

The Alabama Baptist

Toll free 800-803-5201
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December 1, 2022

Vol. 187, No. 47
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.



FBC Grant holds a basketball camp for children in the Sitka, Alaska, community this past summer.

Photos courtesy of Chuck Conley

TRUE PARTNERSHIP

FBC Grant helps Alaska church weather pastoral transition

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Chuck Conley was stunned. He was on the way home from a trip to Alaska in March, and as he traveled he sent a message to the pastor of the church he had just left asking for the link to their Sunday service so he could watch it.

The response surprised him.

“He said, ‘Today may not be the best day to watch. I’m going to resign,’” recalled Conley, pastor of First Baptist Church Grant.

Conley — along with Mike Foreman, associational mission strategist for Marshall Baptist Association in

Guntersville, and Jarred Cantrell, a contractor from FBC Grant, had just spent a few days in Sitka, an island city of about 8,000, with only one Southern Baptist church — First Baptist Church Sitka.

‘How can we help?’

FBC Grant was planning to partner with them for a summer missions trip, and they had worked out the details that week.

So as Conley took in the information that the pastor was resigning, he said God began to focus his thoughts on one thing: “How can we help?”

And Conley began to realize that the best way they could help was to come alongside the church to provide a pastor through the summer.

“You don’t run out and easily find

a pastor in Sitka, Alaska,” Conley said.

The island city has 14 miles of road from one end to the other, he noted, and it’s only accessible by a floatplane or ferry. And even though FBC Sitka is part of an association — Tongass Baptist Association — some of the churches in it are separated by as many as 1,000 miles.

Conley cited the statistic that Alaska has “750,000 people spread over a land mass the [width] of the lower 48 states. And when you realize that half of those people are in the Anchorage area, it really highlights just how spread out everyone is.”

So FBC Grant — which Conley said is “not a large church by any means” — began to think about how they might encourage the sister church by filling their pulpit.

“We thought, ‘Maybe we can fill that pulpit for the summer,’ but we knew it would be a stretch,” Conley admitted.

They worked it out. On June 9, the day after FBC Grant’s Vacation Bible School, Conley got on a plane to Sitka. He preached on Sundays for the month of June and got their Wednesday night Bible study going again.

A missions team from FBC Grant joined him at the end of the month, and they ran a basketball camp in the community and worked on construction projects in the church.

FBC Sitka, which was averaging around 20, drew in 60 children for the camp.

Providing leadership

Then Conley came back to Alabama with the team, and Jeremy Roden, FBC Grant’s youth and family pastor, stayed in Sitka most of July with his wife and two young daughters. Roden filled the pulpit and provided leadership for two other missions teams.

(See ‘Kingdom,’ page 10)



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'The extra mile'

TAB presents first distinctive service award to Bob Terry

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Bob Terry, editor emeritus of The Alabama Baptist, became the first recipient of the new Robert Hugh Edmonds Distinctive Service Award on Nov. 14.

The award — presented at this year's Friends of The Alabama Baptist dinner — is named in honor of the late Edmonds, who along with his wife, Margaret Ann, was named an honorary lifetime TAB board member in 2013. The couple are the only two honored with this title in the organization's history. Edmonds died July 26 at age 90.

Jennifer Davis Rash, president and editor-in-chief of TAB Media Group, said for a few years now, "several board members and staff members have discussed the possibility of creating a way to honor those outside of current staff members who have gone the extra mile in their service to the mission of The Alabama Baptist."

Named after Edmonds

As they finalized the details of the award, they knew it needed to be named after Edmonds, she said.

"Hugh's enthusiasm for serving on the board and helping spread the word about the work being done captured my attention early in my tenure with The Alabama Baptist," Rash said.

"Hugh and Margaret Ann were always such an encouragement to all of us. They rarely, if ever, missed a meeting and would go to great lengths to be present to support the work being done."

The new award "commemorates their enduring faithfulness and dedication to the work and mission of The Alabama Baptist," she said.

Rash presented the award in memory of Edmonds to his son, Rick, during the dinner.

"My daddy would have been overwhelmed by your naming this impressive dedicated service award for him," he said.

"When Daddy was elected to the board of directors, he considered it a high honor. He served on several boards over the years, but it was The



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist
Gary Fenton (left), chairman of The Alabama Baptist board, presents the inaugural Robert Hugh Edmonds Distinctive Service Award to editor emeritus Bob Terry and his wife, Pat, at this year's Friends of The Alabama Baptist dinner Nov. 14.

Alabama Baptist he loved the most."

Gary Fenton, chairman of the TAB board of directors, presented Terry as the inaugural award recipient.

Fenton said Edmonds "epitomized what a board member should be." He "loved The Alabama Baptist and believed the state paper performed a crucial role in keeping Baptists in our state informed on the important issues of our day."

Edmonds was also "extremely proud of the outstanding work that Dr. Terry did as editor," Fenton said.

"Mr. Edmonds believed that informed Baptists led by the Spirit of God will make good decisions. Dr. Terry worked tirelessly to keep the Baptists of our state informed and was recognized not only in our state but throughout the nation for his efforts."

Edmonds "represents the best of our Baptist laymen," and Terry "represents the best of Baptist statesmen and is very deserving to be the first recipient of the Hugh Edmonds Award," Fenton said.

'Loved the Lord'

Terry said of Edmonds, "Hugh loved his church, he loved the Lord, and he loved The Alabama Baptist."

"Hugh liked to be informed," and he thought The Alabama Baptist board of directors "was the best

place to serve in Baptist life," Terry said.

Also during the Friends of TAB dinner, Rash recognized Rick Ellison, director of missions for Baldwin Baptist Association, who is rotating off the board.

He came on the board in 2016 to complete an unexpired term, then was reelected for a full term.

Recent roles

Ellison served most recently as chair of the finance committee and as a member of the executive committee. During his time on the board, he also served as a member of the finance, nominating and circulation promotion committees.



The crossword puzzle
can be found on page 11.

The Alabama Baptist

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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)
© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.

is published weekly except for one week in
July and December by The Alabama Baptist,
Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive,
Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720.
Statewide phone: 800-803-5201.
Website: www.thealabamabaptist.org
Email: news@thealabamabaptist.org
or subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org
Periodicals postage paid at Hattiesburg, Miss.

ANNUAL TAB SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Includes print, digital, app and full web access

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

Individual — \$34.95 per year (50 issues)

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GUEST EDITORIAL

for this week's issue of **The Alabama Baptist**

By Carrie Brown McWhorter, Content Editor

Christmas hymn lyrics teach truths to reach troubled souls

With Thanksgiving behind us, the attack of the earworms has begun. We've all been afflicted. You hear a song or just think of one, and the lyrics play over and over in your head.

For me, the cheery strains of "Sim-ple hav-ing a wonderful Christmas time!" or "All I want for Christmas is you!" are the worst offenders. It's as if suddenly my brain's mute button has become unresponsive.

Don't get me wrong. I'm a fan of Christmas music. Unfortunately, it's usually my least favorite songs that somehow find their way onto my internal playlist.

Out of touch

And the more Christmases I celebrate, the more I feel secular Christmas songs are out of touch with reality.

"It's the most wonderful time of the year."

Is it? Layoffs and high prices have hit hard this year even as many are still recuperating financially from pandemic-related shutdowns. Many of us are looking at our bank accounts and bills wondering how they're ever going to balance, and there's not much hope for the new year.

"Please come home for Christmas."

If only they could. Many families will be geographically separated during the holidays. Many more are separated by death. As the mother of two college students, my heart especially goes out to the families of those killed in the recent shooting at the University of Virginia. If only their children could come home for Christmas.

Our lives are far from the idealized Christmases portrayed by movies, and secular Christmas songs speak only superficially to the needs and longings of our hearts.

Christmas hymns penetrate deeper, which is why we need to sing them over and over during this season and let the words once again settle into our souls.

The lyrics of Christmas carols are so much more than earworms — they are opportunities to impress truth into the deepest recesses of our beings.

I was reminded of this as I listened to Robert Smith Jr. preach Nov. 15 during the evening session of the Alabama Baptist State

Convention. Smith, professor of Christian preaching and Charles T. Carter Baptist Chair of Divinity at Samford University's Beeson Divinity School, is well known for weaving theologically rich hymn lyrics into his theologically deep sermons. It's a technique that engages the listener on multiple levels.

***"Christmas hymns
penetrate deeper,
which is why we
need to sing them
over and over during
this season and
let the words once
again settle into
our souls."***

Research tells us that when we listen to a song, we are doing much more than hearing notes and repeating words. Music connects to our emotions — the emotions conveyed in the song and the emotions connected to memories we have of the song. It's one possible reason people with dementia can remember song lyrics long after they've forgotten almost everything else.

So sing the familiar Christmas carols this year! To paraphrase

Deuteronomy 11:18–19, sing them with your children and your grandchildren. Sing them at church, at home, in the car, even in the store if you want.

Let the truth of the words remind you anew of the hope and promise of Christmas.

"Joy to the world! The Lord is come!"

"Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"

"Go, tell it on the mountain!
Over the hills and ev'rywhere!"

"Word of the Father, now in
flesh appearing!"

"He rules the world with truth
and grace!"

"Now ye need not fear the
grave. Jesus Christ was born to
save. Calls you one and calls you
all to gain His everlasting hall."

"Come and worship, come and
worship! Worship Christ, the
newborn King!"



RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

By Jennifer Davis Rash, President and Editor-in-Chief, will return in January.

Your Voice



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

Reflecting the grace and mercy of Advent

By James Hammack
The-Scroll.com

There is so much at this time of year that is pleasant and memorable and generally amazing. I look forward to Christmas and am always thankful when it comes around again.

But I also recognize that it can be difficult. This may be your first Christmas without someone in your life. Or maybe there is that one family member who adds a little strife to the holidays.

The Gospel of Luke challenges us in how we relate to one another, especially when hurt, ill will or anger are present.

In Luke 10–11, we see two sections that are seemingly connected to each other as well as connected

to the incarnation of Jesus, His birth that we celebrate this time every year.

