

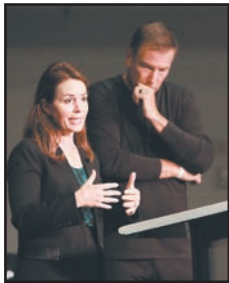
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INSIDE



Sexual Abuse Task Force report prompts grief, apologies, action
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Cool Springs Baptist Church reaches thousands through VBS
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The refugee center in Medyka, Poland, hosts more than 2,000 refugees.



Photo by Ralph Stevens

Helping the hurting

'Overwhelmed,' 'amazed' while ministering to Ukrainian refugees

By Ralph Stevens
Shades Mountain Baptist Church

Medyka, Poland — it's a place where the people have a few numbers etched on their hearts and minds:

► **43.3 miles** — the distance to Auschwitz, the largest Nazi concentration camp

► **6 million** — the number of people, primarily Jews, who were killed during the Holocaust

► **77 years** — the length of time since Auschwitz, which is located in Oswiecim, Poland, was liberated.

Fresh on the mind

The atrocities of World War II are a lifetime ago, but not long enough for the Polish people.

The memories are fresh for them. And they are not going to stand by and let history repeat itself without offering their lives to stop it.

This drives the way they react as they watch the war in Ukraine unfold. Their city is right on the border with Ukraine, and refugees have poured in.

I saw this firsthand when I

traveled there recently with a missions team.

The emotional impact of this one-week trip has been staggering. Memories and thoughts continue to flood my mind and set off empathy, love, anger and frustration, each emotion coming within minutes of the other.

There was joy, however, in serving these people. The refugees are the least of these that Jesus speaks about in Matthew 25:40, "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

Many of those we saw were Ukrainians with low incomes,

people who had never traveled. They carried their possessions in shopping bags.

Many left home without toiletries or another set of clothes or with limited formula for their babies.

Children left their friends, neighborhoods and schools on a moment's notice and had no chance to say their good-byes.

Leaving home behind

Many families will never return to their homes and hope to start a new life elsewhere.

I had a chance meeting with two young men about 25 years old as we sat down to (See 'A great need,' page 12)

HIGHLIGHTS



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Special recognition

Walker County's Jones Dairy honored as Century & Heritage Farm

Birmingham-area CPAs Michael Williams and Chris Williams share stories from the farm from time to time as they assist TAB Media Group with its business and accounting operations.

Intrigued by descriptions of the rows of flowers and plants, massive vegetable gardens and the carnival train, TAB Media staff have hinted at visiting the farm for a few years.

So when staff members heard about the May 17 event honoring the family land as a Century & Heritage Farm by the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries, they knew this was the time.

Editor Jennifer Davis Rash and summer intern Taylor Mitchell joined more than 20 members of the Jones family at the Alabama Farmers Federation office in Jasper.

Dorman Grace, a member of FBC Jasper, moderated the meeting. Bob Plaster from the department of agriculture made the presentation. (TAB)

Right: A carnival train is available for children to enjoy while parents explore the grounds. **Below:** Direct descendants of the Jones family were on hand for the recognition May 17.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist
Farm owners Michael Williams (left) and Chris Williams are the great grandsons of Dudley and Leanna Jones, who purchased the farm in 1916. The Joneses' oldest son, Lester, ran the dairy along with his wife, Lillian, until 1960. The next generation ran operations until 1976.



Photo by Taylor Mitchell/The Alabama Baptist



Photo by Taylor Mitchell/The Alabama Baptist

To see a video about the Jones Family Farm, visit tabonline.org/Jones-Family-Farm.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist
Above: The original family home built in 1927 has been restored. **Below:** The farm first served as a dairy. The milk house built in 1955 and feed mill built in 1962 are still on the property.



Photo by Taylor Mitchell/The Alabama Baptist

The Alabama Baptist

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

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JENNIFER DAVIS RASH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Carrie Brown McWhorter
Content Editor

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INFINITE				ENOS
DOOM		ORA		NEMO
DEAN		NOD		TARO
OLLA		SPY		RIN

The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.

OPINION



RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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



jrash@thealabamabaptist.org



@RashionalThts

Processing a way forward amid crushing news, events

When the promotional advertisement you'll find on page 16 first ran in The Alabama Baptist a few weeks ago, those eyes staring back at us stopped me cold. If you had been with me, you would have noticed a bit of glistering around my own eyes.

I read about the children who attend Camp of Champions and how making positive, fun and healthy memories "can help heal the abuse, neglect and trauma" many have experienced in their past.

Glancing back at the ad now on the other side of a really horrific couple of weeks for our nation, it's even harder to fight back the tears.

My heart aches for so many who are cradling extreme depths of pain with what happened in Ulvade, Texas (see story, page 15) and Buffalo, New York (see story, page 6).

It's also been a little more than three months now since Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine, and the degree of human suffering there is beyond what I can comprehend.

And of course, all of us in Southern Baptist life are attempting to make sense of findings from the recent SATF investigation (see story, page 8).

More unnecessary pain and tortured lives at the hands of those who are supposed to be our shepherds and protectors.

How can all this be happening at all, much less compounding on top of each other?

Many have expressed deep anger, disappointment, sorrow and embarrassment over what has taken place in some of our churches and other areas of ministry as well as among the leadership ranks of the SBC.

Questions are swirling among pastors about how to lead their congregations through the reality of the situation — what to say, how much to say and when to do what.

Several pastors and other ministry leaders are sharing through letters, blog posts and articles (see pages 4 and 5 for a sampling).

Stay informed

We are working to help connect you to as many of our Alabama Baptist voices as possible so you can continue reading and reflecting in the days ahead.

We urge you to prayerfully and thoughtfully navigate the situation and assess your words, comments and actions carefully so as not to add more pain and confusion.

As you process, grieve and lament, also hold tightly to the hope we know exists amid all the unimaginable, unspeakable events taking place around us — and coming at us daily.

Like what you'll read about in the front page story, God is working through His people and in His strength we are finding our way through it.

What's always inspiring to me is to watch how believers strongly in tune with our Savior immediately run toward the crisis and seek to comfort the hurting, tend to the wounded and share the love of Christ amid what might seem hopeless to a watching world.

No amount of darkness can snuff out the Light we have in us, and the gospel truly is the ultimate answer.

At the same time, the heaviness of the difficulties around us, especially as they compound on top of one another, are harder to carry alone. We need each other and are better together.

What are ways you can help someone who is hurting today?

How are you seeking the Lord's guidance on how to address the ugliness of this world?

Which Scripture comes to mind as we attempt to hold strong against the storms?

Scriptural promises

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will heal their land." —2 Chronicles 7:14.

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." —Romans 12:21

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." —Psalm 34:18

"Blessed are those who mourned, for they will be comforted." —Matthew 5:4

What questions do you have? How can we help?

As we all work through the report from Guidepost Solutions and learn more about the recommendations coming from the Sexual Abuse Task Force, let us know how we can best assist

you in understanding all that is taking place.

We are providing continued coverage at tabonline.org/satf and will share updates in print as well. —JDR

Your Voice



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

Alabama leaders 'saddened,' 'grief-stricken'

Alabama Baptist leaders issued a joint statement May 23 in response to the Guidepost Solutions report released by the Southern Baptist Convention Sexual Abuse Task Force on May 22.

The statement reads as follows:

"We are saddened and grief-stricken concerning the reports of cases of sexual abuse and how they were handled. This is a time of deep lament and sorrow. Most of all, this needs to be a time of prayer.

"We join many others in praying for the survivors of sexual abuse. No one should ever have to experience this kind of deep betrayal and violation.

"For years now, Alabama Bap-

tists have forged a partnership with MinistrySafe to train pastors and church leaders so that churches can be safe places.

"On Friday, May 20, State Board of Missions trustees voted to add \$200,000 to enhance that offer of training for our family of churches as we continue this ministry effort.

"In addition, the State Board of Missions website has for many years made resources available to help churches and leaders prevent, deal with and protect others from sexual abuse.

"We urge our Alabama Baptist family to continue to pray God's blessing and healing for the survivors, and we are also praying for current leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention."

Signed by:

► Buddy Champion, president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, chair of the Alabama Baptist Executive Committee, and pastor of First Baptist Church Trussville

► Greg Corbin, chair of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church in Birmingham

► Craig Carlisle, chair of the Sexual Abuse Task Force of the Alabama Baptist State Convention and director of missions of Etowah Baptist Association (Gadsden area)

► Melissa Bowen, vice chair of the Sexual Abuse Task Force and retired attorney, Prattville

► Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

... My heart breaks for the victims of these horrible atrocities both those in the report [and] the many that have yet to even speak up. I am committed to pray for each of you and your families. I'm sorry isn't even sufficient. ...

Southern Baptists must now decide that we are willing to put in the work to begin the long road of trying to regain the trust of those who have understandably lost faith in our convention. I am willing. God help us all to repent and return to the Lord and to start a new path forward of choosing to do right every chance we get.

Pastor Brad Williams
First Baptist Church
Hazel Green

From the Twitterverse

@jdanielatkins

It's completely possible to hold to both autonomy AND accountability.

