

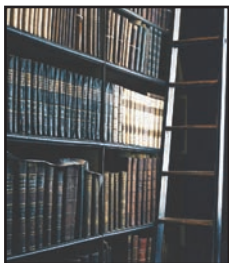
# The Alabama Baptist

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

April 28, 2022

Vol. 187, No. 17  
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

## INSIDE



**SBC Executive Committee officers address law firm concerns**

◆ Page 9



**Baptist Campus Ministries recognizes 100 years of ministry in Tuscaloosa**

◆ Page 11



**Widow fulfills missionary calling, connects with African people through suffering**

◆ Page 13



Photo courtesy of Daniel Gillenwater

Sometimes tutoring is one-on-one or with several children, but The Church at Eastern Oaks in Montgomery opens its doors twice a month to help students of all ages.

## Lesson in love

### Montgomery church members tutor to meet needs

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

Nearly a decade ago, The Church at Eastern Oaks in Montgomery tried something new for the summer.

"We took the entire summer on Wednesday nights and went door to door and asked, 'How can we pray for you, and what's something our church could do to serve the community?'" pastor Daniel Gillenwater recalled.

They got a recurring answer to the second question: "Our kids need help in school."

The church started hosting a breakfast every first and third Saturday morning, helping students with homework or tutoring if they needed it.

"We had schoolteachers in our congregation and college grads who didn't mind helping and someone who volunteered to make breakfast," Gillenwater explained.

"Depending on the crowd, sometimes it's one-on-one,

sometimes it's one tutor for four or five kids."

The focus is kindergarten through 12th grade, but "we've had a few college kids that needed some help with math, and we have a couple of math whizzes in the church," Gillenwater said.

They've also helped a few pre-schoolers with the alphabet and some non-English-speaking families learn the language,

he added.

"We haven't turned anybody away if they show up asking for help."



Photo courtesy of Daniel Gillenwater  
A volunteer works one-on-one with a student at The Church at Eastern Oaks.

**TAB**  
MEDIA GROUP  
PODCASTS

**CHECK OUT OUR PODCASTS!**

Find the TAB Media podcasts at [tabonline.org/podcasts](http://tabonline.org/podcasts) or anywhere you get your podcasts.

## Church, school join together

By Carolyn Tomlin  
The Alabama Baptist

When Siloam Baptist Church in Marion opened its doors to Marion Academy, pastor John Nicholson didn't realize what a difference the school would make to the congregation.

In early 2021, the academy sold its building and needed to relocate. That's when they were invited to share space with Siloam Baptist, a congregation that normally runs between 100-125.

Marion is a small town about 28 miles from Selma with a population of approximately 3,000.

Many underserved families live in the area.

### 'Positive things'

"We didn't expect so many positive things to happen when we invited Marion Academy to share our space," Nicholson said.

"Now our building is being used throughout the week, which makes us good stewards of our space. People pass by and there are cars in the parking lot. About one-third of our student body and 80% of our faculty are members of Siloam Baptist. About two-thirds of students and 20% of the faculty live in the community (See 'Sharing,' page 17)

CONNECT  
WITH  
US

  
alabamabaptist

  
alabamabaptist

  
thealabamabaptist

  
TABMediaGroup

  
TABMediaGroup

  
tabonline.org/  
podcasts

LAPHOLDIMPI  
IBOALEEMONA  
FOUNTAINPUGH  
TUTORSIMON  
DEWMASTER  
NERDENDEATH  
OPENDINDINE  
DEMONTOVNAE  
SEETHESEC  
MALLSSHAME  
ROBBONESIMUS  
ABELNEVEOST  
MIRESEALSEE

The crossword puzzle  
can be found on page 15.



Photo by Grace Thornton/The Alabama Baptist

Sitting in front of the Heaven Bound Mud Bogger, Terry Billings fields questions from curious boys. His ministry is the subject of season 6 of “Stories,” which is available now at [tabonline.org/stories](http://tabonline.org/stories).

# Mud bogger ‘powering through’ for the gospel

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

There’s a lot to see at a mud bogger race. The trucks are big. They’re loud. You can’t avoid seeing them.

But somehow in the middle of all of that, you notice Terry Billings’ truck — the Heaven Bound Mud Bogger.

It’s bigger and louder. People want to look at it, climb up the step ladder, sit in the truck and get their picture taken.

And Billings uses that for the sake of the gospel.

“God gave me this vision to reach out to people who are getting ignored — the good ol’ boys,” he said.

“I’ve always been one of them. I was an alcoholic, and God reached out and touched me. If He hadn’t, and if people hadn’t, I wouldn’t have been saved. So there’s nowhere that’s too far for me to go to reach them.”

We shared his story in a 2018 article about how God turned his world upside down, called him into ministry and gave him a purpose for his old drinking truck. He wanted to

rebuild it, customize it and use it to get people’s attention and share the gospel.

“Over two years, God provided \$100,000,” Billings recalled. “When people heard what we wanted to do, they just kept writing us checks.”

So the Heaven Bound Mud Bogger was born — a massive truck

with a picture of a cross on the side and verses about finding eternal life in Jesus.

The tailgate says, “Covered in mud, but washed in the blood.”

It’s a story as big as his truck.

Billings isn’t shy about asking people where they are with Jesus and telling them how his life was changed and how Jesus can change theirs, too.

He spends a lot of weekends at mud races. But that isn’t the only place he gets people’s attention.

“Every time I stop anywhere, everybody in the gas station or Dollar General unloads and goes out to look at it. Then I get to tell them my story and what Jesus did for me,” Billings said.

“All it takes is a trip to Hardee’s, and we have church.”



Listen to the “Stories” podcast, Season 6:  
The Mud Bogger Story at [tabonline.org/stories](http://tabonline.org/stories).

## 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](http://www.thealabamabaptist.org)  
Email: [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org) or [subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto: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<br>EDITOR-IN-CHIEF            |  |
|---|--|
| Debbie Campbell<br>Director of Communications     | Richard Maddox<br>Computer Services          |
| Dave Walsh<br>Marketing Consultant                | Megan Harris<br>Proofreader                  |
| Susan Stevens<br>Director of Advertising          | Carrie B. McWhorter<br>Content Editor        |
| Melanie McKinney<br>Advertising Manager           | Holly Smith<br>Copy Editor                   |
| Pam Holt<br>Outside Sales Representative          | Robin McCall<br>Copy Editor                  |
| Shawn Hendricks<br>Director of Product Management | Grace Thornton<br>Special Assignments Editor |
| Maggie Evans<br>Operations Manager                | Dianna L. Cagle<br>Production Manager        |
| Jessica Ingram<br>Event Coordinator               | Amy Hacker<br>Creative Services Associate    |
| Annette Brown<br>Guest Services                   | James Hammack<br>Digital Services Manager    |
| Deb Lowery<br>Financial Assistant                 | Sarah Gill<br>Digital Services Assoc.        |
| Lauren C. Grim<br>Creative Services Manager       | Hannah Muñoz<br>Digital Editor               |
|   | Selah Vetter<br>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

## OPINION



# RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash, President and Editor-in-Chief



jrash@thealabamabaptist.org



@RashionalThts

## Share your story and help us celebrate what God is doing among His people

**F**eedback to the March 31 Rashional Thoughts editorial “How are you sensing God leading you to make a difference?” came quickly, and each message continues to warm my heart.

Sharon shared how God is impressing on her some ideas for an affordable community-based, ministry-focused laundromat setting. She said she would like to explore what might actually be possible.

Melissa noted how she keeps a stash of clean clothes in her classroom for students who need something fresh to wear.

“I feel every bit of that article,” she wrote.

Other current and retired teachers sent words of encouragement and appreciation for highlighting the need of helping school children have access to clean and properly fitting clothes.

### ‘Tremendous generosity’

Barbara provided an incredible outline of ministries her church is already doing with the school it adopted.

We’ll feature their story in an upcoming issue of TAB, including tips they suggest for walking alongside a school.

The ministry began with establishing a clothing closet for needs that might arise during the school day and expanded from there, Barbara explained.

“We have learned to just be open to whatever comes next, and we have received notice of needs in so many categories,” she said, including health care and hygiene products, healthy snacks, grief support, meals and other treats for teachers and even various household items for students’ families in need.

Right before Easter, they delivered food boxes and baskets of treats to six families.

“We have seen tremendous generosity from our congregation,” Barbara said. “News has traveled of our clothing outreach, and we receive anonymous donations as well as funds from businesses in other cities.”

They have plans to expand the effort going forward and are diligent in their commitment to love others with no expectations in return, she added.

“We believe this is sharing and caring for others,” Barbara said. “All services are no strings attached.”

You’ll find another example of a church meeting the needs of its community by providing tutoring and a safe space for students in the story on page 1.

Church leaders across the state also have shared how they are reevaluating their ministry efforts overall, including how they spend their time and money.

They are taking more time to assess their surroundings and zero in on meeting the needs of the community where they are planted.

### Awareness is key

It means spending time getting to know the neighbors and truly looking for areas needing a little help.

From there, it’s important to match volunteers with the ministry efforts that make their souls sing rather than merely plugging in “warm bodies,” as Hunter Smith describes in his opinion piece on page 4.

And as Hunter mentions, starting early when it comes to strategizing, planning and recruiting is key.

The school year is quickly coming to a close, so it’s the perfect time to evaluate what’s possible with the start of the new school year in the fall.

It’s also a good time to send notes of encouragement and other treats to teachers and school staff to help them finish strong. They also likely will need help cleaning and refresh-

ing their rooms during the summer months.

And what about all the children and teenagers who could benefit from structured activities outside of the school year?

What possibilities exist beyond Vacation Bible School without requesting assistance from the schoolteachers among the congregation? They really do need the mental break.

Are there young people in your community who could learn important life skills and grow in Christ at the same time — or even meet Christ for the first time — if someone would sponsor them for the summer missions or ministry opportunity at your church or a week at one of our Baptist camps?

And who are the single parents in your community? What are ways your congregation might provide a little relief for them?

The homebound and isolated older adults who might not always share their needs are another group to check on this summer.

The possibilities truly are endless in ways to make a difference in the community. Wherever you sense God leading, let us know. We love hearing how God is moving and celebrating what He is doing among His people.

# Your Voice



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

## 5 things to consider during recruiting season in student ministry

By Hunter Smith

Student minister, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville

Here we are, winding down the school year, and if you're like me your mind has started shifting to recruiting leaders for the next school year.

Our student ministries are always better when committed leaders give of their time, abilities and resources to invest in students.

There's no way we as student ministers could possibly have deep meaningful relationships with all of our students. But if you invite some dedicated leaders to come alongside, it will make a world of difference.

Many suggest students will remain connected to the local church

when multiple people are pouring the love of Christ into them.