In Luke 10, Jesus is tested by an expert in Old Testament law. He responds by showing in parable form who a neighbor is.

He essentially teaches that we are to be the neighbor first, which means everyone becomes our neighbor. Referring to the good Samaritan, Jesus told the law expert, “You go and do likewise” (v. 37).

We are to show mercy to those around us regardless of their qualifications. This is difficult stuff.

Jesus continues in Luke 11 to teach on prayer. One specific portion shows us we should ask forgiveness and that our asking should come from hearts that are quick to forgive:

“... and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us” (v. 4).

What does this mean for us when Aunt Agnes is critical of everything, or you’re trying to compose a faint smile even though your heart is hurting because your dad died last month?

It means that Christ, as the greatest Neighbor, has come down to us regardless of our qualifications and forgiven us for our sin. It means when we rest in Christ this Christmas, the hurting or rightly offended heart can find mercy and grace, and not just enough for ourselves.

Jesus’ coming to us means we are given enough mercy and grace to extend to others from the overflow of His filling.

Christ’s filling of our lives means we can give to others — enough to have positive words of encouragement and thankfulness when we’re together to silence an overly critical tongue; enough for us to weep, with joy still present in our weeping at the loss of a loved one.

It means the struggles of holiday gatherings take their rightful place and that Jesus takes His place at the center of our thoughts, words and actions.

This is how His coming changes things. We will still struggle, but He has promised to never leave us or forsake us, even in that struggle.

How will you handle it this year? Will you commit to keep your eyes on Christ?

It is likely that there is not anyone who does not have expectations in relationships.

The importance of isolating them, naming them, checking them out for any distortions or illogical thought patterns and making appropriate adjustments for mutual satisfaction should be regarded as imperative.

Failure to do so will most likely lead to chaos, conflicts and barriers which are not understood or capable of being mitigated.

Morris Murray Jr.
Jasper, Ala.

When it comes to the good news about Jesus, He is an open-access Savior. His news arrives in umpteen ways.

Paul said Jesus makes Himself available to those far away and those near. “Through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father” (Eph. 2:18).

The Holy Spirit works to connect people with God. His supernatural effort remains within arm’s reach of every person. He conveys consistent news — Jesus saves.

No need for you to worry that the Spirit’s skills will evolve beyond your ability to receive His communication.

Darryl Wood
Birmingham, Ala.

Praise for TAB staff

It was really pretty amazing to be with the TAB Media Group staff — the very people who are doing so much incredible work.

You’re setting a higher bar each day, not just for SBC communicators but for all Christian communicators and storytellers as well. Being with all of you for a few hours Nov. 4 was an honor.

Jim and Carol Venemen
Jackson, Tenn.

It was great to catch up with “old” friends, to meet some

whom I’ve only interacted with virtually and to meet new friends at the Alabama Baptist State Convention. Jennifer, thanks for all the ways you and The Alabama Baptist newspaper staff keep us informed!

Shirley Crowder
Leeds, Ala.

Thank you, Jennifer, for all the good work you and your staff do! You are amazing!

Denise George
Birmingham, Ala.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“We are 199 years strong as a convention. What will be our next right step?”

JOEL CARWILE
Pastor, First Baptist Church Athens

“If we don’t extend our net into the places where [people] are, then we’ll never really be able to effectively minister the gospel to people who would never set foot in a church,” said **Cristina Baker, mother, author and social media influencer.**

“Pastor, the fact that you preach on Sundays does not mean you’re making disciples. Preaching is important. That’s not making disciples,” said **Richard Blackaby, president of Blackaby Ministries International.**

“Hope is not a thing to acquire; it’s a Person to know,” said **Danielle Strickland, author of “The Other Side of Hope.”**

“To understand and love an audience means becoming their pain experts and wanting to provide the best solutions.

“Think about the needs, concerns and goals that impact them daily. Talk about them authentically because you care,” said **Mark MacDonald, communication consultant, author, church branding strategist for BeKnownforSomething.com and executive director of Center for Church Communication.**

“Alaska is a very special place. People are very independent and individual, and they may say, ‘That’s fine for you, but I have my own thing.’ It’s a very [spiritually] dark community because of

that. There’s a lot of room for the gospel,” said **Luke Jones, pastor of First Baptist Church Wasilla, Alaska.**

“If we don’t revitalize the churches that we have, then we’re on a path to self-destruction,” said **Rick Barnhart, director of the office of associational missions and church planting for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.**

“Stories that offer hope, agency and dignity feel like breaking news right now, because we are so overwhelmed with the opposite,” said **Amanda Ripley, former TIME Magazine journalist** on “crisis fatigue.”

From the *Twitterverse*

@pastorjaycbc

Grace never calls wrong right. If wrong were right, there’d be no need for grace.

@WilburnJo

It’s easy to praise God in the good times, but praising God in the hard times can be tough sometimes. But when things are hard is when our praises to the Lord are most critical. God inhabits our praise. When things get tough, the tough get going.

@MontyMullenix

As those who’ve experienced grace, we must be open to God’s transforming work in someone’s life. God turns offenses into blessings and offenders into brothers and sisters in Christ.

@iBeLoNg2JeSuSN1

“But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for

us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God’s sight by the blood of Christ, He will certainly save us from God’s condemnation” (Romans 5:8–9).

@howertonjosh

Find the things that inflame your heart for Jesus and do more of those things.

Identify the things that anesthetize your heart to the things of God and ruthlessly eliminate them from your life.

@MattSmethurst

“If you’re more upset about sin in the news than sin in the mirror, something is wrong.” —Bruce Frank

@Cyanna2023

The real message about Jesus is so simple, yet the greatest mystery, and one we can’t live without —

love. That’s why I believe in Him, not to pick one religion over others or to follow my parents, but because what other love is like that?

@DanielDickard

God isn’t confident in you; He’s confident in Himself.

Your salvation is secure, not because you have a strong grip on God, but because He has a firm grip on you.

@drronlynch

False teachers use our vocabulary but a different dictionary!

@ricklance

Let us be a “geyser of gratitude” for all the Lord has done for us, not just a “trickle of thanksgiving.” —@marklbetha

@grcastleberry

Sanctification is a progressive process. Keep growing. Stay in the fight.

Opposing the Respect for Marriage Act

The Respect for Marriage Act was introduced earlier this year with the purpose of ... codifying protections for same-sex “marriage” into law.

The Nov. 17 Senate vote to take up the bill was likely the last opportunity for the bill to be stopped. The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention will continue to work against its passage into law.

A bipartisan amendment [to the original text of the bill] does not provide adequate protections for religious liberty.

This bill, even as amended, does not provide meaningful protection for those that maintain a traditional view of marriage.

The amendment appears to offer people and institutions of faith more additional protection than it actually does.

At a more fundamental level, this issue transcends electoral politics. For ERLC, this is about human flourishing, love for our neighbors and faithfulness to God’s word.

Underlying the SBC’s commitment to biblical marriage is a verse from the first book in Scripture: “God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27).

Aside from the multitude of religious liberty challenges this bill poses, we ultimately oppose it because we hold fast to this understanding of God’s design of marriage as being between one man and one woman for life, and we know that this biblical framework undergirds a healthy society and promotes human flourishing.

Hannah Daniel
Policy associate
ERLC

3 stories you should know



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist

Alabama Citizens Action Program president and CEO Greg Davis (right) and Morris Johnson (left), ALCAP board member and pastor of Integrity Baptist Church in Hueytown, pray for Alabama Lt. Gov. Will Ainsworth during the 2022 ALCAP pastors luncheon. The luncheon was held Nov. 15 at Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham in conjunction with the Alabama Baptist State Convention. Ainsworth was the guest speaker. (The Alabama Baptist)

'The Chosen' reaches No. 3 at box office

Faith-based streaming series "The Chosen" finished third at the box office among all movies in its opening weekend Nov. 18–20. "The Chosen" launched its Season 3 premiere Nov. 18 in theaters and earned an estimated \$8.6 million during its opening weekend, following only "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" and "The Menu," according to Deadline.

"The Chosen" reached the No. 3 spot while playing on just 2,012 screens — less than half as many as "Black Panther," according to dailywire.com.

Neal Harmon, CEO of Angel Studios, which produces and distributes "The Chosen," tweeted Nov. 18: "Thank you to all of you that are amplifying light by supporting Angel Studios and 'The Chosen!'" (The Alabama Baptist)

12 Zambian churches planted thanks to gifts

Twelve new churches in and around Lusaka, Zambia, have been planted thanks to Southern Baptists' gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

International Mission Board missionaries Randy and Kimberly Windham say their passion is teaching Zambians to plant churches and share the gospel with others.

Their work is only possible, Randy Windham said, because of Southern Baptists' prayers and faithful, generous gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Because you give, "We never stop training and planting churches," Randy Windham said.

This year's Week of Prayer for International Missions is Dec. 4–11.

Go to tabonline.org/lmco-22 for more information on how to pray and how to give. (IMB)

University of Mobile trustees extend Burnett's contract, praise leadership

The University of Mobile board of trustees has extended the contract of UM President Lonnie Burnett through 2026 and beyond.

Burnett's original five-year contract was set to expire in 2024. His new contract extends through 2026, with an automatic one-year renewal each year thereafter. The trustees' unanimous decision was announced Nov. 18.

"We are thrilled with what has been accomplished at the University of Mobile over the past three years," said Terry Harbin, chair of the UM board of trustees. "Despite the turmoil across the world, the University of Mobile has been a place of great stability and growth. We look forward to all the university will accomplish in the years ahead under the leadership of Dr. Lonnie Burnett."



BURNETT

Burnett became the university's fifth president in November 2019, after serving six months as interim. The 1979 graduate of then-Mobile College had a 25-year career teaching history in the Mobile County Public School system and has since served the university for 18 years as a professor, dean and administrator.

Burnett said he is humbled by and grateful for the confidence the board has placed in him.

