \$2 billion mark

Cumulative giving to the annual Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions has passed the \$2 billion mark.

The milestone was announced by North American Mission Board President Kevin Ezell as he shared a report with members of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee meeting in Nashville on Sept. 20.

"What an amazing testimony to God's faithfulness and to Southern Baptists' commitment to the Great Commission," Ezell said in earlier remarks. "It is humbling to look back over the years and think about all the missionaries who were supported and all those who were introduced to Christ because of this ministry that was sustained by this offering. The impact on eternity can't be measured this side of heaven."

Ezell said NAMB plans to announce the final total for this year's offering after the first of October when the fiscal year concludes.

History

In 1895 Woman's Missionary Union began collecting an offering for the Home Mission Board (predecessor to NAMB). In 1934, the offering was renamed after Annie Armstrong in recognition of her tireless work as an advocate for home missions. Armstrong served as WMU's first national leader (corresponding secretary).

"It is simply astonishing that what began as coins placed in paper mite boxes has surpassed the \$2 billion mark," said Sandy Wisdom-Martin, WMU's executive director. Armstrong distributed thousands of mite boxes to Southern Baptist women and encouraged them to give sacrificially. Most were small donations which, multiplied by thousands, started



Photo by Van Payne

During the recent Executive Committee meeting, Lifeway's Ben Mandrell (left) presents the \$445,068 missions offering collected by Lifeway summer campers to Paul Chitwood (center) for IMB and Kevin Ezell for NAMB.

to add up for a significant impact.

"Annie Armstrong once wrote in her notebook, 'The widow's mite is still in circulation. Coined in the mint of self-sacrifice, its influence is being felt today by every member of the church of God.' A century later, the influence of the sacrificial gifts of Southern Baptists continue to touch eternity. Because of these gifts, the gospel is shared, churches are planted, lives are changed and families are transformed," Wisdom-Martin said.

The offering provides half of NAMB's annual funding. Everything given to the offering is spent on mission-

aries and on the missions field. Resources go to pay salaries for church planting and compassion ministry missionaries across North America.

Start-up costs

The offering also funds start-up costs for new churches in under-reached areas and provides outreach events that help church plants engage their communities. Money given to the offering is spent in the year in which it is received. NAMB reports the expenditures to its trustees and WMU.

The cumulative gifts to the offering surpassed the \$2 billion mark June 30. (NAMB)

Florida Baptists collect relief supplies for Cuban churches

Florida Baptist churches are collecting priority relief supplies for churches in Cuba during September and October.

The supplies will be shipped to Cuba during the month of October and distributed among Baptist churches and retired Cuban pastors and widows.

"It is opportune to

show our love and compassion for our Cuban brothers and sisters," said Emanuel Roque, Hispanic church catalyst for the Florida Baptist Convention.

More information on the effort, including a list of needed supplies, is available at tabonline.org/cuba-relief. (TAB Media)



YOUR CAR CAN HELP *kids*

Did you know that donating your used vehicle can help children in foster care across Alabama? By donating your vehicle (car, ATV, boat, motorcycle, or RV/Camper) to Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries, you are helping us in our mission to reach even more children and families.

Donating your used vehicle is an easy, low-stress process that can be done in 5 minutes or less! We've partnered with iDonate to take care of all of the hassle and paperwork. All you need to do is provide some information and set up a time with iDonate to pick up your vehicle. ***That's a BIG investment with a BIG impact!***

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GRACE *gifts*

Memorials are listed below (the name of the deceased is bolded).

Marjorie McKenzie, Franklin; Eureka BC
Bob Mullins, Guin; Gilbert Butler
Sybil Grisham, Opelika; Pleasant Grove BC, (Salem)
Randall Hill, Thomasville; Kylie and Tyson Turberville
Mitch Robinson, Clanton; John Richardson

THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who made a Grace Gift to Alabama Baptist Children's Homes. To learn more about Grace Gifts or how to make one, visit alabamachild.org/give or call **205.982.1112**.

Samford grad shares lessons learned during COVID

By Hamilton Richardson
TAB Media

Community consultant Stephen DeFrancesco said life has not gone as he thought it would after college, but he's learning about expectations and God's leading.

In a recent episode of "Amplify: Conversations about Life and Faith," produced by TAB Media, host Maggie Evans spoke with DeFrancesco about campus life at Samford University and employment expectations during a pandemic.

By his own admission, DeFrancesco has lived a sheltered life, going to private school and Samford University in Birmingham, he now works with individuals seeking affordable housing.

Fulfilling role

"I'm leasing apartments, but I work in affordable housing," explained DeFrancesco, who works for Walton Communities in Atlanta as a consultant.

"We work with people who have Section 8 vouchers and might be low income.

"It's a very fulfilling job, and I've learned so much and broadened my worldview for sure."

DeFrancesco majored in journalism and mass communication with a marketing minor. He said his dream was to be involved in music ministry, and he even received some experience in concert management.

"I was really passionate about that, then COVID hit and everything changed," he said. "Everything came to a screeching halt.

"The Lord had to humble me in a lot of ways," he said. "It's easy to say you'll trust in the Lord but it's really hard and it looks different every day.

"(Still) the Lord is with you in each one of those seasons."

To listen to the interview, visit tabonline.org/podcasts.



DeFRANCESCO

ALCAP board adapts position title, approves transition period

(continued from page 1)
to churches, raise necessary funds and work well to influence legislators.

"We believe God sent us His precise man in Greg Davis."

Davis called it "a privilege" to step into the leadership role with ALCAP and said he has "big shoes to fill."

"ALCAP has only had two leaders over the last 45 years — Dan Ireland for 30 years and Joe Godfrey for nearly 15. That's a lot to live up to," Davis said.

"This new role is important to me, and by making this change, I'm answering God's calling on my life," he said. "I love Alabama and remain personally committed to serving our Lord here until He's finished with me.

"I look forward to traveling the state meeting and listening to pastors and legislators so I can better understand how to represent and relate to them."

