

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.



Photos courtesy of Daria Monroe



Daria Monroe (left), executive director of Women's Hope Medical Clinic in Auburn, adopted her son, Nathan, after learning that his mother was planning to abort him (see baby pictures above). He's now a U.S. Army Green Beret, and Monroe said she knows God has a plan for his life.

A mother's 'yes'

Son's adoption fuels passion of Auburn women's clinic director to help women in crisis

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Daria Monroe remembers that when she had her fifth child, she told God she felt like she had a full quiver. But when her youngest daughter was 4, Monroe got a call that changed that feeling in an instant.

"Someone I know called me and said, 'There is a young, single

mother of a 1-year-old who is five-and-a-half-months pregnant, and she knows she can't take care of another one, so she's headed down to have an abortion,'" Monroe said. "Without even thinking, I said, 'Can I have the honor of raising her baby?'"

Monroe's question — and the mother's "yes" — began a journey for Monroe's family that's allowed them to see miracles she never

would have expected. Her newly adopted son, Nathan, had a lot of health struggles. He had fetal cocaine exposure, and he was in and out of the hospital.

Giving his life to Jesus

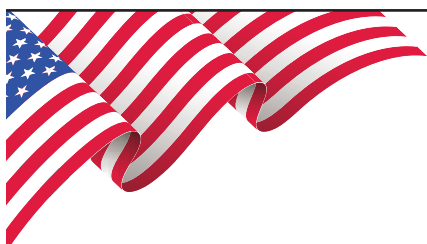
"When Nathan was 4, I took the children to a film festival," she said. "At that point, he was having grand mal seizures regularly. I was told at some point that one day he would

either be permanently brain dead or die in my arms."

But that night at the film festival, when the emcee gave an altar call, Nathan ran down to the front and gave his life to Jesus.

"He's never had a seizure since then," Monroe said.

Now Nathan is a U.S. Army Green Beret, and Monroe said she knows God has a purpose for his
(See 'So many,' page 8)



Memorial Day

REMEMBER AND HONOR

Milestones *and* missions



TAB Media Group photo
TAB Media Group staff members serve at Birmingham's Christian Service Mission on May 9. They sorted through boxes of donations that will be used by churches to help in their communities.



Photo courtesy of Carrie McWhorter
Above: Avery McWhorter, son of content editor Carrie McWhorter, celebrates his graduation from the University of North Alabama on May 13. **Right:** TAB Media Group staff members serve throughout the year in a variety of ways, but the May 9 project at Christian Service Mission allowed the Homewood office staff an opportunity to serve together.



Photo courtesy of Susan Stevens
Jonathan Stevens, son of Susan Stevens, director of advertising for TAB Media Group, celebrates his graduation from Briarwood Christian High School on May 14.



Photo courtesy of Annette Brown

Liam Lewis, grandson of Annette Brown, guest services coordinator for TAB Media Group, celebrates his graduation from four-year-old kindergarten at First Baptist Church Trussville. Liam's favorite things about 4K were his teacher, Miss Hadley, and playing with his friends.



TAB Media Group photo

The Alabama Baptist

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

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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.

OPINION

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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



jrash@thealabamabaptist.org



@RashionalThts

Could a positive national pastime be the answer we need?

My friend Wendy loves Major League Baseball, and I'm talking the full extent of support. She can watch hours and hours of games on TV and never get enough.

She knows the players and their stats and would be first in line for season passes if she lived close enough. She also will gladly hop on a flight anytime for the official MLB ballpark experience.

Wendy's interest in baseball is like my friend Chris' love for the game.

He, too, keeps close tabs on the teams, players and latest drama — and settles into his happy place when breathing in the sights, sounds and smells of “The Show” in a packed stadium.

The topic of baseball also surfaces frequently among our team members at TAB Media Group, which produces The Alabama Baptist.

We have a variety of children and grandchildren showcasing their skills from Little League all the way through high school

— and starting soon we'll have a Division 1 college pitcher among our ranks.

I've grown up around baseball players and have cheered for many a family member or friend. I even helped tutor a few of one school's starting lineup during my early college years.

Along with our personal experiences, many in the sports world affirm baseball's nearly two century legacy as America's National Pastime.

Athletes, coaches, professional commentators and sports reporters debate whether football, basketball or soccer currently is the more popular

sport, but most all agree “baseball is still the godfather of American sports.” Mark Van Sickle used that term in a 2021 Sports Illustrated article, “No Matter What, Baseball is Still America's Pastime.”

The National Baseball Hall of Fame describes the sport as “an American family tradition.”

“Baseball has had a very active role in the shaping of this nation,” according to baseballhall.org. “From the Civil War to Civil Rights and all points in

between and beyond, the game of baseball supports and reflects many aspects of American life, from culture to economics and technological advances. It inspires movements, instills pride and even heals cities.”

While the first professional games surfaced after the Civil War, the sport was well established in its amateur form decades prior.

“Civil War soldiers on both sides played it as a diversion,” reports baseballhall.org.

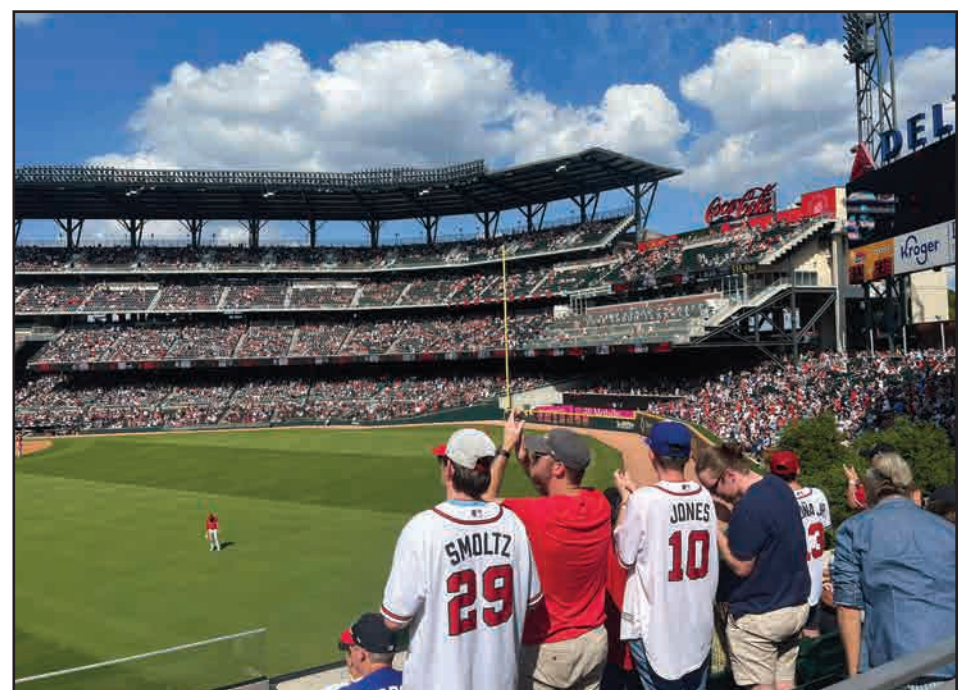
“Many veterans took the game home after the war and it became a great unifier in the years that followed the bloodiest conflict in U.S. history.”

As we pause this Memorial Day weekend to remember and pay tribute to those who have died through the years while in service to our country, let's consider a renewed commitment to truly honor them.

Is it possible we've forgotten how to be grateful? Have we shifted more toward complaining and fixating as pastimes rather than intentionally looking for ways to help?

Finding our way back to a positive national pastime like baseball could be the answer to developing common ground as we work toward unifying what has reemerged as a divided country.

“[Baseball] became a great unifier in the years that followed the [Civil War].”
Baseballhall.org



Facebook photo

Your Voice



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

Wisdom for the graduate's next chapter in life's journey

By David L. Chancey

McDonough Road Baptist Church in Fayetteville, Georgia

Congratulations, graduates, on reaching the magnificent milestone of receiving your hard-earned diploma. You are now launching a new chapter.

You have before you a blank canvas on which to chart a course as you move along life's journey. That's why it's important to choose the right course and make wise decisions.

You will receive many words of counsel. Humorist Erma Bombeck said, "When your mother asks 'Do you want a piece of advice?' it's a mere formality. It doesn't matter if you answer yes or no. You're going to get it anyway."

Proverbs 3 records a conversation between a wise father and his son. This devoted dad pours into his son's life the wisdom of God.

"My son ... trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord and depart from evil" (Prov. 3:1a, 5-7).

This input calls you to rely totally on God. Don't move forward

without God. Trust God and you'll enjoy peace and fulfillment.

You have probably received enough counsel to write a book. If you do, also include these nuggets:

► **Remember who you are and whose you are.**

While still living at home, if I went off with friends, my Mom's parting words usually were, "Remember whose little boy you are." I wasn't a little boy at that point, but she reminded me to remember my raising. I knew the difference between right and wrong, so do right. Also, I claimed to be a Christian. I belonged to God. I needed to act like one of His children.

► **Set your sights high and don't let disappointment deter you.**

Be resilient when the road is bumpy. Learn from failures and persevere. Perseverance is staring down the temptation to quit and moving forward despite difficulties.

► **Choose your friends wisely.**

"The one who walks with the wise will become wise, but a com-

panion of fools will suffer harm" (Prov. 13:20).

Growing up I often heard, "Birds of a feather flock together. If something happened when you were there, then you will be accused whether you are guilty or not."

Avoid "guilty by association" by being careful whom you choose to be your friends and what situations you place yourself in.

There's much truth to the adage, "Show me your friends, and I'll show you your future."

► **Every day decisions are important, whether big or small.**

The choices you make may affect the rest of your life: whether to participate or not, whether to give in to peer pressure or stand firm, whether to hang around or flee from evil.

Pastor J.D. Greear wrote, "One of my mentors in college told me, 'For most decisions in your life, it's not the big dreams you dream but the small decisions you make.'"

► **Be kind. Always.**

Everyone is struggling with something.

I was traveling south on Atlanta's downtown connector and noticed the iconic Corey Tower standing above the I-20 and I-75/85 interchange projecting the phrase "Be Nice" on its 2,000-square-foot digital screen.

What a timely word for hurried

drivers who sometimes show impatience and even road rage. Yet it's a good word for life.

Kindness does not show weakness; it shows a caring heart that considers others.

► **Live with thanksgiving.**

A sweet senior lady I once worked with often told me "It's always appropriate to say thanks!" She said it never goes out of style to write a thank you note.

Plus, we have so much for which to be thankful. Never take your blessings for granted.

► **Cultivate a life of generosity.**

Be a giver, not a taker. Find ways to bless others.

"The generous man will be prosperous and he who waters will himself be watered" (Prov. 11:25).

► **Continue developing your spiritual life.**

Never desert your spiritual roots and keep growing closer to God day after day.

Read your Bible daily. Go to church weekly. Get involved in a local church in your college town. Start tithing now.

Develop your prayer life. Don't leave God behind as you move on to new adventures.

The big question is, will you apply these wise words to your life?

EDITOR'S NOTE — David L. Chancey serves as pastor of McDonough Road Baptist Church, Fayetteville, Georgia. Check out his other columns at davidchancey.com. This column was originally published by The Citizen.



