

# The Alabama Baptist

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## ‘Biblical mandate’

### Annual orphans, widows emphasis highlights need to care for the vulnerable

By Erin Roach  
The Alabama Baptist

**C**hurches in Alabama and beyond are urged to observe Orphans and Widows Sunday on Nov. 12, recommitting to the task of caring for children in distress through foster care, adoption and other means.

“Orphan Sunday serves as a reminder of the biblical mandate in

James 1:27 in which Christ shows specific care to the fatherless,” said Herbie Newell, executive director of Lifeline Children’s Services. “This day sheds light on the staggering numbers of children struggling in the orphan care crises around the world and serves as a reminder for Christ-followers to continue advocating and caring for vulnerable children.”

Lifeline Children’s Services, based in Birmingham (lifelinechild.org), is the largest evangelical adoption and child welfare agency in the United States. Lifeline serves vulnerable children and families through private domestic and international adoption, family restoration and pregnancy counseling.

While the Southern Baptist Con-

vention calendar of events marks Nov. 12 as Orphans and Widows Sunday, others call it Stand Sunday.

#### ‘Stand Sunday’

“Stand Sunday is a day to acknowledge foster families in our local churches and to celebrate and support their noble and biblical calling,” said Rod Marshall, president of the Alabama Baptist

(See ‘Eternal,’ page 8)

**Orphans  
and Widows  
Sunday is  
Nov. 12.**

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The crossword puzzle  
can be found on page 15.



Photo courtesy of Banner Church  
A “tribe” (small group) at Banner Church pauses for a photo. More than 80 people are currently involved in tribes at the church.

# Banner Church continues to grow in amazing ways

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

Malachi Cole said he’s shocked, even though it “shouldn’t be shocking because God can do what He wants.” But Banner Church has grown in amazing ways since TAB shared the story of the brand-new plant back in February. They’ve baptized 12 college students since the church started with the purpose of reaching the Jacksonville State University campus along with the surrounding Jacksonville community.

They’re also averaging more than 100 in worship and more than 80 in small groups with 27 people engaged in discipleship groups.

“It’s been so encouraging. We have been so blessed, blessed beyond what we even considered,” said Cole, who serves as pastor.

“We’re just praying for more favor at the university and in the city, for more disciples to be made and be obedient to what God has called us to do.”

He said they’re also seeing the church grow into a multigenerational, multiethnic group, which “is a beautiful thing to see.”

“We want to reflect our campus and mirror the community as a whole,” Cole said. “We believe that’s a healthy thing to do, and

we’ve been encouraged to see a glimpse of that already.” Banner Church was the fourth church planted as part of The Well Network, which Highland Baptist Church in Florence started in 2015 to plant churches near university campuses. The Well Network is preparing to launch its next two plants in 2024 — in Starkville, Mississippi, early next year and Mobile in the fall. To read more about The Well Network, read our story from earlier this year at [tabonline.org/the-well-network](http://tabonline.org/the-well-network).



Photo courtesy of Banner Church  
Malachi Cole, pastor of Banner Church in Jacksonville, baptizes Tori Williams. The church has baptized 12 college students in the past eight months.

## The Alabama Baptist

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

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# GUEST EDITORIAL

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

**Carrie Brown McWhorter, Content Editor**

## Pride of 'knowing' can be detrimental to peaceful relationships

In his book “Upside Down Leadership: Rethinking Influence and Success,” pastor and author Taylor Field writes about “the futility of trying to know it all.”

Field describes feeling a “need to think and read more slowly ... rather than always finding ways to access more information more quickly and efficiently.”

Do you have that feeling sometimes? I readily admit I do.

Each day, I and other members of our TAB Media editorial team read dozens of emails, text and phone messages, social media posts, and news and feature articles from a variety of sources in an effort to determine what content to share with you.

Some news develops slowly; other stories seem to change minute by minute. Though we strive to provide coverage that is accurate, calm and compassionate, it often feels like there is little time to process each item and its significance when there is so much information coming our way.

And it's not just news; there's an infinite number of podcasts, blogs, tweets, posts and memes shaping the worldview and opinions of our readers on a daily basis, and we strive to be aware of those conversations too.

Perhaps that is what Field means when he warns of the dan-

ger of being on the “cutting edge of information.”

