

The Alabama Baptist

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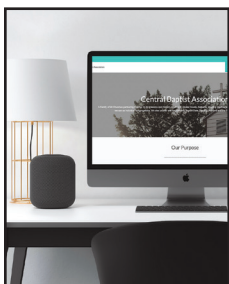
Vol. 187, No. 41
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



Flatline Church at Chisholm makes a difference in the lives of students

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TAB digital services offers 'front door' for churches

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'Christ is who I can fall on,' says Alabama Crimson Tide's Jalen Milroe

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Photo courtesy of Cookie Baker

Photo courtesy of David Hendon

Photo courtesy of Cookie Baker

Work to be done

Top photos: Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers serve on the mass feeding team (left) and prepare tarps for homeowners (right) in Arcadia, Florida. As teams have continued to gather there since Hurricane Ian hit Sept. 28, they've needed more space. Some are now staying in a large tent provided by Florida Baptists (above).

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief sees its largest single-site deployment in years

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

As David Dismukes turned off the main road, all he could see was enormous mud puddles.

"I still had four or five miles to go," said Dismukes, who's currently serving as the white hat in charge of Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief efforts in Arcadia, Florida. "I looked

at the chaplain with me and said, 'God sent us here; He'll take us there.'"

The woman at the end of that road had called for help — Hurricane Ian had hit her area hard when it made land-fall Sept. 28, and now she was living in a boxcar on a concrete slab with no more food, water or fuel for her generator.

"She's there literally surviving, but she said, 'I don't have it as bad as my neighbor,'" Dismukes said. "The neighbor had built a treehouse and was living in it."

That kind of need is a story volunteers have seen repeated over and over, he said. "Any-

thing we can do to help them, we're trying to do."

Since getting set up in Arcadia, ABDR teams have taken nearly 900 job requests from people in the area — requests for tarping, chainsaw work, cleanup and now also mudout as the waters begin to recede.

'Astronomical'

"The numbers are astronomical," Dismukes said. "I'm watching people walk in still applying for help. It's just enormous devastation down here. We've deployed just about every piece of equipment the state has, and we're bringing in others."

Mark Wakefield, disaster relief strategist for Alabama Baptists, said it's the largest single-site deployment since he took on this role in 2013.

"We probably had as many volunteers working Hurricane Sally (in 2020), but at four different sites," he said.

Wakefield said it could take up to three months for rotating teams of volunteers to finish the work in Arcadia. Around 150 volunteers — mostly Alabama Baptists with some volunteers from South Carolina — were serving there at press time.

A team from Southeast Alabama Baptist Association that (See 'God,' page 10)



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TAB Media Group IT specialist to retire after 20 years

By Grace Thornton

The Alabama Baptist

When Richard Maddox first came to work at The Alabama Baptist in 2002, he thought it would be temporary.

His wife, Teresa, was editor Bob Terry's administrative assistant at the time, and she passed along to her husband the news that the company's IT person was leaving.

"Since I had the particular skill set TAB needed, I approached Dr. Terry and offered to help TAB with its IT needs for about three months while they pursued a replacement," said Maddox, who also served as the supervisory information technology specialist for the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Birmingham.

But once he started working part-time at TAB he realized the company was "limited in resources, and virtually one Mac failing away from not being able to produce the paper."

He got invested in the situation, and the three months turned into 20 years.

As Maddox gets ready to retire at the end of October, he acknowledged he has "always considered my services to TAB as a ministry for the furtherance of the gospel."

Over his two decades of service, technology changed rapidly, and in the midst of it Maddox helped guide TAB to invest in resources and a platform that would keep it up to date. He also learned to "speak Mac," as his other work was in a PC environment.

Lifelong friends

"As the IT person, I had the opportunity to work closely with almost all of TAB's employees through the years," Maddox recalled. "Many have become friends that will last a life-

time. That has been one of the highlights of my time there."

He also has been an interim and supply pastor and an instructor for the Ministry Training Institute at Samford University. Before moving to Birmingham in 1999, Maddox was a pastor in Florida for more than 11 years.

Working with confidence

Jennifer Davis Rash, TAB Media president and editor in chief, said TAB is "going to miss Richard guiding our IT needs and being a part of our daily routine."

"He built a system that has allowed us to work with confidence as individuals and a team," Rash added, noting his expertise in IT allowed the rest of the staff to stay focused on their own ministry assignments.

"He truly has been a vital part of TAB Media's efforts to further the gospel," she continued. "Along with his fearless ability to adapt with each technological advancement and his willingness to make the tough calls when needed, Richard also has inspired, encouraged and taught us on personal levels as well."

"He models pristine integrity, tireless determination and fierce loyalty."

Rash said Maddox loves to learn and grow and help others in their own development journey.

"He has an amazing ability to teach God's word and life lessons all within a routine conversation or work-related project," she explained. "We are confident his investment in those around him will continue as he and Teresa step into this next season of life and ministry."

"I'm blessed to call them both friends and grateful to know we'll still be part of their lives outside the IT world."



Photo by Tracy Riggs/The Alabama Baptist
TAB Media Group IT specialist
Richard Maddox plans to retire
after 20 years of dedicated work.

The Alabama Baptist

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

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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



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@RashionalThts

Friends, football standouts model relying on God's strength

Reminders continue to surface that it is in our weakness God demonstrates His strength. When we truly give it all to Him, He will work through us in ways we could have never accomplished on our own.

More importantly, we'll be joining God in His work rather than asking Him to bless the effort we've decided is best.

So often I am tempted to take over. I convince myself I'm helping or I know what needs to happen next.

From there, I'm working in my own strength and eventually find myself exhausted.

In those times, I also tend to be more fearful and insecure.

As friend and fellow team member Dianna Cagle shared from 2 Corinthians 12:9–10 during our most recent staff meeting, the Lord used Paul's words to show me I was at it again and pulled my eyes back toward Him.

Paul writes: "But [the Lord] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'"

"Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

"That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Along with the clarity from Scripture, several friends in ministry have mentioned in passing how they are amazed at what is happening in their work.

They know it is only because they are allowing God to work through them, each acknowledged. Otherwise, it would not be sustainable, they said.

Even the features we've run lately on Bama quarterbacks Bryce Young and Jalen Milroe (see story, page 14), as well as Auburn basketball player Dylan

Cardwell, point to a deep dependence on the Lord.

Next door in Mississippi, a potential Heisman candidate and the nation's leader in passing yards also shared openly about his faith after breaking the record for Southeastern Conference career completions Oct. 8.

Mississippi State's QB Will Rogers tweeted after the 40–17 win over Arkansas that "nothing would be possible without my Savior and my teammates."

In an interview with Mississippi Scoreboard in 2019, Rogers said, "I'm not in this position for my wants or my desires, but I'm in this position to serve Him and expand His kingdom."

Of course, we could say it's easy to point to the Lord and give Him all the credit when breaking records, winning games and being awarded Heismans, but what happens when the situation isn't as sweet?

Milroe can probably speak to that after three turnovers during the Texas A&M game Oct. 8.

While Bama barely squeaked by with the win, Milroe held his head up, described the game as "fun" and noted the opportunity to learn and grow. Rather than sink into despair, he remained calm and confident in the role in which he has been placed.

"No matter what it is, He's the one who strengthens me."

Help us help you: Share areas of concern, topics you would like to learn more about, how you are struggling

Along with covering the news that happens around us and sharing about the people and ministries God is using to further His kingdom, we also seek to provide helpful resources and information for the various situations you face.

It's important to us to know how you are struggling right now and what concerns you face as you go about your daily routine.

Are there certain topics you would like to understand better?

Do you need guidance on where to go for various resources?

Our team would love to dive in and do the research for you to see what we can find. We also encourage you to share resources you've found helpful in your own efforts to seek information.

The topics can be life issues such as what our youth experience today.

In fact, our sister publication, The Baptist Paper, currently is running a five-part series on this topic.

The Endangered Youth series of-

fers suggestions to help care for those facing escalating tragedies related to substance abuse, bullying, suicide and more.

We also work with our partner ministries to let you know what's available for your church needs.

In whatever realm the request falls, we'll do our best to help find resources and information.

Call 800-803-5201, email us at news@thealabamabaptist.org or write to us at the address found on page 2. —JDR

Your Voice



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

My 'Experiencing God' story: A transformed life

By Donna McGukin

Birmingham, Ala.

I read your request in The Alabama Baptist to share about the study "Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God."

That study changed the trajectory of our lives. I'm looking forward to the new edition, planning to go through the study again and hoping it will challenge me as much as it did before.

Here is our Experiencing God story:

We are currently at Valleydale Baptist Church in Birmingham, where my husband, Jeff, serves as the executive pastor.

When the Experiencing God

study first launched, we were on staff at Chapel Hill Baptist Church in Northport. Fresh out of seminary, we had just built a new home on a community lake with a beautiful tree house for our three sons.

We were a short drive from grandparents in Birmingham and Mobile. Our church was growing, with one of the fastest growing Sunday Schools in the state of Alabama.

Life was good

As a bonus, Jeff was getting Alabama football/basketball tickets left and right, and life was good!

We had NO reason to want to move. We could have been happy there for the rest of our lives.

However, Jeff became concerned

and a little discontent with the fact that most of our growth was due to new baptisms within our own church family or transfers from other churches. A desire welled up within him to reach people who had never known the gospel.

We had some connections in South Florida with a few fellow students Jeff had befriended while in college at Samford University.

One of them asked him to sing at his wedding in Fort Lauderdale, so we drove down the week of the wedding. What a culture shock!

People from all nationalities were there, speaking different languages — truly a melting pot of the world.

My famous last words were, "This is a nice place to visit, but I would NEVER want to live here!" From my mouth to God's ear. We were living there within three months. God used Experiencing God to bring us to a place where we were willing to let our yes be on the table.

There is so much more to our story. It was not an easy transition for us, but God did so much in our time there.

Here in the Bible Belt you see

a lot of lukewarm Christians. Everybody either goes to church or claims to have some sort of church affiliation. In South Florida there were no fake Christians. They were either hot or cold, and when they were saved, it was radically and so refreshing!

We never thought we would be back in the Bible Belt, so we are surprised to find ourselves back in Birmingham.

