

The Alabama Baptist

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November 17, 2022

Vol. 187, No. 45
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

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in the Philippines.



**LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS
OFFERING PREVIEW**

IMB photo

Making disciples

Lottie Moon Christmas Offering supports work of IMB missionaries

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

For years, Alabama Baptists have followed the story of two of their own — Jess and Wendy Jennings, International Mission Board missionaries in the Philippines.

Much of their time is spent mobilizing young people. Since 2004, through Nehemiah Teams they've mobilized almost 2,400 students from the United States and 1,200

Filipinos to reach the islands and beyond.

"We really believe God wants to use young people, and we are pleading with this generation to make their lives count for Jesus, because He is worthy. There's no greater cause than to live for Him

and to make sure that in our lifetime we give every person in the world a chance to hear about Him," Jess Jennings said.

The Alabama natives' work is featured on Day 3 of this year's Week of Prayer for International Missions (see

sidebar, page 14), Dec. 4–11. The week of prayer kicks off the season of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, which this year has a national goal of \$196 million. Alabama's goal is \$12 million.

(See 'Huge,' page 14)



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Photo by Jessica Ingram/The Alabama Baptist
Longtime Baptist communicator Jim Veneman (standing) and his wife, Carol (not shown), lead a customized workshop for a team of TAB Media Group photographers Nov. 4 in Birmingham.

TAB holds photography
competition, workshop

Back in the summer, a number of TAB Media photographers received a packet in the mail. Their directive — go on a photography scavenger hunt to grow TAB's stock photo library and take advantage of an opportunity to have fun and be creative.

Several months and several hundred photos later, Jim Veneman, a longtime Baptist communicator, judged the submitted photos and gave out awards to those who participated.

The winners were:

- ▶ Tracy Riggs, first place for best shot and most variety and second place for most creative.
- ▶ Bethany Franklin, first place for most creative and second place for best shot.

Veneman was photo editor at Lifeway Christian Resources from 1986 to 1999. He later was director of visual communications and assistant professor of communication arts at Union University. He is now an adjunct professor of journalism at California Baptist University.

Veneman and his wife, Carol, made the trip to Birmingham to lead some of the TAB photographers in a photography workshop Nov. 4.

Veneman offered practical tips for taking the best photos, but also emphasized the importance of photographers' roles in the ministry of storytelling.

"If we give our best to the work we've been called to do, telling His story, our stories will be retold as well," he said. (TAB Media)

The Baptist Paper places
in EPA awards competition

In the Evangelical Press Association's mid-year awards competition, The Baptist Paper placed in two best in class categories.

TAB Media Group submitted the national publication, now in its second year, for consideration in the summer. The Baptist Paper was awarded second place in the newspapers category and fifth place in the websites — Class B category. (TAB Media)



The Alabama Baptist

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

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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.

OPINION



RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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



jrash@thealabamabaptist.org



@RashionalThts

Share the gift of a cheerful heart during this holiday season

You know I'm all about some celebrating. Like Proverbs 17:22 says, "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones."

Even amid the many layers of discouraging, disappointing and downright scary things happening all around us, it's the glimmers of hope and moments of enthusiasm that can help keep us going.

For those of you who stay connected with our team at The Alabama Baptist, you know we work hard to provide a healthy balance of encouragement and inspiration alongside the difficult news and information you need to know.

We also share resources and ideas to help you — and all of us — find solutions to the daily stresses of life as well as the looming crises in our churches, communities and society as a whole.

Additionally, we serve as a vital connector for Alabama Baptists. We serve to connect you to missions opportunities, potential ministry partners, prayer needs and each other.

In some ways, we are like one gigantic, global church family where the doors are always open and the lights are always

on — you are never alone when you are plugged into The Alabama Baptist.

It was fun to share about all we do during the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting Nov. 15–16 at Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham.

Our staff showcased our overall content, our digital platforms, our print products and how we assist churches with web development.

We also shared how we make sure everyone has an opportunity to engage with us — no matter their situation — through special resources like audio cartridges for the visually impaired and a partnership with Mission:Dignity.

But enough about us. Tell us how you are spreading cheer in your circles of influence.

It's the time of year when seasonal depression sets in because of shorter days, less sunlight, colder weather and, in many cases, the holidays.

Beyond the surface

Keep an eye on your family, friends and neighbors. Isolation and lack of interaction with others only enhances the blues.

Think of ways to genuinely reach out, include and spend time with those missing out on the joy of the season.

As you gather for meals and events around Thanksgiving,

"Friendsgiving," Christmas and New Year's Day, decide ahead of time to find positive and optimistic topics of discussion.

Avoid political rants and harsh criticisms of others.

Focus on the people in front of you. Look in their eyes. Ask about their lives and dive deep if they will let you.

Most of all, listen more than you talk. Give an intentional effort to truly know the people God has given you as special gifts in your life.

Determine to learn more about them so you'll understand them better, know how to pray for them and know how to encourage them throughout the coming year.

'My heart is glad and my soul rejoices'

Preserve me, O God, for in Thee I take refuge.

I say to the Lord, "Thou art my Lord; I have no good apart from Thee."

As for the saints in the land, they are the noble, in whom is all my delight.

Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows; their libations of blood I will not pour

out or take their names upon my lips.

The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; Thou holdest my lot.

The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.

I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me.

I keep the Lord always before me;

because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also dwells secure. For Thou dost not give me up to Sheol, or let thy godly one see the pit.

Thou dost show me the path of life; in Thy presence there is fullness of joy, in Thy right hand are pleasures forevermore.

—Psalm 16

Your Voice



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

A look at who Lottie Moon was

Lottie Moon, the namesake of Southern Baptists' international missions offering, has become a legend. But in her time, Moon was anything but an untouchable hero. In fact, she was like today's missionaries, laboring tirelessly so her people group could know Jesus.

Born Charlotte Digges Moon on Dec. 12, 1840, in Albemarle County, Virginia, Moon rebelled against Christianity until she was in college. In 1858, she dedicated her life to Christ and was baptized at First

Baptist Church Charlottesville, Virginia.

Moon attended Albemarle Female Institute, the female counterpart to the University of Virginia. In 1861, she was one of the first women in the South to receive a master's degree. She stayed close to home during the Civil War but eventually taught school in Kentucky, Georgia and Virginia.

Edmonia Moon, Lottie's sister, was appointed as a missionary to Tengchow, China, in 1872.

The following year, Lottie was appointed and joined Edmonia there. She served 39 years as a missionary, mostly in China's Shantung province. She taught in a girls' school and often made trips into China's interior to share the good news with women and girls.

Moon was passionate about people knowing Christ, and she didn't hesitate to speak her mind.

She set sail for China at 32

years old, having turned down a marriage proposal and left her job, home and family to follow God's lead. Her path wasn't typical for an educated woman from a wealthy Southern family. God had gripped her with the Chinese peoples' need for a Savior.

For 39 years Moon labored, chiefly in Tengchow and P'ingtu. People feared and rejected her, but she refused to leave. She adopted traditional Chinese dress, and she learned China's language and customs.

She didn't just serve the people of China; she identified with them. Many eventually accepted her. And some accepted her Savior.

Moon wrote letters home detailing China's hunger for truth and the struggle of so few missionaries taking the gospel to the 472 million Chinese people in her day. She shared the urgent need for more workers and for Southern Baptists to support them through prayer and giving.

Laying the foundation

She once wrote home to the Foreign Mission Board, "Please say to the [new] missionaries they are coming to a life of hardship, responsibility and constant self-denial."

Disease, turmoil and lack of co-workers threatened to undo Moon's work. But she gave herself completely to God, helping lay the foundation of what would become the modern Chinese church, one of the fastest-growing Christian movements in the world.

Moon died at 72 — ill and in de-

clining health after decades ministering to her beloved Chinese people. But her legacy lives on. Today, when gifts aren't growing as quickly as the number of workers God is calling to the field, her call for sacrificial giving rings with more urgency than ever.

In 1918, Woman's Missionary Union named the annual Christmas offering for international missions after the woman who had urged them to start it. Today, 100% of all gifts given to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering go directly to international missionaries.

Learn more about the 2022 Week of Prayer for International Missions on page 14, and visit lottimoon.org for more information. Find Lottie Moon models, books, coin banks and other resources at wmustore.com/lottimoon. (Adapted from imb.org/about/lottie-moon)

Letters to the Editor

Thank you for the article by Michael Foust in the Oct. 27 issue of The Alabama Baptist that suggests an alternate option to the Hallmark Channel, which is no longer family (or Christian) friendly. Sadly, it is almost impossible to find Christian family-themed entertainment on television.

Thank you again for making this information available to your readers.

Dorothy L. Lusk
Madison, Ala.



IMB photo

Learn more about the 2022 Week of Prayer for International Missions on page 14, and visit lottimoon.org for more information.

“I’m finding churches in every context that God is able to grow.”

JEFF FARMER

associate director of the Caskey Center for Church Excellence at New Orleans Seminary

“I often ask the server before a restaurant meal how I can pray for them when we have a blessing,” said **Jay Gordon, adult and small groups minister at The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham.** “And I often ask people, ‘What’s your spiritual background?’ This question is nonthreatening and has opened doors for me.”

“One of our goals is to get involved with the local people and share our faith in their daily lives,” said **Sarah, an IMB missionary in Northern Africa, who reaches out to locals through goat farming.**

“It felt good because when I think of all the Lord has done for me, (most) importantly dying for me, I

have to live for Him,” said **Wilbert Terry, a 99-year-old World War II veteran,** who was recently baptized at Northshore Church in Slidell, Louisiana. “To God be the glory. I’d love to see everyone come to Christ.”

“We want to smell like God — to be the aroma of Christ to everyone,” said **Josh Oakes, IMB missionary in Central Asia.**

“We’re Christians, and we try to equip people to live a Christian life so people will notice. A big thing of ours is 1 Peter 3:15 — to be ready to give an answer for the hope inside you when someone asks,” said **Steve Chambers, church planter at Calvary Baptist Church in Dothan.**

“If you will open your heart and open your doors, you’re going to be a part of reaching the nations, and that’s what the Scripture is all about,” said **Michael Barrett, associational mission strategist for Piedmont Baptist Association in Greensboro, North Carolina.**

“I will share the gospel with anyone,” said **Wilton Quattlebaum, associate pastor for Hillcrest Baptist Church in Altha, Florida,** who reaches out to hikers along the Florida National Scenic Trail. “I don’t mind sitting down with someone who’s a secular humanist or agnostic or atheist. When they realize you care, you can have respectful discourse with them, and they will open up about what they believe and why.”

From the *Twitterverse*

@chasemjenkins

Soldier. Athlete. Farmer. The Christian life is one of focus, discipline, determination and stamina. It’s also one of affection since what we love drives what we do. Ask the Spirit to grant other-worldly affection for Christ that drives you to missional focus and fruitfulness!