Monitoring the issues

"There are many critical moral issues that will greatly determine the future for our kids and grandkids in Alabama. It's important that ALCAP keep representing Christian values."

Godfrey praised Davis' selection.

"Greg has also been a vocal advocate for the moral issues on which ALCAP and American Character Builders stand," Godfrey said.

"The future for both of these ministries will continue under Greg's leadership. I look forward to working with him over the next few months during these days of transition."

Davis currently serves as president of First Priority Alabama, a nonprofit organization that provides



Photo by Mitchell Bruce

John Killian (right) prays with Greg Davis, who was confirmed Sept. 24 as the new leader of ALCAP and American Character Builders. Killian served as chair of the search committee.

resources for student-led initiatives to promote faith in the public sphere, including support for faith-based, student-initiated campus clubs in public middle and high schools.

He also hosts Priority Talk, a daily radio show that focuses on positive news with a Christian perspective, something he hopes to continue in his new role with ALCAP and ACB.

Davis said he looks forward to collaborating with Godfrey, who plans to mentor Davis during the 2022 legislative session before officially retiring in April.

"Joe has been great and has done this for a long time successfully," Davis said. "I hope in time to be as effective as he's been."

'Complete confidence'

Chris Crain, executive director of Birmingham Metro Baptist Association and chair of the ALCAP board of directors, said he and other board members have "complete confidence" in Davis' leadership.

"Greg is an incredible leader who will continue to build on the tremendous

legacy of ALCAP and ACB," Crain said.

Resumé highlights

Davis has a degree in secondary education from University of Alabama at Birmingham and a master's of divinity from New Orleans Theological Seminary.

He and his wife of 24 years, Sandi, who is a speech language pathologist at Corner Middle School and Corner High School, have two

college-age children, Trent and Meagan. Davis and his family are members of HighPoint Community Church in Empire.

Davis will be president and chief executive officer of ALCAP and ACB, a title change also approved at the Sept. 24 meeting in keeping with other nonprofit organizations, Crain said.

The boards also voted to keep Godfrey on in a contract role following his retirement April 30, 2022, to serve as a consultant with both organizations.

For more information on ALCAP and American Character Builders, go to alcap.com.

For more information on ALCAP and American Character Builders, go to alcap.com.



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Like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives.

4 stories you should know



Facebook photo

Despite rainy conditions in much of the state Sept. 22, students and community members across Alabama gathered around school flagpoles, in churches and gyms, and even at city parks for the annual See You at the Pole prayer event. Pictured above, students gather at Weaver High School in Calhoun County. The theme of this year's event was "Just Pray." See more pictures at facebook.com/FirstPriorityAL. Find resources at syatp.com. (TAB Media)

Supreme Court to hear abortion case Dec. 1

The Supreme Court will hear arguments Dec. 1 in a Mississippi case that could challenge the precedent set by the *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion in the U.S.

Mississippi is asking the high court to uphold its 2018 law banning most abortions after the 15th week of pregnancy.

The justices have said they will limit their ruling to whether, as the state of Mississippi told the court, "all pre-viability prohibitions on elective abortions are unconstitutional." An opinion in support of Mississippi's ban could potentially overturn or at least undermine the Court's prior rulings in *Roe* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*.

A ruling on the Mississippi ban is expected before the high court adjourns next summer. (TAB Media)

Evangelical numbers hold steady, Pew finds

A new analysis of Pew Research Center survey data finds there has been no large-scale departure from evangelicalism among Americans in the past five years.

Data from the Center's American Trends Panel, which has surveyed the same group of Americans since 2014, suggests the number of respondents who identify as evangelicals has remained consistent.

Among white adults who participated in surveys in 2016 and 2020, 25% described themselves as born-again or evangelical Protestants in 2016; 29% described themselves this way in 2020.

Among non-white respondents who participated in both the 2016 and 2020 surveys, 26% identified as born-again/evangelical Protestants in 2016, and 25% identified this way in 2020. (TAB Media)

Rick Lance marks milestone with latest seminary chapel sermon

By Jennifer Davis Rash

TAB Media

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, marked a milestone Sept. 16 at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

His chapel sermon to students and others on the Louisville, Kentucky, campus means he has now filled the role of chapel speaker in all six Southern Baptist seminaries during his nearly 25 years serving Alabama Baptists through his role at the State Board.

He also has spoken in chapel at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham on numerous occasions.

Preaching from Titus, Lance shared four points on Christian leadership in chaotic times — how to live in the present world (2:11–12), how to look at prospects of the



Photo courtesy of Southern Seminary

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, speaks Sept. 16 during chapel at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Lance has spoken in chapel at all six SBC seminaries during his SBOM tenure.

future (2:13), how to be liberated from the past (2:14) and how to lead people (2:15).

Southern Seminary president Al

Mohler led those in attendance to a lengthy and robust applause of Lance as the representative of Alabama Baptist churches.

The Alabama Baptist State Convention's consistent and faithful giving through the Cooperative Program has been an important part of Southern Seminary, Mohler explained, noting Alabama Baptists have given \$50 million to Southern during the last 100 years.

'Generous contribution'

"Every dollar Alabama Baptists gave is a dollar we didn't have to charge students," he said. "If you were to rewind history and take out the generous contribution of Alabama Baptists through the CP, we would not be sitting here today as we are."

"We can't thank every one of the 3,250 churches (in Alabama) today," Mohler said. "We want to, and we can thank the leader of the State Board of Missions ... we can thank Dr. Lance and hope he will take it back to Alabama."

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **John F. Meadows** — who retired in April from the pastorate of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Salem — died Sept. 10. He was 79.

A native of Columbus, Georgia, Meadows earned a master's degree and began a ministry lasting more than 45 years. His ministry led him to churches in Georgia, Florida and North Carolina, then back to Georgia and finally Alabama, where he served at Pleasant Grove Baptist for the last five years of his ministry.



MEADOWS

He is preceded in death by his son, John F. Meadows Jr. He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Norma; daughter, Scarlet; son, Christian; five grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

CONECUH ASSOCIATION

► **Olive Branch Baptist Church, Owassa**, will celebrate its 200th anniversary, Oct. 3, 10 a.m. Lunch will be provided. Herbert Brown is pastor.

