

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.



WorkFaith Birmingham trainees pose during mock interview days with Lena Kappen (far left), social services director, and Pamela Hodges (far right), lead instructor and success manager.

Photo courtesy of Andy Blake

‘God changes lives’

WorkFaith Birmingham helps the unemployed navigate job interviews, workforce

By Lizzy Haseltine
The Alabama Baptist

When people come out of incarceration, addiction or long-term unemployment, they are often nervous and scared when they receive their first job interview. WorkFaith Birmingham exists to help prepare and empower them for the workforce.

“We know that when people are

trying to reenter society or further their career path ... sometimes they need a little bit of extra help,” said Andy Blake, executive director of WorkFaith.

Career-oriented

Through WorkFaith’s mock interviews and training, 75% of their 1,300 clients have obtained jobs within six months of the program. According to the organization’s

website, “Even though over 50% of our graduates have criminal convictions in their backgrounds, we have less than 2% recidivism rate of any of them returning to prison.”

“We believe God changes lives,” Blake said of the faith-based organization. “One of the tools He uses is work because that’s what we’re all designed to do.”

Through two-week-long workshops and monthly trainings that

include Bible studies, WorkFaith teaches people essential skills, professionalism and how to handle conflict with a faith perspective.

The career-oriented organization also helps those who want a refresher course before a job interview.

Located in Birmingham Metro Baptist Association’s building, the nonprofit sends employees to (See ‘Overcoming,’ page 17)

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The crossword puzzle
can be found on page 15.



Photo courtesy of the Church at Chelsea Westover

This Little Light Preschool and Mother's Day Out program is housed in the new children's ministry building at the Church at Chelsea Westover.

Church at Chelsea Westover opens new kids' building

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

In the past, we've shared the story of the Church at Chelsea Westover, which was planted in 2012 at a ServPro headquarters in Shelby County.

In the 11 years since it began, it's continued to grow, and in recent years, they built a gymnasium worship center. It's been a big asset to their community ministry, but they knew they needed the next piece of the plan to be put in place soon — a new children's building.

"The area that was upstairs and originally intended to be the audio-visual hub for services became the children's space," said Eli Alexander, the church's children's pastor.

"It worked, but it really wasn't purpose-built, and it was really bursting at the seams for a minute."

But on Aug. 27, the Church at Chelsea Westover celebrated the grand opening of its new children's ministry building.

"It's been a great change," Alexander said.

The new building has a kids' chapel and six classrooms that can be used for both Sunday School space and Mother's Day Out.

Before, they hadn't held children's Sunday School for a while, only child care during the service.

"When I came here, we had at a max five kids in Sunday School between pre-K and grade school, and

three all from one family," Alexander said. "We cut that ministry just because it wasn't bearing fruit at the time and was a large burden on volunteers."

But now, it's back, and by mid-September, they were running nearly 50 children and volunteers for Sunday School and even more during the worship hour.

"It's been good to see the fruit of having that good space," Alexander said.

Pastor Rick Wright said God is mightily

working at the church and that it "has been a thrill to see our children's ministry explode." "We literally grew out of space and — praise the Lord — God has built us the new kids' building, and it's already been paid for. Pastor Eli and his team are doing an amazing job loving and leading CCW kids."

For more information
about the Church at
Chelsea Westover, visit
thechurchatcw.com.



Photo courtesy of the Church at Chelsea Westover

Members of the Church at Chelsea Westover in Shelby County chat at kids' building grand opening.

The Alabama Baptist

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

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OPINION



RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

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



jrash@thealabamabaptist.org



@RashionalThts

Your opportunity to evaluate our team, content and overall work

A lot can happen in five years, and we've watched an incredible number of changes take place in that time frame.

Building on the strength and structure handed to our team by editor emeritus Bob Terry and Hudson Baggett before him, my nearly five years in the editor's chair have truly flown by as we've worked to continue innovating — and pivoting as needed along the way.

During the final quarter of this year, I'm seeking in-depth evaluations from a handful of those who were part of the transition time that granted me the privilege of serving as president and editor-in-chief during this season of TAB Media Group's ministry.

I'd also like to ask for your help during this evaluation period. We want to look carefully at all aspects of how our team communicates, the products we provide, the quality of our content and the methods of engaging with us.

Would you be willing to contact us in your preferred method — call, write, email, message or drop by in person — to share your impressions?

My fifth anniversary is Jan. 1, 2024, and we would love to use January as a time to finalize our

review and assessment of what all is submitted between now and then. We'll share some of our findings along the way as well.

How you can help take us to the next level:

1. Tell us about your relationship with The Alabama Baptist. How long have you been a reader? How did you first discover us? What keeps you connected to us?

2. What are your favorite parts of the paper? What do you turn to first when the paper arrives in the mail?

3. What content are you least interested in? Any items you wouldn't mind disappearing? Which parts do you always skip over?

4. Which sections do you want us to ensure remain? What are the most important aspects that should not change?

5. How often do you share your copy of the paper or an article in the paper with a friend, family member or neighbor? What types of coverage motivates you to share The Alabama Baptist?

6. What are we missing? What would you like to see more of?

7. How does your engagement with the paper version compare to the digital offerings? Are you connected to any of our social media platforms? If so, which ones?

8. Do you receive our digital PDF version and/or our daily email newsletters that share news highlights that happen after the last print edition went to press? Are these helpful? Any suggestions for improvement?

9. Any other suggestions to share or questions to ask?

We look forward to hearing from you and are excited about prepping for the next five years.

Readers respond to Sept. 14 Rashional Thoughts: 'Your life matters — are you fully leaving your mark?'

"Thank you for these very meaningful words. They touched my heart, and I needed a pick-me-up today."

At the end of our journey here on earth, we all want to know our lives mattered and that we had a positive and valuable impact on the world.

"Enjoyed your article."

"Great paragraph."

Leaving our mark fully on the next generation can only happen if we are able to resist the

temptation (at least until we have no choice) of letting our world become too small, where every aspect of every day is solely focused on our needs and comfort.

"I just had to write and thank you for your 'weekly wisdom.' I sometimes am not able to fit in the entire TAB, but I always turn to your column first, and you always have something that touches me.

"As a [retiree], my days and nights are not as filled as they once were, and I sometimes wonder if I am still having 'a valuable and positive im-

pact on the world' (your words) as I once did. But no matter what age, we can always be a Barnabas encourager to others as you and your Rashional Thoughts are to me. ...

"Your concluding verses are spot on, to which I will add "seek ye first" (Matt. 6:33). I have certainly seen these verses be true as I enter the fourth quarter of my life.

"Ending as I began, thank you again for who and what you are, and for what you do."

—Readers from across Alabama

Your Voice



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

Calling out the called: Church leadership and the pipeline crisis

By George Bullard

ForthTelling Innovation

At a gathering of pastors, the discussion turned to the leadership pipeline crisis.

The convenor suggested they list some of the aspects of this crisis. They began by talking about the positions they have a hard time filling.

When someone said “all of them,” everyone laughed.

Worship and music leaders were the first ones mentioned, and this was echoed by just about everyone.

This included instrumentalists. They could find people with guitars who perhaps could also sing, but few would play a piano, much less an organ.

Theology behind songs

They also said few music leaders understood the theology behind the songs they used. If Bethel Music,

Hillsong Worship, Elevation Worship or Passion Music did not write and sing it, they said they likely would not know it.

Process of disciple-making

Discipleship pastors who understand the process of disciple-making are few. They may understand something about small groups, but in the long term these staff people turn small groups into programs instead of a spiritual journey.

It is a challenge to find age-group staff, even those who commit to part-time work, for all age groups from preschoolers through senior adults. It is difficult to find a student minister young enough to understand the students but mature enough to do more than just sponsor paintball and other activities.

One who can help middle and high school students develop a

healthy disciple-making journey is a challenge.

Compensation for staff is also an issue. Few churches can afford the staff they need. The cost of fringe benefits has escalated tremendously in the past several decades. Many churches depend on the staff's spouse to have the needed benefits package with their jobs.

Full-time staff often ask for compensation packages well above their experience and education, wanting to match what secular positions offer them.

This led to a discussion about the spiritual call of people to Christian ministry. What are churches doing these days to find people God is calling into ministry? In what ways can an association assist with this?

The pastors admitted they were doing very little in their churches to call out those whom God was calling into ministry.

One recounted that in the church where he grew up, there was a regular gathering of and training for people who felt a call to ministry. He remembered there were always more than a dozen people in that group in his church of around 450 attendees.

The people in these groups were high school or college students, plus a few midcareer people feeling God was calling them to consider a vocational change. Others recalled that college campus ministry programs

had influenced them. Someone recalled hearing recently that a fewer number of college students saw the local church as the place they wanted to carry out their call to ministry. They were thinking about other avenues of service, perhaps even in the marketplace and not in a church setting.

Just like many conversations, the identification of the problem without offers of viable solutions dominated the time. In a later session several ideas arose, including:

► Preaching and teaching on the spiritual call to Christian ministry as a life focus.

► Mentoring people who feel called to Christian ministry along with participation in an exploratory community.

Internships and residencies

► Offering internships and residencies from 10 weeks to two years for people called to Christian ministry.

► Sponsoring conferences in the association where church leaders bring people who are considering a call to Christian ministry or people they think ought to consider such a call.

How are churches in your association calling out the called?

EDITOR'S NOTE — George Bullard spent 45 years in denominational ministry and now leads strategic planning in more than 100 associations. He serves as a strategic thinking mentor for Christian leaders through his ForthTelling Innovation ministry.



BULLARD

Letters to the Editor

Thank you for encouraging us to support the Myers-Mallorey State Missions Offering. We are Silas First Baptist in Chocataw County. Our goal was \$500. We received \$1,655 on Sunday — our best ever.

Thanks for keeping our family at SFBC informed about missions.

Pastor Randy Byrd
Silas, Ala.

Thank you so much for running the pregnancy resource center articles!

They have been very well done and informative.

The awareness (or lack of) has been a tremendous issue in our churches and communities.

God bless you all!
Eric Pugh
Athens, Ala.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“We need to commit our hearts to the great Savior who has given us the Great Commission.”

BART BARBER

President, Southern Baptist Convention

“I think a lot of kids are seeing that they’ve been fed a line that success can make you happy,” said **Tim Williams**, associational mission strategist for the Carrollton (Georgia) Baptist Association. “The truth is Christ is the One who makes the difference.

“Maui is devastated by this, and all of Hawaii is devastated by this. It’s not only the loss of property but the profound loss of life, and so please pray for Maui and thank you for the support that you are giving,” said **Craig Webb**, executive director-treasurer of Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention.