However, that study brought us to a place in our lives where we will always be looking for God working and looking to see if He is ready for us to join Him.

I am so excited about

the new study, knowing how God used it in our lives before. Never before and never since has there been a study so transforming for us.

Over the years I've referenced that study to others, and now I'm hoping it will be just as transformative, not only for us, but for this new generation.

EDITOR'S NOTE — We'd love to know how the "Experiencing God" study has helped you in your walk with the Lord. Email us at news@thealabamabaptist.org to share your story.

"[Experiencing God] brought us to a place in our lives where we will always be looking for God working."

Donna McGukin

MinistrySafe training

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions began to provide training and procedures to help churches provide a safe environment for children.

In 2015, state missionaries began to attend MinistrySafe training to help prevent child sexual abuse. More than 1,300 other church leaders have since been trained by the MinistrySafe events sponsored by SBOM.

In addition, beginning in 2022, those enlisted by SBOM and Alabama WMU to serve at camps and other events for children and youth were required to receive MinistrySafe awareness training.

During the first half of this

year, 150 people received the training.

Your church also can benefit from MinistrySafe training. Each Alabama Baptist church can receive a \$200 scholarship toward the first year of MinistrySafe. That lowers the cost to \$50 per church.

In addition, each church can train its staff and volunteers with the MinistrySafe awareness training for \$5 each.

To sign up, go to ministrysafesafe.com/alsbom. Click on the Sign Up Now button, and use the coupon code "alsbom."

For more information, contact Lee Wright at lwright@alsbom.org or 334-613-2241.

Share online or email
news@thealabamabaptist.org

“There is no shame in the blind man saying, ‘I can’t see, Jesus. Can You do a miracle?’”

ANTHONY EVANS

Former professional football player, speaker and author of “When Faith Meets Therapy”

In today’s world of laid-back worship, it is easy to lose focus on one’s faith. No better lesson can be found in the Scripture than the story of the thief on the cross at Calvary. No baptism, no communion, no missions trips, no committees. He didn’t even bend his knees to pray the “sinner’s prayer.”

Yet this lowly thief walked into heaven the same hour as Jesus simply by believing! He could offer nothing more than his faith that Jesus was who He said He was.

James W. Anderson
Talladega, Ala.

“Students are in a post-pandemic mental health and spiritual crisis, and the body of Christ can do something about it,” said **Doug**

Clark, national field director for the **National Network of Youth Ministries**, noting the importance of prayer events like See You at the Pole and the need for students, parents and other Christian adults to pray for this effort.

“It’s a challenge when you start with nothing, but it’s been a blessing,” said **John W. Granger, pastor** of **Church on Boll Weevil Circle**, in **Enterprise**, and **retired DOM** of **Coffee Association**, regarding his recent retirement as DOM.

“It is my prayer readers will find the love of Christ, along with His hope, comfort, peace, love and joy, [and] determination to stay focused on Him no matter what might be

happening in our lives,” said **pastor William “Buddy” Nelson, author** of “Getting Off the Fence Post: Choosing How to Face Difficult Times.”

“You cannot stay where you are and go with God. Change has to happen,” **Kris Henderson, discipleship pastor** at **Macedonia Baptist Church** in **Ranburne, Alabama**.

“I work hard and try to do my best to represent God through football. Whether it’s small things, big things, whatever it is, I understand that God’s with me,” said **Bryce Young, University of Alabama starting quarterback** and **defending Heisman Trophy winner**.

From the *Twitterverse*

@bellevuepastor

We all battle with the thoughts that come into our minds. It’s where the real war is. Every action, good or bad, starts with a thought. That’s why we must take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

@drtonyevans

In order to experience God’s promises, we must take obedient action. Then God can supernaturally intervene to fulfill His word — even in the midst of opposition.

@KFrugé

Kindness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. That’s it, that’s the tweet. #BeKind

@Alli_Young

Last night at church I was tapped on the shoulder. I turned around and it was two first and second grade little girls and they said,

“Miss Allison, we have a question for you. Will you come to our baptism on Sunday?”

@jdanielatkins

If leadership was easy, everybody would do it.

@DanReiland

Trust within your church staff is cultivated by honesty, integrity and competence. Things like pretense, gossip and divisiveness are extremely harmful and must be avoided at all costs.

@brocraige

DOMs need to make time to study, too.

@CatherineRenfro

“But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

@cliffmarshall

“Today, recognize and keep in mind that the Lord is God in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other” (Deut. 4:39).

@pastoremase

The popular preaching of our day is going to catch up with us! We promise people that if you follow Jesus that He’ll bring your dreams to pass. We have made better entrepreneurs, dream chasers and personal purpose gurus than we have disciples.

@pastorjgkell

Before sin, Satan is the tempter who whispers, “You should do this!” After sin, Satan is the accuser who whispers, “How could you have done this?”

Satan kills through temptation and then buries with guilt. Lord, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Outreach tips for Halloween

By **Chip Warren**
Albertville, Ala.

For a number of years my family and I were involved in our church’s fall carnival and were not home for the large number of kids that came through our neighborhood on Halloween.

Now we are delighted to see so many kids and families ringing our doorbell. We love this new opportunity and are having a blast.

I urge churches to encourage some of their members to stay home and participate in trick or treat at their own front doors. Here are two suggestions to consider:

► In addition to a generous amount of treats, include a kid-friendly and season-appropriate gospel tract or Christian music CD. Bible storybooks or Bible coloring books are also good options.

► Remember the parents. Include an appropriate gospel tract or a copy of the Gospel of John in your goody bag for the kids. Consider a calendar of upcoming church Christmas programs and information about various ministries.

Building bridges

While the cost of some of these items can quickly add up, I ask, “What value can we place on just one child or parent that may come to Jesus as a result of some of the items they received at your front door?”

Any conversation or interaction with trick or treaters and their parents goes a long way in building bridges with them. Money spent is money invested in eternity.

Depending on the number of kids that come through your neighborhood, you may consider asking some church friends who live in a low-traffic or rural area to help you. If you are in the latter group, offer to help a church friend who is in a high-traffic neighborhood.

3 stories you should know



Photo by Van Payne/The Alabama Baptist

Bart Barber, pastor of First Baptist Church Farmersville, Texas, and president of the Southern Baptist Convention, said a recent interview on “60 Minutes” was handled “honestly and fairly.” In the episode, correspondent Anderson Cooper asks Barber about Southern Baptist beliefs on a variety of topics, including the Sexual Abuse Task Force report, abortion, same-sex unions and politics. See the full story at tabonline.org/barber.

Lottie Moon giving breaks record

The International Mission Board is rejoicing at God’s work through the generosity of Southern Baptists, who gave \$203.7 million to the 2021–22 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. This is the largest offering in the 177-year history of IMB.

Missionaries serving on the field are aware of the significance of this record-breaking total and the impact every dollar has on reaching the lost.

Gifts to the offering sailed past the original goal by more than \$20 million.

“I came to IMB four years ago praying God would grant a new season of growth,” IMB President Paul Chitwood said.

The \$185 million goal for 2021–22 was set in partnership with Woman’s Missionary Union. (IMB)

IMB to host annual Missions College

The annual Missions College will occur Jan. 4–7, 2023, near Richmond, Virginia. Sponsored by the International Mission Board, MC is a training event for pastors, church leaders, missions trip participants and church members engaged in missions, or people who are interested in partnering with IMB teams.

It centers around 11-hour learning tracks led by missionaries with extensive field experience.

Also included at Missions College are breakout sessions and daily worship times led by keynote speakers.

The fee includes training, materials, lodging for three nights and meals.

For information, please email missionscollege@imb.org or call 804-353-0151. (IMB)

Persecuted church

Islamic State militants behead two Christians in Mozambique

MAPUTO, Mozambique — Two Christian men were beheaded in an attack in a region of Mozambique known as “the land of fear.”

The Islamic State of Mozambique — also known as al-Shabaab — has claimed responsibility for shooting and beheading the two men, reported relief group Barnabas Fund.

The July 30 ambush occurred in the Macomia district of the Cabo Delgado region. Islamist militants largely have control of the region, and Barnabas Fund said the reach of Islamist militants appears to be expanding, despite efforts by the government and other organizations.

“The Christian majority in Mozambique is being systematically victimized by one of the most savage terrorist groups currently operating in

our world,” stated a 2021 communication from Barnabas Fund. “Since 2017, nearly 800 attacks have killed more than 2,500 people.”

Mozambique is No. 41 on Open Doors’ 2022 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.



Photo by Wikimedia Commons

Iranian Christian denied asylum in Europe, may face prison, death

GREIFSWALD, Germany — A European court has denied asylum to an Iranian Christian, who may face prison or death if he returns to his country.

The European Court of Human Rights dismissed his appeal in August; therefore, Hassan

(name changed for security) may face deportation, states Alliance Defending Freedom International.

He learned about Jesus from his brother-in-law, who was tortured and killed for his faith while jailed in Iran. Hassan, his wife and family also came to believe. After their conversion was discovered, security forces raided their home. The family fled to Turkey, then to Germany.

After German authorities rejected Hassan’s asylum request, he appealed to Greifswald Administrative Court, states ADF International. That court considered it unlikely a Muslim would become a Christian after a relative was killed for his faith. The European Court of Human Rights declined to hear the case.

Iran is No. 9 on Open Doors’ 2022 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

Alabama news

BALDWIN ASSOCIATION

► **Lagoon Baptist Church** and **Crosswinds Church**, both in Gulf Shores, in partnership with the Christian Jeep Association, will host Jeep Church on Oct. 23. Jeeps will meet at 10 a.m. at Lagoon Baptist. There will be a drive-in service at 11 (drivers/riders may stay in their vehicles or go inside for the service). After the service, Jeeps will convoy to Fort Morgan. There is a group discount available for those who travel together to the gate; otherwise standard admission rates apply.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► Hueytown Arts Council is hosting GospelFest, a benefit to help New Mount Moriah Baptist Church, Hueytown, that recently burned. The event, which is Nov. 10 at 6:30 p.m. at **North Highlands Baptist Church, Hueytown**, will feature five choirs. For tickets, visit eventbrite.com; search for Worshipfest.