@davesnyder82

Been a tough season. Need these words.

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow/ Because He lives, all fear is gone./ Because I know He holds the future,/ And life is worth the living,/ Just because He lives!

@DustinBenge

There’s a danger in ministry of

one day realizing that you were overwhelmingly busy but have not grown deeper in the things of God.

@shane_pruitt78

Jesus didn’t spend time and eat with sinners because He wanted to appear tolerant, affirming and inclusive. He spent time with them to show them a different way of living.

The work of Jesus is not about affirmation but transformation!

@brocraigc

The gospel will advance through our preaching and teaching. Christ will be exalted through our worship. Lives will be impacted through our children’s and student ministries. Praise the Lord! May some be saved today!

@PatriciaHeaton

For those of you who are Christians and who feel disappointed or despairing of the election results, it is a blessing to be reminded that our security does not rest in men or governments, which are finite and will eventually crumble, but in God alone who is ever sustaining.

@NCPastorsConf

The work we do for Christ will never be enough for us, only Christ will ever be enough for us. —SteveCorts #ncpc22

@macbrunson

I always have two great supporters I could not do without. One (God) who is not seen, and the other (wife) is always holding onto me.

Stranded car leads to salvation

My car broke down on the way home [on Oct. 12] coming from burying my Dad. (A starter problem left us stranded.)

We had to have it towed on my birthday of all days.

Little did I know what a gift God was giving me in this situation.

The driver loaded the car, and I rode in the tow truck. But there was more than a vehicle being towed. Along the way, I got to be a part of watching God tow a man’s life right into His offer of receiving Him as his Lord and Savior.

Yes, after talking with the driver and sharing how not only do our vehicles sometimes break down, but we can break down on life’s journey and need help as well, he gave his life to Christ.

What a story he had. What a story he has now. What a story God has for all of us.

Having my car towed on my birthday was not a present I wanted, but to know my physical birthday is now his spiritual birthday is one of the greatest gifts I could ever receive. Wow!

Whatever the cost of my car repair will be, it will be nothing compared to the price Jesus paid to save our soul — His blood, His Life.

My dad’s physical life just ended, but this man’s life just began. Thanks to my sweet wife, Tina, who waited patiently and supportively while God was birthing this man into the family that lasts forever.

Pastor Vince Lee
Vertical Point Church
Alexander City
via Facebook

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy, He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

—1 Peter 1:3

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

3 stories you should know



Photo courtesy of Oklahoma's Baptist Messenger

Tornadoes swept through areas of Oklahoma Nov. 4, killing two people and causing significant destruction. Trinity Baptist Church in Idabel (above) was destroyed. Oklahoma Baptist Disaster Relief teams were on-site Nov. 5 in Idabel and elsewhere with chainsaw teams and others deployed to assess the damage. Other areas were hard hit in southeast Oklahoma. In that region, First Baptist Church Calera saw damage to its church building. (Baptist Messenger)

Voters lean pro-choice in Nov. 8 measures

Voters in six states leaned toward pro-choice stances on abortion-related ballot measures in the Nov. 8 general election.

In Kentucky, voters rejected a constitutional amendment declaring the state's constitution does not protect the right to abortion. Kentucky law currently permits an abortion only if the health of the mother is at serious risk.

Voters in California, Michigan and Vermont approved measures enshrining abortion rights in their state constitutions. Abortion is legal in all three states.

Montana voters rejected the state's Born-Alive Infant Protection Act, which affirms the personhood of infants born alive at any stage of development and requires they be given medical care. Montana restricts abortions after viability. (TAB)

Billy Graham Archive opens in N. Carolina

The newly built Billy Graham Archive and Research Center in Charlotte, North Carolina, opened Nov. 7, the birthday of the late evangelist.

The 30,000-square-foot state-of-the-art research center brings together videos, cassettes, films, newspaper clippings, sermon notes, correspondence and a lifetime of memorabilia from Graham's career, which began with a sermon at a Florida Baptist church in 1937.

The building is located across the road from the Billy Graham Library, the barn-shaped museum on 20 landscaped acres where visitors can trace Graham's journey through multimedia presentations and interactive kiosks.

Unlike the library, the archive is not open to the public. Researchers must schedule a visit. (RNS)

Persecuted church

Indian state criminalizes conversions, adds 'allurement' clause to law

BENGALURU, India — Karnataka has become the 11th state in India to criminalize converting from one religion to another.

The Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion bill was approved Sept. 15.

This anti-conversion law mandates that anyone desiring to convert from one religion to another must notify authorities 30 days beforehand. The law forbids facilitating conversions by "force, undue influence, coercion, allurement or by any fraudulent means" or "by a promise of marriage."

Punishment for violations includes imprisonment for five years and a fine of 25,000 rupees (\$315) or more. If the intended convert is a minor, a female or a member of the lowest Hindu caste, the punishment is greater.

Opponents say the law violates Article 25 of India's constitution, which grants religious freedom.

The "allurement" aspect in Karnataka's measure makes it different from similar laws adopted in 10 other Indian states. According to Barnabas Fund, the broad interpretation of "allurement" could even "criminalize the gospel message that repentance and faith in Christ leads to forgiveness of sin and everlasting life."

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



Unsplash.com

Ugandan Christian woman poisoned, another beaten in ongoing violence

KAMPALA, Uganda — Two women are among the latest victims of violence against Christians in Uganda.

Namata Habiiba, a young mother, went to a September church service in Uganda's Bugiri District and put her faith in Jesus Christ that day, reported Morning Star News.

After questioning by her stepmother and consuming food her stepmother prepared, Habiiba quickly became ill and died. A medical report indicated Habiiba had been poisoned.

In Kiboga District, Falida Nazziwa, secretly a Christian, attended a church's prayer vigil while her husband was at work. When he arrived home early and learned where Nazziwa had been, he beat and choked her.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **Robert “Bob” Benjamin Hatfield Sr.**, minister of music at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham for nearly 36 years, died Nov. 5. He was 73.

Hatfield retired in 2014 and moved into a part-time position at the church as minister to adults 55 and over. Prior to Dawson, he served in music positions at First Baptist Church Pinson; FBC Scottsboro; Lakewood Baptist Church in Gainesville, Georgia; Buckner Children’s Home in Dallas, Texas; as well as churches in Arkansas and Texas.

He earned an undergraduate degree from Truett-McConnell College in Cleveland, Georgia; a master of music degree from Samford University; a master of church music degree from Southwestern Seminary; and a doctor of ministry degree from Beeson Divinity School at Samford.

He is survived by his wife, Polly Sue; two children; and five grandchildren.



HATFIELD

BLOUNT ASSOCIATION

► **Pleasant View Missionary Baptist Church, Holly Pond**, will host its last singing of the year Nov. 20, 5 p.m. Unity 4 Quartet from Iuka, Mississippi, will perform.

DEKALB ASSOCIATION

► **Max Grizzard** is the new associate pastor and pastor to students and families of **Rainsville First Baptist Church**.



GRIZZARD

Grizzard has served as a missionary at Ponderosa Student Ministries for 22 years and as executive director of DeKalb County Released Time Bible classes since earlier this year. He will continue in both positions.

Licensed in 1990 by White’s Chapel Baptist Church in Gadsden and ordained in 1996 by Faith Baptist Church in Fort Payne, Grizzard holds a bachelor’s degree in religion from Liberty University. He has been in ministry for 35 years.

He and his wife, Sherrie, have seven children and eight grandchildren.

David O. Cofield is pastor.

EAST LIBERTY ASSOCIATION

► **Bill W. King** is the new pastor of **Lanier Baptist Church, Lanett**.

He recently retired as director of missions for Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association. He has served as a pastor in Alabama, Georgia and Mississippi. He is a graduate of Samford University

and earned master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from New Orleans Seminary. He remains active in his ministry as Billy Bob Bohannon.

ETOWAH ASSOCIATION

► **Bellevue Baptist Church, Gadsden**, celebrated its 95th anniversary Oct. 23.

“I believe by God’s grace and His providence, our best days are ahead,” said pastor Colt Hudson during the service. “For the people who started this church, the people here over the years, and those here celebrating today, it is not about the building of our kingdoms or spreading our glory, but it is about His kingdom and it is for His glory.”

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

► **Spice Pond Baptist Church, Eight Mile**, celebrated its 44th anniversary Oct. 30 with preaching by the founding pastor Edward Dickens. Music director Mike Rowland led congregational singing. Special music was shared by Charlotte Hopkins. Ron Butler is pastor.

RUSSELL ASSOCIATION

► **Crawford Road Baptist Church, Phenix City**, celebrated its 75th anniversary Oct. 23 with former pastor Marvin Martin preaching.



Facebook photo

The Seekers Quartet from Columbus, Georgia, sang, and minister of music Danny Kirkland led congregational singing.

Calvin Milford (right) of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a certificate to deacon chair Hunter Wilson (left). “God has blessed us over the years,” said Cindy Wood, who has been a member since she was 2 years old. “It was good to look back and see how we started in a tent and now have 6.5 acres of land and are debt free. He has been in everything we have done.”

TUSCALOOSA COUNTY ASSOCIATION

► **Tony Scarbrough** is the new pastor of **Lakewood Baptist Church, Northport**.

He previously served as operations ministry director at Shoal Creek Baptist Church, Deatsville. He holds a bachelor’s degree in pastoral ministry from the College at Southeastern and is pursuing a master’s



KING



SCARBROUGH

degree in biblical counseling from Southern Seminary.

He is married to Cassidy Scarbrough.

TUSKEGEE LEE ASSOCIATION

► **Wayne Ivey** is the new full-time director of missions for **Tuskegee Lee Association**. He served as the interim leader from January 2022 until Oct. 18 when the vote was held at the annual meeting at Pepperell Baptist Church, Opelika. Prior to coming to TLBA, Ivey led churches for almost 40 years including Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Abbeville; Midway Baptist Church, Smiths Station; and Northside Baptist Church, Opelika.



IVEY

► **Cade Farris** is the interim associate pastor of encore and pastoral care of **First Baptist Church Opelika**.

Farris holds a bachelor’s degree in music from the University of North Alabama and a master of divinity degree in theology from South-



FARRIS

ern Seminary. He previously served as minister of music at Baptist churches in Alabama and Indiana. He served on the staff at FBCO for the first time from 2004 to 2011 as minister to college and singles for two years, and then as the minister to adults for five years. He left FBCO to serve as the lead pastor at FBC Wedowee from 2011 to 2015. Before returning to the

staff at FBCO, Farris was pastor at FBC on the Square, LaGrange, Georgia, from 2015 to 2022.

He and his wife, Jennifer, have three children.

Jeff Meyers is pastor.

WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION

► **Wagarville Baptist Church** celebrated its 75th anniversary Oct. 16 with pastor Bill Dortch (center) delivering the message. Randy Grimes led the singing. Guest pianist was Melinda Bailey.

