

# The Alabama Baptist

Toll free 800-803-5201  
www.thealabamabaptist.org

October 7, 2021

Vol. 186, No. 39  
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

## INSIDE



**Debt prompts beachfront church to sell property**

◆ Page 9



**SBC Executive Committee, Task Force impasse heightens concern**

◆ Page 12



**Fairfield Highlands Baptist passes torch to Faith Church**

◆ Page 15



**Above:** To celebrate the University of Mobile's 60th Diamond Anniversary in 2021, the university took on a major renovation project to transform "the Missionary House," which was established in 1977.



Photos courtesy of UM

**Below:** "The Missionary House," a 1,754-square-foot three-bedroom home, is a beautiful and peaceful place of rest for missionaries who are answering the call to share the gospel throughout the world.

## Labor of love

### University of Mobile renovates missionary house as part of 60th anniversary

In 1977, the University of Mobile established "the Missionary House" a block from campus to provide a temporary home for Southern Baptist missionaries on stateside assignment.

To celebrate the university's 60th Diamond Anniversary in 2021, the university undertook a major renovation project to transform the home.

Now, the 1,754-square-foot three-bedroom home is a beautiful and peaceful place of rest for missionaries who are answering the call to share the gospel throughout the world.

#### 'Missions focus'

The project was determined to be a perfect way to celebrate the anniversary of a university where students receive diplomas at commencement held on the Great Commission Lawn, then touch the Great Commission Globe to signify their commitment to serve Christ as they go into the world beyond the campus gates.

"The missionary home re-

flects the service, missions focus of our school," UM President Lonnie Burnett said. "We wanted to give back to the folks who have given so much of themselves on the missions field."

In the late 1970s, the board of directors of First Southern Federal Savings and Loan Association approached then-Mobile College about establishing a memorial for Maury Lyon, a charter member of the Mobile College board of trustees.

The house was constructed a block from campus in the neighboring College Woods subdivision.

Since then, the University of Mobile has hosted alumni, family, friends and more serving across the globe.

Visitors to the missionary home stay from three months to a year.

The University of Mobile covers all rent and accommodations.

#### Place to rest

The new renovation will help missionaries rest and rejuvenate in an up-to-date, comfortable home before heading back into the field.

The project was a labor of love for Lisa Normand Davis, (See 'Mobile-area,' page 17)



Follow us on  
**Twitter**  
@TABMediaGroup

CONNECT  
WITH  
US


  
alabamabaptist


  
alabamabaptist


  
thealabamabaptist


  
TABMediaGroup


  
TABMediaGroup


  
tabonline.org/  
podcasts

E	A	R	T	H		N	I	G	H	T
N	A	T	U	R	E		O	D	I	O
A	T		M	E			O	F		M
H	E	A	P	S	A	N	D		T	R
U	R	I		P	L	A	I	N		O
M	S		L	A	M	B		O	R	T
			A	S	S		E	R	E	
L	O		P	S		M	A	T	H	L
I	N	N		A	H	I	S	H	A	H
G	E	A	R		E	A	T		B	E
H	E		O	N			A	I		D
T	A	N	A	C	H		I	N	A	R
		T	O	R	C	H		I	T	H

The crossword puzzle can be found on page 13.



Photo courtesy of Ditto Gorme

As part of its 135th anniversary celebration this month, FBC Atmore refurbished its steeple, something that has been seen as a beacon of hope in the community since it was replaced after Hurricane Ivan knocked it off in 2004.

# FBC Atmore sees God move after revitalization journey

When Hurricane Ivan hit Atmore in 2004, it took the steeple off First Baptist Church and destroyed much of the community around it.

Pastor Kevin Garrett says that memory came up when he was walking with the church through a vision-casting process a couple of years ago.

“As we were going through the process of trying to figure out where God would have us, the signature identity of the church was how much the steeple, when they replaced it, gave people hope again,” Garrett said.

So the church rebuilt its vision around the idea of “the steeple and the people” — building relationships, bringing people into the body of Christ and offering hope to the community. And for three weeks, the church is celebrating that mission in honor of its 135th anniversary. First Baptist kicked off the event Oct. 3 by honoring the past with a historical presentation and a concert by Gordon Mote. It will continue for two more Sundays — Oct. 10 and Oct. 17 at 10:30 a.m. — as they celebrate the present and the future with various special guests.

And as part of the celebration, church members have fittingly refurbished and repainted the steeple. “It’s an exciting time here,” Garrett said.

He says First Baptist has watched God do a lot over its history and a lot since June 2019 when TAB Media first told the story of the church starting its revitalization journey.

At that time, Garrett had been there for about six months, and the church was reevaluating its mission with the help of Auxano, a church consulting firm.

They’ve made a lot of progress since

then, Garrett said.

It hasn’t always been easy — in the past two years, First Baptist has survived two hurricanes, replaced three damaged roofs and dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic, of course.

But overall, they’re seeing God move and grow their church and build momentum for their gospel presence in the community.

“God has been faithful — none of us were here 135 years ago,” Garrett said. “So we’re praying and seeing what He’s going to do for the next 135 years.” (Grace Thornton)

## 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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)  
© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.  
is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 800-803-5201.  
Website: www.thealabamabaptist.org  
Email: news@thealabamabaptist.org or subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org  
Periodicals postage paid at Hattiesburg, Miss.

**ANNUAL TAB SUBSCRIPTION RATES**  
Includes print, digital, app and full web access

Group Rate per subscriber per year — \$16.25  
(Check with your church or group to find out if it has a TAB group account)

Individual — \$34.95 per year (50 issues)

### JENNIFER DAVIS RASH EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Maggie Evans Special Assistant	Carrie B. McWhorter Content Editor
Debbie Campbell Director of Communications	Holly Smith Copy Editor
Hannah Muñoz Digital Editor	Grace Thornton Special Assignments Editor
James Hammack Digital Services Manager	Margaret Colson Special Assignments Editor
Sarah Gill Digital Services Associate	Dianna L. Cagle Production Manager
Annette Brown Guest Services	Lauren C. Grim Creative Services Manager
Jessica Ingram Event Coordinator	Amy Hacker Creative Services Associate
Haley Piersol Client Coordinator	Melanie McKinney Advertising Manager
Deb Lowery Financial Assistant	Pam Holt Outside Sales Rep
Richard Maddox Computer Services	Susan Stevens Outside Sales Rep
Addie Lee Frierson Student intern	

**NEWS SERVICES**  
Baptist Press (BP), Associated Press/Religion News Service (AP/RNS), Morning Star News (MS).

**POSTMASTER**  
Send address changes to:  
The Alabama Baptist  
3310 Independence Drive  
Birmingham, AL 35209

**ADDRESS CHANGE**  
Send old and new addresses, and name of church to:  
Subscription Department  
3310 Independence Drive  
Birmingham, AL 35209  
Allow two weeks.

To the best of our knowledge, all of the ads in The Alabama Baptist represent legitimate companies and offerings. However, one should always exercise normal business caution in responding to ads.

Full member of Alabama Press Association

Accredited member of Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability



### ‘Nation’s Top Regional Christian Newspaper’

1999, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 as judged by Associated Church Press, Baptist Communicators Association, Evangelical Press Association or Religion Communicators Council

# RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

**By Jennifer Davis Rash**

President and Editor-in-Chief



[jrash@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:jrash@thealabamabaptist.org)  
@RashionalThts

## Difficulty of providing clarity escalated in current culture

**T**he first time I heard the phrase “trying to change a tire while traveling down the interstate at 70 miles per hour” in reference to what a current situation felt like, I chuckled.

However, it wasn’t long before I knew exactly what it meant and adopted the phrase for my own use through the years.

Recently — as in late September and early October — it truly hit home, even with the words on this page and in this issue. It’s actually quite comical how many times we’ve tweaked, rewritten or completely changed content that started on a page a day or so prior to deadline.

And to have two issues of the paper in a row where updates continued within hours of the paper going to press is quite unusual. It happens from time to time, but rarely back to back.

Still, we worked to provide the most updated information possible in all areas at press time and continued updating the content for the online platforms.

The flow works well, but the constant updates needed for this week’s print issue reminded me of what we are all experiencing in life in general right now.

About the time we think we grasp the latest news or situa-

tion happening in our church, the denomination as a whole, with the state Legislature’s recent special session or all that’s going on in Congress, across the U.S. and around the world, something changes.

More chaos breaks out, a new piece of information surfaces or a different expert reports his or her opinion. What was happening with a small group of people behind closed doors slowly leaks out to the public and all accounts are not the same. Before we know it, countless voices are sharing their opinions.

Even determining who to trust brings a level of discouragement. And how exhausting it must be for anyone who has

worked through a situation, processed all the data and made a decision only to come in the next day with lots of new information or different information that has surfaced overnight. Or within the hour.

Along with the lack of clarity available in many of the current situations is a fear of how those listening will respond.

Pressure is intense for those in leadership to clearly (and quickly) articulate an answer to whatever crisis has occurred. At the same time, repercussions are swift from those who disagree with the answer provided.

Thinking through and weighing all the what ifs while trying

to fully understand an unfamiliar area by absorbing the massive amount of content swirling around would be a lot to shoulder on its own, but it becomes extremely heavy on top of already existing family, church and work responsibilities.

During this chaotic time, a generous gift we can give our pastors and other ministry leaders for Pastor Appreciation Month is a genuine word of encouragement, a kind smile and extra prayers.

While they all aren’t focused on the same concerns or issues, they most likely all are carrying a heavy load and wanting desperately to provide clarity for all of us as they lead.

## TAB Media’s Debbie Campbell elected to serve two-year term as board chair for Alabama Baptist Historical Commission

**T**AB Media’s Debbie Campbell was recently elected chairperson of the board for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

Campbell, director of communications for TAB Media, has served on the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission board of commissioners since 2017.