“One thing that people don’t fully understand is the demand on a pastor’s time, resources and energy. They see him as maybe working a couple days a week, and nothing could be further from the truth,” said **Jeff Yant**, executive director of Lake Yale Baptist Conference Center in central Florida.

If you don’t know God as gracious, you’ll never be able to enjoy Him.

@ethicist

X (formerly Twitter)

“I don’t care what song I sing if the heart of it is that people fall more in love with Jesus, and they understand the heart of God for them,” said singer/songwriter **Kari Jobe**.

“As a lifelong Tennessee Vols fan, I’m not an Alabama fan, and I’m not a Nick Saban fan. But I am a fan of leaders, and the more I’ve thought about Alabama’s loss to Texas ... the more I’ve realized [it] was a BIG Nick Saban win because the young coach he mentored grew and developed to the point to where he was able to come back and win against his own coach.

THAT’s what leadership is all

about — helping those we invest in do even better and greater things than we have done. Way to go, Coach! (BTW — This is an important lesson for pastors to learn too.)

@DrBradWhitt

X (formerly Twitter)

“Regardless of the size of your church, we all have an impact to make for the Kingdom — even if it starts with noodle hockey or human foosball,” said **Brennan Coughlin**, pastor of Fellowship CrossPoint Church in Chesterfield, New Jersey.

“The effect of gender confusion and what it means to be a woman has reached our churches. [It] is just not growing, it is exploding — and by a landslide,” said **Katie**

McCoy, director of women’s ministry for the Baptist General Convention of Texas and author of “To Be a Woman: The Confusion Over Female Identity and How Christians Can Respond.”

Don’t overthink leadership development.

1. Invite a small group.
2. Make it costly (early AM, \$, serving).
3. Do it short-term (8–12 weeks).
4. Pick content that lights you up (doesn’t matter what) or ministry case studies.
5. Be real & generous with yourself.

A little goes a long way.

@Lukedsimmons

X (formerly Twitter)

The blessing of eternal security

In a recent Wednesday night Bible study, I spoke about the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer.

Article V of “The Baptist Faith and Message” states: “All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ and sanctified by His Spirit will never fall away from the state of grace but shall persevere to the end.”

As a career Army chaplain, I often interacted with other Christian clergy who did not believe this. I do not want to speak for them or misrepresent their faith, but I have often wondered two things: 1. What would it take to lose one’s salvation, and 2. How would you know if it happened?

How can a Christian sing “Blessed Assurance” if there is none?

I believe in the eternal security of the believer not because it feels good to believe it but because Scripture teaches it.

In 1 Peter 1:5, Peter assures believers that we do not keep ourselves saved but are rather “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

That’s a relief because if I did not have the power to save myself, I surely do not have the power to keep myself saved!

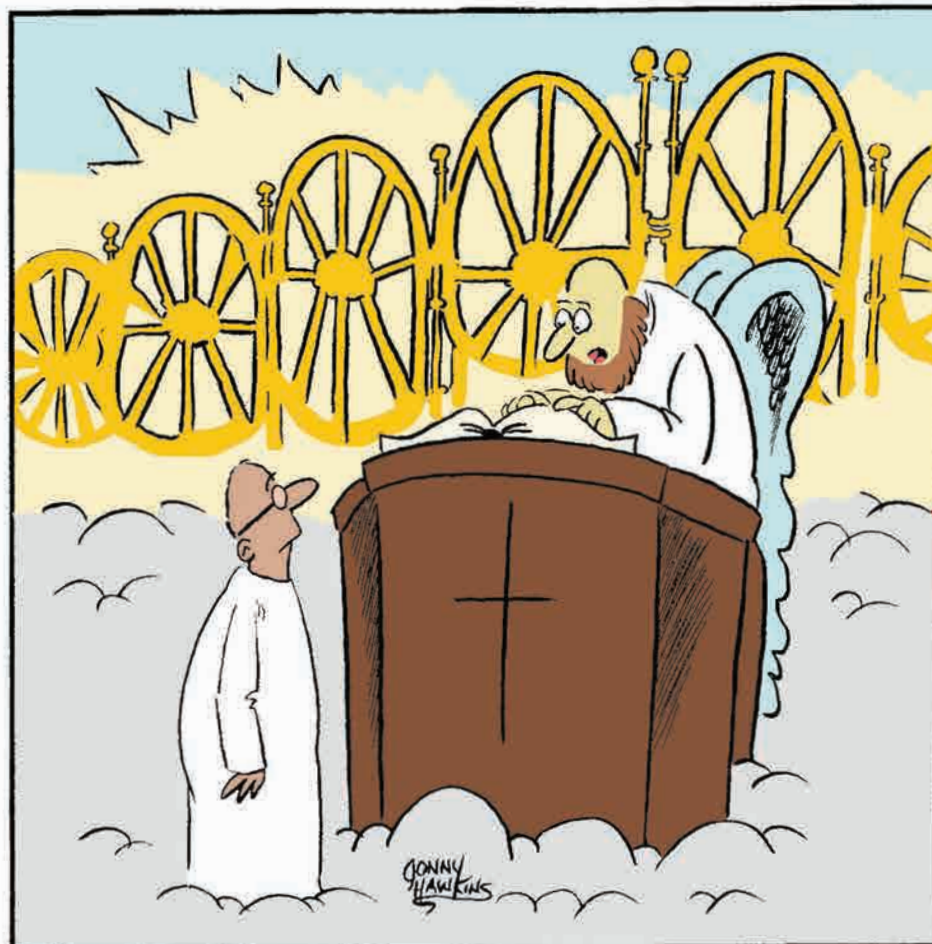
In the previous verse (v. 4), Peter also describes it as “reserved in heaven for you.”

Perhaps you have had the experience of making a hotel reservation and when you attempted to check in were informed that your reservation was dropped or canceled. Imagine the consternation and disappointment.

Thankfully, heaven will not cancel or drop a believer’s reservation! That is indeed “Blessed Assurance”!

Pastor Clay Davis

Friendship Baptist Church
Thomasville



“Since you’re from upstate New York, we’re giving you Buffalo wings.”

3 stories you should know



TAB Media Group photo

October brings a focus on Baptist associations, and among those in attendance at many annual meetings in Alabama will be TAB Media's director of communications Debbie Campbell (center), pictured with Mark Smith (left), minister to adults 55+ at Willowbrook Church in Huntsville, and Robert Mullins, executive director of missions for Madison Baptist Association. Oct. 22 is the Day of Prayer for Associational Missions. Find resources at sbc.org and namb.net/associations. (TAB)

California FCA group can be reinstated after court ruling

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled in favor of an FCA huddle in California after a teacher attacked the group's beliefs, including its policy of choosing leaders only from those that agree with the organization's religious teachings.

Fellowship of Christian Athletes sponsors nearly 20,000 Bible studies and small groups (called "huddles") at schools around the world.

In 2019, the San Jose Unified School District said the group, which had been meeting in San Jose schools for more than a decade, could no longer operate in the district.

Becket, a religious liberty group that helped FCA with the case, said the ruling effectively allows the school's FCA chapter to be reinstated. (Baptist Press)

Oklahoma church latest to be disassociated from SBC

Members of the SBC Executive Committee on Sept. 19 approved the Credentials Committee's recommendation that "Matoaka Baptist Church in Oche-lata, Oklahoma, be deemed not in friendly cooperation with the Convention based on a lack of intent to cooperate in resolving concerns regarding discriminatory behavior on the basis of ethnicity."

Media reports indicate the situation stemmed from the pastor's Ray Charles impersonation during this year's Valentine's banquet at the church. The pastor has denied his impersonation was racist but did not respond to inquiries from the Credentials Committee, according to EC chair Philip Robertson. The Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma made a similar decision about the church. (The Baptist Paper)

Persecuted church

Preacher, others assaulted at outdoor evangelistic event in Uganda

KAMPALA, Uganda — A preacher teaching about Christ's divinity was assaulted at an evangelistic event in Uganda, and so were the Christians trying to rescue him from the melee.

The attack upon Robert Faisali Miya and the others occurred Aug. 11 at an event in Busolwe. Miya had cited passages from the Quran as examples of Christ's uniqueness. He also spoke about Jesus' death and resurrection.

His teaching angered some in the crowd, many of whom were Muslim, Morning Star reported. Miya was stomped and struck. He is recovering after treatment at a clinic. A former Muslim, Miya put his faith in Jesus Christ in 2010.

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, killed or excommunicated by Muslim family members, the World Atlas reports.



Unsplash.com

Nigerian Baptist pastor among those killed in recent days; others abducted

ABUJA, Nigeria — A Baptist pastor and a Christian woman were killed and two Christians were abducted in a Nigerian state that continues to be a hotbed for violence.

Morning Star News reports that Gloria Isa, a Christian, was killed in her home Aug. 9 in the Ungwan Rana area of Kaduna state.

Two weeks later on Aug. 23, assailants fatally shot Jeremiah Mayau in the head as he was working on his farm. Mayau was the 61-year-old pastor of Tawaliu Baptist Church in the Ungwan Mission area of Kaduna state.

On Aug. 25, brothers Yusha'u Peter and Joshua Peter were abducted from the predominantly Christian community of Wusasa in Kaduna state, states Morning Star.

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

For two years, Nigeria was second in the world for attacks upon churches and the number of Christians displaced because of violence.

Alabama news

ALABAMA-CRENSHAW ASSOCIATION

► **Isabelle Jarvis** is the new ministry assistant of **Alabama-Crenshaw Baptist Association**.

BETHLEHEM ASSOCIATION

► **Southside Baptist Church, Monroeville**, is holding homecoming Oct. 1st at 10:30 a.m. with guest preacher Mark McCullough, pastor of First Baptist Church Frisco City. For more information, call 251-743-2577. Mike Crowe is pastor of Southside.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Micaiah Bolton** is the new associate minister of music of **Mountain Brook Baptist Church, Birmingham**.

CAREY ASSOCIATION

► **Big Springs Baptist Church, Ashland**, met July 30 to celebrate 125 years of ministry. The church was organized in 1898 in an old school house. A fellowship lunch was provided by the church to celebrate this day in history. Albert Pike is the current pastor. Photo from the celebration includes



Photo courtesy of Big Springs Baptist Church

(l to r): Michael Dick, deacon; Reginald Blair, deacon; Debbie Dick, treasurer; Maxine Rowell, clerk; and Kenny Packer, music director.