"I am excited about the next three years and beyond," Burnett said. "I look forward to laboring together as we educate and mentor." (University of Mobile)

Tim Hall receives 2022 Paul Stewart Lifetime Service Award

The 2022 Paul Stewart Lifetime Service Award was presented to Tim Hall during the Alabama Singing Men and Alabama Singing Women banquet Nov. 14 at First Baptist Church Birmingham.

Hall (right) is minister of music and senior adults at FBC Demopolis, where he has served for almost 10 years. He previously served 10 years as minister of music at Albertville FBC

and 10 years as music minister at Bethel Baptist Church in Dothan.

He grew up in a musical family at James Memorial Baptist Church in Gadsden, where his mother served as church organist and pianist for 76 years, and his father sang in the choir.

"Music is a tool, a pathway into ministry," Hall said.

Hall is a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Samford University. He has twice served as president of the Alabama Singing Men.

Guy Anderson (left), a member of the Alabama



Photo by Dianna Cagle/The Alabama Baptist

Singing Men, presented the award, which is given annually by the Alabama Singing Men to a person who exhibits excellence in music leadership and ministry. Stewart was

the first state director of the church music office at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. (The Alabama Baptist)

Alabama news

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Westwood Baptist Church, Forestdale**, celebrated its 75th anniversary Sept. 18 with Chris Crain, executive director of the Birmingham Metro Baptist Association, preaching.

Debbie Campbell, a former member and commissioner of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, and Crain presented plaques to pastor Steve Potts in honor of the church's ministry.



Photo by Debbie Campbell

A member of the Westwood Ballet shared a special performance. Don Hawkins, former member and former president of Southeastern Bible College, which was located in Birmingham, offered a prayer of thanksgiving and reflections about his days growing up at the church.

Charter member Katie Thomas, who was unable to be present, was recognized for her faithful service to the church.

EAST CULLMAN ASSOCIATION

► **Dave Wright** is the new discipleship pastor of **Northbrook Baptist Church, Cullman**.



WRIGHT

He holds a bachelor's degree in youth ministry from Martin Methodist College (now University of Tennessee Southern) and a master of arts in Christian education from Southwestern Seminary.

He previously served as vice president of communications at Midwestern Seminary for eight years and director of communications and various other leadership roles at Southwestern Seminary for 10 years. He also served churches in North Alabama in the areas of student ministry and worship leadership between 1998 and 2004: New Prospect Baptist Church, Jasper; First Baptist Church Saks, Anniston; and Grace Fellowship Church, Anniston.

He and his wife, Jill, have four children.

LIMESTONE ASSOCIATION

► **Limestone Baptist Association** is hosting its second annual Christmas Light Drive-Thru at Camp Helen Dec. 1-31 beginning at 5 p.m. each day. Kevin Ward is director of missions.

MARSHALL ASSOCIATION

► **Second Baptist Church, Boaz**, celebrated its 75th anniversary Oct. 16 with David Johnson, longtime member and retired minister; Jimmy Harrison, former pastor; and Boaz Mayor David Dyar sharing in the service.

Lloyd Borden, director of missions for Lookout Mountain Baptist Association, and Debra

Borden sang the song they shared at the church's 50th anniversary. Gene Echols led congregational singing. The pianist was Cathei Echols.

Mike Foreman, associational missions strategist for Marshall Baptist Association, brought greetings from the association and presented a plaque on behalf of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

"The celebration served as a rejuvenation for our people," said Cathei Echols. "God has done so much for us, and it was good to celebrate."

MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATION

► **Dewayne Rembert**, church planting strategist for **Montgomery Baptist Association**, recently celebrated five years of serving on the association's staff.

"It's the best job I've ever had," he said, noting that he enjoys meeting with area pastors, "answering hard biblical questions in regard to race and culture and then seeing them go back and change their church culture."

Rembert also serves as pastor of **Flatline Church at Chisholm**, which he helped plant in 2019. The church has planted two other churches.

He attended Troy University in Montgomery and Birmingham Theological Seminary for classwork in evangelism and is continuing his studies at New Orleans Seminary.

He and his wife, Leslie, have three children.



REMBERT

MORGAN ASSOCIATION

► **Brandon Keel** is the new pastor of discipleship of **Central Park Baptist Church, Decatur**.



KEEL

He previously served churches in Ovilla, Texas, and Alexander City and Dadeville, both in Alabama. Keel holds a master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary and is currently pursuing a doctor of philosophy degree at Midwestern Seminary.

He and his wife, Caitlyn, have three children.

PICKENS ASSOCIATION

► **Arbor Springs Baptist Church, Reform**, celebrated its 150th anniversary Nov. 6.

Mike Owen, missionary to Brazil and former pastor, preached the message.

Chris Babb, former minister of music, led congregational singing. Special music was provided by Chris Babb, Greg Turner and Sonja Brown, who each sang solos. Ricky Morris was



Photo courtesy of David Nelson

the guest pianist.

David Nelson of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, Mike Jackson of the State Board of Missions and Lyle Dease, director of missions for Pickens

Baptist Association, presented certificates.

"It was amazing to see our church family come together to get everything ready for a blessed day of praising God for 150 years of His faithfulness," said Larry Shelton (left), pastor. "We give God all the honor and glory for this great day! We pray for our church as we continue to minister and share the gospel of Jesus."

SOUTHEAST ALABAMA ASSOCIATION

► **Selma Baptist Church, Dothan**, celebrated its 150th anniversary Oct. 23 with former pastor Jeff Mann preaching. Danny Williams, former minister of music, led congregational singing and sang a solo. Cathy Bugg, church pianist, accompanied.

Ellen Dewberry (left) of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and John Thomas, mission strategist for the Southeast Alabama Baptist Association, presented certificates.



Photo courtesy of Ellen Dewberry

"It was a great day that sparked excitement around our church," said pastor Scott Cox. "We are now focusing on the next 150 years."

Beth Glover (right) served as chair of the anniversary committee.

TALLAPOOSA ASSOCIATION

► **First Baptist Church Alexander City** celebrated its 150th anniversary throughout October with speakers Steve King, pastor (Oct. 2); Dave Briley, former worship pastor (Oct. 9); Gerald Hallmark, former pastor (Oct. 16); Steve Layton, former minister of education/administration (Oct. 23); and Harris Cook, former pastor (Oct. 30). Each speaker focused on the theme of heritage and legacy. Briley performed a piano concert on Oct. 9 as well.

Calvin Milford of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a certificate Oct. 16.

"The celebration was a reminder that we have been given a rich heritage left by people we do not know," said Bill Stinson, pastor of education and administration. "We now have a responsibility to carry on their legacy."

Each Monday the church met at 6:15 a.m. for a time of devotion, singing and prayer.

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS AND LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING December 4-11 - alsbom.org/lottiemoon

 <p><i>Americas</i> AK and CK</p>	 <p><i>Asia-Pacific Rim</i> DW and JW</p>	 <p><i>Central Asia</i> ML</p>	 <p><i>Deaf</i> DL and CL</p>
 <p><i>Europe</i> RM and KM</p>	 <p><i>North Africa & Middle East</i> BG and TG</p>	 <p><i>South Asia</i> SM and WM</p>	 <p><i>Sub-Saharan Africa</i> JW and LW</p>

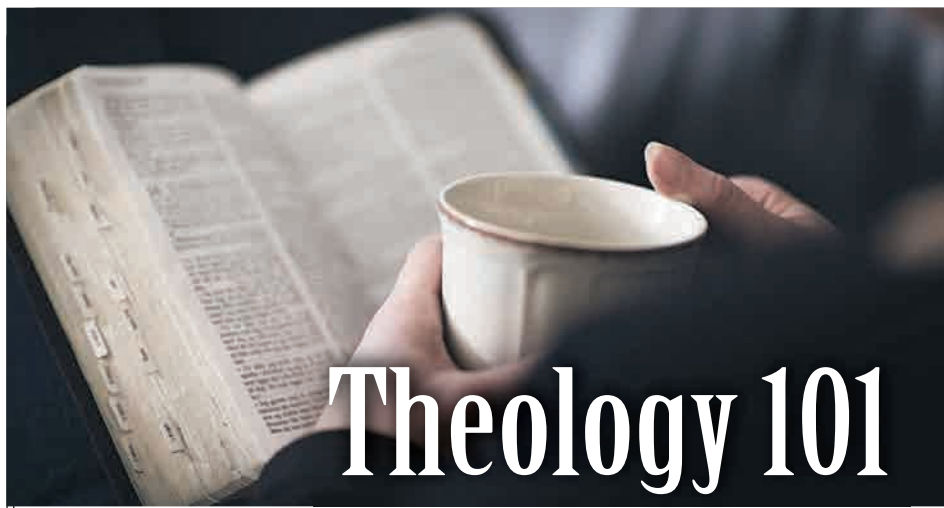
These are more than initials of random people. These letters represent real missionaries who are products of Alabama Baptist churches. They are representative of more than 300 Alabamians who serve around the world. As you pray for them during this focus on international missions, you may not know their names or exact locations, but your prayers reach a Father who knows. Thank you not only for praying, but for giving both through the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.



To learn how your church can connect personally with international field personnel, contact Scotty Goldman, sgoldman@alsbom.org, (334) 613-2387.

For more information about field personnel from Alabama serving around the world, please visit a18c.org.

This resource is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Living in gratitude

Offering Praise

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

In this week after Thanksgiving, we turn our attention to offering praise.

Our attention is again drawn to the familiar words of Psalm 100:4 — “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him and bless His name.”

We are reminded of the difference between these dual responses of thanksgiving and praise.

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.

To be sure, the opposite is also true. We can praise God for what He does, and we can give thanks for what He is like.

Fitting and beautiful

For many of us, a longstanding childhood memory of church worship is the singing of “Doxology.” Its four lines are a wonderful call to praise:

“Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.”

Psalm 33:1 reminds us praise is not only fitting but “praise from the upright is beautiful.”

As we let our minds contemplate some of the Lord’s divine

attributes, it becomes even clearer that praise from our hearts is right and beautiful.