“We are blessed to be here for 75 years,” Dortch said. “A resolve to go forth with worship and praise to the Lord came out of celebrating this anniversary. God surely blessed, and it was a great day.”



Photo courtesy of Jerrol Hare

Jerrol Hare (right) of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a certificate to Dortch and deacon chair Ed Robinson (left).

Ministry offers hope, purpose through job training programs

By Lanell Downs Smith
The Alabama Baptist

Before Demetrist Porter heard about Hope Inspired Ministries Lowndes County, she felt lost and without purpose.

"I asked God if I do have a purpose," Porter reflected. "I couldn't stop thinking of this lost feeling. I couldn't eat or sleep. I even stopped being the best mom and wife.

"But I was determined to find my purpose. I asked Christ where to find it and told myself I needed to start going to church. But I was asking the wrong question."

One day, Porter received a call from her friend Lucy Burrell. Burrell invited her to join HIM's job training program, and that's when everything began to change, Porter said.

HIM Lowndes County held a graduation ceremony Oct. 13 at Imago Dei Church at the 45 in Hayneville. The organization "serves the chronically unemployed by preparing and equipping them to obtain, maintain and excel at employment," according to its website. Roughly 96% of the Lowndes students are African American, and 81% are also single.

HIM participants learn about technology basics, communications, personal growth, job preparation, work-

place behaviors, wellness, financial management and problem-solving.

HIM operates five locations across Alabama, with sites in Montgomery, Birmingham, Hayneville, Bessemer and one that serves youth incarcerated at the Alabama Department of Youth Services Mount Meigs campus.

HIM was founded in 2012 and expanded to open the Lowndes County location in 2020 through a joint effort with the Montgomery Baptist Association. The program operates in the association's Hayneville Mobilization Center, sharing space with the center's food pantry.

Local businesses and churches partner with HIM to provide services — volunteering as mentors, providing daily lunches

or driving students to appointments or to gain necessary credentials.

Davey Lyons, pastor at Imago Dei and also MBA Lowndes County church planting strategist, became involved with the Lowndes HIM site almost from the beginning. As a church planter serving the Whitehall/Hayneville area, Lyons sees the community's needs firsthand and welcomed the opportunity to be part of the solution.

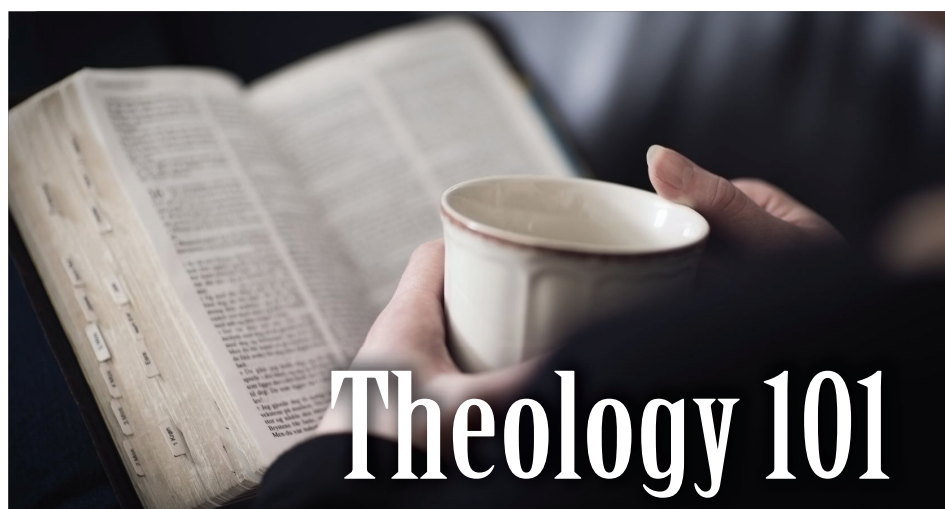
"I love the way HIM takes people that may have made mistakes or served time, who need help to get a job," Lyon said.

For more information, visit hopeinspiredministries.org.



Photo by Lanell Smith/The Alabama Baptist

Hope Inspired Ministries holds graduation for Lowndes campus graduates Oct. 13. Pictured are (l to r) site director Jessica Fails, Brenda Lane, Lucy Burrell, HIM executive director John Bowman, Demetrist Porter and HIM career coach Mary Malone-Williams.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Living in gratitude

Giving Thanks

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

Psalms 100:4 is a wonderful and memorable call to praise and thanksgiving: "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him and bless His name."

The first and third lines focus on giving thanks; the second and fourth lines focus on praise.

While not an ironclad distinction, a helpful way of thinking about the difference between giving praise and giving thanks is this: praise puts a focus on who God is, while thankfulness often focuses on what God does.

In short, we praise God for His attributes, and we thank Him for His activities.

Mercy and grace

What God does is rooted in the dual divine qualities of mercy and grace. A helpful distinction is to think of divine mercy as God's love withholding from us what we rightfully deserve for wrongdoing.

When the Apostle Paul recalled his past activities in persecuting the church, he realized his wrongdoing, saying, "I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. 1:13).

The other aspect of God's love is that of bestowing grace, which we might think of as God giving us blessings which we do not deserve.

These twin aspects of God's love are among our highest mo-

tivations for giving Him thanks. A beloved hymn calls each of us to "count your many blessings, name them one by one; Count your many blessings, see what God hath done."

Active presence

So what is it that God does on behalf of His people?

He accepts us when we give our hearts to Him in saving faith. He hears us when we pray and helps us when we are in need.

God strengthens us when we are weak and guides us when we are confused. He forgives us when we confess our sins and bathes us afresh in grace.

God comforts us when we are stressed and restores us when we repent. He graciously corrects us when we have erred and keeps us when the world seeks to allure us by its standards.

God protects us when the devil would seek to draw us away from Him.

The opening lines of a children's prayer that many of us learned to say at mealtime early in life never becomes outdated and is never too childish: "God is great, God is good. Let us thank Him."

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.



SIGN OF UNITY

Jones, Rembert first recipients of Caesar Blackwell Award for Multiplying Church Planting

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Neal Hughes said he didn't know the story of Caesar Blackwell, a church planter in the mid-1800s, until he became director of missions for Montgomery Baptist Association in 2016. Gary Burton, pastor of Pintlala Baptist Church in Hope Hull, shared it with him.

Hughes has carried that story with him ever since.

Blackwell "was used by God in a great way in the frontier days of Alabama Baptists and the Alabama Baptist Association, the front runner of Montgomery Baptist Association," Hughes said. "He was the first Montgomery Baptist Association church planting strategist, serving the river region in the 1830s and 1840s."

Great success

The members of ABA commissioned Blackwell, an African American, to preach the gospel and start new churches in central Alabama, Hughes said. He noted Blackwell did that with great success. Many were saved, and two of those churches still exist today.

"I thought it would be important for us Montgomery Baptists to



Photo by Robin Crowe

Neal Hughes (right), director of missions for Montgomery Baptist Association, presents the inaugural Caesar Blackwell Multiplying Church Planting award to Terrence Jones (left), pastor of Strong Tower at Washington Park, and Dewayne Rembert, pastor of Flatline Church at Chisholm, both in Montgomery, during the MBA annual meeting Nov. 7.

speak of the legacy of such a great Kingdom warrior that has not been told all these years," Hughes said.

That's why he said God laid it on his heart to start the Caesar Blackwell Award for Multiplying Church Planting — to honor Blackwell's legacy and to honor men who are carrying that mantle.

The annual award will be given to church planters who are leading their churches to train church planting interns, aggressively plant other churches and be a supportive sending church.

'Our heroes of today'

During the MBA annual meeting Nov. 7, Hughes presented the inaugural Caesar Blackwell award to Terrence Jones, pastor of Strong Tower at Washington Park, and Dewayne Rembert, pastor of Flatline Church at Chisholm and church planting strategist for MBA.

"Our first two recipients are our

heroes of today," Hughes said of the two Montgomery church planters. "They both started a church that started churches, and they have their internship programs. They're calling out the called, developing and deploying other church planters."

Rembert said he sees the award as "a testament of God's grace" that God saved him, saw fit to use him and has provided the resources and open doors for his church to plant other churches.

"Our job is to just be faithful and obey Him and watch Him work," Rembert said.

Jones said he also sees the award as a team award for his church, which "has been very supportive of our church planting efforts."

Strong Tower at Washington Park is "not very big but continuing to trust God in these situations and be more about building His kingdom than the Strong Tower brand," Jones said.

"It's a testament to the hard work of our church as a whole. It's affirming in a way. We don't do what we do to get awards, but to get one is one of the ways God is encouraging us to keep moving forward."

An honor

Both men said they see it as an honor to receive an award named after Blackwell.

Rembert said he sees it as another sign of the unity among believers of different races and cultures in MBA.

And Jones said it's meaningful to him, as "the stories of African American contributions to Christianity are not often told."

"I appreciate Montgomery Baptist Association under [Hughes'] leadership telling that story and preserving that history in a way that's honorable to what he (Caesar Blackwell) was able to accomplish," Jones said.



Photo courtesy of Dewayne Rembert

FIRST IN A SERIES

COMMEMORATING
1823–2023

200 YEARS

OF ALABAMA BAPTIST MISSIONS AND MINISTRIES

A year from now, Alabama Baptists will celebrate a huge milestone — 200 years of doing ministry together since the first group gathered and decided they could do more together than they could apart.

That's the story you'll read here — a story of beginnings. And once a month between now and the Alabama Baptist State Convention's bi-centennial celebration in November 2023, you'll read more stories about who Alabama Baptists have become over the past two centuries. From evangelism to disaster relief to race relations, you'll get to read more about the journey we've all been taking together — and see more about where we're headed from here. (The Alabama Baptist)

INTRODUCTION

Organizers had future in mind, Lance says

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said when he thinks about Alabama Baptists, he thinks about fruit.

Fruit starts with tiny seeds scattered across the ground, and that's what Alabama Baptists planted nearly 200 years ago when they banded together to start the Alabama Baptist State Convention. There were only about 5,000 of them in about 125 churches. They were scattered across the state, which had only been admitted to the Union four years before.

When they gathered at Salem Church near Greensboro on Oct. 28, 1823, to start the convention, they had the present and the future in mind, Lance said.

"The early organizers of the state convention were forward-thinking leaders who sought to be on mission with the Great Commission in their day," he said. "The fruits of their leadership built a solid foundation for the next 200 years of ministry in Alabama, across North America and around the world."

One of those leaders was James A. Ranaldson, who rallied a handful of leaders to journey to Greensboro by foot or horseback.

Others had talked about the idea, but he was the one who made it happen, according to "Baptists in Alabama" by A.H. Reid.