Having great leaders makes sense on a practical level, but it also reflects how we've seen ministry accomplished in Scripture.

### Extending the reach

Jesus had His 12 disciples who helped extend His ministerial reach. Jethro pleaded with Moses to find trustworthy, God-fearing men to assist him. David had his mighty men in the cave beside him. Paul had companions to do ministry side-by-side all along his journeys. And if we're paying attention to these examples, to state the obvious, their missions and ministries flourished.

But where do we find these leaders? And once we find them, how do we enlist them? Here are a few things to consider when recruiting leaders:

**1. Avoid "Warm Body Syndrome."** You're better off going alone than having leaders who don't want to be there.

I would prefer to have one passionate leader with 30 students more than 10 small groups with 10 leaders who are not passionate about the ministry.

There's a tendency to jump into filling positions rather than waiting to seek out the most effective leaders possible. Our ultimate goal in student ministry is that every student walking through the door knows they are valued and loved by their Creator. That's a hard message to grasp from the life and lips of less-than-passionate leaders.

**2. Determine your target audience.** Who's on your radar? Where do you start? I'd advise crafting three lists.

First, ask your students who they would love to see serving in student ministry.

Second, ask current leaders who they think would be effective as leaders.

Third is your "Moby Dick" list. Who's the one person walking the halls at your church who would make a huge and sudden splash? Who's the game changer you know

would revolutionize and change your ministry? Go for it and ask!

**3. Start early.** What's the most effective way to avoid "Warm Body Syndrome"?

Begin enlisting your leaders as early as possible. This gives them time to prayerfully consider, weigh their options and give a thoughtful and thought-out response.

**4. Be clear in expectations.** Be totally honest and transparent about tasks, responsibilities and expectations. We don't like being surprised, and we should not blindsides potential leaders.

Clearly communicating these expectations allows people to make informed and thought-out decisions.

**5. Do not take "No" personally.** The temptation is to think a "no" is an insult to you, your ministry and your students who mean the absolute world to you. There's a dangerous and slippery slope if we allow these things to invade our thoughts and opinions of the church body as a whole.

### Maximizing gifts

Some people simply might not feel called to serve in student ministry. I've had to bring myself to the conclusion that that's OK.

We want our students belonging and serving in a capacity that maximizes their gifts and abilities. We should want the same for the church as a whole.



SMITH

## Who is Jesus to you?

Most Americans are sure Jesus was a historical person and an important spiritual figure, but they are more split on what He means to them personally.

Three in 4 U.S. adults (76%) say they believe in the historical existence of Jesus Christ or Jesus of Nazareth, according to an Ipsos survey sponsored by The Episcopal Church.

[When asked] how they would describe their relationship with Jesus, 38% say close and personal, 34% say private, 10% say public, 24% say they have no relationship with Jesus and 8%

prefer not to answer. Respondents could select all that apply.

Evangelicals (70%) are most likely to say their relationship is close and personal.

Among Christians, 88% say Jesus is an important figure in their lives, with 68% saying He is very important. Evangelicals (98%) are the most likely to recognize Jesus as important to them personally, with 88% saying He's very important.

**Aaron Earls**  
**"Jesus Who or Jesus**  
**Woohoo?"**  
**Lifeway Research**

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

*EDITOR'S NOTE — This article originally appeared at [alsbom.org/blog-2/](http://alsbom.org/blog-2/) and has been edited for space.*

“Constantly working from a physical deficit is not a sustainable formula for pastoral ministry.”

SCOTT MCCONNELL

*Executive director of Lifeway Research*

Southern Baptists should always be ready to evaluate the efficacy and value of our cooperative structures in light of contemporary needs.

Nevertheless, proper organizational change comes from proper understanding of an organization's history. ... When we value our history, retaining core commitments and learning from failures, we gain the tools necessary to truly make the work of our Convention better.

Together with our doctrinal distinctives, cooperation historically has been at the heart of everything that makes the SBC worth preserving, and I firmly believe we should pray and work toward its renewal.

**President Adam W. Greenway**  
Southwestern Seminary

“The biggest thing that we want is for women to be restored to who they were created to be in Christ. We feel like that would have a domino effect,” said **Jessica Mathisen**, who serves with **Christian Women's Job Corps** in Athens, Georgia.

“If the minister is weak in the study, he will be a mouse in the pulpit,” said retired **Pastor Al Jackson** from Auburn.

“Older church officers today sometimes find it difficult to transfer responsibility to younger men. Churches faced by the necessity of a change of pastors wonder if they can carry on. The devolution of authority from the older to the younger churches is one of the most pressing

strategic problems in the missionary enterprise. But God is not limited in His working to those whom we consider indispensable. Often new leadership appears in unexpected places when the need for it arises. The Christian cause is advanced by a varied fellowship of endeavor, not by brilliant individuals working alone. Sometimes the necessity for delegating authority to new and perhaps untried hands results in a deepening and strengthening of that fellowship” (**The Interpreter's Bible**, Vol. 11, Morgan P. Noyes, 548-549).

“Since the church is still under construction with Jesus as the Constructor, we must be careful concerning our criticism of a product in the making,” said **Morris Murray Jr.**

## SBC EC will reconsider 2023 location

The 2021 SBC Annual Meeting was the largest crowd we have hosted at an SBC annual meeting in a generation. This June's meeting in Anaheim is shaping up to draw close to 10,000.

This started in 2018 when more than 9,600 messengers came to Dallas. After adding in guests, exhibitors, credentialed press and others, the official attendance was 16,032.

In 2019, 8,183 messengers and 13,502 total attendees made their way to Birmingham. And 2021 blew past those totals with 15,726 messengers and 21,474 total attendees making Nashville their home for the week.

That leaves us with a major problem for 2023.

When Charlotte, North Carolina, was selected in 2016 as the host city for the 2023 SBC Annual Meeting, the plans allowed for a maximum of 8,000 messengers and guests in the Charlotte Convention Center.

Simply put, Charlotte does not have adequate space to host the SBC Annual Meeting in 2023. Our meeting has grown beyond the city's capability and usable space.

We began researching options and earnestly praying for an alternative to Charlotte.

In the end, only one city was able to meet our four major needs for 2023: geographic proximity to Southern Baptists, hotel availability, available dates and available space.

That city is New Orleans, Louisiana.

SBC Executive Committee Chairman Rolland Slade has called a special April 28 meeting of the EC in order for members to vote to relocate the 2023 Annual Meeting. This is in accordance with SBC Constitution Article 11.3.

**Jonathan Howe**  
Vice president for  
communications  
SBC Executive Committee

## From the Twitterverse

### @ricklance

“I want to be Scripture fed and Spirit led.” —Willie McLaurin, SBC Executive Committee

### @DianeLangberg

The most righteous action one can take toward some people is bringing the facts of their lives into the light. It is righteous to expose an abuser. It is unrighteous to cover their crooked deeds. It is righteous to expose a leader's arrogance — unrighteous to minimize to excuse it.

### @daneortlund

The deepest way to know a professing Christian's actual theology is not to ask them which historic confession they subscribe to but to watch how they treat other people.

### @trillianewbell

I'm so grateful that knowing Jesus as our Lord and Savior isn't complicated. We never graduate from the

simple truth of the gospel. I'm also glad that we will explore the riches and depths of our great salvation for a lifetime.

### @mhenslee

On any given Sunday, you may preach to more folks than last week, fewer folks than last week or just have the same number of folks ... but it doesn't change your job today: proclaim Him! Point whoever comes to Jesus, for He alone can save.

### @TAndrewBrown

On Sundays I wake with glorious expectation to meet with the Lord and His redeemed people to gather and tell the story of what is right in the world.

### @LysaTerKeurst

Every one of us has something heavy we're carrying as we walk through our day. And remembering that others have burdens of their

own will help us choose to be a little kinder to one another today. Today, we can choose to let compassion rise, grace soften and love lead.

### @jordaneasley

“If you are going to live by faith, then expect your faith to be tested. A faith that can't be tested can't be trusted.” —Warren W. Wiersbe

### @alan\_floyd

“You can teach what you know, but you reproduce what you are.” —Wayne Cordiero

### @pastorjgkell

Expiation: God removes our sin and guilt; Propitiation: God satisfies His wrath; Reconciliation: God makes His enemies His friends; Redemption: God pays the price for our pardon; Resurrection: God brings dead people back to life; Regeneration: God gives us a heart that loves Him.

# 3 stories you should know



Photo courtesy of New Orleans Seminary

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has renamed its student center in honor of Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans and the first African American to serve as president of the Southern Baptist Convention. The board of trustees at NOBTS and Leavell College approved the name change and several other renovations to campus facilities during their spring meeting April 12–13. Read more at [tabonline.org/lsc](http://tabonline.org/lsc). (TAB)

## *Sexual harassment lawsuit, recent appeal dismissed*

A sexual harassment lawsuit filed by a former Judson College student against a former school administrator over sexually explicit text messages has been dismissed.

Alexis Burt filed suit in 2018 against Judson College and J. William “Billy” McFarland, who served as special assistant to the president for business development at Judson from July 2014 to April 2018.

Burt alleged McFarland sent her lewd messages through Facebook Messenger following a luncheon held in Marion in May 2018, a month after McFarland resigned.

An initial federal lawsuit was dismissed, and Judson was dropped from the suit. A state suit was subsequently filed. In March, a judge ruled the messages were “offensive” but not harassment. An appeal of that decision was dismissed. (TAB)

## *National Day of Prayer is May 5; broadcast set for 7*

On May 5, believers nationwide will mark the annual National Day of Prayer in public gatherings, small groups and independently, at a time when a crisis in Europe and other factors create uncertainty worldwide.

This year’s theme, “Exalt the Lord who has Established Us,” is based on Colossians 2:6–7.

Kathy Branzell, president of the National Day of Prayer Task Force, said thankfulness to God has sustained the U.S. “even through the most challenging of times.”

People in all 50 states traditionally gather at thousands of local prayer events. The annual broadcast will air on television and radio and will stream on social media at 7 p.m. Central time.

More information is available at [nationaldayofprayer.org](http://nationaldayofprayer.org). (TAB)

# Persecuted church

## *Hindu mob disrupts Christian gathering; two pastors arrested*

CHHATTISGARH STATE, India — A Hindu mob disrupted a worship service, resulting in police jailing two Christian pastors on allegations of forced conversions.

The radical Hindu nationalist mob bombarded a makeshift worship hall in Rajouti village, interrupting the March 27 worship service. The mob assaulted members of the congregation, according to the human rights group International Christian Concern.

Police arrested the two pastors who lead the



Wikimedia Commons map

congregation and accused them of breaching the anti-conversion law.

Much pressure has been exerted on Christians in Rajouti to return to Hinduism.