God is transcendent, yet personal and everywhere present. God is benevolent, kind and generous. He is almighty, all loving and all wise.

Kind and gracious

God is compassionate, kind and forgiving. He is gracious, providential and holy.

God is unchanging, all knowing, eternal, empowering and inspiring. He is great, good and infinite.

God is true and triune — Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We can list all the divine attributes that come to mind, yet the list is still not complete.

We praise God with the words of prayer and the lyrics of music. We praise God with our manner of living and by growing in His likeness.

We praise God in public worship and in private devotions.

The Book of Psalms, the praise of the Old Testament, ends with the admonition, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord” (150:6).

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.



Jane Barrett receives disciple making award

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Jane Barrett has spent the past 40 years on the staff of her church — Mount Hebron West Baptist in Elmore, which changed its name to Crossroads Community Church in 2019.

She’s retiring from her position as executive minister at the end of December, and on Dec. 4, Crossroads is celebrating her years at the church.

But pastor Robert Mullins said he knows Barrett is far from finished with ministry, specifically discipleship.

“She loves people well, and she’s been doing it with her life,” he said. “Whether she’s on a paid staff or not, she’s going to keep doing it forever.”

Discipleship network

That’s why Barrett was presented with the Daniel Edmonds Disciple Making Leader Award during the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference on Nov. 14. The award was presented by Edmonds, who has served at the helm of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions office of Sunday School & Discipleship more than 25 years and was instrumental in starting the Discipleship Network of Alabama.

The first award was presented in January at the DNA conference, but leaders decided to move the second

one up to the pastors conference to time it with Barrett’s upcoming retirement.

Edmonds told those present that “when you need help, you turn to Jane.”

As pastors began to connect with DNA in its beginning stages, they started asking how to involve women in the movement. Edmonds said he asked Barrett for help because for many years she has discipled groups of women who have continued to multiply.

‘Being a blessing’

“When we needed help in the disciple making movement discipling women, I knew where to turn,” he said.

Mullins said Barrett has discipled “with her life, and she’s given her whole life to it.”

“She can’t get enough,” he said. “She’s constantly encouraging, training and equipping people to do things. She’s all about being a blessing.”

Barrett said for her “it’s a passion of loving to see people not only fall in love with Jesus, but learn to follow Him the way He created us to do it.”

“I love to help people know who Christ is and know who they are in Him and help them see how they can help other people do the same thing, to make disciples who make disciples,” she said.



Photo by Sam Evans/The Alabama Baptist

The Daniel Edmonds Disciple Making Award is presented to Jane Barrett, executive minister of Crossroads Community Church in Elmore, by Edmonds, who has served at the helm of the office of Sunday School & Discipleship more than 25 years.

Kingdom-focused mission guides Alaska, Alabama cooperation

(continued from page 1)

At the end of July, Dave and Susan Andrews, two lay members of FBC Grant, drove up from Alabama, rode the ferry over to the island and stayed in Sitka until mid-September. Dave Andrews filled the pulpit and provided leadership for the church for seven weeks.

"We've been privileged at FBC Grant to be there the entire summer providing pastoral leadership and encouragement," Conley said.

He returned to Sitka in late September and attended the Alaska Baptist Convention meeting in Juneau. He said since that meeting, FBC Sitka has received two resumes from potential pastoral candidates.

Following that trip Conley has been working with other pastors in the association to see if they can adopt a plan to come together and help support a pastor in Sitka for the next three years.

Members at FBC Sitka have told him this is the first time they've been without a pastor that they didn't feel overwhelmed and defeated.

"We're making a time commitment [and] a finan-



Photo courtesy of Chuck Conley

FBC Grant members serve on a missions trip to Sitka, Alaska, thousands of miles from Alabama.

cial commitment to FBC Sitka, and we're trying to come alongside them and help support a pastor there," Conley said. "There's certainly a need for the gospel message in Sitka. I think it's important that [FBC Sitka] not only survives, but thrives."

FBC Grant is planning another trip to Sitka in summer 2023 to run more basketball camps and work on more construction projects. Conley believes the future for ministry there is bright. He

also is talking with pastors in the association about coming together to offer a retreat for pastors and their wives in southeast Alaska.

"We've had an incredible adventure, but it's not just about the adventure, it's about the King-

dom," Conley declared.

It all started when he decided to reach out to churches in the Last Frontier after learning about Alabama Baptists' five-year partnership with Alaska Baptists, which began in May 2021.

"We're super excited about what the future holds," Conley said.

Scotty Goldman, director of the office of global missions at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said what FBC Grant has done in "putting the wheels in motion to take care of this church" has been "a great example of true partnership."

"There are dozens of opportunities like this all over Alaska," Goldman noted. "We need more churches or associations who will fill those needs for our partners. They might not all be exactly like Sitka, but all of them, and all Alabama Baptists, can benefit from working together for the Kingdom."

For information on Alaska partnerships, contact Scotty Goldman at 800-264-1225, ext. 2387 or sgoldman@alsbom.org.

Forming partnerships



Photo by Dianna L. Cagle/The Alabama Baptist

Jae McKee (right), director of missions and church planting for the Alaska Baptist Resource Network, speaks with Joe Godfrey, consultant with ALCAP, during a Nov. 16 informational luncheon focused on Alaska partnerships hosted by the Shelby Baptist Association. (TAB)

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.
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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.

WORSHIP PASTOR

Seeking someone to lead all aspects of musical program of Linden Baptist Church. This is a full-time position and will also have other responsibilities as an associate pastor. For full job description and to apply for the position, visit <http://www.lindenbaptist.org> and click on "associate pastor application." You may contact the church directly at 334-295-4278 or by mail at P.O. Box 480776, Linden, AL 36748.

WORSHIP LEADER

Hopewell Baptist Church near Andalusia, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a part-time worship leader. Interested people can apply by sending a resumé to: Hopewell Baptist Church, 6592 Brooklyn Rd., Andalusia, AL 36421 or by emailing a resumé to: barryandlaura2000@gmail.com. Resumes will be accepted until Dec. 5. For more information, please call 334-222-2757 or 334-488-5133.

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. Resumes may be sent to: keving@fbcatmore.org.

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 resumes and questions to: search.committee@parkviewdecatur.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

NURSERY COORDINATOR

First Baptist Church Spanish Fort is seeking a part-time nursery coordinator. For more information, contact the Personnel Committee at contact@fbcspanishfort.com.

SIGNS

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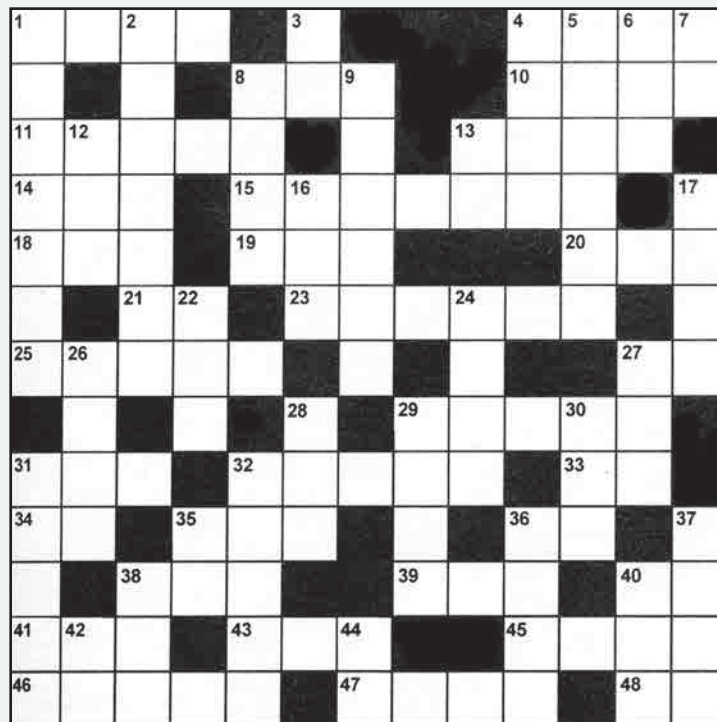
COMPUTERIZED ENGRAVER

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CHRISTIAN crossword

ACROSS

1. To carry something.
4. And thy land ____ ah.
(Isa. 62:4)
8. Shish ____ ob.
10. Seen His star in the _____. (Matt. 2:2)
11. Him only shalt thou _____. (Matt. 4:10)
13. To go on a ____.
14. Also.
15. Thy word ... I will ____ it.
(Ps. 119:105-106)
18. Anna. (var.)
19. Just a little bit.
20. [Samuel] ran unto _____. (1 Sam. 3:5)
21. Printer's measure.
23. That My joy might ____ in you.
(John 15:11)
25. Gives medicine to.
27. In the country of _____. (1 Kings 4:19)
29. Praises.
31. A little while, and ye shall not ____ Me.
(John 16:16)
32. To tie a rope off.
33. As He ____ pure.
(1 John 3:3)
34. Not B.C.
35. They ____ the ship aground. (Acts 27:41)
36. To exist.
38. Give ____, all ye inhabitants. (Joel 1:2)
39. Parent Teacher Association. (abbr.)
40. A two-year college degree.
41. Medical specialty. (abbr.)
43. To rest.
45. Better ... he were ____ into the sea.
(Mark 9:42)
46. Or the ____, be not darkened.
(Eccles. 12:2)



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47. I have fed you with _____. (1 Cor. 3:2)
48. Professional engineer. (abbr.)
49. ____ right side of the ship.
(John 21:6)
24. When fowls came ... Abram drove them _____. (Gen. 15:11)
26. Ephlal begat _____. (1 Chron. 2:37)
27. Office of Strategic Services. (abbr.)
28. ____ men that were lepers. (Luke 17:12)
29. Thy word is a ____ unto my feet.
(Ps. 119:105)
30. That we may ____ with Him.
(John 11:16)
31. Jesus ____.
32. So shall thy ____ be filled. (Prov. 3:10)
35. Egyptian sun god.
36. Rolled ____ the stone. (Matt. 28:2)
37. Jesus also ... suffered without the _____. (Heb. 13:12)
38. Estimated time of arrival. (abbr.)
40. Snake.
42. New Testament. (abbr.)
44. Not a.m.