CHANCEY

**"The generous man will be prosperous
and he who waters will himself be watered."**

Proverbs 11:25

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“God never denies us our hearts desire except to give us something better.”

ELISABETH ELLIOT

Christian author, speaker and missionary (1926–2015)

What we primarily know is that the greatest need is the gospel because the greatest problem is lostness.

Brant Bauman
IMB missionary who works with Ukrainian refugees

When we consider protecting our boys and girls from sexual predators, we'll never get this accidentally right. Churches must be intentional and build the right fences to protect the sheep God has given us.

Greg Love
MinistrySafe.com

Christian folks think that we share Jesus better on the mountaintops, but the truth is, we show people Jesus better in the darkest valleys

when we don't know what in the world God's doing. He pulls things from the dead and brings them back to life.

JJ Weeks
Christian recording artist

There are still too many churches with too little money in the bank given the uncertainties of 2023.

Scott McConnell
Executive director
Lifeway Research

People with little hope for what could be better may dissolve into the helpless stance of decision-making paralysis. Some decide to simply “go with the flow” in whatever direction their inadequate expectations may lead them. ...

As someone once put it, “if people know that we expect little of them, they will probably meet our expectations with disappointing accuracy.” Ouch!

Morris Murray Jr.
Jasper, Ala.

The greatest foundation that anyone will ever stand on is the Word of God. Any other foundation, even though it may appear to be stable, will prove to be sinking sand. Let no trial and no circumstance ever move you away from God's foundation.

O'Shea Lowery
entrustedhopeministries.org

People are hungry in our nation spiritually.

Evangelist Greg Laurie



Chitchat

What people are talking about on social media

#marcusastanley

When nobody stayed with me, God stayed, and He was patient with me.

Instagram

@andrewhebert86

Thesis: Southern Baptists don't have to agree on everything to cooperate together.

Isn't that the genius of cooperation? We can agree to disagree about some things because the things about which we agree are so much more important.

The Great Commission > tertiary differences.

Life without God will leave you bitter when you don't get what you

want and empty when you do get what you want.

Kevin Sanders
via Facebook

@PaulTripp

There is nothing more eternally wonderful as being an adopted child of the one who sits on the throne of the universe, reigning in glory.

One of the most tenacious temptations of the church is assuming it can do God's work the world's way.

Richard Blackaby
via Facebook

Has church become something you just do on Sundays? ... Following Jesus ought to mean we follow

him into our Wednesday morning meetings, Thursday breakfasts and Saturday ballfields.

God is asking you to leverage all that you have for His glory — no excuses. Let's stop hanging out on the sidelines and offer our lives to Christ to use for His glory and His mission.

Wake Cross Roads Baptist Church (Raleigh, N.C.)
via Facebook

#daily_bibleverses

Dear God, Make me better. Change my attitude, my approach, my mind and my reactions. “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” Psalm 51:10

Instagram

Biblical truth on sexuality is needed

When my children, who are in their 40s, were teenagers, many of the churches in my area were teaching “True Love Waits,” an excellent study which, as the title implies, taught the biblical principles of abstaining from having sex until marriage.

Some of the young people who participated in the program failed to live up to the principles, but the majority seemed to have followed God's Word pertaining to the sexual sins which are often the cause of unintended pregnancies.

In the ensuing years, there have been so many mixed messages about human sexuality and behavior that even adults no longer have a firm biblical understanding of sexual sins.

Culture seems to affirm that any kind of behavior is OK as long as it's between consenting adults. Euphemisms gloss over the seriousness of sexual sins, including fornication (now called “being sexually active” or “sleeping around” or “living together”) and adultery (now called “having an affair”).

As Christians, we say we believe and follow the Bible. Unfortunately, we as individuals, as well as our churches, leaders and publications, often address the effects of sexual immorality rather than the behavior itself.

Because many pastors, teachers and parents no longer provide a firm foundation about what God tells us about our sexual behavior, we are faced with addressing the effects of unbridled sexual immorality — unplanned pregnancies, abortion and sexual abuse among them.

I urge pastors, teachers and parents to bring back programs such as “True Love Waits” and make sure everyone, including adults, knows what God says about sexual sins.

Sonja J. Adams
Heflin, Ala.

3 stories you should know

NAMB, McRaney both file motions for summary judgment in pending lawsuit

In separate May 18 motions filed for summary judgment in the six-year-old McRaney v. North American Mission Board lawsuit, NAMB is seeking a ruling to dismiss the entire case and Will McRaney is seeking a ruling on one of NAMB's specific defenses to his claims.

McRaney's attorneys are focused on the separation agreement aspect that impacted his severance package when he was fired from the executive director role at the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware in 2015.

For NAMB's argument, several depositions were included that say McRaney's four counts against NAMB are invalid,

including testimony from Alabama Baptist pastor Rob Paul. Paul served in Mississippi at the time of his connection to the case.

Developing story

The Alabama Baptist staff received notice of the latest news on the lawsuit near press time and is working on providing full details online at tabonline.org.

NAMB and McRaney both have until June 1 to respond to each other's motions and then they will have until June 8 for the following rebuttal.

From there the judge will make the call on how to proceed. The current trial date is set for Aug. 7. (Jennifer Davis Rash)

Saddleback Church will fight SBC expulsion

Saddleback Church, the Southern California megachurch founded by bestselling author Rick Warren, will ask messengers at the SBC Annual Meeting in New Orleans to overturn a February decision by the SBC Executive Committee to expel the church. The EC says the church "has a faith and practice that does not closely identify with the Convention's adopted statement of faith, as demonstrated by the church having a female teaching pastor functioning in the office of pastor."

Stacie Wood, wife of Saddleback's pastor Andy Wood, holds the role of teaching pastor.

Saddleback is one of five congregations ousted from the SBC in recent months over the issue of women as pastors. Fern Creek Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, is also appealing its dismissal. (TAB)

Religious freedom report reveals 'troubling trends'

The U.S. State Department's annual Report on International Religious Freedom says in 2022, advances were noted in Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Croatia and other countries, tempered by new and increased restrictions against Muslim Uyghurs in China, Catholics in Nicaragua, women in Iran, Christians and Shia Muslims in Afghanistan, religious minorities in Burma and targeted attacks and government restrictions against Christians and others in India.

Secretary of State Anthony Blinken said the 2022 report, which covers nearly 200 countries and territories, documents the continuation and rise of "very troubling trends," noting that anti-conversion, blasphemy and apostasy laws are often used to justify harassment and other forms of religious discrimination. (BP)

Persecuted church

Nigerian pastor among 135 people killed during violent two weeks

ABUJA, Nigeria — A pastor was among 135 Christians killed within nine days in two Nigerian states.

Morning Star News said Yakubu Shuaibu, pastor of Church of the Brethren in Nigeria, was killed April 4 in his home in Madlau in Borno State. The pastor's pregnant wife also was shot and was recovering at Biu General Hospital as of Morning Star's April 25 report.

Shuaibu is the third of the denomination's pastors slain in a short amount of time, a denominational leader said.

Between April 2 and April 10 in Benue state, Muslim Fulani herdsmen attacked a number of villages, killing 134 Christians, according to a press release from the state's governor.

Nigeria is No. 6 on Open Doors' 2023 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian. Nigeria led the world in 2022 in the number of Christians kidnapped or killed for their faith.

Christian slain for his evangelism in Uganda

MBALE, Uganda — A Christian who used his business to reach Muslims with the gospel was stabbed to death in Uganda for his evangelistic work.

Morning Star News reports that Engineer Herbert, 42, was killed April 8 on his way home in the Namakwekwe area of Mbale.

Through the business he operated in Mbale, Herbert supported evangelism to Muslims and



MS photo

church leaders whose ministry focuses on Muslims in communities inside and outside Mbale.

"Herbert was very effective in evangelistic activities," a pastor told Morning Star.

An eyewitness said he saw five men in Muslim attire hitting a man along a Mbale roadside. "One of the attackers was shouting to him about damaging the Islamic religion," the witness told Morning Star.

The next morning, police and the witness found Herbert's body.

Uganda's constitution and laws allow for freedom of religion, including converting from one faith to another. Approximately 12% of Uganda's population is Muslim. However, Christian churches have increasingly received threats of violence, and some Christian converts have been attacked, killed or excommunicated by Muslim family members, the World Atlas reports.

Alabama news

OBITUARIES

► **A.L. (Amos Levi) Courtney**, pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church Pell City, died May 15. He was 88.

Courtney's ministry spanned more than 50 years, 20 of those at FBC Pell City prior to his Dec. 31, 1999, retirement from full-time ministry.

Reflecting on his retirement, Courtney told *The Alabama Baptist* in 1999, "Every church I've ever served was a delightful experience."



COURTNEY

Courtney attended East Mississippi Junior College on a football scholarship and was inducted into the school's Sports Hall of Fame. He was a graduate of Samford University and New Orleans Seminary.

He was pastor of FBC Demopolis from 1969 to 1980 and served several churches in Alabama and Mississippi prior to his time at FBC Pell City. During his 20 years there, the church experienced much growth and increased missions giving.

Courtney was active in the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, The Baptist Foundation of Alabama and other community and alumni organizations.

He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Myra Scroggins Courtney; daughter, Amy; son, Michael; four granddaughters; and five great-grandchildren.

BARBOUR ASSOCIATION

► **Shane Traylor** is the new pastor of **Clayton Baptist Church**. He previously served as pastor of Newton Baptist Church for eight years.

He and his wife, Rachel, have two children.



TRAYLOR

CENTRAL ASSOCIATION

► **Central Coosa Cowboy Church, Hanover**, and **Central Baptist Association WMU** will host a grief workshop June 3 from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the church.

Featured speaker will be Bob Terry, editor emeritus of *The Alabama Baptist* and author of "Struggling Toward Hope: Life After the Death of a Spouse," who will share the personal lessons he learned along that journey, as well as practical tips for survivors.

For more information or to register, call 205-566-5134. Lunch will be provided. Bill

Morris is pastor; David Crowe is director of missions.

COFFEE ASSOCIATION

► **Judson "Jud" Waldrop** is the new director of missions of **Coffee Baptist Association**. A native of Shelby County, he holds a bachelor's degree in theology from Baptist College of Florida and attended Mid-America Baptist Seminary, Luther Rice Seminary and Samford University.

He and his wife, Donna, have three children and six grandchildren.



WALDROP

COVINGTON ASSOCIATION

► **Harmony Baptist Church, Andalusia**, will host evangelist D.R. Harrison June 4-6. He will preach Sunday, June 4 at 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. On Monday and Tuesday, he will preach at 7 p.m. Scott Donaldson is pastor.

ESCAMBIA ASSOCIATION

► **John Stuckey** is the new minister of worship and families of **First Baptist Church Atmore**.



STUCKEY

He holds a bachelor of science degree in religion from the University of Mobile and a master of arts degree in religious education from Southwestern Seminary.

Stuckey previously served as worship pastor at Macedonia Baptist Church, Myrtle, Mississippi.

He and his wife, Christie, have served churches in Alabama and Mississippi. They have two children, two grandchildren and a third grandchild due in June.

MADISON ASSOCIATION

► **Edwin Jenkins** will be available for preaching and teaching invitations beginning in July. He recently stepped down from his role as teaching pastor/senior adult minister at **Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville**, where he had served since February 2020.

