

The Alabama Baptist

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July 21, 2022

Vol. 187, No. 28
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

THE WORLD COMES TO BIRMINGHAM



Birmingham was host to the World Games July 7-17 and Baptist World Alliance Annual Gathering July 10-15.

SEE COVERAGE ON PAGES 8-13.

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FRONT PAGE PHOTOS

Main photo — Athletes from Azerbaijan participate in the opening ceremony of the World Games 2022 at Protective Stadium in Birmingham. (Photo by Kathy Lang/International World Games Association)

Bottom, left photo — Birmingham Mayor Randall Woodfin, retired Samford President Andy Westmoreland and South African leader Allan Boesak speak during a July 12 BWA panel discussion on racial justice in the public square. (Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist)

Bottom, center photo — Baptist World Alliance members gathered at Samford University July 12 pray for team members added since BWA's General Counsel last met in person in 2019. (Photo by Taylor Mitchell/The Alabama Baptist)

Bottom, right photo — Samford University sports marketing and analytics student Alyssa Ryals serves as the associate venue producer at Birmingham Crossplex for fin swimming, lifesaving and canoe polo at the World Games. (Facebook photo)



Facebook photo

Bible school graduates in Uganda receive a commentary from Love Packages to help them further their personal study.

Love Packages sees shipping challenges as rates rise

In 2020 we reported on Love Packages, an organization that works to address shortages of Bibles and Christian literature in developing countries.

Readers responded to a call by TAB's President and Editor-in-Chief Jennifer Davis Rash to help Love Packages meet its goal to send 2,020 tons around the world in 2020. Hundreds of pounds of Bibles, gently used Sunday School literature and other materials were transported from TAB's office in Homewood to Love Packages' warehouse in Decatur.

In the months since, Love Packages has continued its mission to help pastors and teachers. In recent weeks materials have been delivered to Kenya, Ghana, India, Uganda and the Philippines.

But like so many individuals and organizations, Love Packages is facing challenges, said Jason Jenkins, manager of the Alabama branch of Love Packages.

In a recent video Jenkins asked for prayers that shipping containers will go out as scheduled.

"We're having trouble getting those out right now," he said. "We

did get one shipped out last week, but we were supposed to ship two."

Jenkins said maintaining the regular shipping schedule is important because people in other countries are hungry for the materials, and also because it helps manage space in the warehouse.

"Literature continually comes in," he said. "Our warehouse is pretty full right now."

Costs for shipping also are rising, Jenkins said. The 20-foot ocean-going containers hold about 40,000 pounds of materials and cost around \$6,000 to ship.

"It used to be \$3,500 to \$4,500 on average, so prices are going up," he said. "Pray for us that

people will support us and we'll be able to ship these [containers] out."

"Over 46 years we've seen how God has always provided," Jenkins said. "We trust Him but we like to make the needs known."

Since it began in 1975, Love Packages has shipped Christian literature to 154 nations. The organization ships more than 1,500 tons annually. Go to lovepackages.org to learn more. (The Alabama Baptist)



Photo courtesy of Annette Brown/The Alabama Baptist

TAB Media's Annette Brown and her husband, Barry, help transport donations for Love Packages.

The Alabama Baptist

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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)

© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.

is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 800-803-5201.

Website: www.thealabamabaptist.org

Email: news@thealabamabaptist.org or subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org
Periodicals postage paid at Hattiesburg, Miss.

ANNUAL TAB SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Includes print, digital, app and full web access

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

Individual — \$34.95 per year (50 issues)

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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

Is it possible too many resources render us incompetent?

While at Samford University in Birmingham last week for the Baptist World Alliance Annual Gathering (see pages 8–9), BWA president Tomás Mackey shared his concern about the state of disciple making among Baptists worldwide.

“Disciples live for Jesus every day, everywhere ... but we are experiencing a lack of relevant training of disciples,” he said. “Bible studies are good but that’s not enough. We need to produce better products to train disciples. ... We Baptists should be salt and light ... illuminating Christ to create ... a better world to leave for the next generation.”

As Mackey continued, my mind wandered a bit. Where had I heard this before? Ah, yes, about 20 miles northeast of campus in the halls and sanctuary of NorthPark Baptist Church in Trussville.

Pastor Bill Wilks and Executive Pastor Stephen Hall faithfully and consistently emphasize the importance of discipleship, disciple making, serving our communities and moving beyond the walls of the church with the gospel.

You’ve seen Wilks’ disciple-making resource “D-Life” promoted in The Alabama Baptist for years, and most recently

his book “The Greater Work: Disciple-Making. Anytime. Anywhere.” has made an appearance.

Life Bible Study, an imprint of Iron Stream Media based in Birmingham, produces D-Life and other disciple-making materials.

Also providing resources is the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions through the work done in the office of Sunday School and discipleship under the leadership of state missionary Daniel Edmonds. Edmonds works with partners throughout the state and nation to help churches grow their members in this area — as does Lifeway Christian Resources through its product line.

The weakening of our Christian disciple population can’t be because of a lack of tools. Plenty of options are available and easily accessible.

Years-long concern

In fact, we may have too much, which could cause us to spend more time researching rather than diving into the Word. If we aren’t careful years could pass without much growth.

Looking back nearly a decade, disciple making was one of the key challenge areas identified by a group appointed in 2014 by the North American Mission Board to study the decline in baptisms among Southern Baptists.

The NAMB group said pastors need to “create a disciple-making culture” within their churches. In 2016, NAMB appointed a task force to focus on how churches can make that happen and appointed Tennessee pastor Robby Gallaty as chair.

“Biblical disciple making includes both inviting — evangelism — and investing — discipleship. We cannot have one without the other,” Gallaty said. “For years we have been ‘decisionistic,’ but we need to be more ‘disciplistic.’”

In Alabama Baptist life, long-time evangelism leader Sammy Gilbreath describes evangelism and discipleship as two wings of the same plane.

And in 2018, Gallaty summarized the recommendations from the task force’s two years of research as “increase Bible engagement for church members; examine the connection between salvation decisions and group involvement; and examine the number of groups that multiply on a regular basis.”

I’m not sure how the last two suggestions played out, but I do know pastors and ministry leaders work diligently to encourage believers in Bible engagement.

Gallaty even developed his own line of resources — Replicate Ministries and the Making Disciples podcast — to add to

existing options. Still, here we are in 2022 having the same discussions.

In fact, NAMB president Kevin Ezell shared with us last week how NAMB plans to recruit pastors across the nation to help promote evangelism efforts within our churches and to train Southern Baptists in evangelism.

But like the discipleship resources, we’ve had access to evangelism resources within our denominational circles for decades. I personally remember participating in the FAITH evangelism training materials produced by Lifeway back in the 1990s and several other options leading up to the more recent 3 Circles and Who’s Your One? promoted by NAMB.

It makes sense branding and methods shift with each generation, even as the message stays the same, but why do we need to spend so much effort to convince our members of the need?

What if the money spent trying to capture our attention and market products could be used to fill the specific needs of congregations exploding with a hunger and commitment to grow in the Lord? What if we were so busy loving our neighbors and sharing our faith we didn’t have time to continually look for new themes and emphasis efforts hoping to motivate a few more church members each year?

Your Voice



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

Letter to the editor — Roe v. Wade

By **Amanda Oliver Hendricks**
Pinson, Alabama

I am one of the hearts hurt by the tone-deaf choice to put the article about Roe v. Wade being overturned on the front page of The Alabama Baptist next to the emboldened words of “Freedom,” “Happy Independence Day.”... Repeating the words of SBC President Bart Barber that Southern Baptists are rejoicing the ruling is like a dagger to the woundedness of women in this country who are Christian and are also mourning.

On the day that the ruling came down from SCOTUS, as I and many other women were sad and dismayed, we were further kicked in the gut by those rejoicing through texts and over social media. ... Every time I think of the ruling, I feel like crying. I’m scared someone will hurt my heart before choosing to see how to love it first. I’m afraid the church I adored as a child will never understand that until they value women completely and equally within their walls; none of their work is sacred.

‘Landmark case’

The church in America, especially the evangelical church, likes to blanket Roe v. Wade as a landmark case that is the main cause of babies being “murdered” in this nation “under God.” ... No woman’s heart is being reached for God in this country by celebrating the overturning of Roe v. Wade. ... [Barber] knows not ... of which

he speaks — having never been a woman who had to make this decision and walk the journey of the experience. Also, the SBC’s actions have not stood for women for quite a while now. ... Not believing women or supporting women who are being abused. ...

The truth is that you can be a Christian and be pro-choice. The truth is that you can be pro-choice and not pro-abortion. Honestly, you can be both pro-life and pro-choice at the same time. However, this issue isn’t about labels, it is about living, breathing women. It is about stories. And if you can’t value women and their stories, then you are missing out on a Christ that loved and valued all women deeply.

I want you to think of a child who has recently gotten her period. She’s being sexually abused by someone in the church, and [the church] has not protected her. She becomes pregnant. Not only does she not know what sex is, she has felt shame. ... Then, already traumatized, her body is most likely too small and underdeveloped for natural birth, and she will most likely be forced to give birth by C-section, a major surgery. ... More trauma, trauma she may never recover from in a world where she may have to keep her pain secret, where she may be shunned ... may not have access to proper physical or mental health care or medicines. She certainly will not want to sit in a pew at church for nine months.

