

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



Gardening program in Tusculum teaches children lessons of the earth

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Churches, parents, teachers make safety a priority as gun violence debate continues

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Daniel Long forges crosses to share the gospel after tragic loss of his wife

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Facebook photos

Missions volunteers from First Baptist Church Florence serve in and around Talkeetna, Alaska, July 8–16. The team assisted elderly members of Montana Creek Baptist Church and other residents with home repairs and yard work.

Living ‘on mission’

Alabama-Alaska partnership enhanced by team from FBC Florence

By Laura Lee Leathers
The Alabama Baptist

Members of First Baptist Church Florence have been engaged in missions endeavors throughout their community and state for several years. But 2022 marked at least 10 years since a group from the church traveled beyond state borders.

In February the idea for a

missions trip to Alaska came through Andy Thompson, a University of North Alabama student involved with Baptist Campus Ministries who attends FBC Florence. He shared with Scott Underwood, associate pastor of worship and students, that he would be a summer missionary at Montana Creek Baptist Church, located three hours north of Anchorage.

Alaska Baptists have another connection with UNA and its BCM. Jae McKee, director of missions and church planting for the Alaska Baptist Resource Network, is a UNA graduate, where he was involved in BCM.

Eddy Garner, associational missions strategist for Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association where FBC is a member, was BCM minister at UNA while McKee was a student. Garner is working with pastors in the association and in Alaska on partnership opportunities.

Two goals

Underwood and Kevin Johnson, pastor of FBC Florence, began to pray and talk about making Alaska a church missions trip destination. Underwood contacted Rendell Day, pastor of MCBC, and the two selected July 8–16 for the trip to Talkeetna.

From the initial planning,

Underwood had two goals for the 12-member Alabama team: to gain a glimpse of what lies beyond their backyard (a tangible experience of the Great Commission) and to become more aware of their spiritual gifts and talents as they served.

Upon their arrival the team met with Day, who laid out the week's activities.

Starting off the week was worship with members of MCBC. After the service the church family and missions team connected over a meal and time of fellowship.

Monday they worked at the Upper Susitna Food Pantry. They removed everything (See 'Missions,' page 12)

HIGHLIGHTS



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The crossword puzzle
can be found on page 15.



Photo by Grace Thornton/The Alabama Baptist

Greg Hasberry (pictured here) met his kidney donor at his gym. Hasberry was struggling with kidney failure when Bob Kuykendall gave him a kidney in 2015.

Stories Season 7 debuts with kidney transplant story

Not too many years ago Bob Kuykendall didn't believe in divine intervention.

"I felt like there was this sort of higher power, but maybe we were kind of on our own," he explained. "Like [God] didn't do anything."

But then Kuykendall met Greg Hasberry, whose kidneys were failing.

Hasberry said his journey started off dark.

"I couldn't see my way out," he remembered. "This is coming from a man [who has] always been independent, always found my own way. It was a test in becoming vulnerable and finding a depth of faith I'd never touched."

The same was true for Kuykendall. Through a series of unexpected events, he felt what he had always questioned in others, a sense of God's leading.

'I knew it'

"I knew I was giving him a kidney. I knew it," he recalled.

And through that experience

He not only gave Hasberry a new chance at life, Kuykendall got one too — a brand new faith in God.

"This wasn't just about Greg's kidney," Kuykendall reflected. "I believe God was working on a two-for-one kind of deal."

Their story is the first in the newest season of the Stories podcast, Season 7: The Living Donor Story.

Listen at tabonline.org/stories or wherever you get podcasts. (Grace Thornton)

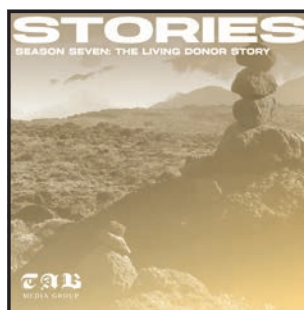


Photo courtesy of Bob Kuykendall

Bob Kuykendall (right) and his son, Cade, climb Mount Kilimanjaro in 2017, two years after Kuykendall gave Greg Hasberry his kidney.

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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OPINION



RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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



jrash@thealabamabaptist.org



@RashionalThts

Ever experience ‘porch reading’ with The Alabama Baptist?

Porch reading, that’s what my friend calls it. You know when you are settled in for a calm reading of a book, newspaper or magazine and your mind wanders as you read the words on the pages.

“Porch reading is slow, deliberately so, offering time to ruminate and reflect, or just let the mind meander in whatever paths the reading generates. In its most profound moments, it is silent,” he noted recently.

While assessing the final versions of the pages in this week’s issue, I found myself porch reading, literally and figuratively. Literally, because I sat outside on my balcony last Thursday evening and slowly poured over every headline, cutline and article. Figuratively, because each page steered my mind toward a memory, an idea or a prayer moment.

Page 1 features the team from First Baptist Church Florence that recently participated in the Alabama-Alaska partnership, and I immediately remembered the conversations our team has had with Randy Covington and Jae McKee from the Alaska Baptist Resource Network.

Scotty Goldman from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions also popped in my mind because of all the work he does in global missions, and

retired state missionary Jamie Baldwin surfaced too. He spent the first six months of the partnership in Alaska helping get it all going.

Quick pause to pray for all of them and the work they are doing before I refocus on the story.

Coming to the bottom of page 1, I follow the jump to page 12 and am taken on a different path as I connect quickly with the FBC Florence team’s yard work, household chores and other projects while in Alaska.

It reminded me of a missions trip taken by a team from Mountain View Baptist Church in Phil Campbell, my home church, while I served as a

short-term missionary with the International Mission Board.

Serving the Caribbean and housed in Hollywood, Florida, my assignment that week was to organize the various work assignments and projects for the team — and being the over-achiever I am, I made sure they had plenty of work to do.

However, now that I think about it, I’m not sure many of them ever volunteered for a missions trip again.

Uh oh, but on a positive note, the team members were such an encouragement for the missionary families that week, and I’ve had the privilege of staying connected to many of those families

for more than 25 years now. In fact, I’ve had conversations with four of the families in the past week — and some of those conversations included sharing updates related to The Alabama Baptist.

Oh yes, The Alabama Baptist, I’m supposed to be proofing pages for deadline. And off I go to the next page and another adventure.

How about you? What surfaces in your mind as you read the articles each week or engage with content produced online?

Email us at news@thealabama-baptist.org or write to: 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.

10 ways to pray for, support students, teachers, schools

1. Pray for the safety of children, students, teachers and staff.

2. Pray for dedicated teachers who see each child as a success.

3. Pray each child will be seen as an individual loved by God.

4. Pray students will be accepting of racial and cultural distinctions. Many areas of the United States have immigrants who have moved here for various reasons — wars, crime, unemployment, education, famine, etc. Imagine how difficult it is to be in a strange place. You cannot speak the language, have no friends and everything is new and different.

5. Pray students will show compassion and kindness to those with special needs. Simple activities may require more time to master, and assigning a “buddy” can be a good starting point.

6. Pray children will learn how to make friends, and how to be a friend to others.

7. Pray for off-campus trips — that bus drivers will be experienced and competent.

8. Pray for extracurricular activities sponsored by the school. Sports injuries can create health problems that last for years.

9. Pray parents and the community

support schools through volunteering, attendance at school functions or offering encouragement to teachers and staff. Churches could “adopt” a school or Sunday School classes can adopt a classroom, providing supplies and materials not furnished by the school system.

10. Look for opportunities to let others know church members are praying for schools. Start a movement for your congregation to pray for all schools.

—Carolyn Tomlin

Excerpt from *The Baptist Paper*

Your Voice



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

Christian 'rights' and the lordship of Christ

By Lynn H. Pryor

lynnhpryor.com

We hear a lot of talk — a lot of concern — about our rights. As Americans we are thankful for the rights that have been spelled out for us in the Bill of Rights. At the same time we are constantly looking over our shoulder because of a perceived threat that such-and-such group is taking away our rights.

If you lean to the left, some right-wing lobby (or the government) is aggressively working to take away your right to choose ... or live where you want ... or ...

If you lean to the right, some liberal lobby (or the government) is aggressively working to take your right to own a gun ... or wave a flag ... or ...

I'll admit it. I like my rights. But I don't want to address our rights as American citizens. I want to address our rights as followers of Christ.

If you are a Christian you have no rights. No group took your rights away from you. You gave them away.

Jesus said, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Jesus told us to count the cost of following Him.

Jesus 'calls the shots'

When we come to Christ, we don't just come to Him as Savior; we come to Him as Lord. He calls the shots. He owns us. We are no longer our own, but we were bought by Christ (1 Cor. 6:19–20).

We don't make ourselves doormats for anyone and everyone to walk on, but we are to be considerate of preferences and desires for the sake of others: "In humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Phil 2:3–4).

Have you ever heard the name

Eleanor of Aquitaine? She was the queen of France in the 12th century, and she is considered one of the most powerful women ever.

When her husband, King Louis VII, returned from fighting the crusades, he walked into the castle clean shaven. Eleanor thought her clean-shaven husband looked hideous and insisted he grow back his beard. Louis refused. Eleanor divorced him and then turned around and married the king of England.

The squabble between Eleanor and Louis led to a conflict between two countries that lasted almost 120 years, the Hundred Years' War. The pettiness over a beard led to political alliances that led to war, which led to the deaths of 3.5 million people. If only Louis VII had set aside his preference — and set aside his Bic razor.

A me-centered attitude leads to fighting and divisiveness. It's serious.

The greatest detriment to the church's witness in the world is how we treat each other. So let me challenge you, follower of Christ, to do your part. Quit insisting on having things your way. After all you have no rights. You gave all your rights to Jesus, who calls us to follow Him in grace and love.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Lynn H. Pryor is team leader for adult ministry at Lifeway Christian Resources. He blogs at lynnhpryor.com. This post is reprinted with permission.