A native of Birmingham, he holds a bachelor of arts degree from Samford University and master of divinity and doctor of ministry from Southwestern Seminary. Jenkins spent several years (2015-2019) in interim ministry, first serving as director of missions for Morgan Baptist Association, followed by interim/transitional pastor positions at Mount Zion; Wall Highway Baptist Church,



JENKINS

Madison; and Sherwood Baptist Church, Huntsville. He served as director of the office of leadership/church growth for the State Board of Missions from 1996 to 2006.

He was pastor of FBC Athens from 2006 to 2015 and had served as pastor of several churches in Texas while in seminary before he was called to Hilldale Baptist Church, Birmingham, in 1984. Jenkins also has served on the board of trustees of Shocco Springs.

He and his wife, Joan, are taking a sabbatical before assuming other ministry opportunities. He can be reached at edwinjenkins@gmail.com or 256-777-5074.

MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATION

► **Teman W. Knight III**, pastor of Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, celebrated 40 years of ministry May 1. He has led Heritage Baptist since August 2010. He is also an adjunct professor of Old Testament and Hebrew for New Orleans Seminary and director of the central Alabama extension of the Caskey Center for Church Excellence.

He holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Southeastern Louisiana University and master of divinity and doctor of philosophy degrees from New Orleans Seminary.

He served with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions from 2001 to 2010, first as an associate in the office of evangelism and later as director of the office of leadership and church health. He served as pastor of York Terrace Baptist Church, Sheffield, and of several churches in Louisiana.

He previously was an adjunct professor for New Orleans' Clinton extension and adjunct professor of religion at William Carey School of Nursing in New Orleans.

He was a visiting professor for Guatemala Baptist Seminary, Venezuelan Mission Training School and Honduras Pastors School.

He is currently serving on the advisory board for Baptist South Hospital in Montgomery as well as on the board of regents for the University of Mobile. He was president of the Alabama Baptist Pastors Conference in 2016 and a member of the SBOM executive committee.

Heritage Baptist celebrated Knight and his wife, Darlana, April 30 during the service. The couple has two children and four grandchildren.

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

► **Southcrest Baptist Church, Bessemer**, will host ClearVision gospel trio June 2, 7 p.m. Supper will be served at 6. Scott Bush is pastor.



Photo by Reid Foster

Supporters of Women's Hope Medical Clinic, a pregnancy and adoption resource center in Auburn, run in the clinic's annual 5K in April.

'So many ways' to help



Photo courtesy of Daria Monroe

Clinic in Auburn offers resources for mothers, including adoption support

(continued from page 1)
life. That thought sticks with her as she goes to work every day as the executive director of Women's Hope Medical Clinic in Auburn. She's been guiding the clinic there

since 2017, leading the team as they have provided free pregnancy testing, options counseling, ultrasounds and prenatal care through 20 weeks of pregnancy. They've also offered free parent-

ing education, mentorship, resources and baby showers. And in late 2021 they added a new facet to the ministry that's close to Monroe's heart — adoption.

Before coming to Women's Hope, Monroe had served as executive director of an adoption agency in Florida in addition to directing a pregnancy resource center.

Now at Women's Hope, she was able to combine the two types of ministry.

With the help of on-site social workers, Women's Hope offers support for women who would like to make an adoption plan and helps match them with prospective adoptive families. There is also post-adoption support.

Monroe said so far they've seen three mothers who were "abortion-determined" place their babies with other families through the ministry's services.

That's three lives to celebrate, but even those don't tell the whole story of the lives saved by the adoption aspect of the ministry, she said.

What they've seen happen numerous times is for a mother to decide adoption is a better option than

abortion, then later — after they see the support Women's Hope can offer them — decide to parent instead.

"It's just been a blessing," said Monroe, a member of Lakeview Baptist Church in Auburn. "If just one baby's life is saved because the baby's mom makes an adoption plan, it's worth it. Whether she places the baby through adoption or chooses to parent, it's a win for the Kingdom."

Monroe said she's seen the Church rise up to help in both scenarios.

"We have seen one after the other — hundreds, probably thousands of parents — who have shown that with the body of Christ supporting, they can make it," she said.

She's also seen families rise up and share their willingness to adopt.

"It doesn't take a village; it takes the Church and the Church corporately," Monroe said. "That might be someone saying, 'I can help with a baby shower,' or

'I can bring baby clothes,' or 'our church can offer financial assistance.' There are so many ways to offer support."

For more information, visit womenshope.org.



Photo courtesy of Daria Monroe

A recent client at Women's Hope started working on an adoption plan, then the day after the baby was born, she and the father decided to parent. Women's Hope reached out to the community and provided her with a baby shower.

PREGNANCY RESOURCE CENTERS

AROUND THE STATE

NORTH ALABAMA

► **Real Life Crisis Pregnancy Center**
104 W. Alabama Ave. Suite F
Albertville, AL 35950
256-878-1300
reallifecpc.org

► **Women's Resource Center Athens**
727-D West Market St.
Athens, AL 35611
256-233-5775
wrcathens.org

SOUTH ALABAMA

► **Sav-A-Life Family Hope Center**
116 Crescent St.
Andalusia, AL 36420
334-222-0644
pregnancyctr.com

► **Women's Resource Center of Escambia — Atmore**
204 S. Pensacola Ave.
Atmore, AL 36502
251-368-4949

CENTRAL ALABAMA

► **Sav-A-Life of Tallapoosa County**
5 Lee St.
Alexander City, AL 35010
256-329-2273

► **HOPE Women's Services — Jacksonville**
301 Henry Road SW
Jacksonville, AL 36265
256-237-9999

► **HOPE Women's Services — Anniston**
1506 Leighton Ave.
Anniston, AL 36207
256-237-9999
hopewomensservices.com

Throughout 2023, TAB will cover the work of pregnancy resource centers around the state. We will print the names of a few PRCs with each article. To download a complete listing of PRCs, visit tabonline.org/prc-list.

INTENTIONAL EQUIPPING FOR MINISTRY

Samford's Ministry Training Institute brings biblical training to local church leaders

By **Hamilton Richardson**
The Alabama Baptist

Prominent seminaries in Alabama and other areas of the country offer important and much-needed instruction in the areas of theology and pastoral training, but one barrier remains — the fact that seminary is out of reach for many Christians.

For decades, Samford University in Birmingham has sought to change that by providing quality instruction to individual believers, church leaders and pastors through its Ministry Training Institute, which celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2022.

Scott Bush, pastor of Southcrest Baptist Church in Bessemer, leads one of over 40 MTI locations or centers across the Southeast.

“Ours, the Shelby/Helena center, began in the first fall term of 2022,” Bush said. “Our mission is to provide a high-quality biblical studies experience for adult learners to equip them to make disciples in their respective ministry contexts. Our students at Shelby/Helena MTI are bivocational pastors, church staff members, Sunday School teachers, small group leaders and dedicated church members who are interested in becoming more effective students and teachers of Scripture.”

Impact on ministry

Bush added that in the relatively short time this MTI center has been operating, it has already seen an impact on ministry in the churches where its students serve.

“We regularly hear how the information is enriching and enhancing their own study and their teaching in groups they lead,” he said.



Photo by Dianna Cagle/The Alabama Baptist

Josh Knierim, pastor of The Church at Old Town in Helena, teaches a class on Paul's letters during the spring term of Samford's MTI program. The Shelby/Helena center is one of 40 MTI locations across the Southeast.

A history of the institute provided by Bush and compiled by Kevin Blackwell, executive director of MTI, stated that in 1946, “Howard College President Harwell G. ‘Major’ Davis proposed to the board of trustees that a statewide extension program be established.

In an effort to reconnect the university with Alabama Baptists, the extension program would target local associations, churches and Baptists all across Alabama. The Howard Extension Division officially launched on January 1, 1947.” The goal of the institute 75 years ago remains the same today — to provide solid biblical training to Christians in churches across the

state for the purpose of growing and strengthening the body of Christ and equipping them for service.

Bush added that his church is in partnership with two others, which has strengthened the work in the area.

“The partnership between Southcrest Baptist Church, Community Baptist Church and The Church at Old Town Helena has really added value to the program,” he said. “Our congregations are close together, but we serve

different communities out of different histories and in different styles. The three pastors (all teachers in our program) are just as diverse in experience, education and background, and yet we’re seeing wonderful

friendships develop across the class and the potential for an even stronger partnership in ministry.”

Josh Knierim, pastor of The Church at Old Town in Helena, said that although this is his first year partnering with MTI, he has already seen the blessings that a partnership can offer.

“Having multiple teachers available and being able to reach folks in multiple churches has increased our reach and impact,” he commented. “There is a growing passion in our churches for deeper scriptural understanding and intentional equipping for ministry. The testimony of the MTI participants is that they have been able to learn these things in an environment that is still pastoral and is connected to their ministries in their local church. As we look to the future, I am excited to be able to offer these classes to our own folks who are new to the faith.”

Still growing

According to Bush, interest is continuing to grow.

“Not all of our students are from the host churches and not all are from Southern Baptist churches,” he explained. “We hope that as the group grows, we will be able to offer even more courses tailored to the interests and needs of the community.”

Samford will award diplomas to its MTI students who complete eight courses (and subsequent diplomas for continuing work), and the first group at the Shelby/Helena center should reach that in May 2024, Bush said.

“We can’t wait to see the fruit that comes from their faithful study and ministry of the Word,” he said.

For more information about Samford University's Ministry Training Institute, visit samford.edu/programs/ministry-training-institute.

Road to NOLA

A preview of the 2023 SBC Annual Meeting and how to follow the latest news

The 2023 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting is fast approaching. Around 10,000 messengers are expected at press time to gather June 13–14 at the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans.

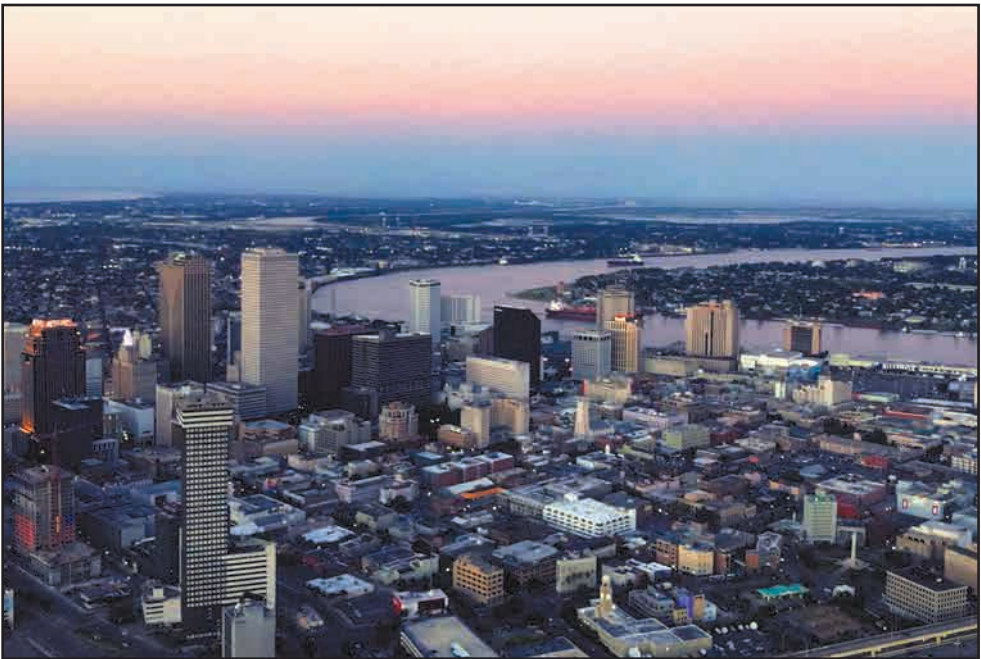
Theme

This year’s theme is “Serving the Lord, Serve others.” On the agenda: a Sending Celebration, entity reports and plenty of questions and discussion on resolutions and other business items.