Would you talk to her? ... Would you ask her to trust the Lord when the man who hurt her loves Him, too?

Remember the hurting

It is too shallow to celebrate the overturning of Roe v. Wade in our churches. Roe v. Wade being overturned will not lessen abortions. ... How are we caring for women when we are talking about women’s health care?

So while a community of [Christ-following] people [who should be] loving the outcast [instead are] celebrating, let us remember women are hurting. We don’t feel free. We feel like our agency, our independence, has been taken from us by people who aren’t living our lives. When was the last time you sat and held the hand of a hurting woman? ... When is the last time you’ve scooted over and asked a pregnant teen to take the seat next to you on a Sunday morning? Are you thinking to yourself you’ve never seen a pregnant teen in your church? Now, ask yourself why.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Content shared on the Your Voice spread is opinion in nature and not necessarily the views of The Alabama Baptist. We welcome calm and respectful dialogue among readers, which provides the opportunity to hear from each other and understand differing points of view. You are welcome to submit letters to the editor to news@thealabamabaptist.org.

Society tells us that we are our sin. Sin becomes our identity. But when God looks at us, He sees our blameless Savior.

Addie Lee Frierson
the-scroll.com

If we are involved in Christian ministry, it is not a question of “if” we will counsel, but “how well” we will counsel.

Those involved in Christian counseling must seek an integration of biblical truths with counseling skills.

Morris Murray Jr.
Jasper, Alabama

“How many kids don’t know the [senior adults] in the church? They know where they sit and when they’re sick, but that’s about it. Now they know them personally,” said **Sandy Franks**, who helped students at **Pleasant Green Baptist Church** in Cynthiana, Kentucky, organize a special outreach day in their community.

I’ve traveled with students all over the world, and I’ve loved seeing them understand their role in God’s world, that God can use them in ways they didn’t think they could ever be used.

Mike Nuss
retired state missionary

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“Our love for God must be reflected in love for those He loves.”

ROY CIAMPA

Armstrong Chair of Religion, Samford University

“I don’t worry about my age,” said 80-year-old **ultramathoner Maurice Robinson**, who also is a member of First Baptist Church Benton, Arkansas. “I just look at what abilities I still have, what I can do and how much I enjoy doing those things.”

Specifically, Robinson describes his running as “a way for me to minister by pointing whatever I do — even a training run — I point to God. ... I’m just the wall that echoes the sounds.”

“God really got my attention when I was studying in college about how He has created us as physical, emotional and spiritual beings,” shared **Molly Petry**, an **International Mission Board worker** in Central

Asia. “Oftentimes we separate those things out. But He desires to transform all those areas of our life.”

“Southern Baptists need some reminders of the good that is being done and the lives that are being changed every day,” said **Jon Graham**, the **creator of ACTS2 TV** and a **member of the research and development team** at the **Georgia Baptist Mission Board**. “They need a reminder that Southern Baptists have a local, state, national and global impact.”

“This just shows you don’t have to be large in numbers to do great things,” said **Michael Hilliard**, **director of Chipola Family Ministries** at Chipola Baptist Association

in Marianna, Florida. “If a small association can care for people and meet their needs, a large association can do so much more.”

“The honor of this office is not lost on me, nor are the responsibilities,” **Bart Barber**, **SBC president and pastor of First Baptist Church Farmersville, Texas**.

“For Christians, we are never called to play a character in our walk with the Lord. We are called to have character. Too often church members play the role of Christian without displaying or producing a genuine, godly life,” said **Bobby McKay**, **pastor of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church** in Brookhaven, Mississippi.

5 healthy church characteristics

Go and Tell ... Come and See” describes Gardendale First Baptist Church’s approach to church growth and evangelism. The Great Commission commands the church to “go and tell” (Matthew 28:19–20). After meeting Jesus the Messiah, the Samaritan woman begged the people of the city to “come and see” (John 4:29).

We believe healthy, growing evangelistic churches challenge and equip believers to “go and tell” while inviting the unsaved and unchurched to “come and see.” I am not an expert and GFBC is certainly not a perfect church, but we have discovered some principles that God seems to be blessing:

1. Proclamation: Preach the Bible. Our world is crumbling. People are discouraged and depressed and disillusioned. They need to know God has a Word for them.

2. Passion: Churches can be boring. I know that is a frank statement, but it is worth unpacking. Members are not going to invite their unsaved, unchurched friends to a dry, dull, dead worship service. This is not about style of worship. It is about passion in worship!

3. Desperation: Oftentimes church members are not truly desperate enough to make any adjustments in order to reach the unsaved and unchurched.

4. Connection: Sometimes churches are no longer connected to unchurched, unsaved people. The longer a person is a believer, the more likely it is he or she no longer has a significant relationship with unbelievers.

5. Invitation: Boldly and clearly share the gospel of Jesus somewhere in the worship service and give the people an opportunity to respond.

Kevin Hamm, **pastor Gardendale First Baptist Church**
Pastor Connections email

From the Twitterverse

@dhmccain

People react aggressively when something threatens that which has become an idol to them. This culture worships sexual indulgence absolutely free of boundaries or consequences. More than power or money, it is the idol of our age.

@dandarling

God calls sinners. God saves sinners. God moves in the world thru sinners. That’s good news for us.

@JCRyle

It costs something to be a true Christian. Let that never be forgotten. To be a mere nominal Christian and go to church is cheap and easy work. But to hear Christ’s voice, follow Christ, believe in Christ and confess Christ, requires much self-denial.

@GreggMatte

Courage is not the absence of

fear but rather mastery of it. Courage is simply the capacity to draw on God’s resources and, by faith, do what we know we must do.

@DianeLangberg

Never for a moment forget that the most precious truth of all time and eternity is that there is a Redeemer.

@jasonthacker

It is a scathing indictment of our culture & the modern ethic when the value of another human life is simply determined by what we want. It is morally disingenuous to argue that a child has dignity and deserves to live when you want it & simply a disposable fetus when you don’t.

@Pete_Keough

15 months ago our church had an avg. attendance of 58, now it’s near 200. Today we had 5 baptisms with over another dozen in the last year.

Preach the Word faithfully, love fiercely, lead gracefully and most important, trust God completely!

@QuoteElisabeth

“We must quit bending the Word to suit our situation. It is we who must be bent to that Word.” —Elisabeth Elliot

@joshreavis

There’s a radical shift in spiritual maturity that happens when you start asking, “How can I serve my church?” instead of “How can my church serve me?”

@LysaTerKeurst

God is the Author of the Truth that empowers us. Satan is the author of the deception that imprisons us. That’s why the enemy is thrilled when we don’t open our Bibles. Truth sheds light on darkness & helps us see clearly what a horrible trap Satan’s luring us into.

Seeing God continually provide

Alabama Baptist leaders encourage Eastern European pastors on visit to Ukraine

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Rob Jackson said when he was in Ukraine in early July a Baptist pastor told him the story of a young mother who showed up at his church.

"She fled with her two children from a place that was being bombed by the Russians," said Jackson, director of the office of church health for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

"She was seven months pregnant, and when she got to the Baptist church she went into labor and delivered the baby."

The baby survived, but three days later the woman found out her husband had been killed.

"She wept and asked the pastor, 'What am I to do now? I have no husband, no job and three small children. What am I supposed to do?'"

"The pastor said he could multiply her story thousands of times," Jackson lamented. "He told me we see on the news in America that it's bad in Ukraine, but it's worse than we could ever imagine."

Connecting, listening

In past years as part of a partnership with Ukraine, Alabama Baptists trained 150 pastors in the country.

Recently the seminary there asked if Alabama Baptists could come again and encourage them at a time when they need it most.

So Jackson, who also is president of Romanian-American Mission, answered that call, along with North Carolina pastor Billy Nale of Fairview Baptist Church in Dobson and Kentucky executive pastor Scott Riessen of Buck Run Baptist Church in Frankfort. Daniel Fodorean, coordinator of Project Antioch, RAM's ministry in Europe, hosted the group that also visited Moldova, Romania and Bulgaria.

As they visited with pastors in



Photo courtesy of Rob Jackson
Daniel Fodorean (right), coordinator of Project Antioch, Romanian-American Mission's ministry in Europe, and Rob Jackson (second from right) director of the office of church health for SBOM and president of RAM, visit with Baptist church leaders on a recent trip to four war-affected countries.

all four countries, the group heard how pastors are stretched thin as they give everything they have to care for refugees who arrive at their doors. Money is running low and workers are exhausted, Jackson said.

"In Ukraine, churches are getting smaller and older as many people flee and many younger men are drafted to serve in the army," he related.

"In other countries, where there might have been an influx of volunteer help at the beginning of the war, now that help is waning.

"The churches said they continue to have more needs but fewer and fewer people to meet those needs."

So churches have found creative ways to try to help, and they've seen God continually provide, Jackson said.

His trip was paid for by donors who wanted to help support pastors, and he took \$70,000 donated by Spring Hill Baptist Church in Mobile, Elkdale Baptist Church in Selma and other supporters of RAM. With that money he was able to support 25 pastors for the next three months.