DOWN

1. To sit or _____. (2 words)
2. For there are set ____ of judgment.
(Ps. 122:5)
3. Mommy. (var.)
4. Thou shalt not ____ false witness.
(Ex. 20:16)
5. What cannibals do.
6. Teach Judah the ____ of the bow.
(2 Sam. 1:18)
7. Light. (abbr.)
8. When I ____ silence.
(Ps. 32:3)
9. Or touch the _____.
(Ex. 19:12)
12. Length of time.
13. To perform something.
16. Cut off his right _____.
(Luke 22:50)
17. Lord of lords, and ____ of kings.
(Rev. 17:14)
22. Cast the ____ on the

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

Associational leaders hold annual meeting

By Dianna L. Cagle
The Alabama Baptist

The Alabama Baptist Conference of Associational Leaders held its annual meeting Nov. 14 at Shades Crest Baptist Church in Hoover. At the gathering, leaders were urged to avoid tackling ministry alone.

The event featured Bob Bumgarner, lead missional strategist for First Coast Churches (formerly Jacksonville Baptist Association in Florida).

"Know you are chosen for this role ... and for this moment," said Bumgarner, noting how God chose David, moving him from local to national ministry (Ps. 78:70-72).

Associational leaders are in a place to encourage local pastors and to help keep them from feeling isolated and on their own, Bumgarner stressed.

"I want you to believe 'local' matters," he said. "If there's ever been a time ... when the leverage point is local, I believe it is now."

Gospel partnership

Jesus formed a team, a gospel partnership, to send out His core team to spread the gospel, he noted.

"When we partner locally," he added, "there's surrender that has to happen."

Creating trust is key to reaching people at a local level. In 2017, Bumgarner noted, a poll indicated 11% of pastors surveyed had considered resigning the year before.

Jump to March 2022 and the number had in-

creased to 42%, he said. More than 80% of pastors don't feel rewarded in their role. Bumgarner acknowledged his own ministry work can be stressful.

"COVID and I arrived at the exact same [time]," said Bumgarner, who started his position in March 2020.

"I feel the weight of the churches," he said. "You can't do the Holy Spirit's work, but you can help [pastors] not pastor alone. Support systems must be local."

Bumgarner challenged associational leaders to help pastors build a support network. He added that leaders need to have their own network first. The network should include the

skillful coach, bold challenger, wise guide, traveling companion, ministry partner, trusted confidant, young leader and next-phase practitioner.

"Is God still as big as when He called you into ministry?" Bumgarner

asked. "He is."

Representatives from the Birmingham Metro Baptist Association, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, Samford University's Ministry Training Institute and The Alabama Baptist also spoke at the meeting.

In its business meeting, leaders elected officers: president, Stan Albright, director of missions of Coosa River Baptist Association; vice president, Jeff Knight, lead mission strategist of Tuscaloosa County Baptist Association; and secretary/treasurer, Tyler Eiland, director of missions of Chilton Baptist Association.



Photo by Dianna Cagle/The Alabama Baptist
Bob Bumgarner speaks to Alabama Baptist associational leaders.



As followers of Christ, we are united in the hope of the Gospel, and we are called to take the message of salvation to our neighbors across the street and around the world. As members of the body of Christ, we are commended to share our resources in reaching a lost and dying world. As Alabama Baptists, we are united in fueling missions and ministry through the Cooperative Program.

WE ACCOMPLISH MORE TOGETHER THAN WE EVER COULD ALONE!

For FREE RESOURCES and other information about the Cooperative Program, visit AlabamaCP.org or contact State Missionary Jay Stewart, jstewart@alsbom.org, (334) 613-2283.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Event and location are followed by SBOM contact person and extension. For more information on these events, call 1-800-264-1225 or (334) 613 plus the listed extension, or visit alsbom.org/events. To register for virtual events, visit PinnacleAlabama.org.

DECEMBER 2022

- 4-11 **Week of Prayer for International Missions & Lottie Moon Christmas Offering**, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325
- 8 **Early Bird Tax Event**, SBOM, Prattville, Lee Wright, ext. 2263

JANUARY 2023

- 1-7 **January Bible Study**, Daniel Edmonds, ext. 2285
- 5 **Church Tax Conference**, SBOM, Lee Wright, ext. 2263
- 11 **Church Tax Conference**, First, Silverhill, Lee Wright, ext. 2263
- 12 **Church Tax Conference**, First, Decatur, Lee Wright, ext. 2263
- 13-14 **Student Missions Weekend**, WorldSong, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325
- 15 **Sanctity of Human Life Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 2289
- 17 **Intentional Leader Series: Person**, SBOM, Prattville, Kim Britton, ext. 2218
- 19-21 **Youth Ministry Conclave**, Chattanooga Convention Center, Jessica Ingram, ext. 2262
- 25 **Church Tax Conference**, Southeast Alabama Association Office, Dothan, Lee Wright, ext. 2263
- 26-27 **DNA Annual Gathering-Making Disciples Through Great Groups**, First, Montgomery, Steve Layton, ext. 2221
- 28 **Bible Skills and Drill Event**, Shades Crest, Birmingham, Belinda Stroud, ext. 2255
- 29-30 **State Evangelism Conference**, Lakeside, Birmingham, Lori McGough, ext. 245

FEBRUARY

- 1-4 **Deaf Pastors Gathering**, Shocco Springs, Kristy Kennedy, ext. 2311
- 4 **Bible Skills and Drill Event**, First, Montgomery, Belinda Stroud, ext. 2255
- 7 **Ministers Tax Conference**, SBOM, Prattville, Lee Wright, ext. 2262
- 11 **VBS Live 2023**, First, Level Plains, Patty Burns, ext. 2312
- 12 **Racial Reconciliation Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 2289
- 14 **Ministers Tax Conference**, First, Decatur, Lee Wright, ext. 2263
- 14 **Ministers' Wives Connection**, ONLINE, Cindy Wilson, ext. 2225
- 15 **Ministers Tax Conference**, First, Silverhill, Lee Wright, ext. 2263
- 17-18 **Experiencing God Weekend**, SBOM, Prattville, Rob Jackson, ext. 2343
- 18 **VBS Live 2023**, Northbrook, Cullman, Ramona Noah, ext. 2312
- 19 **Hunger Sunday**, Kristy Kennedy, ext. 2311
- 19 **Focus On WMU Day**, Kathryn Helms, ext. 2325
- 21 **VBS Live 2023**, First, Fort Payne, Ramona Noah, ext. 2312
- 21 **Great Commission Conversations**, ONLINE, Cindy Wilson, ext. 2225
- 22 **Ministers Tax Conference**, Southeast Alabama Association Office, Dothan, Lee Wright, ext. 2263
- 23 **MinistrySafe Awareness Training**, Calvary, Dothan, Lee Wright, ext. 2241
- 23 **VBS Live 2023**, First, Robertsedale, Ramona Noah, ext. 2312
- 23-26 **Deaf Women's Gathering**, Children's Harbor, Alexander City, Kristy Kennedy, ext. 2311
- 24-25 **Bivocational Minister/Spouse Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Ken Allen, ext. 2208
- 24-25 **Pursue**, First, Montgomery, Ben Edfeldt, ext. 2276
- 25 **VBS Live 2023**, Glynwood, Prattville, Ramona Noah, ext. 2312
- 28 **VBS Live 2023**, Westmeade, Decatur, Ramona Noah, ext. 2312

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

Pastor, evangelist involved in inner-city missions work

Frederick Brotherton (F.B.) Meyer (1847–1929) was a much-loved English Baptist pastor and evangelist who was also involved in inner-city missions work.

This year is the 175th anniversary of his birth.

Born into a Christian home on April 8, 1847, in London, he attended Brighton College, a public boarding preparatory school. In 1869, he graduated from the University of London and then studied theology at Regent's Park College, Oxford.

Meyer began a preaching ministry in 1870. His first pastorate was in Liverpool's Pembroke Baptist Cha-

pel. Two years later he was pastor at Priory Street Baptist Church in York, where he met American evangelist Dwight L. Moody. Meyer introduced Moody to several churches in England. The two preachers became life-long friends.

Meyer led Victoria Road Church from 1874 to 1878 and Melbourne Hall from 1878 to 1888, both in Leicester. The next four years he served at Regent's Park Chapel in London.

In 1895, he became the pastor of Christ Church in Lambeth. Only 100 people attended the church, but in

two years over 2,000 were regular worshippers. Some of the new attendees migrated from Charles Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle after Spurgeon's death in 1892.



MEYER

Meyer stayed at Christ Church for 15 years. He then started preaching at conferences and evangelistic services. His tours included South Africa and Asia. He also visited the United States 12 times. The latter years of his life were spent returning as pastor to Regent's Park Chapel and to Christ Church.

Involved in inner-city missions work in England and North Ameri-

ca, he was a crusader against drunkenness and prostitution.

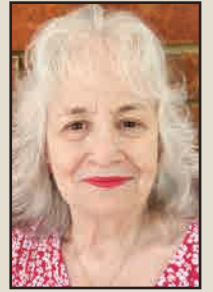
He spoke to 26 Keswick conventions, which were made up of conservative evangelical Christians.

He wrote over 40 books. They include biographies on biblical men such as Moses, David, Jeremiah, Elijah, Peter and Paul. "The Way into the Holiest," "The Secret of Guidance," "Our Glorious Lord" and "Christian Living" are some of his other writings.

Meyer died on March 28, 1929. He had great influence over giants of the faith such as Charles Spurgeon, who said, "Meyer preaches as a man who has seen God face to face."

By Joanne Sloan

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



*FREE lunch with
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This event is made possible by gifts of Alabama through the Cooperative Program.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For December 4

Explore the Bible

By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D.

Dean of the Center for Christian Calling, University of Mobile



IN THE BEGINNING

John 1:1–14

Near the end of John's gospel account, the evangelist explains his intended outcome: "These things are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

This statement is essential for understanding the purpose for the account.