App

Messengers and guests will find many helpful resources in the SBC 2023 Annual Meeting app. The app is available for download at the Apple App Store and Google Play.

The app offers a full schedule of sessions and related meetings, maps of the exhibit hall and a list of exhibitors, information on candidates, social media links, the book of reports and other information. The app is updated as more details become available.



New Orleans, Louisiana, is the location for the 2023 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting. Around 10,000 messengers are expected at press time to gather June 13–14 at the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center.

Schedule

This year’s business sessions will be Tuesday, June 13, at 8:15 a.m. and 2 p.m. and Wednesday, June 14, at 8 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.

Bart Barber, SBC president, said

there are no scheduled panel discussions during the business sessions, and more time has been given to the Resolutions Committee.

Resolutions

According to sbc.net, “a resolution has traditionally been defined as an expression of opinion or concern, as compared to a motion, which calls for action. A resolution is not used to direct an entity of the SBC to specific action other than to communicate the opinion or concern expressed.”

The window for submitting a resolution to be considered during this year’s annual meeting closes May 29, which is 15 days prior to the meeting. For information, go to sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions.

Motions

According to sbcannualmeeting.net, a motion made by a messenger during an annual meeting “calls for specific action by the SBC or requests specific action by one or more of its entities.”

Along with beginning the motion with “I move that ...” it is best to frame the wording as a request rather

than a mandate. Understanding the difference between a motion and a resolution is important.

Motions do not have to be submitted ahead of the annual meeting, but messengers who wish to pre-file a motion can do so through the app.

During the business sessions, messengers who wish to make motions or amendments are encouraged to write out their proposals ahead of time and/or use the app to do that to ensure accuracy and efficiency.

Historic business

A time on Tuesday is slated for appeals from representatives of three churches that were disfellowshipped by the SBC Executive Committee in February. It is the first time in SBC history for this particular item of business to come before the Convention, said EC chair David Sons.

Also on Tuesday, an update on the Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force will be provided by the group’s chair Marshall Blalock.

Elections

Elections for president and first vice president will be held during the Tuesday afternoon business session. The election for the second vice president will be held during the Wednesday morning session, and elections for registration secretary and recording secretary will be held during the Wednesday afternoon session.

At press time, incumbent Bart Barber and Georgia pastor Mike Stone are the only two candidates who have announced intentions to be nominated for SBC president.

Other announced candidates at press time are: for first vice president, Louisiana pastor Jay Adkins; for registration secretary, incumbent Don Currence; for recording secretary, incumbent Nathan Finn.

Related meetings

The June 11–12 SBC Pastors Conference will feature multiple speakers, including Alabama evangelist

Phil Waldrep, speaking on the theme, “Character Matters in Ministry: Be-attitudes of a Pastor.”

The WMU Missions Adventure and Celebration will be June 11–12. The adventure begins with worship at Franklin Avenue Baptist Church on Sunday morning, followed by missions opportunities, a tour of the Museum of the Bible and Archaeology and lunch at New Orleans Seminary.

Monday’s activities including missions opportunities at the convention center, followed by a paddlewheel cruise on the Mississippi River, a reception for retiring WMU Foundation president David George and a tour of the Battle of New Orleans. Registration is open through May 25. More information is available at wmu.com.

A women’s expo will be held in the convention center’s Great Hall Foyer on Tuesday and Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day.

A list of other meetings is available in the event schedule in the app.

Getting around

Most visitors like to get around New Orleans on foot. The French Quarter and Riverfront are walker-friendly, but some of the city’s at-

tractions are a bit spread out. Several transportation options are available.

Taxis, rideshares and buses are available for those who need them. Taxis and rideshares are also good options for those flying in and out of the Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport.

New Orleans’ iconic streetcars are neither the fastest nor most direct mode of transportation, but they are a good way to see some of the city.

Note that buses and streetcars require exact change if you use cash, and fares are \$1.25. You also can use the NORTA app or purchase a Jazzy Pass, good for unlimited rides on buses and streetcars.

Parking

Ample ADA parking is available at the convention center, along with other lots there and around the city. Numerous parking apps may be used to reserve a spot ahead of time. The convention center recommends the ParkMobile app for online parking reservations.

Pedestrians can enter the convention center at the main entrance or the Transportation Center entrance outside Lobby G. (TAB Media Group)

Stay in the know

Looking for more information about the events, activities and business items related to the 2023 SBC Annual Meeting?

TAB Media Group and The Baptist Paper are already preparing for full coverage of all things SBC.

We will be on-site in New Orleans to provide the latest updates and thoughtful analysis of the business meetings, fellowships and other activities held in conjunction with this global gathering of Southern Baptists.

How can you stay informed?

The best way is to subscribe to The Baptist Paper. Use the QR code here to add The Baptist Paper to your current sub-

scription to The Alabama Baptist for just \$10 a year.

You’ll receive biweekly print issues, the digital edition and our weekly newsletters as part of your subscription.



Scan this code to add The Baptist Paper to your current subscription to The Alabama Baptist for just \$10 a year.

You can also get news updates by going to thebaptistpaper.org and subscribing to our free notifications.

You’ll get the latest news and features delivered straight to your desktop.

Finally, don’t forget to follow The Baptist Paper on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for all the news from New Orleans and to continuously keep up with stories of what God is doing through Baptists across the nation and world. (TAB Media Group)

Crossover/Serve Tour connects churches, volunteers for pre-SBC ministry

By Meredith Flynn
The Alabama Baptist

Before the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting kicks off in New Orleans, local churches will work with visiting volunteers to share God’s love across their city.

Crossover is an annual evangelistic outreach planned by Southern Baptists in the host city prior to the annual meeting.

This year, Crossover is partnering with Send Relief’s Serve Tour to bring volunteers together for dozens of hands-on compassion ministry projects.

Send Relief, a partnership of the North American and

International Mission Boards, worked with Louisiana Baptists, New Orleans Baptist Association, Bayou Baptist Association and Northshore Baptist Association to offer 52 projects in New Orleans and nearby communities.

Serve Tour projects are planned across three area hub locations: First Baptist Church New Orleans, First Baptist Church Kenner and Covenant Church in Houma.

Volunteers will meet at their hub before their service day begins and then go to their individual project sites. Around 750 people from 20 states are signed up to help with Serve Tour, said Sammy Simmons, national proj-



Photo by Van Payne/The Alabama Baptist
Friendship Baptist Church in Yorba Linda hosts a block party for the Crossover evangelism event across Anaheim, California, prior to last year’s Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting.

ect director for Send Relief. Registration for Serve Tour projects is available at sendrelief.org/serve-tour/new-orleans.

Volunteers can sign up for individual projects that

still have spots available by clicking on “sign up for this event” on the project’s page. New users will register with Send Relief before signing up for a specific project.

Projects connect volunteers with local churches for construction work, block parties, community outreach and several initiatives unique to New Orleans.

Volunteers are still needed on several projects such as:

► **Backpack block party:** Volunteers will help Baptist Friendship House host a community block party.

► **Baptist community health services:** Volunteers will install solar panels, clear a nearby lot and provide a facelift to the main office location of this ministry in the Ninth Ward.

► **Storm preparedness, disaster relief training and cleanup:** Several projects involve helping residents of New Orleans who are susceptible to the ravages of flooding.

How to participate

- **LOCATION:** New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, 900 Convention Center Blvd., New Orleans, LA 70130
- **PRE-REGISTRATION:** register.sbcannualmeeting.net
- **LIVESTREAM:** sbcannualmeeting.net
- **SBC ANNUAL MEETING APP:** Apple App Store and Google Play



Gilbreath honored for service at 2023 Revive Conference

By Tracy Riggs Frontz
The Alabama Baptist

Sammy Gilbreath, former director of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, was recognized May 8 for 27 years of ministry.

Gilbreath fully retired April 30. He had served the SBOM as event evangelism specialist since early 2020.

The recognition of his nearly three decades of ministry to Alabama Baptists came at the end of the 2023 Revive Senior Adult Evangelism Conference, held at First Baptist Church Birmingham.

Calling Gilbreath a “leader par excellence,” Rick Lance, executive director of SBOM, said that they wanted to recognize the partnership he had over the years with state missionaries, pastors and church leaders, associations and churches training people for evangelism as well as Gilbreath’s friendship with Lance and many others.

Daniel Wilson, current director of evangelism for SBOM, said, “God has used Sammy to reach a lot of people. Truthfully, he’s the greatest soul-winner I’ve ever known. He lives evangelism; he doesn’t just talk about it.”

More than a decade ago, Gilbreath was told he has an extremely rare heart condition that very few survive.

Several years after his doctors told him he had six months to live, Gilbreath said to a reporter, “So, it’s no question really and medically that I’m going to die. It’s just when. [The doctors] say that’s going to come very quickly.

“But that’s been several years



Photo by Tracy Riggs Frontz/The Alabama Baptist

Rick Lance (left) recognizes Sammy Gilbreath, former director of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, for 27 years of ministry.

now and I’m still going. I’m still preaching every day, still traveling. I can’t lose,” he said.

During those bonus years, Gilbreath touched even more lives, including those he has mentored and trained.

“[Gilbreath’s] optimism and enthusiasm for life is incredible. He’s definitely one of a kind, and my life is richer because of his influence and friendship. Personally, Sammy’s always believed in me, and he’s stood behind me 110% in my role as his successor,”

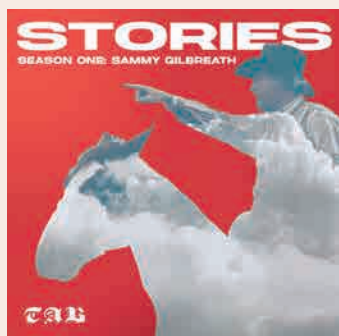
Wilson said.

Lance called the opportunity to recognize Gilbreath’s retirement a “momentous day.”