"The money lifted their spirits because they've given everything away," Jackson said.

"They were also encouraged because I told them we were going to continue to support them in any way we can."

Jackson said the pastors understand this war is an opportunity to make Christ known, and they don't want to miss it.

One church gave out 7,000 packets of food, sharing the gospel with each person who received one.

"This pastor shared that the war

enabled their small congregation to share Christ with more people than any other single time," he said.

He asked the pastors what their biggest disappointment of this season had been, and their answer surprised him.

Need for Christ

"They said they had thought, 'Surely this war on top of COVID and economic problems would drive the Ukrainian people to their knees seeking God,' but thus far it's not happening," Jackson recounted. "They say they rejoice over every one of the few refugees who have responded to the gospel, but they would love for Baptists to pray that God would draw the people to Himself."

Jackson said it was an honor to represent Alabama Baptists as he encouraged pastors who are serving 24/7 on the frontlines and reminded them that Baptists in Alabama are praying for them.

"I think it also encouraged them just knowing that an American was willing to take on the risk of coming there to visit," Jackson said, noting that crossing the border into Ukraine meant giving up the right to health insurance, life insurance and government aid.

A group of 20 pastors in one of the countries asked him to give a sermon of encouragement on the spot.

Prayer requests

Jackson said he prayed for God's guidance and took the opportunity to remind the group they have hope and they need to keep running the race because this isn't their home.

"They had tears in their eyes," Jackson said.

He noted they asked for prayer for four things — that God would stop the war, that churches would stay united, that families would be protected and stay together, and that volunteers would be sent to help in the effort.



Photo courtesy of Rob Jackson
Rob Jackson (center) and others study a map of the surrounding area.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► Longtime Dothan Pastor **Tom Anderson**, 81, died July 10. A South Carolina native, Anderson raised cotton and soybeans and worked in a textile mill until God called him to the ministry in 1972.

He moved to Dothan and attended Baptist Bible Institute. He led Springfield Baptist Church, Jakin, Georgia, and in 1978 Anderson became pastor of Mount Gilead Baptist Church, Dothan, where he served until his retirement in 1987. After he retired, he served as interim pastor at various churches in Graceville, Florida, and Ozark and Elba, Alabama.

He spoke regularly at The Haven, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center. He also served as chaplain at Southeast Health and ministered at The Ark.

He is survived by his wife, Irene; four children; 12 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.



ANDERSON

ALABAMA-CRENSHAW ASSOCIATION

► **Weed Baptist Church, Brantley**, celebrated its 75th anniversary June 26. Former pastor Monroe Sasser preached with congregational music led by Tiffany Worthington. Kathy Bradshaw played piano.

Lonette Berg (right) of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and Jack Anderson, associational missionary, presented certificates to Larry Gay (left) and Bobby Morgan (center), deacons.

A booklet of church history compiled by Merlene Carlisle and Janie Sasser was distributed.

"This church has stayed faithful for 75 years," said Lonnie Worthington, interim pastor. "They have endured through some hardships but chose to press on. They made sure the gospel remained present in this area."



VANDERBURG

HALE ASSOCIATION

► **Nathan Vanderburg** is the new pastor of **Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Moundville**. He also works at the University of Alabama and previously served Big Hurricane Baptist Church, Brookwood, and Duncanville Baptist Church. He and his wife, Heather, have two children.

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

► **Garry Harred**, senior associate pastor of **Woodridge Baptist Church, Mobile**, retired recently after 45 years of pastoral service.

He holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Criswell College in Dallas, Texas. Ordained while still getting his master's, Harred served churches in Texas for five years before coming to Alabama. He served as pastor of First Baptist Bayou La Batre for nine years, Crawford Baptist for 13 years and has been at Woodridge since 2006.

For two years he served as the transitional pastor at Woodridge during the church's pastor search. He and his wife, Jeanne, have three children and five grandchildren.



HARRED

MORGAN ASSOCIATION

► **Ryan Baptist Church, Joppa**, will celebrate its 100th anniversary July 31. Service will start at 10:30 a.m. and will feature former pastor Eldridge Crisco with special music and lunch to follow.

PLEASANT GROVE ASSOCIATION

► **Jack Clary**, 78, recently retired after 42 years of service as pastor of **Evergreen Baptist Church, Vance**.

His last sermon was June 26 but the church held a celebration service for him and his wife, Gail, on July 3 with special music, speakers and a fellowship lunch. He previously was pastor of Beulah Baptist Church, Knoxville, for five years.

"It was just a great service with a lot of folks I haven't seen in a long time," he said. "When you've been at a place this long it becomes more than a church, it becomes family. It's really difficult to leave the people."

He and Gail have two children and five grandchildren.

ST. CLAIR ASSOCIATION

► **Ken Alford** is the interim pastor of **First Baptist Church Ashville**. He holds a bachelor's degree from Troy State University and master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from Southwestern Seminary.

He began pastoral ministry in 1981, and he served churches in Alabama, Mississippi, Florida and Georgia prior to his retirement from full-time ministry in August 2020.

He has served in denominational leadership positions such as a member of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee,

chairman of the board of trustees of the North American Mission Board and president of the Florida Baptist Convention.

He also served as president of the State Pastors Conferences in both Mississippi and Florida. He and his wife, Cynthia, have two children and two grandchildren.



ALFORD

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

► **Juan Felipe Aristizabal** is the new Hispanic pastor of **Westwood Baptist Church, Alabaster**. He will be part of a local residency program over the next several months with the goal of launching Westwood en Español.

He holds a bachelor's degree in advertising from a university in Colombia and a master's degree in commercial and marketing management from a university in Spain.

He has previously served in media ministry, worked with homeless people and trained leaders and new believers at churches in Iowa and Texas. He and his wife, Juliana, have two children.

WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION

► **Leroy First Baptist Church** celebrated **Dave Delegal's** 30th anniversary May 1. Delegal is the current associate pastor of music and senior adults.

The church hosted a reception for Delegal and gave him a monetary gift, as well as a lot of chocolate.

He holds an associate's degree in religious education from New Orleans Seminary. Prior to FBC, he served as music/youth minister of a Louisiana church and in Alabama at Vernant Park Baptist Church, Foley, and Fairview Baptist Church, Selma. He also was youth and education minister of Creola FBC and Fulton Road Baptist Church, Mobile.

He and his wife, Laura, have one son.

WEST CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

► **Caleb Winningham** is the new pastor of **Valley Grande Baptist Church**.

He holds a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Seminary. He is married to Paige.



WINNINGHAM

TO SEE A GALLERY
OF PHOTOS, VISIT
[TABONLINE.ORG/
BWA-2022](http://TABONLINE.ORG/BWA-2022).

Making an impact

Baptist World Alliance holds Annual Gathering at Samford

As athletes from across the globe converged on Birmingham for the World Games, Baptists from around the world assembled at Samford University July 10–15 for the 2022 Annual Gathering of the Baptist World Alliance.

BWA brought its annual meeting, held virtually in 2020 and 2021, to Birmingham for the first time.

The association of churches representing 245 member bodies in 128 countries and territories focused this year's meeting around the theme "A Global Family Standing for Racial Justice."

Attendees worshipped together, visited sites connected to the U.S. civil rights movement and heard from speakers representing a broad spectrum of ministry, cultural and political experience who shared their experiences and challenged Baptists to see racial justice as a common mission for believers.

John K. Jenkins Sr., pastor of First Baptist Church Glenarden in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, and chair of the board for the National Association of Evangelicals, spoke during the opening worship celebration July 11 at the Leslie S. Wright Fine Arts Center on Samford's campus.

Jenkins said Christians have too often been silent on the issue of systemic racism.



Photo by Tracy Riggs/The Alabama Baptist

The Alabama Singing Men and Alabama Singing Women, conducted by Tom Smith, director of ASM, sing during the July 11 opening worship celebration of the Baptist World Alliance Annual Gathering.



JENKINS

"We should want justice. We should want righteousness," he said.

During a July 12 forum on racial justice in the public square, Birmingham Mayor Randall Woodfin and retired Samford President Andrew Westmoreland joined Allan Boesak, a prominent leader in South Africa's struggle against apartheid.

Woodfin, an African American, spoke of how Birmingham employees used dogs and fire hoses to quell civil rights protests in the 1950s.

"Now I am the mayor responsible for that same police department. I

am the mayor responsible for that same fire department. ... I come into office with that history," he said.

Faith leaders

Woodfin said people in Birmingham "need to know the power" of faith leaders, who he said "can have the most impact by going outside the church walls and serving the community."

Westmoreland said Birmingham is a "living, breathing example of progress ... of faith in action. ... We celebrate that. But we can never run past the fact that we still have the history we have," he said.

Boesak said the call to political activism is "sacred" because it is about "the protection of the children of God ... especially the most vulnerable and oppressed children of God."

Christians have no choice but to pursue reconciliation, he added, because it "is a calling laid upon us by Christ." (TAB Media)

BWA forum focuses on work in Ukraine

Within days of Russia's Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine, Baptist World Aid began distributing thousands of dollars to respond to needs in a region wracked by war yet hopeful of how God will work in the tragedy.