Because the Christians have refused to denounce their faith in Jesus Christ, the mob attacked the worship gathering, local sources told ICC.

The congregation consists of 25 families. ICC said these families have withstood threats and abuses from radical Hindu groups.

India is No. 10 on Open Doors’ 2022 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

## *Missions organization’s headquarters in Ukraine bombed, Bibles burned*

KYIV, Ukraine — The Russian military bombed a missions organization’s field min-

istries headquarters near Kyiv, Ukraine, and burned Bibles stored in its warehouse.

Sergey Rakhuba, president of Mission Eurasia, said its facilities had been used to provide training and support for their ministry, which involves 14 countries in Eurasia.

They also have a U.S. office based in Nashville.

Rakhuba requested prayer March 30 as his team continued to work with ministry partners inside and outside of Ukraine distributing food, Bibles and other needed materials to refugees and others impacted by the country’s war with Russia.



Facebook photo

# Alabama news

## BETHEL ASSOCIATION

► **Bethlehem Baptist Church, Linden**, will host a retirement reception for its pastor May 22, from 2 to 3:30 p.m. **Pastor Daniel Gandy** has served the congregation for 34.5 years.

## BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Hueytown Baptist Church** celebrates 50 years of ministry May 22 beginning at 10 a.m. Former members and staff are invited. RSVP 205-491-7130. Chris Burns is pastor.

## CLARKE COUNTY ASSOCIATION

► **Elam Baptist Church, Thomasville**, honored **Ramona Kelley** (left) on April 17 for 72 years of service playing the piano. Johnny Reid (right), chairman of the deacons, presented her with a plaque.



Photo courtesy of Tim Meherg

## DEKALB ASSOCIATION

► **Rickey Phifer** is the new pastor at **New Harmony Baptist Church, Phil Campbell**. He previously served as pastor of New Friendship Baptist Church, Belgreen. He and his wife, Kathy, have one daughter and one grandchild.

► **Trey Kincer** is the new bivocational pastor for **Liberty Hill Missionary Baptist Church, Collinsville**.



KINCER

He holds a bachelor's degree in agriscience education from Auburn University and is agriscience teacher and Future Farmers of America advisor for Cherokee County High School. He previously served as pastor for New Bethel Baptist Church, Collinsville, and youth pastor for Lake Martin Baptist Church, Dadeville, and Moon Lake Baptist Church, Mentone. He is married to Allison.

## ETOWAH ASSOCIATION

► **Sid Nichols** is the interim pastor for **Southside Baptist Church**.

He is the former director of missions for Calhoun Baptist Association. He holds a bachelor's degree from Samford University; a master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary; and a doctor of ministry degree from Alabama Theological Seminary in Tuscaloosa. Nichols served as a pastor for 30 years in Alabama, Tennessee and Kentucky, including at Ashby Baptist Church, Brierfield;



NICHOLS

Samaria Baptist Church, Clanton; Prattmont Baptist Church, Prattville; First Baptist Church Red Bay; Mount Hebron West Baptist Church, Elmore; Sage Avenue Baptist Church, Mobile; and Heritage Baptist Church, Dothan. Since his retirement in 2016, he has also been interim pastor at Union Hill Baptist Church, Oneonta.

Nichols is married to Pam. He has two children and two grandchildren.

## FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

► Blount County Youth Rally will be May 15 at Blountsville Baptist Church, beginning at 6 p.m. featuring Scooter Kellum, youth ministry strategist at the State Board of Missions, and singer-songwriter Tori Parris. This event is sponsored by **Friendship Association**. Steve Sellers is interim associational missionary.

## MUD CREEK ASSOCIATION

► **Chris Stephenson** is the new student minister of **West Jefferson Baptist Church, Quinton**. He has spent 15 years serving as youth pastor at Mount Philadelphia Baptist Church, Cordova; New Beginnings Community Church, Graysville; and Bethel Baptist Church, Dora. He also is the principal of Sumiton Middle School in Walker County. He previously served as an assistant principal, teacher and coach. Stephenson and his wife, Candice, have four children.



STEPHENSON

► **Smithville Baptist Church, Bessemer**, will host its fourth annual car show May 1 at 2 p.m. Mike Simpson is pastor.

## NORTH JEFFERSON ASSOCIATION

► **Sammie Reid** is the new pastor of **North Gardendale Baptist Church**.

He previously served at Mount Zion Baptist Church, Warrior; Zola Baptist Church, Warrior; Mount View Baptist Church, Hayden; and Gethsemane Baptist Church, Hayden. He holds a master of divinity degree from Luther Rice Seminary. He has two sons and six grandchildren.



REID

## SAND MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION

► **Gary Holcomb** is the new pastor of **Calvary Missionary Baptist Church, Ider**. After his call to preach in March 1990, he began ministry as pastor of Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Grove Oak, in 1992. He has also been pastor for Friendship Baptist Church, Dawson; Kelly's Chapel Baptist Church, Grove Oak; Roaches

Cove Baptist Church, Fackler; and Unity Baptist Church, Henagar. He served as youth minister of Mount Tabor Baptist Church, Dawson. He and his wife, Freda, have one child.

## SHELBY ASSOCIATION

► **Danny Lovett** retired as senior pastor of the **Church at Chelsea-Westover, Harpersville**, after 40 years in ministry. He was given the title pastor emeritus as the co-founder of CCW. He is offering a ministry getaway to pastors at his cabin in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He also is an instructor in pickleball and hopes to continue ministry through the sport, under the umbrella of his Jesus Is Awesome Ministries.



LOVETT

Previously, he led Open Door Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, and Highland Park Baptist Church, Chattanooga.

He has also directed the pastoral training program and was the dean of seminary at Liberty University, where he studied. Lovett was president of Tennessee Temple University, Chattanooga. He and his wife, Susan, have three children and two grandchildren.

## WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION

► **Chapel Hill Baptist Church, Millry**, will celebrate its annual homecoming May 15. The service starts at 10:30 followed by the morning message at 11, business meeting at 11:45 and lunch at noon. Joe Williams, former pastor, will attend. Mike Chatham is the current pastor.

## WEST CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

► **Jim Lee, 79**, is the new pastor of **Pisgah Baptist Church, Selma**, where he has been serving as interim since February 2019. He spent his life in radio broadcasting as well as ministering in short-term ministry roles in Alabama. He is the author of "Broken Roads to Grace."

## OTHER

► The second annual **Jacksonville Gospel-fest** is May 21 at the Jacksonville Community Center from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The event is hosted by a number of churches, including First Baptist Church Jacksonville, West Side Baptist Church and Post Oak Baptist Church.

The festival will include crafts and food, outreach booths and a children's activity area with various games and inflatables. Artists include: Clear Vision, The Connells, Dry Creek Bluegrass Gospel, Velma Thomas, Brittany Hart, Mike Byrd and Soul Redeemers.

Net proceeds from the event will be donated to Samaritan's Purse. For more information, contact Lonnie McCarthy at 256-889-9227.

# Headline news

## from around the Southeast

### ARKANSAS

In early April, a team of six volunteers from Arkansas Baptist Disaster Relief found an unexpected need when they traveled to Romania to provide aid to refugees fleeing the Russian attack on Ukraine. There is currently a shortage of construction workers in Romania, a team member told the Arkansas Baptist News. Since team members are skilled in construction, they helped renovate a church kitchen and do much-needed maintenance around the building. Volun-



Photo courtesy of Arkansas Baptist News

unteers also delivered kitchen appliances to a refugee camp and built a fence around the trash site at the camp. Other members of the team helped wash and sort clothing donations. At

least 1,586 refugees were processed through the church while the team was there. (Arkansas Baptist News)

### FLORIDA

During a meeting planned by their peers, 70 young adults gathered at First Baptist Church Daytona Beach to pray for spiritual awakening and a committed prayer life that would enable them to overcome pressures of life, reported the Florida Baptist Witness. Moises Bermudez, 19, along with his sister Angelica, 17, organized the "A Radiant Prayer" conference after they watched their own parents' dedicated prayer life, he said. Inspired by their designated times of prayer on Sunday mornings, the teens organized their own prayer and worship event, including a speaker, to reach other youths. As a result, more youth have joined the Sunday morning prayer meetings. (Florida Baptist Witness)



Photo courtesy of Florida Baptist Witness

### GEORGIA

An evangelistic outreach in one of the toughest neighborhoods in Georgia recently resulted in 102 people becoming followers of Christ, thrilling local church leaders eager to see their community transformed, reported Georgia's The Christian Index. Jimmy Blanton, associational missionary at Columbus Baptist Association,

said he was heartbroken by surveys that showed fewer than 10 percent of the people living in the 31907 zip code attend church, an indicator



Photo courtesy of The Christian Index

that perhaps 90% of residents are spiritually lost. Blanton and other church leaders developed a plan, "Cross-Over907," which sent about 260 vol-

unteers to knock on doors to share the gospel. They also have hosted block parties and events in the community. (The Christian Index)

### MISSISSIPPI

Forty churches from five states sent more than 675 volunteers to join forces and share the love of Christ through community projects with local residents for Southern Baptists' Serve Tour stop in Meridian. Sammy Simmons, national project director for Send Relief, the joint compassion ministry of the International Mission Board and North American Mission Board, said watching volunteers work together in unity was "a true testimony of the love of Christ." Volunteers completed 32 projects, serving 2,828 people in and around Meridian and sharing the gospel with 530 people. Nine salvations were reported. (The Baptist Record)

### SOUTH CAROLINA

Collegians are well suited to reach other collegians. This is one reason why leaders at Shandon Baptist Church in Columbia, near the University of South Carolina, emphasize college ministry. The church has an established college residency program where students can give up to two years to assist in campus ministry. Students have served church plants in Pittsburgh and Denver and responded through the International Mission Board's Journeyman and Go2 programs. During the summer, students have worked on the U.S.-Mexico border and with international ministries in Washington, D.C.

