

# The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

## Remember

Sept. 15 marks 60th anniversary of Birmingham church bombing

By Denise George  
The Alabama Baptist

**S**ix decades ago, a horrific act of racially motivated violence proved to be the blast heard around the world.

On Sunday morning, Sept. 15, 1963, a bomb planted by white supremacists exploded at 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, just minutes before the worship service was scheduled to begin.

The explosion at the predominantly Black church blew a huge hole in the church wall and killed four girls in the downstairs restroom. A number of church members were also injured.

It was a tragic wake-up call that

demonstrated the intense violence, hatred and unfairness faced by African Americans in the South.

The entire world mourned the victims: Addie Mae Collins (age 14), Carole Robertson (age 14), Cynthia Wesley (age 14) and Carol Denise McNair (age 11).

The image of innocent children becoming victims of such violence made the struggle for civil rights impossible to ignore or dismiss.

Their senseless deaths sparked a renewed urgency in the civil rights movement. The public outrage following the incident contributed to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The FBI identified four members of the Ku Klux Klan as suspects in the bombing: Bobby Frank Cherry, Thomas Blanton, Robert Chambliss and Herman Frank Cash.

(See '6 ways,' page 8)



16TH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH IN BIRMINGHAM

The Alabama Baptist photo by Neisha Roberts

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The crossword puzzle  
can be found on page 15.



Freepik photo

# Grandparenting Summit set for October

National Grandparents Day is Sunday, Sept. 10, and it's not too late for your church to develop a plan to honor these very special adults. Legacy Coalition is a good place to start.

The organization's mission is to help grandparents grow in their biblical role so they can have a greater spiritual impact on their families. Legacy Coalition provides resources and events, including a free downloadable Grandparents Day 2023 kit and the annual Legacy Grandparenting Summit.

The Grandparents Day kit includes printable bulletin inserts, bookmarks, sermon notes and social media templates, plus a guide with ideas on how to celebrate grandparents with food, fun and fellowship.

**Annual conference**

The kit also includes information on this year's Legacy Grandparenting Summit. The conference is for grandparents who:

- ▶ Want to see their grandchildren follow Christ.
- ▶ Desire to leave a lasting legacy of love.
- ▶ Want to influence generations of their family for Christ.

The live event will be held at Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, Texas, Oct. 19–20, but three Alabama churches are among those across the nation hosting broadcasts of the events.

**Alabama events**

Events in Alabama will be held at:

- ▶ Mountain Brook Community Church, Birmingham, Oct. 19–20.
- ▶ Shades Crest Baptist Church, Birmingham, Oct. 20–21.
- ▶ First Baptist Church Dadeville, Nov. 2–3.

This year's speakers include Tony Evans, pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship; Mark Yarbrough, president of Dallas Theological Seminary; and Jean and Jeremiah Castille, founders of the Jeremiah Castille Foundation; and several others.

Now a minister, Jeremiah was a star cornerback at the University of Alabama and played six seasons in the NFL (1983–1988) for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Denver Broncos. Jean is an author and speaker.

Legacy Coalition also hosts a webinar, Grand Monday Nights, every Monday evening and offers curriculum for small groups.

Find out more at [legacycoalition.com](http://legacycoalition.com). (Carrie Brown McWhorter)

To register for the Legacy Grandparenting Summit 2023 or to find information on events and resources related to grandparenting, visit [legacycoalition.com](http://legacycoalition.com).

## The Alabama Baptist

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

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## OPINION

# RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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



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@RashionalThts

## Shout out to all the grandparents and great grandparents

**T**he creativity and energy exhibited among all the grandparents and great grandparents — and even great, great grandparents — I know inspires me.

Everything from unique travel experiences to annual cousins camp in the backyard to sharing in school car line duty, grandparents are as involved in their grandchildren's lives as they ever were.

Some are even raising their grandchildren or co-parenting in some form.

Others are embracing the new intentional grandparenting concept and building in daily, weekly or monthly moments to invest in their grandchildren's spiritual development.

A quick internet search will lead you to a variety of online resources to help as you look to be more involved with your grands, even if your health limits your interactions or you live a long distance away.

At grandkidsmatter.org, the National Association for Grandparenting states, "Grandparents have a profound influence on future generations. ... New research demonstrates that grandchildren thrive when grandparents are proactive in supporting and developing a relationship with their grandchildren,

and grandparents thrive when they are actively involved in their grandchildren's lives (Bengtson, 2014).

"Grandparents are important contributors to children and society, and we are here as a clearinghouse of information, bringing top-notch resources and insights to grandparents," the NAG site states. "We are also helping to lead an international effort to bring attention to the role of grandparenting.

"Grandparents, you matter.

Don't underestimate your value or importance."

Legacy Coalition focuses primarily on helping grandparents have a greater spiritual influence on their families.

"In just a few years, Legacy Coalition has seen thousands of Christian grandparents find purpose and have a greater spiritual impact on their grandchildren's

lives," according to reports found at legacycoalition.com

Another group focused on

spiritual legacies is the Christian Grandparenting Network.

"Our mission is to encourage, equip and empower grandparents to pass a legacy of faith in Christ to future generations," CGN states at christiangrandparenting.com.

CGN offers a variety of resources, blog posts and suggestions for how to mark Grandparents' Day of Prayer on Sept. 10, which coincides with National Grandparents Day.

A plea from CGN: "We need to get on our knees, humble ourselves, seek God's face, repent of our sin and intercede on behalf of our children, and grandchildren."

**CELEBRATE  
NATIONAL  
GRANDPARENTS  
DAY  
&  
GRANDPARENTS  
DAY OF PRAYER  
SEPT. 10**

## Nearly (or newly) retired? Stay tuned for tips for this next season; Been retired a little while now? We want to hear your stories

**C**oming soon — a periodic special section printed in The Alabama Baptist to help those nearly or newly retired make the transition to this next season of life.

We want to partner with you to help set you up for success.

To provide helpful guidance, practical tips and suggested resources, we need to hear from those of you who have already been around the block related to retirement.

Help us know what has worked well for you and what parts were difficult.

► What do you realize now that you wish you had known prior to retiring?

► What are some practical do's and don'ts?

► How far in advance should we think about and prepare for retirement?

► Along with thinking through and setting goals related to finances, what else should be considered

when preparing for retirement?

► What surprised you the most the first few days into your retirement?

► What does a successful retirement mean to you?

Please send your comments to:

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# Your Voice



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

## 'Enjoy the ride': 6 ways to spark more generosity in your life

By Matt Tullos

Tennessee Baptist Mission Board

I have regretted many purchases, but one thing I've never regretted is the money I gave away.

Scientists are now saying that generosity actually changes your brain, and that generous people are happier people. But not only does it bless us to give, it also blesses God. He loves a cheerful giver.

Perhaps the greatest adventure you'll experience is the journey of generosity.

Here are six ways to increase your generosity quotient:

### 1. *Begin with the tithe.*

Tithing is God's way of developing our generosity muscles. In the

Old Testament, tithing is a start. It's our way of saying to God, "I trust you with all of my finances."

As it's been said, the tithe is the one promise in the Bible where God invites us to test Him. "Prove me," He says in Malachi 3:10.

### 2. *Transfer ownership of everything you have to God.*

Look around your house and say to God, "These shoes, clothes, furniture, kitchen items, laptop, TV and everything else — it's all yours, God. Thanks for letting me use them all for Your glory."

It's really amazing to see what transferring the ownership of everything does. It forces you to think about where you drive God's car,

what you watch on God's TV and what sites you visit on God's laptop.

### 3. *Give anonymously.*

By doing this, you are paper shredding your ego. When you give anonymously to a person in need, your gifts are incarnational. In other words, people receive it as if it were given from the Lord Himself.

### 4. *Give sacrificially.*

It's easy for a millionaire to give a thousand dollars. That's not sacrifice. Sacrificial giving is dangerous gen-

erosity, and it's the kind of gift that touches the heart of God.

We like comfort, pleasure, entertainment and convenience. But when we give sacrificially, we are placed in the position of saying "no" to our earthly desires to make room for heavenly desires.

### 5. *Practice an eternal mindset.*

In financial investments, you've heard it said, "take the long view." By that they mean 10, 20, even 30 years down the road.

That's a great plan for financial independence, but Jesus cares about what our investments in generosity will mean 10,000 years from now. When we give our treasures to advance the gospel of Jesus, we are making an eternal impact.

### 6. *Enjoy the ride.*

It really is an adventure. When we give, we have better stories than the folks who hoard riches for themselves. Everything is more enjoyable because we become more like God. He is our example. How much did He give? See John 3:16.

Our Father is inviting us on a shared journey. He's saying, "Why don't you give me what you have, and I'll give you what I have. Let's do this together."

In reality, God doesn't need your blessings, but we sure need His. Once we see generosity as a partnership and a journey with God, it will make our brief time on earth much more exciting and transcendent.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — Matt Tullos directs stewardship development for the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board. This article first appeared in the Baptist and Reflector and has been adapted for space.*



TULLOS

## Letters to the Editor

Thank you for the article on Mrs. Glenn Ingouf in the Aug. 24 edition. You captured her heart and life well.

Having known Mrs. Glenn and her husband, John, for years, I can attest they are models of New Testament discipleship. Their commitment to our Lord and His church, their missions dedication and their walk with our Lord inspire all who know them.

Thank you for highlighting the life of one of Southern Baptist's finest missionaries.

**Phil Waldrep**  
Decatur

I look forward to getting your paper and reading it regularly. In fact, I read it and pass it on to others to read.

In your Aug. 3 edition, the page 6 story titled "Sound of Freedom film finds box office success" is concerning. I think calling the film a success needs to be taken in context. Information shared from the McCain Institute provides a more realistic view and should be considered.