"How the Baptist family has galvanized to serve our brothers and sisters since the start of the Ukrainian war has been simply impressive," said Marsha Scipio, director of Baptist World Aid, speaking July 11 during a forum focused on the global Baptist response to the war in Ukraine at the Baptist World Alliance 2022 Annual Gathering at Samford University. "We thank God to have an opportunity to serve in this manner."

Established in 1920, Baptist World Aid seeks to alleviate poverty and hunger, respond when disasters strike and support sustainable community development projects around the globe, organizing prayer and resources to help in times of crisis.

In Ukraine, that has meant helping "build the capacity" of the Ukrainian Baptist Union and Baptists in neighboring countries to "mobilize their resources to support refugees that crossed their borders" as they flee the war, Scipio said.

Igor Bandura, vice president of the Ukrainian Baptist Union, spoke of the situation in his country.

"Church buildings have been damaged or destroyed completely," he said. "Families are divided and can't worship God together. ... Between 100 and 200 soldiers are being killed each day at the war sites, and thousands of families are experiencing terrible pain in their time of loss and grief."

Believers in the country are prayerful God will use the war to bring more people to "a saving faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior," he said. "Without this bigger reason, all the sufferings are senseless and useless. This is why we continue to serve and pray." (Carrie Brown McWhorter)

Birmingham Mayor Randall Woodfin, retired Samford President Andrew Westmoreland and South African leader Allan Boesak speak to BWA members July 12 on the topic of racial justice and civic engagement.



Photo by Tracy Riggs/The Alabama Baptist

‘Bridge-builder’

BWA President Tomás Mackey urges Baptists to take discipleship more seriously

By Michael Foust
The Alabama Baptist

Warning of a rise in “extreme secularism” around the world, the president of the Baptist World Alliance encouraged Baptists to take seriously the discipling of new believers.

“We have many churches that have many members, but they don’t have disciples,” Tomás Mackey, from Argentina, told attendees at the BWA Annual Gathering, held at Samford University in Birmingham, July 10–15.

Extreme secularism, he declared, is promoting a radically different worldview than Christianity by advancing concepts and actions that infringe on religious liberty. The world’s universities, Mackey added, are not teaching students morality. Further, children in schools are being educated with “secular content.” “[Churches] can be full of mem-

bers that are not disciples,” he asserted. “Can you perceive the difference between a member and a disciple? ... One hour of very good Bible study a week is very important but not enough — not enough.”

Baptists “need to produce better programs to train the disciples. That is a very big challenge,” Mackey said.

Equipping church members

He urged churches to equip their members to have “intelligent” conversations on matters of faith.

A secular world, he noted, needs Baptists to be “salt and light, all the days of the week, all the months of the year ... to create a new way of thinking, for society, in our world where we live.”

This was the first in-person Annual Gathering as president for Mackey, who was installed in 2020 and will continue his five-year term through 2025.



Photo by Taylor Mitchell/The Alabama Baptist
Baptist World Alliance President Tomás Mackey addresses attendees at the BWA Annual Gathering.

He noted a meeting he had this year alongside other BWA officials with Russian Christians and government leaders. The 90-minute meeting took place in Russia at the invitation of the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists.

Mackey said he and other BWA

members urged government leaders to end the war with Ukraine.

“We were able to ... raise the need for the immediate cessation of the war. And we were very clear on that,” Mackey related. “And [also] the creation of humanitarian corridors and respect for religious freedom with a special emphasis on the occupied territory of Ukraine.

“And we were able to pray with them for a just peace and reconciliation.”

One of the government leaders told Mackey and others, “We do not often pray in this office.”

“That was a very moving moment,” Mackey recalled. “I believe that the Lord can do miracles.”

BWA members also met with Russian Orthodox leaders and discussed “ways in which the church should be a bridge-builder,” Mackey said.

“We pray for peace and for reconciliation.”

BWA Women share reports, fellowship at reception

By Tracy Riggs
The Alabama Baptist

The presidents of BWA Women’s seven continental unions and others met for a program and reception July 10 at Mountain Brook Baptist Church ahead of the Baptist World Alliance 2022 Annual Gathering in Birmingham.

Speakers emphasized Christian unity and the importance of fellowship.

“Women all around the world are the same. We feel the same. We love the same. We need the same. We come together the same,” said Karen Wilson of Australia, president of BWA Women, as she welcomed guests. “I was just telling some of you that



Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist
Baptist World Alliance Women gather July 10 at Mountain Brook Baptist Church ahead of the start of the BWA 2022 Annual Gathering at Samford University in Birmingham.

though we just met, we are already friends.”

Wilson was installed as BWA Women president in July 2020. She was looking forward to traveling to every

continent to share the gospel and encourage other women, but instead, as she began her five-year term, everything stopped due to COVID-19.

Even amid a global pan-

demic, Wilson found opportunities to work with people from all walks of life and to serve the marginalized around the world.

‘Pull up a chair’

She challenged other women to do the same.

“God is calling us to sit and take a seat at the table.

Pull up a chair and sit down; it’s time for our voice to be heard. Time is short.

“If you leave with nothing else today,”

Wilson said, “leave with a sense of saying ‘yes’ to God in everything you do. It may be what you expected or it may not be what you thought it

would be. What’s in you that He wants to bring out of you?”

Merritt Johnston, who began her role as executive director of BWA Women in November 2021, reminded attendees of this year’s Nov. 7 Baptist Women’s World Day

of Prayer, held annually the first Monday in November, and its theme, “Victorious Life” based on 2 Corinthians 2:14.

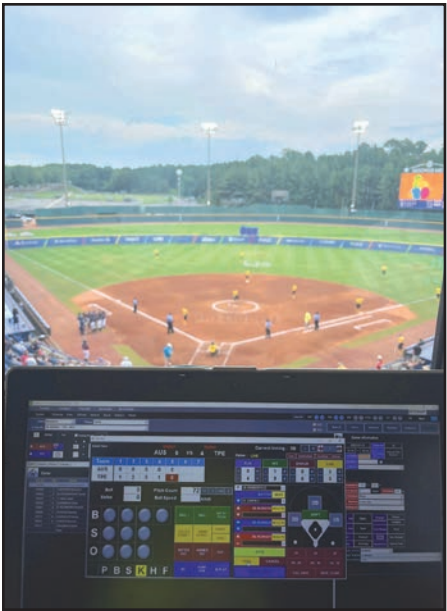
Johnson also reported on the group’s work in domestic violence awareness and supporting aid work in Ukraine.

Read reports from BWA Women’s seven continental unions at tabonline.org/bwa-women.

ALABAMA
BAPTISTS
SERVE

THE WORLD

Right: Undergraduate and graduate students and faculty from Moffett & Sanders School of Nursing help staff first aid stations throughout the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex. The volunteers were based at competitions for gymnastics, bowling, floorball, powerlifting and korfball. They also participated in the Closing Ceremony.



Facebook photo



Photo by Tracy Riggs/The Alabama Baptist

Above: Kenneth Shaw, a member of The Church at Brook Hills, provides ball, strike out and pitch counts to the CBS broadcast of the July 13 gold medal softball game at the Hoover Met. The U.S. defeated Japan 3-2 to win gold. “I have done several fun jobs, but this may be the best,” Shaw said. “Definitely a once in a lifetime opportunity.”



Photo courtesy of Shades Mountain Baptist Church

Above: Members of Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Vestavia Hills help provide meals for homeless people that Faith Chapel is sheltering during The World Games. Samford University students also rescued all possible food from World Games events, receptions and any other opportunities. The uneaten concessions were given to Food for Our Journey, a local organization that delivers meals to those in need and also to other local ministry partners that support the hungry.



Photo by Seth Allen/Dustin Massey Studios

TO SEE A GALLERY OF PHOTOS, VISIT TABONLINE.ORG/TWG-2022

Above: Japan and Germany compete in wheelchair rugby at the Birmingham CrossPlex on July 14.

GAMES 2022

in Birmingham July 7-17

Below: Members of The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham serve at Canoe Marathon at Oak Mountain State Park.



Facebook photo



Photo courtesy of Shades Mountain Baptist Church

Above: David Cheng, a member of Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham and one of the leaders in the church's Chinese ministry, poses with Vulcan, one of the official mascots of the World Games. Cheng served at several different venues.

Below: Dennis Blythe, executive pastor for The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, has an impromptu "match" with Gilberto Delatorre at the end of a training session. Blythe served as a team attaché (assistant) for the USA Sumo Team. For about six days, he was with 19 athletes and seven coaches for several hours each day. He was able to learn each of their stories and also share bits of his along the way.



Photo courtesy of Janice Poole

Above: Sam Poole cleans the glass of the squash court after a game.

His wife, Janice, kept score after being trained by a friend from Germany. They are members of Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church in Hueytown. **Right:** Karen Moore (center), a member of Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Vestavia Hills, meets the Ukraine Floorball Team.



Photo courtesy of Shades Mountain Baptist Church



Facebook photo

The World Games raises human trafficking awareness

By Hamilton Richardson
The Alabama Baptist

Advocates for victims of human trafficking have long warned that major sporting events increase the prevalence of the crime, which is one reason trafficking prevention has been a focus of the World Games 2022 in Birmingham.