As humans, we are created for more than daily living. We were created specially by God for the sake of God's own pleasure, and with that comes the greatest joy of being found in a specific and close relationship with Him.

James Hammack

"Created with purpose"
the-scroll.com

When in a conflict situation, speak less, slow, low and last if possible.

"Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" (James 1:19).

Chris Crain

Executive director
BMBA

Full circle. Full joy. Love seeing God's moments of grace and goodness all around.

Pastor Mark Bethea
First Baptist Church
Montgomery

"The question every kid wants to know ... 'Is God into me and how do I know?' The answer ... Jesus." —Bob Goff

Trent Nolen
student minister
FBC Hartselle
via LinkedIn

Letters to the Editor

I have great concern for the church in America today. ...

A.W. Tozer said 95% of today's church activities would continue even without the Holy Spirit, but 95% of the activities of the early church would have stopped without the Holy Spirit.

We are in an all-out war. Do we really believe hell is real? We go

to church, pay our tithes, sing a few praise songs and then try to beat the crowd to the local diner.

We justify our actions and sacrifice nothing. To refuse to examine ourselves and how we do church is an arrogance, refusing guidance from Christ Himself.

Don Hayden
Tuscaloosa, Ala.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“Deep grief as a result of unbearable loss is not a teaching moment.”

MELANIE DESIMONE

From a blog post at thelifeididntchoose.com

“Our job is to make it realistic for them to come to a place where they can feel loved and learn about God,” said **Chris Lohman**, pastor of **Garage Church in Huntington Beach, California**.

“Compassion is the hallmark of [Jesus Christ’s] life and ministry. It is what drew people to Him. It is what made His preaching different,” said **Ed Litton**, pastor of **Redemption Church in Saraland**, in his president’s address during the 2022 SBC Annual Meeting.

“I feel like this job was just created for me. The fact that I’ve been where these people have been, I understand them and understand the situation,” said **Kathleen Schuster**,

program manager for Ministry Village’s Tender Hearts Caring Hands ministry in Pensacola, Florida.

“All of us need to take seriously where we fit in this cause to defend precious preborn lives in a culture of death. It will look different ... but the call is still there for all of us,” noted **Colson Center President John Stonestreet** during a seminar on how pro-life supporters should respond when *Roe v. Wade* was overturned.

“Only Jesus can save souls. The juggling doesn’t do that. What juggling does for other people is that it brings joy and that alone is a calling,” said **Jesse Joyner**, a pro-

fessional **juggler** and follower of Christ.

“Church Branding 101 is Evangelism 101. It’s not easy, but it is simple. If done properly, the Holy Spirit can use church branding to reach people who never knew they needed Jesus or the church,” said **Mark MacDonald**, **church branding strategist for BeKnown-forSomething.com** and **executive director of the Center for Church Communication**.

“The words of Jesus that are to abide in us have the miraculous ability to awaken the unseen spiritual life deep within you that you long for,” said **Julie Busler**, **author of “Joyful Sorrow.”**

From the *Twitterverse*

@brocraige

Every time I preach I’m reminded what an incredible calling I have on my life. The older I get the more precious each opportunity to preach is to me.

The older I get the more urgency I feel to make sure the gospel is presented. With aging, the weight becomes heavier, not lighter.

@jaytysonstewart

“Finding and funding ways for Southern Baptist congregations to work together to fulfill the Great Commission is the function of the Cooperative Program.” @alsbom @SBCCP —One Sacred Effort #PartnersForTheGospel

@LysaTerKeurst

Be brave today. You’re stronger than you know. You’re held safe in our great God’s mercy. He will be with you. Even if you can’t see the whole pathway forward, trust

goodness is ahead. Just cling to His truth ... and let God light the way step by step.

@DKCaudell

Ministry is great!
Influence is great!
Preaching is great!
Leading is great!
Growth is great!
Strategy is great!

Yet all of these make terrible gods. Jesus is better. Infinitely better.

@BillyGraham

“Science and technology can not change man’s basic nature. No amount of self-improvement or wishful thinking can change man’s basic nature. Only God — the One who created us — can re-create us.”

@BlalockMarshall

“If dependence upon God is your goal, then weakness is to your advantage.” —a great word from

@jdgreear in a message to leaders from some extremely tough places around the world. It’s true no matter where you live.

@TimothyLynch23

I don’t know what God is doing but I do know what God has done! He was faithful then and I know He will be faithful now.

@TAndrewBrown

We get glory into our hearts by getting on our knees in prayer, putting His words on our lips.

@DanielRitchie

Pursue your kids with a greater ferocity than you pursue a paycheck.

@GreggMatte

We can come to Christ in whatever state we’re in, and He will always be gracious. He fully knows us inside and out, yet He still loves us unconditionally!

Prayers of a public school teacher

For some reason there’s a negative stigma around public school teachers. But please know that somewhere there’s a teacher praying over a classroom full of students she’s never met.

She’s praying, thanking God for each of the babies He has chosen to be with her this year.

She’s praying that God guides her to meet each of their individual needs.

She’s praying that God shows His love to each of these babies through her.

She’s praying for strength, patience and understanding through all the days to come.

She’s praying she’s able to give them a safe, loving and comfortable environment throughout the time they spend with her.

She’s praying that over the next year she is able to make a difference in each of their lives.

She’s praying that she is able to teach them more than just the curriculum ... kindness, love, responsibility and how to be a good person.

She’s praying that when they go home each day, they know she cares and does what she does for them.

She’s praying God will lead her through the path He has chosen for her.

She’s praying for an amazing and successful 2022–2023 school year!

She is me! She is also many of my colleagues. She is many of the teachers in our country.

Regardless of your view/opinion of public school teachers, know that teachers do this job because we are called to do this job.

We do this job because we want to make a difference and because we want a better future for our children!

Jennifer Kalyn Akins
via Facebook

‘Catastrophic’

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief responds following Kentucky flooding

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers are providing flood recovery, laundry services and chaplain ministry in Elkhorn City, Kentucky, as the area copes with historic flooding.

The Alabama DR volunteers are part of a multistate effort in

eastern Kentucky, where entire towns were submerged as heavy rains caused flash floods in the overnight hours of July 27. It’s the worst flooding the state has faced in its history.

“The destruction is absolutely catastrophic everywhere you look, and it’s very widespread,” said Ron Crow, Disaster Relief director for the Kentucky Baptist Convention. “It’s going to take months to recover from, if not years. ... [This] is just indescribable.”

“We have people on the ground,

and we have chaplains coming who will be able to bring help, hope and healing to those affected.”

Multiple Southern Baptist state conventions are sending SBDR teams, including Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama with seven sites set up or planned as of Aug. 3.

“We are grateful to our SBDR network because we are receiving help from multiple states,” Crow said. “We are grateful for the cooperative network we have among our Baptist family.”

Send Relief, the compassion ministry arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, is providing resources for meals and flood relief supplies.

The storm has caused millions of dollars of damage and claimed 35 lives so far, with that total expected



Photo courtesy of Send Relief
First Baptist Church Whitesburg, Kentucky, receives its first load of supplies from Send Relief.



Photo courtesy of Send Relief
Southern Baptists are responding in eastern Kentucky to the worst flooding the state has faced in its history. Devastating flash floods swept through the region overnight on July 27, submerging entire towns underwater.

to increase as the flooding recedes and first responders continue their search and rescue efforts. The National Guard has saved hundreds of people through their high-water rescues.

To donate to relief efforts in Kentucky, go to sbd.org and click

the “Flood Relief” banner.

Donations also may be sent to: Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, P.O. Box 681970, Prattville, AL 36068; for: Kentucky flooding. Online gifts may be made at sbd.org/kentucky-flooding-relief. (TAB, Send Relief)

Persecuted church

Pastor’s two sons killed; teen daughter kidnapped from home

ABUJA, Nigeria — A Nigerian pastor’s two sons were killed and his daughter abducted in a July 6 attack at the pastor’s home.

Gunmen invaded the home of Daniel Umaru in Nigeria’s Adamawa State, murdering his two sons — Fanye, 23, and Kefrey, 19 — and kidnapping his 13-year-old daughter, Ijagla, relief group Barnabas Fund reported.

Umaru was in critical condition with gunshot wounds, and his wife was in a shock-induced coma following the attack.

Adamawa State’s governor, Ahmadu Fintiri, sent security personnel to rescue the daughter.

At the funeral for her two slain sons Uma-

ru’s wife said, “I have forgiven those behind these killings and abductions.”

The captors released Ijagla after the funeral, Barnabas Fund reported.

Nigeria is No. 7 on Open Doors’ 2022 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian. Morning Star News reports Nigeria has led the world in the number of Christians killed or kidnapped for their faith.

Extremists in Uganda attack two Christians, killing one

KAMPALA, Uganda — Angry Muslims ambushed two Christians, killing one, after eight Muslims put their faith in Christ during an open-air debate.

Assailants attacked an assistant pastor, Ambrose Mugisha, and Robert Bwenje following the July 6 debate on Christianity and Islam

in Sirimula village in Kyankwanzi District. Morning Star News reported passersby found the two who were taken to a clinic. Bwenje died July 10, a source said.

Police arrested one assailant.

Mugisha’s church in Nyamiringa village in



MS photo

Kiboga District had sent him to Sirimula to establish a church. The debate was part of the congregation’s outreach.

Approximately 12% of Uganda’s population is Muslim. The country’s constitution and laws allow for freedom of religion, but Christians increasingly have become targets of violence, World Atlas reported.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► Longtime Alabama Baptist **Robert Hugh Edmonds**, 90, of Centreville died July 26.