► **Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham**, celebrated 65 years Sept. 29. The church began with a small group meeting at the old Rocky Ridge Elementary School. The church had 69 charter members, the last of whom died in 2021.

CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

► **Union Baptist Church, Rockford**, celebrated its 150th anniversary Aug. 14 with guest speaker Jimmy Brand and guest singers Lori and Scott Roberts. Brenda Edmondson led congregational singing. "It was a wonderful day," said Edmondson. "God really showed out!"

Tommy Edmondson is pastor.

COFFEE ASSOCIATION

► **Mount Zion Baptist Church, New Brockton**, will host a Fall Youth Event on Oct. 29, 5–8 p.m. There will be a bonfire (provided the burn ban is lifted), hayride, sing-alongs, s'mores, marshmallow roast and peanut boil. Youth and adults of all ages are invited.

DALE ASSOCIATION

► **Holmes Baptist Church, Ariton**, will host a fifth Sunday Sing on Oct. 30 at 10:30 a.m. featuring the gospel group All for Him from Alexander City. There is no admission charge. Dinner will follow in the fellowship hall.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION

► **Lookout Mountain Baptist Association** will host its annual Lookout Mountain Children's Home Benefit Concert Nov. 5 at **Mount Zion Baptist Church, Collinsville**, beginning at 6 p.m. The guest group will be Crystal River.

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

► **Woodridge Baptist Church, Mobile**, is hosting Oasis, a senior adult event, Nov. 1 at 1:30 p.m. Frank Jones, gospel pianist, will serve

as host for the event featuring Guy Penrod, Grammy and Dove award-winning gospel singer, and Mickey Bell, Christian comedian.

Visit frankjonesministries.org/oasis or call 205-393-7020 for more information or tickets.

MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATION

► **Trinity Memorial Baptist Church, Montgomery**, plans to honor its pastor **Stanley Holt** with a breakfast Oct. 21 at Chappy's Prattville location at 8 a.m., and a reception Oct. 22 from 5 to 8 p.m. in the fellowship hall.

NORTH JEFFERSON ASSOCIATION

► **Enon Baptist Church, Morris**, will celebrate its 150th anniversary Nov. 6 during its 9 and 10:30 a.m. services followed by a four-night community revival Nov. 6–9 at 6:30 p.m. and a three-day senior adult revival Nov. 7–9 at 11 a.m. The theme is "Jesus, Our Foundation: Honoring the Past, Preparing for the Future."

The nightly revival features John Hambright, previous pastor of Enon Baptist Church; Steve Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee; Kyle Reno, directional pastor of The Summit Church, North Little Rock, Arkansas; and Bill Elliff, founding pastor of The Summit Church.

The senior adult revival features Billy Martin, pastor of Haig Missionary Baptist Church, Morris; Kevin Hamm, pastor of Gardendale First Baptist Church; and Steve Abney, pastor of North Highland Baptist Church, Warrior.

WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION

► **Millry Baptist Church** celebrated its 100th anniversary Sept. 18 with former pastors James Harrison and Billy Kendrick serving as

guest speakers. Pastor Randy Billingsley also spoke. Congregational music was led by worship leader Cindy Toomey and the praise team with special music by the senior adult and children's choirs. Associational missionary Richie Davis spoke and led the closing prayer.

Gov. Kay Ivey and the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission issued certificates in honor of the anniversary.

"We celebrated God's faithfulness — past, present and future," Billingsley said. "Our future is bright because God is faithful."

OTHER

► **Annel Robayna** is the new Hispanic church mobilization strategist for the International Mission Board.

Robayna, who formerly provided leadership for Hispanic work and church planting for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, started the new role Sept. 26.

"I'm excited about the possibility to share with the Hispanic churches how they can be a part of the Great Commission and make disciples of all nations," he said. "A lot of them want to do it, they just haven't had the opportunity to be trained."

Robayna said the role is like an extension of his work with SBOM, which he had done since June 2019. Instead of working with Hispanic churches in Alabama only, he will be working with them nationwide.

IMB's goal is to send 500 missionaries overseas by 2025.



ROBAYNA

Beeson's Smith honored for 'global impact'

Robert Smith Jr., Beeson Divinity School's longtime preaching professor, received Baylor University's George W. Truett Seminary Legacy Award in tribute for his global impact on Christian preaching and service to the kingdom of God on Sept. 28.

Smith, who serves as the Charles T. Carter Baptist Chair of Divinity, was presented the award during Truett's National African American Preaching Conference, held Sept. 27–29 in Waco, Texas. This award is presented once a year to outstanding proclaimers of the Christian faith.

"Anyone who has ever heard Dr. Smith was influenced by both his preaching and his personality," said Ralph D. West, founding pastor of The Church Without Walls in Houston and Beeson Divinity alumnus, who introduced Smith during the Legacy luncheon.

Smith received the E.K. Bailey Expository Preaching Conference Living Legend in 2017 and has spoken at more than 135 universities, colleges and seminars. Smith has taught Christian preaching at Beeson for the last 25 years. (SU)

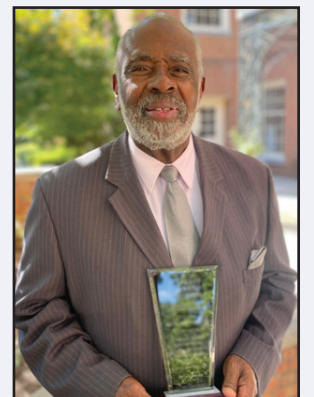


Photo by Samford University

Robert Smith Jr. will deliver the Tuesday evening featured message at the Alabama Baptist State Convention meeting in November.

‘Urban missionaries’

Flatline Church at Chisholm makes a difference in the lives of students

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Dewayne Rembert is a man with a lot on his plate, ministry wise. Ask him what he’s got going on, and you’ll quickly see he’s stretched in a lot of directions.

But for him, it’s always felt simple — go where people are, love them, feed them and take Jesus to them. That’s been the vision of Flatline Church at Chisholm where he serves as pastor, and Flatline Movement, the ministry he started years ago to reach urban youth through Christian hip-hop.

But Rembert said that simple vision has gotten more precise recently. “God is shifting our main focus,” he said.

Most of the people in the community surrounding Flatline Church are age 40 and up, Rembert noted. For several years he and other church leaders have walked the neighborhoods, getting to know people, offering food and other assistance and inviting them to be part of the church.

“We’re doing what we can there, but we see where God has given us so much favor with the schools. We feel like He’s saying, ‘I need that to be the main place you guys focus on,’” Rembert related. “Since the summer, God has shifted us to middle school and high school ministry because they trust us.”

For years, Rembert went into local high schools, building relationships with administrators and coaches. He became one of the main people they would call when they needed help, and he assembled volunteers from his and other local



Dozens of Carver High School football players indicate they want to follow Jesus at a recent Flatline Youth Initiative event.

churches to provide pre-game meals for athletes and school staff.

Now leaders at Flatline are seeing that investment blossom.

“The Lord has been leading us to get this generation, and in two or three years we believe we’ll be able to see a big turnaround here in Montgomery,” Rembert said. “The students who are the leaders of the school are getting saved, and some are on fire too, really taking their walk with the Lord seriously.”

That effort is now called Flatline Youth Initiative, led by Erick Armster and Mercedes “Murk” Wheeler.

Rembert said Armster is working with students from nine local high schools, getting to know them and leading Bible studies several days a week.

Armster knows how to share the

gospel effectively in an urban context, Rembert said.

“Sometimes it takes 30 minutes to get to the Bible because they believe the Bible is the white man’s God, that Jesus is white. In most cases, we have to tear that down before we can ever give them the gospel.”

Reaching students

Armster, who served for 17 years with Fellowship of Christian Athletes in the Montgomery area before moving to Flatline Youth Initiative eight months ago, said the Lord is “showing us favor” in the outreach to the students.

“Trying to get them Christ in their culture is what the team at Flatline’s heart has been burdened for,” Armster said.

Part of that effort is the Christian hip-hop music Flatline Movement is performing at events and producing in a studio at Flatline Church.

“That’s where we feel like God is leading us, to reach out a lot

through the music, through the arts — teaching kids so they feel like, ‘Hey, I’m represented here,’” Armster explained. “We’re bringing the gospel into the urban setting.”

Two camps

The effectiveness of that strategy was highlighted at two camps this summer at the beach in Florida, one each for male and female high school athletes. Twelve schools were represented, and as the students were introduced to the gospel through Christian hip-hop and Bible studies, 67 professed new faith in Jesus.

Flatline continues to dream up new plans, like the Flatline Music Initiative, which will be led by Deandre Burns, Flatline Movement’s general manager.

The initiative will teach students how to write and produce their own hip-hop that has positive or faith-centered lyrics — with hopes to one day have enough music to flood the airwaves with its own radio station.

Rembert said he’s grateful for the church partners that have come alongside to help fund the efforts and the churches that have graciously provided resources and volunteers to keep the pre-game meals going at local high schools.

“We depend on the church so much to help us. We’re urban missionaries,” Rembert asserted. “We’ve got the laborers, the ideas and lost souls all around us.”

Hear more

Want to hear more of the Flatline Movement story? Check out Season 4, Episode 2 of TAB Media’s Stories podcast, available now.

The serial-style podcast tells the story of Dewayne Rembert and Flatline Church in Season 2, continuing in Season 4. Listen at tabonline.org/stories or wherever you get podcasts.