@joeyhanner

God, continue to reveal the sin that so easily entangles. Bring to the light what has been done in the dark, break our hearts for the broken-hearted and heal the innocent as you restore and renew. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

@DrKBlackwell

Now isn't the time for passing blame, explanations, platitudes and disingenuous placating. It is time we as Southern Baptists grieve, pray, soul search and sit in the ashes. It is our worst moment ... it can be our greatest moment.

@kevinwilburn

There is no problem, there is no sin, there is no challenge, there is

not anything beyond the ability of God to take our worst and redeem it and use for His glory.

@johnthweatt

Last night the report disgusted me ... it angered me ... it made me simply ashamed of our convention leadership. This morning I came to the office ... ready to study, ready to preach and once again recommitting myself to accountability, holiness and purity.

Protecting people from all forms of abuse is of utmost priority. May God bring comfort to all victims of abuse and bestow justice upon those who abuse or harbor abusers.

Chris Crain
Executive director
Birmingham Metro
Baptist Association

No more cover-up. No more turning a blind eye. Let action begin to "clean house" in our denomination.

Pastor Alan Floyd
Cottage Hill Baptist
Church in Mobile

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“Worship and lament aren’t mutually exclusive.”

TARA-LEIGH COBBLE

The Bible Recap podcast, Day 138

The appalling findings exposed by the report are heartbreaking. Yet what would be infinitely more horrific is failure to enact strategic initiatives that eradicate sexual abuse within Southern Baptist churches and systems. In the days and weeks and months ahead, may the Father give us all strength and courage and resolve to do what is right.

Sandy Wisdom-Martin
Executive director, National Woman’s Missionary Union

There are not adequate words to express my sorrow at the things revealed in this report. I am grieved to my core for those who have suffered sexual abuse in Southern Baptist contexts, both for those named in this report and the many who are not. I thank God for the courage and persistence of the survivors and advocates who brought the Southern Baptist Convention to this moment. Amid my grief, anger and disappointment over the grave sin and failures this report lays bare, I earnestly believe that Southern Baptists must resolve to change our culture

and implement desperately needed reforms. The time is now. We have so much to lament, but genuine grief requires a godly response. I pray Southern Baptists will begin preparing today to take deliberate action to address these failures and chart a new course when we meet together in Anaheim.

SBC President Ed Litton

I took my daughter to school most every day K–5 and never once thought about her possibly being shot while at school. My wife and I have served churches for 35 years, and I never once thought about a fellow pastor abusing her. I hate those thoughts have to be in our minds today.

Craig Carlisle
Director of Missions
Etowah Baptist Association

Once again, I start a post with these words: I am heartbroken. The tragedy in Uvalde, Texas, is heart-wrenching and mind-blowing. The majority of people in this world cannot conceive the mentality that

would cause a young man to walk into a school and begin shooting innocent children. The horror. The evil. The pain. Tragedy after tragedy. Our country has been hit by so many evils. Our only hope is not in politicians or legislation. Our only hope is the Healer. Our only hope is to turn to the Father and beg Him, in an attitude of godly sorrow that leads to repentance, to change our hearts so that He can then use us to change our culture. The answer is in His people acting like His people, living like His people, and talking like His people. Love one another — that’s what He says. ... Pray that He will give us the strength to do what He requires.

Pastor Ben Hayes
First Baptist Church Dadeville

Pray with us for the victims and their families, the children and teachers who have faced unimaginable trauma, the community of Uvalde and for Southern Baptists as they respond to urgent needs in the coming days. #PrayersForUvalde

Send Relief

Dear Church Family,

Early Monday morning (May 23), I read [about the Guidepost Solutions report] concerning the handling of abuse by the Southern Baptist Convention.

Monday afternoon, I printed the entire report (tabonline.org/satf-report) and managed to wade through the first 50 pages of the 288-page report and to review the other pages.

What I have read angers me, nauseates me and frustrates me beyond my ability to communicate. I can honestly say I had no idea, but this is wrong (Matt. 18:6). This cannot be tolerated.

In the days ahead, we need as a convention to implement care for these victims, encourage prosecution where applicable, remove

anyone connected to any abuse or cover-up and overhaul accountability structures. Page 14 of the report offers eight key recommendations. (See sidebar, this page).

As churches we must do background checks for staff and leaders, and heaven help us if we don’t listen to and hear those who have been abused and take appropriate steps to remove offenders and to protect the flock.

I do not have a massive following on Facebook or Instagram. I don’t even have a Twitter account. I have been your pastor for almost 19 years and have been a shepherd for over 40 years.

You are a loving, compassionate, missions-minded congregation that is and has been generous in missions and Cooperative Program giv-

ing. While I will never be president of the convention, I am, as pastor of this generous, missions-minded congregation, calling for immediate and ongoing action in the [SBC]. We are now aware that wrong has been done.

Now it is time to do what is right. It is never the wrong time to do the right thing.

God has done some great work through the SBC, but to think that Jesus needs us or can only work through us is heresy.

For today, please remain calm and pray. In the days ahead, let’s watch what happens and make future decisions with clear, Spirit-led hearts.

Pastor Roland P. Brown
Golden Springs Baptist Church
Anniston

Guidepost suggestions being reviewed

► Form an Independent Commission and ... a permanent Administrative Entity to oversee comprehensive long-term reforms concerning sexual abuse and related misconduct within the SBC.

► Create and maintain an Offender Information System to alert the community to known offenders. Make it available to churches on a voluntary basis.

► Provide a comprehensive Resource Toolbox including protocols, training, education and practical information.

► Create a voluntary self-certification program for churches, associations, state conventions and entities based on “best practices” to bring awareness to, and enhance prevention of, sexual abuse.

► Improve governance controls, including the use of enhanced background checks, Letters of Good Standing and Codes of Conduct to voluntarily strengthen hiring standards and improve governance.

► Restrict the use of non-disclosure agreements and civil settlements ... unless requested by the survivor.

► Adopt a “Declaration of Principles” setting out fundamental standards regarding how sexual abuse allegations will be handled at every level of the SBC and how those who report will be treated going forward.

► Acknowledge those who have been affected by SBC clergy sexual abuse, through both a sincere apology and a tangible gesture, and prioritize the provision of compassionate care to survivors through providing dedicated survivor advocacy support and a survivor compensation fund.

From page 14 of the Guidepost report. The Sexual Abuse Task Force will work with these recommendations to determine what to present to messengers.

(Read the full report at tabonline.org/satf-report.)

3 stories you should know



Photo by Baptist Press

Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee Interim President and CEO Willie McLaurin traveled to Buffalo, New York, recently to support the community in the wake of the murder of 10 African Americans in a racially motivated supermarket mass shooting. McLaurin met with area pastors and leaders and visited the memorial outside Tops Supermarket honoring those murdered. Read the full story at tabonline.org/support-buffalo. (BP)

Josh Duggar sentenced to 12 years in prison

Former reality TV star Josh Duggar, 34, was sentenced to more than 12 years in federal prison May 25 after his request for a retrial or acquittal of two child pornography convictions was denied.

Duggar was accused of having hundreds of child pornography images of children “ranging from about 18 months of age to 12 years of age” on his devices.

He pleaded not guilty to the charges but in December was convicted in an Arkansas federal court on one count of receiving child pornography and one count of possessing child pornography.

Josh Duggar is the eldest child of Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar, whose ultraconservative family was featured on the reality TV shows “19 Kids & Counting” and “Counting On.” (The Alabama Baptist)

McLean Bible Church looks to resolve conflict

Leaders of McLean Bible Church, a Washington, D.C.-area congregation led by former International Mission Board president David Platt, hope to end an ongoing conflict by redoing a contested church election.

That election is the subject of a lawsuit pending in Virginia state court. Several current and former members claim McLean Bible Church leaders failed to follow the church’s constitution during an election for church elders in July 2021.

Church leaders have fought the lawsuit in court. They hope to render the suit moot, “biblically and peacefully” in Platt’s words, by holding a secret ballot election overseen by a neutral observer.

An issue yet to be resolved is which members can vote in the new election. (RNS)

Professor, theologian urges advocacy for persecuted Christians

Zamani Kafang of Nigeria said he’s the product of American Christians who shared Christ with his nation and brought him to America.

He now needs assistance once again.

“I personally know 20 pastors who have been killed, and 2,000 churches have been destroyed in my country in the past 10 years,” Kafang explained. “We need America — the champion of freedom — to pressure our government to help.”

Raising awareness

Kafang and members of the International Committee on Nigeria, based in Falls Church, Virginia, spoke May 22 at the Church at Shelby Crossings in Calera.

He is in the U.S. until October working with ICON to raise awareness of the plight of Nigerian Christians. His son, A. Jay Kafang, is a member of Shelby Crossings.

The elder Kafang was educated at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, earning master of arts, master of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees.

He teaches Old Testament and Hebrew at Kaduna State University in Kaduna, Nigeria.

Kafang said Islam was introduced to Africa in the 11th century, but what he called “jihad” began in 1804 and accelerated after Nigerian independence was declared in 1960.