While the film's intent is to draw awareness to child trafficking, I believe any portrayal of the issue needs to be more realistic.

For instance, in the Aug. 6 edition of Mississippi's Clarion-Ledger, Kristen Abrams, senior director for combating human trafficking at the McCain Institute, shares her concern.

"No one should question the importance of raising awareness ... (but) the depictions of child trafficking and the rescue tactics celebrated ... are highly sensationalized, misleading and do more harm than good," Abrams writes. "[W]e may miss" opportunities for broader, global solutions.

**Truitt Hobby**  
Cleveland, Mississippi

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# “Engaging students at your church will ensure the next generation remains in the church.”

MARK MACDONALD

*Church communication strategist and founder of BeKnownForSomething.com*

The Holy Spirit gives every believer a gift to use in service in the church, so all generations should be considered in a church's recruiting strategy.

**Pastor Aaron Summers**  
First Baptist Church  
Crowley, Texas

“I really felt like God had placed me in this role, and because He fulfilled my desire to be a career first responder, then I would serve Him through it,” said **Tommy Neiman**, firefighter and paramedic, who responds to calls if needed and helps with the training division of the St. Lucie County (Florida) Fire Department.

“It takes an outside-of-the-box mentality to engage the lost in our community [in Chesterfield, New Jersey],” said **Buff McNickle**, director of compassion ministries for the Baptist Resource Network of Pennsylvania/South Jersey.

**Ashley Veneman**, a small group leader at Bellevue Baptist Church in the Memphis area, believes youth leaders have to talk through “the why” of what they believe. “If [they] don't know why ... then I feel like we've really failed in equipping them.”

“The anxiety of [selecting our gender] is something that we were not created to have to bear,” said **Katie McCoy**, director of women's ministry for the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

“In ministry you end up with lots of stories and scars and all kinds of stuff. To be able to have a group of guys you can confide in — it's extremely valuable,” said **Larry Hyche**, who focuses on men's spiritual development for the Alabama State Board of Missions.

“Our message to our community is simple,” said **Hope Earwood**,

director of development and communications for The Pregnancy Network in North Carolina. “No matter where you serve, every person makes an impact on the life of another. You have a vital role to play in this mission. And there is a place for you here.”

The state has no authority to penalize individuals for their religious beliefs. This is a bedrock principle of our constitutional order, and one that has been affirmed repeatedly in court decisions at all levels.

**Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, SBC**

“I'm just praying we're going to continue to see these puddles of God's grace and pray they will unite

into a major river,” said **Rob Jackson**, director of the office of church health for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, on how First Baptist Church Florence, which only had one college student prayed, “God, would You help us reach more people?” In the past several months, more than a dozen college students have been baptized and more than 70 college students attended during the last academic year.

Keep studying, keep returning to those pages, and watch how God will continue to shape and grow your mind and heart in a way that leads you closer to Him.

**Jessica Ingram**

the-scroll.com

“Finding ‘new’ truth”

## Grandparents Day of Prayer sample prayer

Dearest Lord Jesus,

We come to you today, praying for each of our grandchildren and their parents.

While these loved ones are precious to us, they are more adored by You, their Lord and Savior.

We pray You bless them with good health, sound minds, healthy emotions and loving hearts.

Please guide and guard them in this challenging world.

Let them know You intimately, love You passionately and serve You faithfully all the days of their lives. ...

We pray You equip us to be the godly grandparents, which You envisioned when You created us.

May we always love our grandchildren as You love them.

May we understand them as You understand them and view them as You view them.

Lord Jesus, we now place our thanksgivings and prayer requests for our grandchildren and their parents at the foot of the cross.

(Mention your children and grandchildren by name, giving thanks and offering special prayer requests on their behalf.)

All this, we ask in Your precious and powerful Name, Jesus! Amen.

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — *Cathy Jacobs and Cheryl Cargill gave permission to the Christian Grandparenting Network (christiangrandparenting.com) to adapt and use this prayer for this year's Grandparents Day of Prayer.*

*Cathy is founder of Pass the Legacy and author of “Pass the Legacy: 7 Keys for Grandparents Making a Difference.” Cheryl serves as the South Carolina GrandCamp registrar and editor of the newsletter, Grandparents on the Go.*



“You can still be the salt of the earth on a low-sodium diet.”



# 3 stories you should know



Photo by Katelyn Maten/The Alabama Baptist

University of Mobile students, faculty and staff gathered for Prayer Room on Aug. 13 prior to the first day of fall classes. Prayer Room is a gathering of students for a night of worship and prayer led by the UM Worship Collective, a community of worship leaders and songwriters consisting of students, alumni, faculty and staff from the University of Mobile. The Worship Collective serves to lead UM chapels in genuine expressions of worship. (UM)

## *EC announces review of McLaurin departure*

The SBC Executive Committee announced Aug. 28 it is conducting an “internal review” into Willie McLaurin’s sudden departure from his role as interim president and CEO.

McLaurin resigned Aug. 17 due to the discovery of false education credentials provided to the EC’s presidential search committee.

Jon Wilke, director of media relations for the EC, said the EC is investigating a variety of questions related to McLaurin’s hiring in advance of the Sept. 18–19 SBC Executive Committee meeting in Nashville.

The EC is expected to officially elect an interim president and CEO at the September meeting. Jonathan Howe, EC vice president for communications, is currently serving in that role. (The Baptist Paper)

## *IMB seeks volunteers for Paris Olympics*

The International Mission Board is still seeking volunteers to help with evangelistic outreach efforts during the Paris Olympics in 2024.

Up to 15.9 million visitors are expected to descend on France’s capital from July to September 2024. IMB teams are eager to partner with Southern Baptists from the U.S. who will work alongside French Baptists and others from across the globe.

NextGen students and young adults have specific opportunities to go through Hands On Paris, June 15–Sept. 12. Other opportunities to volunteer include during the Pre-Olympics, May 19–27, June 16–24, and June 23–July 1; the Olympic Games, July 21–Aug. 11; and Paralympics, Aug. 25–Sept. 8.

For more information, contact Margie Drane, IMB Olympics coordinator, at [mdrane@imb.org](mailto:mdrane@imb.org). (IMB)

# Persecuted church

## *China officials allegedly taking steps to eradicate Christian symbols*

WENZHOU, China — Forcible removal of church crosses is resuming in China, according to the human rights group ChinaAid.

ChinaAid received communication anonymously from a pastor who said governments of Shanxi town, Yongjia County and Lucheng District issued a July mandate that churches remove Christian words from their premises.

“For instance, bronze plaques and characters on church walls bearing the words ‘Emmanuel,’ ‘Jesus,’ ‘Christ’ and ‘Jehovah’ were all required to be removed,” ChinaAid said.

An Aug. 3 notice to Dongqiao Church in Zhejiang province states that its cross will be forcibly dismantled, the report states.

Cross demolitions have been happening since

2014. The 2018 effort in Henan province removed crosses, burned Bibles and destroyed Christian plaques in private homes.

China is No. 16 on Open Doors’ 2023 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.



Photo courtesy of ChinaAid

## *Woman fatally beaten in Uganda hours after becoming Christian*

KAMPALA, Uganda — Hours after putting her faith in Jesus Christ, a Ugandan woman reportedly died at the hands of her husband.

Abudullah Waiswa, a Muslim, fatally beat his wife, Amina Nanfuka, in their home in Bugiri District allegedly because she left Islam to be-

come a Christian, Morning Star News reported.

Nanfuka, a mother of three, stayed with a relative in Kampala in June while receiving treatment for a medical condition. During that time, a pastor visited her to pray for her recovery.

The relative accompanied Nanfuka on her return home and told the woman how to be saved through Jesus Christ. Nanfuka returned to Kampala on July 8 and put her faith in Jesus Christ the next day. Subsequently, Waiswa allegedly strangled and beat Nanfuka unconscious.

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



# Alabama news

## OBITUARIES

► **John Francis Sigler Sr.**, former pastor of several Baptist churches in south Alabama, died Aug. 10. He was 69.

A Mobile native, Sigler graduated from B.C. Rain High School, where he met his wife, Emma. At 22, he gave his life to Christ at Riverside Baptist Church in Mobile and was later baptized at Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile. Then at 45, he felt the call to gospel ministry and was licensed at Creola First Baptist Church and later ordained at Tibbie Baptist Church.



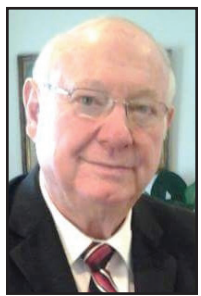
SIGLER

Sigler began his pastoral ministry at Mount Moriah Baptist Church in McIntosh, then served at Springhill Baptist Church in Franklin. His last pastorate was at South Mobile First Baptist Church in Theodore, where he served until he had to step down for health reasons.

He is survived by his wife; sons John Jr., Todd and Matthew; and five grandchildren.

► **Jerry Presnall**, who served as a pastor for more than 50 years in south Alabama, died Aug. 14. He was 78.

Presnall was raised in Saraland and earned a bachelor's degree in theology from Baptist Bible Institute (now the Baptist College of Florida). He began his career in welding and was a first-class welder for many years.



PRESNALL

In 1976, Presnall surrendered to the ministry at Bayou Sara Baptist Church in Saraland, where he was later ordained. He served in ministry for more than 50 years, serving as pastor of a number of Alabama Baptist churches — Tolbert Baptist in Headland, Turnerville Baptist in Chunchula, Southside Baptist in Bay Minette, Creola First Baptist and Axis First Baptist — and in several interim pastorates in Mobile and Washington counties. He also served as pastor of Gulf Crest Baptist Church in Bonifay, Florida.