Photo by Tracy Riggs/The Alabama Baptist

Only a handful of people got together nearly 200 years ago to start the Alabama Baptist State Convention, but now hundreds representing the state's 3,200 Baptist churches meet every November to make decisions and hear how God is working through their cooperative ministries.

Ranaldson, originally from Scotland, knew the importance of a convention. In 1814, he had gone to the Triennial Convention, the first national convention of Baptists in the United States, as a delegate of North Carolina, and he served as a home missionary from that convention in New Orleans and Mississippi.

'Missionary operation'

So in 1823, he and 14 other delegates — Charles Crow, W.N. Calloway, James Goree, Temple Lea, W.M. Ford, Hosea Holcombe, John Marrass, Job Calloway, Lewis Stephens, W.M. Post, John May, Joseph Ryan, Dempsey Winborne

and J.A. Ranaldson — organized the Alabama Baptist State Convention. (James A. Ranaldson and J.A. Ranaldson were different delegates representing separate societies.)

Several of the delegates present were men representing local women's missions societies, and one of them brought a letter from the Ladies' Aid Society of Greensboro that illustrated their heart for missions:

"Being fully convinced of the importance of missionary operation for the spread of Divine truth ... we wish to bear some humble part in so glorious a work."

They sent gifts to back that up, and at that first meeting, the dele-



Photo by Erin Tunnell

A historical marker stands on the site near Greensboro where the Alabama Baptist State Convention was founded in 1823.

(5)

ment to all the friends of true piety and morality in the state, to use their influence and example to sanctify the Sabbath day.

Resolved, That with solemn regret we see the abuses of the Anniversary of American Independence: Therefore, it is recommended that the 4th of July be observed by our denomination throughout this state, with religious thanksgiving and prayer.

Resolved, That it be recommended to each Church of our denomination to purchase for the use of the pastor, a copy of Dr. Gill's Commentary. This valuable work, published by W. W. Woodward, of Philadelphia, in 9 large 4to volumes, is now offered by him at the very reduced price of \$35, little more than half the original price.

Resolved, That the thanks of this Convention be presented to A. T. Pennington, of Claiborne, for generously printing the Constitution and Circular of the Societies, gratis.

Resolved, That the thanks of this meeting be given to our brethren and friends in this place and vicinity, for their kindness and hospitality during the session of the Convention.

Resolved, That the next Convention be held at Marion, on Friday before the 1st Sabbath in Nov. 1824; and that the Introductory Sermon to be preached by Rev. J. A. Ransdson.

Resolved, That the Agent publish his receipts, &c. for Missions, Education, Bibles, Luminaries and Stars, with the Minutes; and, that the Treasurer pay over to him the funds requisite to meet the foregoing Resolutions, and the objects for which they were designated by the donors.

The valedictory address was delivered by brother Ransdson; when the meeting adjourned, and the brethren parted with expressions of the most tender and animated feelings of christian love and sympathy.

BOARD OF MANAGERS.

Rev. DANIEL BROWN, President.

Deacon GARRETT LONGSHIRE, Vice President.

Deacon STEPHEN WIGGINS, Treasurer.

Rev. J. A. RANSALDSON, Cor. Secretary.

COLLIN FINNELL, Rec. Secretary.

Dr. John Marras,	Wm. Harris,
Andrew West,	Wm. Ford,
James L. Gorce,	Isham Harrison,
Dr. Peyton King,	John Gindrat,
Jesse Travis,	D. A. Ransdson.
Temple Lea,	

AUXILIARY COMMITTEES.

Southern District.—Stephen Wiggins, D. A. Ransdson, and John Gill.

Middle District.—J. L. Gorce, T. Lea, and Wm. Ford.

Northern District.—Anderson Robison, Isham Harrison, and Wm. Erwin.

(6)

DOMESTIC MISSIONARIES.

South.—Rev. Messrs. Alexander Travis, and Dempsey Winborne.

Middle.—Wm. Mosely, James M'Laure, Isaac Suttle, Moses Crowson, Hosea Holcombe, Charles Crow, Wm. Calloway, Joseph Ryan, and John Henry.

North.—Henry W. Hodges, Jeremiah Burns, Henry Petty, and Sion Blythe.

From the examination of the Agent's Book, it will be seen, that he has made no public collection in this State. It has been the first object of his mission to form societies, and furnish means of information on topics relating to Missions, in order to prepare the public mind for the work which is now before the Convention. Nevertheless, he has received private contributions and donations, for which he has credited the individuals, or the societies to which they belong, viz.:

Received from members of the "Ladies' Society of Bethel,"

1822.	Mis.	Educ.
Oct. Miss Mary Mason	\$ 2	
Miss Sarah C. King,	1	
Miss Nancy K. King,	1	
Miss Elizabeth S. Fountain	1	
Miss Sarah A. Lewis,	12*	
Miss Lurana Rogers,	12	
Mrs. Elizabeth King,	2	
Mrs. Sarah Fountain,	1	
Mrs. N. Clark (Life member)	5	\$
1823. Mrs. M. Coleman, Treasurer	13 81	6
Sept. Mrs. P. Nettles, clothes box	2 50	

“Ladies' Society of Jonesborough,”

1822. Mrs. Elizabeth Covington,	3	
Oct. Mrs. Judith Worthington,	2 50	2 50
Mrs. B. Wood,	1	
By a Lady,	50	
Mr. Samuel Croft,	50	
Oct. From Mrs. C. Holcombe, Treasurer, by the hand of Rev. H. Holcombe,	4	6 50

“Ladies' Society of Salem,”

1822. Mrs. Elizabeth Roach,	2	
Nov. Mrs. Delilah Jackson,	50	
1823. Mrs. Mary Ransdson,	2	
Aug. Mrs. Roberts, Treasurer	20 50	

“Ladies' Society of Claiborne,”

1823. Mrs. M. McConico,	2	
Oct. Mrs. M. Connell,	2	

* Fractions omitted, from want of types.

archive.org

Minutes from the first Alabama Baptist State Convention meeting are available at the Internet Archive website. Go to tabonline.org/absc-minutes to view them.

gates started four committees — one to get a constitution together, one to focus on domestic missions, one to handle finances and one to deal with nominations.

Planting seeds

The new convention had some struggles at the beginning that made it hard to keep things going. But their perseverance planted seeds for the work that is bearing fruit today, Lance said.

Today the Alabama Baptist State Convention is 3,234 churches strong, representing 74 Baptist associations and 782,533 church members. Carrying out convention responsibilities on a daily basis, the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions also has 41 state missionaries representing a range of Great Commission ministries from disaster relief to church planting to global missions and campus ministry.

Over the past 200 years, Alabama Baptists have seen thousands make decisions to follow Jesus at evangelism rallies, in Sunday School classrooms, at disaster sites and on missions trips. And through the strong generosity of the state's church members, they've seen needs met and ministries started.

“Alabama Baptists have made a Kingdom difference in every era of the state convention's history,” Lance said. “Today we give respectful tribute to the sacrifices and service of the early leaders.”

“Like all of us, they were not perfect people, but as the trite but true saying goes, ‘God often uses us despite ourselves.’ We have learned many lessons from our spiritual ancestors in Alabama Baptist Convention life.”

Much like Alabama Baptists' forebearers, Lance said he's excited for the days still to come.

“The future is bright because of the promises of God,” he said. “May those who come behind us find us faithful as followers of Christ. Let us blaze the trail for those who will be in leadership in the days to come, Lord willing.”



Photo by Erin Tunnell

Earl Potts, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions from 1984 to 1990, speaks at the dedication of the restored historical marker in 2005.



Photo courtesy of Sister Springs Baptist Church

Left: Backpack ministries are just one of many ways women across the state have gone on mission through Alabama WMU over the years.



Photo by Grace Thornton/The Alabama Baptist

Right: Paul Daily tames a horse at an evangelistic event in 2006. For years, events of all kinds have helped Alabama Baptists reach their unreached neighbors across the state.



Photo courtesy of John Hayes

Since 1979, disaster relief has been a major effort and outreach for Alabama Baptists. In people's lowest moments, volunteers have offered practical help and the hope of Jesus.



Photo courtesy of the State Board of Missions

Baptist Campus Ministries — some more than 100 years old, some just getting started — serves as a strong ministry to tens of thousands of college students.



Created at canva.com

4 easy Thanksgiving social media tips for churches

By Mark MacDonald
BeKnownforSomething.com

Thanksgiving social media posts can easily get lost in the flurry of Black Friday and early Christmas ads. How can a church's social media break through?

Try this: Create Thanksgiving social media posts that speak directly to your followers.

But how do you know what they're thinking or wanting?

Helpful tips

Here are 4 easy social media tips any church can use to create shareable posts that speak to the needs and desires of your community.

1. Find out what your community is thinking. Go to google.com and search for "I'm thankful for ..." or "I'm grateful for ..." then stop before you hit return. Google will complete your sentence in a dropdown list of things people in your community have said they're thankful for. It's what they're typing into Google.

Google gladly shares this information with you, so use it. You may be surprised at some of the searches.

2. Choose from the list. Go through the options and pull ideas that fit your church's message.

3. Create a campaign. Make a simple graphic using a design program like

Canva. Keep it very simple, with few words, but use your church's fonts and colors, and maybe a small logo in the corner. A good size to use for both Facebook and Instagram images is 1200 x 1200 pixels.

Then use the same design for other graphics, but change the words. Write a simple post that expands on the message of the graphic (like, "I'm grateful for my family.") and maybe ask a question ("What are you grateful for this Thanksgiving?").

4. Include a call to action. Add a web link on each post to motivate someone to a next step, such as watching a Thanksgiving video about what church members are thankful for, listening to a sermon about gratitude or attending a special Thanksgiving service.

Remember, great social media connects to your website, so make sure your site is ready to lead people to visiting your church or watching a service online.

The more you create a similarity between your Thanksgiving social media posts (colors, fonts, logo, message) and the web page you lead them to, the more it will connect people to your church.

They liked your post so much they clicked on a link — now connect them to your church.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

Place a classified ad below for \$1 per word.

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

First Baptist Church Rogersville is in search of a senior pastor. Interested candidates may email their resumé to: seniorpastorsearch@fbcrogersville.com or mail a resumé to: First Baptist Church Rogersville, 222 College Street, Rogersville, AL 35652, ATTN: Senior Pastor Search Committee.

PASTOR

Newbridge Missionary Baptist Church in Asheville, North Carolina, a member of the Southern Baptist Convention, prayerfully seeks a man who will preach the inerrant word of God and has a heart for missions. Email resumé to: NewbridgePST@gmail.com.

PASTOR

First Baptist Childersburg is in search of a full-time pastor. If interested send resumé to the following — email: childersburgfbcworship@outlook.com; mail: 200 8th Ave. SW, Childersburg, AL 35044.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

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

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. Resúmes may be sent to: keving@fbcattmore.org.