“My country is roughly divided 50–50,” he

noted. “Half the nation is Islamic and half is Christian. But Christians face persecution in employment, admissions and promotions, and sometimes the enemy kills believers and destroys entire villages.”

Kafang said of the 54 nations in Africa, Nigeria is the most populous with some 200 million people in a space the size of Texas. He called Nigeria the world’s largest “killing ground.”

“More people have been killed in Nigeria than in Ukraine,” Kafang said. “Some 350,000 Christians have been killed since 2009.”

The “enemy” includes Boko Haram, Fulani militants and the Islamic State’s West Africa Province, or ISWAP, Kafang noted, though he commonly refers to persecutors as radicalized Muslims or terrorists.

“We need your voice since ours is so small,” Kafang said.

For more information visit iconhelp.org. Stephen Enada, ICON president and co-founder, can be reached at Stephen.Enada@iconhelp.org. (Michael J. Brooks)



Photo by Michael Brooks/The Alabama Baptist

Zamani Kafang speaks May 22 at the Church at Shelby Crossings in Calera about persecution of Christians in his country of Nigeria.

Alabama news

AUTAUGA ASSOCIATION

► **Calvary Baptist Church, Prattville**, will host a one-day Vacation Bible School June 4, 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. The theme is “Joseph’s Journey to Egypt.” It is free and open to Preschool–K and Grades 1–6.

► **Glynwood Baptist Church, Prattville**, held a retirement reception for **Gregg Platt**

(seated) on April 24. They celebrated 32 years of his service to the church in various part-time and full-time positions involving education, the last 17 as minister of



Photo courtesy of Gregg Platt

education and outreach. Former Pastor Howard L. “Chip” Smith was the keynote speaker at the reception. Platt holds a bachelor’s degree (1977) from Auburn University at Montgomery and a master of divinity degree (1980) from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Deborah, have two children and one grandchild.

CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

► **Goodwater Baptist Church** celebrated its first Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast on May 5. The church worked with the city government and the Goodwater Ministerial Association to host the event in conjunction with National Day of Prayer. The church provided a



Photo courtesy of Ed Frantz

continental breakfast with a program starting at 7:30 a.m. The Central High School honor guard and the Hatchett Springs Worship Center’s praise and worship team participated.

CHILTON ASSOCIATION

► **Corinth Missionary Baptist Church, Verbena**, celebrated its 150th anniversary May 15.

William Key, former Corinth pastor and current pastor at Collins Chapel Baptist Church, Jemison, was the guest speaker.

Members shared testimonies of their memories and how the church has met needs in the community. They listened to an audio recording of Lawrence Eugene Jones (now deceased) in which he talked about the history of the church. Special music was provided by members Rodney Nance and Kim Bowen and guest pianist Wendy Pierce. Kay Tippet, music



Photo courtesy of Pat Musselwhite

director, led the congregational singing. Plaques were presented to Pastor Bert Tippet (left) and Deacon Jonathan Bowen (right) by Pat Musselwhite of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and Tyler Eiland, director of missions for Chilton Baptist Association.

“The celebration inspired us to see that even though we are a small congregation, we can continue and go forward,” said Pastor Bert Tippet. Lunch was served in the fellowship hall following the service.

COFFEE ASSOCIATION

► **County Line Baptist Church, Enterprise**, will host a one-day Vacation Bible School June 11, 12:30 until 5:30 p.m. The theme is “Yo Ho Holy! A Pirate’s Guide to Jesus” and is for children ages 4 through completed sixth grade.

COOSA RIVER ASSOCIATION

► **Tony Hickman** is the new pastor of **Dry Valley Baptist Church, Lincoln**.

ELMORE ASSOCIATION

► **Crossroads Community Church, Elmore**, celebrated **Jane Barrett’s** 40 years of ministry May 8. Barrett recently announced her December 2022 retirement as executive minister.

“She has served in every area of leadership and servanthood in this church that she is biblically qualified for,” said Robert Mullins, pastor.

She has taught and trained administrative assistants all over the country for Lifeway, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and other organizations. She has held leadership positions with SBOM, Southern Baptist Convention, Baptist Association of Christian Educators and other entities and organizations.

This year she was awarded the distinguished leader award from Disciple Leaders Network.

“Jane has blessed our church in a million different ways, and we are forever grateful for her and her ministry,” Mullins said.



BARRETT

GENEVA ASSOCIATION

► **Geneva Baptist Association** on April 24 recognized **Dicky McAllister** (left) for his 39 years as director of missions.

McAllister served from 1981 until 2020 providing leadership and support to the more than 30 Southern Baptist churches in the association. He



Photo courtesy of Timothy K. Bedsole Sr.

led in the establishment of the Geneva Churches Mission Store to provide benevolence to the community as well as for missions trips and migrant Vacation Bible School efforts.

Danny Branch (right), association moderator and pastor of First Baptist Church Samson, presented a plaque to McAllister. The State Board of Missions’ Kristy Kennedy also presented him with a certificate of appreciation.

MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATION

► **Stephen Folker** is the new pastor of worship and music ministry of **Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery**. He holds a bachelor’s degree in church music from Truett-McConnell College, Cleveland, Georgia, and a master of divinity in missiology from Southeastern Seminary.

He previously was a worship and missions pastor in Georgia and North Carolina and church planter in the Czech Republic with the International Mission Board.

He and his wife, Jennifer, have three children.

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

► **Greg Sellers** is the new pastor of First Baptist Church Bratt in Century, Florida. He previously served as pastor of **Wilton Baptist Church, Montevallo**, for more than 12 years.



SELLERS

SOUTHEAST ASSOCIATION

► **Tommy Green** is the new pastor of **Bay Springs Baptist Church, Dothan**. He previously served as pastor of Whitewater Baptist Church, Elba. A graduate of the Baptist College of Florida, he has been in ministry for 48 years serving churches in Alabama, Georgia and Florida. He is married to Margaret and has one daughter.

OTHER

► The **University of Mobile** welcomed three alumni to its board of trustees during its spring meeting: immediate past president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention **Tim Cox** (class of 1988), pastor of Liberty Baptist Church in Chelsea; Alabama Power Company project manager **Ron Moore** (class of 2003); and **Paul Carter** (class of 1982), president and owner of the Paul Carter Agency of Mobile. See full story at tabonline.org/um-trustees.

Task force report prompts grief, apology, action

Southern Baptists responded with grief — and in many cases shock — following the May 22 release of the Sexual Abuse Task Force report. Among immediate actions resulting from the report is a list of hundreds of accused sex abusers, including 33 from Alabama, being made public.

The report is the culmination of an eight-month investigation into allegations the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee mishandled reports of sexual abuse within the denomination.

Guidepost Solutions, the third-party group hired for the investigation, conducted extensive research and interviewed current and former staff members of the EC as well as current and former EC trustees, survivors and others. The investigation covered a 21-year time frame (Jan. 1, 2000, to June 14, 2021).

Messengers to the 2021 SBC Annual Meeting in Nashville called for the investigation after numerous allegations claimed SBC leaders had not only protected abusive ministers, missionaries, seminary professors and others, but also had engaged in behaviors to intimidate, shame or otherwise silence survivors.

The findings in the 288 pages of unedited, unredacted information (as well as another 179 pages of appendices) not only reportedly confirm suspicions in several cases but also reveal how longtime pastor Johnny Hunt is accused of sexually assaulting a woman soon after his SBC presidential tenure ended in 2010.

Hunt disagrees with the report's characterization of the events that took place. "I have never abused anybody," he said in a May 22 tweet.

Reactions to Hunt

Still, the response to the news about Hunt, who until May 13 had served as senior vice president of evangelism and leadership at the North American Mission Board, has been swift.

On May 25, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary announced in a letter to students its immediate efforts to remove Hunt's name "from any association with programs, facilities and other items" connected with the seminary.

Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Seminary, also noted in the letter his intentions to present a rec-



Photo by Van Payne/The Alabama Baptist
Julie Myers Wood of Guidepost Solutions and North Carolina pastor Bruce Frank, chair of the Sexual Abuse Task Force, work together to answer questions from EC members during a September 2021 meeting in Nashville.

ommendation to seminary trustees in the fall to have Patterson Hall, which is named after former SEBTS president Paige Patterson, renamed.

In the Guidepost report, Patterson was accused of mishandling reports of sexual abuse during his time as SBC president and as president at SEBTS and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Leaders, boards respond

Across the SBC landscape, executives and boards of trustees held emergency meetings and discussions about how to appropriately respond.

Many were released publicly, such as the statements and updates to policies by NAMB and the EC.

Expressions of lament poured out for days from leaders across the denomination, including state convention executive directors, associational leaders, pastors and national entity heads (see Alabama Baptist leaders' response on page 4).

Willie McLaurin, interim president and CEO for the SBC EC, and Rolland Slade, chair of the EC trustees, shared in a joint statement:

"To the members of the survivor community, we are grieved by the findings of this investigation. We are committed to doing all we can to prevent future instances of sexual abuse in churches, to improve our response and our care, to remove reporting roadblocks and to respond to the will of the messengers in Anaheim," they said.

The task force also noted grief for what was revealed in the report.