The 11-day World Games, which ran through July 17 and was expected to have a \$200 million-plus economic impact in the Birmingham area, was organized with the support of the International Olympic Committee and brought more than 3,000 athletes from some 100 countries to battle for the gold medal in many unique sports.

Thousands of volunteers were part of the Games as well, and part of their training involved human trafficking awareness. And though awareness does not prevent the crime, it is a helpful step toward prevention, said Ellie Friedman, Deputy District Attorney for Jefferson County.

"Training the World Games staff about human trafficking will not prevent it from

happening, but it will make it easier to identify," said Friedman, who is co-chair of the Anti-Human Trafficking Committee with the Junior League of Birmingham.

"Throughout the World Games, we want Birmingham to be known as a place with delicious food, great hospitality and pleasant weather. We do not want Birmingham to be known as a city where you can purchase another person for sex."

Training available

Friedman got involved with the committee three years ago and leads free community trainings on human trafficking for both Junior League and the Children's Policy Council Child Trafficking Solutions Project.

The sheer number of people those organizations have been able to reach helps bring the important subject to the public's attention, Friedman said.

"This year alone, the Junior League of Birmingham has reached 358 individuals through our trainings and events," she said.

"We have placed 424 signs with our partnership through the Alabama Department of Transportation, and through our partnerships with other community organizations, we placed an additional 213 signs in rest stops and gas stations across the state."

Friedman said that as it relates to the World Games in particular,

human trafficking training was a crucial part of preparing to host the Games in Birmingham.

"Birmingham's central location made it an attractive location for the World Games, but it also makes it attractive to traffickers," she explained. "Whenever you add an additional 100,000 people in one location, we know statistically that demand, and therefore supply, for human trafficking will increase."

"While we rely

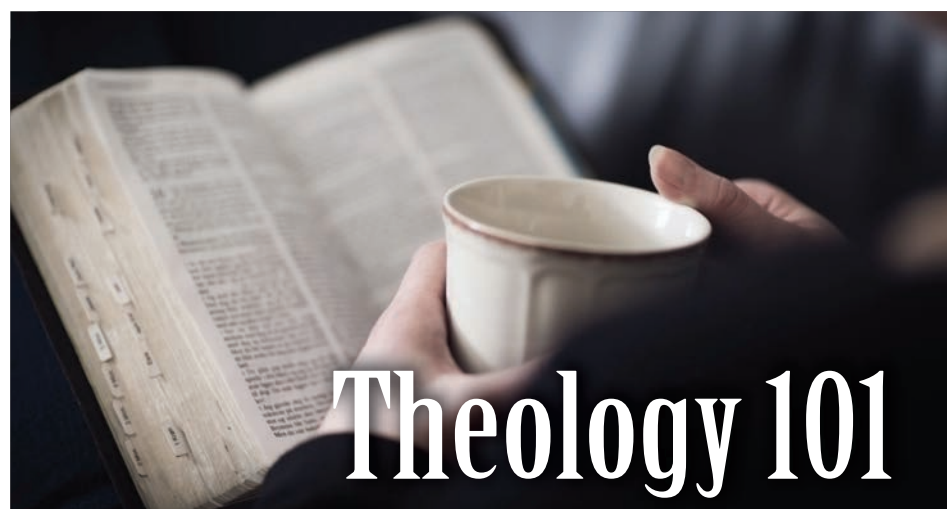
on law enforcement to investigate human trafficking cases, we rely on the public to communicate with law enforcement when they see something suspicious or out of place. Failing to recognize human trafficking does not mean [it] goes away."

Amy Wagar, director of advocacy for Worthy2.org, explained the connection between money and trafficking: "It is basic economics: Demand plus money equals exploitation."

For more information on training around the country and to learn important signs of sex trafficking visit worthy2.org, facebook.com/ChildTraffickingSolutionsProject, and birmingham365.org/organization/junior-league-of-birmingham.



Photo by Carrie B. McWhorter/The Alabama Baptist
Volunteers at the World Games received training on human trafficking awareness and reporting. A quick-reference card and bracelet with a reporting hotline number were given to volunteers.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Spiritual Blessings

The Indwelling Paraclete

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

In chapters 14–16 of the Gospel of John, we read a unique term that refers to the Holy Spirit. As transliterated from Greek, the term is "Paraclete." The first part of the word means "alongside" as in parallel, and the second means "called." Together the two give us the idea of "one called alongside of."

God's Spirit

Such is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. A variety of English words is used in various versions of the New Testament to translate Paraclete in its reference to God's Spirit, such as Comforter, Helper, Advocate and Counselor.

In the first of these occurrences in John 14:15–18, the indwelling is God's provision for our inadequacy or loneliness. Jesus had been with the disciples for three years or so. As He made preparation for His departure at the Ascension, He promised the coming of the Spirit would be "to help you and be with you forever" (v. 16).

Jesus was promising His disciples that He would not leave them as orphans (v. 18). Not only did He promise that the Spirit would be with them, but Jesus also declared He would be in them (v. 17).

Jesus also promised this indwelling of the Spirit would never forsake us, but would abide forever (v. 16).

The fulfillment of this prom-

ise began on the Day of Pentecost when the Spirit was poured out upon a larger group than just the 11 disciples, accompanied by the sound of a rushing mighty wind (Acts 2:1–2).

From our passage in John 14 we can deduce several important truths about the indwelling Paraclete. The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal "it" but a personal "He." This truth is stated in both verses 16 and 17. Just as God is personal, and Jesus was personal during the days of His flesh, so the Holy Spirit brings us the personal presence of God.

Furthermore, the Spirit is God's abiding presence in His people. Jesus put it this way: "He will abide with you forever" (v. 16). He explained further that the Spirit's indwelling would be the fulfillment of His promise not to leave His disciples as orphans but to come to them again (v. 17).

Power supplier

The indwelling Paraclete not only brings to us the abiding presence of Christ with us but also supplies the power to live the Christian life and serve God fruitfully.

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.



RADIATING JOY

Sozo Children's Choir showcases God's love at World Games

By Tracy Riggs
The Alabama Baptist

Sometimes a vision of God's plan for ministry changes radically after learning about a need. In 2010, Suzanne Owens, now CEO of the nonprofit Sozo Children based in Birmingham, was working as a youth minister in Shelby County. Two college graduates in her church wanted to spend a year overseas before getting jobs. Owens had an idea about where they could go.

"We had a Ugandan living in our home with us. Their child was born with some medical complications, so we helped get her on a medical visa here to Birmingham," Owens related. "He said, 'Why don't you get them to come over and help me build a website,' because he housed people when they came on missions."

An arrangement was made for them to spend nine months in Uganda. While there they visited a children's home with some management concerns. The children weren't eating for up to five days at a time, and they were so dirty rats chewed on their feet, Owens said.

After finding out about the terrible conditions, a government official said the place would be shut down. They called Owens, who had started sending money for food.

A mother's heart

"That night, as a mom knowing I had a baby upstairs in bed, I couldn't understand why a 3-year-old had to live in those conditions," Owens recalled. "The Lord really impressed on us that we needed to do something to help. So a couple of weeks later we were able to hire three Ugandans and opened a home with 17 kids."

Sozo Children now owns land with eight homes and nearly 130 residents.

Sozo in Greek means "to save



Facebook photo

Sozo Children's Choir performs at the World Games in Birmingham on July 9. They also will perform at Samford University on Sept. 27. The choir is on a "reverse missions trip" to share about the Sozo Children mission.

and rescue," with the connotation of not only physical rescue, but spiritual as well. However, Sozo Children not only are rescued and ministered to, they have an exciting ministry themselves.

Every other year the Sozo Children's Choir comes to the U.S. for a "reverse missions trip" to share about the Sozo Children mission.

In addition it provides the opportunity for the children to experience family, another culture and to minister to others.

"They come over and perform in churches and schools and different venues for about five and a half months," Owens said. "They are able to share the love of Christ through their song and dance."

'You can just feel it'

Those attending a Sozo Children's Choir performance come away feeling the joy the group radiates, which Owens described as "the pure joy of who God is to them when they perform. That to me is the biggest thing — their

hearts for the Lord and the smiles on their faces. You can just feel it."

Terry Schrimsher, global engagement coordinator for Sozo Children, agreed.

Breathtaking

"During the performances you'll see crowds stand up or cheer.

Whatever they do, it takes your breath away. You'll see them responding to these kids who are just there singing their hearts out for God."

However, the children don't simply perform, they also minister to those in attendance, with the children touching and praying for them.

"One of the first times our choir performed at the Foundry here in Birmingham, they had a prayer time afterwards," Owens recalled. "It was just an extreme Spirit-filled moment to have all of us broken, seeking the Lord in prayer — the kids being able to pray over the participants and the participants praying over our kids."

These actions mean even more in light of the children's past. All have abandonment issues, and most suffered abuse or were trafficked.

They live in host homes during the tour. There they experience family, often for the first time, and connect with other Christians.

Biggest lesson learned

"When they go back home they say their biggest lesson learned was how to live as a family," Owens related. "You think they are coming over here to sing and dance, but really what they're learning is God's plan for their lives. They can learn to love like a family and take care of each other."