He writes, “The problem is not in the acquiring of more information. The danger can come when we begin to think that we can necessarily understand things better than others, since we have had more access to sometimes repetitive or trivial information. It can become another kind of subtle pride where we delude ourselves that we know something when we don't.” Ouch.

### Careful use of knowledge

Field's statement challenged me to consider how I use the knowledge I have. Am I using my knowledge in the spirit of Ephesians 4:29, to build up and benefit others according to their needs? Am I watching my

words, as James 1:26 cautions, especially in conversations with and about those in church leadership?

During this Pastor Appreciation Month, we've shared a number of suggestions for honoring those God has called to pastoral ministry. I'll add one more to the list: Prayerfully consider whether what you “know” (or think you know) needs to be shared with your pastor.

In a recent blog post at churchanswers.com, Thom Rainer writes that *instantaneous* communication means pastors often encounter *thoughtless* communication.

They often face what Rainer calls emotional whiplash, having “their emotions jerked around a few times a day.”

While pastoral counselors and advisers may be needed to help them deal with the spiritual, emotional and professional fallout of this “harsh reality” that Rainer describes, we as church members have a biblical responsibility to hold our pastors in the “highest regard of love because of their work” and to “live in peace with each other” (1 Thess. 5:13).

### Practice restraint

It's easy to make our preferences known to our pastor and others, but it's not always helpful to do so. Proverbs 17:28 is often quoted as a warning about foolish talk, but the preceding verse is equally helpful: “The one who has knowledge uses words with restraint, and whoever has understanding is even-tempered” (Prov. 17:27).

“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

EPHESIANS 4:29

# Your Voice



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

## Gazan Christians caught in Hamas-Israel crossfire

By Eric Black  
Baptist Standard

About 900 Christians live in Gaza, but Gazan Christians are glossed over simply as Palestinians, who themselves often are reduced to no more than Hamas.

We need to learn to look beyond the headlines. We need to look for who is missing from the reports and what's not being said. Many times, our own brothers and sisters in Christ will be found in that void.

The Gaza Strip is a small place, almost 141 square miles in size. More than 2 million people live in Gaza, hemmed between the Mediterranean Sea on the west, Egypt — who doesn't want them — on the south, and Israel everywhere else. There is nowhere for them to flee

Israel's reprisals following Hamas' surprise attack Oct. 7.

This means Christians in Gaza also have few places to flee.

Gaza is also an impoverished place. The Christian Mission to Gaza website reports:

► Children age 14 and younger make up 45% of Gaza's population, compared to less than 18% of the U.S. population.

► "Only 3 percent live past 65."

► "Less than 10% of the water is fit to drink, with seawater, sewage and chemicals contaminating Gaza's overloaded aquifer."

► Before the war, electricity was "available for only about four hours a day."

► "Three out of 10 people live below the \$1.90-a-day poverty line."

► "80% depend on charity for food."

According to an email from Pastor Hanna (John) Massad, founder of Christian Mission to Gaza and former pastor of Gaza Baptist Church, the majority of Gaza's 2 million people do not belong to Hamas or the Palestine Liberation Organization, but "are people who want to raise and support their families."



BLACK

Gazan Christians trace their roots "to the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:9–11)," Massad stated. Among the 14 ethnic groups named in Luke's account of that day, Arabs were among them, Massad reminds us.

Today, there are three Christian churches in the Gaza Strip, only one of which is evangelical — Gaza Baptist Church. Massad reported Gaza Baptist Church's building sustained damage when Israeli munitions struck nearby.

Early in the conflict, Massad reported that many Christians in the Rimal neighborhood of Gaza City have lost their homes and are seeking refuge in the area because there is nowhere else for them to find refuge.

We need to see and understand our Gazan brothers' and sisters' plight the way Christ sees it.

As Massad said during his interview: "When you meet with the Lord Jesus, He put love in your heart, and He put the spirit of for-

givenness, love for everyone ... because all of us, all of us as human beings created in the image of God regardless of our ethnicity, our background, we can see God in each other."

We need to have the Spirit of Christ, not the spirit of the Crusaders, Massad said. The Crusaders were "motivated by violence, hatred and revenge," but the Spirit of Christ is "motivated by love. This is what we want, and this is what motivates our hearts," he said.

In that Spirit, Massad called us to pray.

### Pray for all involved

"The family we belong to as the body of Christ, we need to pray for brothers and sisters on both sides [Israel and Gaza]. ... We belong to a wonderful family, and Jesus is the head," he said.