COVINGTON ASSOCIATION

► **Fairmount Baptist Church, Red Level**, will host homecoming Oct. 10, 10:30 a.m., to celebrate the church's 200th anniversary. Terry Liles from Commerce, Georgia, will be the guest speaker. Liles is a native of Red Level and attended Fairmount Baptist as a child.

ESCAMBIA ASSOCIATION

► **First Baptist Church Atmore** is celebrating its 135th anniversary with three special dates. Oct. 3 will be about "Celebrating the Past" with a historical celebration at 10:30 a.m. and a 6 p.m. worship service led by Gordon Mote from Nashville. (Tickets are available at the church office.) Oct. 10, with a "Celebrating the Present" theme, will feature Rick Lance, director of the Alabama State Board of Missions, at the 10:30 service with Josh Nichols and Mackenzie Wray, both of Nashville, leading worship at 6 p.m. The church will "Celebrate the Future" Oct. 17 with a hymn and celebration service at 10:30 a.m. followed by dinner on the grounds.

MARSHALL ASSOCIATION

► **Mike Foreman** is the new associational mission strategist for the **Marshall Baptist Association**.

Foreman previously served 13 years as pastor of First Baptist Church Level Plains, Enterprise. He is actively involved in church planting, training coaches and coaching church planters throughout the state.

A long time Alabama Baptist



FOREMAN

pastor, Foreman began his ministry as youth minister at First Baptist Church Bessemer in 1993. Since then he has served as pastor of churches in Talladega, Munford and Enterprise. He holds a bachelor's degree from Southeastern Bible College (formerly in Birmingham) in pastoral ministries and a masters in theology from Covington Theological Seminary in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia.

Mike and his wife, Marina, have six adult children and five grandchildren.

► **Creek Path Baptist Church, Guntersville**, will host its 50th anniversary celebration Oct. 10 with Ted Traylor, pastor of Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola, Florida, as guest preacher. Traylor's father-in-law is one of two deacons who started the church.

MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATION

► When **Camellia Baptist Church, Prattville**, was planted on Easter Sunday in 1975, **Hilda Geoghagen** (center) was playing the organ.

She's been playing it ever since — right up until she retired

Sept. 12. The church honored her that day for her 46 years of service and for her 91st birthday, which was the following day. In total, Geoghagen has played the

organ in churches for more than seven decades, since she was 19 years old.

Pastor James Taylor (right) called her a "wonderful example of faithfulness."



Facebook Photo

MUD CREEK ASSOCIATION

► When **Billy Brewer** was a student at Samford University, he surrendered to a call to ministry during a chapel service. Though he was confident in the call, he wasn't sure exactly what it would look like.

He never would have guessed he would serve in pastoral ministries for more than 50 years before he retired.

On Sept. 5, **Mud Creek Baptist Church, Adger**, honored Brewer for his 52 years in ministry, including more than 14 years as their pastor.

His wife of 51 years, Carolyn, has served as the church's pianist, as well as at other churches throughout the years.

Mud Creek Baptist is their eighth church to serve together.

Along the way, Brewer has served bivocationally, working also for 37 years in education as a teacher and coach. He said that career offered him many opportunities to meet people and share his faith.

The journey has been a good one, "a blessing for my wife and I," Brewer said.

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

► **Southcrest Baptist Church, Bessemer**, will host Trusting Grace, Oct. 1 at 7 p.m. Supper begins at 6 p.m. Scott Bush is pastor.



BREWER

Do you have church news to share? Send to news@thealabamabaptist.org.

Persecuted church

Christian man sentenced, fined for 'undermining' faith of Muslims

AIN-DEFLA PROVINCE, Algeria — An Algerian court sentenced and fined a Christian man July 8 for allegedly accepting unauthorized donations to spread Christianity.

Ahmed Beghal (name changed for security) denies the charges and says the related allegations of distributing Bibles, printing and distributing Christian literature, and thus, "shaking the faith of a Muslim" are false.

Beghal said he was forced to sign the authorities' report on the allegations without getting to read it.

He plans to appeal the six-month prison sentence and fine of 100,000 dinars, which is equal to \$740 in the U.S.

The charges are based on Algeria's Law 03/06 that regulates non-Muslim worship and criminalizes any activity "which aims to undermine the faith of a Muslim."



Photo by Damien Boille, Creative Commons

Islam is the state religion of Algeria, where 99% of the population is Muslim. The number of Christians is estimated at 50,000.

Beghal became a Christian in 2017, at which time his wife and children left him.

Algeria is No. 24 on Open Doors' 2021 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)



ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONEPROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANYMINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

October is Cooperative Program Month!



BE A PART OF THE PARTNERSHIP

Choose a Sunday during the month to celebrate the Cooperative Program in your church and the many ministries and mission efforts it makes possible. For resources to help you with your celebration, visit AlabamaCP.org, sbc.net/cp or contact State Missionary Jim Swedenburg, jswedenburg@alsbom.org, (334) 613-2283.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Event and location are followed by SBOM contact person and extension. For more information on these events, call

1-800-264-1225 or (334) 613 plus the listed extension, or visit alsbom.org/events. To register for virtual events, visit PinnacleAlabama.org.