Along with her responsibilities

serving Alabama Baptists through TAB Media, the commissioner role allows her to represent both entities in a variety of settings.

“We enjoy our partnership with the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and are honored to have one of our TAB Media team members serving them in this way,” said TAB Media presi-

dent and editor-in-chief Jennifer Davis Rash.



CAMPBELL

Lonette Berg, ABHC executive director, noted the high energy Campbell brings to the board of commissioners.

“Debbie is such a relational person and brings a ray of sunshine everywhere she goes,” Berg said. “We are excited to have her leading us.”

The commissioners elected Campbell to the position Sept. 16. It is a two-year term, and she begins her role as chair Jan. 1, 2022. (TAB Media)

# Your Voice



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

## What part will each of us play in the hurt in our world?

By Eric Black

Executive director, publisher and editor  
Texas Baptist Standard

We don't have to look far to see an immense amount of hurt in our world. That is made plain to us — to the point of being unavoidable — everywhere we turn. What may not be as apparent: Each of us will play a part in that hurt. What part will we play?

The hurt takes every form imaginable — physical, mental, financial, spiritual — and is coming from every direction possible — nature great and small, the economy, politics, violence, to name just a few.

This means healing and restora-

tion takes every form imaginable in every place possible. What part will we play?

### Natural disasters

During the recent Baptist General Convention of Texas executive board meeting, John Hall, director of communications for Texas Baptist Men, asked attendees to envision being on their roof, looking out over their community and not seeing a single undamaged roof. Inside the house stands two feet of water. There's no electricity, no clean water and few other necessities.

This is the case for thousands throughout Louisiana following Hurricane Ida. The hurt associated

with it is multiform — physical, mental, financial and spiritual — and calls for a full-bodied response.

### Abortion

Abortion is a much edgier subject than disaster relief. We tend to line up on one side or the other of the edge and fight like hell, but do we ever live like heaven? Do we ever turn our swords into plowshares and make the Kingdom of heaven present for those overwhelmed with the kind of fear, shame or doubt that often accompanies unplanned or unwanted pregnancies?

Multiform hurt exists around the issue of abortion — physical, mental, financial and spiritual. Laws banning abortion don't have the power to address all of that. But Christians do. What part will we play?

### Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse perpetrated by clergy and other church leaders is a deep and multiform hurt. Its survivors among Baptists hope the church and its conventions will take up the role of healer and restorer, rather than enabler.

Here again, we would rather turn our attention to the hurt wrought by natural disasters, but the need for a different response to sexual abuse is acute and massive.

The Baptist General Convention of Texas executive board addressed one aspect of the hurt caused by sexual abuse by adopting a new policy that generally deems those churches

allowing registered sex offenders to hold leadership in the congregation as outside friendly cooperation with the convention.

### Global crises

The hurt doesn't end with natural disasters, abortion and sexual abuse in the United States.

There also is the profound hurt of unrest in Haiti, military attacks in Myanmar (formerly Burma), a "man-made" famine in Tigray and crises in Venezuela, Cuba, Afghanistan, Lebanon and elsewhere. Oh, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic everywhere.

We will play a part in this hurt, too. What part will we play?

Healing and restoration don't mean there isn't more pain. Anyone who's been through cancer treatment, surgery or physical therapy knows the cure often can hurt more than the malady. There is a difference between wounding and healing pain.

The pain associated with healing and restoration, however, ought to be upbuilding, not destructive and further traumatizing. How often have we justified destructive pain with the label "tough love?" Too often.

If only we always were on the side of healing and restoration, but we are not. All too often, we are on the side of sin and in need of repentance. Even the nicest among us are — directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly. Yes, in this world, each of us will play a part in the hurt. What part will we play?

*(This article originally appeared at baptiststandard.com and is edited for space.)*

## Letter to the editor

After I read your editorial from Sept. 23 about unfinished projects, I pulled some pending items to the top of my to-do list at work and knocked them out.

I'm also reminding myself to ask when surprise requests are needed, so I can complete what I was working on rather than immediately switching to that task.

I also decided to create a list for my apartment. I still had 4 boxes left to unpack, my closet hadn't been organized and my bathroom cabinet still needed to be organized so I made a list to prioritize what needed to be done at home.

I still have just a few things left on that list, but it's amazing how much relief you feel when you finally finish something that has been on your to-do list for a while. Sometimes you don't realize how much stress you're holding on to by not completing something until that stress is gone once it's checked off.

It was really refreshing to reorganize my to-do list and pull those bottom items up to the top for a change.

**Hannah Muñoz**  
Digital editor  
The Alabama Baptist

Share online or email [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org)

# “Prayer gives us peace because it keeps us in communion with God.”

ROBERT OLSEN

*Associate professor of Christian studies, University of Mobile*

Parents and pastors have the same mission, though their starting points and contexts differ. The business of both is making disciples. And one of the best ways you can prepare to pastor and grow as a pastor is by pastoring your children.

**Bobby Jamieson**  
Associate pastor  
Capitol Hill Baptist Church  
Washington, D.C.

After a year and a half of planning, I am beyond thrilled to be here in Northern Ireland to deliver our first international ultrasound machine to the wonderful ministry of Hope House. These machines have proven to be life-saving tools for organizations dedicated to serving both vulnerable mothers and preborn

children. My prayer is that many women would be helped and babies saved through the ministry of Hope House and that abortion would become unthinkable and unnecessary not only in Northern Ireland, but across the globe.

**Elizabeth Graham**  
Vice president of operations  
and life initiatives  
Ethics & Religious Liberty  
Commission of the SBC

Comparing yourself to another pastor or leader fails to honor what God is doing in your life and in the life of the object of your comparison. When you look at other leaders and judge yourself as more or less valuable than they are, you are denying the planned design of the

Creator who made you in a unique manner and for a noble purpose. You will not be judged by God as to whether you were like so-and-so, but instead by whether you were faithful with the gifts and assignments He entrusted to you.

**Todd Gray**  
Executive director-treasurer  
Kentucky Baptist Convention

In all my years I have never seen a time when pastors and laypersons are more discouraged than they are now. We can encourage each other.

**Rick Lance**  
Executive director of the  
Alabama Baptist State Board  
of Missions, speaking at the  
annual meeting of the Alaska  
Baptist Resource Network

## From the *Twitterverse*

### @ronniep

We need a greater gospel urgency in our churches. Bigger & better is not our call, but reaching, discipling & multiplying is.

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12

### @DerwinLGray

Pastor, Do not work harder on your sermon than your marriage. Your marriage is your first and most important ministry.

### @megannlively

Courage is not an act. It's a habit. —@jdgrear

### @nathanafinn

Some pastors are called Marxists by folks who have been disciplined by right-wing political propaganda. Other pastors are called white supremacists by folks who have been

disciplined by left-wing academic trendiness. Pastors, you will be slandered by someone. Matthew 5:11-12

### @JoWiKi

Preacher, write out and think through your transitions and your sermon will noticeably improve.

### @CatherineRenfro

Pastor appreciation month! I'm incredibly grateful for my pastor and husband and for the thousands of pastors who continue to lead well, serve well, and give endlessly in an effort to point people to King Jesus! Thank you!

### @brocraige

Our @EtowahBaptist churches are making such a great effort to knock on doors in their communities. 11,000 and counting so far. Heard some wonderful reports this evening (Sept. 26). My heart is so

happy and I'm incredibly grateful for our pastors and their leadership. #thisismyneighborhood

### @micahfries

Don't love people so that you can share about Jesus. Instead, love people and share about Jesus. People aren't projects, and love is not a means to an end.

### @deshaun9

show up. be real.  
love others. don't quit.  
@olivebaptist  
@whosyour1\_ #pensacola

### @Chip\_henderson

You will never accidentally drift into an intimate relationship with Jesus. Intimacy must be intentionally pursued.

### @clearviewchurch

The enemy isn't someone to fear. If Jesus is in our hearts, Satan has no real power.

## Find the Opportunity

When we look at issues and situations as problems, our efforts and outlook are only focused on the negative. No matter how we try to explain away our attitudes and actions, dealing with problems always originate from the negative plane. You cannot put enough spin on your words or actions to remove them from the negative.

On the other hand, when you deal only in opportunities you always deal from the positive plane. Wherever there is an opportunity therein lies the prospect of betterment.

When we deal with opportunity, our thoughts are on improvement or becoming better. I believe it is nearly (if not always) impossible to view opportunity from a negative plane.

Opportunity imparts a positive point of view and positions you for a constructive approach to your situation or issue.

When we deal with opportunities, we always probe how we can improve our organization, ourselves and the productivity of our employees or volunteers.

Dealing with opportunities in this manner becomes a winning situation for everyone.

In life, you are given opportunities to help yourself and others. As long as you view people or situations as problems, you will never rise above a negative perspective on life. And you will never be all God created you to be.

Once you begin to view life as a series of opportunities, not only will your life improve, you will assist in the improvement of life for many.

Remember, there are no problems in life, only opportunities. Let's improve something today!

**George Yates**  
Church health strategist  
Alabama Baptist State  
Board of Missions

# ‘God is good. All the time.’

*FBC Montgomery attacked by arsonist;  
damage extensive but not ‘catastrophic,’ pastor says*

An arsonist attacked First Baptist Church Montgomery in the overnight hours of Sept. 29–30, causing extensive damage throughout the campus.

Fires were set in several areas of the church building, according to Pastor Mark Bethea, including the sanctuary and the church’s historic Stakely sanctuary.



Facebook photo

FBC Montgomery’s sanctuary is one of several areas damaged by an arsonist who set fire to the campus in the overnight hours of Sept. 29–30.

“First responders arrived quickly and minimized what could have been a catastrophic event,” Bethea said in a Facebook post Sept. 30.