Edmonds served on the board of directors for The Alabama Baptist newspaper for a total of 16 years — eight years under editor Hudson Baggett and eight years under editor Bob Terry.



EDMONDS

He was chairman of the board in 1993 and 1994.

On Oct. 4, 2013, he and his wife of more than 50 years, Margaret Ann, were named honorary lifetime board members of The Alabama Baptist newspaper. They were the first recipients of this honor.

A March 5, 2011, resolution by the TAB board noting the end of his tenure as a board member in 2010, expressed gratitude for Edmonds' service and proclaimed the day "Hugh and Margaret Ann Edmonds Day."

Edmonds was founder of Edmonds Realty in Brent and a member of Bethel Baptist Church, Brent. He is survived by his wife, two sons and three grandchildren.

► **Steve Kelley**, 49, of Gordo, died Feb. 19.

He was a graduate of Shelton State Community College and was enrolled in the bachelor's of Christian ministry program at New Orleans Seminary. He worked at Beville State Community College as an instructor in modern manufacturing at the Pickens Career Center.

He served Highland Baptist Church, Gordo; Double Branches Baptist Church, Gordo; Mount Hebron Baptist Church, Northport; Indian Lake Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa; Pine Grove Baptist Church, Ethelsville; Kennedy Baptist Church; Corinth Baptist Church, Elrod; and Springhill Baptist Church, Carrollton.

He is survived by his wife, Shellia, and two children.



KELLEY

BLOUNT ASSOCIATION

► **Pleasant View Missionary Baptist Church, Holly Pond**, will host its regular third Sunday night singing Aug. 21, 5 p.m., with New Ground from Scottsboro.

COVINGTON ASSOCIATION

► **Pleasant Home Baptist Church, Andalusia**, will celebrate its 125th anniversary Aug. 28, 10 a.m.–noon. Special music will be provided by Gracyn Martin, Hailey Ward, Marion Bradley and Judy Godwin, as well as a sacred harp song led by Brian Kelley.

Brother Jim Kelley will bring the message, and Lonette Berg from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission will present a certificate to the church. Lunch will follow in the fellowship hall. Fred Kelley is pastor.

EAST LIBERTY ASSOCIATION

► **Lanier Baptist Church, Lanett**, will host its homecoming Aug. 28. There will be no Sunday School. Worship begins at 9:30 a.m. (CDT) with a mini concert by Tom Tyson and Bill King, followed by a message by King, interim pastor. There will be a covered dish lunch.



RAGLAND

FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION

► **Jeremy Ragland** is the new pastor of **Park Avenue Baptist Church, Oneonta**. Previously he served nine years as senior pastor of Bryan Baptist Church, Dora. He has two bachelor's degrees, one in theology and another in pastoral counseling. He also is a musician, having spent the past 20 years playing the piano with various southern gospel groups. He and his wife, Kimberly, have five children.

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

► **David Thomas** is the new pastor of **First Baptist Church Grand Bay**. He has served many churches as a pastor or interim pastor over the past 35 years. He is married to Dana.



THOMAS

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Michael Wilson** retired July 31 as director of Samford University's Center for Congregational Resources after 15 years of service.

Wilson, a Prattville native, was called to ministry as a teenager at First Baptist Church Prattville.

His commitment took him to Samford University and to Southern Seminary.



WILSON

Wilson called the CCR's partnership with TAB Media to help more than 70 churches begin livestreaming ministries "fun and very gratifying."

Wilson plans to do volunteer and consulting work in retirement and hopes to spend more time with his grandchildren.

He and his wife, Del, are members of Vestavia Hills Baptist Church, Birmingham. (Michael J. Brooks)



Photo by Lyle Dease/Pickens Baptist Association

Galilee celebrates note burning after arson

Pastor Bob Little says when members of Galilee Baptist Church in Panola watched their mortgage papers burn up July 16, it was a different kind of feeling than the last fire they watched together.

It was a "sigh of relief," he said. "We have that behind us now."

The small rural church took out the mortgage 15 years ago to pay for materials to rebuild their sanctuary after arsonists burned it down in February 2006. Galilee Baptist was one of nine church buildings torched over the course of a few days that month.

Little is the only one of the pastors still serving 16 years later.

'God's hand'

"We've seen God's hand in the whole process being able to help while we hurt," he said.

It started with Carpenters for Christ, who had Galilee's new building framed up in four work days. Volunteers continued construction, with Galilee's mortgage loan covering the cost of materials.

In the years since, Galilee has passed the fruit of that experience on to others.

"We were able to help maybe five other churches go through Carpenters for Christ and help them rebuild churches in the rural communities," Little said.

Because of the fire, Galilee also built a relationship with Pickens Baptist Association, which they later joined. They've also kept membership with the National Baptist Convention.

Through the church's partnership with Pickens Association, they got involved in prison ministry, planting several churches in nearby federal prisons.

"Through the fire, it allowed us to bridge some gaps, work alongside one another and advance the Kingdom," Little said. "A lot of things we were a part of wouldn't have happened if the fire hadn't come."

And now the congregation has paid off its 20-year mortgage five years early, a blessing they celebrated during the note burning ceremony July 16.

"To be able to do that with a small congregation in a rural community is not easy, but we thank God for His favor," Little said. (Grace Thornton)

God is our provider

Gardening program in Tuscumbia teaches children lessons of the earth

By Leisl Lemire
The Alabama Baptist

When asked if he is on staff at Calvary Baptist Church in Tuscumbia, Alan Nix is quick to say, “I’m just a regular member of the church.”

This is a humble response from the man who initiated a gardening program for students at Calvary Learning Center’s summer camp.

In its second year, the program has seen great success.

Nix said it began as a result of his membership in the Colbert County Master Gardeners Club, which encourages participants “to find meaningful educational activities to participate with, within the mission of the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service.”

‘Very grateful’

He remembers as a child being basically forced to help in the garden. At the time he didn’t appreciate it, but now he’s “very grateful for that,” as well as the things he has learned as a master gardener. He be-

lieves “these kids need to learn about gardening and where their fruits and vegetables come from.”

Willing to help

The idea for having a garden with the students at Calvary Learning Center had to be approved by a committee associated with the Master Gardener program, Nix noted. He credits Lucy Edwards, former regional director for ACES covering both Colbert and Lauderdale Master Gardener programs and current county extension coordinator for Chilton County, for her willingness to participate.

In a Colbert County Reporter article dated May 28, 2021, she is quoted as saying, “This is a program that is dear to my heart.”

When they were getting started, multiple master gardeners jumped in to help with the project. They had fun and served God at the same time, helping “build raised beds for the older students ... while providing smaller containers for the little ones. With these, the children learned to water



Photo courtesy of Lucy Edwards, Wray Dillard and Alan Nix
Students from Calvary Learning Center in Tuscumbia participate in a summer camp where they learn about gardening and how all foods connect back to the ground.

[and remove weeds and bugs from] the soil.”

‘Back to the ground’

One of the first gardening lessons involves considering the parts of a hamburger, the buns and everything that goes between them, “tying each part back to the

ground,” Nix said. “Even the meat that comes from the cow that eats the grain and the corn that grows from the ground.”

In another lesson the students “learn how to do a worm bed, as well as the importance of the worms to the soil for grow-

ing food,” Nix noted.

Midway through the second year of the 8- to 9-week camp, he said the children “get really excited about picking tomatoes, carrots, radishes, peppers, peas, lettuce and okra, some of which they get to take home. They also plant sunflowers and varied other plants.”

As part of the fun, daily snacks consist of items from the garden the children planted, allowing them to have the satisfaction of eating the fruit of their own labor.

Tie it back to God

Nix said that “from the beginning, one of the goals of those helping teach the children in the day camp includes always being careful to try to tie it back to how God provides for it.”



Photo courtesy of Lucy Edwards, Wray Dillard and Alan Nix

Young students from Calvary Learning Center work with smaller containers while older students work with raised beds. The children learn to water and remove weeds and bugs from the soil as well as the importance of worms in growing food.



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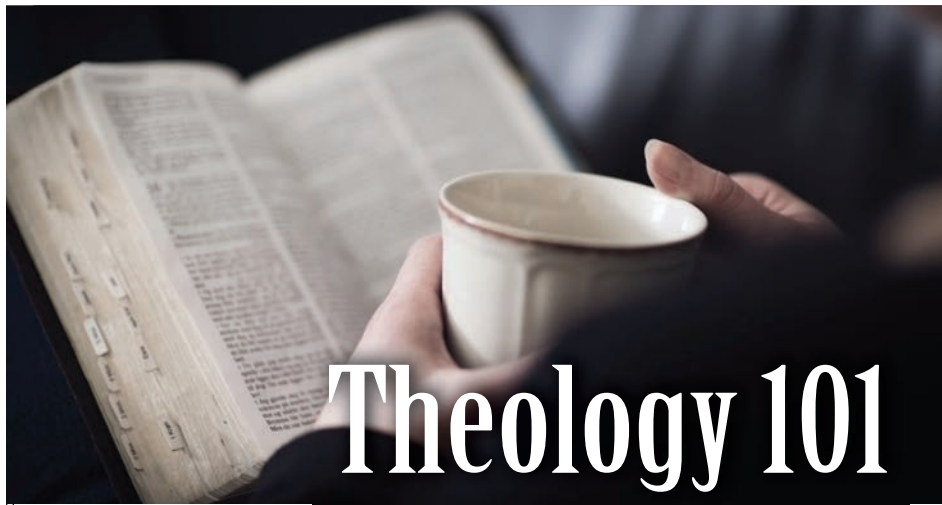
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Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Spiritual Blessings

Missing the Mark

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

The Bible has several ways of presenting the nature and seriousness of sin. One is the idea of “missing the mark,” which suggests a target that should be hit or reached. The mark or target is nothing less than godliness in thought and action.