OCTOBER

- Cooperative Program Month**, Jim Swedenburg, ext. 2283
- Minister Appreciation Month**, Ken Allen, ext. 2210
- 2 International Friends Retreat**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Debbie Adams, ext. 2275
- 5 MinistrySafe: Sexual Abuse Risk-Changes in the Landscape**, ONLINE
- 7 Spotlight on Tech**, Boone's Chapel, Prattville, Karen Gosselin, ext. 2318
- 8-9 Fall Missions Festival for Children**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 2223
- 10-11 Who's Your One? Tour**, Shades Mountain, Birmingham, Lori McGough, ext. 245
- 12 Abundant Living**, Westmeade, Decatur, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 2285
- 15-16 Fall Missions Festival for Children**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Amanda Armstrong ext. 2223
- 19 Fall Missions Festival for Adults**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325
- 21-23 Faith-Focused Security Training B+Level**, SBOM, Prattville, Angie Williams, ext. 2373
- 29-30 Conexión Conferencia de Alabanza**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Kimberly Sandoval, ext. 2244

NOVEMBER

- 1 Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer**, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325
- 2 Tips for Teaching, Reaching and Ministry for Student Leaders**, ONLINE, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 2285
- 4 Time to Plant**, Madison Association, Huntsville, Jarman Leatherwood, jleatherwood7@gmail.com
- 7 Daylight Saving Time Ends**
- 8 A Night of Encouragement & Evangelism**, Carrollton Church, Carrollton, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 14 ALCAP Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 2289
- 14 Alabama Church Planter Network Dinner**, House of Hope & Restoration, Huntsville, Lynn Graham, ext. 2244
- 15 Unite**, The Well Church, Huntsville, Mike Nuss, ext. 2276



ALABAMA BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION,
November 16-17, 2021 Whitesburg Baptist Church, Huntsville
alsbom.org/convention

- 16-17 Conversations with IMB**, Whitesburg, Huntsville, Scotty Goldman, ext. 2387
- 20 International Friends Retreat**, Earle Trent Assembly, Florence, Debbie Adams, ext. 2275
- 28-12/5 Week of Prayer for International Missions & Lottie Moon Christmas Offering**, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325

DECEMBER

- 5 Night of Encouragement and Evangelism**, West End, Valley, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
- 9 Early Bird Tax Conference**, SBOM, Prattville, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263



Former Fayette drug dealer finds purpose behind bars

By Grace Thornton

TAB Media

When Floyd Rodgers was a teenager, he looked up to drug dealers. And he looked down on pastors.

In his neighborhood on the east side of Detroit, drug dealers “were the guys who seemed like they had it made,” Rodgers said. “It seemed like they had all the women and all the money, and it looked like everything was smooth with them.”

So because he wanted their life, he started selling drugs. One day, when he moved back to his childhood home — Fayette, Alabama — he started selling there too.

“And I looked down on preachers and pastors because I actually sold drugs to preachers and pastors,” Rodgers said. “So I didn’t respect them, and I didn’t respect the Church.”

He never would have guessed a pastor’s words would change his life one day when he was facing a life sentence.

‘Jailhouse religion’

In the years leading up to that moment, Rodgers had accumulated a whole bag of charges — including once when he was caught with a large amount of cocaine and marijuana, one of the largest drug busts in Fayette County. He sold drugs in jail. He got out on parole once and got caught selling again.

Over and over, Rodgers was set free for unexplainable reasons. Once the drugs went missing from the evidence room so the charges were dropped. Another time the paperwork got lost.

And over and over, he found himself reading the Bible, even though he didn’t respect church people or pastors.

“Because my mom had raised us up in church, every time I would get in trouble I’d go straight to the Bible,” Rodgers said. “They call that jailhouse religion.”

But it wasn’t until that particular pastor spoke to him in jail that his religion turned into a relationship with Jesus. Rodgers had just discovered he was facing the possibility of a federal life sentence, and he also learned his brother had been killed.

“But I remember that week, there was a minister who was once a



Photo courtesy of Floyd Rodgers

Floyd Rodgers is pictured with wife, Ebony, and sons, Jayce (left) and Jaxson. Rodgers ministers inside the Fayette County Jail and serves as associate pastor of Peaceful Rest Missionary Baptist Church in Fayette.

cocaine addict. He had been clean for more than 20 years, and he was coming inside the jail and preaching,” Rodgers said. “And I remember him looking at me and saying, ‘I don’t know who you are, I don’t know what you’re going through, but God told me to tell you don’t worry about your situation. All He wants you to do is get into His word.’”

So Rodgers did. “So this time I said, ‘God I’m not playing. I’ve been running from You. I know there’s nothing You can’t change. There’s nothing impossible for You. Show me what You want me to do,’” Rodgers said.

He started reading the Bible like never before.

Finding his purpose

“I’m staying up all night reading it, all morning reading it,” Rodgers recalled. “I’m beginning to fast more, I’m beginning to pray more. Before I know it, I’m leading a Bible study, and guys started coming to the Bible study. I’m sharing the gospel, and people were getting saved.

“And I’m like, ‘Wow, maybe this is what I’m supposed to be doing!’ So in the midst of the pain, I found my purpose.”

Not too long afterward, some men

who were forming a church inside the prison asked Rodgers to be the pastor.

“So during this 9-or-10-month period while I’m waiting to get sentenced, I [saw] all kinds of guys in there giving their lives to the Lord,” he said. “I was overjoyed.”

And another big surprise was on the horizon.

When it came time for sentencing, Rodgers found out his brother had been using his ID before he was killed. Rodgers’ federal charge was for drugs coming in from the West, from where his brother had been traveling using his ID

on the same day Rodgers was coming in from Boston.

“So you’ve got a Floyd Rodgers coming from out West, you’ve got a Floyd Rodgers coming from Boston, Massachusetts, at the airport on the same day at the same time,” he said.

That made it difficult to prove Rodgers was guilty.

Not only that, because of his turnaround in prison, local leaders and pastors stepped up to write letters and speak on Rodgers’ behalf.

Long story short, he ended up with a much shorter sentence. And when he got out of prison in late

2014, he felt God calling him to go back in.

“I had said, ‘God, if you will deliver me out of this prison, I’ll never go back there again, and He said, No, that’s exactly where I want you to go,’” Rodgers recalled.

Now he ministers inside the Fayette County Jail, but he’s hoping to get back inside the state and federal prisons one day.

Thanking God

Rodgers is continually thankful for how God has worked in amazing ways in his life — for one, he’s alive. Back when he was dealing drugs, someone tried to rob him and he’d gotten shot in the back, narrowly avoiding paralysis. He had a gun pointed at his head several times.