“There is an active investigation currently into who would have done this, and I encourage you to pray for this person who would seek to damage what the Lord has done for 192 years in the heart of downtown Montgomery,” he said, also offering a reminder that “God is good. All the time.”

Several pews were destroyed and carpet burned in the main sanctuary, and the church’s reception office was destroyed, he said. Carpet in the Stakely sanctuary was damaged, and smoke and soot spread throughout the buildings.

“ServePro is doing a fantastic job already in cleaning and restoring the church building back to functionality and safety, but this will be a process that will require patience and flexibility,” Bethea shared Oct. 1.

“I left the church last night more encouraged and ready to take the gospel forward than ever before,” he added. “What man meant for evil, God is currently using and will use for good. I believe that with every fiber of my soul.”



Facebook photo

A crowd gathers outside First Baptist Church Montgomery the evening of Sept. 30 to sing, pray and encourage each other.

At press time, the plan was for FBC Montgomery to hold an outdoor worship service at 8:30 a.m. Oct. 3, where the Lord’s Supper would be served. Future church services and activities will be determined as church leaders receive more information on clean-up needs. (TAB Media)

## Persecuted church

### *First Christians punished under amended Iranian law*

KARAJ, Iran — Three men, on June 26, became the first Christians punished under a newly amended Iranian law to stop growth of Christianity and non-Muslim religions.

Amin Khaki, Milad Goudarzi and Alireza Nourmohammadi received the maximum sentence of five years in prison and were fined \$1,600 (U.S.) for spreading “propaganda” against Islam. They were sentenced under Article 500, which states that “any deviant education or propaganda that contradicts or interferes with the sacred Sharia (Islamic law) will be severely punished.”

The three plan to appeal the court decision.

The amended law, which went into effect March 5, increases prison terms and allows the state to deny certain rights, such as voting, for as long as 15 years.

Previously, Christians typically received a

six-month sentence, a source said. Religious freedom activists warn the amended law could be used to target religious dissidents and minorities.

Iran is No. 8 on Open Doors’ 2021 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)

### *CCP claims Christian father had ‘terrorism,’ ‘extremism’ materials*

SHANXI PROVINCE, China — The Chinese Communist Party charged a Christian father July 7 with “illegally holding materials promoting terrorism and extremism.”

According to a report by ChinaAid, a Christian human rights organization promoting religious freedom in China, the charges came after police, without a warrant, summoned 35-year-old Zhao Weikai on May 17 for “proselytism” and raided his home. His wife, Li Xin, was summoned later in the day.

The couple home-schools their children. The “proselytism” may be related to the couple’s educational choice. Officials have threatened arrest unless the children attend public school. ChinaAid reported that police confiscated numerous books, a computer, hard drive and flash drive.



ChinaAid resource

Li was released May 17; Zhao received a 15-day, administrative detention. Family, a minister and an attorney sought to visit Zhao on May 20, but officials denied access, saying the case involves “classified information.”

ChinaAid also reported Zhao was questioned about his church.

China is No. 17 on Open Doors’ 2021 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian. (TAB Media)

# Alabama news

## BLOUNT ASSOCIATION

► **Pleasant View Missionary Baptist Church, Holly Pond**, is celebrating its homecoming Oct. 17 at 10:30 a.m. followed by lunch and a singing featuring Bama Blu-Grace.

## BUTLER ASSOCIATION

► **Mount Moriah Fellowship Baptist Church**, 193 years since its 1828 founding, invites everyone to its second “Adjusting to Covid” Zoom Homecoming Oct. 10, 2 p.m.

Moderating will be Don Carmichael Jr. of Chelsea; devotions will be given by Don Donald of Pine Apple; Charlie Grenade of Rogue River, Oregon; Caroline Carmichael of Chelsea, a master’s student at Beeson Divinity School; special music by: Jennifer Ellis of Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Robert Robinson of Birmingham; Gary Yeldell of Melrose, Florida; and Amanda Carmichael of Chelsea. The meeting is on-line only via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85999043596>.

## COVINGTON ASSOCIATION



WICKER

► **Slade Wicker** has been named the senior pastor of **Adellum Baptist Church, Andalusia**. He previously served five years as the worship pastor/student pastor/associate pastor at Southside Baptist Church, Opp.

He is finishing his bachelor of arts degree in ministry studies at the Baptist College of Florida this year. He is married to Ashley, and they have four children.

## ELMORE ASSOCIATION

► **Clint Landry** is the new senior pastor of **First Baptist Church Wetumpka**. He holds degrees from the University of Mobile and New Orleans Seminary and has previously served churches in Bayou La Batre, Arab and Foley. He and his wife, Suzanne, have three children.



LANDRY

## ESCAMBIA ASSOCIATION

► **Alex Sowell** is the new associate pastor for student ministry and worship leadership for **North Brewton Baptist Church**.



SOWELL

He earned a pastoral studies degree from Baptist Bible College of Missouri and is pursuing a master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary.

He also served as co-pastor of Christ Community Church, Louisville, Kentucky. He is married to Lindsey, and they have a son.

## FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

► **Center Springs Baptist Church, Trafford**, plans to celebrate 100 years Oct. 17 at 10 a.m. Steve Sellers, interim director of missions for Friendship association, will preach. If health permits, the church plans to recognize the oldest living member, Mary Frances Noel. A time will be set aside to honor deceased members of the church. A meal and singing will follow the service. Luther Williams is pastor.

## MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATION

► **Hayneville Baptist Church** is celebrating 175 years Oct. 10, 10 a.m.; theme: “Families Rooted in Faith.” Andy Hepburn is pastor.

► **Carol Roberts** is the new minister to children and parents for **First Baptist Church Montgomery**. Carol, and her husband, Steve, have two children. She has volunteered in preschool and children’s ministry over the years and has experience with choirs, tutoring, camps and missions.



ROBERTS

## RUSSELL ASSOCIATION

► **Golden Acres Baptist Church, Phenix City**, will host the second annual National Faith & Blue Weekend presented by the Phenix City Police Department on Oct 10 beginning at 5 p.m. The entire community is invited to join together and help build bridges and break biases.

## TALLAPOOSA ASSOCIATION

► **Jeremy Goodson** is the new pastor of **Horseshoe Bend Baptist Church, Dadeville**. He served as assistant pastor at Living Way Ministries for eight years and was involved in prison ministry. Recently he returned from a missions trip to Uganda. He is married to Kelly.



GOODSON

## TUSKEGEE LEE ASSOCIATION

► **Jordan Hoge** is the new pastor of **Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Salem**. He is a graduate of the University of North Alabama and Midwestern Seminary and has served as an elder at another church. He and his wife, Evan Elizabeth, have one son.



HOGE

## COLLEGIATE MINISTRIES

► **Daniel Lloyd**, worship and student pastor at East Side Baptist Church, Cullman, also will serve students at **Wallace State Community College** in Hanceville as Baptist Campus Minis-

tries director. The BCM minister position is jointly funded by East Cullman and West Cullman Baptist associations.

Lloyd is a native of Atlanta but grew up in Tallahassee, Florida. He was saved at the age of 9 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center.

He is a graduate of the Baptist College of Florida, where he earned a bachelor’s degree and master’s degree in worship leadership.

Over the past 16 years, he has served several churches in Alabama in the areas of worship, education and discipleship, student ministry and college ministry. He also serves as worship and student pastor at East Side Baptist Church, Cullman. Lloyd said he is excited to serve as BCM minister to students at Wallace State because he has a “heart and passion for young adults knowing Jesus and growing in their faith for the rest of their lives.”

He and his wife, Heather, have three children.



LLOYD

Do you have church news to share? Send to [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org).

## Fall associational meetings

Associational fall meetings have already begun. Your TAB Media Group representatives are busy across the state representing The Alabama Baptist. Find a TAB representative near you:

### Oct. 10

- Choctaw Baptist Association
- Cleburne Baptist Association

### Oct. 11

- Lookout Mountain Baptist Association
- North Jefferson Baptist Association
- West Central Baptist Association

### Oct. 12

- Madison Baptist Association
- Marion Baptist Association

### Oct. 14

- Coffee Baptist Association
- Sardis Baptist Association

### Oct. 16

- Baldwin Baptist Association

### Oct. 17

- Coosa River Baptist Association
- DeKalb Baptist Association

### Oct. 18

- Carey Baptist Association
- Tennessee River Baptist Association

As space allows, other associational meetings where you can find TAB representatives will be listed.

# Headline news

## from around the Southeast

### FLORIDA

This fall as college and university students arrived on campuses throughout the Sunshine State, Florida's Baptist Campus Ministries geared up with new opportunities to reach and disciple them for Jesus Christ. As a result, many students have made professions of faith or renewed their commitment to Christ, the Florida Baptist Witness reported. "Because of rising COVID-19 cases and restrictions on campus, the level at which freshmen would engage with campus ministries this year was uncertain," said Nathan Schneider, Florida Baptist lead catalyst for next generation ministries. "Instead, the



Florida Baptist Witness photo

hand of God has been obvious in bringing students to our campus ministries, local churches, and to a saving relationship with Jesus. People have been praying

for this school year and the students at Florida colleges and universities, and the result has been God's favor upon our ministers and their ministries. We have seen worship and event rooms full of college students, and we have seen students pray to receive Christ," Schneider said.

### GEORGIA

Trying to decide how to use her summer for the kingdom of God, Truett-McConnell University student Makenzie Hoyt discovered the opportunity to work at LaVerne Griffin Camp in Alaska, reported The Christian Index. Hoyt soon convinced her friend Annie Noel to join her on the Alaska adventure. The girls joined the camp's behind-the-scenes team, and discovered ministry opportunities as they served food, ran the snack shack and even monitored archery. During the first week, the camp hosted Native Youth Camp for children from



The Christian Index photo

Alaskan villages, and Noel learned Alaska has one of the highest rates of child neglect in the country. Watching the Alaskan youth during their last night of worship, Noel said, "I can't imagine what heaven will be like if that was just a little piece of it at a little camp."