John intentionally utilizes Genesis 1:1 as the foundation to assert the agency of the Word in creation. What better way to establish Jesus is the eternal Son of God than to quote the opening Greek words of the Pentateuch, "en arche"? The evangelist points to creation to introduce the preincarnate Word, "Logos."

Was the Word (1–5)

Jesus was the Logos introduced in Genesis 1:1. He was present in the beginning. He was present with God. He was present as God. He was the Agent of creation, and no created thing was created apart from Him. He is the Author of life in the world and the Architect of light.

The evangelist's choice of motifs encapsulates how he presents Jesus, the Logos, Light and Life. John offers themes which will echo throughout the gospel account. The "I am" revelations, for example, echo these themes of light and life: I am "the Bread of Life" (6:35), "the Light of the World" (8:12), "the Resurrection and the Life" (11:35), "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (14:6).

Made Known (6–8)

"There was a man sent from God whose name was John." As a college student, I heard a chapel speaker quip that Christians from different denominations interpret this verse differently: John Huss, John Wycliffe, John Knox, John Wesley, John Calvin or John Bunyan.

Any good Bible expositor, however, will tell you the evangelist

was writing about John the Baptist.

John, the prophetic forerunner of Jesus, was asked whether he was the Anointed One, but he testified that One greater than himself was coming (Luke 3:15–17).

Unlike Luke's account which includes dialogue between the prophet and enquirers, John simply states the baptizer was not the Light who gives life, but he came to bear witness to the Light.

In the Flesh (9–14)

The Creator entered creation, and His creatures did not recognize Him.

The Covenant Maker who revealed grace and truth since His revelation to Moses (Ex. 34:6–7) came to the remnant of Israel, yet most did not receive Him. Anyone who did receive Him did so because they were born of God, not by heritage or personal will. Only the ones who receive the Word by faith bear the right to be called children of God.

John emphasizes the incarnation of the Word with language reminiscent of the Torah: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt ..." The CSB footnote for verse 14 indicates the literal translation for dwelt is "tabernacled." The tabernacle served as a temporary mobile center to Israel's camp during the wilderness wanderings and the established central location for Israel to meet with God in the promised land.

In the initial passage, the evangelist points to the Word as the central character in this narrative. Both His deity and the humanity of the Word are fundamental for John's account.

As an apologia against Gnosticism (or Docetism) later in the passage, the evangelist underscores the incarnation — that God physically became flesh, rather than merely appearing to do so.

The Word was God. The Word became flesh. And the evangelist was eyewitness to the incarnation.

Bible Studies for Life

By Tyshawn Gardner, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Biblical and Religious Studies, Samford University



THE FEAR OF GOD Psalm 33:6–15, 18–22

In 1952, German-born philosopher and theologian Paul Tillich published his magnum opus, "The Courage to Be." It instantly became a bestseller and a required text in universities and seminaries around the world, not only because of its masterful prose but because it spoke to the time.

The year 1952 was a time of uncertainty — the beginning of the Cold War, the proliferation of existential doubt, the spread of anxiety in every corridor of human life. The book confronts anxiety in three ways: anxiety of fate and death (ontological); emptiness and loss; and guilt and condemnation.

Those same fears exist today, not just in the public square but also in the church. People in every walk of life experience fears, from teachers and administrators to parents and children, and from the pulpit to the pew. Considering these fears, both in 1952 and 2022, we need the kind of courage only the fear of God gives us.

We fear God when we stand in awe of Him as Creator. (6–9)

The fear of God is proper respect and awe-inspiring reverence for His holiness, sovereignty and eternity. In Psalm 33:8, the psalmist declares, "Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere Him."

All of creation must reverence God, who is powerful over all creation, including the waters and heavens. Man is not worthy of the reverence we owe God. However, there are times when we give this kind of fear to men and women.

We fear God when we willingly surrender to His plans as Lord. (10–15)

The fear of man opens the door to unhealthy fears, manipulative relationships and unmanageable obligations. What starts out as admiration and slight intimidation of a person will soon turn into habits, schedules and activities that drain the soul and empty us of life.

As the people of God, we should only fear God. The fear of God leads to life, but the fear of man leads to

a joyless life. We should never allow the fear of living to rob us from the joys of having a life.

Even the mightiest of nations must bow down in reverence to God. Any nation who fears the Lord will be blessed. The wisdom of God is greater than any human philosophy.

Nations that honor God by embracing the counsel of the Lord will enjoy prosperity and posterity because the truth and wisdom in the Lord's counsel does not fade away.

We fear God when we depend on Him as our Shield and Provider. (18–22)

The sovereign Lord is all seeing. He is aware of our physical locations as well as the disposition of our heart. Psalm 18 declares, "the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him." Believers who reverence God can also look to God in hope for help.

As God's eye is on those who fear Him, our eyes should also be on God. Keeping our eyes on the Lord means keeping our heads up and keeping our thoughts elevated as we await the One who has the power to deliver our souls from death and keep us alive in famine.

A healthy fear of the Lord gives birth to hope in times of trouble, and hope in God in times of trouble ensures help in times of trouble.

Help means relief, restoration, aid and assistance. Help implies there are some internal or external factors negating the progress of an individual or group, which requires some inside or outside aid and assistance to remedy the situation. Everyone needs help, but the fear of the Lord ensures hope and help.

For the single mother wishing and wanting the best of opportunities for her children, there is hope and help. For the person diagnosed with an incurable disease, there is hope and help. For the employee laid off due to the pandemic who later discovers they are ineligible for unemployment, there is hope and help.

When we fear the Lord, we have no need to fear any person or situation.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Martha Brown and Marissa Postell

The Alabama Baptist

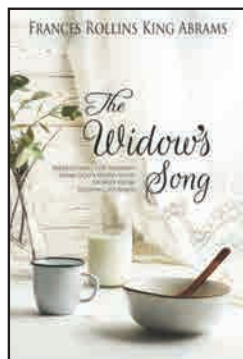
Latest books help widows, share life lessons and theology

The Widow's Song: Meditations for Widows from God's Word with Stories from Widows' Journeys

Francis Rollins King Abrams
DJK Publishing, 2022

The Widow's Song" by Francis Rollins King Abrams is an encouraging book for her target audience, those who have lost a spouse, but it is also an insightful book for others facing struggles.

The book's 40 devotionals contain personal reflections based on Abrams' own experiences after the loss of her husband, longtime pastor and director of missions Jerome King, in 2009. It also includes stories of widows from the Bible; verses, hymns and poetry based on Scripture; and stories from contemporary widows. Topics include "When Sleep Eludes," "Finding Joy," "God is in Control," "Contentment" and a fitting final reading entitled "Good-Bye Mountain."



The reader soon realizes the emotions, the heartache and the pain associated with losing a spouse are not unique but are shared by all widows.

Abrams' words are filled with encouragement and hope for the grieving. The book fulfills the promise of its subtitle: "Meditations for Widows from God's Word with Stories from Widows' Journeys."

The final paragraph of the book's forward reads, "My prayer is that you and I will come to view our station in life as an opportunity to encounter Jesus, spread the good news of His love and encourage others as He touches our widowed lives." Amen.

Widowhood is a dark moment in life, but the love of God permeates that sorrow, as Abrams beautifully illustrates in her writing. Knowing and trusting that God's promises never fail is the rock on which a widow's journey should rest.

I would heartily recommend this book for recent widows and also for those who have been widowed for years. (Martha Brown)

Pages From a Forgotten Notebook: My Journey in Faith

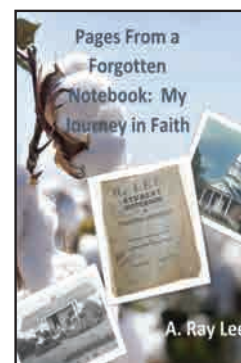
A. Ray Lee
Soncoast Publishing, 2022

Author A. Ray Lee has written a poignant memoir, "Pages From a Forgotten Notebook: My Journey in Faith," chronicling his life from a small farm in rural Alabama to seminary to the pulpits of several churches over a period of 60 years.

As I read through the pages of Lee's book, Luke 22:31 came to mind. To paraphrase, it was as if the Lord was saying, "Ray, Ray! Satan is looking to shake your faith, setting you up for a fall."

But in the face of trials, Lee also

received encouragement. As readers progress through each chapter, which could be likened to journal entries, they will see how Lee grew from each experience and how he contin-



ued to spread the gospel in spite of, and perhaps even as a result of, his trials.

Many tests of faith are shared in his book. For Lee, just as for us, "Jesus Christ began a

good work in us, and He is faithful to complete it" (Phil. 1:6).

In his final chapter, "Nearing the End of My Journey," Lee writes, "Aspects of my journey were painful, faith called into question, painful rejection, courage challenged, self-worth questioned, clouds of doubt obscuring the future." He goes on to say, "An understanding began to emerge of what I had learned."

Lee describes himself as not only a survivor but an overcomer with an experiential and sustaining faith. The Lord renewed his strength over and over.

"Pages From a Forgotten Notebook: My Journey in Faith" is an uplifting and inspiring read.

Lee is the author of two other books, "There is a Time" and "My Angel Slept with Me." (Martha Brown)

Fruitful Theology: How the Life of the Mind Leads to the Life of the Soul

Ronni Kurtz
B&H Books, 2022

What do you picture when you think of a holy person?

Do you think of unsmiling faces

or high-achieving intellectuals? Do you associate closeness with God and greater knowledge of the things of God with dour people in pews or lofty sounding conversations?

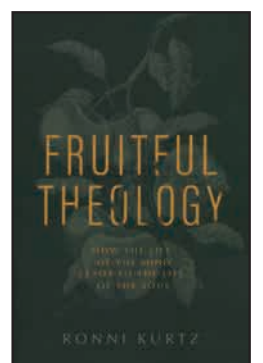
In his new book, "Fruitful Theology: How the Life of the Mind Leads to the Life of the Soul," pastor and professor Ronni Kurtz explores how theology can help reorient the Christian's life toward the fruit of the Spirit and how a right contemplation of God can lead to right living for God.