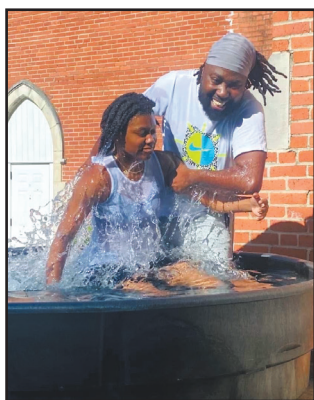
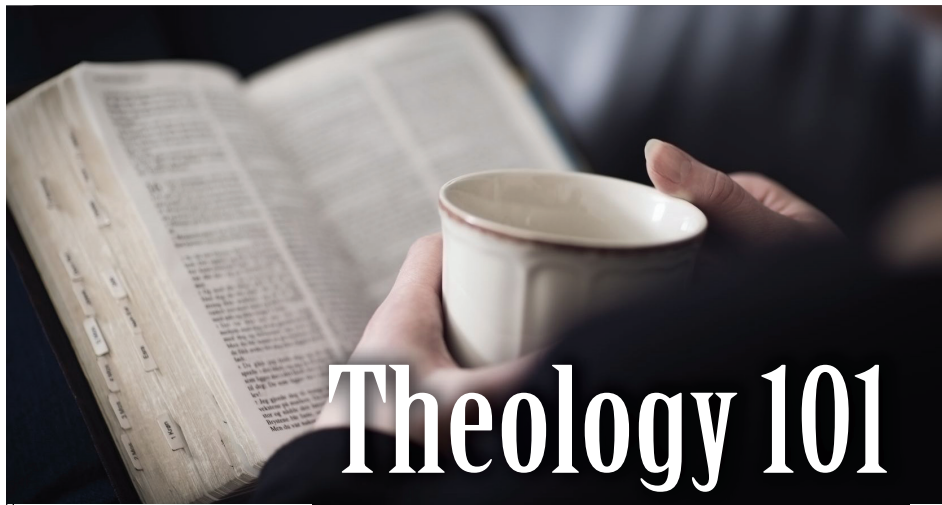


Photo courtesy of Dewayne Rembert
Dewayne Rembert, pastor of Flatline Church at Chisholm, baptizes Jasmine, who made a decision to follow Jesus this summer while at the church’s youth sports camp.

For more information about Flatline Church at Chisholm, visit flatlinechurch.org.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The Holy Spirit

The Spirit of Fruitfulness

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

We began this month by reminding ourselves of several characteristics of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. We previously gave thought to Him as the Spirit of truth and the Spirit of holiness.

This week our thoughts turn to what the Bible terms “fruit of the Spirit.” Galatians 5:22 directs us to seven basic qualities of this spiritual fruit the Holy Spirit seeks to produce in believers.

Love and joy

This list opens with the god-like quality of love. Not only does the Bible lead us to the truth that “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16), it goes further, telling us we should be persons of love: “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God” (1 John 4:7).

Another aspect of the fruit the Spirit listed in the Galatians passage is joy.

This was one of the petitions Jesus made to the Father on behalf of His disciples: “I come to You ... that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves” (John 17:13).

While happiness may depend on what happens or as we put it, on our circumstances, joy is dependent on the indwelling fullness of the Spirit in us regardless of the happenings to us or around us.

A third aspect of the Spirit’s fruit in us as followers of Christ is peace.

Inner peace is not dependent on what is going on around us or happening to us. Peace of heart is tied tightly to the inward reality and control of the Holy Spirit in us.

Promise of peace

Jesus left His followers with the promise, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you” (John 14:27a).

Outward tranquility around us is not essential to the heart peace the Spirit bestows and maintains in us. If we would live in peace, we must look up and not just around.

Space does not permit an elaboration on the other fruit named in the Galatians passage: patience or longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

As we ponder the range of fruitfulness the Holy Spirit can produce through believers, let’s open ourselves to the Spirit of fruitfulness that He might produce an abundant crop in us daily.

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.



BMBA announces new format for ministers conferences

By Michael J. Brooks
The Alabama Baptist

Birmingham Metro Baptist Association has reevaluated the way it ministers to ministers.

Chris Crain, executive director of BMBA, said his team has looked strategically at all their efforts over the past four years, including the traditional Monday morning ministers conference.

“Our ministers meetings have basically been unchanged for 45 years,” he related. “We wanted to meet the needs of today’s ministers, so we conducted a survey and had a great response,” including some interesting answers.

“They told us Thursday was better than Monday since most ministers have major responsibilities the first four days of the week and often have staff meetings and other obligations on Mondays,” Crain explained.

“And we heard from staffers other than pastors who asked about training and fellowship. So we’ve tried to respond affirmatively to these requests.”

Marisa Taylor, BMBA church resource specialist, said she and the staff were involved in Crain’s vision casting and helped work out details for the new format. She believes it will bring about greater participation among church staff.

“We’ve found previously that we had increased interest when we ‘mixed things up’ a bit rather than doing the ‘normal,’” Taylor explained. “So we’re moving forward with three different types of programs.”

Categories

She noted the first category will include pastors and worship leaders.

The first effort was Sept. 22 and was led by pastor Jacob Simmons of Hope Community Church [formerly McElwain Baptist] and his worship leader, Jeff Hindman.

The second category features practical ministry skills development. Pathways counselor Ross

Hickman talked about pastoral counseling Sept. 29, and Robert Smith of Beeson Divinity School will lead “Biblical Exegesis and Hermeneutics” on Dec. 1.

The third category will be fellowship lunches.

Taylor noted those will require reservations, but anyone in ministry is invited to attend all the gatherings.

The new schedule includes almost every Thursday, with some exceptions, Taylor added.

Another goal will be to integrate Crain’s Undivided podcast to help expand learning opportunities.

Ministers are invited to subscribe to the BMBA email list by calling 205-599-3245 or registering online at bmbaonline.org.



Photo courtesy of Michael J. Brooks

Birmingham Metro Baptist Association executive director Chris Crain (right) hopes to feature guests like Mark Hobafcovich of NAMB’s Mobilizing Pastors and Churches for Church Planting Ministries network on his podcast.

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers serve a meal to their teammates at FBC Arcadia, Florida, where around 150 volunteers are helping those affected by Hurricane Ian.

GOD IS PROVIDING



Photo courtesy of Cookie Baker

'Longer-term operation' offers opportunity for even more teams to go and serve

(continued from page 1) came in the early days of the effort served a critical role in getting things up and going, said David Hendon, who served as white hat until Dismukes took over Oct. 11.

"They were a huge help, and I think they are hoping to make a strike team that can respond quickly like that in the future too," Hendon said.

Rotating in and out

Since then, other teams have rotated in and out, staying at two local Baptist churches — First Baptist and Calvary Baptist — as well as in a 40-by-40-foot tent provided by the Florida Baptist Convention.

Many of the volunteers worked out of the mass feeding unit, which was at Calvary Baptist and pro-

vided the Red Cross with between 7,000 and 8,000 hot meals to distribute in the community each day. That unit wrapped up its work Oct. 14.

But other teams are hard at work, including assessors, chaplains and chainsaw and recovery teams. The shower units are still up and running, and mudout teams are starting to deploy.

Dismukes said as he's gone out to do assessments, he's begun to smell the odor that comes with

waterlogged houses.

"It really breaks your heart to see this," he said.

"We know there is a lot to be done here still."

But God continues to provide, he said. One morning, he was out looking for plywood, furring strips and carpet when someone called and said he was on the way with a truckload of

all those things — in the exact amount Dismukes had prayed for that morning.

"God has worked through so many things and through everyone here to provide what we need," he said.

Navigating life

Volunteers have also had many opportunities to come alongside homeowners as they continue to navigate life in the wake of the storm.

One assessment team went to look at a job request and learned that in addition to the trauma of the hurricane, the homeowner had faced another

trauma that week — while driving home from his night shift at work, he had hit and killed a cyclist riding on a dark road.

Chaplaincy help

The man is understandably "really struggling," Wakefield said, noting that after the assessment team spent several hours with him, chaplains also went back to visit with him.

"Our folks have spent time to help him and his family," he said.

Wakefield asked for Alabama Baptists to pray for the homeowners who have to persevere in the midst

of the devastation. Seven people in the Arcadia area have made professions of faith after conversations with disaster relief volunteers, and he prays it will be more.

He also asked for prayer for volunteers to continue to respond. "Since it's a longer-term operation, there's an opportunity for even more teams to go," he said. "They sometimes get tired

and weary. Pray they will stay engaged."

To support Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief or to learn more about training to be a volunteer, visit sbdr.org.



Photo courtesy of David Hendon

Roger Williams (left) and Barney Self put together an outlet to run a water pump for the mobile kitchen.

For more information or to give to Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief efforts in Florida, visit sbdr.org/hurricane-relief.

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Photo courtesy of David Hendon

Ed Davidson (left) and Les Brown wash dishes after a day of cooking. At its peak, the feeding unit provided upwards of 7,000 meals each day.

BEING PREPARED

9 suggestions for how to lead your church when disaster strikes

By Ken Allen

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

Disasters come in many shapes and sizes: fire, flood, wind event, COVID-19. The disaster could last a few weeks or a few years. I was the pastor of a church whose facility was destroyed during the tornado outbreak on April 27, 2011. The following two years and two months, we navigated the waters of relocating and rebuilding.

Here are a few key points gleaned through the process:

1. Have your key leaders confirm property insurance is adequate to cover rebuilding the entire church facility.

2. During a disaster, you will need to make decisions as pastor. However, for the long haul you will need to delegate to properly lead. I met with our deacon, finance and personnel teams immediately. The trustees handled property acquisition. We carefully

formed a rebuilding team and a vision team.

3. Realize that in difficult times people will disagree. Biblical truth is one thing, opinion is another. Attempt to work together to form consensus throughout rebuilding.

4. Do not rush major decisions. Allow the dust to settle. Bathe the entire process in prayer. Receive advice from people inside and outside of your church family.

5. Lead your people to go to the right source for information: God and His ordained leaders. You and your church leaders need to speak with one voice. Give regular reports. Without ongoing information, people will fill in the blanks with what they think is correct.

6. Leadership is formed in challenging seasons. You will learn more through short-term difficulty than during long-term peace.

7. Prepare for disaster; it could



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist

First Baptist Church Reserve in Louisiana suffers the loss of its fellowship hall roof after Hurricane Ida in August 2021.

happen at any time. You could write a sermon outline that speaks to sudden disaster, such as Psalm 46, and create a response plan.

Do you have a tornado-safe place at the church? How would the church meet needs of church members and community members? Glean from the best of your COVID-19 response. Attempt to discover a few places in your area where the church family could meet if you could not meet in the church facility.

8. Remember the church is a body, not a building. Our emphasis should be future focused on the body, not the building. The church should function as the body of Christ. Often, the church is too dependent on a building.