### KENTUCKY/ SOUTH CAROLINA

Recognizing the high poverty rate in Harlan County, Kentucky, North American Mission Board missionaries George and Robin Lewis, South Carolina natives, run Freedom Center



Wampee Baptist Church photo

Ministries, reported the South Carolina Baptist Convention. Harlan County was once known for its coal mining, but with the mines closing over the past 20 years, poverty has grown exponentially. During the summer, teams from S.C., including Pastor Tyler Caines of Wampee Baptist Church, joined Freedom Center Ministries to host a back-to-school bash, a carnival-like event that provides fun for families and two full outfits for every child. Caines described how volunteers wash the feet of each child before presenting the child with a new pair of shoes. Volunteers close the event by sharing the gospel and praying for the children and their parents. George and Robin Lewis said the volunteers "encouraged children and their parents with prayers, shared Jesus' love, and met physical needs."

### LOUISIANA

Lindsey Crawford had not realized how prevalent sex trafficking was in her community until she met a young mother who was a former victim. Prayerfully, Crawford launched Freedom13, a jail ministry that focuses on outreach to formerly trafficked people in northeast Louisiana, the Baptist Message reported. At Freedom13, based on Galatians 5:13, "We want to provide opportunities for women to start over," Crawford said. "But more than that, we want women to know how important they are to the Lord, to us, and to the Body of Christ. We hope they will find or be reminded of their gospel-centered, God-given purpose and walk it out, every day." Since its founding, Freedom13 has helped rescue more than 20 women and children from the sex trafficking industry and offers them resources to gain a new life through a 12-month trauma-informed program.



The Message photo

### MISSISSIPPI

The Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief ministry continues to offer support in Louisiana and Mississippi in the wake of Hurricanes Ida and Nicholas, reported The Baptist Record. MBDR was asked to staff an incident management team to organize and assist chainsaw operations in the hard-hit area around Covington, Louisiana. Hubert Yates, Mississippi Baptist DR director, reported that Mississippi churches have sent teams on their own to minister and assist where



The Message photo

needed and that donations continue to be collected. He reported that 12 recovery sites in southeast Louisiana are being staffed by volunteer teams from 19 state conventions.

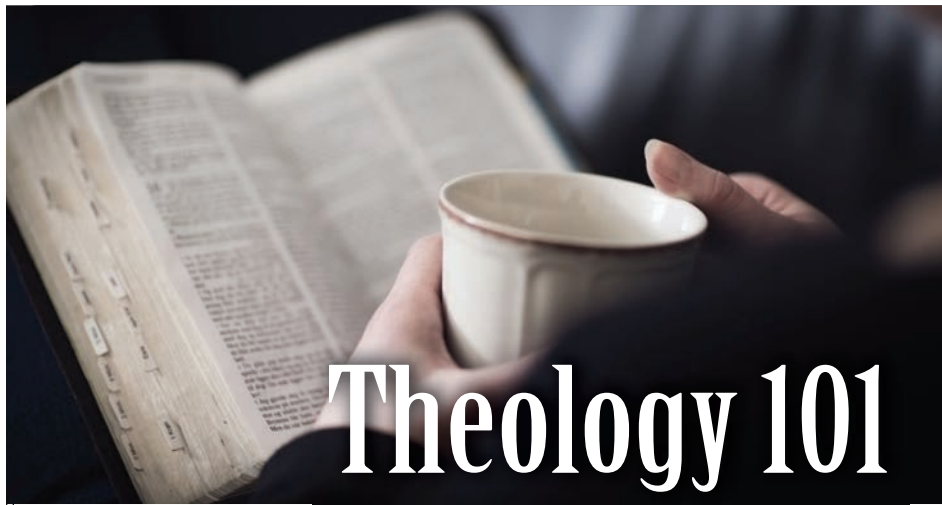
There have been 8,379 ministry contacts with 513 gospel presentations by Southern Baptist volunteers, resulting in 87 professions of faith, Yates reported. Meals prepared by all Southern Baptist disaster relief operations totaled 638,660, as of Sept. 19. In addition, Southern Baptist volunteers completed 494 chainsaw work/debris removal orders, and placed 141 tarpaulins on damaged roofs.

### NORTH CAROLINA

Inspired by Christ meeting physical needs to meet spiritual needs, North Carolina Baptists' health screening ministry, housed in a mobile unit, allows health care providers to use their skills to minister to people in their communities in a practical way. "It's a great way [for healthcare providers] to share the love of Christ through their training," said Crystal Horton, health screening ministry coordinator. Ministry volunteers offer patients basic health exams: diabetes, blood pressure and high cholesterol, assessing the risk of heart disease, screening for mental health, and offering eye exams. "We can give them things to do at home that will impact their health tremendously," Horton said. Churches are able to host health screening ministry in church parking lots, establishing a caring presence in their communities.



Screenshot



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## What is Man?

# God's image and likeness

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.  
TAB Media

For the past few weeks, Theology 101 has focused its attention on some aspects of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. This week, we move from the divine to the human by giving thought to truths given in the Bible concerning us as human beings. We begin with God's creation declaration in Genesis 1:26: "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness."

The next verse reports God acted on His intention: "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (v. 27).

## Generic term

Two things must be noted. First, this reference was not about just the male portion of humanity. "Man" is often used in the Bible in the generic sense of a human being. It's not calling attention to gender, but rather distinguishing humans from animals or angels. Second, the Bible's basic premise is humans were the direct creation of God.

Later, the psalmist would raise the question, "What is man that You are mindful of him?" (Ps. 8:4). The same question was posed in Psalm 144:3, "Lord, what is man, that You take knowledge of him? Or the son of man, that You are mindful of him?"

Job also pondered the same question, saying, "What is man, that You should exalt him, that You should set Your heart on him" (Job 7:17)?

The simple, yet profound, answer to this repeated question is we are the only created beings who bear the image and likeness of God. The intent of these words is to stress some correspondence exists between God and human beings which uniquely reflects God in ways that beasts of the field, birds of the air and fish of the sea do not.

We humans only reflect God but do not possess His divine attributes and perfections. We might think of this likeness as a one-way street.

We cannot analyze a human being in order to reason out what God is like. That would amount to making God after our image and likeness.

Rather the correspondence only moves from God to us. We know what God is like from what He has chosen to reveal about Himself and then seek to understand what this tells us about ourselves.

In His incarnation, Christ became the supreme representation of God. Scripture attests that Christ is the very image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15). Thus, Jesus could say with absolute accuracy, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

*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.*



# Debt prompts beachfront church to sell property

More than a year after Romar Beach Baptist Church put its property on the market, a developer purchased the beachfront facility for \$6.5 million.

The hotel proposed for that spot is a 76-room Marriott brand hotel, according to the Orange Beach Planning Commission.

Pastor Chris Fowler wrote on the church's Facebook page Sept. 26 that most of the money would go to pay the church's longstanding debt.

Addressing a news headline saying the church building had sold for "big bucks," Fowler wrote that the church had long

been "existing literally at the mercy of the bank from month to month."

"It has NEVER been a 'rich' church (in money!) but has been blessed richly by all of you who have worshipped with us or stayed in the retreat center," he wrote.

"Yes, it was a very difficult time keeping 28 AC units working and using equipment purchased at auctions after most of their use was already gone."

The church lost its original building to Hurricane Ivan in 2004 and dedicated its current building in 2008. It sustained major water damage when Hurricane Sally hit in September 2020.

## 'Unfathomable' mortgage

When the church started rebuilding after Hurricane Ivan, the congregation of around 50 local members picked up an "unfathomable" mortgage, Fowler said in 2020.

The post-hurricane structure is a five-story worship and conference center that is anchored to bedrock to withstand a Category 5 storm.

Over time, the church "broke even," he said, but then they faced accusations of some uncleared debt.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic,

Romar Beach Baptist saw somewhere between 10,000 and 12,000 guests — mostly vacationers — come through its doors for worship services each year.

They typically saw between 200 and 300 professions of faith a year. In typical years, they also hosted between 4,000 and 5,000 in the two floors of their building built as a retreat center space.

When COVID-19 drastically affected that number, it cut out a primary source of the church's income, Fowler said.

That led the church to list the

property in summer 2020, he explained.

"When the facility 'sold,' our bank account didn't even increase [enough] to purchase a condo in most of the buildings in our area," Fowler wrote on Facebook.

"We fulfilled our financial debts (which we inherited) with nowhere nearly clearing enough money to purchase 'debt free' almost anything in this area."

God blessed them to provide a way out of debt

through the sale of the building, he wrote. "At any point these wonderful people could have declared bankruptcy and walked away. Christians don't do that.

"It was a debt created in RBBC's name, and we did the only 'right' thing we could do as we were forced into either selling at far below the market value or be 'on the street' because of a foreclosure."

"We believe our 'wilderness' is almost over and it's going to be incredible," he wrote.

Fowler said the church must move into a new home by Oct. 20. At press time, the Oct. 10 services were still planned for the beachfront property, according to the church's Facebook post. (TAB Media)



TAB Media file photo

A developer purchased Romar Beach Baptist Church's property for \$6.5 million. The congregation must move into a new home by Oct. 20, according to Pastor Chris Fowler.

# CHRIST+CENTERED

Colossians 1:17-18



ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ALABAMA BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION  
**NOVEMBER 16-17, 2021**  
WHITESBURG BAPTIST CHURCH • HUNTSVILLE

## FEATURING MESSAGES BY:

**Tim Cox**  
Tuesday Morning

**Jamie Dew**  
Tuesday Evening

**Jeff Meyers**  
Wednesday Morning



Tim Cox



Jamie Dew



Jeff Meyers

## CHRIST+CENTERED

Colossians 1:17-18

testimonies by

**Joshua del Risco**  
**Dewayne Rembert**  
**Zachary Beasley**



Joshua del Risco

**MINI-CONCERT**  
*Tuesday Evening*  
by Contemporary  
Christian Singer  
Christy Nockels



Dewayne Rembert



Zachary Beasley

Visit [alsbom.org/convention](http://alsbom.org/convention) for complete schedule and hotel information or contact Amy Nelson, [anelson@alsbom.org](mailto:anelson@alsbom.org), (334) 613-2231.