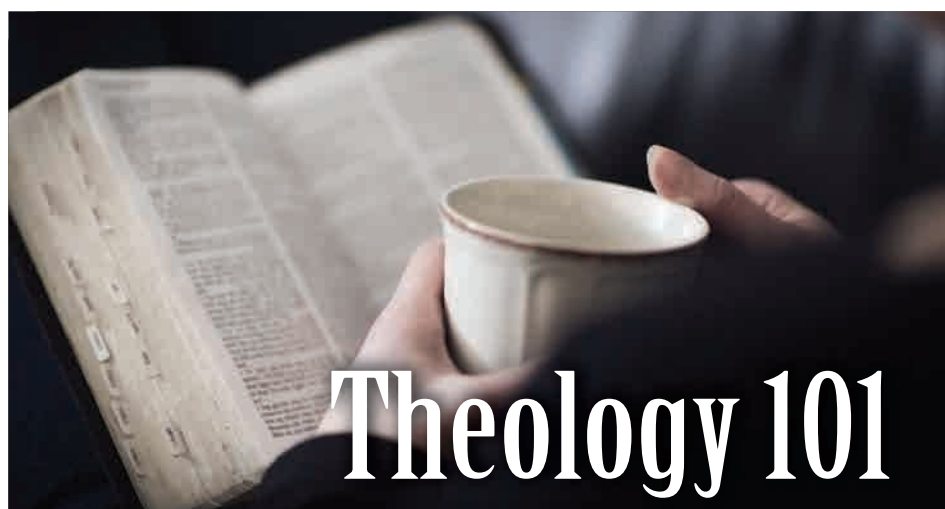
“We can celebrate how the Lord has used Sammy,” Lance said. “His life has been lengthened even when we feared it may be shortened. He is one who ‘lives like he is dying.’



GILBREATH



Hear more about Sammy Gilbreath’s amazing story in Season 1 of Stories with Grace Thornton. Listen to the Stories podcast at tabonline.org/stories or wherever you listen to your podcasts.



BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The Holy Spirit

Holy Spirit and Spiritual Warfare

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

Just as the Bible bears witness to the Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, it also attests to an unholy trinity of the world, the flesh and the devil.

These two trios of spiritual realities set the stage for spiritual warfare. Isaac Watts in his hymn “Am I a Soldier of the Cross?” poses the question, “Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease?” The answer is, of course, a resounding no.

In 2 Timothy 2:3, the Bible declares that each believer “must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” Following that declaration is the instruction, “No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier” (v. 4).

Temptations

As Christian soldiers, we face warfare on three fronts. One of those is what the Bible terms “the world.” This designation embraces all the temptations that war against the soul — temptations that arise from the standards and allurements of the world about us. The subtle message that comes at us suggests, “Why not? Everybody is doing it.”

Of course, we know that right and wrong are not determined by majority vote. The Bible is quite direct in admonishing, “Do not love the world or the things in the world” (1 John 2:15). In one sentence the Bible describes the tragedy that loving the world causes when it records, “Demas has for-

saken me, having loved this present world” (2 Tim. 4:10).

Not only is there the enemy around us, but there is the enemy within us. The Bible calls it the flesh or our fallen human nature.

The biblical appeal reads, “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11). We know from experience as well as from Scripture that Christian conversion does not eradicate our sinful nature.

Works of the flesh

The Bible identifies for us quite a list of works of the flesh: “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries and the like” (Gal. 5:19-21). The Bible’s indispensable instruction is “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16).

Finally, there is also the invisible and subtle enemy, the devil, who incites the flesh and distorts the world, making it and its standards and activities quite alluring.

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.



Someone You Should Know

MARY ETTA BATES

By Leigh Pritchett
The Alabama Baptist

Mary Etta Bates has been pianist and organist at her church for 77 years. At age 16, she began teaching and encouraging others to become a church pianist. At 90, Bates not only still plays piano at her church's Sunday morning and evening services, but also attends Woman's Missionary Union meetings. In the past, she also was a Sunday School teacher, Vacation Bible School volunteer and church librarian, and she worked outside the home.

Q: Describe where you focus your greatest ministry efforts.

A: As church pianist for the Sunday morning and evening worship services and for choir practice. Shelia Sanford is our music director; Brother Guy Moore is pastor. I always try to be there. Faithfulness means so much.

Q: Who was one of the most influential people in your faith life? Why?

A: So many dedicated teachers that lived a Christian life outside class sessions. One pastor, Brother Bert Cornelius, in the late 1960s and 1970s, had a gift and calling from God. His messages seemed to sink deep into my heart in a way that God encouraged me and helped me to trust God as my children were young teenagers.

MINISTRY:
Church pianist

CHURCH NAME:
Republic Baptist Church, Birmingham, in North Jefferson Baptist Association

LIFE VERSE: Be strong and of good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, He it is that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." (Deut. 31:6)

Q: Tell about a "turning point" in your life and how God was involved.

A: My husband, James Bates, passed away in 2014. I had a hard time with ... "Who am I now?" We had been married 62 1/2 years. He was a deacon and faithful in every way. God was very real

to me by blessing me with three adult Christian children and their spouses — always ready to meet any need. Also, we had already in progress a small quilting group that gave away most of our work for any needs. They provided real support for me.

Q: What has God been teaching you lately?

A: When I realize I haven't practiced piano ... and my other serving projects begin to overwhelm me, I seem to hear a voice: "Do the best you can; leave the rest to God." That usually calms my spirit, and I feel amazed!

Q: If there were one thing you could tell your younger self about faith, what would it be?

A: Don't get so busy "doing church activity," though it is very important to work. But take time to listen for the small, still voice. So often we don't hear God lead in the very small everyday things. Let your children know you don't always feel as strong in faith as you might appear because they also will face lots of decisions.

Q: Have you ever read a book or heard a song that changed the way you think about God and faith? What was it and



Photo courtesy of Shelia Sanford

what did you learn from it?

A: My piano teacher, Mrs. Inman, planted a seed. When she found out my parents were moving from Docena and my lessons would end, she assigned me my first hymn, "Where He Leads Me," by E.W. Blandly and J.S. Norris. (Until that point, Mrs. Bates had been learning classical music.) I was only 13 1/2 years old; the words didn't mean anything to me at that time. ... Now at 90, I still

remember my first hymn and thank Mrs. Inman for planting that seed of faith. [Another song] changed the way I think about God and faith — "Each Step I Take," by W. Elmo Mercer — I have changed my weak faith in decisions and learned more to depend on God with the assurance that He will help me. "The Unseen Hand," by A.J. Sims taught me confidence and more trust. God [is] always with us.

Bates marks 77 years as church pianist

Mary Etta Bates said she never set out to spend 77 years as her church's pianist. When she was 13 years old, she just got behind the keyboard one day at Republic Baptist Church in Birmingham and then did that same thing over and over.

And she's still going. "She's one of the most faithful women of God I've known," said Guy Moore, who has served as Republic Baptist's pastor for 28 years.

Bates is humble about it. She said she is just grateful to the piano

teacher who gave her the opportunity to play, and she is grateful to God for giving her the opportunity to serve.

Her church recently honored her for her years of service in conjunction with her 90th birthday, and she quickly says the 77 years were "off and on," not continuous.

'Still got it'

But Moore said those "off" periods were very short — and even then she was playing the organ and giving another young pianist a chance to have some experience, just as someone did for her when she was a teenager. "She's always been our

main pianist," Moore said.

Over the years, Bates has worn other hats too. She coordinated the church library and was actively involved in Sunday School and Woman's Missionary Union.

"I'll continue to do what the Lord has for me to do for as long as He'll let me," she said.

Bates said she doesn't "do fancy playing," but Moore said whenever he walks down out of the choir loft on Sundays and she's still playing, he tells her, "Still got it, sister."

"She's special," he said. (Grace Thornton)

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UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

Connect offers fellowship, training for missions leaders

Refreshing. Tremendous fellowship. Powerful worship.

These are a few of the words that those who attended Connect last year used to describe their time together at Alabama Woman's Missionary Union's enrichment and leader training weekend.

"It's much more than a training conference — there's something for everyone," said Candace McIntosh,

Alabama WMU executive director. "It's a really sweet time of connecting, fellowshiping, learning and preparing ourselves for God to work."

And this year, you're invited to get involved. Connect, set for July 21–22 at Shocco

Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega, is open to everyone.

The Friday and Saturday gathering features:

► Bible study with gifted teacher and leader Page Hughes.

► Engaging breakout sessions on a variety of current topics.

► Missionary testimonies from North American and international missionaries.

► Outstanding leadership training opportunities for new or seasoned leaders of WMU, women's ministry or adult, youth or children's missions groups.

► Fun times of fellowship with other missions-minded believers.

"I think the beauty of Con-

nect is the fellowship as we gather with other missions-minded and ministry-minded adults," McIntosh said. "We enjoy learning from each other, having conversations and making friends in this unique setting."

Training conferences for new missions discipleship leaders also will be offered at Connect.

To register or to learn more about how to make reservations at Shocco for the event, visit alabamawmu.org/connect.



Facebook photo

To register, visit alabamawmu.org/connect or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



Children's Music Summit

To register, visit alabamaworship.org/childrens-music-summit or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



It's back — a hands-on training event for pre-school and children's music leaders to get you excited about teaching these precious children about God through music!

The Children's Music Summit, set for July 7–8, is designed to motivate, inspire, educate and prepare you to lead effectively in your churches, schools, Mom's Day Out or week-day education programs.

Watch the love for worship come alive in your pre-schoolers and children!

The Children's Music Summit will be July 7, 2:30 p.m., until July 8, 4 p.m. at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega.

Register before June 1 to receive the best rate!

For more information or to register, visit alabamaworship.org/childrens-music-summit.

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

Elam Baptist Church, Thomasville, Alabama, is seeking a full-time pastor. Interested applicants can email resumes to: reid2546@hotmail.com or call Johnny at 334-357-1652 for more information.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Paden Baptist Church, 900 Padenreich Ave., Gadsden, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking resumes for bivocational pastor. Please send resumes to church address, ATTN: Pastor Search Committee or to: padenbaptistchurch@yahoo.com.

WORSHIP LEADER/CHOIR DIRECTOR

Calvary Baptist Church in Fayette, Alabama, has an opening for a worship leader/choir director. Duties include leading congregational singing on Sunday morning, choir specials and children's music. Send resume to: hthigpen@hotmail.com.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC

Westwood Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama, is eagerly seeking a part-time minister of music. Contact Pastor Steve Potts: 205-798-3341, email: stevepotts@westwoodbc.net.

MINISTER OF STUDENTS & RECREATION

Heritage Baptist Montgomery is receiving resumes for minister of students and recreation. This team member will develop and implement discipleship strategies for 6th grade through college as well as manage the daily operation of our fitness center/recreation ministry. Full time with insurance and retirement benefits. Send resumes to: Jennifer Foster at jennifer@hbcm.net.

MINISTER TO CHILDREN

NorthPark Baptist Church in Trussville, Alabama, is looking for a full-time minister to children. The minister will lead programming and events for children, mentor young families, and train and oversee volunteer children's ministry workers. Email your resume and questions to team@NPOnline.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

FINANCIAL CLERK

Financial clerk needed. Part time average of 15 hours weekly. Payables, payroll, contribu-

tion entry, etc. Send resumes to: tplant@sbcandalusia.com.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

North Shelby Baptist is currently seeking a full-time administrative assistant, to provide general administrative and office support. Two to three years administrative experience is required as well as proficiency in Microsoft Office Suite products. In depth database entry and membership management experience preferred. The ability to be accurate, detailed and multi-task are necessary. Website maintenance, social media knowledge and understanding of the Baptist Church a plus. Please email resume to: finance@northshelbybaptist.org.