"We lament on behalf of survivors for how they have not been protected and cared for as they deserve and as God demands.

"With broken hearts, we want to lead the way by publicly repenting for what has happened in our convention," the task force members said in a joint statement. "We implore our Southern Baptist family to respond to this report with deep repentance and a commitment to the ongoing moral demands of the gospel as it relates to sexual abuse."

During a special-called May 24 meeting (which was livestreamed and open to the public), EC trustees adopted a statement expressing repentance for its past actions related to survivors and for comments made by EC staff members in an attempt to silence abuse survivors.

Abuser list made public

The EC also announced at that meeting the list of abusive ministers maintained by EC staff members for years would be released. It was made public May 26.

According to the report, the list began in 2007 and was compiled by a staffer for former EC vice president and legal counsel D. August Boto from emails sent by former EC vice president Roger "Sing" Oldham.

The list, with redactions of names and information not yet verified, includes the name of the minister, year

the abuse was reported, state and denomination of the minister and relevant news articles. The files were never shared with EC trustees.

Of the more than 700 names, nine people remain in active ministry, and two appear to be associated with an SBC church, the report said.

McLaurin and Slade shared with the May 26 release of the list:

"[There will be more exhaustive research and analysis of the redacted entries, and we anticipate that some of the redacted entries will be fully released in the future.]"

Additionally, the EC announced May 25 the availability of an SBC Sexual Abuse Hotline for reports of sexual abuse within the convention.

Those needing to make a report can contact the hotline at 202-864-5578 or email SBChotline@guidepostsolutions.com.

All reports will remain confidential, the EC said.

As far as what comes next, survivors and countless ministry leaders asked Southern Baptists to read the report thoughtfully and prayerfully and to work together toward the best next steps.

Questions surface

Some leaders added a note of caution regarding the temptation to respond to the pain, disappointment and embarrassment of the findings emotionally and too quickly without thorough vetting of decisions.

And, at press time, several leaders and media outlets were calling for access to the full archive of evidence and information compiled by Guidepost for accountability regarding what details were not shared in the report. However, it isn't clear how realistic that request might be based on the volume of content and how confidentiality plays into the situation. The EC waived its attorney-client privilege, but that decision pertains only to the EC.

At least two individuals in addition to Hunt called out by name in the findings have come forward to express concern over the interpretation of various aspects of their involvement in activities researched.

The Alabama Baptist will continue following this developing story. To read more detailed coverage, follow the Sexual Abuse Task Force report articles archived at tabonline.org/satf. (The Alabama Baptist)



Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist

Women sign in at the “Ministering to Individuals Who’ve Experienced Abuse” workshop hosted by Beeson Divinity School.

Coping & healing

Ministering to abuse survivors requires careful, thoughtful approaches

By Tracy Riggs
The Alabama Baptist

With the issue of sexual abuse in the headlines, the Center for Women in Ministry at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham recently hosted a workshop on the topic.

Rebecca Henderson was the featured speaker at the “Ministering to Individuals Who’ve Experienced Abuse” event.

A Samford University graduate, licensed clinical social worker and rape response coordinator for the Birmingham Crisis Center, Henderson told the audience, “Whether or not we know it, there are survivors of abuse in your life. You may even be a survivor yourself who’s healing and wanting to offer healing to others.”

Never assume

Henderson focused on common, though wrong, assumptions about survivors of various kinds of abuse, their responses and how best to minister to them.

Abuse is basically the misuse of power over individuals or groups. It may involve physical, mental, emotional, economic/financial, spiritual or sexual abuse, or any combination of these, she said, explaining the impact of various types of trauma before offering practical advice for helping abuse survivors.

“Start with seeking to understand before any advice comes out of your mouth,” Henderson urged.

“When in doubt, don’t give advice is my advice.”

Be careful when responding to disclosures of abuse, she said, and avoid trite spiritual sayings like, “God won’t give you more than you can handle” or the word “why,” which can be taken as accusatory.

When wondering what to say, Henderson encouraged using phrases like:

“I believe you.”

“Thank you for trusting me with this.”

“This is not your fault.”

“I will do my best to keep you safe.”

“I’m sorry this happened.”

She also urged directing the abuse survivor to a crisis center, trained therapist or others with appropriate knowledge.

“Talking about abuse is helpful, but due to the way trauma impacts our brains and bodies, it can be especially helpful to seek out care that integrates the entire person and find trauma-informed and trained therapists,” she noted.

Immediately after a traumatic event a person may experience

shock or denial, and it is important to give them choice and control and not assume what they need or what is best.

Following up

Follow-up must be a priority, Henderson declared. After the acute phase, abuse survivors often push down their feelings and move on. Over time it can become increasingly difficult to do so.

Coping and healing happen within personal abilities and timelines, Henderson noted. Anniversaries and triggering events can bring back what was thought to be healed, so it’s important to provide support and space.

As the person processes and integrates what has happened, often through therapy, “instead of this being [their] whole story, this becomes part of [their] story,” Henderson said.

One way to make a church a safe space for survivors is to talk about abuse in sermons, Sunday Schools or workshops, she noted. Another is to have a woman in leadership with whom abuse survivors feel comfortable discussing their experiences.

Other important ways to have a safe church are to avoid blaming the survivor and prevent cover-ups, she said.

“Research has shown that clergy have been able to recognize that something was rape yet they still put blame on the victim,” Henderson explained.

Finally, avoid judging those who need time away from church especially if that is where the abuse occurred.

“One article I like about creating a safe church said, ‘When someone gets hurt in a basketball game, they’re going to sit out in the basketball game so that they can come back.’”

“When someone has experienced abuse — spiritual, sexual, financial, etc. — in the church, they may take time to come back. But that time away can help them heal,” Henderson explained.

She reminded church leaders they can minister to survivors outside the physical church.

For more information on the Center for Women in Ministry at Beeson Divinity School, visit beesondivinity.com/women-in-ministry.

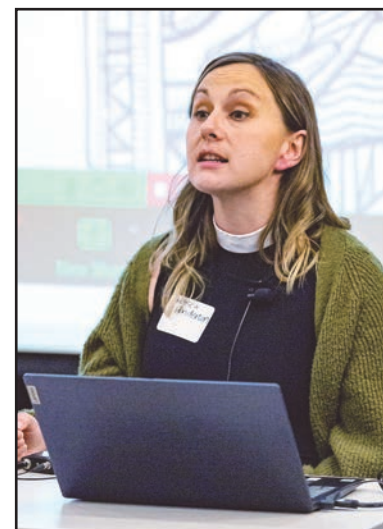


Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist
Rebecca Henderson leads a workshop on caring for abuse survivors at the Center for Women in Ministry.

“When someone has experienced abuse — spiritual, sexual, financial, etc. — in the church, they may take time to come back. But that time away can help them heal.”

Rebecca Henderson
licensed clinical social worker and rape response coordinator
Birmingham Crisis Center

Thank You

for your generous giving to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering during 2021. Because of your faithfulness, more than \$1.5 million was given – well above the \$1.2 million goal.

Here are just some of the ways your prayers and gifts have made a difference since last September's Week of Prayer for State Missions!



Alabama WMU

Since Spring 2020, when Alabama WMU hosted its first Great Commission Conversations, nearly 70 online gatherings have connected Alabama Baptists with missionaries around the world for a time of sharing, encouragement and prayer. In addition, monthly online Ministers Wives Connections have continued, as well as in-person gatherings providing much-needed support and inspiration for all involved.

Your gifts last year also prepared the way for a busy year of leadership training opportunities including the development of missions discipleship among Hispanic congregations and a full summer of Missions Adventure Camps at WorldSong Missions Place in Cook Springs. Candace McIntosh, Alabama WMU's executive director, said "We are beyond grateful for the prayers of Alabama Baptists and their gifts to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering that allow us to champion the cause of missions."



Disaster Relief

Your gifts to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering allow Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers to be ready to respond to needs not only in our state but across the nation and around the world. This included sending a six-member team to Romania in April to minister to refugees displaced by the war in Ukraine as well as a team of volunteer chaplains who served in western Kentucky last December following an outbreak of tornadoes that killed 77 people.

Your offering gifts are also directly funding construction of a new heavy equipment storage facility in Prattville, adjacent to the Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief Center. That heavy equipment is a vital part of disaster relief ministry. Mark Wakefield, state disaster relief strategist, noted, "Volunteers are able to do the work more quickly and move on to the next job and take care of more people that way."



Church Planting

Last year, you prayed for Church at the Oaks, a collegiate church plant in Tuscaloosa, and Pastor Britton Latham. Since then, Britton reports that they have celebrated numerous salvations and baptisms over the past year. New families have joined the church, they have an ever-increasing impact on campus at the University of Alabama, and community groups and discipleship groups have multiplied greatly. In addition, more than 20 students are serving with the IMB or NAMB this summer.

Britton said, "We are so thankful to have brothers and sisters across our state praying for us this past year! God continues to move powerfully in Tuscaloosa through the prayers of His people. We are grateful to be counted among such a community of faithful churches."