We don't always know how to pray, but "the Holy Spirit which lives inside of us ... takes the agony deep inside of every one of us and lifts it before the throne of God our heavenly Father, who will respond according to our needs and his will," Massad said.

In that same Spirit — the Spirit of Christ — and regardless of theology or political position, I join with Pastor Massad in calling us to pray for all involved — Israel and Gaza.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — This story was originally published by Baptist Standard and has been edited for space. Read the full article at [tabonline.org/gaza-christians](http://tabonline.org/gaza-christians).*

## Report: Gospel penetrates chaos

Despite the constant tension and conflict in the Middle East, gospel outreach is flourishing in the region, A.S. Ibrahim, professor of Islamic Studies at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, told Kentucky Today.

"I am thrilled about what I am hearing and seeing in terms of gospel proclamation in the region," he said. "You would imagine a region in that chaotic situation would be very far from the gospel. In fact, it is completely the opposite."

"I would say that the amount of gospel proclamation and the advancement of the gospel in this land is unprecedented — as never before," he said.

During a recent visit, he said, "I saw Muslims coming to churches, attending the services, and I saw some of them baptized, and I saw some of them being disciplined. I praise the Lord for all that is happening and seeing how many Muslims are abandoning their religion after they encounter the gospel of Christ."

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# “If Paul needed ongoing prayer to do evangelism, I suspect all of us do too.”

CHUCK LAWLESS

*Professor and associate dean, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary*

“If we don’t equip them, they’ll probably be right back,” said **Ashley Liveoak**, executive director of Care Net of Chilton County, which offers a broad spectrum of resources to help women navigate unplanned pregnancies and get back on their feet.

“We want to make sure we give them the tools to break those generational curses.”

“It’s good to listen to anyone with an opinion. But be careful if you attempt to please everyone. You can’t,” said **Mark MacDonald**, church branding strategist for BeKnownforSomething.com, on the challenges of creating a church logo.

If your church seems loud because it’s full of young people ... be sure to praise the Lord for that!

Because a quiet church with no young people is deafening.

@shane\_pruitt78

X (formerly Twitter)

“Infertility is a type of grief and that may be new information to many people,” said **Jenn Hesse**, co-author of “Waiting in Hope: 31 Reflections for Walking with God Through Infertility.”

“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. ...

“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.”

“For me, basketball is only a platform that God has given me to pour into the lives of young people,” said **Steve Edwards**, women’s basketball coach at Brewton-Parker College. “It’s much bigger than just winning basketball games. It’s about seeing lives transformed.”

“In my opinion, if you read your Bible, He will bring you through many things, especially when you have no idea what’s going to happen next. But He’ll be there for you. Trust the Lord, put your faith in Him and believe what you read,” said **Billie Lang** of West Point, Mississippi, who is currently in her 31st year of reading the Bible through from Genesis to Revelation.

“I’ve seen boys get saved in that fellowship hall right there. I’ve seen boys get closer to their dads. I’ve seen boys just have a ton of fun out here and connect with each other. This is where we can reach young people for Christ in ways we wouldn’t have otherwise,” said

**Brian Holt**, Royal Ambassadors coordinator for the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board.

The central theme, motif or idea which permeates all of Paul’s letter to the Philippians is God’s glory, which is “the manifestation of His presence among people.”

God’s glory is mentioned in all 4 chapters (1:11; 2:11; 3:19, 21; 4:19, 20) and this is what makes the other themes (joy, love, thanksgiving, prayer, principles of unity) possible and acceptable to Him.

After all, these timely truths written to a first century church are timeless truths for all churches in all centuries.

**Morris Murray Jr.**  
Jasper, Ala.

## Pray for your pastor year-round

**A**t First Baptist Church Trussville, our Sunday School classes are a vital part of our prayer ministry.

Each month, two Sunday School classes take the responsibility to pray for our pastor. Members of the class are encouraged to pray at any time and place they choose using the guidelines below:

Read the following Scriptures aloud as unto the Lord for the pastor:

- ▶ Matthew 6:9–13
- ▶ Jeremiah 33:3
- ▶ Philippians 4:6
- ▶ Philemon 1:4–7
- ▶ 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

They also are encouraged to read and consider these prayer prompts to guide them:

- ▶ Pray for the anointing power to be on your pastor and the worship service.
- ▶ Pray the message will fall on fertile ground.
- ▶ Pray that the music will set the table for the message.
- ▶ Pray for the people who need to be saved.
- ▶ Pray for people who have personal issues will find peace.
- ▶ Pray for other items that might come to your mind.
- ▶ Close the prayer by giving God all the glory and praise.
- ▶ End the prayer in the name of Jesus.