Paul Worcester, national collegiate director for the North American Mission Board, said churches, whatever their ministry context, would benefit from connecting with college students. "This generation is look-



Baptist Press photo

ing for a cause worth living and dying for, and we have the greatest cause on earth," he said. (Baptist Press)

### TENNESSEE

Dave Shelley, director of missions for Wilson County Baptist Association in Lebanon, is beginning his 51st year of leading day camps for children. Shelley's first experience with day camp happened 50 years ago in Atlanta when he was involved in a summer training for college students as they attempted to share the gospel with children through fun games and Bible studies. In the years since, he has served in numerous Tennessee Baptist camps, including All Nations Camp and Journey Camp, using his gifts as a master storyteller, creative game maker, energetic leader, discipler, mentor and encourager. Children and teens from more than 40 nationalities, many of them immigrant and refugee



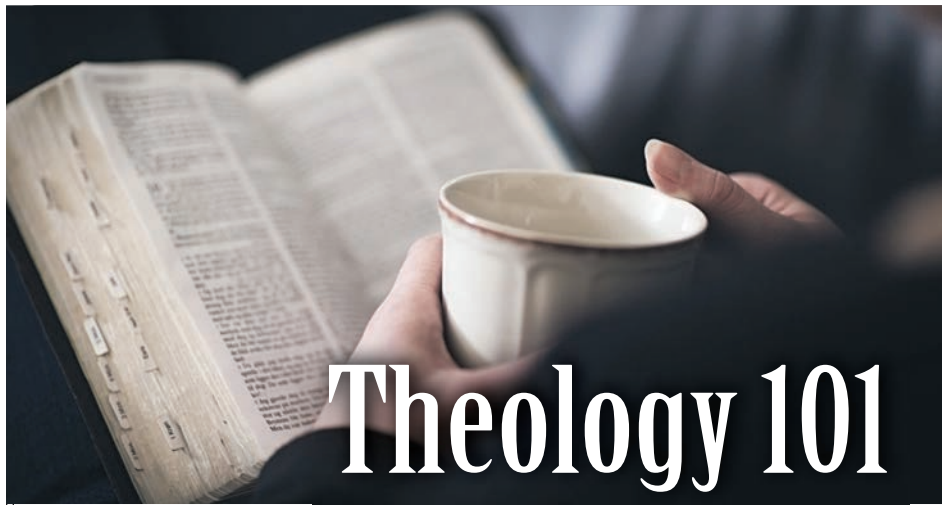
Photo courtesy of the Baptist and Reflector

children, have heard the gospel preached at All Nations Camp and have been disciplined by their local churches. Some have been called to the ministry or missions

service in the United States or around the world. Shelley is grateful that after nearly 30 years of involvement with Tennessee Baptist-sponsored camps, God has given him the physical ability to continue leading camps. "Only eternity will reveal the impact of camp," he said. (Baptist and Reflector)

### VIRGINIA

With an aging congregation and declining attendance, Westwood Baptist Church in Waynesboro was struggling to reach its neighbors. After years of strategies, prayer and discussion, Pastor John Brownlee approached the church with a new option — the opportunity to become home to a new church plant, New Valley Church. After more than nine months of talks, Westwood officially gave its property to New Valley, led by church planter K.J. Washington. A native of Waynesboro, Washington returned to plant a church to reach his hometown. Since moving into Westwood's campus, New Valley regularly has new guests, and five people recently completed the new member process. New Valley has experienced God's blessings, he said, and Westwood has been able to continue its gospel legacy. (The Proclaimer)



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## The People of God

### God's Household

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.  
The Alabama Baptist

**T**he idea that believers are members of God's family who make up His household shows up in several places in Scripture. For example, family ties are implied whenever believers are called children of God. Jesus taught His followers to address God in prayer as "our Father" (Matt. 6:9).

More specifically God's people viewed as His household emerges chiefly in a passage like 1 Peter 4:17, which says, "It is time for judgment to begin at the household of God." Ephesians 2:19 uses the same imagery when speaking about the changed spiritual status of Gentile believers: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."

The Bible sets forth two ways to help us think about how we become members of God's household: birth and adoption. Christians are begotten of God or born into His family by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. We are also said to be adopted by God into His family by the same Spirit, referred to as the Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15).

As members of God's household, believers enjoy both vertical and horizontal fellowship. The vertical is what we have with the Father and His Son (1 John 1:3). The horizontal is what we have with one another (1 John 1:7). As Christians, God is our Heavenly Father, and we are all siblings.

In short, a genuine family feeling ought to permeate each congregation.

Certain family traits fall to us. Church members ideally treat one another with mutual respect and practical ways of caring. A genuine family feeling manifests itself when members feel one another's hurts and needs. The same feeling manifests when we rejoice with other family members in their joys and victories.

#### Sense of belonging

Normally family members have a deep sense of belonging to and acceptance with all other members without any semblance of pretense or playacting. In its best expression, church membership carries with it the same sense of belonging and acceptance that exists in healthy families. In the absence of these characteristics, both our literal family and our church family become dysfunctional.

Galatians 6:10 gives this practical admonition for members of God's household: "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."

*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.*



## Executive Committee officers address law firm concerns

By Jennifer Davis Rash  
The Alabama Baptist

**A**s the Sexual Abuse Task Force finalizes its report in the coming weeks, the law firm representing the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee during the investigation will be wrapping up its service in the coming months, according to an announcement April 14.

The upcoming change in attorneys comes amid questions about the firm's support of organizations and efforts in conflict with traditional Christian values.

The EC secured the services of the Bradley law firm, a national firm with a local office in Nashville where the EC is based, in a temporary capacity in late October.

Three attorneys from the group were hired to assist with the legal aspects related to Guidepost Solutions' third-party review following the decision of longtime EC attorneys Jim Guenther and Jamie Jordan (from the firm Guenther, Jordan and Price) to terminate their role with the EC earlier in October.

EC board members and officials explained in October the recommendation for Bradley came from a then-EC staff member and the decision had to be made quickly.

#### Urgent matter

"The urgency of the effort to cooperate with the Sexual Abuse Task Force investigation was, and is, critical to the reputation of the SBC Executive Committee and in demonstrating its commitment to transparency during the investigation and to the convention at large," the EC officers said in a statement released April 14.

"Bradley came highly recommended with expertise in critical areas being faced by the SBC Executive Committee," the statement reads.

"Since their engagement began, they have resolved potential litigation, ensured maximum cooperation with the Sexual Abuse Task Force's investigation, demonstrated an understanding of our statement of faith and mission as well as our polity, earned the trust of Guidepost Solutions and the Committee on Cooperation, and tirelessly worked

to protect and preserve the interests of the SBC Executive Committee.

"Bradley is, however, a secular corporation ... (and) supports multiple diversity and inclusion efforts and internal affinity groups. ... Some of these efforts may be out of step with Southern Baptist convictions expressed in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, but most churches and state conventions are faced with similar challenges when they engage in business with various secular companies."

#### Anticipated fees

Concern over Bradley's support of the Nashville Pride festival and other LGBTQ-related groups surfaced publicly in late February through an article published by The Pathway newspaper in Missouri.

Pathway editor Don Hinkle wrote in a follow-up editorial: "There is genuine concern over how Cooperative Program money is being spent."

The EC anticipates paying at least \$4 million in legal fees — which includes Bradley, Guenther and others — at the conclusion of the Guidepost investigation and task force report.

The report will be released publicly in mid- to late May and a presentation with recommendations will be made to convention messengers attending the June 14–15 SBC Annual Meeting in Anaheim.

Founded in 1870 in Elyton, Alabama, before moving to Birmingham in 1871, Bradley is now a global operation with 10 offices located in Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and the District of Columbia, according to the firm's website.

Bradley (officially Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP) has nearly 600 lawyers on its payroll.

#### Search plans

The search for a new law firm will begin after the annual meeting, the April 14 statement noted. "The SBC Executive Committee requires sophisticated legal counsel to guide the SBC in our faithful response to the findings and recommendations from the Sexual Abuse Task Force's investigation, and we are determined to secure such counsel."



**FREE  
ADMISSION**

# Revive

## Senior Adult Evangelism Conference



**Monday, May 2 – 9:30-Noon  
Glynwood Baptist Church – Prattville**

**SPEAKERS:**  
*Jay Wolf and  
David Dykes*



**SPECIAL MUSIC:**  
*Karen Peck  
and New River*



**For more information, please visit [evangelizeAL.org/revive](http://evangelizeAL.org/revive)**

# Gathering to celebrate

## Baptist Campus Ministries recognizes 100 years of ministry in Tuscaloosa

By Dianna L. Cagle  
The Alabama Baptist

**W**hen Nate Young walked into the Baptist Campus Ministries building April 9 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the University of Alabama's BCM, memories of his first impression of the building came to mind.

Young first entered the building in the fall of 1993. The number of students at the welcome-back-to-school event drove him back to his dorm.

Away from his home state as well as his family and friends, Young was homesick. The freshman had been voted most bashful by his high school classmates. Within a couple of days of his first visit to the BCM, he met two young men at his dorm's dining hall who invited him back to the BCM.

"The second time I walked through those doors, I did not walk through them alone," Young said. "They knew everybody."

Young was later elected to the BCM student council as socials director.

"The Lord had a plan," he said. "He placed people in my path who would push me and grow me."

Young took part in special projects and summer trips, spending part of one summer in Ecuador. He connected with an upper classman who disciplined him.

"Through that, I sensed a call to ministry," said Young, who thought at first he would work with youth.

After graduating from UA in 1999, Young went to seminary.

### 'Sense of belonging'

In 2006, Young entered the BCM again. This time, he was the campus minister. He served in that capacity for 11 years.

"I got to see students take their first steps with Christ," he said. "I saw students take their next steps with Christ. I saw students just like me get connected and find a



Photo by Dianna L. Cagle/The Alabama Baptist

A collection of University of Alabama alumni from the Baptist Campus Ministries choir perform two songs for the 100th anniversary celebration April 9. Singers represented classes from the late 1970s to early 1990s.

place, a sense of belonging."

It was through the BCM that Young learned to love the local church.

### 'Missions mindset'

"This ministry exists because of the buy-in and the generosity, because of the missions mindset of the local church," said Young, who is lead pastor of North River Church in Tuscaloosa. "This ministry belongs to the local church."

"In a deeply divided territorial world, things like BCM stand in the gap and join us together in connecting students with local churches, connecting students to Jesus and connecting our local churches to our campus, which is more of a challenge today than it's ever been."

Young contemplates a day when he might step into the BCM again, maybe as a parent of a student.

Young spoke during the celebration, which consisted of a barbecue lunch, open house and program. About 175 former and current stu-

dents, as well as former and current leadership from the BCM and the State Board of Missions, trickled into the facility to reminisce and catch up with each other.

They shared stories, laughter and some tears.

Television screens showed pictures of BCM students through the years — serving on missions trips; playing cards, table tennis and intramural sports; studying God's word; praising Him during worship services; gathering around a table to eat together; handing out gospel tracts; and attending sporting events, concerts or retreats.

Stuart Bell, UA president, and Rick Lance, SBOM executive director, shared messages in a video shown during the program.

Several former students and BCM leaders were highlighted during the video, too. As part of the celebration event, Kim Andrews, lead campus minister, shared about the current environment on campus.



YOUNG

She said there are almost 46,000 students in the Tuscaloosa area, including UA, Shelton State Community College and Stillman College. The BCM rebranded with Tuscaloosa in its logo to include the other two campuses in town.

### Historical perspective

The April 9 celebration was organized by current BCM leadership, along with several alumni.

They wanted to highlight the history and celebrate what God has done in and through the BCM over the years.