9. A fresh start is usually needed to break out of hindering traditions. If rebuilding is necessary, use that time to take a fresh look at your church mission and practice.

With a little effort, you can prepare for disaster. Will you have all the ducks in a row? No. But you could be two or three steps ahead. Attempt to thrive and not merely survive if and when disaster strikes.

EDITOR'S NOTE
— This article originally appeared in

Ministry Moments, a newsletter of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Allen has served as a pastor, director of missions and now works with churches and leaders to foster healthy, God-honoring environments.



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist

A disaster can occur at any time. To thrive when disaster strikes, churches must have an emergency response plan in place and work together with a future focus.



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist
After waters recede, churches struggle to salvage resources and rebuild.



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Why and how to memorize Scripture

By Carolyn Tomlin
The Alabama Baptist

The King James Version says in Proverbs 23:7, “As he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” Memorizing Scripture is the best defense in times of trials and problems, or simply when we need to praise God for His goodness.

There is no instant or magic way to memorize Scripture. Consider your mode of learning to get started.

If you learn best by seeing something, you are a visual learner. If you recall information through hearing, you are an auditory learner. If you remember best by doing or acting it out, you are a kinesthetic learner.

Here are some memorization tips for each type of learner.

Visual learners

► Picture in your mind the first letter of each word. Example: Psalm 136:1: “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good” (GtttL,fHig). Write these letters on a sticky note where you will see them often. Use them as clues for memorizing.

► Organize verses into topics, such as fear, praise, forgiveness, anxiety and faith. Work on the chosen

topic for a month or more.

► Keep a small notebook of Scripture verses you are working on. Read them over and over throughout the day.

Auditory learners

► Break the verse down into phrases. When they are memorized, string them together in a sentence.

► Record a verse on your smartphone and play it back frequently.

► Sing the words; develop a melody.

► Play Christian songs that contain Scripture and use

them when traveling. Children will learn the words easily.

Kinesthetic learners

► Form a mental picture of a word in the verse. Example: Psalm 23:1: “The Lord is my shepherd.” Write out the verse and draw a shepherd’s staff near it.

► To represent love, draw a heart or hold up a large heart when working with a group of children.

Decide how many verses you want to learn in a day, week or month. Then find a method that works for you and stay with it. The desire and commitment to memorize are the secrets, and repetition is key.

START WITH THESE

Begin with these four verses every believer should know:

Genesis 1:1
John 1:1
John 1:14
John 3:16

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For more information call 205-870-4720, ext. 200, or email ads@thealabamabaptist.org. To place an online classified ad for \$9.99/month, visit thealabamabaptist.org/classifieds.

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Church located in Mobile County, Alabama, seeking a full-time pastor or possible bivocational pastor. Prior pastoral service desired. Submit resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church of St. Elmo, P.O. Box 159, St. Elmo, AL 36568.

PASTOR

Prayerfully, Hillview Baptist Church is seeking a part-time pastor. Resumés may be sent to: Pastor Search Committee, 800 Heflin Avenue E, Birmingham, AL 35214.

PASTOR

Sweet Home Baptist Church in Guntersville, Alabama, is in search of a pastor. Interested candidates may send a resumé to: sweethomesearchcommittee@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Dunns Creek Baptist Church in Echola, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumés to: jaanderson@live.com.

MUSIC MINISTER

Pine Grove Baptist Church, Heflin, Alabama, is a small congregation prayerfully seeking a part-time music minister. Please email resumé to: pinegrovehefinal@gmail.com.

MUSIC DIRECTOR

East Gadsden Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a part-time music director. Please send resumé and/or experience to: eastgadsdenbaptist@gmail.com.

MINISTER OF MUSIC

Faith Baptist Church Midway, located in Lawrence County, Alabama, is currently searching for a bivocational minister of music. This individual will be responsible for leading worship for the congregation as well as rehearsing and directing the choir. The minister of music must be willing to present a well-blended program of music that will promote worship and exalt our Savior. Please submit resumés by email to: secretary@fbcm.com.

SONG LEADER

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, 6057 County Road 50 in Moundville, Alabama, is searching for a song leader to lead congregational singing on Sunday morning only. Please send resumé to: jbshaw@mound.net or call 205-454-0035.

MUSIC LEADER/PASTOR
Wadsworth Church in Deatsville

is looking for a paid part-time music leader/pastor. A church profile, job description and application can be found at wadsworthbaptist.com/music. Additional compensation for travel may be considered.

MINISTER OF WORSHIP & FAMILIES

First Baptist Church of Atmore, Alabama, is realigning ministry positions. The church is seeking a full-time minister of worship and families to lead the worship ministry and serve as “second chair” to the pastor in a church undergoing an exciting revitalization. The church is also seeking a co-vocational minister to students. Resumés may be sent to: keving@fbcatmore.org.

MUSIC MINISTER & YOUTH MINISTER

Verbena Baptist Church is seeking both a bivocational music minister and a bivocational youth minister. Please email resumés to: verbenabaptist@att.net.

OTHER POSITIONS

PIANIST

First Baptist Church Vincent is seeking a part-time pianist. This position would include playing for the Sunday morning worship service and Wednesday night choir practice. If interested, please call Pastor Robbie Weems, 205-617-1277, or the church at 205-672-2512.

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TAB EXTRAS

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It's an amazing thing for someone to give someone else a kidney and with it a new chance at life. It's even more amazing the way God brings the paths of the donors and recipients together. This season shares three of those stories. TAB's Grace Thornton writes and produces the shows. Listen to the Stories podcast at tabonline.org/stories.

TAB DIGITAL

In addition to the print edition, The Alabama Baptist also releases a weekly digital edition of the newspaper to every subscriber's email. The digital edition comes in PDF form as well as part of an app and is included with all subscriptions. It has exclusive content for the digital edition only, and can be accessed anytime as long as you have internet. To update your email address, contact subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org.

TAB HIGHLIGHTS

TAB Highlights is an email newsletter delivered every Monday–Wednesday–Friday with the day's top stories from the world of faith-based news. Headlines come from international, national and Southern Baptist coverage as well as one story that has been trending during the week. To sign up, email news@thealabamabaptist.org.

VISUALLY IMPAIRED READERS

Know someone who's visually impaired and finds it difficult to read? The Alabama Baptist is now offering a way for that person to listen to stories and news in a format that comes in the mail for free. For more information call 205-870-4720 or email ahacker@thealabamabaptist.org.

TAB digital services offers 'front door' for churches

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Have you ever wondered, “Does my church really need a website?”

Maybe you already have a Facebook page, and you feel like that’s enough. Or maybe your church is small, and no one wants to take on the extra responsibility of building and maintaining a website.

James Hammack, digital services manager for TAB Media Group, said you might want to look at it through the eyes of someone who is considering visiting your church and think of your website as part of your outreach.

“In almost all contexts the church website is the front door to the church

in today’s digital age,” Hammack said. “In many ways, to have no web presence can communicate a message to potential visitors that you don’t want them. The church website is the first step to inviting people into your church.”

Variety of options

An easy way to open that front door is through Hosted Church, a new

service offered by TAB Media. Hosted Church offers a variety of website options and personalized design, but if

you’re looking for something simple, an Essentials website might be just right.

The Essentials template offers a well-designed landing page that tells peo-

ple who you are and the information they need to know to visit your church.

What’s included

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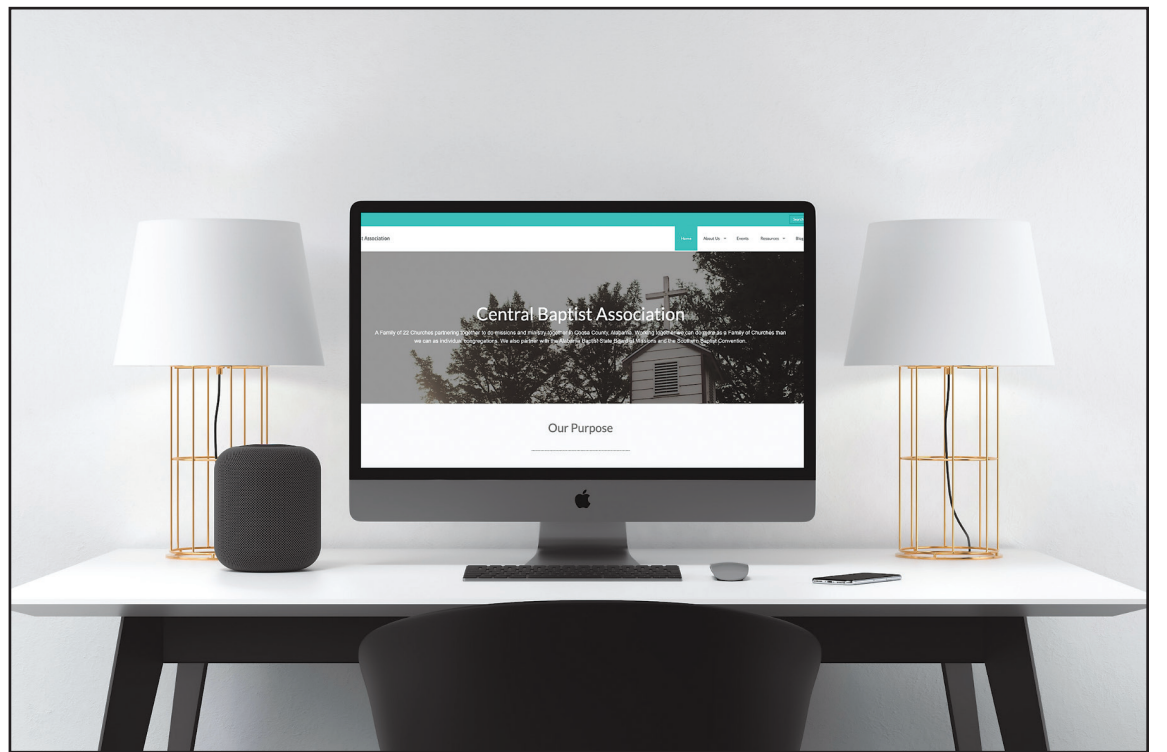
main name; the landing page with personalized information, colors and images; and updates to that information as it changes during the year.

A sample template for

the Essentials page is at essentials.hostedchurch.com.