They also get to experience different foods and weather, though they'll cook Ugandan foods for their hosts when given the opportunity.

So far some 176 children have gone through the program, producing teachers, social workers and other skilled workers. Some are in graduate school studying medicine and law; others are in university and vocational schools. The organization supports them through college if they choose to go.

"When we started this ministry, there was not a lot of money. We didn't understand how it was going to work. We totally relied on the Spirit," Owens remembered. "I think, for me, seeing that God is in the miracle business and God is in the saving business — to see Him come out on top time after time — God always prevails and always shows out that He's taking care of these kids no matter what."

"We think we're all different, but we're really not. This shows a way that we do have a common bond. That love is so strong."

Sozo Children's Choir will perform in the Southeast through October.

Visit sozochildren.org for booking information or to learn more about the organization.



Photo courtesy of Rob Jackson

Daniel Fodorean (center), coordinator of Project Antioch, Romanian-American Mission's ministry in Europe, tries on a bulletproof vest made by a church in Ukraine.

Ukrainian church sews bulletproof vests for military

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

One church in Ukraine has found a creative way to save lives — sewing bulletproof vests for soldiers.

A Baptist leader in the war-torn country got the idea as he was praying about what could be done for the war effort, said Rob Jackson, director of the office of church health at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and president of Romanian-American Mission.

"So many people they know and love were being killed," Jackson lamented. "There's a shortage of equipment, and the military doesn't have vests."

So church members who can sew began stitching vests together using fabric with NATO and Polish military camouflage patterns. So far they've made about 800 at a cost of \$200 per vest.

Each vest includes a Gideon New Testament in the Ukrainian language in the front pocket.

Dependent on God

"The Ukrainian army will send the church a request for vests, and after the vests are given out, the army will send the church the name of the person who is wearing each vest so they can

pray for them," said Jackson, who met with church leaders during a trip to the country in early July.

The project is led by a man who ran a thriving florist business but felt compelled when the war started to step down from his job and focus on making the vests. He depends solely on God to provide the money he needs for living expenses.

'God provides'

While Jackson was there, he provided some funds donated by Spring Hill Baptist Church in Mobile.

"He cried and said, 'This is an answer to prayer. I was out of money and every time I am, God provides,'" Jackson related.

The vests are one of a number of creative ways churches in Ukraine and surrounding countries have tried to preserve life and help the hurting. One church continues to meet in an unfinished building because it gave all its building fund money to care for refugees. Others have taken refugees into their churches and homes.

"Each church is doing what it can," Jackson said.

For more on Jackson's visit to Ukraine and other eastern European nations, see page 6.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

Place a classified ad for \$1 per word. For more information email ads@thealabamabaptist.org.

CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

Providence Baptist Church, Town Creek, Alabama, is in search of a senior pastor. Please send resumes to: jcrosslin89@gmail.com.

PASTOR

Emmanuel Baptist Church of Gordo, Alabama, is currently seeking the will of God to direct us to the pastor that He has ordained to lead us at this time. We are currently open to either a full-time or bivocational pastor, whichever way the Lord leads. If you are interested in submitting a resume for this position, please send it to: ebcpastorsearch2020@gmail.com.

PASTOR

Ryans Creek Baptist Church seeks God's man to be our pastor. The church is located in Brushy Pond near Smith Lake. Baptist pastors interested may mail your resume to the church at 24849 County Road 222, Bremen, AL 35033, or email to: RCBC35033@gmail.com. ATTN: Search Committee.

PASTOR

First Baptist Church Irvington, is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resumes to: DARBREL59@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Shelby (Shelby, Alabama) is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumes to: fbc141891@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Paden Baptist Church, Gadsden, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please submit resumes to: padenbaptistchurch@yahoo.com or to: Paden Baptist Church, 900 Padenreich Ave., Gadsden, AL 35903.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR — WORSHIP & EDUCATION

Linden Baptist Church is now accepting resumes for the position of associate pastor. This is a full-time position. The primary focuses of this position will be worship leadership and education, though there will be other responsibilities. For a complete job description and to apply online, visit lindenbaptist.org and click the "Assoc. Pastor Application" button. To apply by mail, send resume and cover letter to: P.O. Box 480776, Linden, AL 36748. Applications will be received until July 15.

WORSHIP PASTOR

FBC Fairhope is searching for a full-time worship pastor to lead

corporate worship, including choir, praise team, orchestra and praise band. The ministry also includes administering children, youth and senior adult choirs and leading several special events during the year. For more information, contact Kerry Flowers at kerrybflowers@gmail.com.

MINISTER OF MUSIC

Montevallo First Baptist Church is seeking a bivocational minister of music. Please submit resume to: mfbcbellsouth.net. ATTN: Pastor.

YOUTH/EDUCATION MINISTER

Taylorville Baptist Church is seeking a full-time minister of youth/education. An ordained minister with a college degree preferred and at least three years of ministry experience required. A nice pastorium is included in the pay package. Please email your resume and cover letter to: rpate@taylorvillebaptist.org. Resumes will be accepted until July 31.

FAMILY PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Atmore, Alabama, is seeking a full-time family pastor. He will serve as "second-chair" to the pastor with oversight of volunteers within age-group and small-group ministries, having direct responsibility over student ministry. Resumes may be submitted to: keving@fbcatmore.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The Duck River Baptist Association is seeking a director of missions. Located about 55 miles south of Nashville, Tennessee, the association is comprised of 41 churches and 1 mission ministering to Coffee, Franklin, and Grundy Counties. Send resumes to: Search Committee, Duck River Baptist Association, P.O. Box 820, Tullahoma, TN 37388.

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The Gibson Baptist Association (Gibson County in NW Tennessee) is prayerfully seeking a director of missions (DOM) to lead our local Baptist association in missions and evangelism. We desire a conservative man called by God with at least 10 years ministry and/or missions experience. Please send resumes and inquiries to: gbaresumes@gmail.com. All resumes must be submitted no later than August 31. Any resumes received after the cutoff date may not be considered. To find further information about the Gibson Baptist Association, go to www.gbalife.org.

MINISTRY ASSISTANT

The ministry assistant for stu-

dent ministry and social media at Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama, is responsible to the minister of discipleship and outreach for providing logistical, clerical and communications support to student ministry and for coordinating, maintaining and executing churchwide digital/virtual communication. This is a full-time position with compensation based upon experience and training. Candidates should contact Dr. W. Stacey Boutwell (sboutwell@lakesidebaptist.com, 205-313-2907) with questions and for a complete position description.

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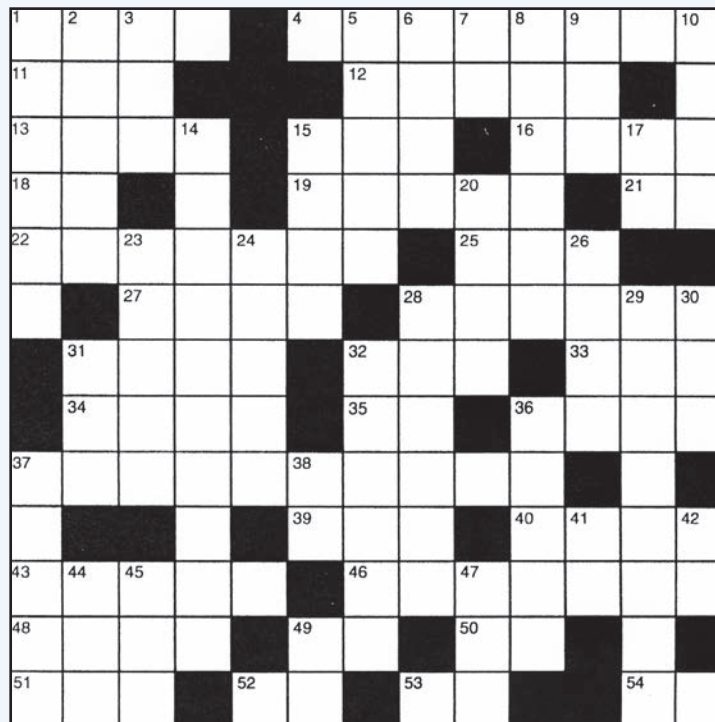
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CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

1. To ___ the brokenhearted. (Luke 4:18)
4. Honor, and glory, and _____. (Rev. 5:12)
11. The hearing _____. (Prov. 20:12)
12. ___ it with the prayers. (Rev. 8:3)
13. The ___ to come. (Eph. 2:7)
15. Princes of Midian, _____. (Josh. 13:21)
16. Preach the word in _____. (Acts 16:6)
18. Lines. (abbr.)
19. The son of _____. (1 Kings 4:9)
21. Doctor of Divinity. (abbr.)
22. A ___ come from God. (John 3:2)
25. Airport code for Monte Carlo, Monaco.
27. Uz and _____. (Gen. 36:28)
28. ___ the beauty of the Lord. (Ps. 27:4)
31. To rid of excess by cutting.
32. Zechariah, _____. (1 Chron. 15:18)
33. Though they be ___ like crimson. (Isa. 1:18)
34. Japanese city.
35. Established church. (abbr.)
36. The waters called He _____. (Gen. 1:10)
37. Biology: resembling a string of beads.
39. Mother.
40. She is thine _____. (Lev. 18:14)
43. Let us ___ before the Lord our Maker. (Ps. 95:6)
46. To demand the restoration or return of.
48. Following the ___ great with young. (Ps. 78:71)
49. Turn ye unto ____.