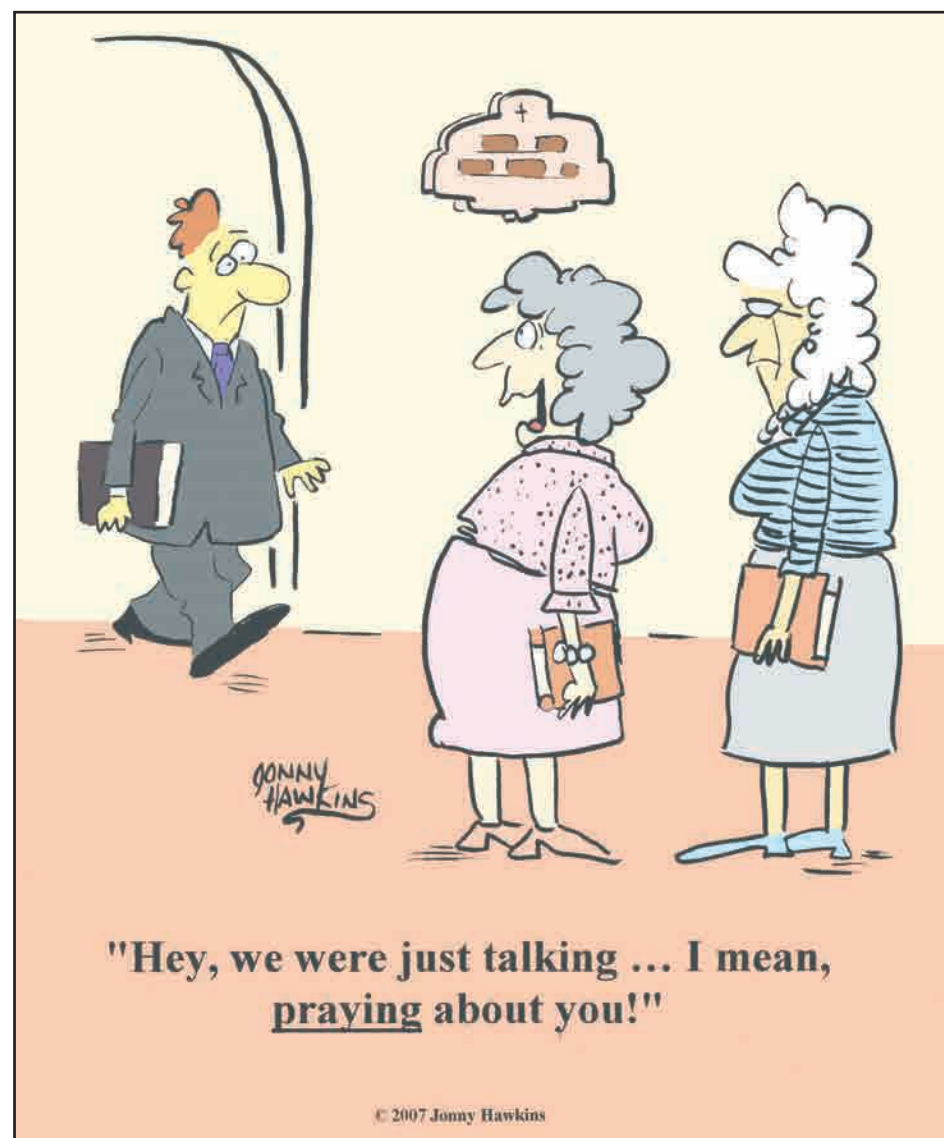
Class members are urged to send the pastor a card or note letting him know he is being prayed for.

**Henry Ward**  
FBC Trussville

Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you.

Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.