For more information about Hosted Church, visit hostedchurch.com or call 205-870-4720, ext. 108.

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LEANING ON GOD

‘Christ is who I can fall on,’ says Alabama Crimson Tide’s Jalen Milroe

By Tracy Riggs
The Alabama Baptist

University of Alabama backup quarterback Jalen Milroe has a motto: “I’m more than an athlete — I’m a Christian athlete,” he says.

A four-star recruit out of Texas and a redshirt freshman this year, Milroe usually backs up the Crimson Tide’s Heisman Award-winning starting quarterback Bryce Young.

Milroe says the quarterback position is all about leadership, a lesson he put into practice in Bama’s Oct. 1 victory over the University of Arkansas Razorbacks.

Less than five minutes into the second quarter of the Tide’s Oct. 1 game against Arkansas in Fayetteville, Alabama quarterback Bryce Young injured his shoulder.

Milroe entered the game, scoring one touchdown and passing for another in the second quarter. Milroe finished the game with four of nine passes completed for 65 yards.

In the Tide’s Oct. 8 win over Texas A&M, Milroe completed 12 of 19 passes for 111 yards, three touchdowns and an interception. He also ran the ball 17 times for 83 yards but fumbled the football twice.

It was a tough game, but Milroe and the team got it done.

“That’s what I like about the quarterback position. You embrace that leadership role. You embrace trying to lead others,” Milroe told *The Alabama Baptist*.

But as exciting as winning football games may be, Milroe says his life is about so much more than football games, and his faith is very important to him.

‘More than athletes’

“I just want people to know that we’re more than athletes,” he said. “We’re student-athletes — we have things going on. Also, like myself and other people, we’re big on faith.”

Meeting with fellow Christian



Photos courtesy of Alabama Athletics

University of Alabama backup quarterback Jalen Milroe throws a pass against Utah State during the first game of the season. A four-star recruit out of Texas, Milroe started against Texas A&M Oct. 8.

athletes is very important to Milroe. He attends the Fellowship of Christian Athletes where he gets to meet with other believers on a weekly basis.

“FCA is awesome,” he said. “It allows athletes to come together to be in the presence of the Lord. ... It’s a great thing, great opportunity, a great time. We all enjoy it.”

Football and faith

He also said one of the benefits of FCA is that it preaches the Word and shows how to apply the Word to everyday life.

Football and faith are intertwined with Milroe. Milroe’s Christian journey started in childhood through his family, growing up in church with his grandfather, a deacon, and his grandmother, who led a Bible study.

Milroe also played football, starting at 4 years old. Though he liked multiple sports, he was very active. Baseball was too slow for him, so he decided to concentrate on football. With his dad’s training help, Milroe became a star quar-

terback in high school. Even as his sports star rose, he kept his mind and heart focused.

“When it came to my faith, it was important to me because that allowed me to walk with purpose, and it drove me to do other things beyond my sport,” he said.

Being more than an athlete was also important to Milroe when he was still at Tompkins High School in Katy, Texas.

“Going to high school, I wanted to change the atmosphere at Tompkins,” he said. “My goal in life is not to seek blessing but to be a blessing to other people. That’s what I took moving forward with my faith. I know God. I know who He is in me. Now [I want to] put who He is in me into other people. My ultimate goal is to invest in other people.”

Milroe dreamed of playing for Alabama as far back as he can remember, and he knew there was something special about the team. He saw the consistency and success of the Crimson Tide under head coach Nick Saban’s leadership.

Various college recruiters came to his high school to watch him play, but he got the most excited when an Alabama coach came to his high school to talk to him. Later, when he got the recruitment call from Alabama, both he and his parents were overjoyed.

“I still remember it like yesterday. I ran down the stairs, and I got the phone call. I got the offer. Alabama was my dream offer,” Milroe said. “I remember tearing up when I got the call. I told my mom and dad that I received the offer, and they were super excited.”

Milroe credits God for helping him get through the tough times, both in football and in life.

“The Bible says, do not lean on your understanding ... lean on the Lord through it all. That’s been big because here at Bama you’re challenged day in and day out. Sometimes you can get weary; sometimes you can waver away from your end goal,” he said.

Challenges

“But you know that God has a purpose. God wants us to lean on Him through it all. ... Every day I’m challenged. No matter what, I know that I can lean on Him. Not only for the bad, but I can lean on Him [also] for good and thank Him.”

Milroe is also learning challenges can make a person stronger. He relies on Philippians 4:13.

“No matter what it is, He’s the one who strengthens me,” he said. “When you’re having a rough moment, when it feels like everything is against you, just know God is the One who is going to uplift you and push you to your ultimate — wherever you want to go.”

“Christ is who I can fall [back] on no matter what it is — no matter the circumstance, no matter what’s going on. Christ is within me. With my faith, it honestly catapults me to what I want to do.

“There’s nothing I can’t do because of the Man above.”

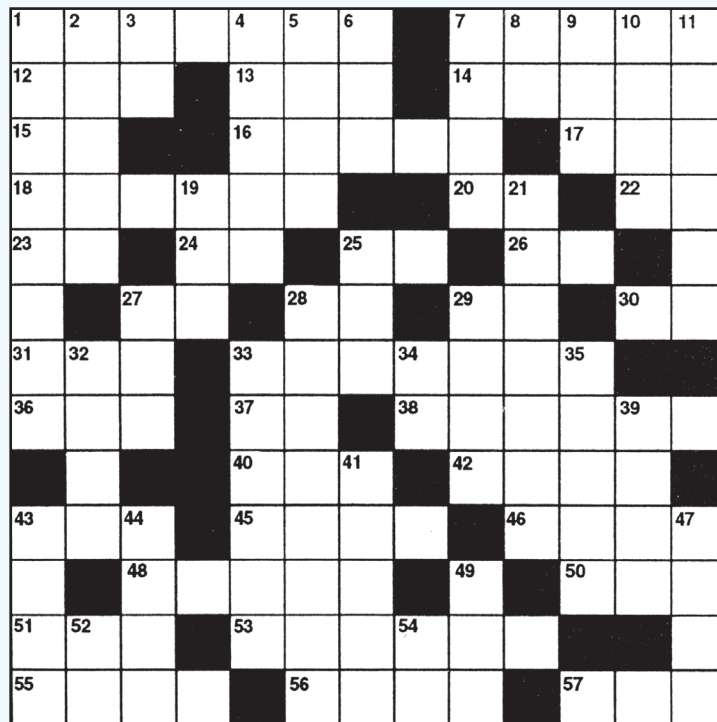


MILROE

CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

1. Daniel the ____.
(Matt. 24:15)
7. ____ stilled the people. (Num. 13:30)
12. Lord, ____ long?
(Isa. 6:11)
13. Iron ____.
14. Not live on bread ____.
(Matt. 4:4)
15. ____ I my brother's keeper? (Gen. 4:9)
16. The family of ____.
(1 Sam. 10:21)
17. Measure of weight.
18. A pharaoh.
20. Middle Atlantic state.
(abbr.)
22. ____ will we sing.
(Ps. 21:13)
23. I am ____ the Father.
(John 14:10)
24. How ____ it that ye have no faith?
(Mark 4:40)
25. Go up ____ Jerusalem.
(Acts 25:9)
26. Old Testament.
(abbr.)
27. Saint. (abbr.)
28. That it shall ____.
(Acts 27:25)
29. Social Security.
(abbr.)
30. Yes. (Spanish)
31. Samuel ran to ____.
(1 Sam. 3:5)
33. He looked on the ____.
(Num. 24:21)
36. Variation of aeon.
37. And the Lord shut him ____.
(Gen. 7:16)
38. To scheme. (2 words)
40. Disc jockeys. (abbr.)
42. ____ He is come.
(John 4:25)
43. Long ____.
45. To the slaughter, like ____.
(Jer. 51:40)
46. Christ ____ me.
(1 Cor. 1:17)



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48. Elimelech's wife.
(Ruth 1:2)
50. Standard in golf.
51. Long, narrow fish.
53. Type of acid.
55. Nos.
56. Orderly.
57. Mine enemy and my ____ (sing.). (Ps. 27:2)

DOWN

1. A certain ____ besought Him. (Luke 11:37)
2. Art thou a ____?
(Acts 22:27)
3. Exclamation of pain.
4. Houses.
5. Periods of time.
6. Asian holiday.
7. ____ and Abel.
8. American League.
(abbr.)
9. ____ sat in the gate of Sodom. (Gen. 19:1)
10. Seth called his son's name ____.
(Gen. 4:26)
11. Name Rachel called Benjamin. (Gen. 35:18)
19. ____ thou on My right hand. (Matt. 22:44)
21. ____ coat of many colors.
25. Number of lepers.
(Luke 17:12)
27. All manner of ____.
(Matt. 12:31)
28. The sons of Rachel; Joseph and ____.
(Gen. 35:24)
29. Put away (on a boat).
32. ____ ago.
33. Passest over the brook ____.
(1 Kings 2:37)
34. Consider ____ in thine heart. (Deut. 4:39)
35. Let us not ____, as do others.
(1 Thess. 5:6)
39. Was one ____ a prophetess.
(Luke 2:36)
41. I will ____ all thy borders with frogs.
(Ex. 8:2)
43. So be it.
44. The ____ true God.
(John 17:3)
47. The ____ of life.
(Rev. 22:2)
49. The ____ wherein Ishmael had cast ... the dead.
(Jer. 41:9)
52. Each. (abbr.)
54. Egyptian god.

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

SBC releases calendar of activities for 2023

By Timothy Cokes
Baptist Press

The release of the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention Calendar of Activities is highlighted by the addition of Caring Well Sunday, to be observed for the first time Sept. 24, 2023.

The addition of Caring Well Sunday, dedicated to awareness and a proactive attitude toward preventing sexual abuse, was approved Sept. 20 by the SBC Executive Committee.

The emphasis will be the last Sunday in September on subsequent SBC calendars.

Staple events

The 2023 calendar also includes Southern Baptist staple events such as Disaster Relief Sunday (June 4), CP Sunday (Oct. 1), week of prayer and missions study for International Missions and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (Dec. 3–10) and week of prayer and missions study for North American Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (March 5–12).