STUDENT PASTOR

Concord Baptist, Anderson, South Carolina, is seeking a student pastor (grades 6-12). Degree required from an accredited seminary and minimum of three years church/ministry experience. Submit resúmes via email to: jjames@concordbaptist.com or to: Concord Baptist, 1012 Concord Road, Anderson, SC 29621, ATTN: Dr. Don Cox. Church website: concordbaptist.com.

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND/OR PRESCHOOL

Parkview Baptist Church in Decatur, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a full-time and/or part-

time director of children and/or preschool. Send resúmes and questions to: search.committee@parkviewdecatur.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

WMU FOUNDATION PRESIDENT

The WMU Foundation, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation, benefiting the work and mission of Woman's Missionary Union is seeking a president to lead the organization. The candidate must be a Christian who is actively involved as a member of a local Southern Baptist church with evidence of and commitment to the purpose and work of WMU. Candidate's job location will be from the WMU building in Birmingham, Alabama. Successful candidate qualifications are a bachelor's degree with a master's degree in business or finance, preferred; five to eight years progressive work experience in development and investment/trust management; excellent interpersonal, written/verbal communication skills; technical expertise in the area of planned giving. Interested candidates should submit an email and resumé to the search team at this email address: WMU-Foundation-Search-Team@outlook.com on or before Nov. 30.

CHILD CARE CENTER DIRECTOR — VESTAVIA HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH

Vestavia Hills Baptist Church Child Development Center is seeking an enthusiastic and skilled full-time director to manage the day-to-day operations of our center. The VHBC CDC provides quality care for babies through pre-K within a nurturing Christian environment. Bachelor's degree in education or related field required. To learn more about VHBC CDC, visit <https://www.vhbc.com/child-development>. How to apply: please send your resumé to: cdcdirector@vhbc.com.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

The Baptist Church at McAdory is seeking an individual to fill the full-time position of administrative assistant to the pastor and staff ministers. Responsibilities will include general secretarial and bookkeeping. Knowledge of Microsoft Office programs and church financial software a plus, but training will be provided. Compensation based upon experience and training. For more information and to apply, please

send request and resumé to: newpersonnel.bcm@gmail.com.

SIGNS

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TAB EXTRAS

STORIES SEASON 7: THE LIVING DONOR STORY

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. Listen 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. It has exclusive content for the digital edition only. To update your email address, contact subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org.

‘Seed of hope’

Operation Christmas Child shoebox recipient shares impact of generosity on his life

By Tracy Riggs
The Alabama Baptist

Since 1993, more than 198 million children across the globe have received Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes filled with toys, hygiene items, school supplies and other gifts.

Alex Nsengimana, one of those children, says his journey to Christ began with such a shoebox.

“[In 1995] for the very first time in my life I got to receive a gift,” he recalled. “It was [the first time for] all of us in the orphanage. We had lost all hope, so ... [receiving] a shoebox gift was such a special moment.

“We were told to line up in the yard, and they said, ‘Hey, today you’re going to get a gift.’ And they handed out these gifts. Then they said, ‘Don’t open the shoeboxes until all of them have been handed out.’

“So some of us had to hold our presents for about five long minutes,” he remembered.

Loss and gain

As a 6-year-old in Rwanda, Nsengimana had “lost everything and almost everyone” in his life.

Some 800,000 people were murdered during Rwanda’s genocide against the Tutsi, and “unfortunately, we were among the first people who were hunted down,” he said. “Our grandmother and one of our uncles would be killed. Me and my brother and my sister would run from family to family.”

Nsengimana had no idea God was keeping him alive.

Militia members with weapons accosted them, “but they never bothered doing anything to us,” he recounted. “At some points, weapons wouldn’t work when they went to pull the trigger.”

As one of 400,000 Rwandan orphans, Nsengimana ended up in an orphanage in Uganda where the children were given Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes



Photo courtesy of Samaritan's Purse
Alex Nsengimana says his journey to Christ began with a shoebox given by Operation Christmas Child.

through Samaritan’s Purse.

“It was chaos — all of us screaming in this orphanage,” he recalled. “But this time it was a different kind of screaming. We were not scared. We were not running for our lives. We were screaming because we could not contain the joy of getting a gift.”

Nsengimana remembers the moment he opened the box and saw school supplies, hygiene items and candy. A candy cane was foreign

to him, and he said he ate half before realizing the plastic was supposed to come off.

“We got to [know] someone out there was thinking about us,” Nsengimana said of the gifts. “For me, a seed of

hope and love in Jesus Christ was planted.”

A year later he joined the African Children’s Choir and traveled in the United States.

God’s presence

“I spent ... 10 years of my life really angry and pointing fingers at God to the point where I actually missed out on the miracles He did,” Nsengimana lamented. “The people that came in my life that

counseled me and loved on me helped me to realize God’s presence was with me from the day I was born.”

Adopted and moved

In 2003, Nsengimana was adopted and moved to the U.S.

Knowing their impact, he packed OCC shoeboxes during high school and college, eventually interning with Samaritan’s Purse. He is now a spokesperson for the ministry.

Ten years after he received one, Nsengimana delivered shoeboxes to the same orphanage where he grew up.

“It was so special to be able to see the kids who were in the orphanage being able

to receive a shoebox gift and having the joy I had as a little boy,” he recalled.

“In my own journey of healing, God sent me people who would disciple me, counsel me to process all the anger I had in my life,” he said. “It was through the divine

appointment of prayer and the people who loved me [that] when I was traveling with the choir, a chaperone came to me and asked me, ‘What if I saw the people who had caused me pain?’ ”

Nsengimana knew he had to forgive.

March 15, 2013, was the most difficult but also most freeing day of his life, he said. He met with the man who had killed his grandmother and uncle and shared his

healing journey.

Afterward, the bitterness Nsengimana had been living with went away.

“That journey that launched my own healing process, my faith journey, it came from [a] stranger — from the person who

packed my Operation Christmas Child shoebox gift — a person I have never met,” Nsengimana said. “I realized Operation Christmas Child is not about just the toys. The physical gift was a tangible representation of God’s love.”

For drop-off locations, a detailed list of gift suggestions and how to pack a shoebox, visit [samaritanaspurse.org/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child](https://www.samaritanaspurse.org/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child).

Twin girls’ story illustrates value of praying over shoeboxes

Many shoebox recipients’ prayers have been answered when someone felt led to pack something specific, Alex Nsengimana said, relating one story:

“There was an outreach that took place in South America. There were twin girls — one of them got [a box but] they ran out. It was so sad. [They told] the other twin, ‘Look we’re going to give you shoeboxes. Next year you’ll be the first one to receive a box.’

“The miracle of how God answered that prayer very specifically was that when her twin sister ... opened the shoebox, you’ll never guess what was in[side] ... double of every item!

“[Whoever packed that box may never know it, but] they were led by the Holy Spirit to pack two of every item. Little did they know what God [would do] when that shoebox was delivered!”

‘Represents a child’

“That’s why prayer is very important as you pack the box,” Nsengimana continued, “because that shoebox gift represents a child, a human being, a child who may be praying for shoes, and they get a pair of shoes in that shoebox gift; or praying for school supplies, and they get exactly what they need.”

National collection week for Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes is Nov. 14–21.

‘Huge blessing’

Alabama’s Jennings and Wanslow families among IMB workers aided by gifts

(continued from page 1)
The offering supports the work of Jess and Wendy Jennings, as well as the work of the other 3,550 IMB missionaries around the world.
One hundred percent of all funds given to LMCO goes straight to missionaries who are making disciples and multiplying churches among unreached people groups.
Some of those missionaries are

from Alabama, including the Jenningses as well as Steve and Chrissy Wanslow, who serve in a small city in the Asian Pacific Rim region.
They and their daughters have been investing their lives there for a decade, sharing the gospel with people who have never heard it before.
They stay faithful although they haven’t seen a person among their people group choose to follow Jesus.

Steve Wanslow said Revelation 7:9 is a big encouragement.
“As we look at the vision that all will be in the throne room worshipping God, we know there will be people from our people group there,” he said.
Southern Baptists’ support through prayer and gifts to LMCO also encourages them greatly, he remarked.



Photo courtesy of Nehemiah Teams
Jess and Wendy Jennings are featured on Day 3 of this year’s Week of Prayer for International Missions.



IMB photo
As part of the Nehemiah Teams training program, students participate in a Bible study, preparing them to take the gospel first to the Philippines and then to the nations.

“It directly supports everything we do, from our ministry budget to medical expenses ... the house we live in, everything. It’s a huge blessing for us,” Steve Wanslow said.
“Without that, we would have to raise our own support. But because Southern Baptists give so willingly and freely, it allows us to focus on

the work and not have to worry about those kinds of things.”
EDITOR’S NOTE — Some names have been changed for security reasons.

THE WEEK OF PRAYER for International Missions is Dec. 4–11.



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MISSION BOARD

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CHRISTMAS OFFERING

National goal: \$196 million • Alabama goal: \$12 million

For more information or to download resources like videos, social media graphics, posters and bulletin inserts, visit imb.org/lottiemoon.

Week of Prayer for International Missions

DAY 1 — Global lostness

One Christ follower can’t be everywhere, and neither can his or her church. But by partnering together through IMB, churches can make a global impact.

DAY 2 — Health care

Around the world in hard-to-reach places, medical clinics run by missionaries open doors into communities that desperately need the hope of Jesus.

DAY 3 — Students

Alabama missionaries Jess and Wendy Jennings invest their lives discipling and mo-

bilizing students to reach the unreached in the Philippines and beyond.

DAY 4 — Refugee ministries

As IMB missionaries in Moldova meet the needs of Ukrainian refugees, they’re seeing God at work and lives changed with the gospel.

DAY 5 — Cities

IMB missionary Erik White said Southern Baptists send missionaries like him to cities across the globe to share Jesus with people who are searching for a better answer than Islam.

DAY 6 — Diaspora

Southern Baptists work together to reach

refugees, immigrants and international students God is moving to more accessible countries.

DAY 7 — Missionary partners

Partners all around the world work alongside IMB missionaries to reach every people, tribe and language with the gospel.

DAY 8 — Global lostness

IMB missionaries need prayers as they train national partners in South Asia to disciple new believers among a people group that previously had no known Christians.