In the year 1920–1921, Baptist Christian Council started meeting on campus at UA.

Soon, the name changed to Baptist Student Union. It is believed to have been the first BSU east of the Mississippi River.

When the Alabama Student Union building was erected in 1930, meetings were held there. That original spot is the current location of UA's Reese Phifer Hall, part of the College of Communication and Information Sciences.

The current facility on University Boulevard opened in December 1954.

Barry Daniel, minister of senior adults and pastoral care for Hunter Street Baptist Church in Hoover, graduated from UA in 1985. During his time in college, Daniel was called into music ministry and served as the choir director for the then-BSU.

For the anniversary, Daniel was tasked with gathering a choir to perform. The choir performed two songs and consisted of graduates from the late 1970s to 1990s.

"I remember junior-senior years, wrestling with God's call to ministry," he said. "My answer was, 'Not me, Lord.'"

But working with the BSU choir helped prove God could do it through him, Daniel said.

# AUBURN MUSICAL JOURNEY

## More than 300 singers reunite to celebrate 50 years of performances

By Carolyn Tomlin  
The Alabama Baptist

**T**homas Smith has led the music ministry at Providence Baptist Church in Opelika for 48 years, but recently he marked the half-century milestone of another stop on his musical journey, the formation of the Auburn University Singers.

As a young professor at Auburn University in 1972, Smith organized the Singers.

Different from other choral groups, the Singers used choreography and included pop and musical theatre in their performances. They also took their music on the road to other cities and countries.

On March 20, more than 300 former students returned to Auburn's campus to present a 50th anniversary concert at the Jay and Susie Gogue Performing Arts Center. And they brought their children and grandchildren to fill the audience.

With only one day of preparation, they presented a concert and joined with current Singers for a number.

Since its organization in 1972, the group has met for a reunion every five years.

"Auburn alumni have a bond that is difficult to describe," Smith explained.

"We are like family. We are there for each other in times of happiness and in not-so-good times. With 2022 being 50 years since being organized, this was especially an important celebration."

During those early years, Smith's wife, Gayle, worked

along with her husband, sewing costumes and traveling.

It was a family affair, as their two children came along on road trips. Of course when they entered Auburn, the junior Smiths joined the Singers.

Smith, who retired from the university in 2006, continues to be active with the group and part of the Auburn family.

"One of the selections on the program each year is, 'What Would I Do Without My Music,'" said Lara Hejazen, a senior in early childhood education and president of the Auburn University Singers.

When possible

Smith returns for one of the shows and conducts the group when the piece is performed.

Smith is quick to give credit to Dale Farmer, current Singers' conductor and an instructor in the

university's music department.

Farmer is a founding student member of the Singers and was an active member of the group.

He is continuing the rich tradition, keeping the well-established family feeling of the group, Smith said.

### Connected by music

Reunions help with that, as does another important aspect of being a Singer — travel.

In 1974, the group spent three weeks in Romania. In 1979, the Singers served as Friendship Ambassadors to Poland and the former Soviet Union. They also toured Western Europe, England and Ireland. Smith wanted an international cultural experience for his students.

"Music itself brings people together," Smith said.

"They bring joy to others. Music is so connected to the heart and soul."

Mary Cam Burg, a freshman at Auburn, agreed.

"Despite all the differences

among the generations of Singers, the music remains the same and connects us in such a unique and powerful way," Burg said.

Former Singer Kenneth Adams said, "There really are no words to properly articulate what the group means to me.

"What an amazing legacy and family that has been built based on the vision of Dr. Thomas R. Smith and carried on by Dr. Dale Farmer.

"This group is a true mark of the 'Auburn Creed,' and the thing I'm most appreciative of is the values that this group instills and the lifelong friendships that were born out of our time together. I will forever be proud to be an AU Singer!"

### A family

Smith believes the secret to the success of the group is sharing.

"The Singers share their gifts with others and share with the audience.

"They bring joy to others. It's such a wholesome atmosphere. We are indeed a family!"



Family, friends and supporters join the Auburn University Singers for the group's 50th Anniversary Concert on March 20 at the Jay & Susie Gogue Performing Arts Center.

Photo courtesy of AU Singers



Photo courtesy of Thomas Smith  
Thomas Smith conducting the opening piece of the Auburn University Singers 50th Anniversary concert, "Sing Joy!"



IMB photo

When Staci Powers (pictured here in white shirt) lost her husband, Jeff, her suffering gave her a stronger ministry in Zambia. The people knew she loved them because she returned to the field after her loss.

# Proving her love

## Widow fulfills missionary calling, connects with African people through suffering

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**W**hen Staci Powers was growing up in Girls in Action in Brownwood, Texas, she told God she would go anywhere, but she never thought He'd send her.

But He did — after college, she went as a journeyman with the International Mission Board to West Africa. She drove all over the region she was assigned, sharing the gospel and discipling believers.

Years later God would set her on a path she hadn't signed up for.

After she graduated from seminary, got married and spent 15 years with the IMB in Botswana and Zambia, her husband, Jeff, started experiencing pain and lethargy and started losing weight.

When he went to see a doctor in South Africa in 2013 at the recommendation of the IMB, Powers said she "wasn't thinking it was what it was; I was just thinking we would have to adjust our eating habits or something."

### Happened quickly

But she soon got the news that he had tumors on his pancreas.

Everything happened quickly from there — the IMB booked flights to the U.S., and their ministry partners in Zambia packed up their house after they left.

One of those ministry partners was Darbi Tidwell, who along with her husband, Blu, had been part of starting an orphanage.

"We were tasked with cleaning out their house and packing up their keepsakes, their wedding china — all of us thinking they'll

never be back," Tidwell said. "We didn't know if he was going to live, but definitely didn't think they would be back to the field."

But the story of the Powers' work in Zambia wasn't over yet.

It would be a couple of tough years before Powers got back there to stay. Over the next year, she watched her husband's health decline, but she said she also saw glimpses of God's grace she wouldn't have seen otherwise.

She remembered one day he was singing "We're Marching to Zion" loudly even though in previous days he'd been unable to speak much.

She and their pastor's wife joined him, then she prayed — and he joined in.

"He said, 'Lord, You know that as I sing that song I see a bright light. And You know I want to embrace that light one day, but forgive me, Lord, I don't want to embrace that light right now. I still have things I want to do and people I want to see.'"

"And then he went on to praise

the Lord again," Powers recalled.

She carried moments like that with her as she grieved his death in the following months. As she returned to Zambia, the memories strengthened her faith.

### Continuing the ministry

Powers now lives at the orphanage the Tidwells helped start. She drives every week to the village where she and Jeff used to live. There she disciples new believers and supports church leaders. She's continuing the ministry they started together.

She now has a connection she believes wouldn't be there if she hadn't walked through the valley of losing her husband.

She said Africans experience suffering and don't often see missionaries suffer, and that was a bridge in relating to them.

One Zambian church leader told her, "Now we know you really love us since you came back."

Her husband's death has given

Powers a new platform from which to share how Jesus is better than anything.

She said along the way she's shared over and over that "what I see in Scripture is 'many are the afflictions of the righteous' and 'this light and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory ... count it all joy when you face various trials.' I see all through Scripture we're going to have suffering, we're going to have trials."

### Christ is worth it

But what Powers has found is that Christ is worth it. She wouldn't want any other road than the one He has asked her to walk.

Laurie Wilcox, who along with her husband, Wes, helped start the orphanage, said they love Powers and are grateful for her partnership in ministry.

"We really admire her," Wilcox said. "It's really amazing. I don't know if I could've done that, to do all the things that she does to continue the ministry they were involved in."

"It's challenging. But she's faithful. She's very faithful to the task."

### Hear more

Want to hear more of Staci Powers' story? Check out Season 5, Episode 3 of TAB Media's "Stories" podcast, available now. This season tells her story along with those of two other women who lost their husbands while on the missions field, but saw God do incredible things to sustain them. Listen at [tabonline.org/stories](http://tabonline.org/stories) or wherever you get podcasts.



IMB photo

Jeff and Staci Powers, IMB workers who were based in Zambia, used storytelling as a way to minister.

*"I don't know if I could've done that, to do all the things that she does to continue the ministry ..."*

Laurie Wilcox, IMB missionary

# State's 'vulnerable child' law challenged

By Carrie B. McWhorter  
The Alabama Baptist

A lawsuit was filed April 19 challenging a new Alabama law banning puberty blockers or hormones as transgender treatments for children and teens.

The lawsuit challenges Senate Bill 184, known as the Vulnerable Child Compassion and Protection Act, set to take effect May 8.

The law bans certain medical therapies for minors and makes it a felony punishable by up to 10 years in prison for medical providers who violate the law.

The lawsuit was filed in Montgomery in federal court.

Two previous lawsuits challenging SB 184 were withdrawn April 15.

Plaintiffs in the new suit are four families with children ranging from ages 12 to 17, two doctors and a clergy member. The plaintiffs are not identified in the lawsuit.

In an April 16 statement announcing the withdrawal of the first two lawsuits,

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall said a "fleet of activist groups" were behind the legal challenges, despite lawmakers' hopes the new law will "protect children from experimental medical interventions that have no proven benefits and carry with them substantial risk of long-term, irreversible harm."

## Care for children

Sarah Warbelow, legal director for the Human Rights Campaign, one of several national LGBTQ rights groups representing the teens and their families called the transgender therapies "critically important care" and said care providers and families want "the best for their children."

Lawmakers in other states have proposed similar measures, but Alabama is the first state to lay out criminal penalties for doctors.

A 2021 Arkansas law banning transgender treatments for minors remains on hold after a federal judge blocked its enforcement.

## ALCAP prepares for transition



Photo courtesy of Joe Godfrey

While Joe Godfrey's last day as head of Alabama Citizens Action Program isn't until April 30, he paused April 7, the last day of this year's legislative session, to "hand off the reins" to Greg Davis, the new president and CEO of the nonprofit group. Davis will continue ALCAP's efforts of lobbying the Legislature on moral issues as well as leading American Character Builders.

## 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

#### SENIOR PASTOR

Prospect Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Tenn., is seeking a senior pastor. Prospect is a conservative, evangelical Southern Baptist church. Send resumé to: [rjones@fpunet.com](mailto:rjones@fpunet.com).

#### SENIOR PASTOR

Jemison First Baptist is accepting resumé for senior pastor. Visit [tabonline.org/FBC-Jemison](http://tabonline.org/FBC-Jemison) to see the job listing.

#### PASTOR

Thomaston Baptist Church, Thomaston, Ala., is seeking a full-time pastor. Please email resumé to: [thomastonbaptistchurch@gmail.com](mailto:thomastonbaptistchurch@gmail.com).