CHEROKEE ASSOCIATION

► **Herbert Reid** retired as pastor of **Nazareth Baptist Church, Centre**, after 51 years of bivocational service. Reid had a clear call to be a witness in the workplace, which he did for 38 years. Soon to be 80 years old, Herbert and his wife, Earline, have been married 61 years. Reid was honored for his



Photo by Tina McCord

years of dedicated ministry on Aug. 13 with a reception and letter of commendation.

CHILTON ASSOCIATION

► **Leighton Coppedge**, sophomore education major at the University of Alabama, was licensed to gospel ministry by **West End Baptist Church, Clanton**. Coppedge grew up attending West End Baptist Church. During his first semester at UA at a church re-



COPPEDGE

treat, Coppedge felt the Lord calling him into ministry, so he pursued an internship at West End. After spending this past summer working as an intern in all five ministries of the church, Coppedge's call to ministry was affirmed with the blessing of his church.

COVINGTON ASSOCIATION

► **Fairmount Baptist Church** is celebrating 202 years by holding a homecoming service Oct. 8 starting at 10:30 a.m. with guest speaker Herbert Brown, pastor of Southside Baptist Church, Greenville and Olive Branch Baptist Church, Evergreen. A fellowship meal will follow the service.

ELMORE ASSOCIATION

► **Glenn Goggans** retired as pastor of **Mitts Chapel Baptist Church, Deatsville**, July 30, after more than 17 years of service. Church members expressed gratitude for Glenn and his wife, Delane.



Photo courtesy of Mitts Chapel Baptist Church

JUDSON ASSOCIATION

► **Joel Laseter** is the new pastor of **Calvary Baptist Church, Abbeville**, where he served as interim pastor.

He was saved at age 7 at Kinsey Baptist Church and called to ministry at 15 years old.



LASETER

Laseter has a bachelor's degree in ministry from the Baptist College of Florida and a master of arts degree in theological studies from Liberty University.

He previously served as youth minister and interim pastor of Union Hill Baptist Church, Cottonwood; and pastor of Webb Baptist Church and

Mount Enon Baptist Church, Midland City.

Laseter and his wife, KrisAnn, have three children.

MARSHALL ASSOCIATION

► **Glenn Pankey** is the new senior adult minister of **Solitude Baptist Church, Albertville**.

PICKENS ASSOCIATION

► **Aliceville First Baptist Church** celebrated its bicentennial on Aug. 20.

Former pastor Jim Cooley, pastor of First Baptist Church Birmingham, preached. Rick Lance (right), executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, and Angie Cooper (center) of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission were special guests.



Photo courtesy of Charlie Wilson

The church recognized those present who grew up in the church and went on to serve as ministers and missionaries, including two former student ministers who planted churches in Tuscaloosa and Elmore counties in August. Charlie Wilson (left) is pastor.

TENNESSEE RIVER ASSOCIATION

► **Woodville Baptist Church** celebrated its 92nd homecoming on Sept. 10 with a note burning in honor of Glenda (Bit) Hodges and in memory of Steve Hodges. Bit is the oldest living member of the church. Steve served as a deacon, song director, Disaster Relief team member and in many other positions.

The formal organization of the church was held Sept. 8, 1931, with eight charter members. The first service was held in the new building Oct. 27, 1931. There have been 31 pastors, including one interim pastor, over the 92 years. Three members have been ordained as ministers, and one member was called to serve on the missions field.

In September 1998, the church took a leap of faith and voted to purchase three acres of land for the purpose of building a new facility in the future. After holding VBS in tents on the property for three years, the decision was made



Photo courtesy of Rick Freeman

to move forward with the building plans. Work began on New Year's Eve 2001 with Bit and Steve Hodges unlocking the doors of the new facility on June 16, 2002.

God has blessed Woodville Baptist Church through all of the peaks and valleys so the mortgage could be paid off, Pastor Rick Freeman said. "We are committed to serving the Lord and reaching the lost for Christ."

STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

► **Kimberly Sandoval**, who previously worked as a ministry assistant in the office of associational missions and church planting, is moving to Phoenix, Arizona, to serve as the Next-Gen Missions recruiter for the International Mission Board's western region. She was honored with a reception Sept. 5.



SANDOVAL

Offering a safe place

Chilton County maternity home aims to help women through unplanned pregnancies

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Ashley Liveoak said she just couldn't get it off her mind. "The Lord just laid it on my heart, and I kept thinking, 'maternity home,'" she said.

At that point — in 2021 — Liveoak had been executive director of Care Net of Chilton County for two years, and every day she and the staff and volunteers there were offering a broad spectrum of resources to help women through unplanned pregnancies.

But sometimes those women needed something Care Net didn't have — a safe place for them to land and live for a while.

"I remember one time last year that we had four moms we could've placed in a maternity home if we'd had it, and that's not uncommon for us," Liveoak said.

So in 2021 when God laid that on her heart, she asked the Care Net staff to start praying about it with her.

The two years since then have filled an "Ebenezer book" with the ways God has provided, Liveoak said.

'A great need'

On Oct. 1, they'll open Selah's Oasis Maternity Home.

"This is a great need in our state," Liveoak said, noting that the closest maternity home up until now has been in Elberta, more than 200 miles south.

More than half of the women who live at that home come from central Alabama, she said. "So we



Photo by Grace Thornton/The Alabama Baptist
Ashley Liveoak, executive director of Care Net of Chilton County, stands in the doorway of a bedroom at Selah's Oasis Maternity Home set to open Oct. 1. The building can house eight expectant mothers and their babies, along with two girls aging out of foster care and one house mother. The closest maternity home up until now has been in Elberta, more than 200 miles south.

know there's a need here."

She knows it from that number, but she also knows it from the women who walk through Care Net's doors.

In the past two weeks, the Clanton-based ministry has already had four people contact them about a place at Selah's Oasis. They've also had one online application — and they haven't even made an announcement about the home being open yet.

"God has definitely affirmed that

this is what He has for us," Liveoak said.

He's done that through the apparent need, and He's also done that through the way He's provided, she said. He first led them to the right place — a building outfitted with 11 bedrooms with connected bathrooms, along with kitchen facilities and living and dining areas.

Partnering churches

Liveoak, a member of Mount Carmel Baptist Church #1 in Jemison, said 12 Baptist churches in the

area as well as others have come alongside them to help get the house ready, adopting bedrooms to decorate for the women and their babies.

Because of that, Selah's Oasis doesn't look like a facility, it looks like a home, Liveoak said. "The home atmosphere is what's key, and everything in this house has been donated by God's people, which is just mind blowing to me."

The building can house eight expectant mothers and their babies,



Photo courtesy of Ashley Liveoak

Selah's Oasis Maternity Home is outfitted with 11 bedrooms with connected bathrooms, along with kitchen facilities, dining and living areas (pictured).

along with two girls aging out of foster care and one house mother, Liveoak said.

"A lot of people have asked how it's going to work to have expectant moms and the girls aging out of foster care living there together, but we find that they come out of some of the same backgrounds and need the same skillsets," she said.

They will all take budgeting and cooking classes together along with studying the Bible, Liveoak said. "And they can all take parenting classes. Even though they (the girls coming from foster care) don't have children, that model of a parent is something that was missing from their lives. It could very well benefit them in the future."

Liveoak said she also learned as she attended the National Christian Housing Conference and prepared to open Selah's Oasis that at other maternity homes across the country, many of the moms said their favorite thing was family dinner every night because that was something they never had.

"I wanted to make sure that was included because of that," she said.

Worth in Christ

She hopes it will be a place where they can learn confidence, learn their worth in Christ and prepare for the future. Each bedroom is named after one of the names of God, and she hopes that name will become personal for each woman who occupies that room.

"Our goal is for the churches to

come in and pour into these ladies also," Liveoak said. "That's ultimately what they need."

The women can choose to stay there up to two years, enough time for them to learn some vital life skills, meet financial goals, buy a car if needed and prepare to move into their own place.

Equipping women

"If we don't equip them, they'll probably be right back," Liveoak said. "We want to make sure we give them the tools to break those generational curses."

A case manager will work goals with them every week, from small things like drinking enough water to bigger things like signing up for GED classes.

Liveoak said she's so grateful for all God has done to prepare the way for the women who will live there.

"The need is growing — at Care Net, since Roe v. Wade was overturned, our client traffic has increased by 30 percent," she said.

Selah's Oasis will be one of more than 400 maternity homes in the nation.

"It's a great need, and we pray for God to place it on the hearts of His people around the country to help care for these women," Liveoak said, noting that those involved with Selah's Oasis are grateful for all the prayer and financial help they have received so far, though they still have more to go.

"It's His vision, and He will bring it to fruition," she said.

Planting Oaks helps organizations connect

By Tracy Riggs Frontz
The Alabama Baptist

A variety of ministries and organizations provide care for hurting children, but their efforts can feel disconnected. Planting Oaks, a support branch of Big Oak Ranch, seeks to provide teamwork, collaboration and mentorship to address that problem.

Founded in 1974 by John Croyle, Big Oak Ranch provides homes for abused, neglected and abandoned children where they can learn of God's love and His plan for their lives.

Over the years, leaders at Big Oak Ranch have sought to discover and utilize best practices for everything from caring for vulnerable children to managing the resources entrusted them to provide that care. A goal they've always had was to share those lessons with others.

So starting with a few like-minded ministries, Big Oak Ranch developed an informal mentorship and resourcing program. This developed into a 2 1/2-day, "A to Z" program for new groups or employees. Held two to three times a year, these workshops are called Planting Oaks Intensives.

"We wanted to take everything we knew — everything we've learned and all the resources we've gained — and be able to leverage those for greater good," said Erin Woods, director of Planting Oaks.

Best practices

Planting Oaks Intensives provide opportunities for leaders of various organizations to talk with each other and problem-solve. This professional networking provides guidance for participants, and best practices rise to the top through collaboration.

Blanket Fort Hope, a ministry building a restoration home for young survivors of sex trafficking, recently benefited from the Planting Oaks experience.

"When Planting Oaks became real in our life at Blanket Fort Hope, it was just the right time," said Alexa James, CEO and founder of Blanket Fort Hope. "We needed to know those next steps of what the pieces to bring this together looked like because they have the most experience, and they are successful at doing it."

"I was just blown away to be invited to be part of that process."

To find out more about joining in the vision of Big Oak Ranch or the Planting Oaks Intensive, visit BigOak.org.



Photo courtesy of Evan Lanier

Big Oak Ranch team members discuss strategies and best practices during a workshop at a recent Planting Oaks Intensive.

Addressing the issues

SBC Executive Committee trustees working through leadership, financial matters

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee trustees approved a readjusted operating budget for the 2023–24 fiscal year and dealt with a variety of heavy topics during their Sept. 18–19 meeting in Nashville.