WORD search

- BOARD

CHARLOTTE

CHILDREN

CHINA

CHRISTMAS

COOKIES

COURAGEOUS

DETERMINED

DIGGS

EDMONIA

FAMINE

FLOOD

FOREIGN

FURLOUGH

GENEROSITY

JAPAN

LANGUAGES

LETTERS

LOTTIE
- MISSION

MISSIONARY

MOON

OFFERING

OUTSPOKEN

PRANKSTER

PRAYER

REVIVAL

SHORT

SINGLE

SPIRITED

STARVED

TEA CAKE

TEACH

VIRGINIA

WAR

WEEK

WOMAN

WRITE

S P S Z Y T I S O R E N E G X J
E P P H M I S S I O N A R Y V O
G K I M W N R R A W H C R F I F
A J R H I E A R K L X H K O R F
U R I R T S D P C H R R X R G E
G T T T W E S O A W R I T E I R
N M E C V V O I V J Y S N I N I
A L D R H K R T O H M T H G I N
L F A M I N E C V N Y M L N A G
K T L E D A S U O E G A R U O C
S E S H C E T E F V T S E R R M
S H E H T C N U L E R O Y E E D
G M H W V E R I T G U N A V T R
G O C T N L A T M T N I R I S A
I O R H O F O C S R N I P V K O
D N N U I L L P A O E Z S A N B
B Q G M R N O O M K M T X L A W
R H N A A K A D O R E K E L R M
X C H M E R E W X D Y R P D P J
R C O N N T R O H S L O T T I E
P W R C H I L D R E N X V G R Z

EDITOR'S NOTE — This Lottie Moon-themed word search was created by Janet Erwin and may be reproduced for use with groups. Read more about Lottie Moon on page 4.

CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

1. Now the Lord said unto _____. (Gen. 12:1)

6. Are not _____ and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus? (2 Kings 5:12)

11. Abraham ... _____ the wood. (Gen. 22:3)

12. Athenian woman who believed. (Acts 17:34)

15. In charge of King Ahasuerus' women. (Esther 2:3)

16. The Lord sent him to meet Moses in the wilderness. (Ex. 4:27)

17. Infant's first word for "Daddy."

18. Joseph's wife. (Gen. 41:45)

20. The works that are done _____ the sun. (Eccles. 1:14)

22. I am, you are, he _____.

23. Dialect for "get."

24. Eli heard the noise of the _____. (1 Sam. 4:14)

25. Joshua sent men from Jericho to _____. (Josh. 7:2)

26. Descendants of Eri. (Num. 26:16)

28. Sarah shall bear unto thee _____. (Gen. 17:21)

29. Not bow down thyself to them, _____ serve them. (Ex. 20:5)

31. I _____ the marathon.

32. Place of 12 wells of water. (Ex. 15:27)

34. _____ ye therefore. (Matt. 28:19)

35. Sons of Aaron, took either them his _____. (Lev. 10:1)

37. They went forth _____ go. (Gen. 12:5)

38. King of Greek gods.

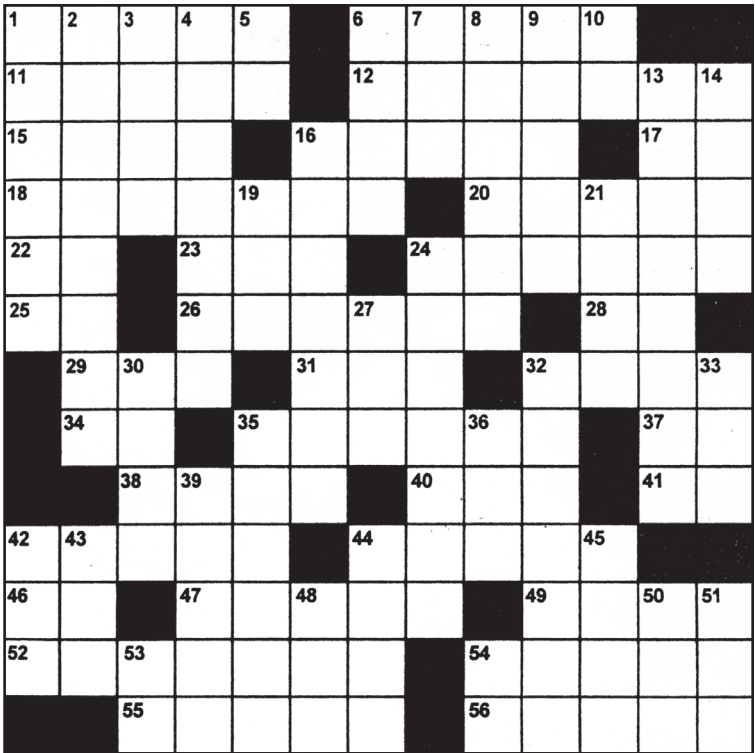
40. Cut off his right _____. (Luke 22:50)

41. God said, _____ shall not eat of every tree. (Gen. 3:1)

42. Bright _____.

44. Strong people set in battle _____. (Joel 2:5)

46. And, _____, the angel of the Lord came. (Luke 2:9)



By Diana Rowland Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

47. Melts.

49. Upon the great _____ of their right feet. (Lev. 8:24)

52. For it is the _____ of _____ flesh. (Lev. 17:14)

54. Ahian, and Schechem, and _____. (1 Chron. 7:19)

55. Led him away to _____ first. (John 18:13)

56. An _____ the hole.

DOWN

1. Gallio was the deputy of _____. (Acts 18:12)

2. Thou shalt be a _____. (Gen. 12:2)

3. Why do the heathen _____? (Ps. 2:1)

4. The Lord is the _____ of all such. (1 Thess. 4:6)

5. _____, myself, and I.

6. And _____ bare Jabal. (Gen. 4:20)

7. Candy or ice cream _____.

8. Loves.

9. Mary Poppins was one.

10. Pass over through _____. (Deut. 2:18)

13. Joseph's brothers didn't know his _____. (Gen. 42:22)

14. "Hey, _____." (Beetle Bailey)

16. Dresses. (verb)

19. The fowl of the _____. (Gen. 1:26)

21. The sun _____ of Ahaz. (Isa. 38:8)

24. And the _____ of pure gold. (1 Kings 7:50)

27. You get this at a beach.

30. Leak out slowly.

32. Flighty, capricious.

33. _____, Larry and Curly.

35. The tents of _____ in affliction. (Hab. 3:7)

36. Give _____ to His commandments. (Ex. 15:26)

39. Hast thou _____ of the tree? (Gen. 3:11)

42. So that it went _____ with Moses. (Ps. 106:32)

43. The noise of them that sing _____ hear. (Ex. 32:18)

44. Pointed tools for piercing holes.

45. Broken the bands of your _____. (Lev. 26:13)

48. Order _____ carte.

50. Benjamin's son. (Gen. 46:21)

51. Cleanseth us from all _____. (1 John 1:7)

53. Do, Re, Mi, _____.

54. Syllable to sing when you don't know the words.

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Mac Brunson
Pastor, Valleydale
Church, Birmingham

All Nations Youth Worship Night draws more than 100

By Grace Thornton

The Alabama Baptist

The first All Nations Youth Camp exceeded expectations of its organizers with robust attendance and a desire to keep a good thing going.

So Oct. 8, more than 100 youth from various cultures gathered for the first All Nations Youth Worship Night at Huntsville Baptist Church.

Kimberly Sandoval, a ministry assistant and part of the intercultural ministry

team for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said that before the summer camp, intercultural youth didn't have a network of leaders in the state.

"We got together and wanted to plan something for the youth," she said. "A lot of the students who had come to the camp were there."

David Inestroza, who develops and resources Hispanic worship leaders in Alabama, said it was "a great time for different communities and cultures to come together and worship the Lord and also hear from the Word."

"Events like this show that the church is all over and made up of people from all cultures," he added. "Here in Alabama most communities have these cultures represented in them."

Huntsville Baptist — a primarily Korean congrega-



Facebook photo

More than 100 youth from various cultures gather for the first All Nations Youth Worship Night at Huntsville Baptist Church, a primarily Korean congregation, on Oct. 8.

tion — provided much of the food for the event, with De-wayne Rembert, pastor of Flatline Church at Chisholm, featured as speaker.

Sandoval said for her it was a picture of Revelation 7:9, with all nations and languages

coming together for worship.

"This was our prayer from the beginning, that what we see and experience in heaven starts here," she said.

The date for next year's All Nations Youth Camp is set for July 26–29.

For more information, visit facebook.com/IBHAlabama.

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The WMU Foundation, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation, benefiting the work and mission of the Woman's Missionary Union is seeking a President to lead the organization.

Candidate will lead a team by providing leadership, direction, and control to all aspects of the WMU Foundation (WMUF) at the direction of the Board of Trustees, Articles of Incorporation, and corporate bylaws. The candidate must be a Christian who is actively involved as a member of a local Southern Baptist church with evidence of and commitment to the purpose and work of WMU. Candidate's job location will be from the WMU building in Birmingham, Alabama.

Key responsibilities include, but are not limited to, managing and providing direction to WMUF staff, along with planning, analyzing, executing, managing and evaluating fund raising activities and planned giving programs. The candidate must also coordinate the formulation of financial development programs in order to se-

cure gifts from individuals and other mission minded organizations with special focus on deferred giving through wills, gifts, gift annuities, charitable trusts, and other instruments for the purpose of increasing the financial support of WMU through the WMUF.

As part of the financial responsibilities, the candidate must also be able to keep up-to-date on current fund raising and planned giving practices and procedures used within the nonprofit sector, and inform the Board and WMU Foundation staff of matters that would benefit their work.

Candidate would research and initiate contact with current and potential individuals, corporate, and foundation donors recommended by Board members, staff members, and other interested entities. The candidate would also oversee asset management relationship with the trust company while giving specific attention to detailed accounting for all funds and endowments.

Candidate will represent the WMUF in national

and state WMU events, churches, associations, and applicable meetings. Reporting to the WMU Executive Board meetings and other WMU Committees as requested is also a key responsibility.

Essential responsibilities: ability to travel; work on a regular and consistent basis; completing assigned tasks; providing oral and/or written reports on projects as requested; and upholding WMU Foundation and national WMU company policies while working in a cooperative manner with team managers, co-workers, customers, and the public.

Successful candidate qualifications are a Bachelor's Degree with a Master's Degree in Business or Finance, preferred; five to eight years progressive work experience in development and investment/trust management; excellent interpersonal, written/verbal communication skills; technical expertise in the area of planned giving.

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INTERESTED CANDIDATES SHOULD SUBMIT AN EMAIL AND RESUMÉ TO THE SEARCH TEAM AT THIS EMAIL ADDRESS: WMU-Foundation-Search-Team@outlook.com on or before November 30, 2022.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For November 20

Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Historical Theology, University of Mobile



HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Micah 4:6–8, 5:1–9

In that day (4:6–8)

Having the Bible brings great joy because it gives us access to God's promises. Christians derive confidence from knowing God's promises because we understand God's plans and the end result. We live with courage knowing our lives are not in vain, but that God uses us to further His plans.

In this section of Micah, God reveals His plan: After His judgment, He will bring restoration. God is going to reign in the future Kingdom, bringing back all of the exiles to an eternal Kingdom. Christ's return will bring about this restoration.

At His first coming, many Jews believed He was the Messiah who would restore Israel to the dominant position it held in the days of David. They expected Jesus to throw off Roman rule and return theocracy as in the Old Testament days.