Each month of the year is highlighted by particular dates designed to promote a specific ministry focus.

Examples include Focus on

Christian Service in August, Focus on Christian Evangelism in April and Focus on Christian Unity in February.

A resource

Jonathan Howe, vice president for communications for the SBC EC, said the calendar serves as a resource designed to aid Southern Baptists in their cooperative efforts. "The SBC calendar

is a helpful tool for churches to highlight how God is working in and through Southern Baptists around the country and the

world," Howe said.

"Furthermore, days like Caring Well Sunday provide strategic opportunities for churches to resource and train members.

"We would encourage all cooperating churches to partner with us to equip and inspire Southern Baptists through these convention-wide emphases."

While observance of emphasis Sundays on the SBC calendar is optional, it is important "just to encourage us to consider putting these on our church calendars, especially [Caring Well Sunday] in light of the season that we're in," SBC Executive Committee Chairman Jared Wellman said.

For the full 2022 and 2023 SBC Calendar of Activities, visit sbc.net/calendar.



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The release of the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention Calendar of Activities is highlighted by the addition of Caring Well Sunday, to be observed for the first time Sept. 24, 2023.



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Questions?
Contact Sandy Harmann,
(334) 613-2266,
sharmann@alsbom.org.

COMPLETE YOUR ANNUAL CHURCH PROFILE

Know well the condition of your flock, and pay attention to your herds.

PROVERBS 27:23 (CSB)

7 tips to create headlines that work

By Mark MacDonald
The Alabama Baptist

Your job to create headlines that work is fairly clear but certainly not easy.

Put the right words together to describe your expanded content so it captures the interest of your audience. But write a wrong headline and you'll risk having your potential audience ignore the rest.

Once an audience ignores content, it's difficult to engage them again.

Checklist

You need a great headline everywhere.

Here's a checklist to ensure an audience pays attention to your sermons, social media posts, church blogs or newsletters.

► **Provide a solution or remind them of a need.** To understand and love an audience means becoming

ing their pain experts and wanting to provide the best solutions. Think about the needs, concerns and goals that impact them daily. Talk about them authentically because you care.

► **Create a strong connection between headline and content.** Don't click-bait them (bait and switch doesn't feel good). Always ensure your content delivers what the headline promises.

► **Use good keywords or key phrases.** Think what your audience would be googling and use those words. Use a good keyword research tool if necessary. Once you identify the keyword or phrase, be sure to use it regularly throughout the content (i.e., this article's key phrase is "create headlines that work.")

► **Create headlines that work by using active voice.** Your audience wants practical knowledge. Most don't



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want existential or philosophical discussion (unless it can be put into practice). Use active voice for verbs so the audience knows there'll be steps to achieve their goal or solve their need.

► **Keep it short; make it memorable.** Once you create headlines that work by using the first four points, edit it to make it as short as possible. Brevity makes it easier to remember.

► **The unexpected will break through.** Don't make it boring, or it'll get lost. Try to make it sound like content they've never heard before and information that'll change their future. If not? It's worth ignoring.

► **Create headlines that work by implying your audience has time for this.** Adding a number to your headline is the easiest way to do this.

Everyone feels like they don't have time to do everything required of them, so let them know you're limiting the solutions to a manageable amount. That'll help the audience think, "I know the content's outline will be organized, and it'll fit within my attention span."

EDITOR'S NOTE —

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

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 23

Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



THE HOLLOW PROMISES Hosea 6:1–7:2

Return (6:1–3)

Hosea pleads with his fellow Israelites to return to the Lord because He will heal their wounds. In just a brief amount of time (after two days and on the third) God will heal them if they turn back to Him. In fact, God's love and forgiveness will be poured out on them like the spring rains that refresh the land.

It is evident God's punishment against Israel is not out of spite or revenge. It is a form of discipline. The purpose of discipline is to change behavior — it is actually a form of love (Heb. 12:7).

God is trying to get the Israelites to return to Him because this is in their best interest. Many people today think of the Bible as a handbook of laws meant to keep us from having any fun. However, the Bible shows us how to worship God and live in a way pleasing to Him, which is also for our benefit.

If we follow the teachings of the Bible, we will have a much more stable and spiritually prosperous life. The temptation of sin makes us think we know better and our decisions are better than God's.

Still, God is quick to forgive us when we repent, and we can never be so far away from God that He will not forgive us when we repent.

Interestingly, in this section is a seemingly insignificant passage with profound implications. Hosea says God will revive the Israelites soon once they repent, and on the third day, He will raise them up so they can live in His presence. This comment is a foreshadowing of the resurrection of Christ.

Many people try to suggest this comment is meant only for the Israelites in Hosea's day, but that is a shortsighted view.

In 1 Corinthians 15:4, Paul tells us the Scriptures point to Jesus rising on the third day. It is important to remember the Holy Spirit is the One who works through the men who wrote the Bible, and it is the Holy Spirit who then gives interpretation to passages.

Loyalty (4–6)

One of the problems facing the Israelites and Judeans was that they believed their rituals demonstrated repentance.

We can fall into the same trap today. We may think if we go to church, read our Bible, give to the poor, etc., then our action will cause God to love us, grant favor to us or forgive our sins.

The problem is that while we may be doing good things, God is looking at our heart.

God desires we repent from our heart, which then leads to good deeds. God would prefer us to live by the spirit of the Law than try to obey the law for the sake of just obeying the law.

Hosea 6:6 sums this up well: "For I desire loyalty and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings."

It is not in the act that God delights, but in the heart behind the act. A heart properly aligned to God leads to acts that please Him.

There is nothing we can do to make God love us. In fact, He loves us in spite of ourselves (Rom. 5:8). Proper appreciation of the salvation we have in Christ is acts of love toward God.

Judgment (6:7–7:2)

Because the Israelites and the tribe of Judah did not worship God in spirit and in truth, He was going to punish them, and they would face judgment.

Just as Adam had violated God's law in Genesis, these Israelites had also violated God's covenant with them, and they would pay the price.

God is holy and must punish sin. God will punish everyone who has not accepted Christ as payment for their sin. The gospel is that the perfect Christ, both God and man, died in our place for us.

If we do not accept this transaction and instead trust in our own supposed goodness, we will face an eternal separation from God.

The good news of the gospel of Christ needs to be shared throughout the world.

Bible Studies for Life

By Rony Kozman, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



HEAR GOD'S WORD Nehemiah 8:1–3, 7–12

Put yourself in a position to hear God's word. (1–3)

With the ascendance and permission of the Persian empire, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah recount the return of the exiles from Babylonian captivity to the land of Judah and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. This return to the land of Judah should be understood within the framework of the covenant God made with Israel and that we read about in the Pentateuch.

Israel must be faithful to God and must obey the covenant. If Israel proves to be unfaithful and breaks the covenant, then the curses of the covenant will fall upon the people. They will be defeated by foreign nations and exiled from their land just as the Northern Kingdom of Israel was conquered by Assyria in the eighth century B.C., and as the Southern Kingdom of Judah was conquered and deported from its land by Babylon.

The return of the exiles to their homeland is God's mercy and compassion in bringing the curses of the covenant to an end. With this return of the people to their land, there must also be a return of the people to heed God's covenant (God's word and instructions).

At the opening of Nehemiah, Nehemiah recalls God's covenantal fidelity and confesses His people failed "to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the ordinances that You commanded Your servant Moses." And after the Book of Nehemiah recounts the return of the exiles to the land of Judah, the people ask Ezra, the scribe and priest, to bring out "the book of the law of Moses" and to read it aloud to them. They wanted God's word unfolded to them, and they listened carefully to what it said.

Listen to God's word with the goal of understanding (7–8)

The law of Moses was not simply read out loud to them. But one of the jobs of the priests was to interpret, explain and teach the law to the people. We are told "the Levites helped the people understand the law."

There was both the public reading of God's word as well as certain designated and qualified people (the Levites) who dealt with its "interpretation" and who "gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading."

Respond to what you hear with both repentance and celebration. (9–12)

We can learn from the example of the people of Israel. We should eagerly desire to intake God's word, to have Scripture read to us, but also to pay careful attention to the teaching of qualified people who can explain it, interpret it and apply it to our lives.

This attention to Scripture should not be merely intellectual and cerebral, but as with the people of Israel, we should be attentive to God's word so that we can conform our lives to it (9:9). In this case, the people of Israel grieve because they recognize they were not faithful to God's instructions. But Ezra instructs them to rejoice because they had understood God's word and the teaching of Ezra and the Levites.

We also can and should (and at different times) respond similarly. We can grieve that we have not done what God requires of us in Scripture, and we can also rejoice that we understand what God requires of us as we turn in repentance and as we remember and celebrate God's mercy and forgiveness.

"And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen,' lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground."

Nehemiah 8:6

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs
The Alabama Baptist

TikTok content creator shares Christ with 'Hope in 60 Seconds'

TikTok is not especially known for its Christian content, but Cristina Baker — mother, author and social media influencer — uses the platform to share the hope of Christ, and her content is now available in a new book, “Hope in 60 Seconds: Encountering the God of the Impossible.”

“God is getting so resourceful. He’s like, ‘Hey, I’m going to send you into the darkest places and that’s what’s going to draw people to Me. You’re gonna let your light shine, and people are gonna see that burning passion they have for Me. They’re not gonna know — maybe they won’t understand at first — but then they’ll be compelled,’” Baker said.

TikTok has become Baker’s missions field, and it started as an idea back in 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

She felt the Lord wanted her to share hope through social media and chose TikTok, a relatively new social media platform concentrating on videos of less than two minutes.

Baker filmed her first post in the middle of the night in her bedroom, simply quoting Joshua 1:9 to en-



CRISTINA BAKER

Photo courtesy of Cristina Baker

courage watchers to be strong and courageous in the Lord.

The next morning Baker found the video had gone viral. Knowing single videos sometimes did, she didn’t think much of it. But despite the poor quality, each video that followed also went viral.

“The Lord was just really wanting to reach people [on the platform] with the hope that is only found in Jesus,” Baker said. “[The videos] became so widespread — people from so many different nations and backgrounds and ages, and men and women. ... God was intercepting their scroll on TikTok.”