He is survived by his daughters Darlene, Robin and Cheryl Ann; six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

► **Elouise Williams**, a long-time supporter of and scholarship-raiser for Samford University, died Aug. 25.

A native of Pell City, Williams attended Judson College in Marion and graduated from the University of Alabama. She earned her master's from Columbia University in New York.



WILLIAMS

Before moving to Birmingham in the late 1970s, she taught school in Pell City, the hometown of her husband, Harold. In 2008, a new school there was named after them — the Elouise and Harold Williams Intermediate School.

Williams also developed deep ties to Samford. Her two children, Richard and Anna, both graduated from Samford in the 1980s. From 1986 to 1990, Williams served as president of Samford Auxiliary — now called Legacy League — and in 1990 started an 18-year tenure as its coordinator.

In 2008, the Elouise Wilkins Williams Scholarship was officially established to coincide with her retirement from the organization.

Legacy League now has a growing scholarship endowment due in large part to the Williamses' generosity.

In 2004, the Samford Alumni Association recognized the couple's service by naming them the university's first honorary alumni. Williams was a founding member of Samford's board of overseers and a member of the executive council for Friends of Samford Arts. She and her husband were longtime members of Mountain Brook Baptist Church.

Williams is preceded in death by her husband and son. She is survived by her daughter.

## AUTAUGA ASSOCIATION

► Longtime worship pastor **Mitch Loftin** retired from FBC Prattville in August. He served 20 years as worship pastor at FBC and this past year as senior adult and pastoral care pastor. He and his wife, Cathy, plan to move to Birmingham in retirement.

## DALE ASSOCIATION

► **Ozark Baptist Church** celebrated its 175th anniversary Aug. 20. Worship was led by the church's 829 band with former minister of music Bill Hix directing the congregation and choir. Additional special music included an offertory piano duet by Janet Johns, current pianist, and Laura Pride, former pianist.

Pastor Eric Fuller recognized former pastors and staff. Ron Heddle, a former pastor, was the guest speaker. During the service, Debbie Campbell of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and TAB Media Group, presented a plaque to Fuller.

The celebration included displays, "parlor" fans, a special keepsake booklet and T-shirts worn by many of the church members, including Todd Ledford, deacon chair. A potluck luncheon was served following the service.



LEDFORD

## MONTGOMERY ASSOCIATION

► **Pinedale Baptist Church, Montgomery**, celebrated its 75th anniversary Aug. 6. Former pastor Bill Tucker was the guest preacher.

Special music was provided by Andrew and Carly Lovelady, singing a duet of several hymns of the faith, and Lary Burton, former minister of music, who led the congregation in worship.

Commemorative plaques for the church were presented to Mickey Godwin (right), deacon chair, by Ralph Foster (left), a commissioner of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, and Neal Hughes, director of missions for Montgomery Baptist Association.



ABHC photo

"We had set a goal of 75 attendees, and we had 100 people in attendance," said Dale Huff, interim pastor. "It was a huge success. To God be the glory."

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — Please send news items to [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org). Submissions that include the following information are greatly appreciated:

- complete details of the event, celebration or honor;
- at least one high resolution photo of the event or honoree;
- the name and phone number of a contact person at your church.

## Shocco marks 75 years

Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega, is celebrating 75 years of ministry and service to Alabama Baptists.

Lonette Berg (left), executive director of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presents Russell Klinner, executive director of Shocco Springs, with a commemorative plaque during the Aug. 11 Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions quarterly meeting, held at Shocco.



Photo by Wendy Westerhouse



# 6 ways churches can foster racial harmony, fellowship

(continued from page 1)

It took nearly 40 years to convict two of the men as guilty of first-degree murder. Chambliss was convicted in 1977, and Cash died in 1994 without being charged.

Since the bombing, Birmingham has worked to recognize and remember the tragic event, with 16th Street Baptist Church being designated a National Historic Landmark.

Adjacent to the church, the city has built the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, a museum and research center that depicts the struggles of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s.

Much healing and reconciliation have taken place in the city since 1963. Birmingham's leaders, citizens and institutions have engaged in a long-term process of acknowledging past wrongs, seeking forgiveness with public apologies and moving toward healing.

Area churches have participated in reconciliation efforts encouraging dialogue and understanding, with many making

conscious efforts to become more multiethnic and inclusive, seeking to break down racial barriers and create communities that reflect the diversity of the body of Christ.

Other churches have become active in advocacy, community outreach and services, and educational programs to raise awareness and promote dialogue within the Christian community.

## Steps toward reconciliation

In the years since the bombing, the Southern Baptist Convention has issued a formal resolution of apology for past racism tolerance within its churches and has taken steps toward racial reconciliation.

Churches today can continue to encourage fellowship, understanding and peace and to stand against racism in many ways, including:

► Encouraging congregations to learn more about the history and legacy of racial injustice, using every opportunity to challenge assumptions, foster empathy and inspire Christlike action.

► Actively seeking diversity in leadership positions and welcoming people of all races and ethnicities to worship services, ministry programs and church and community activities.

► Expanding outreach programs to serve the community, addressing issues like poverty, education and other disparities.

► Creating spaces for open, honest conversations about race, respect, equality, justice and reconciliation.

► Partnering with other churches for joint worship services, community outreach programs and educational events, allowing these partnerships to foster fellowship and mutual understanding, challenge racial and cultural assumptions and present a united front for justice and equality.

► Praying as a congregation and community that Christ's love may dwell within the hearts of people everywhere, and that each can learn to understand and practice Christ's message of unconditional "agape" care and compassion, of loving "your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31).

Sixty years later, the bombing still serves as a stark reminder of the violence, hatred, pain and loss that can stem from racism. It teaches us that while some good progress has been made, there is still much more work to be done.

The bombing underscores the importance of continuing to stand up for equality and against racial injustice. It reminds us to never forget the past, but to use its painful lessons to guide our actions in the present and the future for the cause of Christ.



Alabama Department of Archives and History. Donated by Alabama Media Group. Photo by Tom Self, Birmingham News.

The stained glass window at 16th Street Baptist Church was damaged in the 1963 bombing.



Photo courtesy of Barbara Cross

Barbara Cross stands with the statues of the girls killed in the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in 1963.

## Pastor's daughter recalls 1963 church bombing

On the morning of Sept. 15, 1963, Barbara Cross was concluding Sunday School class at 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, where her father, John H. Cross Jr., was the pastor.

She and other children were in the basement when a bomb went off. In a 2021 interview with The Alabama Baptist, Barbara Cross shared memories of that day she still remembers so vividly.

"That was the most devastating day of my life. To this day, if I hear loud noises, it bothers me because I remember that sound, the boom! I'll never forget it," she remembered.

Her father was well aware of the dangers and threats that existed during those days. When he smelled the fumes, he knew what had happened.

### 'We just need to pray'

"When he went through the rubble, he said, 'Oh Lord, I hope there's nobody under that rubble.' That's when they found the four girls," Cross recalled. (See story, page 1.)

Rev. Cross told angry church members, "We don't answer violence with violence. We just need to pray." Then with tears streaming down his face, he found a bullhorn and quoted Psalm 23, calming the crowd.

"Years later schoolchildren would innocently ask, 'Ms. Cross, do you hate the bomber that killed your friends?' I said, 'No. We weren't taught to hate. But I dislike what they did.'"

### 'Forgive them'

One of her favorite Scripture passages is Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them. For they know not what they do." The principle has helped her to live a life of thankfulness, even though she still mourns the losses.

"The Sunday School lesson that day was, 'The Love that Forgives.' How ironic and appropriate that we would have to draw on the strength of that lesson based on what happened at Sixteenth Street," she said.

The bombing was a horrific event, but it could have been a whole lot worse, Barbara Cross said. "Thank God it didn't flatten the church and more people weren't killed. So that's the blessing.

"If I had to do this all over again and know the outcome, for the children, I wouldn't want that to happen, no," she said. "But I thank God that He spared me. I don't know why He spared me because I was in the basement. I'm just blessed that I can share the history and share the story." (Tracy Riggs Frontz)



# FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

## Blue Feather Candle Company tells ‘the story of God’s goodness’ for Birmingham family

By Tracy Riggs Frontz  
The Alabama Baptist

**W**hat do a very rare, disfiguring illness, an unrelated cancer diagnosis, 11 surgeries in two years and starting a homemade candle company have in common? They are all a part of Mark and Karen Williams’ story — and their way to tell it.

The story began on a day that’s usually about family, presents and celebrating the birth of Jesus.

“December 2019, on Christmas Day, [Mark] was admitted to the hospital. We were there until December 28th. He ended up having his first surgery; that was his very first surgery to clean out his sinuses. They thought it was a sinus infection,” said Karen.

The next spring, Mark was diagnosed with unrelated kidney cancer. After a delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the tumor in his kidney was removed and it seemed like an ending.

The respite didn’t last long. A month later Mark had another sinus infection — or so they thought.

After an exam by a sinus specialist, he was sent to the University of Alabama at Birmingham with a tremendous amount of bone death in his jaw. Mark went through two more surgeries in the fall of 2020 to remove his upper jaws and teeth.

Eight weeks passed — and still no answers came.

“Our doctor decided to pull his pathology reports again to see if anything else had shown up since the initial report, and that’s when they found the mucormycosis fungus,” Karen said.

Mark and Karen immediately went to UAB where the doctor



Photo courtesy of Blue Feather Candle Company

said, “I don’t mean to scare you, but this is bad. This is really bad. You’re going to go home; you’re going to get your clothes and you’re going to go in the hospital — and I don’t know when you’ll get to go home.”

This type of fungus, also called black fungus, can have a high mortality rate with about 54% dying.

Over approximately the next six months, Mark made it through another surgery on his sinuses and a marathon 11-hour surgery to rebuild his upper jaw.