The indictment of Romans 3:23 stands against every person when it says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

The truth about the target was also expressed in what Jesus admonished in the Sermon on the Mount when He set the mark beyond our natural reach: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). Little wonder that we mortals are all guilty of sin!

Failure to even aim at the target makes missing it inevitable. As James 4:17 says, “To him who knows to do good, and does not do it, to him it is sin.”

On the other hand it is possible for people to live and die having never known what the target is that God set. Herein lies one of the great motivations for missionary outreach and evangelistic strategies. The logic of Romans 10:13–14 never passes away when it says, “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?”

For those who have heard and thus possess a knowledge of the

target, the imagery of missing it presents several additional insights concerning sin.

A person might miss the intended target by aiming at an alternative. Rather than aiming at godliness, some might find themselves aiming at targets such as fitting in with human expectations or seeking acclaim, popularity or acceptance with the crowd. The biblical target of God’s glory gets displaced by such goals.

Genuineness of faith

Professing Christians who are comfortable with unconfessed sin raise serious doubt about the genuineness of their faith. Becoming acclimated to missing the target casts doubt on the reality of that faith. One who has not been born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit will not likely be overly concerned about the target.

On the other hand a genuine Christian might miss the target of godlikeness simply through inconsistency in private devotional life. Consistent exposure to God’s word is indispensable to staying on target. Fellowship with other believers also can be an important boost to keeping focused on the right target.

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.



5 communication strategies for churches as summer ends

By Mark MacDonald
The Alabama Baptist

Looking for some fresh church communication strategy ideas? We’re in the waning summer months on the church calendar, so Vacation Bible School is probably over, and regular church ministry groups are somewhat paused for a much-needed break. It’s relatively quiet.

However, fall anticipation is upon us. So let’s use this time to get your church communication strategy ready.

Here are five late-summer church communication ideas to do now to prepare you well for the fall.

1. Get to know the congregation better. You can’t go wrong learning about members. Talk with them to truly understand their needs, concerns and goals. Create (or correct) research about large church groups that represent growing demographic groups in your community. What do they need from your church? Are you delivering that information in your communication? Is there anything that can be eliminated?

2. Focus on their social media. Discover your church’s social media influencers by searching for their feeds. What are they posting about? Do they follow church channels? Why? Why not? Then ask them how the church can improve engagement and content. Do they think you have enough engaging content? Is there too much promotional content? What’s a successful rhythm for your content?

3. Identify potential volunteers. Talking with members about communication improvements will help you discover talented people you need for a highly effective communication team. Organize a meeting with them to dream about what can be done. Share goals and request help. Be on the lookout for photographers, videographers, writers, editors and designers who’d love to join your ministry. Be mindful,

though, of those earning a living doing what you’re requesting. They may not want to give the church free work, so ask them if they’ll offer a discount for ongoing assistance.

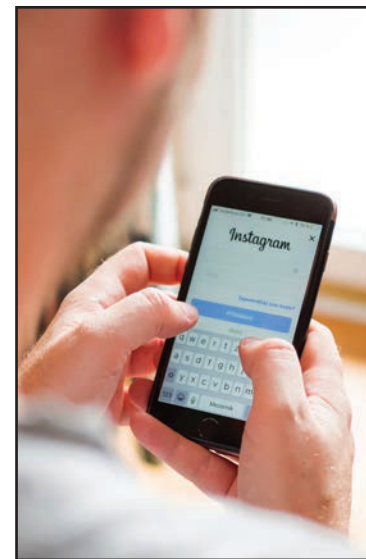
4. Talk with ministry leaders. Talk to the leaders who run the ministries. Share what you’re discovering about members. Encourage the leaders, and show interest in what they’re doing. Ask questions to hear how they’re meeting the needs of their groups. Share how you’re trying to help them and enable their ministry. Find out what they’re prioritizing and how you can assist.

5. Simplify your website. Effective church communication is about simplification. And since your website is critical to the church’s digital communication, calm it down. Ensure it’s clear and organized well (only 6–7 main menu items). Each page should have short scannable content, not a lot of paragraphs. Include bullet points with answers, three or four links to other pages and calls to action along the way. Are there enough pictures that extend each page’s story? How about staff pictures? Do they look up-to-date? Is there an easy

way to contact the people in charge of various ministries?

Make sure your website is ready this fall to lead people from catching the occasional online service into being involved with an in-person community of believers in your local church.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Mark MacDonald is a communication pastor, speaker, consultant, bestselling author, church branding strategist for *BeKnownforSomething.com* and executive director of the Center for Church Communication, empowering 10,000-plus churches to become known for something relevant (a communication thread) throughout their ministries, websites and social media. His book, “Be Known for Something,” is available at *BeKnownBook.com*.



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Church security

Safeguarding congregations against active shooters

In light of several church shootings in the past few years, including one in Vestavia Hills in June, many Alabama church leaders are evaluating the security measures they have in place.

Why might a church be targeted? Churches are welcoming to strangers and trusting of those who enter. Many have few safety precautions in place, and a church worship service provides a shooter with a large number of potential victims.

Shooters are hard to predict and can cause devastation in seconds, said Curt Carpenter, a retired police officer and team leader for Overwatch Security Advisors, a consulting firm based in Birmingham that works with businesses, nonprofits and churches.

“Your actions will play a large part in the effects that the shooter has on your facility,” he said during a security workshop held in recent years.

To know how to respond, churches and church security teams need to prepare, Carpenter said.

Some may choose to arm the church security team and others may choose to hire off-duty police officers to assist as a first line of defense, but other preventative actions also are important, experts say. Preventative tips from various sources include:

► Train volunteer church greeters to be watchful for those who are suspicious and may cause violence. Provide them with two-way radios to report possible danger to an appointed church person.

Enlist local officials

► Meet with local law enforcement officials and learn their strategy for responding to an active shooter. Give them a detailed blueprint of every room in the church to be used if they need to secure the building. Ask officers for up-to-date contact information in case of a church crisis and distribute it to church leadership/staff. Ask them about a lockdown policy for your church to avoid the chaos of an unexpected evacuation.

► Train your deacons to be



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watchful before, during and after church worship services and events. Teach them to be actively aware of people/things that seem out of the ordinary. During worship services, place deacons throughout the sanctuary, balcony and building. Most church shootings take place after the worship service begins.

► Consider locking some back entrances after services begin, but ensure members are able to leave the building if necessary. Put trained greeters at outside entrance doors left unlocked to meet latecomers.

► Establish an emergency plan in the event of an act of violence, and practice it regularly. Equip church leaders and staff with information on how to respond to emergencies, as well as how to get police and medical assistance. Create a list of counselors in your area who can be contacted in case of an emergency.

► Hold a disaster leadership workshop. Ask a local law enforcement official to train appointed key leadership/people in your church to deal with active shooters.

► Make the congregation aware of all emergency exits in the building. Ask members to report any

concerns and/or anything out of the ordinary to an appointed central person. Teach them what to do in case of an emergency. This can be done with the congregation as a whole or through newsletters and brochures. Practice emergency procedures together as a church on a selected day.

Establish communication

► In case of an emergency, alert your members to places they can take cover and hide, as well as a designated rally point inside or outside the church.

► Establish a good method to communicate among church leaders, staff and security teams.

► Plan for a post-incident course of action: evacuation and assembly points, witnesses speaking with law enforcement, prayer and counseling, etc.

While church shootings are rare, shooting violence is escalating. Taking preventive measures can help churches avoid the tragic results of active shooters and other acts of violence. (Denise George, TAB Media)

EDITOR'S NOTE — For more tips, visit tabonline.org/church-security. To assess your readiness for threats, visit counterthreatgrp.com.

15 tips for securing church facilities

1. Use thorny or prickly plants (like holly bushes) under first floor windows to make break-ins more difficult. (Don't allow the plants to obstruct the view from the windows and doors.)
2. Use fences and screens to control property access.
3. Parking lots should be visible from the street.
4. Patrol parking lots and grounds during services and activities.
5. Sufficient lighting is one of the best and least expensive ways to deter burglars and vandals.
6. Put lighting at doors, windows, skylights or any other areas of entry.
7. Protect outside lights with a cover so bulbs can't be easily broken.
8. Keep property clear of rubbish.
9. Lock all doors and keep track of the keys.
10. Develop a neighborhood watch.
11. Regularly check for places of illegal entry (easy access to the roof where one can climb without a ladder).
12. Train those responsible for the facilities to know ways to protect the buildings.
13. Leave on some interior lighting for law enforcement patrols.
14. Consider electronic security systems to alert and monitor.
15. Designate one person to lock and secure the building at the end of each activity.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This information is courtesy of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company offers a number of resources to help churches safeguard their congregations. View them at tabonline.org/security-resources.

So many questions, few answers

Gun violence: Parents, teachers, churches make safety a priority as leaders debate solutions

By Denise George
The Alabama Baptist

As students return to campus this fall, memories of the May 24 shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, linger in the minds of families and teachers.

The attack by a lone gunman armed with a military-style rifle left 19 fourth graders and two teachers dead. Less than a month later, three senior adults were killed when a shooter opened fire at a June 16 potluck dinner at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Vestavia Hills.

So far this year more than 26,000 deaths in the U.S. have been attributed to guns, according to the nonprofit Gun Violence Archive. In 2021, 45,042 people were killed in the U.S. by guns. About half of those deaths (24,090) were suicides.

The National Fraternal Order of Police reports that in 2021, 346 officers were shot in the line of duty, 63 of whom were killed.