“I’m supposed to be paralyzed. I’m supposed to be dead,” Rodgers said. “I’m supposed to be in prison for the rest of my life. But God has got me out here right now doing His work, and that’s what I enjoy doing, running around telling my story.”

In addition to sharing the gospel at the jail, Rodgers serves as associate pastor of Peaceful Rest Missionary Baptist Church in Fayette. He preaches revivals around the area and often shares what God has done in his life.

“I don’t consider myself worthy to be in anybody’s pulpit, worthy to carry the gospel to anybody,” Rodgers said. “Yet out of all the mess I’ve been in, God is still using me.”

Another way he said God has shown him grace — he ended up marrying his attorney, a childhood friend from Fayette. They’re now raising two sons.

John Killian, director of missions for Fayette Baptist Association, said Rodgers “really is a picture of ‘behold, all things become new’” when someone meets Jesus.

He recently graduated with a certificate in biblical ministry from the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary extension at Fayette Association, and now is working on his certificate in biblical teaching.

“He just has such a good spirit about him,” Killian said. “He’s such a humble, unassuming guy, and he’s become a dear friend. He’s got quite a story. He’s a picture of God’s transforming power and grace.”

“I’m supposed to be in prison for the rest of my life. But God has got me out here right now doing His work.”

**Floyd Rodgers
former drug dealer**

IndyCar Ministry opens door to share Jesus

By Tracy Riggs
TAB Media

For those who attend the same church every Sunday, it's easy to take for granted having a spiritual leader who is there for you when needed. The drivers and crew of the IndyCar racing circuit wouldn't have that help if not for IndyCar Ministry.

"For the average [IndyCar] fan, as you turn on the TV, you see the beautiful cars; you see the crew in matching outfits; you see the 'production side' of things. What you see on TV looks really good, really professional," said Jason Holt, a Florida pastor and IndyCar Ministry chaplain.

That slick, fancy appearance masks a high-stress job. Being away from family and the inherent danger due to

the nature of the sport can take a toll.

"It's a very broken environment, [and] many people try to find a solution for the brokenness," Holt said. "That turns to a lot of things that are destructive."

However, the dark environment has "provided a great opportunity for the gospel to be shared, to be lived, to be reflected," he said.

As an elite sport, the IndyCar community is tight-knit, with its own language and cultural dynamics.

Holt was a driver for 24 years, and before he became a Christian, he partied with some of the same guys he now helps.

"They trust me because I can't pretend to be something I'm not," Holt



Photo courtesy of IndyCar Ministry
IndyCar Ministry chaplains work on building relationships with drivers and team members.

explained. "It has really opened the door for some gospel conversations."

The IndyCar world is rough, both physically and emotionally. "I've had stressful days at work, but I didn't have somebody's life in my bare hands," Holt said.

IndyCar Ministry used to look very different, reaching

out both to fans and racing professionals. They conducted a Sunday church service.

About five years ago, they realized they were being spread too thin, and the approach was ineffective.

"We were framing ministry in the lens of the American culture that ministry happens in four walls," he

said. Conducting a church service on race day meant people were leaving work to worship, even if it was only for the 30-45 minutes the service lasted.

This ended up causing resentment on the teams and put more work on others.

"We scrapped all of that. [Now] we do a 'Pit Stop,' a short devotional at the tech pad, a central location," Holt explained.

Instead of the five to six who were attending church, 30 to 40 now attend the Pit Stop.

"The other side of it that's been beautiful is that we've put such focus on relational connections," Holt said.

"We're finding that the more we relationally connect with people, God opens the doors on His own. We don't have to barge them open. The consistency of our presence is what paves the way for gospel conversations."

For more information, go to indycarministry.org or check out their Facebook page for specific ways to pray.

NEW CONFERENCE FORMAT



2021 ALABAMA BAPTIST PASTORS CONFERENCE

DATE: Nov. 15

TIME: 11:30 AM

LOCATION: FBC Decatur

COST: \$10 (includes lunch and dinner)

MUST REGISTER AT ALBAPTISTPC.COM

GUEST SPEAKERS



DR. KEVIN EZELL

President
North American Mission Board
Alpharetta, Ga.



DR. JUNIOR HILL

Pastor, evangelist
Hartselle, Ala.



DR. ROBERT SMITH

Charles T. Carter Baptist
Chair of Divinity,
Beeson Divinity School
Birmingham, Ala.



JAY WATSON

Pastor
Life Community
Nashville, Tenn.

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NEW ORLEANS
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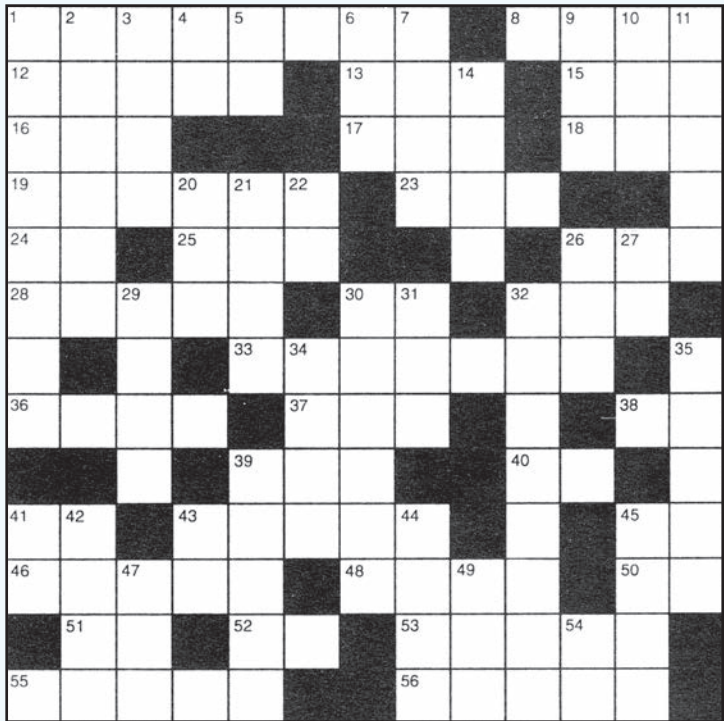