Partnership Missions

You might recall the story from last year of retired state missionary Jamie Baldwin, who spent six months in Craig, Alaska, partnering with Liberty Baptist Church and Pastor Cody Schwegel on a relaunch of the church on July 4. Mission teams from Alabama assisted in construction projects, Vacation Bible Schools, block parties and community outreach. Last year, crews were able to finish out the church entrance, education space, a kitchen and restrooms.

Now, in 2022, Jamie is back in Craig for two more months, with the goal of seeing the sanctuary space completed so it can be dedicated and occupied by July 4 – the one-year anniversary of the relaunch. A year ago, six people were members of the church. Just a few Sundays ago, 82 people were in attendance. Jamie said, "If it were not for God's people praying and giving, I know there's no way this type of work could have been done. Thank you, Alabama Baptists!"



Church Revitalization

The Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering is enabling the SBOM's Office of Church Health to impact hundreds of churches in the revitalization process. State Missionary Rob Jackson reports that there have been positive responses to revitalization strategies such as *Ministry Moments* (a weekly email to pastors and church leaders); *Healthy Home, Healthy Church* (which promotes church health beginning in the home); *Reaching the Summit* (helping churches avoid and reverse decline); and *Empower* (leading the church to a position of health).

Rob said, "Thank you for your sacrificial giving, enabling us to travel the state representing you. Moreover, thank you for the prayer support. I am convinced that we are witnessing many churches turn the corner in revitalization because you are praying and giving!"



Myers-Mallory.org



Alabama Baptist
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

Mark your calendar now for the 2022 Week of Prayer September 11-18, and watch for your promotional packet and additional resources in July. Remember, your gifts and prayers are having a huge impact on people across Alabama and beyond!

A great need

Alabama Baptist ministering to Ukrainian refugees reminded God 'is not silent'

(continued from page 1)

eat dinner before driving back to the hotel. Sebastian and his friend Adam are representative of most of the Polish people.

Neither speaks Ukrainian, and neither knew any Ukrainians before the war began, yet they are heavily involved in the war effort. They drive supplies to the front line to re-supply the Ukrainian military. They work to establish warehouses in Poland to collect supplies and move

them to those fighting the Russian army.

These two young men decided to act because there is a great need.

Willing to help

Many other Polish people also jumped in to help. May 3 is Poland's Constitution Day, like Independence Day in the U.S. There are Polish and Ukrainian flags bound together everywhere in Warsaw and Krakow.

The government opened its borders without restriction, made public buses and trains free for the people of Ukraine and is simplifying the process of legalization. Polish families opened their homes, created jobs and put their lives on hold to serve these people. Why? Because they remember.

The Ukrainian families we met, mostly women, children and the elderly, were gracious and appreciative though some expressed despair.

Many did not know what to do or where to go.

On the first day, we met Sasha who was by himself in the train station. Brad, a member of our team, speaks Russian and went to speak to him. Sasha is 15 years old and knew he could not go home for fear he would be killed. He heard the gospel that day and is now a believer.



Photo courtesy of Ralph Stevens

A girl from the train station receives a Send Relief backpack.



Photo by Ralph Stevens

Missions team members walk through the NGO tent city at the border crossing at Medyka, Poland. The city is right on the border with Ukraine, and refugees continue to pour into the area.



Photo by Ralph Stevens

A missions team member (in the orange vest) plays the game Jenga with refugee children in Medyka, Poland. Children left their friends, neighborhoods and schools on a moment's notice and had no chance to say their goodbyes.

Illya is 12 years old, an aspiring soccer player. His mom, brother and sister are at the refugee center in Warsaw. He has an older brother in Turkey who is a professional basketball player. Illya's family hope to emigrate to Berlin soon to start fresh.

We also met a young girl about 17 years old. She was there with her 12-year-old brother in the train station in Krakow waiting for a train.

She does not know where her parents are. She fled the country with her brother and is now taking care of him as she seeks work.

At times during this trip I was overwhelmed by what seemed like God's silence, but I was reminded He is not silent at all.

He is moving and speaking through His people as they share the love of Christ. If we do and say nothing, how will He be heard?

How will He be felt? Are we not the hands and feet, the body of Christ?

God's people must respond. What will we do with the treasure we have been given? In God's story, believers have a story like that of

the Polish people who remember the numbers. We know what it is to suffer and be given new life. What we do with it shows what we truly believe. Do we open the doors for those in need? Do we point them to hope? Are we meeting people at the front lines of their lives?

I am changed and amazed at the goodness of our God. He has raised up people from all over the world to help the Ukrainian refugees.

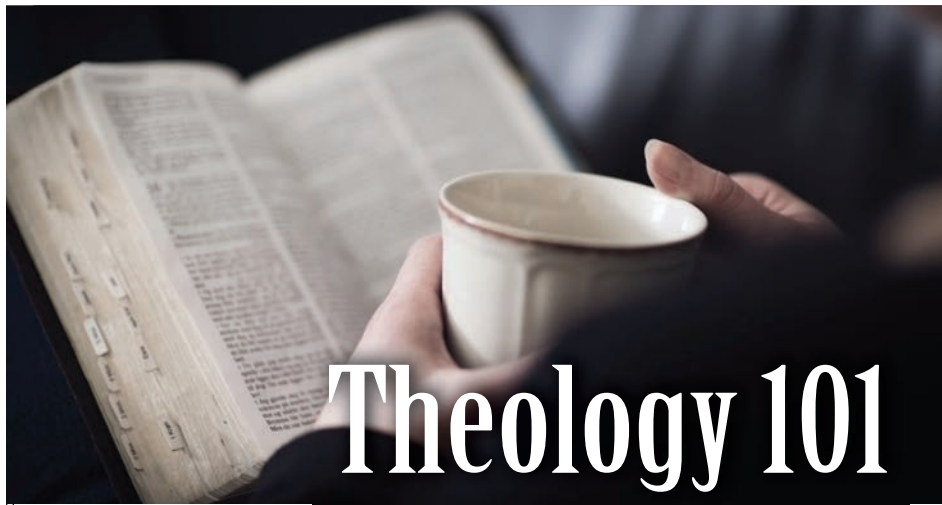
We saw people from all nations set up and ready, working side by side to serve the helpless.

However, it is our responsibility as believers to carry the good news that will change their eternity.



Photo by Ralph Stevens

Auschwitz, the largest Nazi concentration camp, is 43.3 miles from Medyka, Poland. It was liberated 77 years ago. Six million Jews were killed during the Holocaust.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Spiritual Blessings

The Incoming of Christ

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

Spiritual blessings are inseparably connected with Christ as declared in the opening paragraph of Ephesians: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing ... in Christ” (1:3).

This being true, it is imperative that each of us has a vital connection with Christ to be able to experience these blessings.

The Bible offers a variety of images about this spiritual connection. It is like being grafted as an alien branch into the True Vine (Rom. 11:17).

It is like being adopted into God’s family, becoming a legitimate child of God by being taken out of a dysfunctional spiritual family that belongs to its father, the devil, and placed into God’s forever family (Gal. 4:4–5).

It is like answering a knock on a door and opening it to admit Christ into our lives (Rev. 3:20).

‘Holy visitor’

Let’s think about this holy visitor who knocks on the door of human hearts. He is the eternal Son of God who became the incarnate Son of Man. Being found in fashion as a man, He then became the crucified Savior of the world.

Blessed be our God and Father! His only begotten Son did not stay dead. He arose on the third day and now reigns as the risen Sovereign of all.

This magnificent Savior seeks entry into human hearts. We often refer to the occasion of His

admission into our hearts as conversion. It is the beginning of the promised eternal life God bestows on those who repent and trust Him as Savior.

God has provided the Savior; we must respond to that provision. According to Revelation 3:20 two things are essential to that response: We must hear His voice, and we must open our hearts to Him.

Indispensable act

We can say several things about opening our hearts to the Savior. It is a definite act or a willful choice we make. It is a unique act we only do once in our lifetime because He will never leave or forsake us. It is an individual act no one can do for us. It is an indispensable act as there is no other way to become a Christian.

Many a child in Sunday School learned the little chorus:

“Into my heart, into my heart /
Come into my heart, Lord Jesus /
Come in today, come in to stay /
Come into my heart, Lord Jesus.”

None of us will ever pray a more important prayer than this simple one that launches the Christian life.

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.



Bethel Baptist in Snead infuses NOLA with love

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Dustin Taylor says there are some men on the streets of New Orleans who are known for talking about Jesus and saying unkind things from the same megaphone.

He’s not a big fan of that.

For more than two decades, Taylor has taken a group of men to the streets of New Orleans to help people know Jesus — and to know Him for His love.

“We stand around and watch when they preach and catch the overflow from that and start loving on people,” said Taylor,

pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in Snead. “Sin is still sin. We don’t water that down. But our approach is different.

“In Scripture, we see Jesus preaching hard at the ones who were supposed to be religious, and we see Him reclining at the table with sinners.”

That’s what Taylor and his teammates do when they’re there. They eat and talk with as many people as they can and try to show them who Jesus really is.

On an annual trip he calls part men’s retreat, part missions trip, the group spends the day in Bible study, prayer, conversation and preparation for the evening. Before dinner they ask God to send them to the restaurant He wants them to visit so they can talk to the server who needs to see the love of Jesus that night.