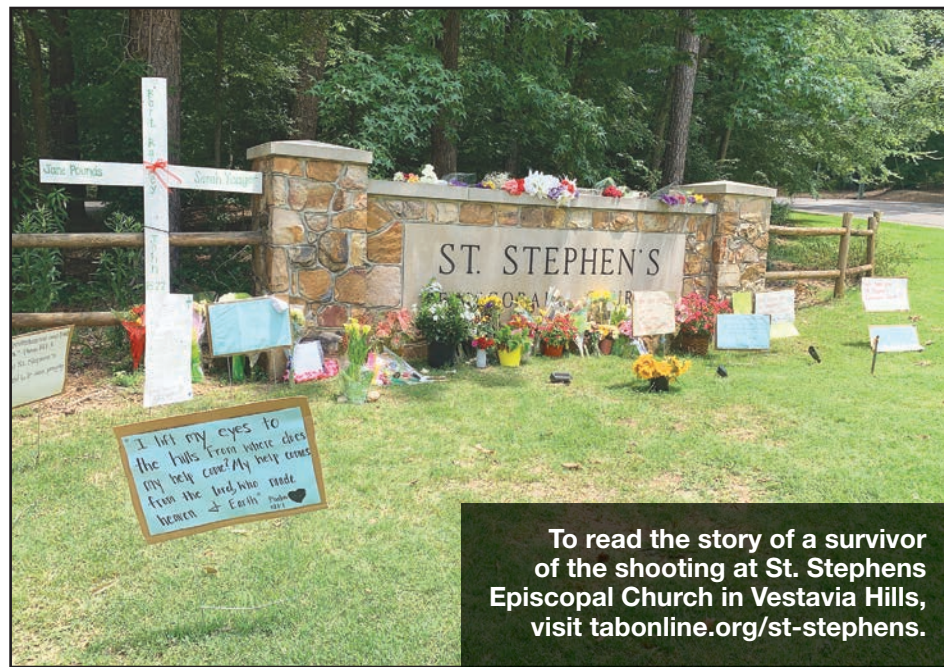
The statistics are alarming.

Yet gun ownership is a constitutionally protected right. And just as gun violence is real, it's also true that thousands of Americans safely and responsibly own and use guns daily for hunting, target practice and self-defense.

So the debate goes on: Is there an answer to what many describe as an epidemic of gun violence while also protecting the rights of gun owners?

Difficult issue

Our nation is deeply divided on how to address gun violence. Some believe restrictions on the sale of assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, enhanced background check requirements focusing on people with mental illnesses and/or criminal convictions and improved federal and state tracking might help.



To read the story of a survivor of the shooting at St. Stephens Episcopal Church in Vestavia Hills, visit tabonline.org/st-stephens.

Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

Others disagree, arguing the emphasis of government should be on preventing crime of all types, including gun violence.

While political officials argue and decide on these measures, families, pastors and teachers can take some commonsense steps to help protect loved ones from gun violence.

Safety tips

Here are a few suggestions:

- There are more than 300 million guns in U.S. homes. The American Academy of Pediatrics believes the best way to prevent gun-related injuries to children is to remove the guns. If a person chooses to keep a gun in the house, the gun should be unloaded, and both gun and ammunition locked in safe and separate locations.

- Inquire about guns in the homes of family members and friends before allowing your children and/or youth to visit.

- If your home is one where domestic violence happens or is apt to happen, remove guns from your home.

- Teach children and youth to be alert to potential violence and to report anyone suspicious. When

faced with a potential shooter, teach children and youth how to run away or take shelter and hide, barricade entrance doors and call for help.

- Secure and lock all entrances to schools and churches, leaving one main guarded entrance. Upgrade door locks and add deadbolts to the inside of doors and, if possible, install metal detectors and/or access control systems at building entrances.

Reinforce glass in doors to make it bulletproof.

- Train or hire more guards to provide security during school hours, worship services, community functions, etc. Where funds are limited, recruit capable individuals to guard school entrances and grounds.

Monitor social media

- Advocate for improved social media monitoring and closely monitor children's involvement and posts. If you read posts that threaten violence, alert authorities immediately.

- Check the security measures put into place by schools, playgrounds, community parks and churches.

- Make sure to have adequate adult supervision where children and youth gather. Know where your children and youth are at all times, and know their friends, classmates and peers. Keep communication lines open with your children.

- Provide professional counseling for those children and youth who have been injured by gun violence and/or who have witnessed it. (Carrie Brown McWhorter contributed)

How to educate the public

Families and leaders from churches, schools and communities can work with agencies to educate the public about the growing trends of gun violence. Some ways might be to:

- Host educational events that teach people the startling facts about our nation's current gun violence.

- Work with local and national agencies to produce, provide and distribute information about gun safety.

- Host family events, inviting experts to teach safety procedures to put into place when a gun is kept in the home.

- Learn how to identify and report those who may be considering acts of violence.

- Work together with schools, churches, communities and others to provide professional help to those who need it in order to prevent potential harmful or deadly situations. (Denise George)



Facebook photo

A team from FBC Florence works at Upper Susitna Food Pantry in Talkeetna, Alaska. They removed everything from three shipping containers, took inventory and organized the items on shelves.

Missions team sees faith connect to service

(continued from page 1) from three shipping containers, took inventory and organized the items. LouAnne Carroll-Tysdall, food pantry director, told Underwood she had not had a more willing and loving group serve.

The group also served several local residents and church members.

Working in groups, the team cut down and cleared trees, raked leaves, painted and completed other tasks.

Some worked at the home of Shirley, a senior adult who has been a member of MCBC for years and formerly was director of the food pantry.

The team worked together at Ms. Shirley's, cleaning the yard and helping improve accessibility for her.

The mostly young adult team members benefited in numerous ways from the trip, Underwood said. Not only did they have several opportunities to share the gospel, they made connections with each other and those they helped.

"Serving in ministry, one of the great joys is always seeing when those you are leading have their 'aha' moments — the times when their faith connects to their service, and they see God at work around them,

through them and in them," he said.

"Seeing this team make that connection was just an amazing moment for me; knowing that what happened in each team member's life can have a ripple effect that can spill over into every aspect of life, whether at home, school or work, to give them the encouragement to live a life 'on mission' daily."

The church is planning a return trip and praying about a partnership with MCBC. Some members of MCBC hope to participate in a Florence missions trip too.

State partnership

Alabama Baptists entered a five-year partnership with Alaska Baptists last May. Churches or individuals interested in learning more about the partnership can contact Scotty Goldman, director of the office of global missions for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, at sgoldman@alsbom.org or 800-264-1225, ext. 2387.

McKee will attend the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting Nov. 15-16 at Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Vestavia Hills, where he will be available for conversations about the partnership, the need for "frontier pastors" and other missions needs.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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CHURCH POSITIONS

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Spring Bank Baptist Church in Silas, Alabama, is seeking a full-time pastor. Please email resumé to: michaelthorn@gmail.com.

PASTOR

Lakewood Baptist Church, Phenix City, Alabama, is now accepting resúmes for the position of full-time pastor. Please send resumé to: pastorsearch@lbcpc.org or 4011 Lakewood Drive, Phenix City, AL 36867.

PASTOR

Union Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor. Resúmes will be received through Sept. 30 by mail at: Pastor Search Committee, Union Baptist Church, 5251 Grand Bay Wilmer Road S, Grand Bay, AL 36541 or by email at: admin@ubcgrandbay.org.

PASTOR

Thomaston Baptist Church, Thomaston, Alabama, is seeking a full-time pastor. Please email resumé to: thomastonbaptistchurch@gmail.com.

PASTOR

Westlawn Baptist Church of Huntsville is seeking a pastor. Please send resúmes to: pastorsearchcommittee@westlawnbaptist.org.

PASTOR

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

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Prattville, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please submit resúmes to: PHBCPrattville@gmail.com.

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 worship 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 kerryflowers@gmail.com.

MUSIC MINISTER

Philadelphia Baptist Church in Smiths Station, Alabama, is seeking a full-time music minister. Our congregation enjoys worshipping to both traditional and contemporary music. If you enjoy Jesus and serving His

church, please send your resumé to: duck.clay1@gmail.com.

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. Resúmes may be submitted to: keving@fbcatmore.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

EDITOR/PRESIDENT

The Baptist Courier, the oldest ministry partner of the South Carolina Baptist Convention (153 years), is seeking a full-time editor and president. The position requires oversight of the print and electronic editions of the monthly magazine, the website, weekly podcast, social media, Courier Publishing (books), tours and fundraising. Qualifications include significant experience as a Baptist communicator/writer who adheres to the 2000 Baptist Faith & Message; active member of a Southern Baptist church; resumé with at least three references; and at least a master's degree. Deadline for receiving resúmes and letters of reference is Sept. 30. Please email resúmes and letters of reference to: tarafreeman@fbccola.com.

MINISTRY ASSISTANT

The ministry assistant for student 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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TRUE HEART FOR MISSIONS

By **Grace Thornton**
Special to the SBOM

Myers-Mallory offering prepares student pastor to plant church in his hometown

Gilliam Springs Baptist Church in Arab has a special place in Will Harbison's heart.

"I was saved there at 10 years old," he said.

But even so, he didn't expect to stay there.

"I met my wife at Auburn, and we thought we would be overseas. We had a heart for missions and felt like that's what God had for us," Harbison said.

So it surprised him when he ended up back at Gilliam Springs in 2011 as the church's student pastor. It surprised him even more when a few years later, he and his wife, Claire, started taking steps toward planting a church in San Francisco and God didn't open the doors.

"We decided then to plant our roots at Gilliam, and we bought a house," Harbison said. "We loved it, but we felt this stirring of church planting."

At the same time, Jamey Pruett, Gilliam Springs' pastor, was watching the growth of the Huntsville area. Arab is a bedroom community to the city, Pruett said, and what he saw got him started thinking about church planting too.