CHRISTIAN crossword

WORD search

ACROSS

- 1. In his days the ____ revolted. (2 Chron. 21:8)
- 8. A pillar, which is in the king's _____. (2 Sam. 18:18)
- 12. The ____ are fallen unto me. (Ps. 16:6)
- 13. But put forth thine hand _____. (Job 1:11)
- 15. Hath not one ____ created us? (Mal. 2:10)
- 16. And Adam knew ____ his wife. (Gen. 4:1)
- 17. He shall ____ without instruction. (Prov. 5:23)
- 18. Any taste in the white of an ____? (Job 6:6)
- 19. Mibsam his son, ____ his son. (1 Chron. 4:25)
- 23. Make bare the _____. (Isa. 47:2)
- 24. Which perished at ____-dor. (Ps. 83:10)
- 25. For ____ of Zion shall go forth the law. (Isa. 2:3)
- 26. How we say "hath" today.
- 28. Where the birds make their _____. (Ps. 104:17)
- 30. And ____ came to pass. (1 Kings 16:11)
- 32. A raiser of ____ es. (Dan. 11:20)
- 33. Our brother ____ is set at liberty. (Heb. 13:23)
- 36. And he ____ the burnt offering. (Lev. 9:12)
- 37. Do all the words of this _____. (Deut. 28:58)
- 38. Lord looked down from heaven ____ on the children. (Ps. 14:2)
- 39. Taken a ____ of money with him. (Prov. 7:20)
- 40. Children of Aram ____, and Hul. (Gen. 10:23)
- 41. ____, not so, my Lord. (Gen. 19:18)
- 43. I have been an ____ in a strange land. (Ex. 18:3)
- 45. To offer unto ____ in their due season. (Num. 28:2)
- 46. The words of ____ from the mouth of God. (2 Chron. 35:22)
- 48. Sibbechai the Hushathite slew _____. (2 Sam. 21:18)
- 50. To the chief Musician, ____-taschith. (Ps. 57:1)
- 51. An abbreviation for the



By Valerie Barrett Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

- book of Ruth.
 - 52. You, ____ that one reign over you? (Judg. 9:2)
 - 53. Noah builded an ____ unto the Lord. (Gen. 8:20)
 - 55. A nation ____ out and trodden down. (Isa.18:2)
 - 56. After they were come to _____. (Acts 16:7)
 - your hand. (Isa. 1:12)
 - 26. The ____ appeareth, and the tender grass. (Prov. 27:25)
 - 27. With the ____ to cut down. (Deut. 19:5; alt sp.)
 - 29. Have they not ____? (Judg. 5:30)
 - 30. The groves and ____ shall not stand up. (Isa. 27:9)
 - 31. As a thread of ____ is broken. (Judg. 16:9)
 - 32. Of the ____ of the heart. (1 Chron. 29:18)
 - 34. ____ the Ahohite. (1 Chron. 11:29)
 - 35. On the wall of ____ he built much. (2 Chron. 27:3)
 - 39. Become ____ upon the dry land. (Ex. 4:9)
 - 41. The birth of Jesus Christ was ____ this wise. (Matt. 1:18)
 - 42. But abide ____ fast by my maidens. (Ruth 2:8)
 - 43. ____! it is made bright. (Ezek. 21:15)
 - 44. Iru, Elah, and _____. (1 Chron. 4:15)
 - 45. Call me not Naomi, call me _____. (Ruth 1:20)
 - 47. Ye shall be ____ in pieces. (Dan. 2:5)
 - 49. One of several layers.
 - 54. Men of ____ smote of them. (Josh. 7:5)
- DOWN**
- 1. In bondage under the ____ of the world. (Gal. 4:3)
 - 2. While they ____ a lie unto thee. (Ezek. 21:29)
 - 3. All their little ____, and their wives. (Gen. 34:29)
 - 4. Hear ____ now therefore. (Prov. 5:7)
 - 5. Saying, ____ this the city? (Lam. 2:15)
 - 6. Unto the ____ of the eleventh year. (Jer. 1:3)
 - 7. It was planted in a good _____. (Ezek. 17:8)
 - 9. Mine ____ is as nothing before thee. (Ps. 39:5)
 - 10. Trespass offering, and the ____ of oil. (Lev. 14:24)
 - 11. By the two ____ was it coupled together. (Ex. 39:4)
 - 14. The people ____ throughout their families. (Num. 11:10)
 - 20. When the sun waxed _____. (Ex. 16:21)
 - 21. So he ____ do after the law. (Num. 6:21)
 - 22. Hath required this ____

- ABEL
- ADAM
- BANISHED
- BEGINNING
- BIRDS
- CAIN
- DARKNESS
- DIVIDE
- EDEN
- EVE
- EXPANSE
- FALL
- FARMER
- FIG LEAVES
- FIRST DAY
- FISH
- FRUITFUL
- GARDEN
- HEAVEN
- HOVERING
- JEALOUSY
- LIGHT
- LIVESTOCK
- MULTIPLY
- MURDER
- OCEANS
- ORIGINAL SIN
- PARADISE
- PUNISHMENT
- RIB
- RIVERS
- SACRIFICE
- SEASONS
- SEED
- SERPENT
- SETH
- SHEPHERD
- SOUND
- TEMPTED
- WALKING

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



Photo by Amy Hacker

Supporters of First Priority of Alabama enjoy fellowship while using Topgolf facilities in Birmingham to practice their golf swing after a luncheon Sept. 9.

First Priority of Alabama seeing students 'hungry' for fellowship, spiritual answers

Supporters of First Priority of Alabama joined together for the Topgolf challenge Sept. 9 in Birmingham.

The lunch event drew about 90 participants. President Greg Davis said the organization is busy training students and adult volunteers to work with established clubs or to get new ones started.

"The students are really hungry for community," he said. "They're ready for fellowship. People are even more hungry for answers for spiritual matters."

He thanked supporters for their finances, talents and influence.

He mentioned club kits for elementary, middle and high schools as one way people can support First Priority clubs in the schools.