One expected item on the agenda, the naming of retired Kentucky pastor Dan Summerlin as transitional interim EC president, changed midway through the meeting when Summerlin withdrew his name from consideration the evening of Sept. 18.

“This job would require far more of my attention than I am able to give it right now as my wife undergoes treatment for breast cancer, and I need to take care well for her,” Summerlin said in a statement.

Trustee chair Philip Robertson said he plans to begin a new search right away.

During an executive session Sept. 19, the EC approved Jonathan Howe, EC vice president for communications who has been serving as interim president since Aug. 18, to continue as the temporary interim until a transitional interim — someone who will not be considered for the permanent role — can be selected, Robertson said.

Robertson also reported results of the internal investigation related to Willie McLaurin’s resignation in August over falsifying his resumé.

“While it is clear that Willie McLaurin engaged in both academic and professional fraud during his tenure with the Executive Committee, no evidence was found of financial wrongdoing or direct harm to the Ex-



Photo by Van Payne/The Alabama Baptist
Craig Carlisle (above), director of missions for Etowah Baptist Association, serves on the SBC Executive Committee with fellow Alabamians Tim Cox, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea; Dana McCain, member of FBC Dothan; Neal Hughes, DOM for Montgomery Baptist Association; and Ann Stafford, member of Southside Baptist Church in Dothan.

ecutive Committee,” the EC statement on McLaurin says.

“While the Executive Committee acknowledges the collateral, reputational harm and indirect financial impact resulting from McLaurin’s misrepresentations, the Executive Committee does not plan to proceed with taking any legal action against McLaurin at this time.”

Separation agreement

A confidential separation agreement was approved between the EC and McLaurin, Robertson said, without elaborating on any specifics.

In his address to trustees Sept. 18, Howe calmly outlined the current reality facing the EC and called for a spirit of humility and unity from all Southern Baptists.

“We are facing significant challenges,” he said. “Over the past few years, we have repeatedly heard of distressing actions that could not be ignored and the cost of addressing them has been very high.”

Howe commended staff members for their continued commitment to the work despite the instability around them.

“But we must come to grips with the reality that these accomplishments do not outshine where the EC as an institution has fallen short,” he said, adding “the Lord has still placed us here with a mission and an opportunity to join Southern Baptists in service to His Kingdom.

“Nothing has been more humbling

to the EC in recent years than our financial position. We are all aware. There is a price to pay for reform even when reform is necessary,” he noted.

Drop in reserves

“We have seen our reserves fall from more than \$13 million, almost \$14 million to just over \$4 million in two short years. ... This week we are making difficult choices moving forward with our budget to exercise our fiduciary responsibility. It should not be this way, and I wish it wasn’t, but we cannot debate the steps that got us to this point.

“We are here now and have convention-mandated responsibilities that we are bound to carry out,” Howe added. “Your officers and your staff leadership have set forth a new path financially that will reduce our dependence on reserve funds and allow us to maintain our financial feasibility.”

Howe said EC staff members “are moving forward committed in our service to Southern Baptists.”

“Only when we join in unity with one another will we see our response to a call for the cooperation for the greater good,” Howe said. “Pastors and convention leaders, it’s past time for us to lay down our personal preferences. It’s time for us to lock arms for the greater good of the convention. Our churches deserve the best of us, and I truly believe that when they get the best of us, they will respond in kind.

“We must move forward in unity for the sake of the convention and for the sake of gospel proclamation. ... May we desperately ask the Lord to



HOWE

renew the people, churches, the entities of the Southern Baptist Convention to serve not ourselves, not our plans, not our ideas, not our political interests but serve and adore the one true God.”

Path forward

While the 2021–2022 fiscal year audit details have not been released by the EC trustees, the finance and stewardship committee members continue working on a path forward.

The EC is funded by a small percentage of CP funds and investment income, which is rapidly decreasing.

A readjusted \$8,305,500 EC and SBC operating budget proposal for the 2023–2024 fiscal year was approved Sept. 19. It is the same bottom line number approved in February, but line items reportedly were adapted (primarily from recent staff cuts of five full-time positions) to cover rising costs related to the SBC Annual Meeting and to decrease the amount being pulled from the EC investments.

Mike Bianchi, interim chief financial officer, said in February that the EC’s auditors emphasized “the sexual abuse issues, the DOJ investigation and the deteriorating liability of the EC” as concerns.

The current pace is “unsustainable,” Bianchi said in February, noting options such as liquidating assets (including the EC building), changing financial arrangements, etc., were discussed with the auditors.

During the recent meeting, Adam Wyatt, chair of the finance and stew-

ardship committee, confirmed the possible sale of the building is being discussed with the other entities who co-own it as well as a potential listing agent.

In his message to trustees, SBC President Bart Barber reflected on how Southern Baptists have emerged time after time in cooperation after being rocked by economic disaster, doctrinal conflict and leadership scandals.

Among those examples included the 1920s–30s, when the SBC mission boards were leveled with financial scandal after corrupt leaders not only stole money but also the trust of many Southern Baptists.

Barber also recalled how during those years, Southern Baptist churches sacrificed and responded in troubled times through creating the Cooperative Program, the SBC’s unified plan for supporting missions and ministry, and adopting the Baptist Faith and Message, the Convention’s statement of faith.

“Amidst all of these controversies, instead of allowing themselves to become embattled and distracted, Southern Baptists chose to be bold and courageous at the very moment when people would be tempted to hunker down and ride out the storms,” he said.

‘Commit our hearts’

“We need to commit our hearts to the Great Savior who has given us the Great Commission, and if we do that ... God will go before us and give us the victory.” (Shawn Hendricks contributed)



BARBER



Photo by Van Payne/The Alabama Baptist
During a break in meetings, SBC Executive Committee member Ann Stafford, an educator and member of Southside Baptist Church in Dothan, speaks with another EC member. The EC met Sept. 18–19 in Nashville.



Photo by Van Payne/The Alabama Baptist
Neal Hughes, director of missions for Montgomery Baptist Association and chair of the SBC Executive Committee President/CEO Search Team, gives an update during the full EC’s Sept. 18 meeting in Nashville.

SBC Executive Committee President/CEO Search Team Report

September 18, 2023

Thank you for praying for your search team, made up of the following trustees: Neal Hughes (chair), Nick Sandefur (vice chair), Nancy Spalding (secretary), Sarah Rogers, Drew Landry, Corey Cain and Philip Robertson (ex-officio as EC chair).

The team meets every Thursday afternoon via Zoom and have met in person the last two days. As always, we are grateful to EC staff members Amy Thompson and Jon Wilke for their faithful and wise assistance.

As you know from our last report, we have divided the work into the following phases:

1. Invitation Phase
2. Interview Phase
3. Investigation Phase
4. Introduction Phase

Regarding the Introduction Phase, your search team is working diligently and expeditiously toward the day we will have a candidate before you. With the help of the Lord, we hope to have this person for the Executive Committee’s examination and vote on or before Feb. 19, 2024. Thank you for joining us in praying earnestly to that end.

Your search team is presently in the Invitation Phase. This means we are receiving resumé until Sept. 30, 2023. Note that we have received multiple resúmes from fellow Southern Baptists. ...

One can submit his biographical [information] (or an endorser can present the resumé on his behalf) to ecpresidentsearch@sbc.net.

Please understand that the President/CEO Search Team is not in the recruitment business. To put this in biblical terms, Southern Baptists, including you, are seen as “Jesse.” We feel our role as the search team is to be “Samuel.” Therefore, it is our SBC family’s responsibility to present a candidate (with his resumé) to ecpresidentsearch@sbc.net.

It is the search team’s job to prayerfully search for “God’s man for the hour and the hour for the man” out of the pool of resúmes presented.

In keeping with our six-week communication commitment, we will present the next report to the SBC Executive Committee “first” on or before Monday, Oct. 23 (most likely via email), followed by a press release later that day.

Thank you once again for your continued encouragement and concerted prayers.

For the Kingdom,
Neal Hughes, chair
Nick Sandefur
Nancy Spalding
Sarah Rogers
Drew Landry
Corey Cain
Philip Robertson

Someone You Should Know

THOMAS THORNTON

By Leigh Pritchett
The Alabama Baptist

Ninety-year-old Thomas Thornton of Muscle Shoals has been in ministry 54 years. Currently he is pastor of Abbie Baptist Church in Leighton and has served 10 northwestern Alabama churches. As a bivocational pastor, Thornton worked at Reynolds Alloy Co., retiring after 33 years. He studied at Faith Baptist Institute in Monroe, Louisiana, and what was then Northwest Alabama State Junior College. The Army veteran now takes courses through Samford University's Ministry Training Institute. Thornton and Mildred, his wife of 72 years, have two daughters, five grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Q: Describe where you focus your greatest ministry efforts.

A: Sharing the gospel and showing people that I love them; sharing the Word of God; visiting those that need to be visited, the sick and shut-in; and showing them some Christian love. I work with the deacons and anyone else that wants to be a part of the ministry of sharing God's love and compassion. One of the great things God has done for me is to let me live to 90 years old and still carry a loving heart for people, and to have the health to do that.

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

A: There were two people: First, I

MINISTRY:
Pastor

CHURCH NAME: Abbie Baptist Church, Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association



LIFE VERSE: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

must say that my wife knew before I did that God had a call for me, and she had purchased me a new Thompson Chain Reference Bible before I accepted the call. Her faith and her trust in me has carried me through the 54 years of ministry, even in the hard times. The second person was Reverend Ben Turner. He started and ran a children's home, and even after these 50 some years, that children's home is still very strong. His devotion to God and to children and the church he served was what showed me the helping hand of a loving God.

Q: What has God been teaching you lately?