# Engaged in God's word

October 7 is the annual student-led event 'Bring Your Bible to School Day'

By Tracy Riggs

TAB Media

According to a Center for Bible Engagement study, people who read Scripture at least four times a week are 228% more likely to share their faith than those who don't.

Good News Broadcasting Association Inc. research shows "most children do not read or listen to the Bible regularly. Even among children who identify as born-again Christians, one-quarter to one-third do not read or listen to the Bible at all in a given week."

## Exposed to the Bible

Bring Your Bible to School Day, held annually on the first Thursday of October (Oct. 7 this year) aims to promote biblical literacy and freedom of religious ex-

pression among elementary and high school students.

Similar to the annual See You at the Pole event in September, Bring Your Bible to School Day is student led, meaning it's up to the students to organize and carry out the event in their schools.

Prior to the 2019 event, Jim Daly, president of Focus on the Family, which helps promote Bring Your Bible to School Day, wrote an opinion piece for Fox News, sharing one story of the power of Scripture on a young person's life.

"Take Perry, for instance, a 17-year-old high school student in Colorado," Daly wrote.

"He has brought his Bible with him to school every day since he was in middle school. 'I want to be real at school and at church and



123rf.com

with my friends,' [Perry said.]

"But the real test of his faith came when his mother was suddenly diagnosed with cancer during his junior year in high school.

He said reading just a few Bible verses a day brought peace and emotional stability. 'That's what really got me through that — just

practically digging into God's word.'

"And now he wants the freedom to talk about that spiritual strength with other classmates."

The event also reminds students, parents, teachers, administrators and the community that First Amendment guarantees of religious liberty do not stop at the school door.

These protections mean public school officials may not be antagonistic to religion in general or to a particular religious belief in particular or do things to inhibit religion, according to the National Coalition Against Censorship.

## Empowering students

More than 514,000 students brought Bibles to some 50,000 schools during 2019's emphasis, Focus on the Family reported.

"This event empowers Christian students of all ages to speak God's grace and truth into the culture around them, starting with two simple steps — bringing their Bibles to school and sharing what God's word means to them," Focus on the Family said.

Their website includes

a video from Christian band Skillet's John Cooper, quizzes and activities for children, information for parents about religious freedom, a guide on how to empower students in your church and other resources.

## Engaged, prepared

"The ultimate implication of our findings is that in order to help children grow spiritually and be prepared to face the temptations they encounter in the world, both now and as they move into the teen and young adult years, is to get them engaged in God's word," Good News Broadcasting Association's study concluded.

After all, as Daly said in the Fox News article, "Bring Your Bible participants are walking into their schools with a message of hope and an effort to begin conversations. It's vital to empower the next generation with the understanding that they don't have to hide their faith or compartmentalize it to the 'private' sphere."

To sign up for Bring Your Bible to School Day visit [focusonthefamily.com/bring-your-bible](http://focusonthefamily.com/bring-your-bible), and scroll down to the bottom of the page.

Those interested in participating year-round can go to the Live It Challenge page on the website, [focusonthefamily.com/bring-your-bible/live-it](http://focusonthefamily.com/bring-your-bible/live-it), to sign up for monthly Live It Challenges — "specific, tangible actions you can take to live out your faith and strengthen your relationship with Jesus Christ."

Updated information can also be found on the group's Facebook page.

We work tirelessly to help kids get well because the world needs to see what Natalie dreams up.

WE DO WHAT WE DO  
BECAUSE CHILDREN HAVE DREAMS.



Children's  
of Alabama®

1600 7TH AVENUE SOUTH  
BIRMINGHAM, AL 35233  
(205) 638-9100 | [ChildrensAL.org](http://ChildrensAL.org)

Among the more than 80 people participating in the virtual SBC Executive Committee meeting Sept. 28 are (clockwise from top left) Greg Addison, Ronnie Floyd, Barry McCarty, Jared Wellman and Josh Bonner.

# Pressure intensifies



Screenshots

## Growing number of ministry leaders reaching out to SBC Executive Committee trustees, staff

By Jennifer Davis Rash  
TAB Media

**A**labama Baptists were among Southern Baptists across the nation holding a collective breath to learn what would happen coming out of the Sept. 28 SBC Executive Committee meeting.

But after a more than five-hour meeting — two of those hours in executive session and the last hour showcasing a build up of short tempers — EC members voted down the proposal to waive attorney-client privilege 39 to 35.

However, they did decide to give the officers seven more days in which to conclude their negotiations with the Sexual Abuse Task Force and Guidepost Solutions, if possible following a specific model presented Sept. 27 to the officers.

The motion for more time to negotiate passed 77% to 23%.

An amendment proposed by SBC President Ed Litton to shorten the time to 48 hours was defeated, and Task Force chair Bruce Frank said he was open to more negotiations but not seven days.

He indicated he was only open to talk through end of day Oct. 1 and reminded the Executive Committee that he doesn't need permission to move forward.

The Task Force's assign-

ment is from the messengers, he noted.

At press time, the next vote was set for Oct. 5.

Monte Shinkle, secretary of the Executive Committee, mentioned the recent negotiations came "very, very close [the day before]."

"If we go with the Michigan model (an investigation model developed for the University of Michigan that doesn't require waiving attorney-client privilege), we are going to come down to ... who hires this overseeing attorney."

The Task Force is not OK with the Executive Committee hiring the investigating attorneys because it would give them oversight,

but the EC attorneys are advising the EC to be the one to sign the contract.

"This still can be a very good report with the Michigan model as long as the EC is not the one contracting those folks," Frank explained, while reiterating the preference is for waiving privilege.

The Sept. 28 meeting was intended for the officers to bring a final agreement between Guidepost Solutions, the Sexual Abuse Task

Force, Executive Committee officers and the attorneys.

It was a follow up to the group's regularly scheduled meeting Sept. 20–21 in Nashville, where the group struggled to make a definite call with some members adamantly for waiving privilege, some adamantly against it and several needing more information, so they agreed on seven additional days of deliberation.

But when the EC members landed at a second impasse and voted for another extension, the disapproval sparked quickly across social media and in open letters sent on behalf of pastors, state conventions and others.

All six seminary presidents also weighed in on the concern, all calling the EC "to get this right" and follow the will of the messengers.

In Alabama, 55 ministers had signed a letter circulating the state at press time.

In the letter dated Sept. 30, the Alabama ministers said in part: "We want to be unashamedly clear. We repudiate any form of sexual abuse and any attempt to cover up such abhorrent sin. We rejoice that the Executive Committee shares the same sentiment.

Following the directive of the messengers is the best way to affirm support for survivors of abuse and to walk in a manner 'worthy of your calling.' The loss of our witness on such a large scale would violate the spirit of fiduciary trust that you, serving as our Executive Committee, have been given.

"We sincerely urge you to waive Attorney-Client Privilege, as instructed by the messengers in June, when you meet again on Tuesday. For the sake of those whose lives are deeply affected by sexual abuse, for the sake of our ability to earnestly engage our neighbors, and above all for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, please hear our hearts on this matter."

More signatures were anticipated as the letter continued to circulate.

### To Alabama Baptists

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, released a letter Oct. 1 to Alabama Baptists in response to the discussions taking place.

His letter reads:

"To say these are chaotic times would be an understatement. We have the highest level of frustration I have ever witnessed in the life of the SBC."

***"We have the highest level of frustration I have ever witnessed in the life of the SBC."***

**Rick Lance  
Alabama Baptist  
State Board of Missions**

"We at the State Board of Missions have fielded calls, answered emails and responded to text messages. We want to assure Alabama Baptists that we have always abided by the wishes of state convention messengers.

"I trust and believe that by the end of the next SBC Executive Committee meeting on Tuesday, October 5, the wishes of the SBC messengers will have been honored.

"Please continue to pray for the SBC EC and the Sexual Abuse Task Force. We should earnestly and fervently pray for those who are the survivors of sexual abuse because they are the focus of our concern.

"In the meantime, I would plead for all who share opinions on social media to do so with kindness, love and conviction. In my opinion, Alabama Baptists have already been exceptional in doing so. I am proud of our state convention family for many reasons, and this is just one."

***"For the sake of those whose lives are deeply affected ... please hear our hearts on this matter."***

**Alabama pastors**

# IMB 'committed' to safeguards against abuse

**I**nternational Mission Board President Paul Chitwood shared an update on abuse-related policies with trustees during their Sept. 29–30 meeting near Richmond, Virginia.

“Over the past two years, we have methodically implemented every recommendation, diligently moving toward the highest standards in abuse prevention and response, including providing compassionate, trauma-informed care,” Chitwood said, referring to the recommendations made by the firm reviewing the IMB in this area.

## Thorough review

In 2018–2019, IMB underwent an examination concerning the organization’s handling of past matters and current policies and practices related to the prevention of and response to allegations of child abuse

and sexual harassment (including sexual assault).

Also, the IMB has reported every known incident of alleged child abuse by its personnel or others affiliated with the organization that had not previously been reported, Chitwood noted.

And the IMB has adopted protocols for consistently reporting allegations of child abuse committed by its personnel or others affiliated with IMB to U.S. government authorities as well as adopted protocols for reporting allegations of child abuse to foreign government authorities.

IMB created and filled a full-time, senior-level “prevention and response administrator” position to oversee IMB’s prevention and response efforts in relation to child abuse and sexual harassment.