Throughout this entire ordeal, neither had asked God the common question, “Why?”

However, Karen had battled God during a

two-week period when He asked her to surrender Mark’s fate to Him.

“I realized that, as a Christian, I had no choice but to surrender. It was hard to do but I will say that after I did surrender, God gave me a peace that I had not had.

“I knew that we would get through it,” she said.

Mark had no complications and other than surgeries to debulk the tissues, and he hasn’t had to go back to UAB’s infectious disease team.

But what do candles have to do with this journey?

### In need of a distraction

Karen still isn’t sure. Looking back, her inspiration might have been buying candles for Christmas presents in 2020.

Soon after that purchase, when facing one more delay for a necessary surgery after a year of unknowns, delays, life-altering diagnoses and surgeries — and

knowing it wasn’t over yet — Karen needed a distraction.

“One night, it was dark when I came in from work. I just couldn’t do it,” she said, knowing she had to find another focus than sickness or the future — and she remembered the candles.

Karen told Mark about an idea to

start making candles. Mark asked if she knew how, and Karen admitted she didn’t.

But they started anyway.

While she was thinking of a name and testing the candles, she kept running into issues. After recognizing she had made the company about her, Karen asked God to show them the name He wanted.

Blue Feather Candle Company was the result.

### Two reasons

“There were two reasons,” she said. “First [was] the verse Psalm 91:4. The only way we survived was by His protection and His faithfulness. Second, there are several meanings of blue feather, but one is acceptance — an ongoing acceptance.”

Karen felt God’s confirmation when she found two feathers the next week. Then it was confirmed in a deeper way.

“The minute that I quit wanting to make the candles about me, about what I wanted to name it — when I made the name about God — then all of a sudden, everything fell into place.

Since then, Mark and Karen have been using the candles to tell the story of how they survived and about God’s protection and

His never-ending faithfulness, even through what seemed to be a relentless storm.

“I made the statement, ‘The candles will be a platform to tell the story of God’s goodness to

us, to tell the story of the miracle, to tell the story of God’s graciousness.’

“The minute that happened, everything fell into place. I got six scents that worked immediately. It was remarkable to see God do that, but it wasn’t about me or the perfect name I was going to pick. It was about Him.”



Photo courtesy of Blue Feather Candle Company

MARK & KAREN WILLIAMS

To find out more about Blue Feather Candle Company and the Williams’ story, go to [bluefeathercandlecompany.com](http://bluefeathercandlecompany.com).





Myers-Mallory  
State Missions Offering  
State Goal: \$1,200,000

A WORD FROM OUR STATE LEADERS



Rick Lance  
State Missionary and  
Executive Director



**We are, indeed, approaching** a momentous anniversary in the history of Alabama Baptists. Not only are anniversaries a time of celebration, they also are a time to reflect and to consider the days ahead. In reflection, my heart is full as I am reminded that Alabama Baptists are a missional people focused on the Great Commission. And as I look ahead, I feel a sense of overwhelming urgency for Alabama Baptists to be about the work of sharing the Gospel more than ever before through these five Great Commission Ministries supported in part by the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering. Your partnership is vital as we press forward in reaching those without a relationship with Christ. We reflect in gratitude and move onward in faith. Thank you for your commitment to pray during the Week of Prayer for State Missions and to give to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering. To God alone be all glory.




Candace McIntosh  
Executive Director



Myers-Mallory.org


YOU'RE INVITED TO JOIN US FOR THE  
**WEEK OF PRAYER**  
FOR STATE MISSIONS  
SEPTEMBER 10-17, 2023

WEEK OF PRAYER DAY 1




An Unfinished Mission  
WEEK OF PRAYER OVERVIEW

WEEK OF PRAYER DAY 3




Job Skills and Eternal Hope  
ALABAMA WMU

WEEK OF PRAYER DAY 5



Connecting With Overseas Missionaries  
PARTNERSHIP MISSIONS

WEEK OF PRAYER DAY 7



Standing With Disaster Victims  
DISASTER RELIEF

WEEK OF PRAYER DAY 2



Helping the Hurting  
DISASTER RELIEF

WEEK OF PRAYER DAY 4



Seeing God Move Among Hispanics  
CHURCH PLANTING

WEEK OF PRAYER DAY 6



Joining God As He Revives Churches  
CHURCH REVITALIZATION

WEEK OF PRAYER DAY 8



Supporting Missionaries' Families  
ALABAMA WMU

Visit [Myers-Mallory.org](https://Myers-Mallory.org) for downloadable print and video resources, including the full prayer guide and accompanying Week of Prayer videos, the 2023 Missions Study, social media graphics and announcement slides.



## Famous Christians from previous centuries

# Heroes of the Faith

## Devoted pastor Robert Murray M'Cheyne ministered to Scotland

**R**obert Murray M'Cheyne (1813–1843) was a minister in the Church of Scotland whose short tenure as a pastor was one completely devoted to God.

He was born to Adam and Lockhart M'Cheyne in Edinburgh, Scotland, on May 21, 1813. When he was 4, he learned the Greek alphabet. At 8 years old, he began high school; at 14, he entered the University of Edinburgh and won honors in all his classes.

Although he excelled educationally, he had not experienced a spiritual transformation. He attended the Church of Scotland with his family, could recite Scripture and knew the Westminster Catechism. He later said of his early days that “he cherished a pure morality but lived in heart a Pharisee.”

His older brother, David, died in the summer of 1831. A devout Christian, David had pleaded with Robert to turn to Jesus. His brother's death started M'Cheyne's path to salvation.

After reading the theology book “The Sum of Saving Knowledge” by David Dickson and James Durham, he accepted God's grace and his life took a new focus.

M'Cheyne immediately began divinity school at the University of Edinburgh. He received his license to preach in July 1835. His first year was spent as an assistant pastor.

In November 1836, he was called to preach as the first pastor of St. Peter's Free Church in Dundee. He preached twice each Sunday to his congregation of 1,100 members.



M'CHEYNE

He worked enthusiastically, starting many initiatives. He began a Sabbath (Saturday) school for young children. His Tuesday night Bible study brought in 250 youth.

He commenced a Thursday night prayer meeting with 800 people attending. During the summer, he held weekly singing meetings.

His hard work weakened him, however, and in 1838, he recuperated in Edinburgh.

Hoping the climate might help him, M'Cheyne traveled with a small team to Israel to investigate missionary possibilities in reaching Jews. The eight-month trip was successful in creating interest in Jewish missions in several countries.

### Revival

When M'Cheyne returned to his church, a Dundee revival had broken out under the zealous preaching of William Chalmers Burns. M'Cheyne continued the revival in his church and on evangelistic tours.

His ministry was flourishing when he contracted typhus fever and died March 25, 1843. An estimated 7,000 people attended his funeral.

His life was characterized by one of his many maxims: “It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.”

# Lass WORDS

BY KEN LASS

The Alabama Baptist



DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

## The Lady and the Elevator

**R**ecently I walked into my local hospital to visit a sick friend.

I made my way across the lobby to the elevators and mashed the button to summon one of the cars.

The button lit up with a bright, white glow. I stepped back and waited for the elevator to arrive.

A few seconds later, a lady whom I did not know walked up next to me.

She didn't speak a word, but she stared at that elevator button, still shining brightly. She looked at me. Then again at the button, and then again at me. I'll bet you can guess what she did next.

That's right. She walked up to that button and mashed it. Even though it had clearly already been pushed. I wasn't sure whether I should feel insulted or amused. Why would she do that?

The answer is control. She had a need. She needed an elevator, and something inside of her simply couldn't trust me to meet the need for her. She had to take control of the situation.

We all deal with that issue. Control of our lives is of utmost importance.

Instinctively, we want control over everything we do, and everything others can do to us.

Think about it. All of the most contentious political issues boil down to control, personal versus government. The right to buy a gun, abortion, vaccination, taxation and so on.

If that need for control is so strong it affects a small thing like

waiting for an elevator, imagine what a challenge it is to give away control of our very lives to Jesus Christ! To put Him behind the wheel and let Him drive us down paths we have never seen before, never expected and fear we cannot handle.

Yet that is exactly what the Bible tells us we must do.

There's a verse in the sixth chapter of Romans that states “When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.” That sums it up pretty well.

### Turning to God

We want the freedom to navigate the world around us on our own terms, even though that world is increasingly dark. We think we can handle it. It's difficult, if not a bit scary, to turn our fate over to God. We'd rather push the elevator button ourselves.

Maybe there's a better way to look at it. Consider this: By choosing to give your life to Jesus, you are actually exercising the ultimate act of self determination. It's you choosing salvation. It's you choosing to rise to heaven.

Now that's an elevator worth waiting for.

### MEET THE AUTHOR

*Ken Lass is a retired Birmingham television news and sports anchor, and an award-winning columnist for numerous publications and websites.*

### By Joanne Sloan

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



# ‘That was a seed planted’

## Disaster Relief chaplains offer hope with help from the Myers-Mallory Offering

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**W**hen Bob Cooper sat down beside Mr. D, the man gave him one directive — he wasn’t allowed to talk about religion or politics.

“When Hurricane Ian came through Arcadia, Florida, he and his wife only had minor damage, but she called and asked for a chaplain to come because her husband had liver cancer and knew he was dying,” said Cooper, an Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief chaplain.

Mr. D was an atheist and “defiant about the Word,” Cooper said.

Another ABDR chaplain, Thelma Goolsby, had also been there that night visiting with Mr. D’s wife, who is a believer.

“I was glad I got to see her; she was such a special, special woman, and the Lord just stamped her on my heart,” Goolsby said. “Her husband was dying of cancer and didn’t want to hear about the Lord.”

But before they left, the man let Cooper pray with him.