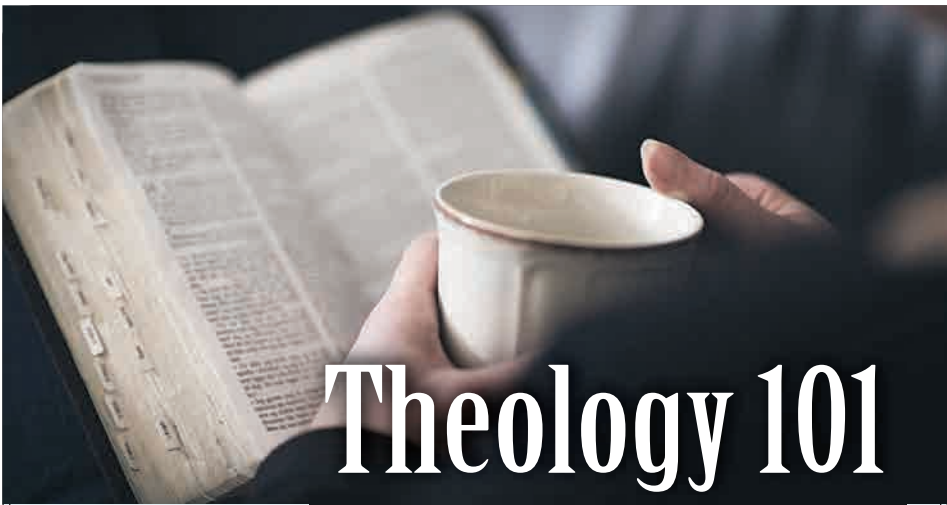
A: We are never too old to learn and find what and where God needs you to know and be. As of Aug. 21, I just started my third group of classes from Samford University on biblical studies. What God has been teaching me is the fact that a person is never too old to learn and to study about the Lord. The older I get, the more I want to learn about God and His love and grace.

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

A: I could tell a younger person to trust God and walk in His calling for your life.

DO YOU KNOW A PERSON WHO SHOULD BE FEATURED AS
Someone You Should Know?

Send his or her name, a contact number and the reason you think he or she should be featured to Someone You Should Know, c/o The Alabama Baptist, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209, or to news@thealabamabaptist.org.



BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Sanctification

A Work in Progress

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.
The Alabama Baptist

For several weeks, Theology 101 has given attention to the doctrine of justification. We took note that justification is a truth about God's work of redemption of sinners that occurs totally at the time of personal faith in Christ's redeeming work on the cross. At the very moment of one's trust in the Savior, God credits Christ's perfect righteousness to the believer's account for both time and eternity.

We turn now to another aspect of divine salvation, which the Bible describes as sanctification. This term refers to an ongoing work of God in a believer's life that aims at progressively transforming a forgiven sinner into a good and upright person. This work of God stretches across the entirety of the Christian life but is not totally completed until one's death and subsequent presence in heaven.

Producing holiness

Sanctification may be thought of as the process by which believers cooperate with God's means of producing holiness or godliness in the life of a sinner who has chosen to respond in repentance and faith to the saving work of Christ and the ongoing sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

At its heart, the term "sanctify" conveys the idea of being set apart. This work of God in a Christian's life is a lifelong work. Although it is God's work, we must cooperate with Him in its implementation.

We cannot ever honestly testify concerning our Christian growth, "Look what I have done." Rather, our testimony says, "Look what God is doing as I cooperate with Him."

The Bible admonishes, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). As this growth takes place, we must always acknowledge the last phrase of the verse, which says, "To Him be glory both now and forever!"

Eternal perspective

This work of God is not completed prior to a Christian's death and the eternal reception into God's heavenly presence.

Until that time, Christians are not fully pure and holy in thought, word or deed. Rather, we find ourselves having to deal continually with sinful tendencies and moral imperfections.

Thus, the meaning of sanctification teaches us that all Christians are a work in progress and therefore must deal continually with sinful tendencies and failures even though our final destinies are secure in light of the truth of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Jerry Batson is a retired Alabama Baptist pastor who also has served as associate dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and professor of several schools of religion during his career.



‘If my people will pray,’

Thousands of people set to come together for prayer Oct. 1 ‘and nobody’s in charge’

By Erin Roach
The Alabama Baptist

Akin to the account of Paul and Silas in the Book of Acts, groups of believers are planning simply to sing and pray together Oct. 1, crying out to God in a time of need and leaving the results to Him.

“If My People Will Pray” is planned for 5–7 p.m. at Samford University’s Wright Center in Birmingham and at churches and other sites throughout the world, including Washington, Jerusalem, the Philippines and Kenya.

“God stirred me out of a sleep and spoke directly and gave clarity and confirmation that we were to come together on Oct. 1, 2023, and we were to worship from 5 to 6, and then we were to pray from 6 to 7,” said Jacky Connell, pastor of Eden Westside Baptist Church in Pell City.

The plan is for no one to be introduced and no instructions for how to pray to be given. Each prayer site is to begin at 5 p.m. in its time zone, not trying to coordinate worldwide.

“It’s kind of a hard concept to think about,” Connell said. “We’re so familiar with programming everything, and we’re so familiar with somebody leading everything. It’s hard to visualize thousands of people coming together and nobody’s in charge.”

Like Paul and Silas, Connell said the groups will just “sing and pray and see what God’s going to do.”

When a U.S. congressman heard of Connell’s idea, he invited the pastor to meet with various leaders at the U.S. Capitol in June. They agreed to offer the Reflecting Pool there as a prayer site Oct. 1 for



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people to gather at the Capitol and pray.

“It was a blessing to see God going ahead of me to prepare the hearts of leaders of our nation in Washington,” Connell said.

The Scripture for the emphasis, 2 Chronicles 7:14 —

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then

I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” — is a guide for what Connell hopes will unfold.

Call to repentance

“What I would love to see happen is the fulfillment of Scripture, and that is that we would turn from our wicked ways,” Connell said, noting that Christians must repent initially, not expecting the world to do it first.

“Can it change our world? Yes. We can see God work. He’s done it before, but in doing it before, it always started with His people,” the pastor said.

Connell said he “would love for every community — every city in our nation — to be willing to consider hosting a prayer gathering somewhere in their city, that churches would open themselves up and invite people to worship and pray at that time.”

Someone described the idea as puddles popping up all over America, Connell said, and those puddles could come together to create a raging river that would flood the country for God’s glory.

“I think that’s a beautiful picture of what could happen,” Connell said. “If the puddles will pop up all over this country of people crying out to God in concert, wouldn’t it be amazing to see the flood of

God’s Spirit flow all over this country in such a supernatural way that we would have an awakening again?”

Rob Jackson, director of the office of church health for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said words cannot express his excitement and anticipation over “If My People Will Pray.”

‘Divine opportunity’

“I am convinced these gatherings are a divine opportunity for God’s people to unite in worship and prayer,” Jackson said. “My hope is this day will be remembered as a time when God chose to send a downpour of revival and awakening that will reverberate across our globe.

“May our collective efforts on Oct. 1 spark a fire that spreads across the globe, touching lives, healing wounds and guiding souls back to the path of righteousness,” Jackson said.

Kevin Blackwell, assistant to the president for church relations at Samford and director of the Ministry Training Institute, said the school is eager to see what will transpire around the prayer gathering.

“After meeting with Jacky Connell and hearing of this profound impression God placed on his heart to call God’s people together to pray, I knew that Samford had to host this gathering,” Blackwell said. “The Leslie S. Wright Center is the perfect venue. It provides a great opportunity for Samford to offer our campus as a place where God will meet with His people in a remarkable way and for our Samford students to assist in worship leadership and to pray with local churches.”

For more information and to sign up as a prayer site, visit ifmypeoplewillpray.net.

UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

NAMB Evangelism Training Oct. 17 in Birmingham

Get ready to ignite your passion and transform your community with the power of the gospel! Join us at NAMB Evangelism Training, designed to equip you with the tools and resources to create an evangelism-focused culture in your church.

With renewed passion and a clear sense of purpose, you'll learn to fearlessly proclaim the gospel message and make a lasting impact on a world searching for hope and answers. You will also enjoy food and fellowship with like-minded leaders.

Don't miss this incredible opportunity to deepen your



Photo by Freepik

evangelism focus and learn about the latest resources available to all churches.

The training will be held at Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham on

Oct. 17, 10:30 a.m.–1:15 p.m.

The event is free and includes a catered lunch. Register by Oct. 16 at evangelizeal.org/net.

Minister Appreciation Month

October is Minister Appreciation Month. Have you thought about how your church might show appreciation to your pastor and church staff?

The Church Health office at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions offers these possibilities for consideration:

► You could honor your pastor and staff on a Sunday in October.

► You may wish to include a gift to each minister as a

part of the special recognition. This could range from a gift card for dinner at a nice restaurant to a weekend away or a love offering.

► You could feature each minister and family in the church newsletter and express gratitude for their contributions to the church.

For more suggestions, visit churchhealthal.org/resources or contact Rob Jackson at the SBOM, 334-613-2343 or rjackson@alsbom.org.

For resources, visit churchhealthal.org/resources or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



Abundant Living event for seniors set for Oct. 26 at FBC Pelham

Abundant Living, an event for senior adults, will be held Oct. 26 at First Baptist Church Pelham.

Frank Jones will provide pre-service music and lead congregational singing.

Speakers will be Daven Watkins, pastor of FBC Pelham, and Robert Smith, professor of Christian preaching at Beeson Divinity School.

The event will be held

from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. with a break for lunch on your own from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The event is free. Registration is encouraged. Register at alsbom.org/abundantliving.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

Place a classified ad below for \$1 per word. For more information call 205-870-4720, ext. 200, or email ads@thealabamabaptist.org. To place an online classified ad for \$9.99/month, visit thealabamabaptist.org/classifieds.

CHURCH POSITIONS

ASSOCIATE PASTOR & MINISTER OF YOUTH/EDUCATION

Taylorville Baptist Church is seeking a full-time associate pastor and minister of youth/education. An ordained minister with a college degree preferred and at least three years of ministry experience preferred. Please email your cover letter, resumé and three references to: kcollins@taylorvillebaptist.org. Resumes will be accepted until Sept. 30.

STUDENT & YOUNG ADULT PASTOR

Lakewood Baptist Church, Phenix City, Alabama, is seeking a full-time student and young adult pastor. Resumes sent to: lbpsearch@outlook.com.

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Oak Bowery, Ohatchee, Alabama, is in search of a director of children's ministry. Part time. Contact Pastor Sam Fordham: DrSamFordham@gmail.com.

SIGNS

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exercisecoach.com/find-a-studio.

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MINISTRIES

PENNPPOINT COUNSELING

Dr. Romeo Penn is a licensed clinical pastoral counselor/therapist. Dr. Penn serves those in need of pre-marriage, marriage and relationship counseling, as well as those struggling with grief depression, anxiety, fear and anger. Visit his website at pennpointcounseling.com to learn more. Dr. Penn also recently published his first workbook, "R.P.T. Therapy: Rejoice. Prayer. Thanksgiving." It is available for purchase through Amazon.

TRIPLE THREAT: A TALE OF FRIENDSHIP, LOVE AND BETRAYAL

From the outside, Alex Maddox and his wife Laura seem to have a perfect life, but they have fooled themselves as well as others. Carrying the guilt for a life they helped destroy was bad enough, but no one saw the tragic consequences looming. As their world unravels, new temptations and betrayal tear open old wounds. Triple Threat is Jason Rash's debut novel and is available to purchase on Amazon.