An active campaign is happening right now for Bibles as well.

Sense of community

Carole Michelle Cox, Topgolf assistant manager for training, was there to discuss safety for the participants, but she also is a Birmingham native and participated in a First Priority club when she was a P.D. Jackson-Olin High

School student.

"Your youth pastor tells you it's OK to tell others about your faith, but it's intimidating," she said.

"The beautiful part about First Priority is that it gives you not only accountability, but it gives you a community within your school as well. It was always good to know that as a Christian, you weren't alone." (TAB Media)

"The students are really hungry for community. They're ready for fellowship."

Greg Davis
president, First Priority of Alabama



TAB CLASSIFIEDS

Place a classified ad for \$1 per word.
For more information call 205-870-4720, ext. 102,
or email ads@thealabamabaptist.org.

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Aimwell Baptist Church located at 2770 County Road 17, Sweet Water, AL in the Aimwell Community is prayerfully seeking a full-time pastor who is called by God and equipped to effectively preach and teach the word of God and to grow and lead our small dedicated congregation. Our church values biblical preaching, heartfelt worship and the Great Commission. The pastor must be God-fearing, demonstrate an enthusiastic love for Christ, possess and apply a comprehensive knowledge of the Bible, utilize the Baptist doctrine, and have a clearly defined vision for the Church. To submit your resumé for this position, please use karenrigdon1956@gmail.com, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee or mail resumé to: Aimwell Baptist Church, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, 2770 County Road 17, Sweet Water, AL 36782.

PASTOR

Brindlee Mountain Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resumé to: Brindlee Mountain Baptist Church, ATTN: Search Committee, 3422 Hwy 231, Lacey's Spring, AL 35754.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Hughes Memorial Baptist Church in Bradford, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, 535 Buck Ridge Road, Remlap, AL 35133 or email: hmbcpastorapps@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

County Line Baptist in Trafford, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, County Line Baptist, 74 Smith Mill Road, Trafford, AL 35172 or email: countylinebaptist1@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Verben Baptist Church is currently seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: verbenabaptist@att.net.

WORSHIP LEADER

West Side Baptist Church is seeking a part-time worship leader. To submit your resumé please use wsbcjax36265@gmail.com, or mail resumé to: West Side Baptist Church,

ATTN: Worship Leader Committee, 713 Mountain Street, Jacksonville, AL 36265.

STUDENT PASTOR

North Shelby Baptist Church is accepting resúmes for the full-time position of student pastor. Responsibilities include reaching and discipling students as a member of the ministerial staff. A model of personal integrity, discipleship, evangelism and humility is mandatory. Self-motivated, with excellent administrative and organization skills required. Seminary degree preferred. Minimum 3+ years' experience in student leadership and church staff experience required. Submit resumé to: PC@northshelbybaptist.org.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 3

Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



JOY THROUGH PEACE
Philippians 4:1–9

Stand (1)
Throughout the book of Philip-pians, Paul encourages his readers to remain firm in their faith in order to help build joy and confidence in other believers. As the culture turns more and more against Christians, it becomes more important than ever for Christians to know what they believe and stand for, even if it costs us our jobs or reputations. As we are seeing now, it is costing Afghani Christians their lives, and this should help us to be bold in our own setting.
When we choose to stand for Christ, we show others that our God is worth the sacrifice, and we bring glory to Him. We also pray this would lead others to accept Christ as their Savior, choosing to stand for something eternal rather than choosing to stand with the world.

Unite (2–3)
In the midst of Paul’s encourag-ing letter, he confronts a conten-tious situation in Philippi; two Christian women, Euodia and Syn-tyche, were at odds with each other. We are never told how these two disagreed with each other, but Paul encourages them, with the help of others in the congregation, to put aside their differences.
It is crucial for Christians to work at being unified.
Internal disputes are far more dangerous to the well being of an organization than external ones. External pressures often help to forge unity, but internal ones weaken it.
The Church should focus on our unity in Christ and our similarities rather than our differences. Our identity is to be in Christ, not our own demands or preferences.
Paul shows us it is the duty of those in the church to help bridge these differences rather than going to external authorities or even leav-ing these two women to handle it themselves.
The sake of the gospel is more important than our disagreements,

and it needs to be our focus.

Pray (4–7)
Instead of being contentious, Paul tells his readers to rejoice in the Lord always. Because of the salvation we have in Christ, we know God has secured an eternal home for us. No matter what happens to us here on earth, God has a plan for us that we can trust.
Having joy in all circumstances encourages other Christians and also is a way to show the world the hope we have. We live in a society that has no hope. The depression rate in the U.S. is at an all-time high because people have no eternal purpose. Atheists believed getting rid of religion would result in a world of peace and happiness, but instead it has brought anger, resent-ment and dread.
In this environment, Christians have an opportunity to be light and salt (Matt. 5:13–16), to bring hope to the world.
This is not an easy task; just be-cause we possess this eternal hope does not mean we are above the stresses and pressures of life. This is why Paul tells us to be in prayer and not be anxious.
Prayer gives us peace because it keeps us in communion with God and reminds us He is with us in the middle of our situations.

Dwell (8–9)
To show the Philippians what it looks like to not be anxious, Paul holds himself up as an example. Paul had been tortured, imprisoned, beaten, etc., but he always had joy because he knew he was doing God’s will. Paul told believers to focus on eternal things so they wouldn’t get bogged down with the things of this world.
Paul told them to focus on things that are honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable and morally excellent and praiseworthy.
Focusing on the beauty of Christ and His word is a good way to help us deal with the negative situations we find ourselves in and point oth-ers to Christ.

Bible Studies for Life

By James Riley Strange, Ph.D.
Professor of New Testament, Samford University



SURE OF GOD’S LOVE
1 John 4:7–13, 19–21

John wants his readers to take lessons in the Gospel of John to heart, particularly Jesus’ “new commandment” at the Last Supper (John 13:34). The commandment is old for John’s readers (1 John 2:7; 3:11), yet it is new (2:8) because they apparently have forgotten it. Otherwise, why would John repeat it so often? John deals with the reality that believers do not like some fellow believers, and others they outright dislike.
He even deals with hate. We know what he is talking about, don’t we?
Reread 2:7–11 and 3:11–22. Read 4:7–5:5 for context.