**1 Thessalonians 5:12–13**



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# 3 stories you should know



Photo courtesy of Kentucky Today

More than 1,000 people went through the corn maze of Locust Grove Baptist Church in Murray, Kentucky, this year, the 13th year it's been provided. But the number is not what excites pastor Brandon Bramlett — it's the message they hear. Some 18% of this year's record-number of participants were unchurched, he estimated. As people exit the maze they are handed a gospel tract, invited to the church and given an opportunity to talk with a member. (Kentucky Today)

## *Hospital blast reminds Baptists of work in Gaza*

A missile blast on Oct. 17 damaged Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza, reminding Southern Baptists of their historic work in the Middle East and the ongoing humanitarian crisis unfolding as war continues to rage.

At least 500 people died in the blast, and others were feared to be trapped in the rubble. It is unclear who was responsible for the bombing.

Al-Ahli was managed by Southern Baptist Convention missionaries from 1954 to 1982, according to Baptist News Global. The hospital is now run by the Episcopal Church.

It is one of 22 hospitals in northern Gaza struggling to respond to the needs of the more than 2 million residents of the region, one of the most densely populated areas in the world. (The Alabama Baptist)

## *Greenway threatens \$5M lawsuit against SWBTS*

Adam Greenway, former president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, is threatening a \$5 million lawsuit against the school for disclosing details about his alleged spending that "harmed his job prospects."

Greenway was SWBTS president from 2019 until September 2022. He fully resigned in February 2023 after he and the seminary reportedly reached a confidential agreement.

A task force investigated spending during Greenway's tenure and published a report in June 2023.

"The framing of these expenditures as unauthorized and lavish personal gain ... is an assertion of financial impropriety on par with embezzlement," Greenway attorney Andrew Jones said in the Sept. 25 letter to Southwestern, according to The Tennessean. (The Baptist Paper)

## Persecuted church

### *Nigerian believers are among those killed, abducted in ongoing violence*

ABUJA, Nigeria — Christians are among the dozens killed and kidnapped in Nigeria in September as violence in the country continues.

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

The following details are from Morning Star News reports:

► Sept. 23–27 — Five villages in Kaduna State were attacked. Fifteen Christians were killed.

► Sept. 27 and Oct. 1 — Eleven Christians were slain in raids on two villages in Plateau State. Two children were among those killed.

► Sept. 29 — Gunmen intercepted a bus car-

rying members of Christ Apostolic Church in Akure in Ondo State. Twenty-five individuals were kidnapped, but eight later escaped. Kidnappers demanded a ransom of \$64,770 (50 million naira) for the 17 remaining captives.

► Sept. 30 — One Christian was killed and 19 others abducted, including women and children, in Angwan Waku village in Kaduna State.

### *Teen in Uganda reportedly starved for putting faith in Jesus*

KAMPALA, Uganda — A Ugandan teen who was starved for four months for becoming a

Christian is recovering, and his father has reportedly put his faith in Christ too.

A report from Morning Star News says an evangelistic team rescued the emaciated 17-year-old male from a locked room in his family's home in Uganda's Bugiri District.

The teen's Muslim father reportedly imprisoned and starved the boy after the youth put his faith in Jesus earlier this year.

Having heard from neighbors about the abuse, a pastor and evangelical team asked to be allowed to come into the home to pray for the family Sept. 15.

After praying, they forced their way into a room and found the teen, who was then taken to a hospital.

Later, the father said he had put his faith in Christ and asked the team not to report his cruelty to police, the pastor told Morning Star.



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# Alabama news

## AUTAUGA ASSOCIATION

► **Calvary Baptist Church, Prattville**, will host Trunk or Treat Oct. 31, 6–8 p.m. Bring your family for games, food, candy and fun. A tent revival will take place Nov. 9–10, 7 p.m. All are welcome. Dave Burns is pastor.

## BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Hannah Price** is the new associate minister to children at **Dawson Family of Faith, Homewood**. She is a student at Beeson Divinity School and a graduate of the University of Alabama. Price is engaged to be married to Spencer Adams. David Eldridge is pastor.



PRICE

► **Raleigh Avenue Baptist Church, Homewood**, will host Trunk or Treat Oct. 31 from 4:30–6:30 p.m. Hot dogs, candy and fun provided. Michael Ent is pastor.



WHEELER

## CHOCTAW ASSOCIATION

► **Scott Wheeler** is the new associate pastor to youth at **First Baptist Church Butler**. Originally from Crossett, Arkansas, Wheeler has served churches in youth ministry and as a senior pastor for over 20 years. Scott and his wife, Brooklin, have two children. Jason Moye is pastor.