HOSTED CHURCH

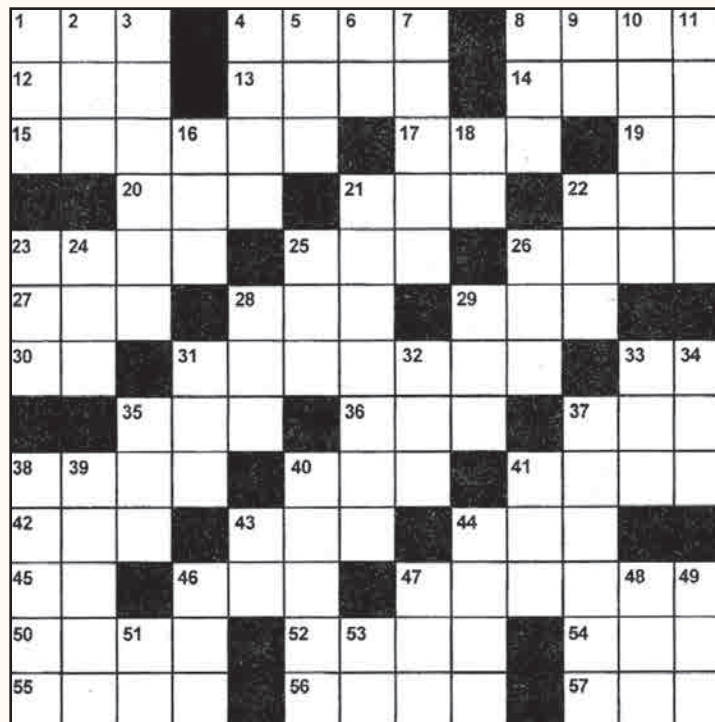
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CHRISTIAN Crossword



ACROSS

1. Look ___ new heavens and a new earth. (2 Pet. 3:13)
4. I will ___ thee: on the third day. (2 Kings 20:5)
8. Health resorts.
12. My days ___ like a shadow. (Ps. 102:11)
13. Enter ___ his gates with thanksgiving. (Ps. 100:4)
14. We have seen his star in the ___. (Matt. 2:2)
15. I will destroy this ___. (Mark 14:58)
17. ___ no man any thing. (Rom. 13:8)
19. A greeting.
20. To hurt.
21. We ___ great plainness of speech. (2 Cor. 3:12)
22. He ___ to meet them. (Gen. 18:2)
23. A narrow cut.
25. Voice of ___ crying in the wilderness. (Matt. 3:3)
26. With ___ life will I satisfy him. (Ps. 91:16)
27. An ___ of oil for an ephah. (Ezek. 45:24)
28. I saw thee under the ___ tree. (John 1:50)
29. Arise, take up thy ___. (Matt. 9:6)
30. What think ___ of Christ? (Matt. 22:42)
31. We were ___ of God to be put in trust. (1 Thes. 2:4)
33. Chemical symbol for radium.
35. Hear my ___, O God. (Ps. 61:1)
36. Thou shalt ___ about thee. (Job 11:18)
37. Babylon is taken, ___ is confounded. (Jer. 50:2)
38. O Lord, ___ shall I say! (Josh. 7:8)
40. Height (abbr.).
41. He moveth his ___ like a cedar. (Job 40:17)
42. Even as a ___ gathereth her chickens. (Matt. 23:37)
43. Not willing that ___ should perish. (2 Pet. 3:9)
44. I would thou wert cold or ___. (Rev. 3:15)
45. A piece (abbr.).
46. Wheat bristle.
47. ___ and built up in him. (Col. 2:7)
50. The high places also of ___. (Hosea 10:8)
52. The children of ___ of Hezekiah. (Ezra 2:16)
54. ___ up for yourselves



By Evelyn Boyington Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

- treasures in heaven. (Matt. 6:20)
55. An examination.
56. Gaddiel the son of ___. (Num. 13:10)
57. How long will it be ___ thou be quiet? (Jer. 47:6)

DOWN

1. Liberal soul shall be made ___. (Prov. 11:25)
2. Raw metal.
3. My joy might ___ in you. (John 15:11)
4. Every mountain and ___ shall be brought low. (Luke 3:5)
5. Compass point.
6. Marvel not ___ this. (John 5:28)
7. ___ thy shoe from off thy foot. (Josh 5:15)
8. Whereas I was blind, now I ___. (John 9:25)
9. Dad.
10. Ain, Remmon, and Ether, and ___. (Josh 19:7)
11. O death, where is thy ___? (1 Cor. 15:55)
16. Brought me up also out of a horrible ___. (Ps. 40:2)
18. ___ are the children of God. (Rom. 8:16)
21. Christ died for the ___. (Rom. 5:6)
22. Moses took the ___ of God in his hand. (Ex. 4:20)
23. Timid.
24. I will ___ with my fathers. (Gen. 47:30)
25. A horn of ___. (1 Kings 1:39)
26. The Lord ___ me. (Gen. 24:27)
28. For then would I ___ away. (Ps. 55:6)
29. Therefore shall he ___ in harvest. (Prov. 20:4)
31. Thou ___ the Son of God. (John 1:49)
32. Powers of thinking.
33. Shimei and ___, and the mighty men. (1 Kings 1:8)
34. The Lord is good to ___. (Ps. 145:9)
35. How ___ these things be? (John 3:9)
37. The Lord mighty in ___. (Ps. 24:8)
38. Sowed tares among the ___. (Matt. 13:25)
39. The first of your dough for an ___ offering. (Num. 15:20)
40. And led him away to ___ first. (John 18:13)
41. Ye take ___ much upon you. (Num. 16:3)
43. A sound of sympathy.
44. The sons of Lotan; ___, and Homam. (1 Chron. 1:39)
46. Go to the ___, thou sluggard. (Prov. 6:6)
47. The Lord dried up the water of the ___ sea. (Josh 2:10)
48. Give ___ to my words. (Ps. 5:1)
49. A solution for coloring.
51. Suffix used in forming plurals.
53. Peace ___ him that is far off. (Isa. 57:19)

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 or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



ACPs are due Oct. 1 and can be turned in through your association or online at 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.

Don't forget October is CP emphasis month

We need each other. We can do more together than we can do alone. And no person or church has enough resources to do individually what God has called us collectively to do.

That's why Rick Lance, executive director of the State Board of Missions, said the Cooperative Program is so vital.

October is Cooperative Program Emphasis Month on the Southern Baptist Convention's calendar, the

month when churches are challenged to study the CP — to learn about it, see what it does and pray about their part. The CP is Southern Baptists' unified plan of giving through which cooperating Alabama Baptist churches give a percentage of their undesignated receipts in support of the Alabama Baptist State Convention's and SBC's missions and ministries.

Free resources are available at AlabamaCP.org.

5 practical steps to creating a church logo

By Mark MacDonald
The Alabama Baptist

Creating a church logo is not for the novice, but it's a necessity because we live in a visual world. Most in your community have become accustomed to a controlled, visual symbol that represents everything an organization, product, service or church is known for.

A logo is an easy way to have people quickly recognize your ministries and distinguish your communication from all the other churches. And, as they say, a picture is worth a thousand words.

Creating a church logo properly will reinforce messaging and open doors. Here are 5 practical steps to do just that:

1. Know all your requirements. Many will want a say into your church logo development. Many will believe you must have certain symbols with a certain style.

It's good to listen to anyone with an opinion. But be careful if you attempt to please everyone. You can't.

Questions to ask

Consider these: Do you need a religious symbol? (Probably not.) What words must be part of the logo? (Is the word "church" needed?) Do you have a thread or tagline that needs to be present in your visual brand? (I say "yes"!)

2. Decide on the church logo format. You'll certainly need a horizontal and vertical version for flexibility. But consider the choice between a wordmark-style



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logo (just a stylized font for your name) or a unique symbol that accompanies your stylized name. The latter gives you flexibility.

3. Create the design in vector format.

Now the fun, creative and challenging part. If you're not a designer, I'd recommend hiring one. There are many companies who specialize in branding and some that focus on churches and nonprofits.

If you want the challenge of creating a church logo that'll define who you are for over a decade, the options are endless. Research trends, but resist being too trendy.

Simplicity and uniqueness need to define the logo. Use computer programs like Adobe Illustrator (\$\$\$), Affinity Designer

(\$\$) or Canva (\$) to create a vector format (all points and curves are mathematically created). Vector format can be enlarged to a billboard-size and maintain a quality appearance.

4. Edit, reduce, simplify. Think you're done creating a church logo? No. Your design now needs to be revised. Decide now between a "simple but not unique" logo OR a "more complex and very unique" concept.

Logos today

Most logos today are very simple so it will read well in a small format (like in a website header or on a business card) and also can be screen-printed on a shirt.

Your final church logo should represent who you are, the quality you expect and the people who attend. If it's printed on something and offered to your audience, they should want to be associated with it or want the item.

5. Create file assets.

Once the church logo is fi-

nally approved by all stakeholders, you need to create various files that can be used and controlled across all mediums and sizes.

File formats

Your vector format (.ai) can be used in professional applications, but you'll probably need some bitmap (resolution-bound) file formats (like a transparent .png) in color, grayscale and/or black and white. And your bitmap formats will need various sizes for different usage.

Yes, there'll be many assets required in your collection, but the end result will be a logo you can use

across multiple communication channels.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Mark MacDonald is a communication pastor, speaker, consultant, best-selling author, church branding strategist for BeKnownforSomething.com. He is also executive director of Center for Church Communication, empowering 10,000+ churches to become known for something relevant (a communication thread) throughout their ministries, websites and social media.

His book, *Be Known for Something*, is available at BeKnownBook.com.

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Photo courtesy of Andy Blake

WorkFaith program director Crystal Parker (left) and executive director Andy Blake (right) celebrate with a program alum who received a job offer at a Second Chance Jefferson County Hiring Fair. The next job fair will be Oct. 17 at Boutwell Auditorium in Birmingham.

Overcoming obstacles

Program helps unemployed clients address the past truthfully during job interviews

(continued from page 1)
conduct these trainings at local organizations such as The Lovelady Center, which helps women coming out of incarceration and addiction, and the WellHouse, which aids women who have been rescued from human trafficking.

In addition, WorkFaith

conducts public workshops at the Salvation Army in North Birmingham and has partnership programs with Birmingham Drug Court.

While the program helps many former convicts and addicts, it's not an ideal fit for homeless people or people who only have a few months of sobriety.

"Our program is designed for people who are a little bit further along on their journey," Blake explained, adding some may need more time to get back on their feet before entering a career.