“IMB remains absolutely committed to the ongoing

nature of this task as a part of our work both now and in the future,” Chitwood said.

“We will do what is necessary to better prevent instances of child abuse and sexual harassment (including sexual assault), and to better care for victims while holding perpetrators accountable.

“We can do better than we have done. We must do better. We will do better.”

Chitwood emphasized that IMB encourages anyone who has been a victim of abuse by IMB personnel to report it to authorities.

In addition, IMB invites any victims of abuse by IMB personnel to contact a

confidential hotline at 855-420-0003 or email reports@lighthouse-services.com or advocate@imb.org so IMB can provide compassion-

ate care to that victim and take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of others.

Also, IMB provides accurate employment references on every former employee, leaders explained.

To help make informed hiring decisions, IMB leaders strongly encourage any church, entity or other employer who is considering working or partnering with former IMB personnel to contact references@imb.org to inquire about a reference on that individual.

“Based upon our experi-

ence here at the IMB, I also want to encourage every Southern Baptist entity and every Southern Baptist church to be intentional and proactive in reporting abuse, creating policies and procedures to help safeguard against abuse, and to ensure compassionate care for victims of abuse,” Chitwood said.

“It is difficult, but we are incredibly thankful that we have done it.

“As the SBC Executive Committee is currently dealing with this issue, I have encouraged them and continue to encourage them to move forward quickly and decisively with the external investigation,” he said.

“In that, they will ensure transparency, regain any lost trust, provide respect and care for victims, and preserve the cooperative missions work of Southern Baptists.” (IMB)

***“We can do better  
than we have done.  
We must do better.  
We will do better.”***

**Paul Chitwood  
president  
International Mission Board**



## VIVA MEDICARE

Save money with a Medicare plan that puts you first.



**Call our Medicare Helpline today! 1-833-202-5538 | TTY: 711**

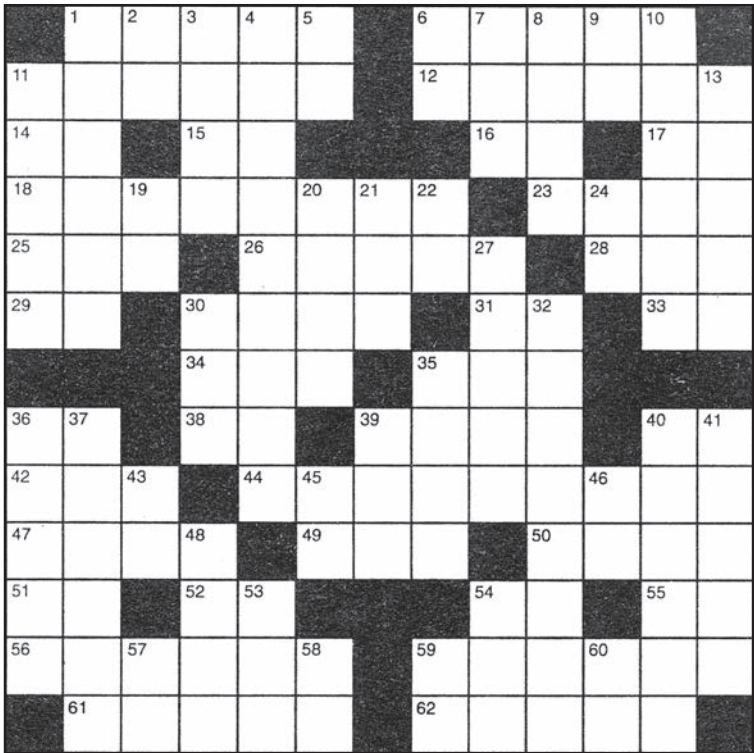
**www.VivaHealth.com/Medicare**

VIVA HEALTH complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-888-830-8482 (TTY: 711). 注意: 如果您使用繁体中文, 您可以免费获得语言援助服务。请致电 1-888-830-8482 (TTY: 711). H0154\_mcdoc2992A\_C\_08/09/2021

# CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

- 1. God created the heavens and the \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 1:1)
- 6. The darkness he called \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 1:5)
- 11. Doth not even \_\_\_\_\_ itself teach you. (1 Cor. 11:14)
- 12. They had made themselves \_\_\_\_\_ to David. (1 Chron. 19:6)
- 14. The kingdom of heaven is \_\_\_\_\_ hand. (Matt. 3:2)
- 15. And bring your youngest brother unto \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 42:34)
- 16. Darkness was upon the face \_\_\_\_\_ the deep. (Gen. 1:2)
- 17. The serpent beguiled \_\_\_\_\_, and I did eat. (Gen. 3:13)
- 18. Make Jerusalem \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ a den of dragons. (Jer. 9:11)
- 23. We are \_\_\_\_\_ men. (Gen. 42:31)
- 25. Called by name Bezaleel the son of \_\_\_\_\_. (Ex. 35:30)
- 26. Lot chose him all the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jordan. (Gen. 13:11)
- 28. Ninety years \_\_\_\_\_ and nine. (Gen. 17:1)
- 29. Multiple sclerosis. (abbr.)
- 30. But here is the \_\_\_\_\_?
- 31. Give me children, \_\_\_\_\_ else I die. (Gen. 30:1)
- 33. Do, re, mi, fa, so, la, \_\_\_\_\_, do.
- 34. Abide ye here with the \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 22:5)
- 35. And \_\_\_\_\_ the lamp of God went out. (1 Sam. 3:3)
- 36. And, \_\_\_\_\_, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. (Gen. 18:10)
- 38. Postscript. (abbr.)
- 39. Mathematics. (abbr.)
- 40. Cajun state. (abbr.)
- 42. When we came to the \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 43:21)
- 44. Zethan and Tharshish and \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Chron. 7:10)
- 47. Drive, park or reverse.
- 49. We may \_\_\_\_\_ of the fruit of the trees. (Gen. 3:2)
- 50. Was like a weaver's \_\_\_\_\_. (2 Sam. 21:19)
- 51. And \_\_\_\_\_ went on his journeys. (Gen. 13:3)
- 52. Abram called \_\_\_\_\_ the name of the Lord. (Gen. 13:4)
- 54. Not a man left in \_\_\_\_\_ or Beth-el. (Josh. 8:17)
- 55. Zip code abbreviation for Delaware.
- 56. Of Manasseh, \_\_\_\_\_ with her



Diana Rowland Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

- suburbs. (Josh. 21:25)
  - 59. Which lieth \_\_\_\_\_ the south of \_\_\_\_\_. (Judg. 1:16)
  - 61. Like a \_\_\_\_\_ of fire in a sheaf. (Zech. 12:6)
  - 62. If \_\_\_\_\_ find in Sodom, \_\_\_\_\_ I will spare. (Gen. 18:26)
- DOWN**
- 1. Among riotous \_\_\_\_\_ of flesh. (Prov. 23:20)
  - 2. Behold, I am \_\_\_\_\_ the point to die. (Gen. 25:32)
  - 3. The fat and the \_\_\_\_\_. (Ex. 29:22)
  - 4. For his \_\_\_\_\_ unto the Lord \_\_\_\_\_ ram. (Lev. 5:15)
  - 5. Male and female \_\_\_\_\_ created them. (Gen. 1:27)
  - 6. The waters shall \_\_\_\_\_ more become a flood. (Gen. 9:15)
  - 7. \_\_\_\_\_ set my bow in the cloud. (Gen. 9:13)
  - 8. Ask me never so much dowry and \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 34:12)
  - 9. \_\_\_\_\_, every one that thirsteth. (Isa. 55:1)
  - 10. What meaneth the noise of this \_\_\_\_\_? (1 Sam. 4:14)
  - 11. The vision of \_\_\_\_\_ the Elkoshite. (Nah. 1:1)
  - 13. Unto thy \_\_\_\_\_ will \_\_\_\_\_ give this land. (Gen. 12:7)
  - 19. And the king of \_\_\_\_\_ he hanged on a tree. (Josh. 8:29)
  - 20. That ye do not your \_\_\_\_\_ before men. (Matt. 6:1)
  - 21. Slang for "snatch" or "catch."

- 22. Prince Charles and Princess \_\_\_\_\_.
- 24. Abbreviation for book of Romans.
- 27. And to the east, and to the \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 28:14)
- 30. Also I shook my \_\_\_\_\_. (Neh. 5:13)
- 32. The sons of Eliezer were, \_\_\_\_\_ the chief. (1 Chron. 23:17)
- 35. At the \_\_\_\_\_ of the garden of Eden. (Gen. 3:24)
- 36. Let there be \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 1:3)
- 37. To make \_\_\_\_\_ wise, and did \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 3:6)
- 39. Missing in action. (abbr.)
- 40. Of the Gershonites were, \_\_\_\_\_ and Shimei. (1 Chron. 23:7)
- 41. He \_\_\_\_\_ his trained servants. (Gen. 14:14)
- 43. Not available. (abbr.)
- 45. And there \_\_\_\_\_ put the man. (Gen. 2:8)
- 46. And \_\_\_\_\_ said unto me. (Gen. 24:40)
- 48. Let the sea \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Chron. 16:32)
- 53. National Council of Churches. (abbr.)
- 54. Go to the \_\_\_\_\_, thou sluggard. (Prov. 6:6)
- 57. And he knew her again \_\_\_\_\_ more. (Gen. 38:26)
- 58. Initials of Hubert Humphrey.
- 59. \_\_\_\_\_ heard thy voice, and \_\_\_\_\_ was afraid. (Gen. 3:10)
- 60. About. (abbr.)

## TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

### CHURCH POSITIONS

**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**

Mount Philadelphia Baptist Church, Cordova, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: Mount Philadelphia Baptist Church, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee, 1885 Cordova-Gorgas Road, Cordova, AL 35550.