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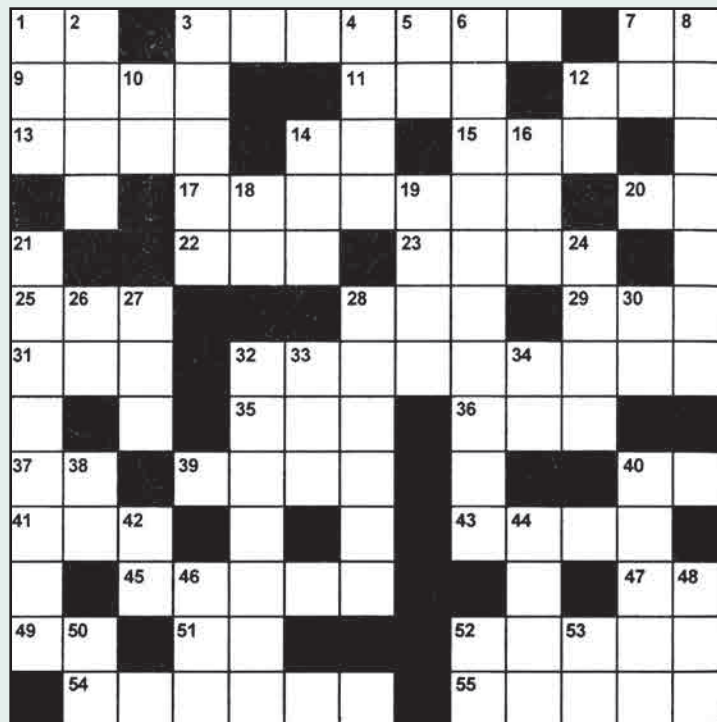
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CHRISTIAN Crossword

ACROSS

1. ____ angel of the Lord. (Judg. 6:11)
3. He ____ the number of the stars. (Ps. 147:4)
7. This is the way, walk ye in _____. (Isa. 30:21)
9. What have I ____ any more with idols? (Hos. 14:8; 2 words)
11. Eli ... sat up ____ seat. (1 Sam. 1:9; 2 words)
12. It is ____ of the twelve. (Mark 14:20)
13. Prefix meaning "within."
14. Each. (abbr.)
15. Gold is often formed into a ____.
17. Paul ... ____ God, and took courage. (Acts 28:15)
20. Filled them ____ to the brim. (John 2:7)
22. When the sun waxed _____. (Ex. 16:21)
23. They took him, and brought him unto ____ pagus. (Acts 17:19)
25. To hurry somewhere.
28. Woman's name.
29. Plural of Pi.
31. ____ wine ... is better. (Luke 5:39)
32. The mediator of the new _____. (Heb. 9:15)
35. The Cat in the ____.
36. ____ two walk together, except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3)
37. Yes in Spanish.
39. Bind the ____ of thine head upon thee. (Ezek. 24:17)
40. ____ panteth my soul. (Ps. 42:1)
41. Venomous snake. (Deut. 32:33)
43. Exacted ... of ____ man 50 shekels. (2 Kings 15:20)
45. A manifest ____ of the righteous judgment.



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- (2 Thess. 1:5)
47. God ____ high.
49. Learn to ____ well. (Isa. 1:17)
51. Regarding.
52. In her mouth was an ____ leaf. (Gen. 8:11)
54. A crown of _____. (Matt. 27:29)
55. Sin which doth so easily ____ us. (Heb. 12:1)

DOWN

1. I ____ no pleasant bread. (Dan. 10:3)
2. There is ____ like unto thee, O Lord. (Jer. 10:6)
3. Trouble is like a broken _____. (Prov. 25:19)
4. For the ____ which is lent to the Lord. (1 Sam. 2:20)
5. Printer's measure.
6. Will build again the ____ of David. (Acts 15:16)
7. That I am ____ the Father. (John 14:10)
8. Ye are not come unto ... darkness, and _____. (Heb. 12:18)
10. Doctor of divinity. (abbr.)
12. One ____ the other.
14. ____ such things as are set before you.

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.



UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

Small Church Tax Conference

Do you need a W2 if the pastor is the only paid employee? Do you have to complete Form 941?

Can a minister take 100% of his income as housing?

How does a small church of 100 or fewer people differ from the large church in tax issues?

At the Church Tax Conference for Small Churches, you will learn the answers to these questions and more.

The conference will be held June 8, 10 a.m.–3 p.m., at the SBOM office facility at 1404 Fairview

To register, visit alsbom.org/churchtax or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



Avenue in Prattville. The cost of this event is \$15, which includes lunch and materials.

For more information or to register, visit alsbom.org/churchtax.

Emerging Leaders

Do you have girls in your Acteens or youth group who have demonstrated leadership ability? Do these girls have a passion for knowing God more and serving His people?

Alabama Woman's Missionary Union wants to contribute to their continued leadership development through Emerging Leaders, a forum designed to enhance and develop the leadership skills and abilities of girls who have com-

pleted grades 9–12. You, as a leader of girls, can nominate candidates to participate in this forum July 21–22 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center. The forum is by invitation only. Girls are eligible to attend two years of Emerging Leaders Forum.

The cost is \$60, which includes accommodations, three meals and a T-shirt.

To nominate a teen girl, visit alabamawmu.org/emergingleaders.

Next Intentional Leader Series set for July 25

The next Intentional Leader Series, set for July 25, will focus on the Preacher aspect of the four Ps of leadership: Person, Pastor, Preacher and Pathfinder.

The event will be 9 a.m.–2 p.m. at the State Board of

Missions office in Prattville, and will feature Hershael York, dean of Southern Seminary's School of Theology. The \$8 cost includes lunch.

Visit leadercareal.org/ils to register.

Pastors must continue to grow in leadership skills

By Michael J. Brooks
The Alabama Baptist

Ken Allen, director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions office of LeaderCare, says leadership development is an ongoing process.

"We learn from doing, and we learn from each other," Allen said. "Our leadership in our churches must be biblical and missional. We want to help our churches discover their God-given purpose."

Speaking to participants at an intentional leaders workshop held in April at the SBOM office facility in Prattville, Allen said we live in an era of discontent.

"In these times of uncertainty and confusion, we must create a thirst for positive change," Allen said. "Long-term church health will take time and patience."

Allen suggested leaders must be able to lead themselves.

"How can we ask people to follow us in prayer if we don't have a vibrant prayer life or to seek God daily in Scripture if we don't have a vibrant devotional life?" he asked. "Our leadership is authentic when we ask people to join us on the journey."

Welcome guests

Rob Jackson, director of the SBOM office of church health, also spoke at the workshop. His topic was "Twelve Steps to Increase Guests and Get Them to Come Back."

Jackson said a welcoming church begins with the pastor.

"We can't 'hole up' in our offices and never come out," he said. "We must be with people and genuinely love them. We must work hard at remembering names and making everyone feel special. Pastors set the example for everyone else in becoming a welcoming church."



Photo by Michael J. Brooks/The Alabama Baptist
Ken Allen, director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions office of LeaderCare, speaks to participants at an April intentional leaders workshop held in Prattville.

ing a welcoming church."

Jackson said research suggests most guests make decisions about whether to return to a church or not within 12 minutes.

"We should look at our facilities with guests in mind, and sometimes it's good to get someone outside the church to take a fresh look

at things since we get accustomed to how things have always been," Jackson said. "Can we find ways to improve the atmosphere in our churches?"

Inviting campus

Jackson suggested a close look at the church campus and facilities, as well

as timely follow-up with guests, such as leaving a door hanger at their homes, making phone calls and sending notes.

Helpful resources

Allen said several helpful leadership tools can be found at alsbom.org in "leadership resources" under the "ministries" tab and at leadership.lifeway.com.

The third training event in this year's intentional leader series will be July 25 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Prattville. Hershael York, senior pastor of Buck Run Baptist Church in Frankfort, Kentucky, and dean of Southern Seminary's School of Theology and author of several books on preaching, will speak.

For more information, go to leadercareal.org/event/intentional-leader-series or contact Allen at 800-264-1225, ext. 2210, or by email at kallen@alsbom.org.

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Using sports as an influence

IMB reaching thousands of coaches in Central Asia through athletics and training

Growing up, sports were a huge part of International Mission Board worker Wes Blakely's world.

In high school he lettered in three sports. He continued to play at the collegiate level. After college, he was a volunteer coach.

Now, sports play just as big of a part in his ministry on the mission field.

Blakely has been coaching sports in a school and a few clubs in Central Asia where he serves. Through this, he's seen a number of people become curious about the Christian faith and some even turn to Jesus.

Far reach

But, Blakely couldn't foresee the far reach of his ministry, in this Central Asian country where he lives with his wife and kids. Re-

cently, he received the opportunity to influence thousands of coaches at all levels around the country.

Desiring better performances after the latest Olympics, government leaders heard that American athletes were living in the region.

Biblical worldview

They figured this might be their solution.

The invitation was extended for Blakely and friends in the U.S. to bring their expertise in athletics and training. They'd be given influence over thousands of coaches. Whatever curriculum they developed would be passed on and others would follow it.

Blakely never hides the fact that he is a Christian and that his faith shapes what he teaches and how he coaches.

He shares that sports, coaching, athletics — all of it — should be seen from a biblical worldview.

In sports, an athlete pursues excellence, has a competitive spirit, aims to win, but people are to be



IMB photo

Kids play football in the streets of a small neighborhood in Konya, Turkey. Once known as Iconium, Konya, it was one of the missionary destinations of the Apostle Paul.

Outside the town of Astara, Azerbaijan, a group of Talysh men spend an afternoon enjoying a game of soccer in an empty field.



IMB photo

valued above all else. Most importantly, as with everything in life, it should all be used for God's glory.

Training that will eventually reach thousands of coaches has already begun. The prayer is that this teaching influences coaches, who in turn influence athletes, who then influence society.

Open door

"We weren't looking for this opportunity," Blakely said. "We were praying for the Lord to use sports to influence people, but we had no idea that this door was going to be opened. We realized, 'OK, God you are way bigger than we realize, and

you're seeking to reach this whole society.'"

He had been praying for God to move among the people where he and his wife live and work. They planted their lives there, and Blakely has been praying for a harvest for nearly 20 years, the entire time he's been serving in the area.

While Blakely has other big dreams, like seeing one church planted for every 1,000 people in a city where hundreds of thousands reside, he's taken heart that this opportunity for gospel access has been opened, especially after so many years of waiting for a harvest. (IMB)

"We realized, 'OK, God you are way bigger than we realize, and you're seeking to reach this whole society.'"

Wes Blakely
International Mission Board worker

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 28

Explore the Bible

By Ben Stubblefield

Visiting assistant professor of Christian studies, University of Mobile



DO YOU LOVE ME?

John 21:15–23

Do you? (15–17)

In many ways, John's narrative reaches a natural conclusion in 20:30–31. This is why scholars refer to chapter 21 as John's epilogue, bookending the prologue of John in 1:1–18.

Chapter 21 opens with a scene of the disciples fishing. I think it is reasonable to suggest that the disciples are flirting with returning to their former ways of life.

They are elated in the resurrection but unsure of what they are supposed to do next. So they turn to fishing because they are, after all, by trade fishermen. But they catch no fish until Jesus' miracle, at which point Peter hurries to shore.

This miracle is important because it mirrors the event described in Luke 5 early in Jesus' ministry when He calls the men to become His disciples. More importantly, it is after that great catch that Jesus initially commissions these men to lay down their nets and become "fishers of men" (Luke 5:10).