In his six years at WorkFaith, Blake has noticed the main employment barrier doesn't involve people's past. Rather, "the biggest employment barrier for anyone is motivation," he said.

Aside from that barrier, Blake said that many of his clients who have struggled with addiction or ongoing unemployment don't know how to truthfully talk about their lives in a way that doesn't disqualify them from the job.

Direct answers

"They will run from questions about unemployment gaps. They'll kick that can down the road and hope it doesn't come up again [in the interview]," Blake said.

Amanda was a WorkFaith client who hoped her past wouldn't ruin her future. After she was rescued from sex trafficking, her long criminal record stood between her and employment.

WorkFaith ran a background check to help her know what might come up.

"It was very, very long and she didn't know how to address that," Blake recalled.

A WorkFaith staff member sat down with her and

individually went through each conviction to offer her guidance. Now, Amanda has two jobs.

To help more candidates like Amanda gain confidence and have hope, WorkFaith is launching a new initiative called WorkFaith in a Box, a model program that trains organizations how to help others in the job process.

"We had our first seminar this year," Blake said. "We had six organizations there that are trying to implement our curriculum."

Additionally, WorkFaith started another program called Magic City Pipeline.

In this program, a person will acquire soft skills through a monthly mentorship with WorkFaith. They'll also attend four seminars during the year and do multiple check-ins with staff members.

To acquire hard skills, candidates will be required to either participate in an apprenticeship with a local employer or enroll in technical training classes.

"So an employer agrees to hire this person and give them the hard skills, and they [work] with us to learn these other essential skills," Blake said.

With the launch of Magic City Pipeline, WorkFaith

needs volunteer monthly mentors who will sit down with people and ask them basic questions like, "How are things going? What obstacles are you facing? What victories have you gotten?"

Volunteers could help people like Sarah. Discouraged, she came to WorkFaith with no history of addiction or incarceration. She had simply lost her job during a company downsizing and had faced unemployment for more than a year.

Despite her education and career background, she couldn't get

past the first interview.

After graduating from a workshop, Sarah put what she learned into practice and found a great job.

'Key' to the future

"I believe the key to employment and workforce development in the future is to rethink what we're doing," Blake said. "We want to take the soft skills — essential skills ... and match them up with the hard skills, partnering with employers and certification opportunities."

"That's what the wave of the future looks like for us."

EDITOR'S NOTE —
Names have been changed for privacy.



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To get involved with WorkFaith or learn more about the ministry, visit workfaithbhm.org.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 1

Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



INCLUDES Mark 7:24–37

The Dejected (24–30)

After having a debate with the Pharisees over their traditions, Jesus and his disciples traveled to the region of Tyre, north of Israel, into Gentile territory.

They went into a house to escape notice, but a Syrophenician woman entered, pleading with Jesus to heal her daughter who was demon possessed. This was unusual because, first of all, Jesus was Jewish and this woman was a Gentile. These two groups did not casually interact with each other. Secondly, this was a woman initiating conversation with a man, which was against cultural norms. The Pharisees would certainly have seen this interaction as against their traditions.

Many modern readers are insulted by the way Jesus deals with the woman. However, when Jesus talks about throwing the bread to the dogs, He does not say that her daughter is not allowed to receive healing but rather that Jesus' first mission is to the Jews and then to the Gentiles.

This is the same order that Paul gives us in Romans 1:16. The woman is fine with this arrangement and acknowledges as such in her reply, showing her faith and trust in Jesus. For this, Jesus heals her daughter.

The passage shows that God is for all people and wants all people to experience the gospel, regardless of race, ethnicity or gender.

It also shows how we should approach God. Many people try to understand God by bringing in their own cultural presuppositions into their reading of the Bible. This woman serves as an example in that she believes Jesus and does not debate with Him but exhibits faith.

Her concern for her daughter causes her to go to the only source

of healing she could trust.

The Deaf (31–35)

After leaving Tyre, Jesus and his disciples went back toward the Decapolis, where Jesus had healed the man possessed by Legion in Chapter 5. The friends of a deaf and mute man bring him to Jesus for healing. Jesus heals the man by touching him. Jesus is communicating to the man in a way he will understand. Being deaf, he can experience what Jesus is going to do by His hand gestures.

This is how God deals with each of us, meeting our individual needs in a way we can understand. The gospel heals our deepest need — forgiveness of sin and a right relationship with God. But each of us has different struggles in our lives, and God is able to overcome them on a personal level.

The Dumbfounded (36–37)

Once He healed the man, Jesus told the crowds not to tell anyone but they did anyway. Why does Jesus give this command? Wouldn't he want everyone to hear of these great events?

Most likely Jesus did not want the people to think He was just a miracle worker, leading people to come to Him only to be healed of their physical ailments, not their spiritual condition.

This happens today when people are more interested in Jesus for what they can get rather than for making Him the Lord of their lives. We need to come to Jesus on His terms, not our own.

Many people today see Jesus as their magical genie, asking for money, fame or physical healing instead of coming to Him for their most important need — forgiveness.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew and also to the Greek.

Romans 1:16

Bible Studies for Life

By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Biblical & Religious Studies, Samford University



CONFESS WHOLEHEARTEDLY Daniel 9:3–10, 17–19

The final six chapters of Daniel consist largely of a series of apocalyptic visions concerning the empires of Alexander the Great and the four generals who followed him.

Tucked in the midst of these visions is this particularly moving chapter in which Daniel wrestles with the long years of exile his nation continues to endure.

Judah's prophets had repeatedly warned the people that continued disobedience would result in their exile from the land. Sadly, no repentance was to be found in Judah.

In 2 Kings 23, we see King Josiah leading a reform of the nation's worship, but the reform did not survive the untimely death of its author.

Soon after Josiah's death, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar seized control of the land, began exiling its leading citizens and finally destroyed Solomon's famous temple.

Daniel and his companions were, of course, part of this defeated and exiled population. And though Daniel lived to see the fall of Babylon at the hands of the Persians, the full restoration remained incomplete.

Jeremiah had declared that the exile would last for 70 years. From Jeremiah's perspective, this announcement was meant to disabuse the people of any hope that the exile would last only a couple of years.

From Daniel's perspective, however, the problem was that 70 years had come and gone, and the nation remained largely in ruins.

Confession of sin is needed to maintain a right relationship with God. (3–6)

Faced with this dilemma, Daniel's immediate response is to approach the Lord in prayer.

We know from the famous story of Daniel and the lion's den that prayer was a daily routine for Daniel.

Three times a day, he would open a window toward Jerusalem, bow down on his knees and offer up prayers of thanksgiving to God.

The prayer in Daniel 9, however, is of a different sort than these regular prayers. Here, Daniel is said to have "turned [his] attention to the Lord God to seek him by prayer and petitions, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes."

What is particularly interesting is Daniel's use of plural pronouns as he prays his prayer of confession. Daniel was clearly a righteous man, but he still identified with the sins of his people as a whole.

Confession draws our focus to God who is righteous, compassionate and forgiving. (7–10)

As Daniel's prayer continues, he appeals to God to have mercy on his people. He draws God's attention to the pitiable state of the nation, twice describing the people as covered with shame.

Daniel by no means denies that this shame is well deserved given the people's sinfulness; he only asks his merciful and forgiving God to relieve the people despite their rebellion.

Seek the forgiveness of God and trust Him to respond with favor. (17–19)

Daniel also asks God to respond for the sake of God's own reputation. When Daniel begs God to see the city and people who bear His name, he is invoking an important Old Testament theme.

"Name" in the Bible often refers to more than one's title; it has to do with one's reputation. It is God's city and God's people who are covered with shame, and so it is God's own reputation that is apt to be tarnished in the eyes of the nations.

And so, both for the people's sake and for God's own glory, he asks once again that God have mercy on the nation.

MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs Frontz
The Alabama Baptist

Devotional resource supports those 'Waiting in Hope' through grief of infertility

About 1 in 10 people — both men and women — experience fertility problems, and the result is often isolation, discouragement and prolonged grief. A new book seeks to provide hope and encouragement to individuals walking that path.

"Waiting in Hope: 31 Reflections for Walking with God Through Infertility" is co-authored by Kelley Ramsey, founder of Waiting in Hope Ministries, and Jenn Hesse, content director at Waiting in Hope.

Both say they felt alone at times during their own journeys through infertility.

"Infertility is a type of grief and that may be new information to many people," Hesse said. "It is a type of loss. It can include miscarriage, which is losing a baby, which is the death of a loved one. Infertility is death of a dream, of all these expectations."

'You're not alone'

"Waiting in Hope" was written to help readers feel seen, they said.

"We wanted to reach women ... and help them get a sense of, 'God is with you. You're not abandoned. You're not alone,'" Hesse said.

Written in a devotional style, the book has short chapters so it's



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not too overwhelming. There are reflection questions, a prayer and an action section at the end of each chapter.

"It is meant to meet them where they are in terms of the unique heartache that they are feeling," Hesse said. "Kelley and I share snippets into moments of our journeys, our waiting experiences and some of the times where we felt extremely lost or confused."

Ramsey and Hesse acknowledge how God designed people to be in community and lift up each other. Those experiencing infertility have a hard time connecting due to a common stigma that makes it difficult to share openly about this very personal topic.

"When it's not falling into place as we know that it should — how

God made us to conceive and carry life — then there's a huge amount of grief and letdown from the expectation to the reality that this is not working right," Hesse said.

Though "Waiting in Hope" is geared toward the women experiencing infertility, it is also helpful for friends, family and churches who love and want to support these women. There is also a section for husbands, written by Kelley's husband, Justin.

Attending baby showers or celebrations of others' growing families is extremely difficult, Hesse noted. Compassion is necessary.

"One of the hardest side effects of infertility is how one woman's joy sparks another woman's grief," Hesse said.

Many feel guilt over the difficulty of celebrating Mother's Day with those who are already mothers, especially their own moms, and don't

want to ignore the day. However, it can feel like having salt poured on a wound during these special times.

"We encounter so many women who can't even go on Sundays. It's a lot," she said. "They have to prepare themselves and guard their hearts as they go into church, if they can even go there."

'Brutal' moments

"Mother's Day in particular is brutal for a woman who is really desperately wanting to become a mom," Hesse said. "It's like this parade in front of you of what you don't have."

One woman whose story was included in "Waiting in Hope" felt shame and sorrow over having an abortion when she was young.

She found a post-abortion support group and began to heal as she processed her emotions, which helped her trust Jesus when she faced infertility later in life.