By Pamela Jensen Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

- (Zech. 1:3)
50. Symbol for chlorine.
51. Scrap of cloth.
52. Known unto ___ the mystery. (Eph. 3:3)
53. ___; and he smelleth the battle. (Job 39:25)
54. ___ in peace. (Mark 5:34)

DOWN

1. I will restore ___ unto thee. (Jer. 30:17)
2. Fly as the _____. (Jer. 49:22)
3. Now these ___ Thy servants. (Neh. 1:10)
5. A ___ of hospitality. (Titus 1:8)
6. One of a people of southern Nigeria.
7. Science fiction. (abbr.)
8. I the Lord ___ the heart. (Jer. 17:10)
9. Internal Revenue Service. (abbr.)
10. Let us be ___ and rejoice. (Rev. 19:7)
14. Offer up spiritual _____. (1 Pet. 2:5)
15. Garden of _____. (Gen. 2:15)
17. Idaho. (abbr.)
20. To everlasting. ____.
- (Ps. 41:13)
23. Holy garments for _____. (Ex. 28:2)
24. Sons of Pharez ... Hezron and _____. (Gen. 46:12)
26. Weep no _____. (Isa. 30:19)
28. All things are ___ new. (2 Cor. 5:17)
29. Will increase in _____. (Prov. 9:9)
30. Doctor of Dental Science. (abbr.)
31. Technical knockout. (abbr.)
32. My cry came ___ Him. (Ps. 18:6)
36. Witnessing both to ___ and great. (Acts 26:22)
37. God my _____. (Job 35:10)
38. Contraction for "I am."
41. United Artists. (abbr.)
42. Symbol for thulium.
44. Northwest Airlines. (abbr.)
45. Electroencephalogram. (abbr.)
47. Circuit Court of Appeals. (abbr.)
49. Every knee shall bow to _____. (Rom. 14:11)

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

Mosaics discovered in ancient synagogue

The earliest known depiction of biblical heroines Jael and Deborah was discovered at an ancient synagogue in Israel, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill announced July 5.

A rendering of one figure driving a stake through the head of a military general was the initial clue that led the team to identify the figures, according to project director Jodi Magness.

"This is extremely rare," Magness, an archaeologist and religion professor at UNC-Chapel Hill, said. "I don't know of any other ancient depictions of these heroines."

The nearly 1,600-year-old mosaics were uncovered by a team of students and specialists as part of the Huqoq Excavation Project, which resumed its 10th season of excavations this summer at a synagogue in the ancient Jewish village of Huqoq in Lower Galilee.

The project team unearthed a part of the synagogue's floor decorated with a large mosaic panel that is divided into three horizontal strips called registers. The mosaic depicts the account from Judges 4 of the victory of the Israelite forces led by the prophetess and judge Deborah and the military commander Barak over the Canaanite army led by the general Sisera.

Depiction

The Bible relates that after the battle Sisera took refuge in the tent of a Kenite woman named Jael

(Yael) who killed him by driving a tent stake through his temple as he slept.

The uppermost register of the newly discovered Huqoq mosaic shows Deborah under a palm tree gazing at Barak, who is equipped with a shield. Only a small part of the middle register, which appears to show Sisera seated, is preserved.

The lowest register depicts Sisera lying deceased on the ground, bleeding from the head as Jael hammers a tent stake through his temple.

'Special resonance'

"Looking at Joshua 19, we can see how the story might have had special resonance for the Jewish

community at Huqoq, as it is described as taking place in the same geographical region, the territory of the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun," Magness said.

Mosaics were first discovered at the site in 2012, and Magness said the

synagogue, which dates to the late fourth or early fifth century, is "unusually large and richly decorated."

In addition to its extensive, relatively well-preserved mosaics, the site is adorned with wall paintings and carved architecture.

Other mosaics discovered at the site depict two of the spies sent by Moses to explore Canaan carrying a pole with a cluster of grapes (Num. 13:23), the parting of the Red Sea, Noah's ark, Jonah and the building of the Tower of Babel. (RNS, UNC News)



Photo by Jim Haberman

The Israelite commander Barak is depicted in the Huqoq synagogue mosaic.

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Hobbies aid health and outreach efforts for pastors

By Aaron Earls
Lifeway Research

While some pastors may believe they don't have the time to invest in a hobby, that investment could enable a pastor to meet one of the greatest ministry needs.

More than 3 in 4 pastors (76%) say fostering connections with unchurched people is a top ministry difficulty.

One way to establish those relationships is through a hobby that takes place outside the walls of the church. Yet half of pastors admit that taking time for personal hobbies or interests is challenging.

Health and happiness

Numerous studies point to the benefits of developing personal hobbies away from work. Having off-the-clock interests leads to better physical and mental health.

Not only that, they help make a person more well-rounded and interesting to be around.

Lifeway president and former pastor Ben Mandrell says hobbies help prevent him from becoming a "work machine."

As pastors look to connect with those outside of the church, they should want to present a faith that leads to

a life of flourishing. Seeing pastors enjoy hobbies, grow as well-rounded people and maintain good mental health will make Christianity more attractive to those apart from Christ.

Having composure

Having peace and composure in the midst of a challenging world will present pastors with opportunities to "give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15).

It can be hard to foster connections with the unchurched if you're constantly surrounded by the church. Pastors should spend time with their congregations. But if they want to meet those far from Christ, they'll have to go beyond those congregational relationships.

Bivocational pastors have a built-in advantage for connections with unchurched people. Their jobs often surround them with non-Christian coworkers and customers. For pastors who work full-time in the church, they have to do more. Hobbies can help.

When asked about their personal hobbies, numerous pastors mentioned how those interests helped them get outside of the Christian



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bubble and get to know non-Christians in their communities. A hobby can push you beyond your usual group of connections and help you get to know those around you.

Some pastors may be particularly skilled at developing deep relationships with people they casually meet, but for most, those connections form more easily when they happen over a shared connection or interest.

Hobbies help pastors move from knowing the name of an unchurched person to actually knowing that person.

Every Tuesday night, I play basketball with a group of guys I would have otherwise never met. But now that we've been playing together for a year or more, I know their personal successes and struggles.

Those relationships have blossomed over the shared connection of a sport we enjoy. I've grown as I've gotten to know these guys, but those relationships have also provided gospel opportunities.

Opens gospel doors

Religiously unaffiliated Americans are open to faith conversations but are overall less open than the average American.

Crossing that barrier may be even more difficult for pastors who don't have areas of common ground to start those conversations.

When pastors have a hobby or interest that creates a connection with unchurched people, they have a key that can open doors for gospel conversations.

Because of my weekly

basketball games, I'm able to share the love of Christ with those guys on Tuesday nights and beyond. We've been taking prayer requests and doing brief devotionals through John's Gospel each week before we play. We text back and forth about our lives and ways I can pray for them.

Those opportunities happen because basketball created a bridge. Think through hobbies or interests that can spark connections with those in the community.

Not only can personal hobbies help pastors seek to reach the lost in their community, but hobbies can also help pastors better reach the lost when they show up in church.

When the unchurched read the Bible or hear scriptural stories, they often have a unique perspective and different questions about the text. Pastors who spend time with the lost and have formed relationships with them over shared interests will be better equipped to address those questions in their sermons.

Pastors with hobbies and resulting connections with the unchurched can respond to common objections with gospel truths because they've been around those who are skeptical and questioning.

Bridge to share

As personal hobbies give pastors a bridge to share with the unchurched, outside interests can also enable the pastor to create a bridge for the unchurched to relate to the Bible passage. Pastors can use personal interests to provide sermon illustrations that non-Christians may connect with. And this could give them a better grasp of the gospel message. The illustrations could also benefit young Christians and others in the church.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This story was originally published by Lifeway Research.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 24

Explore the Bible

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



GOD HEALS 2 Kings 5:1–14

Desperate (1–6)

Naaman was the commander of the army for the king of Aram (Syria). He had an impeccable reputation. He was successful in his military career. He was an important man to the king, highly regarded and a valiant warrior. Through him the Lord had given victory to Aram, Israel's traditional enemy. Although startling to the reader, God is revealing He is sovereign over all nations and all people. The Lord had already laid claim to Aram's political future (1 Kings 19:15).

But Naaman had a problem. He had a skin disease many translations call leprosy. The word was used for a variety of illnesses in the Old Testament and was not necessarily limited to Hansen's disease. Naaman was clearly in the early stages of the disease since he could move about in public and continue his work.

There was a young girl from Israel serving Naaman's wife, a casualty of one of Aram's raiding parties into Israel. After hearing of her master's sickness, she told her mistress Naaman could be cured if he would go to the prophet of God in Samaria. She shared the knowledge her master needed the most.