"I think the motivation really started with the realization that Huntsville was growing so quickly, but also it was growing in a manner

with such diverse people," he said. "Wherever there are people, there's a need for the Gospel."

So Pruett gathered church staff to start praying about it, and that group grew to include deacons and other lay leaders.

"Along the way we never heard the Lord say 'no.' Nobody had a check in their spirit," he said.

Gilliam Springs is a missions-minded church, and the members were quickly supportive, Pruett said. And with Harbison's heart for church planting, the idea made sense.

"Here's Huntsville, just 30 minutes up the road and it's still growing, it's still diverse — it just seemed like a natural thing for us to send him and Claire," he said.

Harbison said he sensed from the beginning that God was opening the doors this time.

"Jamey had just started praying about the idea to plant a church in Huntsville and what that would look like, and he knew that was our heartbeat," he said.

"He asked us to pray about it, and we felt like it was a yes for us, like the timing was right. Our heart had also grown for the Huntsville area."

As Gilliam Springs leadership continued to pray, they reached out to Brian Harper, lead church planting strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, who



Photo by Doug Rogers

Church planter Will Harbison (standing on right) greets worshippers before a recent service at Mill City Church in Huntsville.

began to guide them through the process of planting a church.

Harbison went through the SBOM's church planter training along with Jeremy Patterson, the church's missions minister. The training, which is made possible by gifts to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering, covers 11 competencies of a church planter over a three-month period.

Patterson said it's "a great process, a great systematic approach, and it makes you think about things upfront."

In January, Gilliam Springs launched discipleship groups in a rental space in the Lincoln Mill area in downtown Huntsville.

"It's been awesome," Patterson said. "The unexpected relationships we've seen so far has been only God-sized stuff. We've been able to connect to the community."

Gilliam Springs' plan is to move forward both with the new Lincoln Mill plant and with planting more churches in the future.

"We call it planting pregnant; we want to give birth to another church," Patterson said. "Long term, we would also love to do a church-planting residency program with the state here too."

Harper said Gilliam Springs is "a model of a good, healthy, reproducing church," and he's thankful for their example.

"If multiplication is what we're after, we need a model that shows what it looks like to plant in these new communities where the Gospel is not," he said.

For more information about church planting in Alabama, visit PlantAlabama.org, or contact State Missionary Brian Harper, bharper@alsbom.org, 334-613-6332.

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‘ANYONE CAN BE RESHAPED’

Daniel Long forges crosses to share the gospel after tragic loss of his wife

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Daniel Long has put many things into the fire and watched impurities burn away.

He has a kiln in his garage, and as a machinist that sort of thing is both a career and hobby.

But he’d never been put in the flames himself until Oct. 7, 2021. That was the day he found his wife’s SUV upside down on the side of the interstate, and his life turned upside down too.

“She was my absolute best friend from the first time she got in my truck to the morning of Oct. 7,” said Long, who had been married to Rachel for almost 27 years. “We did everything outside of hunting and fishing together.”

He rushed to the scene of the accident after his cousin called and said she had been on the phone with Rachel when she heard a crash.

“How I got there so fast, I do not know,” Long recalled. “A lady in

black scrubs came running toward me and stopped me and put both her hands on my shoulders and said, ‘Sir, she is gone.’

“I asked where. I assumed she was hurt and [had been] taken to the hospital, but she said again,

‘No, sir, she is gone.’ I fell to my knees.”

Rachel had been a kindergarten teacher, and she was focused on loving her students well and planting seeds of the gospel as they came through her classroom.

Rachel’s crosses

So in the months since her death, Long, a member of Grace Life Baptist Church in McCalla, has worked to carry on her legacy with small metal crosses he forges in the kiln in his garage. He calls them Rachel crosses. As he gives them away he uses them to share Jesus.

“God can take a piece of scrap, heat you up and forge or form you into something of value,” Long explains.

He stamps each cross with his initials, called the “maker’s mark,” and says each person who follows Jesus has His stamp on their lives too.

“Anyone can be reshaped no matter how rusty you are,” Long said. “Jesus can put you on His altar and shape

you with His amazing and saving grace.”

When he first started making the crosses he thought it would just be a few, but in the eight months since his wife died Long has made and given away more than 350. If the



Photo by Grace Thornton/The Alabama Baptist

Daniel Long carries on his wife’s legacy with small metal crosses he forges in the kiln in his garage. He calls them Rachel crosses. As he gives them away, he uses them to share the good news of Jesus.

recipient is a nonbeliever, he tells the person not to wait to give his or her life to Jesus. His wife’s death is a poignant reminder that life is short and can be gone in an instant, Long says.

And if the recipient is a believer, he asks the person to use the cross

to share the gospel with others.

Long said up until Oct. 7 he would have beaten around the bush asking people where they stood with God, but not anymore.

“Rachel would tell you Friday is not good enough if you die on Thursday,” he said. “So don’t wait.”

“God can take a piece of scrap, heat you up and forge or form you into something of value.”

Daniel Long
member of Grace Life Baptist Church in McCalla

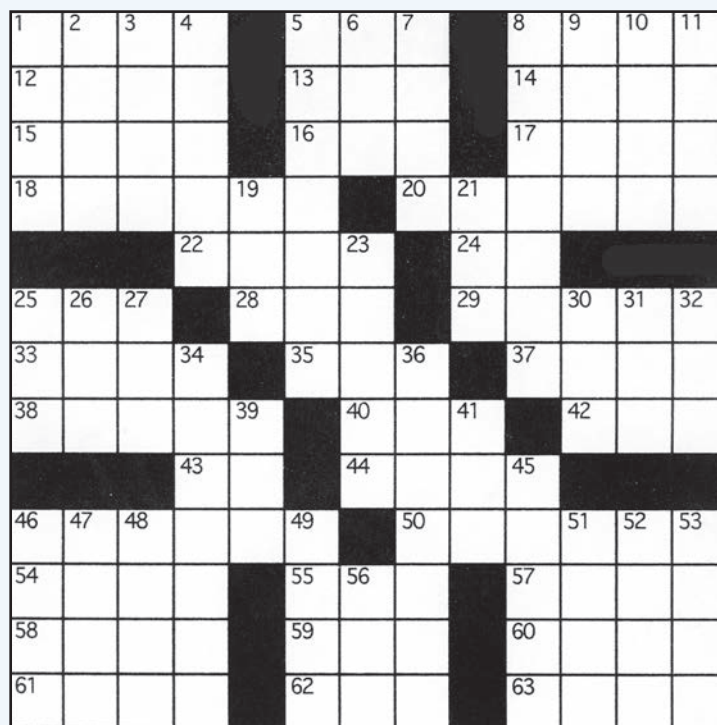


Photo by Grace Thornton/The Alabama Baptist
Daniel Long stamps each cross with his initials, called the “maker’s mark,” and says each person who follows Jesus has His stamp on their lives too.

CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

1. At the peak.
5. "As for the stork, the ___ trees are her house." (Ps. 104:17)
8. "This is now ___ of my bones." (Gen. 2:23)
12. Spanish greeting.
13. Mine product.
14. "The sons of Mushi: Mahli and ___." (1 Chron. 23:23)
15. Having little or no rain.
16. Long, narrow inlet.
17. "Son of Salathiel which was the son of ___." (Luke 3:27)
18. "Behold, the man is ___ as one of Us." (Gen. 3:22)
20. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot ___ God." (Rom. 8:8)
22. St. Petersburg's river.
24. Preposition.
25. What Malchus lost. (John 18:10)
28. Bird's beak.
29. "He lodgeth with one ___ a tanner." (Acts 10:6)
33. Political group.
35. N.C. capital.
37. "We spend our years as a ___ that is told." (Ps. 90:9)
38. Healthy glow.
40. "Abner, the son of ___." (1 Sam. 14:50)
42. "And the first came out ___ all over." (Gen. 25:25)
43. Continent. (abbr.)
44. "___ was a keeper of sheep." (Gen. 4:2)
46. Mount of ___.
50. "His eye was not dim, nor his natural force ___." (Deut. 34:7)
54. Uncovered.
55. Even. (poet.)
57. Piece in a game.
58. One who does. (suffix)
59. WWII arena.
60. "The same is Micaiah, the son of ___." (2 Chron. 18:7)
61. "The elements shall ___ with fervent heat." (2 Pet. 3:12)



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62. Went through a stop sign.
63. "They that are whole have no ___ of the physician." (Mark 2:17)

DOWN

1. "___ rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth." (1 Kings 21:16)
2. Ripped.
3. Chemical suffix.
4. "The children of Sia, the children of ___." (Neh. 7:47)
5. "The kingdom, the power and the glory ___." (Matt. 6:13)
6. "The sons of Bela: ... Uzziel, Jerimoth and ___." (1 Chron. 7:7)
7. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also ___." (Gal. 6:7)
8. "Faithful and beloved partakers of the ___." (1 Tim. 6:2)
9. Ancient Greek auditoriums.
10. Belonging to the father of Abner. (1 Sam. 14:50)
11. Great Lake.
19. Promise Keepers.
21. ___ Alamos.
23. A river of Damascus. (2 Kings 5:12)
25. Wane.
26. "As Thou hast given Him power over ___ flesh." (John 17:2)
27. One of Winnie the Pooh's friends.
30. Disfigure.
31. Corrida cheer.
32. Masculine name.
34. "If any of you do err from the truth, and one ___ him." (James 5:19)
36. "A well of living water and streams from ___." (Song of Sol. 4:15)
39. Feminine name.
41. Johnny ___.
45. Language of ancient Rome.
46. "And the children of Shobal ... Shepho and ___." (Gen. 36:23)
47. Ancient stringed instrument.
48. "Is this man Coniah a despised broken ___?" (Jer. 22:28)
49. "He that is now called a Prophet was ... a ___." (1 Sam. 9:9)
51. "A ___ to be born." (Eccles. 3:2)
52. She. (Fr.)
53. "Even God who quickeneth the ___." (Rom. 4:17)
56. Greek letter.