## COLBERT-LAUDERDALE ASSOCIATION

► **Jacob Chandler** is the new senior pastor at **CrossRoads Baptist Church, Rogersville**.

► **Chad Holder** is the new interim pastor at **York Bluff Baptist Church, Sheffield**.

## EAST LIBERTY ASSOCIATION

► **Lanier Baptist Church, Lanett**, will host a Fall Festival and Trunk or Treat on Oct 29, at 4 p.m. (Eastern). Hot dogs, chili and entertainment by professional illusionist Bruce “Kid” Davie begins at 5:30. Admission is free and all ages are welcome. Bill King is pastor.

## ETOWAH ASSOCIATION

► **Wade Carney** is the new youth pastor at **North Glencoe Baptist Church, Gadsden**.

## LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION

► **Jesse Parker** is the new pastor of **New Bethel Baptist Church, Collinsville**. He previously served as youth director of Welcome Hill Baptist Church, near Collinsville, and as youth pastor of First Baptist Church



PARKER

Menlo, Georgia. He and his wife, Krista, have three daughters and a son on the way.

## MOBILE ASSOCIATION

► **Fellowship Baptist Church, Chunchula**, celebrated its 100th anniversary Aug. 27. The guest preacher was David Perry, a former pastor. Bluegrass gospel group the Chestang family from McIntosh provided special music. Dalton Campbell (left), a commissioner of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a plaque to



Photo by Ashley Funk

Marshall Robinson (right), deacon chair. Additional guests included Thomas Wright, executive director of missions for Mobile Baptist Association; Paul Ott, a former pastor; and Walt Turner, a

former interim pastor. Bob Barr currently serves as interim pastor.

## MORGAN ASSOCIATION

► **Bertis Ray** is the new pastor of **Walden Chapel Baptist Church, Danville**. Ray is a native of Gadsden. After earning an M.Div. from New Orleans Seminary, he served in Louisiana and Wyoming. Upon returning to Alabama, he served as pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Gadsden; First Baptist Church Ashville; First Baptist Church

Rogersville; and Providence Baptist Church, Town Creek. Ray previously retired after 52 years of ministry. He and his wife, Rhonda, have one son.

## SAND MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION

► **Steve Townson** is the new pastor of **Poplar Springs Baptist Church, Bryant**.

## ST. CLAIR ASSOCIATION

► **Nathan Daniels** is the new pastor of **First Baptist Church Ashville**. He previously served as pastor of Bethany Baptist Church, Andalusia, for six years. Daniels grew up in Pleasant Grove, near Birmingham, and has a bachelor's degree in Spanish and world religions from Samford University and an M.Div. from Beeson Divinity School. He and his wife, Jessica, have three children.



DANIELS

## OTHER

► **David Nelson** is the new operations manager at **Worldsong Missions Place, Pell City**. Nelson served 16 years in Alabama churches in the areas of discipleship and outreach until coming to WorldSong in the spring of this year. David and his wife, Paige, have three children.



NELSON

## Fayette event sees hundreds come to Christ

Ray Nelson still remembers the way God moved at a crusade in his area in 1988 and lit a “revival fire.”

“That was 35 years ago, but it’s just been something in my heart — a desire I’ve had to see lost people saved, to see evangelism in our community,” he said.

So last year Nelson — treasurer of Fayette County Baptist Association, a member of Concord Baptist Church in Fayette and former mayor of the city — suggested to his friends in ministry that they revive the idea for a community-wide crusade.

Fast-forward to October 2023, and the fruit of that burden — and a lot of prayer — was an evangelistic event called Festival of Hope. The crusade pulled in thousands over several nights of worship and preaching at the stadium at Fayette County High School.

Ronnie Hill, an evangelist from Fort Worth, Texas, was the speaker. Mark Maier, executive

pastor of worship ministries at First Baptist Church Rogers, Arkansas, led worship alongside Kevin Beck, worship and education pastor at Southside Baptist Church in Fayette, and a 75-person mass choir from local churches.

Nearly 400 people professed new faith in Jesus.

John Killian, director of missions for Fayette County Baptist Association, said the whole process of preparation also added to the unity among the churches in the area. He said many people came together across denominational, cultural and racial lines to

pull off the event and to pray together.

“We spent an entire year praying,” said Robert Parrish, pastor of Southside Baptist and chair of the festival.