### Finding Jesus

“That was a seed planted,” Goolsby said.

And after she returned to Alabama, she couldn’t forget the couple.

“I was not supposed to go back,”

she said. “But then I got a message that day that they were wanting more chaplains, and that night I went to the associational meeting, and a friend of mine said, ‘If you want to go, I’ll go with you.’”

### Gospel conversations

So Goolsby went back to Florida and continued some of the gospel conversations she’d started — including a visit to Mr. D and his wife.

And as she talked with Mr. D, something happened — he softened. Then he softened some more.

And when Goolsby asked him if he wanted a relationship with Jesus, he said yes, and he prayed for that.

“He had a smile on his face and no hardness in his voice. I was absolutely overwhelmed,” she said. “I talked to his wife in the weeks following that, and she said he was different — he was kind.”

A few months later, he passed away. Goolsby

said only God can change a heart, but she’s grateful ABDR chaplains were able to plant the seeds.

Mark Wakefield, state disaster relief strategist, said Mr. D’s situation is an unusual one for chaplains to encounter, but “it’s always a possibility, because even in the midst of disasters, life and death are still going on.”

A crisis that was there before the disaster is only compounded by the



Photo courtesy of Thelma Goolsby

Mr. D (left) was an atheist and “defiant about the Word.” When Hurricane Ian came through Arcadia, Florida, he and his wife (right) only had minor damage, but she called and asked for a chaplain to come because her husband was dying from liver cancer.

disaster, Wakefield said. “Those people need someone to walk with them through the things they’re having to deal with. Chaplains offer help and hope.”

And thanks to help from the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering, those chaplains have support and training, he said. “In the training, we talk about how they will be going places to be with people who are going through things that are so difficult that other folks are uncomfortable talking to or listening to or being with them. We tell them, ‘If you’re going to do that, you need to do that well.’”

So Wakefield and other disaster

relief leaders train chaplains to go out with teams that are helping with practical needs like cutting up trees, cleaning up damaged houses and preparing meals for those in need.

“We train them with recognized crisis intervention strategies so that they will have a skill set to not only be with people, which is crucial, but also to listen well with their eyes, their ears, their body language — all those things,” he said. “They’re able to bring a spiritual

component to the table also — to share about hope, forgiveness and the truth that they are not alone, God is always with them.”



Photo courtesy of Thelma Goolsby

Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers Thelma Goolsby (left) and Kathy McDougal (right) visit with Mr. D and his wife (center).

  
**Myers-Mallory**  
State Missions Offering

**This year’s week of prayer is Sept. 10-17.**

**For more information and downloadable resources, visit [myers-mallory.org](https://myers-mallory.org).**



## UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

# International Friends Retreat set for Oct. 6-7

Ten years ago, Alabama WMU came alongside Collegiate & Student Ministries at the State Board of Missions as they began hosting the International Friends Retreat at World-Song Missions Place. The retreat is designed to help international students attending college in Alabama make American friends and adjust to life in the United States.



SBOM photo

This annual weekend away has grown to become an impactful world missions opportunity for college students across Alabama. American students invite their international friends to enjoy a weekend of canoeing, mountain climbing, archery and breakout sessions

about life in Alabama. The retreat provides an avenue for relationship building and sharing the gospel. Over the years, hundreds of international students from dozens of countries have attended.

This year's International Friends Retreat will be held Oct. 6-7. If you know an

international student who could benefit from this, encourage them to register at [onemissionstudents.org/IFR](http://onemissionstudents.org/IFR), or if you'd like to help put together gift bags for international students, visit [alabamawmu.org/ifr](http://alabamawmu.org/ifr) for instructions. The deadline to turn in bags is Sept. 21.

## Preparing for retirement

If you've got questions about retirement, the State Board of Missions has answers.

The Preparing for Retirement workshop will cover these topics:

- ▶ The basics of retirement planning.
- ▶ How much do I need to retire?

- ▶ When can I retire?
- ▶ Basics of GuideStone investments.
- ▶ Withdrawal strategies.
- ▶ Basics of Social Security and Medicare.

It will be available at two dates and locations:

- ▶ Sept. 18, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., at Canaan Baptist Church in Bessemer.

- ▶ Sept. 21, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., at First Baptist Church Decatur.

Lunch is not included in this event, but registration is requested to make sure enough materials are available.

For information or to register, visit [alsbom.org/preparingforretirement](http://alsbom.org/preparingforretirement).

## Tools for Personnel committees

Do you serve on a church personnel committee? The Personnel Management Conference — set for Sept. 19, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at the State Board of Missions in Prattville — can give you some tools

to help you serve more effectively.

The conference can help you better understand the committee's role and how to provide for the financial and working needs of church personnel.

It can also help you think through the process of adding new staff members.

The cost is \$15 per person and includes lunch. To register, visit [alsbom.org/personnel](http://alsbom.org/personnel).

## 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](mailto:ads@thealabamabaptist.org). To place an online classified ad for \$9.99/month, visit [thealabamabaptist.org/classifieds](http://thealabamabaptist.org/classifieds).

### CHURCH POSITIONS

**BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR**  
New Beginnings Baptist Church, a small congregation in Hayden, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Send inquiries/resumes to: [sonyahumber@gmail.com](mailto:sonyahumber@gmail.com).

**BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR**  
New Providence Baptist Church, 53080 Rabun Road, Bay Minette, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resume to: Search Committee, P.O. Box 503, Bay Minette, AL 36507 or email to: [arlene@pfefferflooring.com](mailto:arlene@pfefferflooring.com).

**DIRECTOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY**  
Oak Bowery, Ohatchee, Alabama, is in search of a director of youth ministry. Part time. Contact Pastor Sam Fordham: [DrSamFordham@gmail.com](mailto:DrSamFordham@gmail.com).

### OTHER POSITIONS

**LIVE-IN HOUSE MOTHER**  
Live-in house mother needed for battered women's shelter. Strong faith and good communication skills, office skills a plus. Job can be shared, salary and benefits. Send resume to: [hopecottageofrandolphcounty@gmail.com](mailto:hopecottageofrandolphcounty@gmail.com) or P.O. Box 366, Wedowee, AL 36274.

### SIGNS

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results that matter most to you through our uniquely data-driven, coach-led workouts. All fitness levels welcome. Contact us for two free sessions. Go to [exercisecoach.com/find-a-studio](http://exercisecoach.com/find-a-studio)

### TRAVEL/VACATION

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### MINISTRIES

**SAMFORD MTI**  
The Ministry Training Institute at Samford University exists to equip Christians to be leaders in their churches and communities through theological education and practical ministry training. Education opportunities exist through the institute's vast extension network and robust online certificate curriculum. Find more information at [samford.edu/programs/ministry-training-institute](http://samford.edu/programs/ministry-training-institute).

**DOGWOOD MEDIA SOLUTIONS**  
Dogwood Media Solutions can do everything from graphic and web design to social media and search engine marketing. Connect and find out how we can partner with you to make your business goals a reality. Find out more at [dogwoodmediasolutions.com](http://dogwoodmediasolutions.com). Contact us at 334-425-0009 or [contact@dogwoodmediasolutions.com](mailto:contact@dogwoodmediasolutions.com).

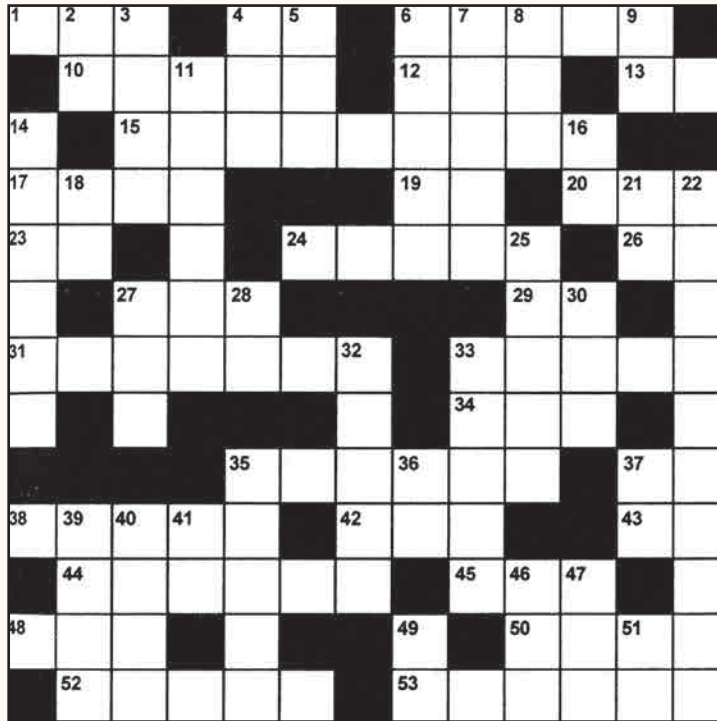
**THE WELLNESS KITCHEN**  
The Wellness Kitchen is a blog and e-newsletter focused on healthy living, ingredients and recipes. The Wellness Kitchen was started by Pat Terry, a registered dietitian and nutrition professor at Samford University for 30 years. Visit her website at [thewellnesskitchenrd.com](http://thewellnesskitchenrd.com) to read more and subscribe to her monthly e-newsletter.