Both laypeople who may be intimidated by theology and academics who may be exhausted by theology have seen it weaponized or politicized in an us versus them culture war. But theology was never intended to be a tool to belittle others and elevate self. Instead, the heart of theology is right worship of God and right love for our neighbors.

Focusing on the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5, Kurtz evaluates how Christians who fix their minds on the things of God (and all things in relation to Him) aren't performing a mere intellectual stunt. Rather, they're engaging in the process of producing fruit and becoming more Christlike.

As Kurtz explores each of the fruits of the Spirit, he breaks down barriers and helps the reader understand how accessible theology can be, and how it impacts his or her Christian walk.

He is also the author of "No Shadow of Turning: Divine Immutability and the Economy of Redemption." (Marissa Postell, Lifeway).



EDITOR'S NOTE

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

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The Alabama Baptist

Starting a new life

By Carolyn Tomlin
Texas Baptist Standard

Texas church offers hope to refugees who relocate to Austin

When Paul Sebinezza helped plant a church in Austin to reach new arrivals from refugee camps in Kenya, he had an advantage — personal experience.

“I understand the fears and frustration of coming to America and starting a new life. Once, I was in their place,” said Sebinezza, who immigrated to the United States from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Sebinezza serves alongside Pastor Dieudonne Ratabagaya at Hope of Life Baptist Church in Austin. As coordinator of church programs, his responsibilities include ministries geared toward children, youth, men and families, as well as camps.

When Sebinezza and Ratabagaya started Hope of Life Church in 2015, they began with six people. Today, average attendance is 140.

The church’s name, Hope of Life, explains its purpose and ministry, Sebinezza said.

Hardships

“These refugees have lost everything,” he said.

“Many have been in refugee and resettlement camps for five to 10 years. The church is helping them fit into the American culture. It is difficult.”

Sebinezza understands the hardships of being a refugee.

He spoke French when he arrived in the United States and knows the difficulty of learning to speak and write English.

He empathizes with the newly resettled refugees, and they respond to him because he relates to what they are going through.

Hope of Life Baptist Church



Photo courtesy of Texas Baptist Standard

Hope of Life Church ministers to refugees who relocate to Austin, Texas. The church gives those who attend the opportunity to dance and sing familiar music and hear sermons in their native language. Refugees also receive help finding jobs.

gives those who attend the opportunity to dance and sing familiar music and hear sermons in their native language. Ratabagaya often allows ordained men in the church to preach, which gives them experience in speaking and sermon preparation.

In addition to helping new arrivals learn English and become more familiar with American food, customs, culture and recreation, the church also assists with transportation.

“Imagine being in a large city like Austin, and not understanding the language,” Sebinezza said. “‘What bus should I take to go to work? Which bus takes me home?’ This is only one example of the problems faced.”

The church also helps resettled refugees find jobs. The city needs workers, and the people can learn skills needed for labor, Sebinezza noted. But completing applications and developing a resumé can be daunting for a new arrival.

Hope of Life also offers counseling to those who request it. With so many changes, adjusting to a new way of life can be depressing, Sebinezza acknowledged.

“Expectations from back home are not easy to change,” he observed.

COVID-19 effect

The COVID-19 pandemic increased the number of people needing help.

For those who have difficulty feeding their families, the church provides groceries.

Hope of Life receives support from the Texas Baptist Hunger Offering.

And the number of people in need continues to grow.

“Since restrictions are less strict [under the current] administration, we have seen more refugees arriving in Austin,” Sebinezza said.

‘God has blessed’

When Sebinezza helped plant Hope of Life Church in Austin, his life changed.

“I feel good about what I’m doing and how God has blessed me. ... God is good. America is good,” he said.

In addition to ministering to refugees who relocate to Austin, Hope of Life also ministers to people in their homeland.

In September, Ratabagaya and Sebinezza will journey to Kenya to help plant a church, and Ratabagaya’s sermons at Hope of Life are posted on YouTube.

“Technology allows people all over the world to listen and become involved in this ministry,” Ratabagaya said.

“This is one of the blessings from God — that everyone, regardless of where they live, if they have a computer or cell phone and internet, can hear the gospel.”

As Sebinezza offers encouragement to refugees, he often points to a favorite Bible verse, John 14:27: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

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COM.

SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN WRITERS CONFERENCE BOOK OF THE YEAR

goodnight, sweetheart.

*"Love bears all things ... hopes all things ... endures all things ...
Love never ends." 1 Corinthians 13:7-8*

BY ALAN JOHNSTON

When life is suddenly and dramatically interrupted, what do you do? React in fear, despair, become overwhelmed with anxiety, just give up?

"Goodnight, Sweetheart" tells the story of how Alan Johnston dealt with the 16-year illness and eventual death from Alzheimer's of his beloved wife, Judy.

Johnston says, "... none of the negative thoughts and emotions improved our situation, nor did they solve any problems. Perhaps the best advice is that which comes from the Apostle Paul "... stand firm in your faith."

Chapters include, "When a Man Loves a Woman," "The Twilight Zone," "Bad Things Happen to Good People," "Man of Sorrow," "Paradise Found," "Those That Mourn," "Joy Comes in the Morning" ... and more.



Alan Johnston is a retired pastor living in Chattanooga, Tenn. During his 54 years of ministry, he pastored churches in Alabama and Tennessee, and during 34 of those years he was also a certified financial planner. He is founder of Path2Truth Ministry and spends much of his time teaching and writing.

AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE AT PATH2TRUTH.COM,
SONCOASTPUBLISHING.COM AND AMAZON.COM



Growing faith

By Leslie Peacock Caldwell
International Mission Board

Refugee's journey reveals plight of many persecuted Christians

Nights are the hardest. Really, anytime he's alone in the apartment is hard. He'd much rather be with people or be busy at work. Time alone reminds him of his family — his wife, daughter and two sons. He hasn't seen them in person in nine years. He blinks back tears when he talks about them.

When Aftab fled his home country, he thought he'd only be gone for a few weeks, possibly months. He can hardly imagine that it's been this long. He can't believe the journey he's taken. Still, he remains amazed at God's protection and faithfulness.

Daily life remains difficult as a refugee, but he no longer faces danger. He shares a government-subsidized apartment with two other refugees. He has work in a fish factory. He has friends. His faith is growing, and he seizes every opportunity to share the gospel. Still, it's lonely as he continues to wade through the legal processes that will bring his family to him.

Unlikely friendship

One of his closest friends is International Mission Board missionary Ian Gibson. The friendship between the two is evidenced by the comfort Aftab feels with Ian and his family. He often joins them for meals and enjoys cooking for them.

For Aftab's birthday, the Gibsons took him rock climbing. It's a friendship between followers of Christ who share a common purpose to spread the good news.

But Aftab's background is much different from Ian's upbringing in Georgia.

Though his life was not always easy, Aftab was born into a Chris-



IMB photo

Aftab shares stories of many others in his home country who are persecuted for being Christians. He faced the mistreatment of Christians common in his region, but he grew up used to it.

tian family, received a good education, married a Christian woman, had three children and a good job. He had Muslim and Christian friends. He faced the mistreatment of Christians common in his region, but he grew up used to it.

But in adulthood, he noticed very overt persecution, costing the homes and lives of Christians. He protested, peacefully and legally. He knew he was within his rights to do so.

But the local government didn't intervene when Aftab was accused of blasphemy, a crime that often results in execution, especially for Christians. Warned by a friend to leave immediately, Aftab fled on foot for his country's border. He thought the accusations against him

would settle. He thought Muslim friends and people he knew in the local government would come to his aid. No one would help him.

Facing death threats, Aftab began a grueling journey away from his home country, away from his family. He walked for weeks on rough roads and across steep mountains. Others were also fleeing the country, and sometimes they would hike together. Aftab said at

one point he was too weak to even carry a small plastic bag with personal items. They were all hungry and hopeless.

"God, save me. Help me," Aftab remembers continually praying.

His family drained their bank accounts to hire human smugglers to carry Aftab across borders. The

journey required long hours, even days, crouched in a shipping container with no food or water.

Aftab finally settled in a European refugee camp. There he met a Christian who works with refugees. He was introduced to a new faith community and encouraged to seek God with renewed hope. "The Christians there were very serious about their faith. They helped me to see I could still live for God," Aftab says.

Family of faith

His own faith was strengthened, and he started to tell others what it meant to follow Jesus. In his time there, he baptized 30 new believers.

In spite of having a strong family of faith, life in the refugee camp wasn't free from danger. The more Aftab spoke openly of the plight of Christians in his home country, the more Muslims in the camp became enraged. One night he was led outside of the camp and brutally beaten. Friends warned him he had to leave.

A final leg of his journey brought him to a community in Europe where Ian serves. Ian heard from a friend that Aftab needed help. A friendship grew, and today they serve as ministry partners.