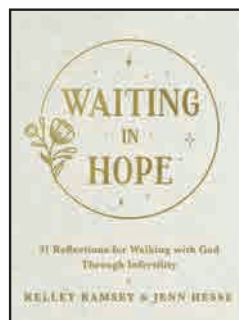
Other women feel like infertility is God's punishment for past mistakes. "Waiting in Hope" reminds them there's no condemnation for those in Christ.

"Many women come and show up broken — and that's okay. God doesn't take us after we're cleaned up. This is how we come. This is how we approach Him," Hesse said.

"He is the One who says, 'I'm doing the work in you. I am your Redeemer. I'm your Savior, and you can tell me that these

things have been hard and I will carry them for you."

"That's how we want our community to be — women who help each other believe that God cares."



"Waiting in Hope" can be found at Lifeway and wherever books are sold. To find out more about Waiting in Hope Ministries, go to waitinginhopeinfertility.com.

EDITOR'S NOTE

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

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Session 5: The Sustaining Peace of God

GUEST SPEAKERS



H.B. CHARLES
*pastor of Shiloh
Metropolitan Baptist
Church, Jacksonville,
Florida*



MATT MASON
*pastor of The Church
at Brook Hills,
Birmingham*



ED LITTON
*pastor of
Redemption Church,
Saraland*



JARED WILSON
*pastor at Liberty
Baptist Church,
Kansas City, Missouri*

*Lunch and dinner will be provided. Registration is required by October 16.
Visit albaptistpc.com to register or for more information.*

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5 tips for writing better content for churches

By Mark MacDonald

The Baptist Paper

Churches create much content, so it's important to learn how to write better. Church content, even when spoken from a stage, often starts with a pen to paper or a blank document in a word processing program.

It can be scary and challenging. With just a blank sheet of paper, it's often difficult to get started.

These five writing tips will get you started and deliver content that will be read or listened to:

1. Identify your audience.

Start here. Think stereotypically about describing the group God has given to you as an audience, or think about a potential audience. Be realistic, though. You can't reach everyone.

2. What are they searching for?

When describing your group, consider what makes them unique and what they're seeking. Perhaps

it's a need or concern they want help obtaining, something that wakes them up at night or weighs on them all day. Perhaps it's an unattainable goal they want to achieve but just can't. This step alone will probably suggest content ideas as you consider what they need.

3. Niche down.

Now you may have too many ideas. Consider targeting a smaller audience based on needs, concerns and goals.

Don't target large groups or create content that's too broad, with too many options. You'll not cover it well in your limited time.

When people are searching for something, they often look for a solution that's more specific than broad.

4. Create a relationship funnel.

Everyone's on a path. Some are Christians who attend church regu-

larly. On the opposite end of the spectrum, there are those who don't understand why anyone would consider a relationship with Jesus. But how many steps are in between?

Structure your content so you lead from one step to another. Don't try to move people much more than one splash in the funnel.

Use links online to take them to their next step. In a sermon, give next steps like Bible references, website pages or ministry opportunities they can seek out.

5. Narrow keywords.

Once you've defined and refined your audience with a solution in mind that will move them along their journey, you need to write. A tip is to say their name and speak their pain with solutions to proclaim. Edit based on keyword research, determining what people are searching for.

Look for search terms that have a

large search volume. Why is this important for how to write better?

Whether someone is online or in person, you need to provide them with the solutions they're seeking. Practical steps are key.

Free keyword research tools (such as Google Keyword Planner, Keyword Surfer, Moz, etc.) let you get into the minds of your audience and deliver great content that's desired.

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

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The Wellness Kitchen

“Nature is God’s Wellness Kitchen where Food is Medicine.”

By Pat Terry
The Wellness Kitchen

BLACKBERRY CHEESECAKE BARS

Makes 12 servings

INGREDIENTS:

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 tube (16.5 ounces) refrigerated sugar cookie dough or make your own | 2 teaspoons grated lemon zest |
| 1 1/2 cups whole milk ricotta cheese | 1 teaspoon lemon juice |
| 1 carton (8 ounces) mascarpone cheese | 1 teaspoon orange juice |
| 1/2 cup granulated sugar | 1 tablespoon amaretto, optional |
| 2 large eggs, lightly beaten | 1 cup (with seeds or seedless) of blackberry spreadable fruit or make your own (no pectin) |
| 3 teaspoons vanilla extract | |

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 375 F. Let the cookie dough stand at room temperature for at least 5 minutes to soften. Press onto the bottom and 1 inch up the sides of a greased 9-by-13-inch baking dish.
2. On the middle rack of the oven, bake 12 to 15 minutes or until golden brown. Cool on a wire rack.
3. In a large bowl, beat ricotta and mascarpone cheeses with the sugar until well blended. Add eggs and beat on low speed until just combined. Stir in vanilla, lemon zest, lemon and orange juices, and amaretto if desired. Pour into the crust.
4. Bake 20 to 25 minutes until the center is almost set. Cool 1 hour on a wire rack.
5. Place spreadable fruit in a small microwave-safe bowl and heat on high for 30 to 45 seconds or until melted. Spread over the cheesecake layer and top with the blackberries. Refrigerate until serving.

Adapted from tasteofhome.com

What’s in season right now? Blackberries!

Blackberries are part of the rose family, along with raspberries and strawberries, and they are found growing wild on every continent except Antarctica! Several types of blackberries exist.

True blackberries are known as bramble fruits and grow on an erect bush. Dewberries, which closely resemble blackberries, grow on trailing vines that run along the ground. Dewberries are usually smaller and tarter than blackberries.

Another fruit that is sometimes confused with the blackberry is the black raspberry. The distinguishing feature of the black raspberry is that when picked, the stem separates from the fruit.

Blackberries are a superfood with beneficial vitamins, minerals, dietary fiber and phytonutrients. All of this nutrient density is packed into berries with only 62 calories per cup.

Whether from your backyard, a farm, market or grocery store, blackberries should be enjoyed while in season.

Peak time: June to September

Average price: \$2.89–2.99 per 1/2 pint in the grocery store/\$3 per quart at a farm near you.

Nutritional highlights: Blackberries are an especially excellent source of vitamin C, providing half of the daily recommended intake

in 1/2 cup. Blackberries are rich in beta carotene that converts to vitamin A. They are high in dietary fiber with nearly 8 grams per cup. This includes both soluble and insoluble fiber that add a wealth of health benefits.

They are also good sources of vitamin K, manganese, magnesium and potassium.

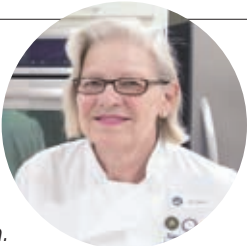
Blackberries also are powerful sources of several phytonutrients in addition to beta carotene, including anthocyanins contained in red, purple and blue foods, as well as flavonoids and tannins.

These phytonutrients give blackberries antioxidant, antidiabetic, anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties. They are also considered prebiotics that feed the good bacteria in the gastrointestinal tract.



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Pat Terry started The Wellness Kitchen as a way to share the knowledge she’s acquired over the 30 years she served as a professor of nutrition and dietetics at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. Prior to her work at Samford, Terry was the first nonclinical dietitian appointed by the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention to serve overseas. Visit her website at thewellnesskitchenrd.com.



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.

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Vital role

By Mary Holloman
Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

Female, male, young, old: How your congregation can serve pregnancy resource centers

The thought of sitting across the room from a woman facing an unplanned pregnancy strikes fear in the hearts of many. Visions of a quiet room, hushed tones, heartbreaking stories, positive tests and difficult decisions may cause anxiety or discomfort.

To be honest, this fear isn't unwarranted. As a woman who has worked in the pregnancy resource center world in a variety of capacities for the past 10 years, I've seen firsthand how serious and intense the front-lines of a PRC can be.

Staff and volunteers willingly walk into a difficult but essential ministry every day, committed to speaking truth in love to women who are either desperate to hear it or determined to reject it.

These workers stand in the gap to advocate for life within the womb and for the mothers who carry those lives. Make no mistake: what's happening behind those closed doors is life and death.

Getting past the barriers

But in an attempt to paint an accurate picture of the life-changing work happening at PRCs, churches unwillingly — perhaps unknowingly — may be discouraging their members from connecting with pregnancy centers at all.

Your congregation is filled with women who would go weak in the knees at the thought of closing themselves in a room with a mother who is considering abortion.

Their hearts may be burdened to stand for life, but the knee-knocking, white-knuckled anxiety of what “could” or “might” happen keeps them glued to the sidelines.

Meanwhile, the other half of your



Photo by senivpetro on Freepik

congregation may believe this is a ministry in which they have no place. After all, what could men possibly have to offer in this woman-focused missions field?

The beauty of the Church is that there are many parts, but one body (1 Cor. 12:12). Every member of the body has a unique, purposeful and invaluable role to fill.

Because abortion is a gospel issue, the Church must rise up to address it at all costs. There is room for everyone in the pro-life movement.

Practical ways to serve

What does this look like on a practical level?

Allison Herrington, director of partnerships at The Pregnancy Network in North Carolina, said volunteers — male, female, young, old, confident, fearful — can do a variety of things, including:

- Sort and organize baby items and donations.

- Write notes of encouragement for mothers.

- Prepare food, greet clients and/or distribute class incentives.

- Clean offices.

- Use their time in school carlines to make phone calls to potential event sponsors.

- Teach sessions on infant CPR or other professional certifications during parenting classes.

- Donate funds to cover costs of billboards and other marketing tools to reach more clients.

- Serve as mentors, make baby blankets, assist with mailings.

- Help set up and break down at events, and mobilize their small groups to assist with special projects.

“Our message to our community is simple,” said Hope Earwood, director of development and communications for The Pregnancy Network. “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.”

If your church wants to get more involved in the pro-life movement but isn't sure where to start, what is the first step?

Steps your church can take

If your community has a local PRC (and it probably does), I guarantee they would welcome your involvement with open arms. Take the initiative to invite a representative from that PRC to speak with you and your church leaders about their needs.

Consider the unique strengths of the individuals in your church. Is your church filled with stay-at-home mothers? Empty nesters? IT gurus? Graphic designers? Writers? Businessmen and women? Event planners? The answer is almost certainly “yes” to all of these, and every last person in your congregation can serve in some capacity.

Something beautiful happens when a wave of individuals from different backgrounds, skill sets and comfort zones unites around a common mission and purpose.

When the body of Christ refuses to remain passive and complacent about putting the Word into action, and instead rallies around women in unplanned pregnancies by mobilizing every possible resource they possess, well — that's when mothers will believe us when we say we value all life.

EDITOR'S NOTE — This article was originally published by the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and has been adapted for print.