However, Christ came first as the suffering servant prophesied in passages such as Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22. At Christ's second coming, all will be restored. There will be a new reign where justice prevails.

Knowing this future, we can live in hope. God is in control. Nothing catches Him off guard. As my pastor says, the Trinity never meets in emergency sessions. This encouraging fact allows us to face trials with joy. Sin will be overcome.

Those who oppress us will still have a chance to be made right with God. This is why Christians facing persecution do not fight back or lash out. Instead, we turn the other cheek and forgive those who sin against us. Christians must love those who hate us. We can stand against the world because we have hope unbelievers will respond to the gospel.

One will come (5:1–6)

Speaking of the Messiah, God reveals to Micah He will come from Bethlehem, the city of David. Most of us are familiar with this passage from the birth narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. This is another proof of fulfilled prophecy undergirding the Bible's validity. We

can be confident God will fulfill His promises because we see the number of promises already fulfilled.

This future ruler will be the Good Shepherd. Jesus references this in the Gospel of John, affirming His position as Messiah. How is a shepherd supposed to act? He provides for, protects and feeds his sheep. This is exactly the role Jesus fulfills for us.

God cares for us so much He sent His Son to die for us. Jesus Himself says the Shepherd lays His life down for the sheep (John 10:11), dying in our place so we can be redeemed and made right before God. As sinners, the punishment for sin is death (Rom. 6:23), but because Christ paid our penalty, we have His righteousness if we believe in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21).

Then the remnant (7–9)

Micah points to the future when the Messiah will return and bring justice to the nations. This is not just a prophecy for the old nation of Israel; it is a prophecy that points to God's people from all nations. This is for all people. This is why we are called to spread the gospel to all nations. They all need to hear the gospel, and God will bring people from all nations into His kingdom.

We can share the gospel with boldness and confidence, because we know it is the means by which people are saved and made right with God. It also assures us God is with us in this endeavor. We can have hope, even when we face rejection and persecution, knowing God's powerful word does not return void.

Many who have been God's enemies and openly persecuted Christians have embraced God's love and become His servants. No one is outside the power of the gospel. We should never lose hope that God can change people's hearts — from those who have never heard the gospel to friends, coworkers and family whose hearts remain hard toward the gospel.

This should fill us with hope and motivate us to continue loving and sharing the gospel with others.

Bible Studies for Life

By Rony Kozman, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies, Samford University



COMMUNICATE GOD'S WORD

Deuteronomy 6:1–9

Obedience to God's word benefits us and others. (1–3)

In the Book of Deuteronomy, Israel is poised to enter the promised land. The previous generation, whom God rescued out of Egypt, refused to believe He would give them the land He had promised.

Because of their disbelief and rebellion, God sentenced that generation to wander in the wilderness 40 years.

Once that generation died, the next generation would enter the land of Canaan. Moses would also not enter the land.

This failure to enter the land, and Israel's wandering in the wilderness is evidence of the curses of the covenant.

The people violated the covenant God made with them at Sinai. And the curses that accompany infidelity to the covenant include, among other things, exile from the promised land and death.

Now the next generation is poised to enter the land, and Moses gives his farewell sermon to the people.

He repeatedly reminds Israel to remember the law he gave them and to keep the commandments. When they enter the land, they need to ensure they and their children obey the law so they may live long in the land and prosper within it.

Like Moses, Jesus instructs us to be obedient. Those who follow Jesus and obey His words are like the "wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matt. 7:24). They will be vindicated in the final judgment because Jesus says those who bear fruit will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7:15–23). We will also experience a flourishing or blessed life in the present age, though not by this world's standards (Matt. 5:3–12).

Love for God compels us to trust and obey Him. (4–5)

Moses reminds the people of their need to be wholly and exclusively devoted to God.

Israel is to worship God alone and not the gods of other nations.

We also are to exclusively worship God who has revealed Himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

To be faithful to God, we must be filled with His word.

Love for others compels us to share God's word at every opportunity. (6–9)

Not only does Moses exhort the current generation to keep God's word, he also exhorts them to pass God's commandments on to their children.

We are to keep God's words and instructions continually before us. Wherever we go, we are to remember God's words. They are to be in our hearts.

Our heart, or mind, is the root of our fidelity to God. We must set our mind upon God's word and ensure the words He commands are continually, as Moses says, "in your heart."

We must then take God's words that are in our hearts and teach them to our children. Parents are responsible for instructing their children in the ways and words of God.

We must beware that we do not shirk our responsibility to instruct our children and the next generation. Parents should create a culture in their homes and families in which they repeatedly recite and discuss Scripture.

The vision in this passage is a family that weaves Scripture throughout their daily lives whether at home or while traveling.

The rhythm of our day should be framed and immersed with meditation on God's words.

As pictured in verse 9, even the physical spaces of the home have God's word inscribed upon them.

The picture Moses gives us is one in which God's word fills our hearts, family discussions, days, travels, bodies and houses. Our lives are to be wholly filled with God's word so we will be faithful to Him.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs
The Alabama Baptist

Speaker, author shares what it means to be 'defined by Christ' instead of disability

Inspirational speaker and author Daniel Ritchie's worst struggle isn't that he was born without arms. "Is it hard to be armless in a world full of arms?" he asks rhetorically. "Yeah, absolutely! But I really didn't physically struggle that much. I was able to do everything with my feet that everybody else does: eat, write, type on a computer, drive a car, mow the lawn, make dinner for the kids. My physical body's never been my struggle."

But people's opinions, stares, comments and efforts to "slip in subtle iPhone photos of me doing my thing," that's a different story.

"Trying to deal with people's opinion of me and feeling valued and important and worth it — that's always been the greatest struggle within my story," Ritchie acknowledged.

'Making assumptions'

He wasn't breathing when he was born, and because he was armless the doctor asked Ritchie's father if they wanted to resuscitate him.

"By God's grace, dad didn't hesitate. He just asked the doctors to get to work immediately," Ritchie related. "So they were able to revive me. That glimpse of the doctor



THE RITCHIE FAMILY

Photo courtesy of Daniel Ritchie

just [saying], 'Do we really need to revive him?' — that's always the thing I've pushed back against my whole life — people looking at me and making assumptions."

Ritchie grew up in a Southern Baptist church and knew Jesus loved him, but he still asked God questions like, "Why did this happen?" and "What did I do wrong?"

It was a youth pastor who changed his perspective.

"God's love was expressed to me, not in arms, not in fingers," Ritchie explained. "God's love is expressed to me in Jesus being sent to this world to live a perfect life that I can't live, to die the death I should die, to be raised to life to show His power over sin and death."

When he came to this understanding, Ritchie realized he had been allowing circumstances to color his perspective of the gospel. That was the moment he stopped

being a victim defined by his disability.

"Being defined by the work of Christ and having that hope is so much bigger than my disability," he said.

Not long after that transforming realization, Ritchie felt the call to ministry. He interned in student ministry during high school and went to the College at Southeastern in Wake Forest, North Carolina. While still in college, he began to travel and speak.

After graduating and serving as a student pastor for 13 years, Ritchie felt God's call to be an evangelist and writer.

'Open doors'

"I think all along the way I never would have envisioned any of this," he said. "I'm an introvert. I struggle with people. I struggle socially."

"I didn't want to do it. Twenty-two years ago when God called me into ministry, I didn't want to do it.

"But God still called, and God continues to open doors, not only to preach but to write."

Ritchie, now a member of the Summit Church in Raleigh, North Carolina, has written two books: "My Affliction" and "Endure."

'Preaching the Word'

Describing "My Affliction" as an "autobiographical sermon," Ritchie said it details what God has done in his life. "Endure" is about personal hardships during the pandemic, especially that he couldn't share the gospel, and how difficult it was to provide for his family.

Ritchie said, "'Endure' is a fiercely practical book on how ... as believers, we can pursue Christ with this life that He's given us."

Ritchie's books and speaking opportunities are not just about what he's overcome.

"Inspiration can only carry somebody so far," he asserted. "I'm a big advocate of just preaching the word of God. So I would say I probably deal with the whole armless thing for maybe five minutes — just share my story very briefly — and then we open the Word. We get to teaching and preaching real quick."

When Ritchie isn't speaking or writing, he loves to work out and enjoys football, ultimate frisbee and other sports.

He relies on Philippians 1:21 "where Paul just says, 'For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain' — with Paul just saying, 'As long as I'm gonna carry on in this life, I'm gonna make it about Jesus, with the full realization that the moment I pass from this life to the next, I get to see the One I've lived my life for, the One I've built my life on.'"

"That's my great hope — it's seeing Jesus face to face."

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.

For more information about Daniel Ritchie, visit DanielRitchie.com.

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TAB
MEDIA GROUP



Honoring God

By Brian Blackwell
Baptist Message

99-year-old WWII veteran completes mission: baptism

Wilbert Terry, 99, successfully completed numerous missions as a World War II veteran, but he said none of those compared to the assignment he undertook to be obedient through believer's baptism with the help of Northshore Church in Slidell, Louisiana.

A retired firefighter, a police officer, a former law enforcement officer and a U.S. Coast Guard veteran lifted Terry from his wheelchair and placed him in the baptistry while Pastor Larry McEwen baptized him during the service.

Terry, a U.S. Army veteran who was involved in battles in Europe and the Pacific, had surrendered his life to Christ when he was 15, but he had not experienced New Testament baptism.

Baptism by immersion

When he started attending Northshore Church several years ago, Terry learned of his need to become baptized through immersion.

But health concerns delayed his baptism for more than a year, until Terry finally celebrated along-

side friends and family in July when four others were baptized.

"It felt good because when I think of all the Lord has done for me, (most) importantly dying for me, I have to live for Him," Terry told the Baptist Message.

"To God be the glory. I'd love to see everyone come to Christ."

Share the hope

McEwen believes God protected Terry in World War II so he could share the hope of Jesus with others. "He knows the good Lord got him home from the battlefield and all the time since was a gift from God," McEwen said.

"Painting that picture of a new life in Christ through baptism is something he has wanted

to do for a while.

"He wanted to honor the Lord for the way He saved his life, not only spiritually but also physically on the battlefield."

McEwen added, "With Wilbert being a World War II vet, our people love and honor him.

"They gave him a standing ovation, and there was hardly a dry eye in the place. The people singing the song after the baptism

struggled to start because they were so emotionally moved."

Since January, 25 new believers have been baptized at Northshore Church, which averages 566 for Sunday worship.

McEwen said the baptisms reflect the congregation's passion to see others come to Christ.

Started in 2001 as a plant of Grace Memorial Baptist Church

in Slidell, the church has grown from just a handful who met in McEwen's living room.

The church has seen hundreds accept Christ and 394 baptized since its formation.

Their outreach has included ministry to first responders, construction of homes in Haiti and Mexico and acts of service by its men's ministry.