# CHRISTIAN Crossword

## ACROSS

1. I am from \_\_\_\_\_.  
(John 7:29)
4. \_\_\_\_\_, thou that  
destroyest the  
temple. (Mark 15:29)
6. He shewed himself  
\_\_\_\_\_. (Acts 1:3)
10. To goad.
12. Local area network.  
(abbr.)
13. Have mercy on \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Matt. 15:22)
15. He giveth meat in  
\_\_\_\_\_. (Job 36:31)
17. Abram said unto Lot,  
Let there \_\_\_\_\_  
strife. (Gen. 13:8;  
2 words)
19. Royal Canadian.  
(abbr.)
20. Missing in Action.  
(abbr.)
23. Registered nurse.  
(abbr.)
24. Strain at a gnat, and  
swallow a \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Matt. 23:24)
26. 1,100 in Roman  
numerals.
27. The \_\_\_\_\_ a Pharisee,  
the other a publican.  
(Luke 18:10)
29. \_\_\_\_\_ the King of  
Bashan.  
(Num. 21:33)
31. Now \_\_\_\_\_ faith,  
hope, charity.  
(1 Cor. 13:13)
33. The price of wisdom  
is \_\_\_\_\_ rubies.  
(Job 28:18)
34. They \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus to  
the brow of the hill.  
(Luke 4:29)
35. Be not \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Matt. 14:27)
37. In a certain place.
38. The tower of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Gen. 11:9)
42. Bringing sick f\_\_ s.  
(Acts 5:16)
43. Mom.
44. For many be \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Matt. 20:16)
45. The falling tide.
48. It is. (contraction)
50. They shall \_\_\_\_\_ as  
lions' whelps.



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- (Jer. 51:38)
  52. Demonstrated.
  53. Horse's strut. (Nah. 3:2)
- ## DOWN
2. Out of \_\_\_\_\_ are the  
issues of life.  
(Prov. 4:23)
  3. What \_\_\_\_\_ these  
seven ewe lambs?  
(Gen. 21:29)
  4. Arizona State  
University. (abbr.)
  5. As a \_\_\_\_\_ gathereth her  
chickens. (Matt. 23:37)
  6. Trumpets to cry \_\_\_\_\_.  
(2 Chron. 13:12)
  7. They shall hold the ...  
\_\_\_\_\_ are cruel.  
(Jer. 50:42)
  8. Incorporated. (abbr.)
  9. Dorothy's aunt.
  11. A faithful man shall  
\_\_\_\_\_ with blessings.  
(Prov. 28:20)
  14. The love of God is  
shed\_\_\_\_\_ in our  
hearts. (Rom. 5:5)
  16. Printer's measure.
  18. \_\_\_\_\_ able.
  21. I am. (contraction)
  22. For this is \_\_\_\_\_ in the  
sight of God.  
(1 Tim. 2:3)
  25. Divided into sections,  
such as the brain,
  - the ear.
  27. Thou didst eat fine  
flour, honey, and  
\_\_\_\_\_. (Ezek. 16:13)
  28. Electrical Engineer.  
(abbr.)
  30. He that is of \_\_\_\_\_  
heareth. (John 8:47)
  32. \_\_\_\_\_ feared John.  
(Mark 6:20)
  33. Whether they both  
shall be \_\_\_\_\_ good.  
(Eccles. 11:6)
  35. That which I do I  
\_\_\_\_\_ not. (Rom. 7:15)
  36. American League.  
(abbr.)
  37. Whom do men say  
that I the Son of  
man \_\_\_\_\_?  
(Matt. 16:13)
  39. Praise him for his  
mighty \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Ps. 150:2)
  40. To smash, or a wild  
party.
  41. Elevation. (abbr.)
  46. Even a fruitful bough  
\_\_\_\_\_ well.  
(Gen. 49:22; 2 words)
  47. Benjamin's  
nickname.
  49. All these things I  
kept from my youth  
\_\_\_\_\_. (Luke 18:21)
  51. Lower case. (abbr.)

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.



## Annual Church Profiles due October 1

The Annual Church Profile (ACP) is one of the most practical ways churches partner each year with the local Baptist association, the State Board of Missions and the Southern Baptist Convention to prepare for the future. As churches take stock of where they are in key statistical categories, it enables the SBOM to provide resources and offer training to meet needs.

“The ACP allows us to focus on collecting information that will give us a true picture of what’s going on in Southern Baptist churches and helps us to be able to share that in ways that will advance the Kingdom of God,” said Rick Lance, state missionary and executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

To complete the ACP online, visit [adx.alsbom.org](http://adx.alsbom.org) or scan the code below with your smartphone’s camera.



ACP’s are due October 1 and can be turned in through your association or online at [adx.alsbom.org](http://adx.alsbom.org).

If you need help completing the ACP, please contact your local association or contact Sandy Harmann at the SBOM, 334-613-2266 or [sharmann@alsbom.org](mailto:sharmann@alsbom.org).

## Resources for church worship ministers

The LIFT! Defining Worship Conference has a simple purpose — to worship God with all of our heart, mind and soul, and give you tools to take that worship back to your church with fresh tools to meet your church’s needs.

This event is created for worship leaders, lay leaders, worship teams, pastors and more to join together and rediscover the love and importance of leading

worship. It’s also a great time for networking and fellowship with people doing ministry similar to yours in their own churches. LIFT! features corporate worship plus breakout sessions to choose from. The conference will be held Sept. 28, 9:30–2 p.m., at First Baptist Church Trussville.

The cost is \$35 and includes lunch.

To register, visit [alabamaworship.org/lift](http://alabamaworship.org/lift).



# Florida Baptists share lessons, tips after online theft of funds

By Margaret Colson  
Florida Baptist Witness

**M**ore than \$700,000 meant for missions and ministry was stolen from the Florida Baptist Convention in a cyberattack, and leaders there want churches to learn from their experience with online thieves.

In August, Florida's State Board of Missions heard a report from the subcommittee tasked with providing oversight and next steps regarding the investigation into the financial fraud discovered by the Florida Baptist Convention in May.

The subcommittee worked with federal and state investigators, internal and external auditors and cyber forensics experts in their investigation.

Investigators concluded

that the crime was the result of sophisticated financial fraud by, at this point, unknown perpetrators.

## Protocols needed

The subcommittee's work culminated in the recommendation for strengthened financial protocols and ongoing training for convention staff.

Among the efforts to prevent such a crime from occurring in the future, the convention is exercising heightened awareness when carrying out financial duties, implementing appropriate data security controls and completing the process to become accredited by the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability.

The convention is still making efforts to recover the stolen funds.

Tommy Green, Florida Baptists' executive director-treasurer, acknowledged that this is the first time he has dealt with a crime of this nature in his more than four decades of ministry.

"Everything we do is built on trust," he said, adding that churches are learning from the convention's experience.

## Recommendations

The convention recommends several best practices to help churches protect their financial assets:

- ▶ Provide staff training on recognizing suspicious emails and other sophisticated cyberattacks.
- ▶ Enable multifactor authentication logins when available.
- ▶ Verbally verify any changes to payment instructions requested by a vendor related to accounts payable or an employee related to payroll.



Photo courtesy of Florida Baptist Witness

Tommy Green, Florida Baptists' executive director-treasurer, says implementing strong financial protocols and training staff to be cautious online are important steps in preventing fraud.

tions requested by a vendor related to accounts payable or an employee related to payroll.

▶ Engage a cybersecurity professional to provide analysis of information technology infrastructure and security.

▶ Discuss with the church's insurance agent the programs and levels of coverage available in the event of a cyberfraud experience and other fraudulent issues regarding finances and websites.

Alabamabaptist churches may contact Lee Wright regarding financial practices that can assist the church to better protect themselves against such nefarious activities. Contact Wright by email at lwright@alsbom.org or by phone at 800-264-1225, ext. 2241. (TAB contributed)



## Her cure happened here.

Kennedi is cured of sickle cell disease thanks to a life-changing bone marrow transplant she received from her sister here at Children's of Alabama. The amazing treatments, discoveries and innovations for pediatric blood disorders and cancer happening here are helping change lives for the children of Alabama, across the country and around the world.



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# BWA Women leader sees how 'God is at work globally'

**EDITOR'S NOTE —**  
Baptist World Alliance is a global community of 51 million Baptists from 176,000 churches. Under that umbrella, BWA Women provides support for missions and ministries in seven continental unions representing more than 150 countries.

This is the first in a series of eight stories about leaders in each region, the challenges they face and the way they see God working through women across the globe.

**By Tracy Riggs Frontz**  
The Alabama Baptist

Throughout nine decades of intentional ministry, Baptist

World Alliance Women has fostered prayer, fellowship and service among women across the globe.

Karen Wilson, president of BWA Women, is responsible for setting vision and direction for BWA Women and the 28 million women the ministry impacts.

## Reaching the world

Wilson, who lives in Australia, also works as the vice president of international ministries with the Global Leadership Network and is the CEO of the Global Leadership Network Australia.

When the opportunity came to take the role as

president of BWA Women, she quickly prayed and then accepted, excited about getting the opportunity to travel the world.

Then COVID-19 arrived. "Within months, there was no traveling to any continent of the world. And then you stop and go, 'God, what on earth am I doing here?' This is not what I thought it would be," she said.

The distance between the teams of leaders makes this role difficult. Except for one in-person meeting each year, meetings are conducted virtually.

"With modern digital communication this has become so much easier, but with time zones and varying cultural needs, it is a complex role and one that is often challenging," she said.

When Wilson is able to be with the leaders and other BWA Women members, she said she feels like she's within a circle of friends, even with those she just met.

"Women all over the world, honestly, are the same. We feel the same; we love the same; we need the same; we come together the same," she said.

Wilson loves meeting and seeing God work through women from all over the



Photo by Tracy Riggs Frontz/The Alabama Baptist

**KAREN WILSON**

world as well as collaborating with the leaders of BWA Women's seven Continental Unions. She calls working with her fellow leaders an "absolute joy."

She believes the promise of Ephesians 3:20, "Now

unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us," even as she recognizes the scope of the

battle taking place all over the world.