‘Unbelievable’ response

“We strike up a conversation with the waiter or waitress and ask how Mardi Gras season is going for them,” Taylor explained. “Then we tell them we are going to bless our food in a little while and will be praying for them, and we ask if they have any specific prayer requests.

“The response has been unbelievable. I could tell so many stories.”

One man said his wife had left

him recently and he had been living with his mother. Taylor told him they would pray for him and his wife to reconcile.

Offer to pray

“Before we left he came up and said, ‘You’re not getting this ticket until you pray for me again.’ He sat down and let us pray for him, and then he gets up and he’s crying. We’re all crying,” Taylor said.

That was the Thursday night before Fat Tuesday. On Sunday, when the group tried to go to another restaurant and couldn’t get in, they decided to go back and visit the waiter.

“As he was walking over to us one of the guys on our team said, ‘Something about his face looks different,’” Taylor remembered. “And the waiter said, ‘After y’all prayed for me, my wife contacted me. I’ve been sleeping in my own bed for the last two nights.’”

One night Taylor’s group set up a grill in Jackson Square and grilled 150 pounds of chicken, 135

pounds of sausage, bell peppers and onions.

“We fed everyone from the homeless to gutter punks, train kids to millionaires who owned houses in the French quarter,” Taylor said. “And when people asked why it was free, we told them about how salvation is a free gift.”

He noted the ministry began in 2001 when a friend asked if he wanted to go on a missions trip to New Orleans. He immediately said yes and asked if he could bring a friend. Now, 21 years later, while the team he joined and other teams have stopped going, the one from Bethel Baptist still sees the effort as a vital part of their church’s outreach.

“Everybody comes back so fired up,” Taylor said. “Our church has a saying — ‘Be the Love’ — and that’s what we want to be, both there and at home.”



Photo courtesy of Dustin Taylor
Missions team from Bethel Baptist Church in Snead grills at night in New Orleans’ Jackson Square.

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

Baptist pastor and evangelist died when Titanic sank

John Harper (1872–1912) was a Scottish Baptist pastor and evangelist who died when the RMS Titanic sank.

This year marks the 150th anniversary of his birth in the village of Houstoun in northern Scotland. He became a Christian at age 14 and started preaching at 18. As a young adult he was a manual laborer.

In 1897 Harper founded Paisley Road Baptist Church in Glasgow. The church quickly grew from 25

members to 500, and a new building was constructed to accommodate 900.

In 1910, Harper became pastor of Walworth Road Baptist Church in London. The next year the Moody Church in Chicago invited the evangelist to speak three weeks. He spent three months with the church.

In 1912 Harper was 39 and a widower with a 6-year-old daughter, Annie Jessie (Nana). He made arrangements for Nana and her aunt Jessie Leitch to

accompany him to America aboard the RMS Lusitania. He waited another week so they could sail on a ship named Titanic on April 10, 1912. While onboard Harper witnessed to many passengers.

On April 14 at 11:40 p.m. the Titanic hit an iceberg, and water began to fill the ship.

The captain ordered all women and children into lifeboats and several men to be rowers. Making sure his daughter and sister were on a lifeboat, Harper stayed

aboard the sinking ship shouting, “Women, children and the unsaved, get into lifeboats.”

Running along the decks, he pleaded with people to accept Christ. He preached until the ship tilted.

Harper jumped into the frigid water swimming to everyone he saw and begging them to turn to Jesus. He witnessed to a young man three times asking him to accept Christ.

As hypothermia set in, Harper disappeared under the water. The ship sank at 2:20 a.m. More than 1,500 drowned. Only six survivors were rescued by assisting ships.

Four years later a young Scotsman named Aguilla Webb gave his testimony in Hamilton, Canada. He said, “Shortly after he went down; and there, alone in the night ... I believed. I am John Harper’s last convert.”



HARPER

By Joanne Sloan

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

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Salem Springs Baptist Church of Elkmont is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resumé to: salemspringsbc@bellsouth.net.

PASTOR

Bluff Springs Baptist Church is searching for a full-time pastor. Search questions and resumé to: bsbc@graceba.net or mail to: Bluff Springs Baptist Church, 1990 Bluff Springs Road, Ashford, AL 36312.

PASTOR

Southside Baptist Church, Andalusia, Alabama, is now accepting resumé for the position of pastor. Anyone interested in this position please send resumé to: Southside Baptist Church, 1213 Western Bypass, Andalusia, AL 36420, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

New Beginnings Baptist Church, a small congregation in Hayden, Ala., is seeking a bivocational pastor. Send inquiries/resumé to: stamar171526@gmail.com or sonyahumber@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Mineral Springs Baptist Church, Pell City, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please submit resumé or questions to: msbc2295@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Paden Baptist Church, Gadsden, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please submit resumé to: padenbaptistchurch@yahoo.com or to: Paden Baptist Church, 900 Padenreich Ave., Gadsden, AL 35905.

OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

Southside Baptist Church, Andalusia, Ala., is seeking a part-time office administrator. Work hours are Monday–Friday with 25–30 hours per week. Applicants should have a minimum of 5 years experience supervising at least 8 people, 5 years office management experience, advanced computer skills. A bachelor degree in business, accounting or related field is preferred. Inquiries or resumé should be submitted to: Southside Baptist Church, 1213 Western Bypass, Andalusia, AL 36420, ATTN: Personnel Committee.

SEEKING

Fern Creek Baptist Church is seeking part-time and/or full-time ministerial staff in the following areas: music, youth, children or education. According to the applicant's gifts and skills, two of these areas could

be combined for a full-time position. Applicants must exemplify a growing relationship with God, spiritual maturity, responsible authority, fervent evangelism, sound theology and effective communication skills with all age groups. Applicants should have experience and education in ministry. Anyone seeking the music position must be an excellent musician, worship leader and educator. Send resumes to: Fern Creek Baptist Church, Attention: Personnel Committee, 5920 Bardstown Road, Louisville, KY 40291, or email to linda@ferncreekbaptist.org. Resumes will be received through June 15, 2022. Questions? Call 239-0316, ext. 103 (Linda Barnes Popham).

WORSHIP LEADER: Mount Hebron East Baptist Church, Eclectic, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a worship leader. Responsibilities include planning/leading congregational music weekly with PowerPoint presentation. Performing special music and directing choir on special occasions. Also participating in church functions. Please send resumé to: jwspeake@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH DIRECTOR

Southside Baptist Church, Andalusia, accepting resumé for position of bivocational youth director. Send resumé to: Southside Baptist Church, 1213 Western Bypass, Andalusia, AL 36420. ATTN: Youth Search Committee.

OTHER POSITIONS

IL BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOME AND FAMILY SERVICES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

IL Baptist Children's Home and Family Services (BCHFS) is looking for an executive director. See qualifications and standards at <http://www.bchfs.com/employment>. BCHFS is a Licensed Child Welfare Agency whose mission is to “Provide Christ-centered services that protect, heal and restore.” The agency has a rich history of providing care for children and families in crisis for over 100 years. BCHFS has an annual budget of \$3.9 million and provides care for children and adults through various programs including residential care, maternity care, adoption services, counseling services and a pregnancy resource clinic. To apply, send a letter of interest and resumé to: Eric Bramlet, Search Committee Chair,

ericbramlet@kogerbramletlaw.com.

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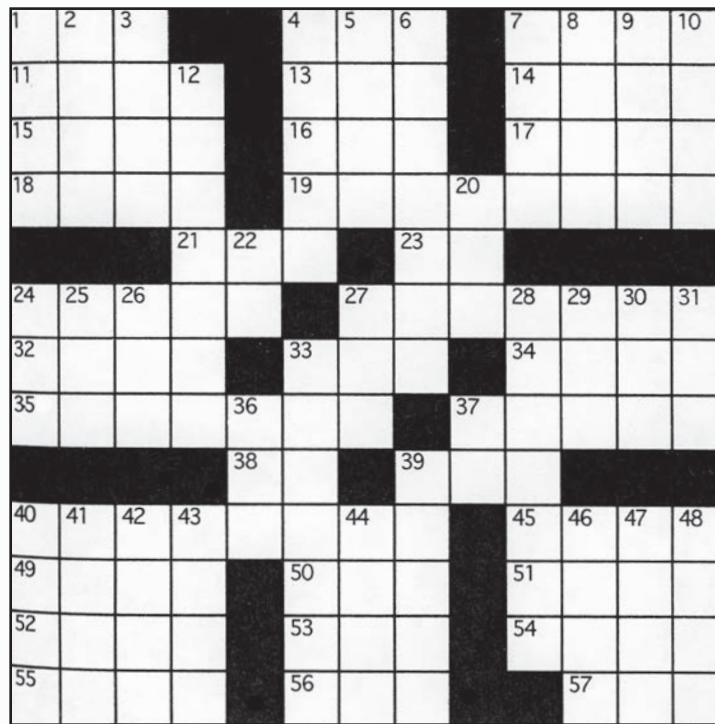
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CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

1. QEll milieu.
4. Noun case. (abbr.)
7. Hot ____.
11. Pull behind.
13. Gold. (Sp.)
14. Feminine pronoun. (Fr.)
15. Emanation.
16. Comparative suffix.
17. "He burned the bones of the king of Edom into ____." (Amos 2:1)
18. "Go, ____ an altar unto the Lord." (2 Sam. 24:18)
19. Another name for Jesus.
21. "We receive the ____ reward of our deeds." (Luke 23:41)
23. Preposition.
24. "Ye that labor and are heavy ____." (Matt. 11:28)
27. Registered.
32. ____-a-dale. (var.)
33. Scold.
34. Raised. (Fr., masc.)
35. The sun.
37. "Then the ____ taketh Him up into the holy city." (Matt. 4:5)
38. Pronoun.
39. "A ____ for a burnt offering." (Lev. 9:2)
40. "His understanding is ____." (Ps. 147:5)
45. Son of Seth.
49. Inescapable ruin.
50. Pray. (prefix)
51. Captain of the Nautilus.
52. ____ of students.
53. "Cain ... dwelt in the land of ____." (Gen. 4:16)
54. Edible root.
55. Cooking pot.
56. Caleb was one.
57. ____-Tin-Tin.