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Photo courtesy of the Baptist Message

Wilbert Terry, a U.S. Army veteran who was involved in battles in Europe and the Pacific, prepares for baptism at Northshore Church in Slidell, Louisiana.

“TO GOD BE THE GLORY. I’D LOVE TO SEE
EVERYONE COME TO CHRIST.”

WILBERT TERRY
WORLD WAR II VETERAN

Right beside you'

By Garold Smith
Florida Baptist Convention

Florida Baptists encourage New England pastors, return inspired

In a section of the northeastern U.S. that was once the cradle of American independence and the Great Awakening, religion is no longer part of the culture.

Instead, like the historic churches that sit empty and unused, the gospel is often viewed as part of a once-important past no longer relevant or necessary to modern life in New England.

For pastors trying to share Jesus in a spiritual darkness akin to modern Europe, the indifference and remoteness they face can be discouraging.

So a team of Florida Baptist pastors, led by Craig Culbreth, East region catalyst for the Florida Baptist Convention, traveled to New England to offer encouragement and friendship to pastors there.

The idea of the pastor-to-pastor connection was first birthed in February when Hal Haller, associate executive director of the Baptist Convention of New England, visited with South Florida Baptist pastors.

'Come alongside'

"We need your pastors to come alongside our pastors to encourage them and pray for them," he said.

BCNE serves approximately 380 churches spread across Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine, and Haller already had a connection with Florida Baptists. He had planted Living Hope Baptist Church in Middleburg, Florida, in 2012 and worked in church planting with the Jacksonville Baptist Association.

Culbreth, who has embraced the partnership opportunity that would reach beyond geography and into the hearts of pastors and their con-



Photo courtesy of the Florida Baptist Convention

Prayer undergirds the developing partnership between Florida Baptists and New England Baptists.

gregations, gathered a team of pastors from his region and prepared them to go to New England.

"These Florida pastors had never met before, so we did several Zoom calls prior to the trip," Culbreth said.

The Florida team, which included wives of some of the pastors, drove between churches, towns and communities throughout western Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island.

They visited small rural congregations, historic churches in Boston and a chapel near Yale University in Connecticut.

"The trip was about congregations encouraging congregations and pastors encouraging pastors," Culbreth said.

"Our team met with 18 pastors over the week; we ... got to pray with them and bless them with gift cards and meals."

While encouraging the New England Baptist pastors, the Florida

Baptist pastors returned home encouraged and inspired.

Daniel Helms, pastor at The Branch Community Church in Palatka, decided to go on the trip to capture the needs of the BCNE churches.

"The Lord taught me that I have a responsibility in Palatka to raise up disciples who are willing to go across cultures to spread the good news ... even if that other culture is in New England and not Uganda."

Clint Wagon, pastor at CrossWay

Church in Deltona, also sensed God leading him to go on the trip.

"Given the influence the region has on American culture and the need for gospel work in the region, we sensed God was leading us to go see for ourselves how we could join His mission," he said.

Tremendous opportunity

Wagon said they returned with a clear mission.

"The need and opportunity are tremendous, but the workers are few," he said. "It made me pray for potential planters and pastors across the nation to hear the 'New England call' like Paul heard the plea from Macedonia in his midnight vision."

Terry Dorsett, BCNE executive director, sees hope, opportunity and God's hand at work in the developing partnership.

"Though New England may be one of the least religious regions in the nation," he noted, "that does not mean God is not working. Pre-COVID, we had record baptisms ... and BCNE has joined with our partners to help ... plant 169 new congregations in the past 15 years."

Culbreth said the past two years have been hard on churches and pastors throughout the U.S., but more so in New England which spent a lot more time shut down than did Florida.

"It just reminded me how important it is to encourage and stay connected to our pastors. Our little statement, 'Right Beside You' (the Florida Baptist Convention tag line) is more important than it was when we came up with it seven years ago," Culbreth reflected. "Seven years ago, it was cool; today, it is a necessity."

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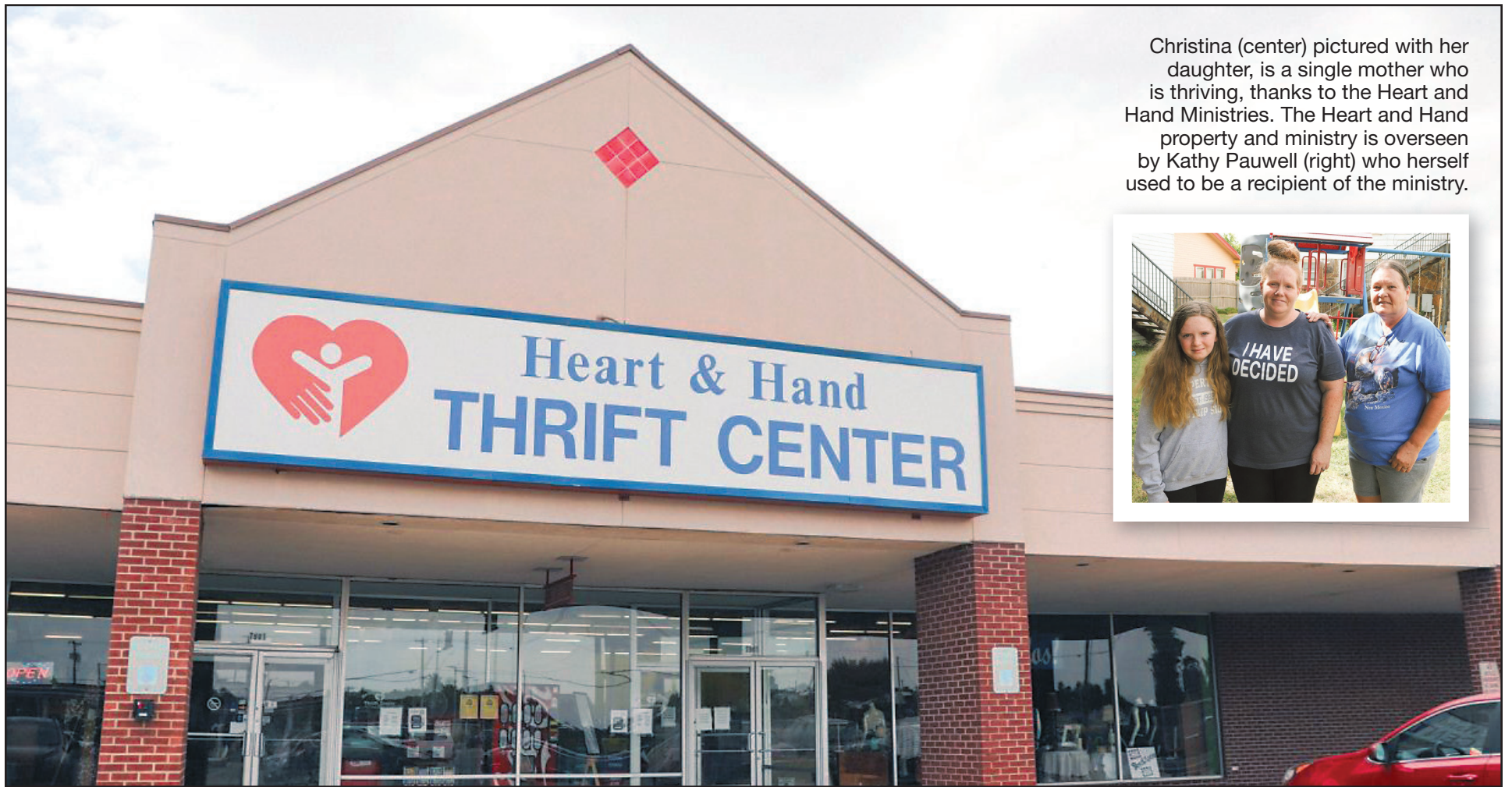
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Christina (center) pictured with her daughter, is a single mother who is thriving, thanks to the Heart and Hand Ministries. The Heart and Hand property and ministry is overseen by Kathy Pauwell (right) who herself used to be a recipient of the ministry.

Photos courtesy of The Baptist Messenger

Oklahoma ministry shows Christ's love to single mothers

By staff

The Baptist Messenger

Christina is like so many other single mothers in Oklahoma these days. She is trying to carve out a good life for herself and her children, which includes 10-year-old twins.

Christina, however, has faced other challenges that many have not. Having been addicted to substances years ago, Christina found herself homeless and without work. Today, she now has a stable living situation, attends church each week and is back on her feet.

God brought about this transformation through a ministry called Heart and Hand Ministries, a non-profit organization founded in 1997 by then-pastor Steve Kern and leaders of Olivet Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Meeting needs

Christina and her twins live in one of several apartment properties near Olivet, in the inner city of Oklahoma City. These properties are owned and operated by Heart and Hand.

The purpose statement of Heart and Hand is to meet “the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of homeless women and their children in the Oklahoma City area. The ministry provides families with crisis housing, including rent and utilities, as well as food, clothing, medical care, counseling, education, job training and job placement to lead them to spiritual and financial freedom and possible home ownership.”

Kern, who retired in 2019 from Olivet Baptist, shared how Heart and Hand got its start. “Years ago, the Lord gave me and others a burden to reach people in our neighborhood with the love of Jesus,” he said.

Since its founding, Heart and Hand has ministered to some 1,400 children and mothers like Christina, who was recently baptized at Olivet.

The average length of stay of a mother is six months to two years, prior to the mother completing the

Heart and Hand program and finding work.

The Heart and Hand property and ministry to mothers is overseen on a day-to-day basis by Kathy Pauwell, who was once a recipient of the ministry.

“Kathy does a remarkable job ministering to these mothers, helping them get back on [their] feet,” Kern said. “It’s a testament to what God can do, that she was once here as a resident and now serves here.”

The Heart and Hand properties include the Millie Bradley Complex, a group of four houses adjacent to each other. The complex was named in honor of Kern’s mother. Altogether, the properties can house and assist three to six families simultaneously.

Heart and Hand operates completely from donations made by individuals and churches to the ministry, as well as proceeds from the Heart & Hand Thrift Center located nearby.

At this thrift center, shoppers will find books, furniture, clothing, sports apparel and more. They also will notice the presence of the Lord on the faces of the staff and volunteers.

Home away from home

Since its establishment in 2003, the Heart & Hand Thrift Center has given 100% of its profits to aiding single mothers. Many employees and volunteers have found the thrift center to be a home away from home and even a missions field.

Kern and others have seen the provision and blessing of God in the thrift center, noting that more volunteers are now needed to continue the ministry of Heart and Hand.

Through people donating items to the thrift center, volunteering, offering financial and prayer support, Kern is hopeful the Lord will continue to make the ministry flourish.

To find out more, contact Heart and Hand at 405-470-0431.

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"LET EVERYTHING THAT
HAS BREATH PRAISE
THE LORD." - Psalm 150:6