"In countries that are at war and ravaged with natural disasters and poverty, we see the shining light of Christ brighter than ever," Wilson said. "We have a lot to learn about how God

blesses His people, and it has little to do with wealth or prosperity.

"The deepest places with God are often found in the darkest places on Earth."

BWA Women's foundation is prayer and shows it each year when they organize the Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer, held the first Monday in November.

In 2022, BWA Women developed a prayer guide, calendar, other resources, a virtual networking platform and a global worship service as part of this prayer initiative. (See sidebar, this page, for more information on the 2023 BWA World Day of Prayer.)

Wilson believes in the power of God and the strength of women and wants to encourage women in the fight.

## 'His Spirit is moving'

"God is at work globally. The Church is the hope of the world, and His Spirit is moving in incredible ways," Wilson said. "Women hold the key to transformational living and in so many communities globally, they are the strength of health and well-being.

"What's in you, He wants to bring out of you. Say yes to God in everything He asks you to do. Every time God asks, just have a posture of yes."

**To learn more about BWA Women and the Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer, go to [bwawomen.org](http://bwawomen.org).**

## Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer set for Nov. 6 with focus on Job. 33:4

For more than 70 years, sisters in Christ have united in prayer for the Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer.

Held annually on the first Monday in November, this year's observance will be Nov. 6, though groups and individuals are encouraged to celebrate with prayer on any day of their choosing.

The 2023 theme is "Breath of Life" drawn from Job 33:4: "The Spirit of God has made me; the

**BREATH OF Life**  
2023 BAPTIST WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

breath of the Almighty gives me life."

More than 100 nations are expected to participate, seeking the Lord in collective prayer, reading God's Word and hearing stories of how the Spirit is moving.

Learn more and complete a brief participation form at [bwawomen.org/day-of-prayer](http://bwawomen.org/day-of-prayer). (Carrie Brown McWhorter)

Take the

# Smell

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**Ongoing smell loss may be one of the most important signals of risk to brain health as we age.**

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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 10

## Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



### PROCLAIMED Mark 1:35–45

#### Focused (35–39)

Having just come off a full day of healing people from sickness and demon possession, Jesus woke up early and went to a secluded place to pray to the Father. This tells us that we need to see the importance of prayer and take time to pray.

While Jesus was sleeping, Peter and the disciples came looking for Him because many people were wanting to see Jesus. Throughout Mark, the disciples misunderstand what Jesus' mission was, often seeing Jesus as a great leader who was going to do great things like kick the Romans out and restore Israel to the time of David.

However, Jesus told Peter that He needed to go tell the good news in other towns, which is why He came — to preach the gospel.

Just like the disciples at this juncture in Jesus' ministry, many people look to Jesus as a sort of wonder worker through whom His followers will receive temporal rewards, like fame and fortune.

The promise of riches and health is not the message Jesus came to share. His message is about being made right with God, which is an eternal reward.

#### Compassionate (40–42)

While Jesus was preaching, a man with leprosy approached Him and asked to be healed. In the Book of Leviticus, people with a skin disease had to remove themselves from society because they were unclean and would defile others by their touch. However, this man, having heard of Jesus' miraculous powers, broke all of these social and theological conventions to come and get healed.

Jesus' willingness to help this

man in need is a good pattern for us to follow.

As Christians, we are concerned with the spiritual well-being of people and the need to share the gospel in order to meet this need. However, it is also imperative that we help others meet their physical needs when we can to help show the love and compassion of God.

Many times, it is by helping others that God gives us opportunities to share the gospel!

#### Proclaimed (43–45)

Once Jesus healed the leprosy man, He told him not to tell anyone what He had done for him but to go and see the priest so he could be declared clean, fulfilling what is required in the Book of Leviticus.

Instead of keeping silent, this man went out and told everyone what Jesus had done for him, which made it difficult for Jesus to travel about freely because he was always in demand to meet the people's physical needs.

Why wouldn't Jesus want everyone to know about Him so that the crowds would come to Him? Jesus didn't want to be perceived mainly as a miracle worker instead of One who came to die for the sins of mankind.

To fulfill the prophecy of the Old Testament, Jesus needed to suffer, die, rise from the dead and ascend into heaven. Jesus wanted people to listen to His message, not come for their own physical benefit of being healed and getting food.

We need to see Jesus correctly as well. Many people today want Jesus to do what they want Him to do, but God gives us what we need. That is forgiveness of sin and atonement with God through Christ. This is the gospel message Jesus came to preach.

***“And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, He departed and went out to a desolate place, and there He prayed.”***

Mark 1:35

## Bible Studies for Life

By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Biblical & Religious Studies, Samford University



### PRAY WITH PASSION Daniel 2:13–23, 27–28a

The push and pull of various political factions can make our form of government seem a genuine mess. Democracy can hardly hold a candle, however, to the mysteries, intrigues and hidden dangers of monarchy.

Consider how many aides, generals and royal rivals met an untimely doom just in the passing of the torch of rule from David to Solomon. As one junior officer reflects when speaking to a general in the movie “The Thin Red Line,” “The closer you are to Caesar, the greater the fear.”

Living in exile and enlisted to become members of Nebuchadnezzar's royal court, Daniel and his friends would come to know this fear all too well.

In the first chapter of Daniel, the danger facing the young men revolved around their refusal to eat nonkosher food. As it happened, the youths' request for a different diet was granted by their supervisor.

Without God's unique blessing upon them, however, things could have taken a much darker turn. Now, in the book's second chapter, Daniel and his companions would face an even greater danger.

#### When problems arise, choose to seek God. (13–16)

Seemingly without warning, word arrived that Daniel and his friends were to be put to death. Though no doubt panic stricken, Daniel kept his wits about him and spoke “with tact and discretion” to the officer sent to carry out the execution.

Learning that it was not just himself and his friends who were to be executed but all the wise men of Babylon, Daniel begged to know what could possibly explain the king's harsh decree.

The officer explained that Nebuchadnezzar had had a dream and had called for his sages to interpret it. But Nebuchadnezzar had refused to tell the wise men the contents of his dream. Apparently to certify the

accuracy of their interpretation, Nebuchadnezzar had insisted that the wise men not only tell the king what his dream meant but also tell him what he had actually dreamed. This they most certainly could not do.

#### Pray and expectantly seek God's wisdom and guidance. (17–19)

Daniel pleaded with the king's official to give him just a bit of time so he could interpret the dream for the king. Granted this short reprieve, Daniel turned to his friends, not for advice but for prayer. He urged them “ask the God of the heavens for mercy concerning this mystery,” and plead they did.

With their very lives on the line, the friends prayed that they and the other sages of Babylon might be spared from the king's decree. That very night, God answered their prayers and in a vision revealed to Daniel the mystery that had eluded the rest of the king's dream interpreters.

#### Acknowledge God as the source of the answer. (20–23, 27–28a)

Even before he reported the news to the king or the king's official, Daniel offered words of praise to God.

Freely acknowledging that wisdom and power, knowledge and sovereignty belonged to God alone, Daniel praised God for disclosing this mystery to him and making known to him the contents of the king's dream.

This attitude of praise and submission would endure even as Daniel appeared before King Nebuchadnezzar.

When the king demanded to know whether Daniel could reveal the dream and its interpretation, the young Hebrew firmly denied that he could. God alone, Daniel insisted, could reveal this mystery, so Daniel could only convey to the king what God Himself had revealed.



# MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs Frontz  
The Alabama Baptist

## Illustrator highlights value of prayer, practice in creative expression

**B**irmingham-based illustrator, artist and author Amy Grimes knows the value of persistence and commitment. Whenever she feels the urge to stop, she reminds herself who she is in Christ.

"If God's my identity, then I have room to fail and be able to keep going," Grimes said. "One of the biggest ways I see God having worked in my life to get me to where I am right now is in the ways He helps me not to give up. ... I can be pushed forward because I know who I am."

Because of the time commitment, Grimes is careful about which books and projects she takes on. However, Grimes knew immediately that she wanted to illustrate the latest Ann Voskamp book because she loves the beautiful messages that Voskamp sends out into the world.

### Venturing out

Voskamp's recent release, "Your Brave Song," focuses on Una Rayne, a little girl who is venturing out into a "big day of big things" full of unknowns.

To combat her fear, her mother reminds Una Rayne that Jesus loves her and that, in Him, she has the courage to face whatever comes, including the thick fog at the start of her journey.



AMY GRIMES

Photo courtesy of Amy Grimes

The fog wasn't just an obstacle for Una Rayne. It was also a stumbling block for Grimes.

Though she had painted clouds before, Grimes had never painted fog. She started by finding photos and illustrations of fog but found that most of these examples were dark and gloomy.

"When I read [the story], I didn't see darkness in my mind," Grimes said. "I don't even see the fog as being a dark or scary thing."

"I didn't want to represent that the fog itself is a problem, that it's bad. It's just you can't see past it."

Before officially starting on the project, Grimes prayed. She then spent some time experimenting with painting fog. The first two samples she painted didn't set the right mood, but the last one was just what she had envisioned.

Once the project officially began, painting was only a fraction of

what she did. Since Una Rayne was loosely based on the author's daughter, Grimes spent the long hours painting praying for her and for her family.



Having had experience drawing pen-and-ink portraits in the early part of her career, Grimes knew how to transfer the daughter's image to the character. It helped that Voskamp's daughter "looked like an illustration," she said.

Once she had Una Rayne's face in mind, her outfit had to be chosen. In the photos Grimes used as a reference, two features stood out.

### Careful details

"Everything revolved around the look of that beautiful black hair and red coat," she said.

She decided to paint Una Rayne's dress as slightly faded, as if it were her favorite and had been worn over and over.

Throughout the project, Grimes concentrated on keeping the overall work unique while making sure that the pages in the book had a consistent look.

Looking back, she knows God had prepared her for the challenges and long hours of this kind of project.