All Bible translations are KJV unless otherwise specified.

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

2022 marks 400th anniversary of Anglican rector's death

Thomas Wilson (1563–1622) was an Anglican rector at St. George the Martyr (Church) in Canterbury from 1586 until his death.

His most important work was "A Christian Dictionary," one of the earliest attempts to write a concordance of the Bible in English.

This year marks the 400th anniversary of his death.

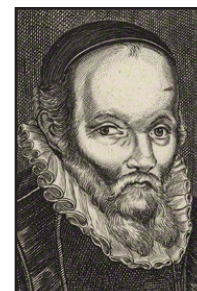
Wilson was born to Edward and Agnes Godmont Wilson in 1563 in Durham, England. At the age of 18 he entered the Queen's College, Oxford, where Henry Robinson, an English cleric and later the bishop of Carlisle, paid for his education. In 1584 Wilson graduated with a bachelor's degree and two years later earned a master's degree. He became chaplain of the college and was ordained in 1585.

He married his wife Rebecca in 1587. They had three children before she died in 1591.

He married Christian Ower the next year, with whom he had eight children. His second wife outlived him.

Most of his 11 children emigrated to New England.

When the Pilgrims traveled on the Mayflower in 1620, some of them took his dictionary with them.



WILSON

Wilson spent seven years writing "Epistle to the Romans," which is in the form of a dialogue between Timothy and Silas.

He died at Canterbury in January 1622 and was buried in his own churchyard.

William Swift, rector of St. Andrew's in Canterbury, preached Wilson's funeral sermon, referring to him as "a judicious divine, sound in the truth and an excellent interpreter of Scripture; a professed enemy to idolatry, superstition and all false worship."

Sole pastorate

Through the influence of Robinson, the next year Wilson was appointed rector of St. George the Martyr, serving at this, his only pastorate, for 36 years. Wilson loved his congregation and was an industrious worker, preaching three or four sermons every week and sometimes every day of the week. Because he was popular with the Puritans, the archbishop of Canterbury sometimes received complaints that Wilson was a nonconformist.

By Joanne Sloan

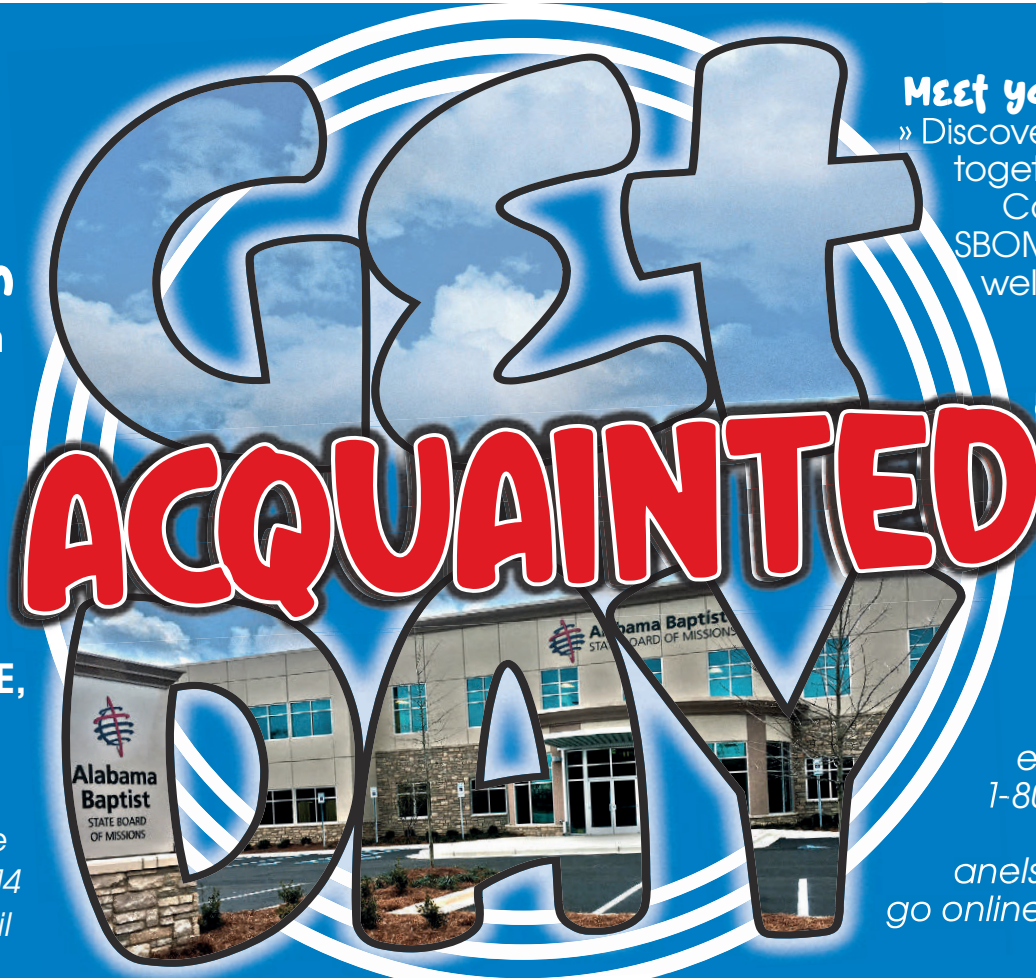
Joanne Sloan, a member of First Baptist Church Tuscaloosa, has been a published writer of articles and books for 30 years. She has a bachelor's degree double majoring in history and English from East Texas State University (now Texas A&M–Commerce) and a master's degree specializing in English from the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

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Terry plays strategic role in recent BWA event

One of the largest gatherings of international Baptist leaders ever held in Alabama occurred at Samford University in Birmingham in July.

More than 400 Baptist leaders representing 54 nations met in Birmingham for the Baptist World Alliance Annual Gathering, and another 150 from 12 more nations participated online.

With more than 600 participants from 66 nations, the 2022 event was the largest BWA annual gathering in history and marked the first time this meeting has been held in the U.S. in 37 years.

BWA is a network of 246 national Baptist bodies in 128 countries and territories representing more than 51 million baptized believers. Individual Alabama Baptists have participated in various ways through the years.

Host committee

Bob Terry, editor emeritus of The Alabama Baptist, has supported and been involved in BWA for nearly 30 years. He currently serves as chair of BWA's constitution and

bylaws committee and as organizational parliamentarian and was chosen to chair the host committee for the event.

Terry, who wrapped up his work as Samford's adviser to the president for faith networks at the end of July, incorporated his focus on the BWA gathering into his goal of increasing Samford's standing among Baptists around the world.

Samford leaders exercised flexibility during the four-year journey from invitation to actual meeting, he said.

The pandemic brought continual changes, "but everyone cooperated and made the meeting a success for BWA and a success for Samford," Terry noted. "I'm grateful former Samford President Andrew Westmoreland shared the vision of bringing the gathering to campus and appreciate President Beck Taylor supporting that vision."

"Now I look forward to seeing how Samford will be able to impact Baptists of the world going forward and how Baptists of the world



Photo by Taylor Mitchell/The Alabama Baptist
Bob Terry, editor emeritus of The Alabama Baptist, explains a bylaw change to participants attending the Baptist World Alliance Annual Gathering on Samford's campus in Birmingham.

will impact Samford."

Birmingham Metro Baptist Association also joined in supporting and promoting the event.

Volunteers from Shades Crest Baptist Church in Hoover greeted registrants as they arrived at the airport.

Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Homewood provided a minibus and volunteer drivers to transport them from the airport to campus.

At the end of the week Dawson again provided driv-

ers for the shuttle runs to the airport with assistance from Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Vestavia Hills.

Combined worship

On the opening Sunday, 15 local congregations invited speakers from Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, Latin America and the Caribbean into their churches.

The next evening about 400 Birmingham-area Baptists joined BWA participants for a welcome celebration featuring Alabama Baptist Singing Men and Alabama Baptist Singing Women.

The Men of Distinction, a men's chorus from Sixth Avenue Baptist Church in Birmingham, shared favorite Black gospel songs. Others provided southern gospel, bluegrass, classical, sacred harp singing and more.

Patricia Terry, a former international missionary and retired Samford professor, closed the service by leading the group in prayer in both

English and Spanish.

"Racial Justice" was the meeting's theme. Birmingham Mayor Randall Woodfin spoke to the group about Birmingham's story. Attention also focused on racial justice in South Africa and other places around the world.

Other topics were addressed by BWA leaders and Samford personnel, including Beeson Divinity School founding dean Timothy George.

Baptists also learned from one another.

Baptists from Ukraine reported how they are responding to the war raging in their country. It was BWA partners who sent relief supplies into Ukraine within hours of the war starting. And it was Baptists in Ukraine and Central Europe who responded by making 51,000 beds available each night for refugees and internally displaced persons.

Other reports shared about the suffering created by the military coup in Myanmar, the crisis in Nigeria produced by Muslim extremists and the growing threat to Christians and other minority religions in India from Hindu nationalism backed by the government of Prime Minister Modi.

Other parts of the week focused on planning together for missions and evangelism, learning from one another about theological education and discipleship development, as well as promoting Baptist unity through worship. (TAB Media)

If you have thirty minutes or more to listen, ask Antonio what he dreams of being in ten years.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For August 14

Explore the Bible

By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Theology, University of Mobile



GOD JUDGES 2 Kings 17:7–20

This passage is an illustration of the old maxim stated by preachers: Sin will take you further than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay and cost you more than you want to pay. The northern kingdom of Israel came to an end in 722 B.C. when the Assyrians under Shalmaneser V captured Samaria. He then deported the Israelites to Assyria and resettled them.