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DOWN

1. Sixth month of Jewish calendar.
2. "We know that Thou art ____." (Matt. 22:16)
3. Heroine of Dr. Zhivago.
4. "Let us make a joyful ____." (Ps. 95:1)
5. Classic cookie.
6. "Joy cometh in the ____." (Ps. 30:5)
7. "I can of Mine own ____ do nothing." (John 5:30)
8. "And they came to ____, where were twelve wells." (Ex. 15:27)
9. Feminine name.
10. High school student.
12. "I made me ____ and orchards." (Eccles. 2:5)
20. Can. prov.
22. Not. (prefix)
24. Boy.
25. In the manner of.
26. "So that ____ come upon you unawares." (Luke 21:34)
27. "Incline Thine ____ unto me." (Ps. 17:6)
28. Constituent.
29. The apocalypse. (abbr.)
30. A prince of Midian. (Josh. 13:21)
31. "The First State." (abbr.)
33. "By these were the ____ divided in the earth after the flood." (Gen. 10:32)
36. Jack Haley portrayed this man.
37. Lawyer for the state. (abbr.)
39. "Be ____ always to give an answer." (1 Pet. 3:15)
40. The seer against Jeroboam. (2 Chron. 9:29)
41. Christmas. (Fr.)
42. Young horse.
43. A son of Helem. (1 Chron. 7:35)
44. Cancer is one. (abbr.)
46. "My salvation is ____ to come." (Isa. 56:1)
47. He defeated Zimri. (1 Kings 16:12)
48. Not later.

Texas Baptists respond after Uvalde shooting

Texas Southern Baptists dispatched ministers to South Texas in the wake of an elementary school shooting May 24.

Nineteen children and two teachers were killed when an 18-year-old gunman entered Robb Elementary School in Uvalde and "began shooting anyone that was in his way," authorities said.

All the victims were in the same fourth-grade classroom at Robb Elementary, according to local officials.

Uvalde is a town of roughly 16,000 residents located about 85 miles west of San Antonio.

Marlene Astling, ministry assistant at First Baptist Church Uvalde, said "The prayers from God's family are deeply appreciated."

"Please just continue to pray for these families, the teachers and administrators that were at Robb, all the pastors and grief counselors."

How to pray

SBTC Associate Executive Director Tony Wolfe offered three ways to pray in the aftermath of the shooting:

► Pray that the God of all comfort will heal the broken-hearted and bind up their wounds. The tragedy is unspeakable. The pain is unbearable. God, have mercy.

► Pray for emotional and

physical endurance for first responders and crisis volunteers on the ground. May their hands be steady, their minds sharp and their hearts soft.

► Pray for heavenly wisdom among local, state and national policymakers. This tragedy should be unheard of; instead, it has become all too common. We must do better for our children. God, help us do better for our children.

Community impact

Texas Baptist Men also dispatched chaplains to Uvalde, the Texas Baptist Standard reported.

"We grieve what happened," Mickey Lenamon, TBM executive director/CEO, said. "This tragedy is impacting every member of the Uvalde community right now. Please pray for the city during this extremely difficult time."

The chaplains will help people share and work through their emotions in the wake of the shooting. They will be working alongside Uvalde church leaders throughout the city.

"Our chaplains will offer a shoulder to cry on, an ear to listen, an encouraging word and an offer of prayer," Lenamon said. "They serve as a reminder to the community that people care about them and God cares about them." (TAB Media)



Facebook photo/TAB Media graphic

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Alabama Baptist
CHILDREN'S HOMES
& Family Ministries

Cool Springs Baptist reaches thousands through VBS

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

The numbers didn't look quite right. Cool Springs Baptist Church in Enterprise, with a membership of 125 and an average of 20–25 in weekly attendance, had a Vacation Bible School enrollment of 5,363 in 2021.

Yes, 5,363 is correct because they offered VBS online.

Patty Burns, VBS strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said, "I recently had the privilege to talk with Nancy Jankoski from Cool Springs Baptist. When I heard that through her efforts more than 5,000 boys, girls, teens and adults were enrolled in VBS 2021, I knew I had to meet her."

"What an inspiring and encouraging story this

is," Burns said. "Through in-person Vacation Bible School events at this small church, plus virtual VBS lessons posted on social media pages, the love of Jesus and the gospel story were shared, not just in Coffee County but around the world."

"...the love of Jesus and the gospel story were shared, not just in Coffee County but around the world."

**Patty Burns
VBS strategist
Alabama Baptist State
Board of Missions**

Nancy used her talents, joined them with the talents of others and created a VBS event that impacted more lives than she probably ever imagined.

"I pray that other churches and VBS leaders will be inspired to think big, to reach far and to remember that with God all things are possible."

Catching attention

Cool Springs' VBS numbers also caught the attention of Lifeway Christian Resources representatives,



Photo courtesy of Cool Springs Baptist Church.
Joshua Gross, 9, assists Nancy Jankoski with a VBS session on animals of the Bible in summer 2021 at Cool Springs Baptist Church in Enterprise in Coffee County.

and they called Sandy Harman at the State Board of Missions to double-check.

"He said, 'I know this is wrong, so if you don't hear an answer back, I'll change it,'" said Harman, an SBOM ministry assistant who regularly inputs figures from Annual Church Profile reports from local congregations. "So I called Nancy, and she said, 'No, I know it seems like a lot, but that is correct.'"

In the world of Nancy

Jankoski, VBS director at Cool Springs, the numbers made perfect sense. They were something for which God had paved the way — starting with her job.

More free time

"Up until 2020 I was working as a director of religious education for Fort Rucker near our church," she said. "When the funding for that job got cut, I switched to another job on post and that freed me up to do more work at the church where my (late) husband was serving as a part-time pastor (at the time)."

It also gave her the opportunity to contact all the people she had known at Fort Rucker in the past. She let them know her department was being cut, but they could receive a per-

sonal newsletter she would send out regularly with Bible study resources.

The list grew and grew.

"Rucker is the kind of base where people may be there a few weeks or up to a year and a half and then they move on," Jankoski said. "Many go to areas that are very remote, or they may be out in the Pacific Northwest where it's difficult to find evangelical churches of any kind."

Continuing an internet presence through Cool Springs was easy.

John Boss, the church's pastor before Jankoski's husband, had set up podcasting equipment before the COVID-19 pandemic ever hit.

When the pandemic hit, it encouraged her to try another new thing — doing VBS online.

It met a bigger need than that of her immediate congregation. It gave her the opportunity to provide VBS for all the Fort Rucker families who got her newsletter.

That's how Cool Springs ended up with an enrollment of 5,363 in 2021.

Around the world

"We have a couple of people in the Middle East and other remote parts of the world. They're still participating by logging in to our Bible study sites or YouTube channel," Jankoski said.

She noted that while she had the benefit of being so close to a military post, every church has a missions field in its backyard.

"Whether a church is located near a military post or not, they can look for the missions, soup kitchens, women's shelters, all kinds of places that might be the hands and feet of Jesus carrying the gospel to folks, and then work alongside them to be out in the world," Jankoski said.

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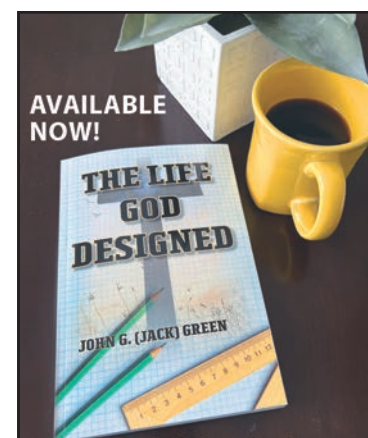
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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For June 5

Explore the Bible

By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Theology, University of Mobile



GRANTED 1 Kings 3:4-15

God offers (4-5)

Solomon's defining moment came in the context of worship at Gibeon. Solomon offered 1,000 burnt offerings to the Lord on the altar at Gibeon. This was not a private ceremony but a national act of worship (2 Chron. 1:2-3).