It is likely that Jesus performs this miracle after His resurrection in order to reorient, reclaim and remind His disciples of what He has called them to do. He is not done with them yet. They cannot go back to bringing fish into nets when the Lord has anointed them to bring people into the Kingdom.

As the lead apostle, Peter, who has betrayed the Lord most deeply, must undergo a similar kind of reclamation.

It was three times and over a charcoal fire that he denied the Lord. Thus, Jesus extends to him a redemption over a charcoal fire (v. 9), asking him three times if he would love, instead of deny, Him.

Will you? (18–19)

Our Lord continues to commission and prepare Peter for a future

of difficulty and death.

Few of us would want to consider what kind of death looms ahead of us, and it would be difficult to get catalyzed to serve a King with faithfulness who forecasts our martyrdom. But that is exactly what Peter hears from Jesus, and that is exactly the kind of leader for the Church that he becomes.

The Lord calls to Peter, "Follow me!" Those are the same words with which Jesus began summoning His disciples, and they are fitting words with which to end His instructions to them.

At the core of Christ's ministry, that is His invitation.

What about ...? (20–23)

Here we might understand Peter to be complaining about his prognosis, but I think it is better to understand him as curious. John is very close to Jesus (13:23–25; 19:26–27). So if fellowship with Jesus will lead in time to Peter's death, it's normal to wonder what might happen to John.

But Jesus redirects Peter to consider his future in the Kingdom and no one else's. Comparisons cause controversy, jealousy and greed. The Lord, therefore, reminds Peter that his job is to follow and let Him handle John.

It may seem a strangely trivial way to end a Gospel, but this moment was crucial for the early church. As Christianity expanded, there was clearly an opportunity for squabbling among its central leadership.

The early apostles could have hindered the growth of the Church by fostering their own sense of self-importance. Instead, they saw themselves as followers of Christ with a particular calling and mission to fulfill. How helpful would such an attitude be for us.

"Jesus said to him, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!'"

John 21:22

Bible Studies for Life

By James R. Strange

Professor of biblical and religious studies, Samford University



AVOIDING A CRITICAL SPIRIT

Numbers 12:1–15

Today's lesson derives from a crucial moment in the story of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt and wilderness wandering. Challenges come from an unexpected direction. Moses' siblings contest God's leadership of the people through him exclusively.

Apparently Moses is the youngest of the three (Ex. 2:1–4; 6:20; 7:7; 15:20; 1 Chron. 6:1–3), but the story makes no mention of rivalry from birth order. We do see, however, alienation borne of envy.

Comparing yourself to others can lead to a critical spirit. (1–3)

The issue with Moses' Cushite wife is unclear. Cush is usually thought to be ancient Ethiopia, south of Egypt, but because Zipporah is from Midian (10:29), Cush might refer to a region in the northwestern Arabian peninsula named for one of six sons of Abraham and Keturah (Gen. 25:1–2).

Are Miriam and Aaron concerned about a non-Israelite yet ancient familial influence on Moses?

Aaron and Miriam say that the Lord has also spoken through them because both are prophets. Miriam uses song, dance and instruments to lead God's people after the defeat of Pharaoh's army (Ex. 15:20–21, the first mention of Miriam's name). Aaron serves as Moses' spokesperson when he confronts Pharaoh (Ex. 7:1; 4:10–17). He then becomes the first Israelite high priest (Ex. 28; Num. 17).

Moses is indeed "very humble" or "meek," for he will not defend himself against the challenge.

Criticism of others can be a form of questioning God's work. (4–9)

The "pillar of cloud" recalls God's leading of Israel by day (Ex. 13), protection at the Red Sea (Ex.

14) and giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai (Ex. 24).

Throughout the Bible, clouds indicate God's presence, wisdom, guidance and power (Ps. 97:2; Job 37:15–16; Dan. 7:13; Mark 14:62). Here, the pillar of cloud reminds Aaron and Miriam (and readers) that to this point, God has led and protected Israel as promised. Therefore, by challenging Moses, the siblings question

God's provision.

God affirms that He does not talk with Moses the way He talks with other prophets who receive visions and dreams.

No, God's dealing with Moses is unique in three ways: Moses alone is entrusted with all of God's people ("house"), God doesn't give him confusing vi-

sions but speaks "face to face," and Moses alone sees "the form of the Lord" (see Ex. 33–34).

According to God, Miriam and Aaron should know this and know better than to challenge Moses.

Confess a critical spirit and return to God. (10–15)

We don't know why Miriam alone endures an affliction of the skin. We do see that she is shut out of the camp for seven days, the normal period for dealing with ritual impurity due to skin disease (Lev. 13:4; 14:8).

Hence, Miriam's envy results in her alienation from her family and also from all her people, and she requires restoration.

In a similar way, we see Aaron's resentment of his brother turn to anguish for his sister. For his part, Moses, also distraught, petitions God on behalf of a sibling who had questioned his authority.

Note the people's gracious response. They don't leave without Miriam but wait for her to return.

In this case, envy leads to alienation, which, by God's grace, yields to forgiveness and restoration.

"With [Moses] I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the Lord."

Numbers 12:8

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs Frontz
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama author's new book addresses walking through 'hard' times

Stacy Averette wears many hats. She's a wife and mother. She first became a staff member at her church at 18 years old. She has a doctorate in education. She helps others find their way through life as a coach and consultant. She is an avid thrifter and "do-it-yourselfer."

She is also a writer. Averette has posted on her blog, StacyAverette.com, regularly since 2012 and recently released her first book, "When Life is Hard: 50 Reminders that God is Near."

The book was born out of Averette's experiences working at various Southern Baptist churches. As a staff member, she led women, sharing what she was learning about God. But when she became a stay-at-home and homeschool mom, her platform changed.

Her children became her new audience, she said — until she found an online community receptive to her wisdom gained by experience.

Broader audience

"I loved sharing that with [my children], but I also was hungry to have another place to be creative and to share — particularly with other women. Around 2006, I discovered blogs," she said.

Blogging gave her the audience



Photo courtesy of Stacy Averette

STACY AVERETTE

she wanted and she was satisfied with that medium.

Not sensing she was qualified to write a book, Averette avoided the idea at first.

It took family and friends telling her they wanted to share her ideas with others through print for her to begin considering the idea.

Ultimately it was her husband, Eric, who encouraged her to start the project, observing that she "already had a book in her blog."

With the quiet the pandemic provided, she finally made the decision that it was time to put the blog into book form. "When Life is Hard" was the result.

Times of need

Practical and easy to relate to, each chapter addresses a specific time of need in a person's life.

Each chapter ends in a "Takeaway Truth" — a Bible verse related to its main point.

Though all of the chapters stem from Averette's personal experiences, some are more personally mean-

ingful to her than others. Several even trigger an emotional reaction because she can remember what she was going through while writing them.

For example, the chapter "When You Want an Easy Button" is a result of Averette's desire for order and efficiency in her life. She's always been a manager of her home and business, and she has an organized, Type A personality approach to most tasks.

"But I do know my best writing, my best speaking, my most profound interactions with God have come in the hardest times of my life," she said.

Another chapter that stands out to Averette is "When You Can't Sleep."

"Sleeplessness has been an issue for me my whole life," she said. "I've never slept. I've blamed it on parenting, staying up late studying, all those years of school. But as an empty nester, I don't have any reason not to sleep now."

When those sleepless times come, she goes back and re-reads the chapter on the subject to remind herself that many in the Bible experienced sleeplessness — and God used those moments.

"I've learned to say, 'OK, God, why are You waking me up? What are You trying to say?'"

"The middle of the night is the only time most of us are quiet and still," she said. "He is longing to have our undivided attention and sometimes in the middle of the night — at 3 o'clock in the morning — that's when He has mine."

American culture emphasizes how

people need to be independent and self-sufficient, but Averette believes that with God, it's just the opposite.

She admitted she has pursued perfection, only for God to remind her that it is unattainable. Speaking and writing have not come easy for her either, she said. It can be frightening to attempt to convey what's in her heart, she said.

Trust the Holy Spirit

"Then He reminds me, 'OK, you probably can't.' That's why you have to trust the Holy Spirit," she said.

Through all of the 50 scenarios Averette highlights in the book, she has learned with certainty that God is good — even through times of deep pain and suffering, loss and disappointment and personal failure.

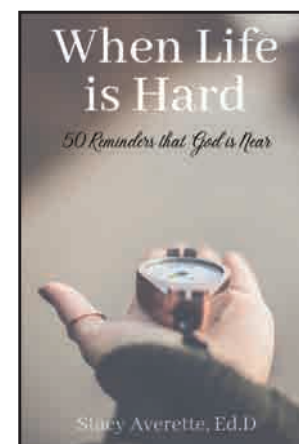
"I know that for sure because I've experienced it," she said. "Certainly, more hard times will come in my life but God's going to be right in the middle, faithful and comforting and guiding."

"We're going to have trouble in life whether we're 27 or 57 — or 97. But to walk with God in it all ... I can't imagine any other life."

"God is so full of surprises and adventure. It feels like an adventure, and it's the best kind of adventure."

Averette lives in Anniston and is available for coaching and speaking. Her blog, StacyAverette.com, features posts on topics ranging from inspiration to decluttering to parenting.

Her book, "When Life is Hard," is available on Amazon in paperback and on Kindle.



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.

LARGEST-CIRCULATED PAPER IN THE STATE

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Church brand

By Mark MacDonald
The Baptist Paper

5 logo ideas to create ‘visual wrapper’ for your church

Do you really need a church logo? Yes. Need ideas to help you create an attention-grabbing church logo, one that will be a visual wrapper for your church brand? Read on.

First, let’s discuss the overarching principles of a logo and how one will help represent who you are as a ministry.

Is it biblically wrong to have a church logo? No. We need logos because we live in a visual world. That’s why a controlled visual wrapper is ideal to help consumers and community members identify an organization, product, service, etc.

How can you tell if you’re successful with your church logo? Your congregation should recognize it even if your church’s name isn’t seen next to your logo symbol.

So how can your church design a logo that stands out? Here are five free church logo ideas to help your church in the branding process:

1. The logo must visually represent what you’re known for.

The test? Your congregation should love wearing something with your logo on it. If they don’t, it’s time to change either what you’re known for or what your church logo looks like. In a sense, the logo represents the congregation, not just the church. If you have a thread or tagline, that should accompany your logo for most uses so the visual connects with what you’re known for and vice versa. Your brand ultimately is your thread, and the logo simply offers a visual wrapper for what you’re known for.



Unsplash.com

2. Be unique and simple.

When creating a visual for your church, design trends must prevail. Simple is the trend right now because church logos need to be recognized at very small sizes and formats, especially on digital channels. Therefore, flatten and simplify (e.g., remove shadows and gradients). Resist illustrations and photos. Another idea is to make your logo unique in order to singularly represent your unique church brand.

3. Have hierarchy and balance.

With any design, ensure there’s balance in the symbol. Be careful of hierarchy when adding your name and tagline near the symbol. Ask yourself these

questions: Do all words need to be the same size? Do you even need the word “church” if your denomination is in your name? Fault to simplicity by creating a well-balanced logo that looks professionally designed. Decide if the symbol should have more presence than the words or if the words should be dominant. It’s up to you — just don’t have them battling for attention. A well-designed logo should last at least 15 years.