#### PASTOR

Full-time or bivocational pastor. Oak Grove Baptist Church, Frisco City, Ala. Please email resumé to: [oakgbaptist@gmail.com](mailto:oakgbaptist@gmail.com).

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Paden Baptist Church, Gadsden Ala., is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please submit resumé to: [padenbaptistchurch@yahoo.com](mailto:padenbaptistchurch@yahoo.com) or to: Paden Baptist Church, 900 Padenreich Ave., Gadsden, AL 35905.

#### CHURCH BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR

The First Baptist Church of Headland, Ala., is seeking a church business administrator. This is a full-time, non-ministerial position that oversees the day-to-day business of the church. The job description is available at [www.fbcheadland.com](http://www.fbcheadland.com).

#### MUSIC MINISTER

Fayette First Baptist Church is seeking a full-time music minister to utilize the gifts and talents of our church to guide the church toward meaningful worship. Resumé can be sent to: [scottdavis@fayettefbc.org](mailto:scottdavis@fayettefbc.org).

#### PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER & PART-TIME TECHNOLOGY MANAGER

Steele Baptist Church is seeking a part-time youth minister to lead our youth. The individual should be called by God to the youth ministry. Experience and Bible education is preferred but not necessary. Steele Baptist Church is also seeking a part-time technology manager. The candidate should have a working knowledge of livestreaming, downloading music and working with the sound board. They will work with the pastor, music director and media team to over-

see the media ministry. Both positions can be combined for the right person. Please email a resumé to: [steelebaptistchurch@gmail.com](mailto:steelebaptistchurch@gmail.com) or mail to: Steele Baptist Church, 3811 Pope Ave., Steele, AL 35987.

#### BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER

Macedonia Baptist Church in the Coats Bend community of Gadsden, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a bivocational youth minister. Please send resumé and or questions to Ken Blakney at [ktblakney@yahoo.com](mailto:ktblakney@yahoo.com).

#### BIVOCATIONAL CHILDREN'S MINISTER

Government Street Baptist Church, Mobile, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a bivocational children's minister. Applicants should subscribe to the Baptist Faith & Message. Please send resumé to: [governmentstreetbaptist@gmail.com](mailto:governmentstreetbaptist@gmail.com).

#### BIVOCATIONAL CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DIRECTOR

Macedonia Baptist Church in the Coats Bend community of Gadsden, Ala., is prayerfully seeking a bivocational children's ministry director. Please send resumé or questions to Lori Johnson at [macedoniachildrensministry@gmail.com](mailto:macedoniachildrensministry@gmail.com).

#### BIVOCATIONAL CHILDREN'S MINISTER

East Highland Baptist Church, Hartselle, Ala., is prayerfully seeking God's choice for a bivocational children's minister who will lead the children's ministry program. Applicants should subscribe to the doctrinal statement of the Baptist Faith & Message. See additional information under the announcements tab at [ehbc.church](http://ehbc.church). Please send resumé to: [cmssc@ehbc.church](mailto:cmssc@ehbc.church).

### OTHER POSITIONS

#### RESIDENT SUMMER STAFF

We are currently praying for and seeking out Jesus-loving, servant-hearted young adults to join us in facilitating our summer ministry. The RSS program provides work and ministry opportunities, a place for spiritual and personal growth and an amazing Christ-centered community to be a part of. Students are paid a summer salary and receive meals and lodging. We'd love to have your students join us this summer! All this information, a video and the application can be found at [www.shocco.org/summerstaff](http://www.shocco.org/summerstaff).

### SOCIAL SERVICES MANAGER

Youth-focused nonprofit seeking full-time (40 hours) social services manager to oversee daily operations. Located in the Birmingham area. Salary \$47,000-\$52,000 annually. Health and dental insurance eligible. Call 205-994-1439 from 7 a.m.-4 p.m.

### 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. State-wide since 1994. 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955. [www.reliablesigns.com](http://www.reliablesigns.com).

### 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.

### FOR SALE

#### BUS

2000 Ford bus. 59,000 miles. Seats 25 passengers plus driver. Good condition. \$10,000 OBO. Contact 334-818-0565.

### TRAVEL/VACATION

#### AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE CONDOS

Orange Beach, Ala. Rent direct from Christian family owners. Lowest prices on the beach for over 30 years! Call Don, 251-752-2366, call Donna, 251-656-4935 or [www.gulfshorescondos.com](http://www.gulfshorescondos.com).

#### 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.

### PODCAST

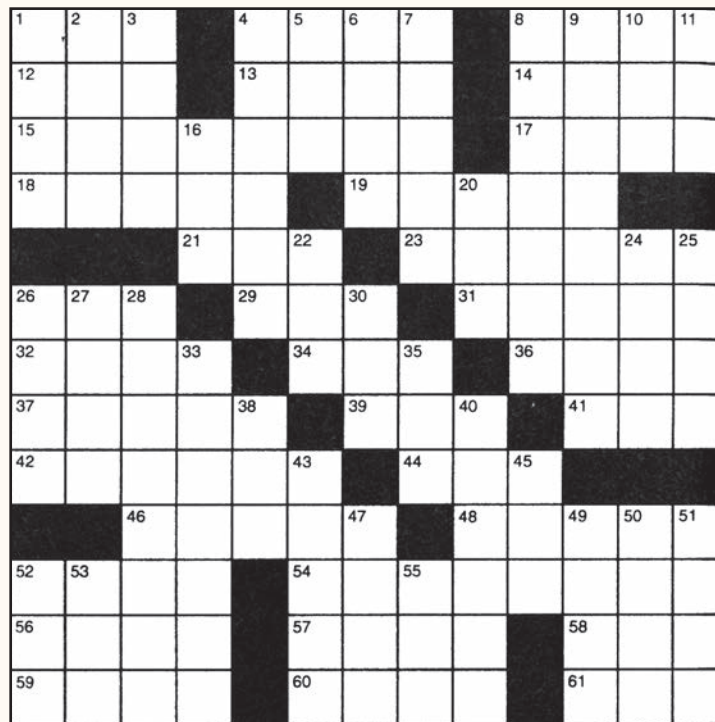
#### STORIES SEASON 6: MUD BOGGER STORY

Terry Billings used to spend his life mud racing in his old drinking truck, until one day everything turned on a dime — in Walmart. Now he and his truck have both had a transformation — and have found a very different purpose. This season shares his story. Listen to the Stories podcast at [tabonline.org/stories](http://tabonline.org/stories) or wherever you listen to podcasts.

# CHRISTIAN crossword

## ACROSS

1. Separate those who \_\_\_ the water ... like a dog. (Judg. 7:5)
4. \_\_\_ fast that which is good. (1 Thess. 5:21)
8. Kaffir warrior.
12. Independent business owner. (abbr.)
13. Away from the wind.
14. Woman's name.
15. So can no \_\_\_ both yield salt water and fresh. (James 3:12)
17. A family name.
18. But is under \_\_\_s and governors. (Gal. 4:2)
19. \_\_\_, I have somewhat to say unto thee. (Luke 7:40)
21. In the morning the \_\_\_ lay round about the host. (Ex. 16:13)
23. Then the \_\_\_ of the house shall be brought unto the judges. (Ex. 22:8)
26. And \_\_\_ begat Kish. (1 Chron. 8:33)
29. Cast into the \_\_\_ of lions. (Dan. 6:7)
31. O \_\_\_, where is thy sting? (1 Cor. 15:55)
32. Hereafter ye shall see heaven \_\_\_. (John 1:51)
34. Noise.
36. A certain Pharisee besought Him to \_\_\_ with Him. (Luke 11:37)
37. The \_\_\_ threw him to the ground. (Luke 9:42)
39. Mazel.
41. No. (Scottish)
42. Thou shalt not \_\_\_ a kid in his mother's milk. (Ex. 23:19)
44. Securities and Exchange Commission. (abbr.)
46. Shopping meccas.
48. They were counted worthy to suffer \_\_\_ for His name. (Acts 5:41)



By Janet W. Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

52. Virginia senator.
54. I beseech thee for my son \_\_\_. (Philemon 10)
56. By faith \_\_\_ offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice. (Heb. 11:4)
57. Glacial snow field.
58. Oven.
59. Thy feet are sunk in the \_\_\_. (Jer. 38:22)
60. \_\_\_ not the sayings of the prophecy of this book. (Rev. 22:10)
61. We shall \_\_\_ Him as He is. (1 John 3:2)
- dwelt in the land of \_\_\_. (Gen. 4:16)
20. I am not \_\_\_, most noble Festus. (Acts 26:25)
22. Marry.
24. Sicilian volcano.
25. Korean president.
26. Dozes.
27. Fencing sword.
28. \_\_\_ now thy Creator. (Eccles. 12:1)
30. Insect.
33. Having a reputation.
35. Nitrous Oxide Systems. (abbr.)
38. National Hockey League. (abbr.)
40. I am like a broken \_\_\_. (Ps. 31:12)
43. Belonging to the father of Bashemath. (Gen. 26:34)
45. Greek letter.
47. Dagger.
49. The words of \_\_\_, who was among the herdmen. (Amos 1:1)
50. I \_\_\_ on the work of Thy hands. (Ps. 143:5)
51. This. (Spanish)
52. Abraham went and took the \_\_\_, and offered him up. (Gen. 22:13)
53. Japanese sash.
55. Form of "Eve."

## DOWN

1. Wherefore \_\_\_ up the hands which hang down. (Heb. 12:12)
2. Father. (Arabic)
3. Sulk.
4. Hostility.
5. Woman's name.
6. Hawaiian gifts of greeting.
7. Jeans fabric.
8. Carnal ordinances, \_\_\_ on them. (Heb. 9:10)
9. Say unto this \_\_\_, Remove hence. (Matt. 17:20)
10. Persona non grata. (abbr.)
11. Biblical name ending.
16. And Cain went ... and

# Someone You Should Know

**DONNIE ISBELL BYRD**

By **Carrie B. McWhorter**  
The Alabama Baptist

**D**onnie Isbell Byrd, 92, of Tuscumbia, was born in 1929, one of nine children. She never misses church and is involved in WMU and other ministries. She has been on five international and two home missions trips. When her flowers are in bloom, she brings fresh flowers to her pastor, Greg Beasley, each Sunday. She has read through the Bible 44 times.

**Q: Describe where you focus your greatest ministry efforts.**

A: When I was younger, we grew most of the food we ate. We did not have the supermarkets we have today. We grew fruits and vegetables to can and freeze to have to eat during the winter. I made a garden for many years and shared vegetables with family and friends.

For many years. I made pear preserves and shared them with family and friends. Brother Greg Beasley came as our pastor about 12 years ago in June. I had some flowers blooming in the yard and thought I would put some of the flowers on his desk to make him feel welcome. I did not know how much Brother Greg loved flowers. I still enjoy sharing flowers with him.