Five-sixths of God's people were essentially wiped out. The area of the promised land was drastically reduced. The curses of the covenant were poured out, and the blessings were seemingly lost. The disastrous end to the nation highlighted the issues that had plagued the Israelites from their rebellion beginning at the time of Rehoboam.

Warned (7–13)

Israel's fundamental error had been breaking God's covenant, with idolatry as the most obvious manifestation. The people forgot the exodus and what it meant: God's grace and power exhibited on their behalf and their responsibility to reciprocate God's goodness with faith, undivided allegiance and God-honoring worship.

The Israelites had come to think like, talk like and act like the people around them. The basic crime of Israel was breaking the first commandment, which was rapidly followed by adopting the practices of the Canaanites and the earlier kings of Israel. Despite the grace God showed His people in the exodus, Israel had become a nation of serial idolaters, each generation building on the sin of the one before it.

Verses 9–12 outline the offenses the Israelites committed as they worshipped other gods. The claim they did these things secretly is surprising since these offenses were very public acts. The Hebrew word secretly is only used here in the Old Testament and can have the meaning of doing something hypocritically. They did all these things while claiming to be the Lord's people. The Israelites built high places,

erected sacred pillars and Asherah poles and burned incense on all the high places just like the nations the Lord had driven out before them.

Assyrian captivity should not have been a surprise. God had warned both Israel and Judah for more than 200 years.

Rejected (14–17)

The people of Israel were stubborn and did not heed God's warnings. They rejected God's statutes and covenant. They turned their backs on God's laws. They had broken His covenant by not loving God supremely. Having rejected God's laws and their covenantal relationship with Him, they closed their ears to the prophetic warnings God faithfully sent them. They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves.

The final stage of the indictment added more specifics. The making of two idols cast in the shape of calves was forbidden (Ex. 20:4–6). The worship of the starry hosts was forbidden in Deuteronomy 4:19. The worship of Baal shattered the first commandment, and sacrificing their children in the fire was detestable and forbidden (Lev. 18:21). Neither did their practice of divination and interpretation of omens have a place among God's people.

The Israelites had devoted themselves to doing what was evil in the eyes of the Lord. They did not sin out of ignorance.

Removed (18–20)

God removed His people from His presence, literally "from before His face." We cannot take this in physical terms, since God is omnipresent. The term is used here relationally, describing punishment, specifically deportation and dispersion. The Lord is slow to anger, but He is sure to anger when He is consistently defamed.

Sadly Judah did not learn from Israel's demise. The people of Judah followed in Israel's footsteps. Just as judgment had fallen on Israel, it would also fall on Judah unless the nation repented.

Bible Studies for Life

By Roy E. Ciampa, Ph.D.

Armstrong Chair of Religion, Samford University



HONOR YOUR NEIGHBOR ROMANS 12:9–21

Most of Romans 1–11 focuses on what God has done for us in Christ. Chapter 12 emphasizes the practical ways in which our new lives are to reflect Christ and His character. Paul provides an extended list of instructions that reflect what it means to be conformed to the image of Christ.

Honor others by seeking their best. (9–13)

Our relationships with others must be marked by authenticity and integrity rather than hypocrisy. Most of the commands Paul gives here have to do with promoting the well-being of those around us: practicing love and goodness and showing honor, diligently and fervently serving the Lord (presumably in service to those around us) and living with patience (even when afflicted), prayerfulness, generosity and hospitality. We serve the Lord best when we honor others and seek the best for those around us.

Honor others over honoring yourself. (14–16)

Christ showed what it is to "bless those who persecute you" when He prayed for those who crucified Him (Luke 23:34). He rejoiced with those who rejoiced at the wedding at Cana (John 2:1–10), and He wept with those who wept at the news of the death of Lazarus (John 11:32–35). He sought to live in harmony (although that was not and is not always possible), and He demonstrated humility throughout His ministry, spending time with the marginalized, those who were outcasts and those rejected as sinners. He demonstrated humility in His willingness to give up the prerogative of glory, take on human flesh and die on a cross for our salvation (Phil. 2:3–8).

When we remember that Christ associates with us, we realize how foolish it would be for us to be too proud to associate with those more humble than ourselves or for us to become wise in our own eyes. We rejoice with our neighbors in their moments of joy and empathize with

them in their times of sorrow (even if the cause for their weeping may be partly a result of their failings, just as our own causes for weeping can be partly a result of our failings).

We empathize with them in their times of joy and pain as we would want them to do with us in our times of joy or sorrow. Although we will never do so perfectly, Christ's example of honoring others over honoring oneself remains the model we seek to emulate by the grace of God.

Honor others through peaceful relationships. (17–21)

Paul reminds us honoring Christ requires behavior that directly contradicts our fallen human nature. As sinful beings we are naturally tempted to repay wrong with wrong, evil with evil. When there is conflict around us, our natural inclination is often to choose sides and enter the fray rather than seeking to live at peace with all whenever possible.

Following Christ means seeking to do what is right and honorable in the eyes of others whenever obedience to God does not require otherwise. We are called to trust God to eventually establish justice, leaving all vengeance and recompense to Him, as Christ Himself demonstrated on the cross.

Following Christ calls for Christ-like behavior that turns our fallen tendencies on their head so we show mercy to our enemies and meet their basic needs when we can, as Christ has done for us. Doing so might even lead them to become ashamed of their unloving behavior (the probable meaning of "heaping fiery coals on his head").

Christ was not conquered by evil but conquered evil with good when He gave Himself up for us on the cross. We are to do the same. We are conquered by evil only if we are seduced by the temptation to advance our agendas by ungodly means. We conquer evil with good by remaining faithful to our calling to exemplify the grace and righteousness of Christ rather than lowering ourselves to the standards of the world.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs
The Alabama Baptist

How the ‘wrong’ person’s yes led to successful community ministry

Sometimes the result of resting produces more than being productive.

Jenny Waltman, CEO/founder and director of the board of Grace Klein Community in Hoover, learned this when she took six weeks out of her busy life to rest at a partner missions base in Africa.

Waltman, who also is president of Grace Klein Construction, spent the first three weeks “reading multiple books a day and hanging out with Jesus.”

Her new book, “God Chose the Wrong Person: Surrendering to His Plan, Not Mine,” flowed from that rest.

“God gave the download, and I wrote the book in three weeks. It was amazing,” Waltman recalled. “My colleague, our director of development, was with me for a portion of the time, and she said it sounded like a symphony as the computer keys made ‘music.’”

Life journey

“As I prayed, each chapter would come to me. God does choose all the wrong people. If you read through the Bible, all the wrong people were chosen by God so He could make them the right people — so He would get the glory.”

Waltman considers herself one of



Photo courtesy of Jenny Waltman

Volunteers unload food donations for Grace Klein Community, a nonprofit organization in Hoover that generously shares resources to build relationships and ignite restoration for individuals, families and communities.

those “wrong people” for almost every role she’s had in life.

She became a fire claims adjuster, a job that required more physical strength than her size and stature suggested.

She never felt comfortable around kids but had two.

She became a bookkeeper when math was her worst subject.

She started a construction company, making her mark in a traditionally male-dominated field.

Then she saw a need to feed hungry people.

As that ministry grew, a friend suggested she file the paperwork to make it a nonprofit. She had no idea how to start or run a nonprofit.

But she knew God did.

In 2021 the ministry rescued more than 1 million pounds of food to provide 150,000-plus food boxes and 885,000-plus meals to the hun-

gry. The organization was included on the sustainability team for the World Games, which was held in Birmingham in July.

“That wouldn’t have ever been on my radar,” Waltman admitted. “I would have said, ‘I couldn’t do that!’ But the ‘yes’ of obedience stacks and so you look back and turn around and realize, ‘Oh, that’s my life!’ All those yeses smushed together into something beautiful because I obeyed

God. Sometimes if He showed us what was going to happen in 20 years, we would think that we couldn’t do it,” Waltman declared. “All God needs is today’s ‘Yes’ and He will do the rest.”

“God Chose the Wrong Person” contains biblical principles and how Waltman strives to live them. Candid about her struggles and times she knew she was the “wrong person,”

she writes about how God showed His glory through transforming her into the right person.

God provides

One of her main goals is to encourage others who feel inadequate.

“It’s OK to feel like the wrong person,” Waltman asserted. “It’s scary and dangerous if you feel like the right person because then you’re doing it in your strength and your capacity and what you can do.

“God’s capacity is so much bigger, so much grander, with so much more adventure.

“But He’s infinite, and He can use us to do things we would never believe we could do until we courageously say ‘yes.’”

By choosing the “wrong person,” God has taken food that would have been thrown away to feed hungry people. He also has taken rescued flowers and fruit to give to those who need encouragement or as an outreach for volunteers to love their neighbors.

He also created an organization that serves as a “conduit,” Waltman said, by helping those with excess to connect with needs, those with specific gifts and talents connect

with services, and a means for those who want to feed the hungry.

“At Grace Klein Community we see diverse people working together and living an ‘others first’ lifestyle,” she said.

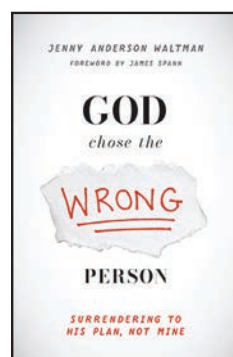


WALTMAN

For more information about Grace Klein Community visit gracekleincommunity.com. To learn more about Waltman or order “God Chose the Wrong Person,” visit jennywaltman.com.

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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