Dark places

TikTok’s popularity is growing fast, but concerns about the platform abound, from security issues to its promulgation of dangerous advice and trends. Baker calls it one of the “dark places.”

But Baker has been in dark plac-

es before, and she knows the importance encouragement can play in bringing people to Christ.

“I was one of those people,” Baker acknowledged. “The Church came to me.

“I believe the Lord is just extending the nets far and wide in the darkest places. ... If we don’t extend our net into the places where they are, then we’ll never really be able to effectively minister the gospel to people who would never set foot in a church.”

When Baker came to the “end of her rope,” she was an atheist, alcoholic and drug addict. She became homeless as a teenager and found help through a youth pastor and a couple from his church.

In their home there were two rules: an 11 p.m. curfew and attending church every Sunday. As she had no other options, she agreed.

Baker went to church, but wore

pajamas, fuzzy slippers and a black hoodie with obscene content. Even when she fell asleep during the service, she said she was never shamed or judged, but cared for and loved.

Experiencing that love put down roots that would later lead her to Christ, though it took another 10 years and facing jail time.

“Everybody was like, ‘She’ll be dead by 30 or in prison. It’s one or the other. There is no third option,’” Baker related. “I can’t even say that there was this huge willingness in my heart. I was just at a breaking point.

“I didn’t know who He was, but there was just this little bitty window that was like, ‘Whoever You are, help me.’”

In the videos, Baker shares stories from her life when God was there for her, even when she didn’t realize it, and talks about her drug addiction, being homeless and having a brain tumor.

She prays for those who are watching.

‘Resourceful’

When her TikTok followers ask about the passion behind the prayers, she answers, “It’s what God has done for me.”

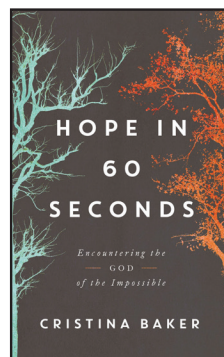
The desire to tell her story in depth and spread hope to a new audience led to “Hope in 60 Seconds,” which includes elements of her story, relevant Bible passages and a challenge, bookended by prayers in each chapter.

Baker said in writing the book she felt “raw” and “vulnerable,” but she knew sharing those dark places could be the key to someone else’s breakthrough.

“He’s the God who sees me,” she said. “He sees us in our distress and sees us in the dark moments. He sees us in those places.”

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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‘Front lines’

By Stella McMillan
International Mission Board

Medical missions opens door for ‘deep relationships’

Spencer Jones, a doctor who serves with the International Mission Board in Southeast Asia, remembers the moment Christ’s love truly made sense to a patient and her husband.

Jones was sitting in the home of Maiah and Yeshe Myat, an older couple he’d known for several years. Maiah was a terminally ill cancer patient.

The Myats didn’t have the resources to pay for scans or chemotherapy, but Jones and his wife, Kathryn, used donations to provide everything Maiah needed. Three years of treatment had given the Joneses many opportunities to pray and talk with the Myats about the gospel, but the Myats remained steadfast in their Buddhist beliefs.

A few months ago, Maiah’s latest CT scan revealed her cancer had spread. The Joneses felt an extra urgency to call the couple to repentance. As Jones talked with them one afternoon, Yeshe shared their family hadn’t given them any support. They’d only told Maiah to hope for a better reincarnated life.

Unconventional approach

“But you Jesus followers,” Yeshe said, “You’re caring for us and you’re not even our family. Why would you do this?”

A few weeks later, the Myats were baptized just before the Joneses left for several months in the U.S.

“We may never see Maiah again on this earth, but we’ll see her again in heaven,” Jones said.

Any salvation is always a reason to rejoice, but Maiah and Yeshe’s story especially encouraged the Joneses that their unconventional approach to medical ministry was bearing fruit.



IMB photo

When they first felt called to serve overseas, they weren’t sure where it would lead. But one conviction that developed as they prayerfully considered their options was that medical work shouldn’t be at the expense of ministry or vice versa.

“Medicine is not a bad thing, but it can very easily become an idol,” Jones said. “It can be tempting to just rely on that and forget what we’re actually called to do. Yes, to heal, but there’s not a period after that word. We’re called to heal and proclaim the gospel.”

Jones, a family practice physician, and Kathryn, a physician assistant, saw limitations in the typical approaches to medical missions. They knew medical missionaries who worked in hospitals, but saw how the strict boundaries of those formal roles made it difficult to build deep relationships with patients.

They knew of other approaches where medical work is seen just as a platform to gain entry somewhere to

focus on meeting spiritual needs.

They believed something different could be true — that medical care itself could be the open door for deep relationships that lead to gospel transformation. Meeting physical needs and spiritual needs could go hand in hand.

“These were very specific callings we knew the Lord had asked of us, and it didn’t fit the mold of what anyone was doing at the time,” Kathryn said.

Building trust

Seven years later, they can testify God has made a way where at first there didn’t seem to be one.

The Joneses serve in a small, rural town in Southeast Asia. While they aren’t formally licensed to practice medicine where they serve, the Lord has helped them build trust with officials and opened a door for them to run an informal clinic.

They’ve cared for patients dealing with everything from hypertension

to cancer to pregnancies, and faithfully meeting these physical needs has opened doors for gospel opportunities.

Training locals

They’ve developed strong partnerships with local believers who help with evangelism and discipleship, and they began training locals to help in the clinic. The ministry they have built didn’t happen overnight. The Joneses say focusing first on learning language and culture laid an essential foundation.

There were days during the first few years when they wondered how they’d ever get a foothold into medical work, but they can see the wisdom in God’s timing. Because of the years they spent learning the language and investing in the community, they have been well-positioned to serve during these last two years.

COVID-19, along with political unrest, closed every other clinic in their town. Many doctors at the local hospital also left, prompting officials to ask the Joneses to meet any needs they could. They began helping deliver babies, administering Maiah’s chemotherapy so she wouldn’t have to travel and caring for a myriad of other needs.

Not every story has had a happy ending, but as they’ve followed God’s leading, they’ve learned to release control and entrust their patients to the Lord.

“The last two years have been very hard. Being on the front lines of life and death situations has been incredibly difficult, but God’s been there with us,” Kathryn said. “He never left us alone in those times, and He’s prepared everything we needed.”

EDITOR’S NOTE — Some names may have been changed for security reasons.

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**How to
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is Not the Answer**

*with Brian Rosner, principal of
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Tuesday, Nov. 15

Event schedule:

10 a.m. Wright Center, Sermon,
"Jesus, Paul and the Self-Made Self"

11:30 a.m. Clergy/Faculty Lunch and Learn:
"You Do You: The Bible and Identity Formation."
▪ Rotunda Club ▪ Register via bridgewa@samford.edu

3 p.m. Brock Forum, Lecture, "Be Yourself:
A Christian Response to Expressive Individualism"

CONVO CREDIT



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Tony Dickerson, pastor of Pinehurst Baptist Church in Columbus, Georgia, preaches despite his physical frailties.

Photo courtesy of Pinehurst Baptist Church

Cancer, brain hemorrhage not stopping pastor

By Roger Alford
The Christian Index

Tony Dickerson makes his way into the pulpit, his voice unmistakable in its rhythm and intensity.

"I want to tell you, friends, God is in this place, and don't you for one minute doubt it," he declares with a boldness that fills the auditorium at Pinehurst Baptist Church in Columbus, Georgia. "He is here, and we are going to have a meeting with Him."

People settle into their seats, eager to be taken on an adventure through the Bible by the pastor who has been serving the same church for the past 50 years, an almost unheard of tenure.

Gifted orator

An orator with flawless diction and smooth cadence, Dickerson has led Pinehurst Baptist through an amazing transformation from a nearly all-white congregation to a predominantly African American church since he arrived here in 1973.

The 76-year-old pastor has been the one constant amid the change, his fearless preaching and kind heart

making him a beloved figure among all people in the Georgia city.

"The Pinehurst membership, because of Pastor Dickerson's powerful expository preaching and unconditional love, do not see him as black or white, but as God's man doing God's work with passion and faithfulness," said J. Gerald Harris, retired editor of the Christian Index and one of Dickerson's longtime friends.

"I do not think I have ever met a preacher with a greater devotion to the call of God or a greater commitment to his church," Harris said.

"He has an unqualified love for his parishioners; and the people of Pinehurst love him with an equal measure of esteem and appreciation."

Dickerson, a former president of the Georgia Baptist Convention, has been a pastor since he was 12 years old, having served churches in Alabama, Florida and Georgia. All of his previous pastorates prepared him

for Pinehurst, where he arrived as a 28-year-old with 16 years of experience.

"I have never counted myself to be so blessed as I am now, to be at a church where I am so highly regarded and where age is venerated," he said. "I thank the Lord that He has kept me here all these years."

Being a pastor has been a labor of love for Dickerson throughout the years. It continues to be today, though he's now dealing with bone cancer and has begun walking with a cane to help with his balance since he suffered a cerebral hemorrhage earlier this year.

Declining health also has impacted his wife, Mary, whose infirmities have forced her to give up her positions as Sunday School teacher and organist.

They now have caregivers who stay with them near the campus of Columbus State University.

Physical frailties haven't affected

Dickerson's preaching, though. He still approaches every sermon with urgency.

Preaching Jesus

"No event in human history has touched the world like Calvary," Dickerson declared from the Pinehurst pulpit recently. "It was the most influential event in human history."

Pinehurst's L.B. Murphy said it has been Dickerson's unwavering allegiance to preaching the pure gospel that has endeared him to his congregation.

"If I had to put my finger on one thing that sets him apart, it's that he preaches the Word and nothing else," Murphy said.

Murphy drives Dickerson to church each Sunday and walks with him into the auditorium and onto the platform. When it comes time for preaching, Dickerson needs no help walking to the pulpit, where he hangs his cane on the podium and forgets about any infirmities.

"As long as God allows, I will not stop," Dickerson said.

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"NOTHING IS BETTER THAN THE
PROMISES OF GOD!"

"Do not fear, for I am
with you.
Do not anxiously look about
you, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you,
surely I will help you.
Surely I will uphold you
with my righteous right
hand." (ISAIAH 41:10)