**Q: Who was or is one of the most influential people in your faith life? Why?**

A: I did not grow up in a Christian home. My daddy and mother were good people, but they did not attend church. They went to revival in the summer. When I was 8 or 10, I started walking to

**MINISTRY:**  
Encourager

**CHURCH NAME:**  
Valley Grove Baptist Church, Tuscumbia

**LIFE VERSE:**  
Gal. 5:22-23

church with another family. I was in Mrs. Lula Gargis' Sunday School class. Mrs. Gargis created in me a love for reading the Bible, and I still enjoy reading the Bible today.

**Q: Tell about a "turning point" in your life and how God was involved.**

A: Around 1976, someone challenged us to read through the Bible in one year. It took me two years the first time. I first read through the Bible in 1978, and I have read the Bible through 44 times. I want the Lord to draw me closer.

**Q: If there were one thing you could tell your younger self about faith, what would it be?**

A: If God calls you to a difficult

task and there are problems, He might not deliver you from the problems, but He will go with you through them.

**Q: What has God been teaching you lately?**

A: God has been teaching me I can trust Him. If God tells me something, I can believe Him.

He will never lead me astray. God only wants what is best for me. He has been so good to me. He deserves my best.



**BYRD**



# Mobilize to Evangelize

Southwestern Seminary evangelism professor Matt Queen will be in Alabama May 9-12 for a series of sessions across the state designed to help you and your church “**Mobilize to Evangelize**.” Based on his own pastoral experience in local churches, Dr. Queen will facilitate discussions with Alabama Baptist pastors, staff ministers and church leaders about how they can assess the state of evangelism in their churches and offer tangible ways they can mobilize their congregations to evangelize.



The events are **free** and a meal will be provided at each gathering, along with a free book for each attendee. However, registration is required so there will be enough food and materials. Please visit **EvangelizeAL.org/events** and click on the date and location of your choice for specific registration instructions.

Questions? Call or email Lori McGough at 334-613-2245, [lmcgough@alsbom.org](mailto:lmcgough@alsbom.org). Here are the times and locations:

- Monday, May 9, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.**  
West Cullman Baptist Association Office  
601 Cleveland Ave. SW, Cullman
- Monday, May 9, 6-8 p.m.**  
Birmingham Metro Baptist Association Office  
1449 Medical Park Dr., Birmingham
- Tuesday, May 10, 10 a.m.-Noon**  
Calhoun Baptist Association Office  
1130 Woodstock Ave., Anniston
- Tuesday, May 10, 6-8 p.m.**  
Tallapoosa Baptist Association Office  
13103 US-280, Jacksons Gap
- Wednesday, May 11, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.**  
Evergreen Baptist Church  
107 Park St., Evergreen
- Thursday, May 12, 8-11 a.m.**  
Bethlehem Baptist Church  
416 Bethlehem Rd., Midland City

## 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](http://alsbom.org/events). To register for virtual events, visit [PinnacleAlabama.org](http://PinnacleAlabama.org).

- MAY**
  - 1 Senior Adult Sunday**, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 2285
  - 2 REVIVE**, Glynwood, Prattville, Lori McGough, ext. 2245
  - 3 Get Acquainted Day**, SBOM, Prattville, Amy Nelson, ext. 2231
  - 4 Speak Tour**, BMC Wellness Center, Centreville, Josh Meadows, 478-410-0080
  - 8-14 Christian Home Week**, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 2285
  - 9-12 Mobilize to Evangelize Seminars**, various locations around state (see ad for details)
  - 9 South Region Disciple-Making Roundtable**, Pilgrim Home, Newton, Mark Gainey, ext. 2240
  - 10 Ministers Wives' Connection**, ONLINE, Trish Jackson, ext. 2224 ([alabamaWMU.org](http://alabamaWMU.org))
  - 13 Speak Tour**, The Beach at McFarland Park, Florence, Josh Meadows, 478-410-0080
  - 17 Great Commission Conversations**, ONLINE, Cindy Wilson, ext. 2225 ([alabamaWMU.org](http://alabamaWMU.org))
  - 31-6/4 Ymlink on Mission Huntsville**, Jackson Way, Huntsville, Scooter Kellum, ext. 2280
- JUNE**
  - 1-4 Ymlink on Mission Huntsville**, Jackson Way, Huntsville, Scooter Kellum, ext. 2280
  - 7 Church Tax Conference for Small Churches**, SBOM, Prattville, Linda Hicks, ext. 2263
  - 13-18 Ymlink Birmingham**, Westwood, Birmingham, Scooter Kellum, ext. 2280
  - 14-15 Southern Baptist Convention**, Anaheim, Calif., Keith Hinson, ext. 2289
  - 21 Church Administrative Guidelines**, SBOM, Prattville, Jim Swedenburg, ext. 2283
- JULY**
  - 3 Citizenship and Religious Liberty Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 2289
  - 8-9 Children's Music Summit**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, April Brewer, ext. 2279
  - 11-15 MIX MusiCamp**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Cindy Parrish, ext. 2230
  - 11-15 Super Summer Alabama**, Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Scooter Kellum, ext. 2280
  - 15-16 SPEAK**, Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Scooter Kellum, ext. 2280
  - 21-23 'YOU' All Nations Youth Camp 2022**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Kimberly Sandoval, ext. 2244
  - 22-23 Connect (formerly Equip)**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325
  - 25-8/3 Ymlink on Mission New York**, Metro New York Baptist Association, New York, Scooter Kellum, ext. 2280
  - 26 Intentional Leader Conference**, SBOM, Prattville, Kim Britton, ext. 2218
- AUGUST**
  - 5-6 Pinnacle Alabama @ Shocco**, Shocco Springs, Steve Layton, ext. 2221
  - 6 Called Conference**, Samford University, Birmingham, Mary Kelley, ext. 2227
  - 7 Social Issues Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 2289
  - 9 Ministers Wives' Connection**, ONLINE, Trish Jackson, ext. 2224
  - 11 Uplink on the Road**, Bethany, Andalusia, Scooter Kellum, ext. 2280
  - 15 North Region Disciple-Making Roundtable**, Westmeade, Decatur, Mark Gainey, ext. 2240
  - 16 Great Commission Conversations**, ONLINE, Cindy Wilson, ext. 2225
  - 19 SALT Conference**, Canaan, Bessemer, Ramona Noah, ext. 2312
  - 25 Uplink on the Road**, First, Trussville, Scooter Kellum, ext. 2280
  - 27 Fortify Conference**, First, Trussville, Larry Hyche, ext. 2268
- SEPTEMBER**
  - 8 Get Acquainted Day**, SBOM, Prattville, Amy Nelson, ext. 2231
  - 8-9 Alabama Singing Women Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Cindy Parrish, ext. 2230
  - 8-9 Alabama Singing Men Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Karen Gosselin, ext. 2318

# Sharing space

## Curriculum focuses on Christian foundation that will have effect on students' lives

(continued from page 1) and surrounding area. This gives us a connection with the community that we didn't have before."

### Keeping busy

Even with the pandemic, there often is something going on at the church.

"There is no line-item budget, but what the church provides is free space," Nicholson

noted. "They have their own insurance, and we share in the utilities. What was unexpected is that the heat and air expense hasn't changed much. Now the building is cooled or heated daily. Before it was mainly Sunday and Wednesday night or for special events."

The academy has its own janitorial and cleaning service. The church and academy share space for

Sunday School and classes, and the fellowship hall is used for lunch.

Another way the two work together is church members volunteering — the fall fundraiser was combined, and all funds collected went to the academy.

Latin has been added to Marion Academy's curriculum, and Latin phrases often are posted throughout the educational space.

The congregation is picking up a few phrases and words, which Nicholson said is "something we never thought of before. It's a bonus for us!"

Rebecca Watford, president of the board of directors for Marion Acad-

emy since 2020, says the academy and Siloam Baptist working together is an excellent partnership.



Photo courtesy of Rebecca Watford

Leaders say the diversity at Marion Academy teaches students to learn from others with differing backgrounds.



Photo courtesy of Rebecca Watford

Marion Academy students celebrate Veterans Day at Siloam Baptist Church in Marion. The school needed a location after selling its building in February 2021.

"I'm reminded of the story of Jesus feeding the crowd from the five loaves and two fishes from Matthew 14:13-21," Watford said. "We want to disciple children and share the gospel, not only in Alabama but wherever the Lord leads these children in life. We are planting seeds that will produce fruit."

### Having an effect

"Whatever our students study — algebra, Latin, biology — we want the cur-

riculum to have an effect on their Christian life," she added.

Watford noted what makes the academy special is the small classes, individual learning, one-on-one contact with teachers and each student knowing they are loved and accepted.

"Diversity in our enrollment teaches students to be accepting of other cultures and to realize that

we are all God's children," she said.

One of the most valuable classes is the farm-to-table program, Watford said.

Plans are to involve most of the students as they prepare vegetable beds, select seeds, plant and take care of the vegetables. They hope to have a small farmer's market where the students learn business skills and financing.

Through the program the academy is teaching students to enjoy work and make a living, Watford noted, along with how to live in today's world.

"Looking forward, sharing space with Marion Academy has been a very positive learning experience for Siloam Baptist Church and the community of Marion," Nicholson said. "Learning to think in a Christian way and to put these teachings in the hearts and minds as students go forward in life is a tremendous opportunity."

**"We want to disciple children."**

Rebecca Watford  
president, Marion  
Academy board

SIXTH AVENUE  
CHURCH OF CHRIST  
ROOTED IN THE CROSS... GROWING IN CHRIST  
GLORIFYING GOD

**Jesus is the ANSWER**

ROMANS 10:16

Jasper, Ala.

**Reliable SIGN SERVICES**

"Celebrating Over 25 Years"

"The sign purchase was great from start to finish, I never asked anything that wasn't answered in a timely manner and the support from your personnel was great. The installation guys, were excellent and very professional. I searched several places but always came back to Reliable Signs. One reason we chose Reliable Signs is that they were very patient with all the questions I asked, took time to explain how, when and why the sign we were going to choose was the right one. They knew what we needed before we asked, very knowledgeable, and I thank you all for your help and support. We are very happy with the sign it is just what we needed."

**Phillip Horton, Sign Committee Chairman**

www.reliablesigns.com • 1.800.729.6844 • 205.664.0955

Pastor Charles Lewis  
recommends Jimmy Dixon

**The Benefits of a Reverse Mortgage**

- Get cash
- Erase mortgage payments
- Start a growing line of credit
- Purchase a home

**Contact Jimmy Dixon**

**205-567-4800**

**jdixon@mcgowinking.com**

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

NMLS #207518

# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 1

## Explore the Bible

By Ben Stubblefield

Visiting assistant professor of Christian studies, University of Mobile



### LIVING

#### 1 Thessalonians 5:12–24

##### Respecting (12–13)

I heard a story of a church hoping to call a young preacher. The financial chairman told him, “I need to tell you how your salary situation is going to work. It’s your job to work for the Lord, and it’s my job to keep you humble.” The young preacher didn’t take the job.