### Getting started

Though Grimes had been "drawing forever," she didn't start painting until taking a couple of beginner paint classes in college.

"I was not very good at it. Nobody's really good at painting at first. It's a difficult switch from drawing to painting because it doesn't work the same way. You just have to keep going," she said.

Grimes repeated a couple of phrases to help her get through those times of discouragement: "Reaching for something beautiful is never a waste of time," and, "This is a beautiful experiment."

Eventually Grimes decided painting would be her career. She decided to pursue story paintings with a goal of making the viewer feel like they "jumped right into the painting."

Grimes said she has been able to create consistently due to knowing who she is in God, even if she has to remind herself regularly.

"God's been my motivation, and He has been my comfort — my solid ground."

Grimes constantly reminds herself, "I'm loved and this is what I'm made to do. It doesn't really matter how it turns out. This is just the direction I've got to reach."

### 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.

Go to [storypaintings.net](#) to find out more about Grimes and her work. "Your Brave Song" can be found wherever books are sold.



# **Resources for the VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

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**Do you know someone who's visually or physically impaired and finds it difficult to read?**

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**The Alabama Baptist**



UPCOMING SPECIAL EDITION

NOVEMBER 30 ISSUE

# Aging Well

*Resources that encompass aspects of growing older, including fitness and wellness tips, estate planning, housing and health care, and ways to mentor the next generation.*

— The Alabama Baptist —

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# 5 ways

## pastors can help families navigate social media

By **Chris Martin**  
Lifeway Research



Photo by cookie\_studio on Freepik

**I**n May, Dr. Vivek Murthy, the Surgeon General of the United States, issued a 25-page advisory titled, “Social Media and Youth Mental Health,” detailing the dangers of social media use among children and teens and what parents, government agencies, tech companies and others can do about it.

If you’re a pastor, you’ve likely heard about or seen parents in your church struggle with how to lead their children to use social media wisely or abstain from it entirely. I do not envy those parenting pre-teens and teenage children today who have to endure endless requests for social media access from their desperate, peer-pressured children. It is not an easy position for parents, to be sure, even if the data and wisdom are clear.

How can you as a pastor help parents with the matter of social media and their children?

This is a broad topic, and

a plethora of perspectives can fall within the scope of wisdom. But here are a few pieces of advice for pastors who want to help parents.

### 1. Encourage research and thoughtfulness

If you’re a pastor, you would be wise to read widely about social media and its effects on the hearts, souls and minds of people.

Your own church leadership experiences may have made you all too aware of how social media can be divisive or lead people astray. But it can still be helpful to read articles and books about social media and its effects in order to see how common your experiences are.

Likewise, you should encourage parents to read and learn about social media and its effects on their children. Take the time to read the advisory produced by the surgeon general’s office. Read books about social media and psychology or social media and faith. Read articles about the same. Parents need to be willing to do some homework about this issue if they want to help their kids.

### 2. Take children’s requests seriously

While serving in student ministry, I’ve spoken with scores of parents about when their children should be allowed to have a phone or access to social media. My answer is always the same, and it really isn’t a cop-out no matter how much it sounds



like it. There is no “right” answer. My general advice is that the longer parents can keep their kids off social media, the better.

However, pastors and parents need to realize that kids who beg to be on social media have a case.

And they should take it seriously because a lack of access to social media has resulted in bullying and other negative social effects. These should not be taken lightly.

Pastors should advise parents to have good, fruitful conversations about their children’s requests.

### 3. Exemplify wise use

Look, this one is pretty simple. Pastors need to advise parents that they cannot lead children where they themselves will not go.

Parents are going to have a hard time keeping their kids off their phones at the dinner table if mom and dad are scrolling their preferred social media platforms in between bites.

It’s going to be hard for parents to put limits on their son’s YouTube usage if their son has trouble getting his parents’ attention away from their phones anytime he has a question while working on his math homework.

This doesn’t mean parents need to be perfect social media users to lead their kids well in this space, but they can’t be hypocritical either.

A child is going to have a hard time listening to parenting about wise social media use if the parents can’t do it themselves.

### 4. Establish realistic and enforceable restrictions

Pastors and parents alike probably recognize the importance of this. If you want to take social media seriously, you need to be willing to restrict access to it. This is true for anyone who uses social media, not just children.

Pastors, if the parents in your church have already let their chil-

dren onto social media, you can’t un-ring that bell. So the next best thing is to limit social media use as effectively as possible.

Realistic restrictions may vary but no one really needs to be on social media for more than an hour per day. Most new phones, tablets and computers have features that allow for restrictions. Use them.

### 5. Create and maintain an environment of openness

Unfortunately, this is probably one of the most overlooked or taken-for-granted aspects of our families’ relationship with social media.

In parenting, we simply don’t talk about our social media activity enough.

Pastors, parents likely feel a bit intimidated when they think about talking with their children about what they’re doing on social media.

Some parents may be afraid to know what their kids are getting into — and with good reason.

If parents have decided to let their children on social media, that privilege must come with openness and honesty about social media use.

Parents cannot rely on surveillance software alone to monitor their children’s online activity. Such software is far too easy to get around.

Parents and children alike would be best served by an atmosphere of openness and honesty about social media use.

No one is served when parents shame kids for getting into content they shouldn’t.

Give grace. Show humility. Love children even when they sin online.

*EDITOR’S NOTE — This story was originally published by Life-way Research. We also would love to hear about your family or youth group’s experiences regarding social media and the conversations needed. Email us at [news@thebaptistpaper.org](mailto:news@thebaptistpaper.org). And be sure to check out Shawn Hendricks’ guest editorial about parenting teens on page 3.*

“[PARENTS,] IF YOU WANT TO TAKE SOCIAL MEDIA SERIOUSLY, YOU NEED TO BE WILLING TO RESTRICT ACCESS TO IT.”





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# On mission

By Ken Camp  
Baptist Standard

## Baptists called ‘to every neighborhood and every nation,’ BWA leader urges

**B**aptists from more than 40 nations gathered for the Baptist World Alliance annual meeting in Stavanger, Norway, which kicked off with a celebration of their common mission as a people called, sent and empowered by God.

During its July 2–5 meeting, BWA launched the Global Baptist Mission Network — a collaborative venture involving 23 inaugural member agencies — as well as passed a resolution condemning abuses against indigenous people. They also welcomed two Texas Baptist universities as member partners.

The BWA Executive Committee approved the creation of the network in March after a group of 15 leaders from eight countries began work two years ago to develop a proposal for the “gospel collaborative,” BWA General Secretary Elijah Brown said.

The inaugural network includes 23 representatives from mission agencies and initiatives in 17 countries with a cumulative total of 7,012 missionaries.

### Relationships, effectiveness

“It is the largest and most globally diverse mission network” in Baptist life, Brown said, adding additional mission-sending agencies and missionary initiatives are encouraged to join.

The Global Baptist Mission Network will not be a missionary sending entity. Rather, the primary goals focus on building relationships, facilitating collaboration and fostering effectiveness.

A steering committee will be responsible for leading the network through adjudicating new members, forecasting future directions, planning an annual network forum, strategizing collaborations and orga-



Photo by Amy Brown/Baptist Standard  
BWA President Tomás Mackey commissions inaugural members of the Global Baptist Mission Network with prayer.

nizing subgroups to work on agreed upon projects.

The network will begin by focusing on two projects, he said.

A mapping initiative will seek to identify and develop a global database of ongoing missions endeavors to avoid duplication and enhance collaboration, while identifying areas and groups without a gospel witness.

The network will also work with Baptist Mission Australia to develop the “Many Places, Many Voices” initiative. Growing out of a position paper presented at a workshop during the 2022 BWA annual meeting in Birmingham, Alabama, the initiative envisions a “polycentric, polyphonic missiology.”

During the meeting, the BWA General Council also adopted a resolution condemning the historic and ongoing mistreatment of indigenous people around the world.

The resolution “calls on Baptist

churches, colleges, unions and other institutions to study their own history and present complicity with discrimination” against indigenous people.

It also urges “more work toward restorative justice efforts to end discrimination ... and repair the damage from past wrongs.”

The resolution — adopted without opposition — “laments that some Baptists and other Christians participated in injustices” against indigenous people.

### New member partners

Two universities affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas became the first educational institutions accepted as member partners of the Baptist World Alliance.

The BWA General Council voted to accept Dallas Baptist University and Howard Payne University as member partners during the annual meeting.

The two Texas Baptist universi-

ties were among four applicants approved in the newly created “member partner” category, made possible by governance changes to the BWA constitution and bylaws.

Baptists are “a missionary people” sent by God “to every neighborhood and every nation,” Brown told the annual gathering.

### ‘Mission of God’

“From every mountain to every municipality, we are sent on the mission of God,” Brown said. “From every rural countryside to every rustbelt city, we are sent on the mission of God.”

The missionary mandate and evangelistic imperative are woven into Scripture from Genesis to Revelation and grounded in the Triune God, he noted.

The biblical teaching that man and woman were created in the image of God not only is a call to human rights, but also a call to missions and evangelism, he said.

Brown cited 400 years of Baptist history and multiple resolutions and statements adopted by BWA over more than a century to underscore Baptists’ commitment to missions and evangelism.

Globally, three Baptists in 10 face the highest levels of vulnerability to hunger, poverty, violent conflict and religious persecution, the 2023 edition of a vulnerability index produced by the BWA revealed.

Brown reported 15.7 million Baptists — 30.4% of all 51 million BWA Baptists in the world — are subject to the most significant levels of vulnerability.

That represents a significant increase over the previous year, when one in four Baptists worldwide — 13.5 million — faced the highest levels of vulnerability to hunger, poverty, war and challenges to religious freedom.