We know we are loved because God sent Jesus. (7–10)
We do not love one another because we are lovely. We love “because love is from God.”
Indeed, we love because “God is love.” This love, therefore, comes not from us but from God.
Furthermore, it makes us like God (4:17), who sent Jesus for those who are mean, spiteful and nasty just as for those who are kind, gentle and just.
Jesus came for us apart from our dispositions and deeds. He came because of God’s love alone.
Taken out of context, “love” could mean many things, but John makes it clear he is talking about the coming of Jesus.
John’s Judaism taught him that all God’s people were creations and hence were “born of God” and “children of God” (2:29–3:3; see Ex. 4:22; Hos. 11:1).
John adds the idea of Jesus’ atonement, which he calls living “through Him.”
Therefore, living includes both existing by the word of a loving God (Gen. 1:26–27) and the “eternal life” given by God (1 John 1:2; 2:17, 25). Eternal life begins now (1 John 5:11–13; John 3:16; 5:24). It is life regulated by the love of the One who loves the world.

We must love others. (11–13)
Therefore, lov-ing one another cannot be sepa-rated from living “in Him and He in us.”
If you have been wounded by another Christian, you know why John never bases love on the char-acter of the ones we are to love.
Rather, he repeats that we love because God loved us. (The past tense refers to Jesus’ earthly mis-sion.)
We know how miraculous this love is because we know what we have done and what we would do if we gave reign to our emotions and appetites.

We must not hate. (19–21)
John shifts to more comfortable teachings in verses 14 through 18: Jesus is the “Savior of the world,” we “confess that Jesus is the Son of God,” “we may have boldness on the day of judgment” and “perfect love casts out fear.”
Then comes verses 19–21, which starts well enough — “We love because He first loved us” — after which John returns to his topic: We must not hate a fellow Christian, for if we do, we do not love God. Who among us is not convicted by this teaching?
Who among us does not wish John would let it go? Does John think we are dense? Not dense, just sinners who will do as we please unless we are reminded of what God requires of us.
By not permitting us to claim to love God, whom we have not seen (also see John 1:18), if we hate one another, John suggests we love God by loving one another. Jesus taught a long parable about this that ended with, “ ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me’ ” (Matt. 25:40).
Let us then love God “with actions and in truth” by the ways we love one another, even when we are unlovely.
Let us begin living eternal life now.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Michael Foust
TAB Media

'Jesus Music' traces the history of Contemporary Christian music

Contemporary Christian music is so ubiquitous in today's church, it's often sung in Sunday morning worship — with few people in the congregation even knowing the source.

Sixty years ago though, the American church was in a different place, largely opposing the new style of music, which mixed elements of rock, folk, country and gospel to form a new sound with a Bible-centric flare.

Back then, hymns were the music of choice.

Simply put: Many in the church in the 1960s and 1970s didn't approve of "long-haired hippie" music — even if lyrics about Jesus were at the core.

But then men like Chuck Smith, Greg Laurie and Billy Graham stepped forward to embrace Contemporary Christian music. Soon, other church leaders followed. And soon after, it was playing on radio stations nationwide.

Decades of growth

A new documentary, "Jesus Music," follows the birth and increase of CCM, beginning in the 1960s and continuing during its growth in the 1980, 1990s and through today.

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.



Facebook photo

It was directed by Jon and Andrew Erwin — the same filmmakers behind "I Can Only Imagine," "I Still Believe" and "Woodlawn" — and includes interviews with dozens of musical artists including Bill Gaither, Steven Curtis Chapman, Eddie DeGarmo, Michael Tait, Lecrae, Amy Grant, Mandisa, Michael W. Smith, TobyMac, Kirk Franklin and Lauren Daigle.

Andrew Erwin calls the film a "love letter to the music that shaped our careers."

Before they made films, he and his brother were music video directors for multiple artists, including Casting Crowns.

It is one of the best documentaries you'll see — especially if your

spiritual walk has been boosted by these and other CCM artists. It's a fascinating and inspiring film that reveals key behind-the-scenes mo-

ments in CCM history, but also raises important questions about racial diversity and the church's tendency to "eat their own."

The film, which opens in theaters Oct. 1, is a "defense of the humanity of these artists," Erwin said. It's rated PG-13 for some drug material and thematic elements, but,

honestly, I thought it should be rated PG.

Also worth watching in October:

► **God's Not Dead: We the People (theaters)** — The fourth film in the "God's Not Dead" franchise, following the story of several

Christian homeschool families who challenge the government's interference in what their children are taught. It stars Isaiah Washington, David A.R. White, Antonio Sabato Jr. and Christian recording artist Francesca Battistelli, and will be in theaters for three nights, Oct. 4–6.

► **Nothing But the Truth (streaming)** — A documentary that examines culture's embrace of relativism and rejection of biblical truth. The film was inspired by the teachings of the late Adrian Rogers and includes interviews with Tony Evans, Albert Mohler, Lee Strobel, Mike Huckabee and Jennifer Rothschild, among others. Visit NBT-movie.com for how to stream it.

► **Little House on the Prairie (Peacock TV)** — Take a voyage back to a simpler time with this award-winning series, which tells the story of the Ingalls family in their quest to survive in the American Midwest of the 1800s. The series was based on books by Laura Ingalls Wilder. All nine seasons are on the free side of Peacock TV.

► **You vs. Wild: Out Cold (Netflix)** — The latest interactive Netflix special that allows the viewer — that's you — to decide which choices Bear Grylls makes in a survival situation. In this installment Grylls is stranded in a cold mountainous landscape. It's both educational and entertaining. Rated TV-G.

MEET THE REVIEWER

Michael Foust covers the intersection of faith and entertainment as a media reviewer for The Alabama Baptist. He also is the husband of an amazing wife and the father of four young children.





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