Hopefully, that kind of mentality is rare among our churches. Paul urges congregations to hold leaders in high esteem when they labor diligently, bear their responsibility seriously and work admirably.

Paul concludes this section by saying “live in peace with one another” because he knows leadership can sometimes come into conflict with those being led. We all know authority is not essentially evil, and we all have known some church leaders who aren’t good. But we also know sometimes we don’t like leadership in our lives because we just don’t like being told what to do.

This can make church life contentious at times because pastors must bring the word of God to bear on the lives of their congregants.

Pastors carry a unique and daunting responsibility before the Lord, and most of them work hard to lead well. But if we don’t value that work or hold them in high regard, it’s likely we will not respect their judgment, and the house of God will be a place of strife instead of peace.

I often hear people say, “I want a preacher who is going to lead me.” But what they actually mean is “I want someone to lead me only when I’m in the mood to be led.”

It shouldn’t be that way. Those who have answered heaven’s call to shepherd the souls of others should be esteemed highly in love by fellow Christ-followers.

##### Accountable (14–22)

I met a man named Rambo the other day, and I tried to share the gospel with him. During the course of our conversation, he (true to his name) got combative, cursed a lot and told me he was a “lone wolf Christian” who didn’t need to go

to church. I summoned all my powers of elocution to answer him and said, “That’s stupid.”

How many people do you know who successfully navigate sin, hell’s temptations and the burdens of life? I know One — God the Son. But I’m not Jesus, and neither are you.

In verse 14, Paul tells the church to admonish one another to live Christ-honoring lives. He then gives a burst of exhortations he wants them to admonish each other to fulfill. In other words, Paul expects the church family to stimulate each other to love and good deeds.

These verses highlight how much we need each other for Christian living. We need church family because we aren’t the best at detecting and correcting ourselves.

Praise God the church you belong to is there to protect you from regression and spur you to progression in your pilgrimage to glory.

##### Sanctified (23–24)

After exhorting the Thessalonians to work hard at righteousness, Paul draws the letter to a close with a beautiful prayer asking the Lord for their continued sanctification until the day of Christ’s coming.

Occasionally, I’ll let one of my small children sit in the driver’s seat with me and hold the steering wheel while I operate the pedals. We’re not on the interstate, mind you, just the field next to our house.

But what she doesn’t see is my knees making constant adjustments to her steering. Sometimes, she’ll turn all the way around and look at me while she’s “driving” to tell me how good she’s doing. “You’re doing great!” I’ll say. But all the while, I’m making sure the car doesn’t run over the chain-link fence.

We have to work at living right. We’ve got to struggle to hold the wheel and keep things straight. That’s what these verses are about.

But the real power undergirding our strength is our Father in heaven, who supplies all our needs for life and godliness in Christ Jesus.

## Bible Studies for Life

By Will Kynes

Associate professor of biblical studies, Samford University



### KNOW WHAT’S COMING

#### Matthew 24:15–22

Though Jesus’ yoke is easy and His burden light (Matt. 11:30), Scripture does not promise following Him will guarantee a life of peace and prosperity.

Instead, as both the history of Israel and the history of the church demonstrate, obedience to God often inspires opposition and oppression. Are we prepared? Where will we find hope to endure?

##### The desecration of the temple signals the coming end. (15–16)

The “abomination that causes desolation” was prophesied by Daniel (9:27, 11:31, 12:11) and fulfilled in 167 B.C., when the foreign ruler Antiochus IV set up an altar of Zeus upon the altar of God in the temple.

However, like much of the imagery Jesus uses in this chapter, this image of devastating desecration has further resonance with both the suffering that continually threatens Christians and that which is associated with the end times.

Paul also uses this image to describe the “man of lawlessness,” who, before the Day of Judgment, will “exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God” (2 Thess. 2:4).

In A.D. 70, the Romans did destroy and desecrate the temple, and Christians fled to the mountains, as this passage describes.

But even as these two historical events indicate, the desire of worldly rulers to take God’s place, whether literally or not, and the suffering this often brings for those who believe, is a continual threat. If we’re honest, we may even see this urge to usurp God in our own hearts.

##### The distress that follows will come suddenly. (17–20)

This sudden threat that accompanies the desolation of the temple should inspire immediate, unhesitating and unhindered flight. Jesus instructs His followers not to retrieve items from their houses or even to grab cloaks left behind.

He encourages His disciples to pray that this cataclysm does not occur in the winter, when travel will be more difficult, or on the Sabbath, likely because for Matthew’s largely Jewish Christian audience, this would make Sabbath observance more difficult.

The urgency here parallels the angel’s instructions to Lot and his family before the destruction of Sodom (Gen. 19:17). The spiritual application of such warnings is to be absolutely committed to fleeing God’s wrath through faith in Christ, “throw[ing] off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles” (Heb. 12:1) and following Christ without looking back (Luke 9:57–62).

##### The time of distress will be so severe that God will mercifully cut it short. (21–22)

Whether the “great distress,” unparalleled in world history, refers hyperbolically to the siege of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 or eschatologically to final judgment, Jesus makes clear to His disciples that affliction awaits.

Yet as Daniel and other apocalyptic texts consistently affirm, God is sovereign, greater than the great tribulations that threaten His people.

Scripture does not guarantee freedom from affliction, but it does consistently promise that though these tribulations may be great, we serve a God who is greater still.

In Daniel’s visions, he sees the Ancient of Days sitting on a throne (7:9). The Son of Man, who comes to him, “was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped Him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Dan. 7:14).

We see Christ’s triumph celebrated in Revelation, as “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes” cry out in a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (7:9–10).

# MEDIA REVIEWS

By Minnie Lamberth

The Alabama Baptist

## Gamer logs prayers of believers; authors explore who Jesus is

### Decurion: Called to Be a 21st Century Warrior

Mark Randall  
Covenant Books

Alabama author Mark Randall has envisioned a story with a video game premise he presents as a spiritual warfare illustration.

In this imaginative work of fiction, a talented young gamer, Jay, is unexpectedly transported to another realm where he is standing in a mission control room with a replica of Earth in view. He soon learns he is in the prayer processing center, where technological tools assist in logging the prayers of believers around the world.

That's also when Jay discovers from his greeter, a military-type official named Stallworth, that he's been recommended as a candidate for the position of Decurion with responsibility for a small unit of 10 legionnaires within a far larger operation.

Jay soon meets the members of

his team, hears about their various specialties and begins his training program.

Randall's story blends teachings from Scripture in a sci-fi format as his main character gets an intense lesson on prayer.

The book concludes with a prayer warrior challenge and a discussion guide.

The author's admiration for warriors stems from a childhood living on a military base in Japan and at a mission station in Zimbabwe.

Following in his father's footsteps, Randall is a graduate of UAB School of Medicine. Among his global missions adventures, he worked in hospitals in East Asia for 15 years.

### Finding Jesus in Judaism

Elaine Jacobs

Independently published

Elaine Jacobs has a deep personal connection to the topics she addresses in "Finding Jesus in Judaism."

Jacobs was born into a practicing conservative Jewish home where she observed all customs, feasts and traditions. She converted to Christianity while in college.

Jacobs hopes to help readers better understand the Jewish faith and culture so they'll be more knowledgeable as they witness to their Jewish friends.

Her self-published book offers abundant detail for those who want an insider's view.

She defines the term Jew, both through cultural identity and reli-

gious practice. She explains a wide array of terms, customs and beliefs, as well as other aspects of the Jewish faith.

Jacobs addresses elements of Scripture and Jewish teaching, including the Torah (the five books of Moses), the Tanakh (the Jewish Bible, which Christians call the Old Testament), the Talmud (a textbook of ancient writings) and the Shulchan Aruch (a condensed version of the Talmud).

She also notes some reasons Jews don't believe Jesus is the Messiah. For example, the Trinity — a three-in-one God — is foreign to Jewish teaching, in light of the Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is One."

In addition, she said, "The Jew does believe in the coming of the Messiah, but they don't believe He has come yet in the form of a man."

### Shepherding Like Jesus

Andrew Hébert

B&H Books

With a smooth, eloquent writing style, Andrew Hébert, pastor of Paramount Baptist Church in Amarillo, Texas, offers wise counsel for fellow pastors through "a fresh application of the greatest sermon ever preached."

As Hébert recalls news stories from recent years that involved scandal in churches or with ministerial leaders, he says the problem is one of character. The subtitle of the book points to his goal: "Returning to the Wild Idea that Character Matters in Ministry."

Hébert asks, "But how do we know what the character of Christ should look like in the life of a pastor?"

He turns to the Beatitudes of Matthew 5 to show how pastors

can avoid the missteps of heart-breaking headlines or other difficult detours.

For example, as he reaches the final beatitude, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness," he makes note of a range of tensions in the country, including political division, racial strife and pandemic responses.

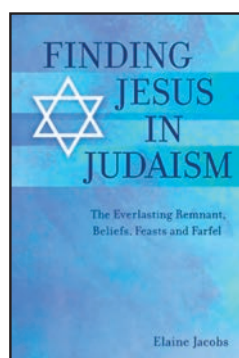
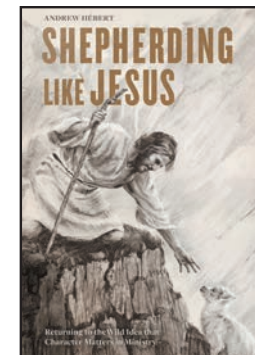
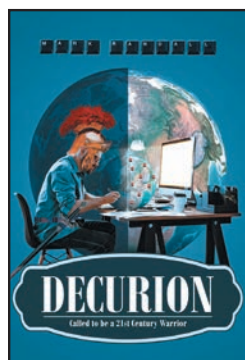
"Pastors have been in the crucible of trying to navigate problems

for which no seminary class could have ever prepared them," Hébert writes.

The criticism pastors receive can be overwhelming, he acknowledges, suggesting, "If

you are going to last in ministry, you need a tough hide and a tender heart."

"Shepherding Like Jesus" is filled with humility and honesty but also hope. Between chapters several other pastors offer their own commentary on the principles discussed.



### 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.

WANT  
YOUR BOOK  
CONSIDERED  
FOR A REVIEW?

Mail a copy to:

3310 Independence Dr.  
Birmingham, AL 35209



# VISIT

## THEALABAMABAPTIST.ORG

✓ Up-to-date *resource* for topical articles, feature stories and breaking news

✓ More than *45,000 articles* plus a variety of helpful links and resources

**The  
Alabama  
Baptist**