**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](mailto: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](mailto:countylinebaptist1@gmail.com).

**BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR**

Verbena Baptist Church is currently seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: [verbenabaptist@att.net](mailto: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](mailto:wsbcjax36265@gmail.com), or mail resumé to: West Side Baptist Church, ATTN: Worship Leader Committee, 713 Mountain Street, Jacksonville, AL 36265.

**BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER**

Union Springs Baptist Church in Newville, Ala., is looking for a bivocational music minister. Choir experience is preferred. Please email Jim Cordes at [cordes0238@gmail.com](mailto:cordes0238@gmail.com) to submit your resumé or get further information.

**STUDENT MINISTER/MUSIC**

FBC Abbeville, Ala., is currently searching for a full-time student minister or a combination of student minister/music.

If you are interested in this opportunity, please contact the church at 334-585-2367 or email: [todd@fbcabbeville.net](mailto:todd@fbcabbeville.net).

**ASSOCIATE PASTOR**

First Baptist Church of Slocomb is currently seeking a full-time associate pastor, with primary responsibilities of leading youth. Applicants can call FBCS at 334-886-2200 for information or send resumé by email to: [FBCS206@aol.com](mailto:FBCS206@aol.com). All applications should be received by Oct. 31.

**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](mailto:PC@northshelbybaptist.org).

### BUSINESS

**FOR SALE NEW & USED STAIR LIFTS**

Lift chairs, power wheelchairs, car lifts, scooters and walk-in tubs. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658.

**STEEPLES, ETC.**

No job too big or too small. Call for free on-site consultation. Toll-free 1-888-699-9679 or Alabama local 205-699-9679. Ask for the owner Terry Barnes. Visit gallery at [leedsstainedglass.com](http://leedsstainedglass.com).

### SIGNS

**CHURCH SIGNS**

Signs are your first impression. What kind of impression is your church sign making? Call us to replace/update yours with either digital or traditional. Statewide since 1994. 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955. [www.reliablesigns.com](http://www.reliablesigns.com).

### TRAVEL/VACATION

**LOG CABIN RENTAL**

Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to [www.paradisevista.net](http://www.paradisevista.net) to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

# ‘A developing story’

## Fairfield Highlands Baptist in Midfield passes torch to Faith Church

By Grace Thornton

TAB Media

Charles and Sharlene Marlow have a photo next to their couch of one of the happiest days of their lives — in 1970 when they got married at the home of their pastor at Fairfield Highlands Baptist Church in Midfield, which sits between Bessemer and Birmingham.

They’ve enjoyed a lot of happy days at that church.

But they recently experienced what Charles Marlow called the saddest day of their life — when they disbanded their small, aging congregation.

“We had a loving church. It was a hugging church,” he recalled.

Over the years the Marlows did just about everything at Fairfield Highlands. They met there in the late 1960s and began leading a student group during Training Union.

After they got married, he served as Sunday School director for decades, and together they helped run the bus ministry, cleaned the church and decorated it for all the holidays.

In its heyday in the early 1970s, when Ron Herrod was pastor, there were 150 baptisms a year, if not more. Marlow remembered taking a sledgehammer to a building and knocking out eight walls to make more room for people in Sunday School classes.

They also had a thriving Christian school for a while.

### ‘Mature church’

But in recent years, that’s changed, he acknowledged.

“Our young, married people started moving out, and that left us to be a mature church.”

Eventually the church faced some tough decisions — they were a shrinking congregation with a large facility to keep up.

But though it was sad to make the decision to draw Fairfield Highlands’ days to a close, the decision to give their buildings to a church that could reach the next generation was a happy one.

### Joint service

In July, Fairfield Highlands held a joint service with the facility’s new resident — Faith Church — to pass the torch of ministry.

This all happened through the orchestration of Birmingham Metro Baptist Association.

In May, Fairfield Highlands voted to dissolve and give all its assets to BMBA. Then in June, BMBA voted to transfer the facilities to Faith Church, which had been meeting in rented space.

Chris Crain, BMBA executive director, said Aubrey Miller, Faith’s

pastor, has “been a partner in the Baptist work of our city for a long time” and his “main motivation was to go somewhere where they could be a missional outpost in a community.”

Miller said Midfield wasn’t on his church’s radar earlier this year, but over time, God made it clear it was the place He had picked out for them.

In October 2020, Miller — a longtime

bivocational pastor — retired as executive vice president of YMCA of Birmingham, and his church plant began looking for a permanent home.

As they searched, he talked with a friend — Gary Fisher, pastor of South Roebuck Baptist Church in Birmingham — about their need for a building.

Within days, Miller got a call from Michael Ethridge, BMBA director of operations.

“He said, ‘I’m standing in the sanctuary of Fairfield Highlands Baptist Church, and you guys need to be right here,’” Miller recalled,



Photo by Debbie Campbell

Chris Crain (center), Birmingham Metro Baptist Association executive director, joins Ed Cruce (left), pastor of Fairfield Highlands Baptist Church in Midfield, and Faith Church pastor Aubrey Miller in a joint dedication service in July.

adding that he promised he would pray about it.

He didn’t feel God drawing him to Midfield until one afternoon when he drove around in the area and saw all the children getting off school buses.

### ‘Broad reach’

“I took my administration team and my wife over there with me later, and we looked around the community and thought, ‘This makes a lot of sense,’” Miller remembered.

He added he’s deeply grateful for the ministry of Fairfield Highlands, a church that started in a wood-frame tabernacle nearly 100 years ago and has had a big impact.

“The spirit of all the folks who have ever worshipped in that building and served in that place is so heavy on us because everywhere I go and talk to friends across the city about what we’re doing, I can’t tell you how many of my personal friends will share with me that they have a connection to Fairfield Highlands,” Miller said. “The church had a very broad reach, and the church members we’ve met are just absolutely committed, loyal people who were trying to serve the Lord in a place where the work was needed.”

Faith Church’s hope is to build on that legacy. They’ve already held a back-to-school rally to get to know the community, and they’re planning to demolish one of the buildings that’s in disrepair and put up basketball hoops and a playground.

“That will be another signal to the community that ‘this is your church, we want to make it for you,’” Miller said.

They’re also partnering with Mountain Brook Baptist Church in Birmingham in a variety of ways to provide Faith Church with support and Mountain Brook with an avenue for hands-on urban missions.

### ‘Tremendous impact’

Crain said members of Fairfield Highlands were to be commended for the work they have done in the community in recent years, specifically reaching out to area youth, adding he believes Faith Church will continue that ministry and “make a tremendous impact in Midfield.”

Ethridge said it’s been a great story of two faithful congregations and an association that made a connection to see ministry continue in Midfield.

“It’s the beginning of a developing story,” Ethridge said.



Photo by Grace Thornton

Charles (left) and Sharlene Marlow were faithful members of Fairfield Highlands Baptist.



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](http://AlabamaCP.org), [sbc.net/cp](http://sbc.net/cp) or contact State Missionary Jim Swedenburg, [jswedenburg@alsbom.org](mailto:jswedenburg@alsbom.org), (334) 613-2283.

**STRONGER TOGETHER**

Program is your missional mutual fund for being able to do that. It is a God-given genius that has been given to Southern Baptists since 1925." - **Rick Lance, state missionary executive director, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions**

"Your generosity through your church and the Cooperative Program shares the good news of Jesus Christ with lost and hurting people around the world every day." - **IMB.org**

"The Cooperative Program mitigates competition between entities, thereby allowing a balanced Acts 1:8 Strategy." - **NAMB.net**

"The Cooperative Program is the financial fuel to fund the SBC mission and vision of reaching every person for Jesus Christ in every town, every city, every state, and every nation." - **BaptistPress.com, 10/5/2020**



"With confidence and conviction, you can be assured that your Cooperative Program dollars are going to invest in a theological education that echoes the heartbeat of our Southern Baptist Convention of churches." - **Adam Greenway, president, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas**

**ADVERTISE WITH US!**

Call Melanie McKinney  
at 205-870-4720, ext. 102.

**The  
Alabama  
Baptist**

# Mobile-area community helps complete major renovation project

(continued from page 1)  
coordinator in the office for advancement, and Barbara Greene, executive administrative assistant to the president.

Davis brought her professional decorating talents to the task and Greene, with a daughter and son-in-law serving in Japan through the International Mission Board, brought a heart for serving missionaries.

While the house has had some renovations over the years, this major renovation included a new kitchen island, counter tops and cabinets.

The bathrooms were updated.

All flooring was removed and replaced with luxury vinyl plank.

Appliances including an oven/cooktop, dishwasher, refrigerator, fans and more

were replaced. A new laundry room was added.

"The initial money to renovate the missionary house was given by the president's office at the University of Mobile, but we couldn't have completed the project without the help of others in our community," Davis said.

Among the many in the Mobile area who provided services or funds to complete the project were Dayspring Baptist Church in Mobile (Kris Nelson and Rob Hartman); SJ&L Contractors Inc. (Mike Tew); Roberts Electric; M & E Plumbing; Hembree Heating & Air; Scotty Goldman, director of the office of global missions with the Alabama

Baptist State Board of Missions; Ray Van Slyke and Alan Nations with Campers on Mission; North Mobile Rotary Club; National Plant Services; Signal 88; Barbara and Bill Greene; Brian Boyle; Lisa Normand

Davis; Phillip Maddox; Caleb Croom; Vicki Burgin; Jim Simmons; and UM Baseball Coach Jon Seymour and baseball assistants.

"There will always be ways to

improve on the missionary house," Davis said.