4. Limit versions; control extensions.

Church logos should have horizontal and vertical versions so you have a logo for multiple uses. Resist too many versions though, or you could lose control of your overall look. When

extending your church logo into individual ministry logos, be careful not to have too many symbol or font variations. It’s always safest and best to use your main church symbol with one font layout for all ministries, resembling your main church logo. Don’t let your ministries compete with your church as separate brands or silos. They’re part of you.

5. Religious symbols are *unnecessary*.

The purpose of your church logo is to uniquely represent your ministries with a visual wrapper. Because there are many churches, your logo needs to be different from other ministries to avoid confusion. Many churches use prominent religious symbols (a cross, a dove, etc.) in their logo. This can create a challenge when you are trying to make the logo unique. Your church probably has a religious word in its name, so most will understand your logo is for a religious organization. If you do want to have a religious symbol, try to make it secondary or subtle. Be creative and unique.

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

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‘All in with Jesus’

By Myriah Snyder
International Mission Board

Art ministry in Spain leads to salvation

Henar was searching for the truth everywhere she thought she could find it — her Catholic background, through Jehovah’s Witness friends and even New Age religion. She tried crystals, meditation, energy and healing.

The search left her overwhelmed and without peace.

That’s when she met Emilio and Hannah Marrero, International Mission Board missionaries to the Basque region of Spain, through an online Bible study. She connected deeply with them and the message they taught using art.

The Marreros use a unique outlook on art to share the gospel. The approach works in a region like Basque where they take pride in their history. Art and religion are part of the area’s historical culture and current pop culture.

“I studied art history and all we did was look at pictures of Jesus throughout the histories of European countries. Art has always been united with a religious perspective,” Emilio said. “A postmodern artist is already creating religious art. It’s just a relativistic, chaotic piece though.”

Mixed messages

Anywhere the couple went, they saw brightly colored pop culture posters touting everything from feminism to nationalism plastered on walls, poles and windows. Beautifully designed pamphlets were also everywhere.

The mixed messages were countering and confusing. The couple wondered how they could make a gospel impact through this medium the people of Basque already understood.

So the missionaries decided to



IMB photo

In the Basque region of Spain, any public space is plastered with posters and brochures touting new ideas and things to do. IMB missionaries Emilio and Hannah Marrero post their own religious posters among the mix. Each has a QR code leading to a website designed for digital evangelism.

enter that artistic space with the hope of the gospel.

They designed some posters and pamphlets that emphasized different gospel truths. The street art is designed to not only give a quick message about Jesus but to start deeper conversations, like the one they had with Henar. On each poster and pamphlet is a QR code that leads to a website called Atejejo and an opportunity to share the gospel in a clear, narrative-based way.

“We are intentionally trying to go back to bringing the gospel narrative to the forefront,” Emilio said. “Everybody’s already being religious in art, and we just want to show the gospel.”

A post in an online community for the Marreros’ Bible study led to Henar’s first encounter with the missionary family. As she joined

the Bible study community, her interest was further piqued through their work. Henar read their pamphlet “Todas Las Cosas,” explaining their faith through illustrations, and she connected on a heart level with the art and messages in a way she’d never done with other pamphlets of information. She wanted to know more about the Marreros’ God. As they reached out, she saw their love for people and their community. That’s when everything changed.

Stepping out

When they looked through the narrative and discussed gospel truths proclaimed in their art, Henar knew she couldn’t keep one foot in Christianity and one in New Age. It was time to fully step out and put her faith in God.

“What makes Christianity so dif-

ferent from everything else I’ve tried is the simplicity,” Henar said, referring to the hours and hours she spent each day meditating and partaking in New Age practices that included crystal healing. “With Christianity, you only have to put your faith in God. It doesn’t mean that my life is perfect, but my mental health is much better, and I feel so much peace knowing that God, Yahweh, is holding my hand.”

World’s greatest problem

With so many different beliefs represented in a postmodern world, Emilio isn’t surprised at how much energy goes into trying to find this peace. He knows the world’s greatest problem is spiritual lostness. So the IMB missionaries found a way to present the gospel solution in a forum most in Basque understand. The combination of art posters, pamphlets and their website allows them to have deep conversations in a space where people are already giving ideas.

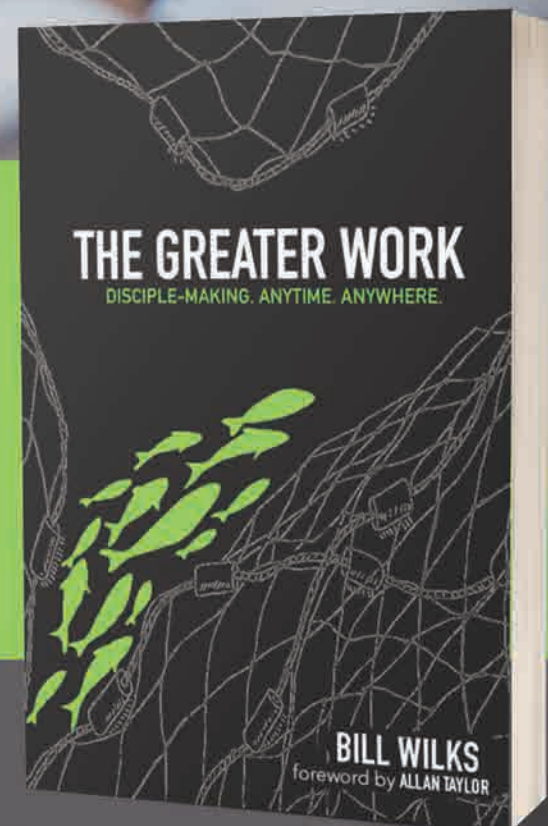
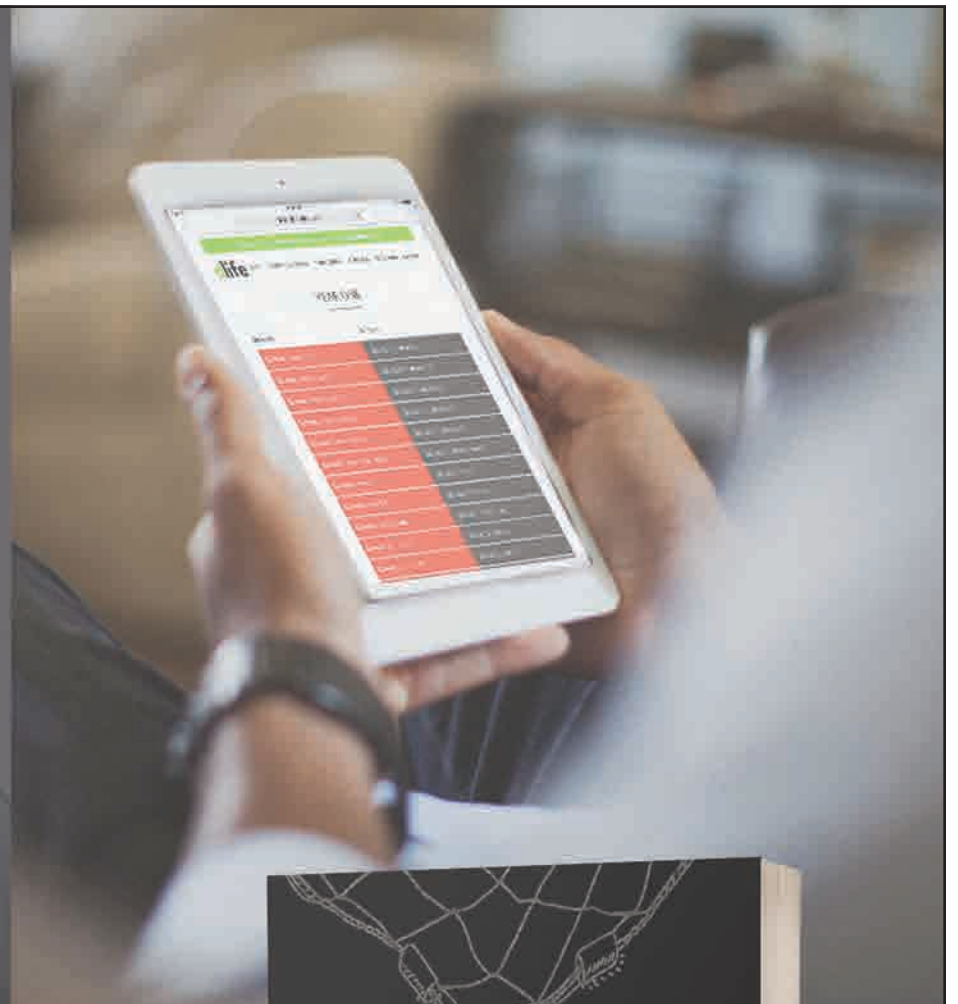
“The art is central to the gospel, it defines or redefines everything that is bleeding into this culture — the hope of having peace, shalom and harmony — and understanding who we are as humans,” Hannah added. “It starts to just point in a different direction.”

For Henar, that difference is being “all in with Jesus.” She’s being discipled. She delights in His Word. The Bible is her best friend. And she is so grateful for the supportive Christian community around her — a direct result of the Marreros’ ministry.

EDITOR’S NOTE — This story was originally published by the International Mission Board.

d+life

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Why is face-to-face evangelism more difficult?

By Chuck Lawless

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I could list all kinds of reasons why evangelism is difficult.

It can be frightening to try to speak truth into someone else's life. We may not have all the answers to somebody's questions. A friend might reject us because of our attempt to share the gospel with him or her. Even worse, we might face persecution — particularly around the world — for our faithfulness.

Supernatural enemy

Behind all these reasons is also a supernatural enemy who wants to keep us from telling the good news (Eph. 6:10–12).

There is, though, another reason on my mind that explains why evangelism is more difficult. I realized it a few years ago at the gym, and it seems the problem has only gotten worse.

Let me explain. Many years ago, I began going to the gym because I needed the exercise to take care of

the body God has given me, and I wanted to be around non-believers more.

There I found a bunch of people who cared for their physical well-being but thought little about their spiritual condition. Back then I did have ongoing opportunities to speak of Jesus at the counter, in the locker room, on the gym floor and even in the parking lot.

It's not so easy anymore. On one hand, it's increasingly difficult to talk to anyone when everybody is wearing headphones or earbuds. Many drive to the gym with their

music in their ears, and they seldom hear anything other than what they alone can hear. It's tough to tell people about Jesus when nobody's listening.

Nobody's really talking

On the other hand, that's just a symptom of what's going on around us.

We communicate via text — and even then often without complete words. In fact, quite often we speak with emojis. Then we're engrossed in our phones, even when we are trying to have a conversation

with someone. We listen with one ear while our mind is more committed elsewhere. We take little time to talk because it seems no one wants to hear.

This is my point: It's hard to do evangelism when nobody's really talking to anyone.

As believers, we — beginning with me, for I'm guilty too — must take the initiative to engage people, draw their interest and attention to the gospel and speak the good news clearly to them in the few minutes they might grant us. That means we create opportunities by initiating conversations, listening closely to others and taking those conversations clearly and concisely to the gospel.

It's just hard to do.

Would you pray for me that I would stay faithful to this task?

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