IMB asks Southern Baptists to pray Nov. 6 for persecuted Christians around the world:

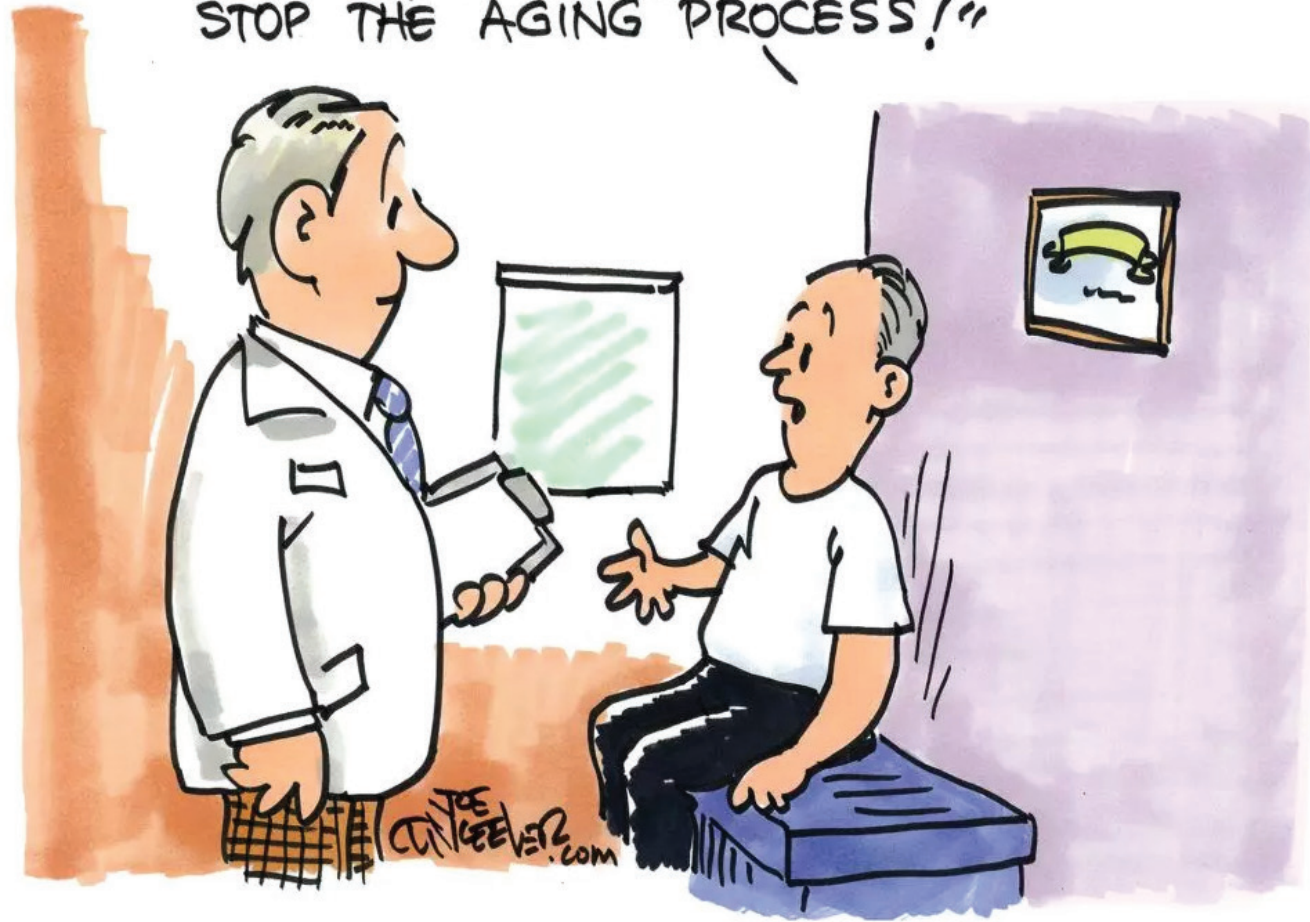
► Pray the gospel would continue to spread even in the face of persecution. Ask God to reunite families.

► Praise God for the faithfulness of believers around the world who are choosing to follow Christ, even unto death. Ask God to hear the cries of His children and be their Deliverer.

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

**SBC DAY OF PRAYER
FOR THE PERSECUTED
CHURCH IS NOV. 6.
RESOURCES ARE
AVAILABLE AT IMB.ORG/PERSECUTED.**

"TELL ME WHAT TO DO, DOC. IN A FEW DAYS I TURN SIXTY YEARS OF AGE! SIXTY! THIS IS GETTING SERIOUS! TELL ME WHAT TO DO TO STOP THE AGING PROCESS!"

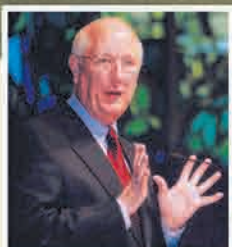


STRUGGLING TOWARD HOPE:

LIFE AFTER THE DEATH OF A SPOUSE

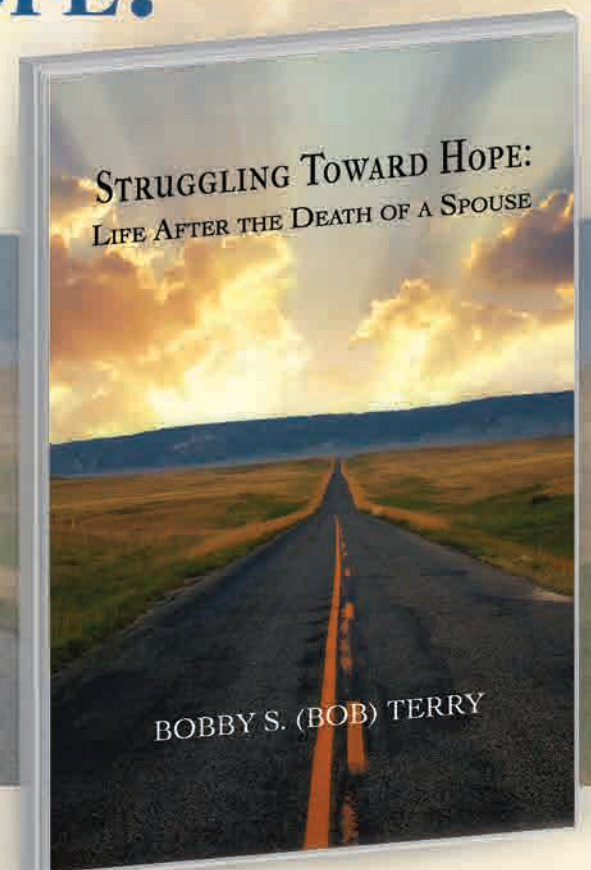
A powerful, beautiful and very helpful account of working through the loss of a spouse. Dr. Terry describes the deep sense of loss he felt and then the process of building hope. This is not a "how to" book on grief, but one that allows the reader to follow the journey and then engage on several levels. As I read the book, I wish that it had been available when as a pastor I struggled to minister to church members who were going through this process. I firmly believe that this book needs to be in every pastor's library to read with extra copies for folks to read as they go through their own grief journey. Dr. Terry's background as a journalist allows him to unpack his own story with unique insights along the way. It is a must read for pastors and counselors.

DR. GARY FENTON
RETIRED SENIOR PASTOR OF DAWSON MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH
BIRMINGHAM, ALA.



BOBBY S. (BOB) TERRY

As a Christian minister Bob thought he understood grief. He had done special studies about death and dying and walked with numerous families through the loss of loved ones. But when his wife died from injuries suffered in an automobile accident while the couple was on a mission trip, Bob learned the difference between studying grief academically and knowing grief personally. In this book, Bob relates his own struggles about putting life back together after the death of a spouse. He examines issues related to the changes that death brings and questions about religious faith, about the grief journey and about finding a new hope-filled sense of life.



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Trip of a LIFETIME

By Marilyn Stewart

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Motorcycle sabbatical goes ‘off-road’ visiting small churches in 45 states

When Jeff Farmer rode his Indian Chieftain motorcycle off the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary campus in May, it marked day one of a five-month sabbatical year journey that covered thousands of miles and 45 states.

His goal was to step into growing small-membership churches around the nation and see what fuels their growth.

In other words, Farmer was riding into a really big laboratory.

“The purpose of the Caskey Center is to encourage and equip,” said Farmer, associate director of the NOBTS Caskey Center for Church Excellence. “That’s very much a part of who we are, and part of why I’m going.”

Ministry context, ministry focus and evangelism strategy were the focal points of Farmer’s interviews with pastors across the country.

From that, Farmer hoped to formulate principles and tools other churches can use.

“We have so many churches that are small in size,” Farmer explained.

“A lot of them feel alone, as if there’s no way to grow a church in their context. But I’m finding churches in every context that God is able to grow.”

100 churches

While Farmer visited about 100 small membership churches, he looked forward to another ministry aspect of his trip.



NOBTS photo

Jeff Farmer, associate director of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Caskey Center for Church Excellence, makes a stop during his five-month sabbatical year journey that covered thousands of miles and 45 states.

Farmer expected gospel conversations to come up daily. His bike, with its classic look and illuminated headlight on the front bumper, provided the starting point.

“Whenever I ride my Indian Chieftain, people come over and talk to me,” Farmer said. “God has used the motorcycle as a great icebreaker for me to get into gospel conversations.”

Farmer’s route took him to churches that recorded 100 or less in worship attendance in 2016 and experienced at least a 10% growth from then until the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

He also narrowed his selection to include churches with a few specific baptism statistics such as

a minimum of 25% growth coming from baptisms.

Farmer’s journey took him from the West Coast, across the mountainous West and into the Midwest, through the Great Lakes region and then into the Northeast as far as Maine before turning south on the final leg of his trip back home to New Orleans.

Other five states

The five states not on his itinerary include Hawaii, Alaska and three states that did not have churches whose recorded data fit Farmer’s criteria. Farmer’s route was mapped out from New Orleans to Anaheim, California, where he stopped for the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting.

Prior to this journey, Farmer’s longest motorcycle ride covered more than 1,000 miles in 16 hours in an event benefiting wounded members of the military.

Paige Farmer, his college-aged daughter who worked for the Caskey Center this summer, handled the logistics of booking churches and interviews, helping navigate some routes and other details.

‘Learned so much’

“I enjoy helping him. It gives me an extra excuse to call and talk to him while he’s away which I could never pass up,” Paige Farmer said. “I have learned so much about the locations he is visiting while researching for him, and I love getting to see photos of everywhere he is stopping.”

Along the way, Farmer camped out, spent some nights with friends or at churches and posted about his experiences through a blog and a podcast hosted at caskeycenter.com. He can be contacted at jfarmer@nobts.edu or by emailing farmer.research22@gmail.com.

Farmer considers the trip a once-in-a-lifetime experience and is grateful to the seminary and to Southern Baptists whose support of the seminary made his sabbatical possible, he noted.

With a trip so far and so varied, surprises were sure to come up. Nevertheless, Farmer said the trip would go “one day at a time,” leaving it up to God.