"We always buy new linens, pillows and other amenities for each family who is staying. We want to make sure they have the best stay possible." (UM)

**To see all renovations, watch a video overview of the project at [tabonline.org/the-missionary-house](http://tabonline.org/the-missionary-house).**

## 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](http://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.

### SPONSORED BY:



**NEW ORLEANS**  
BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 10

## Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



### JOY AND CONTENTMENT Philippians 4:10–20

#### In All Situations (10–14)

Paul rejoices that the Philippian church sent him a gift and Epaphroditus, a faithful worker with Paul. But his thankfulness is not that he received the gift as much as the gift revealed the Philippians concern for him. Paul didn't need the physical gift as he had learned how to live in contentment while in need, a crucial lesson for believers.

Many heresies and false teachers have preached the gospel is about receiving material goods and having their material desires given to them because of their faith. I was told one time by my friend that he knew a man who was told if he prayed for a Cadillac 5,000 times, God would give him a Cadillac, and so that is what he was doing.

This is a perversion of the gospel message. The gospel message is about deliverance from sin and being made right with God, not about "deliverance" from poverty.

This type of preaching is common around the world because it resonates with our desire to be financially stable or financially well off, but it is missing the mark.

Focusing on our financial or health situation takes our focus off our greatest need, to be forgiven from our sins by believing in Christ. Our faith needs to be in what God has done for us, not in our ability to "believe" God will reward us financially.

In Paul's case, he had been wealthy, and he had been poor; he had been free, and he had been in prison. He had even been beaten and shipwrecked. But God had given Paul the ability to be content in these circumstances because his confidence and hope was in Christ, not his circumstances.

What a lesson this is for us today! We live in a time of instability with a global pandemic and worldwide unrest. If we watch the news too much or look at our circumstances, it is easy to worry and become frustrated; it can kill our joy.

But if we focus instead on Christ, it helps us maintain an eternal

perspective and helps us focus on our task at hand, to glorify God in our current circumstances, whatever they may be — at work, at home, in prison; whether we are jobless, wealthy, sick or healthy. Our focus needs to be on how we can best reflect and represent Christ, not what will happen to us in the future. This is a monumental task, but Paul says it comes from Christ.

#### Through Other Believers (15–18)

Paul expresses his gratitude for the attitude and actions of the Philippians, but he points out that he doesn't want the Philippians to think he needed the gift as much as the gift shows the character of their heart. It is often said it is the thought, not the gift, that counts. Paul emphasizes this mindset.

The attitude of the Philippians will be seen by God, and their reward is from Him.

It is reminiscent of the poor widow who gave two small coins into the temple treasury (Luke 21:1–4). This gift was more than what others had put in even though it was worth less, because she gave all she had.

God views our actions in the same way. Many people think their contributions are minimal because they are unable to give hefty sums of money. But Christians are able to contribute to others' ministries through letters of encouragement and prayer.

#### For His Glory (19–20)

As Paul demonstrates God has met all his needs, he prays God would meet the Philippians' needs as well.

The end result of this is bringing glory to God. In a world that increasingly looks to bring glory to self, Christians are to promote the glory of God. Pointing to eternal things is countercultural. It is a good way to demonstrate our commitment to God rather than worldly things, helping us to stand out against the culture.

## Bible Studies for Life

By James Riley Strange, Ph.D.

Professor of New Testament, Samford University



### SURE OF SALVATION 1 John 5:1–5, 11–13, 18–21

Today we complete our lessons in 1 John. In the last chapter, John repeats most of his teachings from previous chapters, including the love commandment. Re-read the letter for context.

#### I can know I am born of God because Jesus is the Christ. (1–5)

Chapter 5 begins with what is probably a claim of the "false prophets" (4:1) and "antichrists" (2:18; 4:3): Jesus was not the "Christ" or "Messiah," for He had no body (4:2). Remember, if Jesus did not "come in the flesh," then He neither died for sins nor rose again. Hence, He was not the full revelation of God's love for the world.

John picks up what he introduced in 4:7. There he said, "Everyone who loves is born of God." Now he says the same of "everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ."

For John, to accept Jesus as the Christ and to love one another are equivalent. No wonder he says, "Everyone who loves the Father also loves the person who has been born from Him."

We cannot say in English, "The one who faiths that Jesus is the Christ" (5:1) or, "The one who faiths that Jesus is the Son of God" (v. 5). It is possible in Greek, however. For John, therefore, to "believe" in Jesus is to be faithful to Him.

Thus, John speaks of believing/faith as conquering: Obedience to God's commands is what conquers the world (compare 2:13, 14).

#### I can know I have eternal life because God's word says so. (11–13)

The "testimony" John speaks of comes not from a human but from the Spirit (5:6). John is referring to a truth his readers already know (see 2:7, 13–14, 21–25, 27): They have a life that John calls "eternal" (1:2; 2:17, 25; 5:20). This word can mean "everlasting," but note John's use of past and present tenses: "God gave eternal life" (compare

John 5:24) and we "have eternal life." This means, in addition to being a quantity of life lived with God after death, it is a quality of life lived now.

This explains John's earlier metaphors for living: "walking" in the light as Jesus walked (1:7; 2:6, 9–11); and "remaining" or "abiding" in the Son and the Father (2:6, 24, 28; 4:13–16). John wants his readers to know they have this life now. How can they live it otherwise?

#### I can know I am saved because my life has changed. (18–21)

Earlier John condemns those who claim not to sin (1:8–2:2; 3:4, 8), but he goes on to say that those who "abide in Him" and who "are born from God" do not sin (3:6, 9).

Here he is probably speaking of failing to love, or outright hating a fellow believer, the sin he most often addresses. This sin violates Jesus' "new commandment" (2:7; John 13:34).

John emphasizes this with a play on words: "Everyone who has been born from God does not sin [by hating]." Why not? Because "The One born from God [Jesus] protects them." To be born anew from God is to come under the protection of God's Son.

"The evil one [the devil; 2:13–14; 3:7–10] does not touch" those born from God. Why not? Because they counter his deception by knowing who their Father is and by keeping the understanding that the Son has given them.

They will learn more as the love of God comes to completion in them, but for now, what they know is sufficient.

John's abrupt ending reveals that most of his readers converted from Roman state religion, and there must have been tremendous social pressure to return to it. We are no less tempted by the things that lure us from God.

Thanks be to God, Who has given us everything we need to remain faithful.

# MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs  
TAB Media

## More than comedy: Chonda Pierce brings laughter in difficult times

**C**honda Pierce isn't sure if the title "Queen of Clean" fits.

When the comedian, actor and author first heard it, she said she was concerned people "might think I had a housekeeping business. But if they saw my house, they might think differently," she joked.

Early in her career Pierce also was labeled a "Christian comedian."

"I didn't know that was going to be such a controversy at the time. But when I really gave my life to Christ, I was proud of it. When I found out I wasn't going to hell, I was really excited," Pierce said with a laugh. "I didn't know it would have limitations down the road. But at this point, doing this for 27 years, I'm very proud of the work I've done and what we've accomplished and the strides we made for comics now."

Though she is obviously experienced and talented in the field, she is still nervous about an upcoming tour.

### 'Needed' more than ever

"Life is so hard. [While worrying about it], it just seemed like out of the clear blue I had this complete calm that my job has never been more needed in my entire career. That gave me nerves because now I



CHONDA PIERCE

Photo courtesy of Chonda Pierce

really, really need to be funny!

"I guess of all the titles out there somebody gives you in my line of work, I pray they just say I'm funny."

Though highly successful by the world's standards, even being recognized as the best-selling female comedian of all time by the Recording Industry Association of America, Pierce knows where her success originated.

"For me, it really happened almost supernaturally," she recalled. "It was almost an amazing script of how the pieces were put together in order for me to get an audience. Back in the day, we didn't have social media; we didn't have cell phones. Unless you were a strong force in Hollywood, it just wasn't going to happen."

During Pierce's heyday when she was selling out arenas, one day she was singing "Mercy Saw Me" for a mic check and noticed men wearing

orange jumpers. She remembered that local prisoners were working at the arena.

"I saw them stop what they were doing and sit on their chairs, with many of them putting their faces in their hands, just weeping. I think it was one of the first times I realized that my show was not just about comedy — that it was about reaching people's hearts. I'll never forget the scene of that and it has reminded me often of why I do what I do."

"The comedy has always been the opening act; it's always been about something a little bit more than just being funny."

### Favorite verse

Pierce's favorite verse also keeps her on track: "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing" (John 6:63a).

"That really keeps my ego in check. It's like, don't listen to your

own press too much," Pierce said. "Don't get puffed up when the crowd is really big. ... Don't get depressed when it's not."

"It's not really about our jobs or our mental state or our physical being. It's about the condition of our heart. It's like that verse. How you feel about yourself, the mistakes you've made in your past, how funny you are, how not funny you are ... that puts everything in perspective."

### 'Trust God'

Pierce never starts a tour without knowing its direction, and this year she will address how tiring debates about the pandemic are and what's happening worldwide.

"It dawned on me that many times we run to the wrong place first to get information," Pierce said. "I realized that needs to be the message: Where do we really run? You talk to your doctors; you try to be really smart; you listen to your pastor; but at some point, you're going to have to trust your heart and trust God."

Though Pierce recognizes the power of laughter and appreciates non-message-driven comedians, God never allowed her to go that route.

"I have always felt like my stories, my pain, my testimony are to mean something. You have a whole world of people who are going to need your encouragement."

"People measure success in a lot of odd and different ways. But if you can buy a meal today because of what you do in your gifting, then you're successful. I look at people with the mansions and all that stuff in Hollywood, and they don't look all that happy to me."

"Just being able to go down to the diner or feed my family or put one of my kids in school because of the art of comedy, I'll feel greatly successful."

### 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.

Chonda Pierce's nationwide tour runs through Nov. 14. To find dates and more information about her work, including DVDs, CDs, books, movies and other merchandise visit [chonda.org](http://chonda.org).

# CONNECT WITH US



**alabamabaptist**



**alabamabaptist**



**thealabamabaptist**



**TABMediaGroup**



**TABMediaGroup**



**The Alabama Baptist**