Naaman's desperation was evident because he believed the word of the young girl. He told his king what his wife's servant had said, and the king offered Naaman his full support and wrote a letter to the king of Israel. The letter asked the king of Israel to cure Naaman of his skin disease. Along with the letter, Naaman took hundreds of pounds of silver and gold and 10 sets of clothing. This was a huge amount of money. Naaman thought he could hire the prophet to cure him.

Directed (7–10)

When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes. He understood the futility of the letter, for he knew he could not heal anyone. He thought like a king and suspected the king of Aram was looking for an excuse to renew old hostilities. He had no idea personal pain and a

young girl's pure motives had led to this trip.

Elisha saw Naaman's presence as an opportunity to prove there was a real prophet in Israel. His message encouraged the king since he intended to show Naaman that while the king does not heal, someone in Israel could cure him. Then Naaman and his impressive entourage went to Elisha's house, expecting to see the prophet. Elisha did not come out to meet him. Instead, Elisha sent a messenger to instruct Naaman to wash seven times in the Jordan River and he would be healed.

Disappointed (11–12)

It is not surprising Naaman was furious. He had come a long distance. He was prepared to pay. He had even left the palace and gone to Elisha's house. In his vending machine theology he had put plenty of coins in the slot, but for what? No respect. No healing. It was humiliating.

Despite his pagan background, Naaman had expected the prophet to offer up a prayer to the Lord his God and perform some kind of religious action to heal him. If all he needed was to wash in a river to be healed, the rivers back in Aram had much better water quality than the Jordan River.

Delivered (13–14)

Once again Naaman's servants came to his rescue. They challenged his foolish response to Elisha. They reasoned with him that if Elisha had asked him to do some great thing, he would have done it. Why not do this simple thing in order to be healed? Naaman took their advice and dipped himself in the Jordan River seven times and was healed immediately.

Since Naaman was willing to humble himself and obey what God had spoken through Elisha, he was changed. Not only was his skin healed, but his heart was transformed as well (v. 15). God knew Naaman was even sicker on the inside than he was on the outside. God healed Naaman from leprosy of the heart.

Bible Studies for Life

By Roy E. Ciampa, Ph.D.
Armstrong Chair of Religion, Samford University



WHO IS YOUR NEIGHBOR? Luke 10:25–37

What does God expect of us when it comes to addressing the needs of others? An expert in the law of Moses tested Jesus' abilities as an interpreter of Scripture by asking what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus indicated the answer was found in the law of Moses and turned the tables on the man, asking how he interpreted what the Scriptures said about inheriting eternal life.

Love for others is tied to our love for God. (25–28)

The expert was a pretty good interpreter of the Scriptures after all. In his answer he combined the command to love God (Deut. 6:5) with the command to love our neighbors (Lev. 19:18). Jesus Himself indicated elsewhere these two commands together summarize the whole law (Matt. 22:37–40, Mark 12:29–31), and Jesus tells this expert he has understood the Scriptures correctly.

The command to love God with all one's being was recited by faithful Jews twice each day and is clearly at the heart of all God's commandments. Once one remembers God created and loves every person with His love as our Father, it becomes clear anyone who truly loves God must love those He created and loves (and so Leviticus 19:18 is an implication of Deuteronomy 6:5). Our love for God must be reflected in love for those He loves. To keep these two commands, to love God with all one's being and one's neighbor as oneself, is to keep all God's commandments.

Love for others does not ignore them. (29–32)

This expert in the law reminds us even expert interpreters of the Bible can be tempted to interpret it in self-serving ways.

He wanted "to justify himself," hoping for a narrow interpretation of what was required by the command to love our neighbors. He probably hoped it only required loving people who are like us and close to us.

Jesus told a story about a man violently assaulted by robbers and left half dead on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Rather than helping him, a priest and a Levite went around him, leaving him there as they walked by him. These men were assumed to have a proper worship and love of God, but they did not consider the stranger on the road worthy of their time. They undoubtedly had some rationalization for leaving him there. Perhaps they were afraid and just wanted to get away from that area as soon as possible.

Love for others goes out of the way to help and support them. (33–37)

A Samaritan also approached the man. Samaritans were despised by most Jews and were thought to have a defective worship and love of God. Rather than avoiding the man, the Samaritan "had compassion" on him and generously gave time and resources. The Samaritan did everything he could to help the man. In fact he assumed indefinite responsibility for the man's well-being.

Jesus' question at the end, asking which of the people had proved to be a neighbor to the victim, transforms what it means to be a neighbor. A neighbor isn't just someone who lives near us or is like us. Our neighbor is anyone in need we might encounter and be in a position to help through our time, efforts and resources.

The Samaritan, identified as the "one who showed mercy," was a neighbor to the man in need, while the priest and the Levite abandoned that role. Are there people God sees as our neighbors who we have rejected for that role, like the priest and the Levite?

God's love compels us to reflect His love to others around us because the One who commanded us to love Him with all our being loves our neighbors more than we could ever possibly imagine. Jesus commands us to be like the Samaritan, to "go and do the same."

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Hamilton Richardson

The Alabama Baptist

Caring for aging parents not just duty, but a calling, Linda Winn says

Caring for aging parents is a natural consequence of the passing of time and should be actively prepared for, according to writer Linda Winn.

During an episode of The Alabama Baptist podcast, “Amplify,” Winn told host Maggie Evans about her recent experience caring for her mother, who was totally blind and paralyzed by a stroke. It prompted her to write, “The Road to Glory: Walking Mama Home.”

Winn, a retired educator with a bachelor’s degree from Tennessee Tech University, a master’s degree from Winthrop University and post-master’s work at West Georgia University, explained how she came to take care of her mother, saying that on his deathbed her father made the request.

“I want you to take care of your mother now,” Winn said, sharing her father’s words. “I promised him I would. That’s my Heavenly Father’s wish, too. He pretty much commands it.”

“In 1 Timothy 5, He issues a dire warning. He says they’re worse than an unbeliever if they neglect to take care of their parents. That’s a shock to the system.”

“When we were growing up, they were there for us.”



LINDA WINN

Photo courtesy of lindawinn.com

“God led the way the whole time,” Winn asserted. “I turned it over to Him because it was a bigger mess than I could deal with. There were bumps in the road, but He steered us clear.”

She learned a lot from the experience, Winn acknowledged.

“It was those 10 years that I spent navigating the way through the eldercare system with my mother that were the years of greatest spiritual growth for me. I was in a place of total dependence on the Lord. I was in close personal contact with Jesus the whole time. My prayer life was 24/7. My constant question was, ‘What do I do now Lord?’ ”

When parent and child trade places, as happened with Winn and her mother, it can be a hard thing to deal with, she said.

“It was a role reversal, and it was hard for both of us to adjust. It was very difficult for her losing her independence, and it takes that kind of

setting yourself aside for someone else. It’s a calling.”

Learning the ins and outs of the eldercare system and working through details of finding good caregivers also was difficult.

High alert

“It came at a time that I could rearrange my schedule to do it,” Winn said. “You have to put your discerning spirit on high alert because ... you’re going to meet all kinds of people and you have to constantly be aware of the good people and the bad people.”

“The reality is that we live in a fallen world and people do bad things and cause bad things to happen — but it also is a world with lots of good people who also have bad days. When good people have bad days, we need to be there as a buffer between them and our parents.”

As Winn reflected back on her journey, she described how she realized God brought her through her childhood and early years as preparation for taking care of her mother.

“I grew up in the kind of church where I got head knowledge, but not the heart knowledge,” she admitted. “I attended a crusade and finally heard the gospel. I finally understood what that meant. I was saved and sealed and under His protective hand until I was ready to follow Him.”

God then started putting people in Winn’s life to draw her closer to Himself.

“I was influenced by Charles Stanley, and I realized I needed a church to belong to,” Winn said,

adding God eventually led her to the right one.

“The minute I walked in the door, I knew that’s where I belonged,” she recalled. “I walked the aisle and I was baptized. The rest is history.”

An unexpected result of the 10 years taking care of her mother was the inspiration to write “The Road to Glory.”

“My writing took off,” Winn said, explaining how her experiences drove her to write. “I had written in the secular world but it helped

me learn to dig deeper, and it helped me in every aspect of caring for my mother.”

Winn said her situation is common to many adult children, which is why she believes what she has learned and shares in the book will be valuable to others.

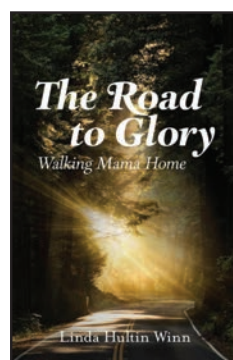
“We’re all headed for this if we live long enough,” she said. “We’ll be in this situation or helping someone in this situation. This is kind of a trailblazing book for you when it’s your turn. It’ll give you an idea of all the bad things that can happen and the bad people you can meet, and all the good people that you can meet, and how to deal with them. Everyone expects the unexpected when you’re dealing with aging parents.”

God’s goodness

Pointing to God’s goodness and direction during the trying times, Winn said she was just doing what God wanted her to do.

“If we empty ourselves and allow Him to solve problems from His point of view, allow Him to use us to solve the problems, everything’s going to work out fine, just the way He wanted it to,” she declared.

For more about Linda Winn’s story and about her mother Sadie, as well as about her book, visit lindawinn.com.



EDITOR’S NOTE

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