By any standard this was a staggering act of devotion. As king of Israel Solomon was demonstrating his love for the Lord.

In response to Solomon's worship and leadership, the Lord appeared to him in a dream with a stunning offer: "Ask. What should I give you?" This was no ordinary dream because the Lord and Solomon carried on a conversation.

This was a divine revelation. God's offer was a remarkable act of divine generosity. It also amounted to a reaffirmation of the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:8-16).

Solomon's act of worship led to the defining moment of his life. When we worship by intentionally setting our mind's attention and heart's affection on God for who He is and for what He has done for us in and through Jesus Christ, we will find ourselves in a place where we can discern the will of God more clearly.

Solomon Answers (6-9)

Solomon responded to God with gratitude, humility and boldness. His praise focused on God's great and faithful love for his father, David. His father had lived a faithful life before the Lord.

But Solomon understood God's initiating grace and generosity providentially orchestrated all that had occurred. Solomon knew his presence on the throne of his father was living evidence God's great covenant love continued.

Solomon next focused on his problem. He humbled himself before the Lord by acknowledging it was the Lord who had made him to be king.

Further, he described himself as a "youth with no experience in leadership." He was immature and inex-

perienced with respect to his new responsibility to lead the nation. His new calling overwhelmed him.

We can learn much from the way Solomon prayed. First, he filled his mind with a sense of God's greatness and grace. Second, he humbled himself in dependence upon the Lord. Third, he lifted up his request.

Think of all he could have asked the Lord to grant him. But because he focused on God and his own inadequacy, he made a request that brought pleasure to the heart of God.

Given his personal dilemma, Solomon asked for "a receptive heart." Solomon prayed for God to grant him a hearing and obedient heart.

He felt a need to hear God's guidance and direction as he sought to lead the people. He needed divine discernment to be able to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong, truth and falsehood. Solomon wanted divine help so he could faithfully perform his duties as king.

God Provides (10-15)

God granted his request. Though Solomon could have prayed for selfish favors such as wealth, long life or revenge, he desired the ability to lead well and help others.

God blessed Solomon with discernment so he could administer justice.

The word discernment conveys the idea of being able to distinguish between options, seeing whether something is right or wrong, wise or foolish.

Along with discernment God granted Solomon wisdom. Biblical wisdom is not about intellectual genius so much as it is about the ability to live rightly and reverently before the Lord.

God not only granted Solomon's request, but He also promised to bless Solomon with riches, honor and a long life if he followed God's ways. God's covenant with David is eternal, but Solomon could be replaced by another "son of David" if he disobeyed the Lord.

Bible Studies for Life

By Roy E. Ciampa, Ph.D.

Armstrong Chair of Religion, Samford University



CONVICTED BY THE SPIRIT John 15:26-27, 16:7-15

When we are dealing with some struggle or serious challenge in life, it is easy for believers to feel we are all alone. We forget Jesus promised not to leave us alone or as orphans (John 14:18), but that He would be with us "to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20).

Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to us. (15:26-27)

Jesus promised to send the "Counselor," meaning the Holy Spirit, to serve as our mediator, intercessor or helper. Christ no longer physically walks among us to lead and teach us as He did with the 12 disciples.

However, believers have received "the Spirit of truth," Who comes to us from the Father, tells us the truth about Christ and leads us to testify about Christ.

John 15:26 emphasizes the Father, the Son and the Spirit are focused together on promoting the truth about Jesus. Christ was sent by the Father to testify about Himself while He lived among and ministered to and with His disciples. Now He sends the Counselor to do the same through Christ's followers.

The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin. (16:7-11)

At some point in your life you've probably wished you had the opportunity to know Christ during His earthly life and ministry.

Jesus knew the Holy Spirit would only come to us in a new way once He Himself had returned to the Father. He promised the Holy Spirit's work among us would compensate for His absence and in some ways be even more beneficial to us.

The Spirit empowers us to know and follow Christ. Everything the Spirit does is Christ centered.

The Holy Spirit convicts the world about sin because the world does not believe in Christ. The Holy Spirit convicts the world about righteousness because Christ's righteousness has been

vindicated by His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father (and because Christ is no longer walking among us to do it Himself). The Holy Spirit convicts the world about judgment because to its shame, the world falsely judged Christ Himself.

Only by the work of the Holy Spirit do we truly understand the reality of sin. Only by the work of the Holy Spirit do we clearly perceive what righteousness demands of us.

The Holy Spirit reveals the faulty nature of our own judgments. He helps us see we are no different from, and just as culpable as, all those who falsely judged Christ and supported His crucifixion.

In the Old Testament, the Spirit convicted the world about sin, righteousness and judgment through the prophets with the law of Moses as the reference point. Now the reference point is Christ Himself.

The Holy Spirit guides us in the truth. (16:12-15)

One might have expected Christ to communicate all the important things God had to reveal through Him during His years of ministry. But Jesus said there were things He would only be able to reveal to His disciples through the Spirit after He had returned to the Father. The truth the Son reveals is the Father's truth, and the truth the Spirit reveals is the Son's truth which glorifies Jesus as more of His truth is revealed.

The books of the New Testament represent the fulfillment of Christ's promise that the Spirit would guide us into "all the truth." Scripture guides us to the truth of salvation in Christ and continues to grow us in truth as we follow the Lord. Through the Spirit-inspired and Spirit-illuminated Scriptures we are led into and by the truth.

May that truth be lived out among us as the Spirit leads us by the grace of Christ to the glory of the Father!

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Minnie Lamberth
The Alabama Baptist

Authors love through 'dark disease,' expound on civil rights in SBC

TOP 10

best-selling Christian books

COMPILED AND DISTRIBUTED BY ECPA

- 1. The Five Love Languages**
By Gary Chapman (Moody)
- 2. Jesus Calling**
By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
- 3. Jesus Listens**
By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
- 4. Find Your People**
By Jennie Allen (Waterbrook)
- 5. I Guess I Haven't Learned That Yet**
By Shauna Niequist (Zondervan)
- 6. The Truth and Beauty**
By Andrew Klavan (Zondervan)
- 7. Get Out of Your Head**
By Jennie Allen (Waterbrook)
- 8. Embrace Your Almost**
By Jordan Lee Dooley (Waterbrook)
- 9. Life Makeover**
By Dominique Sachse (Thomas Nelson)
- 10. Prophetic Forecast**
By Joshua Giles (Chosen Books)

Source: Christian Book Expo at press time

Goodnight Sweetheart: A Story of Faith, Hope and Love

Alan Johnston

Soncoast Publishing, 2021

Alan Johnston's life took a sudden turn the moment he first caught sight of someone he describes as "the most stunning, gorgeous woman I had ever seen."

Smitten by an enchanting woman identified to him initially only as "Judy," he draws on familiar songs, oldies such as "Pretty Woman" and "Earth Angel," to describe his reaction.

From the opening of his memoir on love and illness, "Goodnight Sweetheart: A Story of Faith, Hope and Love," Johnston makes clear his future wife would be the love of his life.

Halfway into their 29-year marriage, however, their lives were jolted by a medical appointment that confirmed their worst fears. At age 54 Judy was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's disease. For the next 15 years Johnston remained a devoted and loving husband as he dealt with her progressive illness.

His deeply personal tale details his love and devotion to his late wife, and the grief he experienced while dealing with "a dark disease with no survivors."

Clearly Judy was a special person, evidenced by reminiscences at the end of the book from those who knew and loved her.

A native of Alabama, Johnston lives in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and has spent his career in ministry and financial planning.

His book is available at Amazon.



The Southern Baptist Convention & Civil Rights, 1954-1995

David Roach

Pickwick Publications, 2021

David Roach has written a thorough history of Southern Baptist views on segregation and paints a detailed picture of how they shifted over the latter half of the 20th century.

The general belief in equality was not foreign to early Southern Baptists. Roach writes, "They

called for evangelization of all races, Christian treatment of all races, and ministerial education for all races."

Yet, he notes "at the same time, they were segregationists who did not recognize the conflict between their general beliefs and their specific beliefs regarding African Americans."

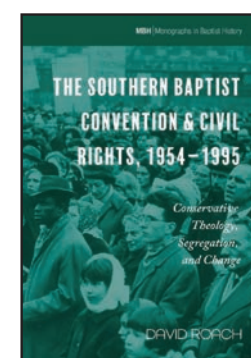
Roach, pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Saraland, Alabama, details efforts to address segregation in Baptist churches and institutions, specifically in the era leading up to the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Supreme Court decision that desegregated public schools and concluding with a resolution adopted at the 1995 SBC annual meeting repenting of past racism within the denomination.

Though there were social pressures at work in these shifts, Roach presents the case that churches were more likely to respond to the need for change when the issues were approached in alignment with conservative theology.

In a chapter on seminaries, for example, Roach notes discussions of race that "appealed to traditional evangelical doctrines such as creation in the image of God, the death of Christ for all, and the unity of the church" were more effective for Southern Baptists than appeals to social gospel.

Roach holds a doctor of philosophy degree in church history from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

His book is available at Amazon.



EDITOR'S NOTE

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

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