Nelson said he prays the experience will light a fire for Christ followers in the area to share their faith with their community with renewed intentionality. (Grace Thornton)



Facebook photo

# 'ETERNAL DIFFERENCE'



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## Alabama ministries offer resources to help churches educate members about needs

(continued from page 1)

Children's Homes & Family Ministries. "It is also a day to recruit and challenge families to consider responding to the call to become foster families."

In 2004, a woman in Brownwood, Texas, encouraged her church to stand up for children in foster care in her state, and in 2002, Orphan Sunday had begun in a church in Zambia, Marshall said.

For a few years, Orphan Sunday was observed on the first Sunday in November as the day for the global Church to stand up for the cause of the orphan. Since 2014, the two days have been combined and are called Stand Sunday, observed on the second Sunday in November.

In Alabama, nearly 6,000 children are in foster care, Marshall said, but there are only 2,500 foster homes available. That makes the number of foster homes only about 42% of the number of children in foster care.

"The Church cannot rely upon the state or federal government to solve the foster care crisis in our nation," Marshall said. "Churches must lead the charge in responding to the plight of the fatherless and should also be actively involved in strengthening families, combating substance abuse, reducing poverty and otherwise eliminating the need for children to be in need of out-of-home placements."

### Tools available

ABCH's website — [alabamachild.org](http://alabamachild.org) — suggests some ways churches can participate in Stand Sunday. They can download a toolkit containing bulletin inserts, a sermon outline and supporting slide deck and guidance for an offering to support children in foster care.

Churches can host a collection drive to gather supplies such as paper products, cleaning supplies, diapers and other baby items. The

website also provides videos promoting foster care that can be shown in church services or other settings.

"Stand Sunday is a great day to challenge churches and Christ-followers to do that which they are instructed by Scripture to do, 'to look after the orphans and widows in their distress,'" Marshall said.

"Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries is the state's largest faith-based provider of foster care services. Our ministry partners with congregations to lead them to care for the fatherless and to support foster parents in their congregations and in their communities."

Michael Smith, chief operations officer for ABCH, said the ministry is eager to speak in churches to further explain their mission and how Alabama Baptist churches and individuals can partner to care for vulnerable children.

ABCH sponsors 285 foster homes in Alabama, and by the ministry's 140th anniversary in 2031, they hope to increase the number to 600 homes serving about 1,000 children.

"One of the simplest ways that we could accomplish this is if we could get one foster family from every Alabama Baptist church," Smith said, adding that everybody can do something to support a foster family such as offering to babysit, providing meals periodically or being a prayer partner.

Through the BRACE program promoted by ABCH, every foster family would be paired with a church that would support them — like Aaron

and Hur supported Moses. BRACE is an acronym that stands for Bear with, Respite provider, Appeal in prayer, Cater needs and Encourage consistently.

By 2031, in addition to serving 1,000 children in foster care, ABCH hopes to reunify 250 of those children with their families of origin

each year, see 50 of them adopted annually and have 50 professions of faith each year.

To reunify, ABCH works with the Alabama Department of Human Resources to help families accomplish goals so that their children can safely return to them.

"Oftentimes, when those biological parents will

allow it, our foster families work closely in mentoring relationships with them," Smith said.

Smith mentioned a "tremendous need" for foster parents who will serve older children.

### Showing Christ's love

"We have a lot of parents who will serve elementary and under, but we don't have that many who will serve middle school and teenage children," he said.

Alabama Baptists, Smith said, "are the most amazing, generous people," and they want to help when there is a need. They have the opportunity to make an eternal difference for thousands of children.

"When we can put children in a Christian foster family, we can love on them and protect them, but we can also expose them to the greatest gift, which is the gospel of Jesus Christ."

For more information on how to participate in Stand Sunday, visit [alabamachild.org](http://alabamachild.org).

## Fruitful 2023 coming soon

Subscribers to The Alabama Baptist will soon receive this year's Fruitful magazine in their mailboxes.

The 2023 edition of Fruitful is filled with stories of the ministries and missions endeavors of Alabama Baptists through the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and the entities that cooperate with the



SBOM, including the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries.

Be sure to read the story of Cedric and Omar Davidson, two brothers who found safety, security and hope through the ministry of ABCH (pages 18–19).

Be inspired, encouraged and entertained as you enjoy our gift to you. (TAB)

# ‘Close to the brokenhearted’

## How the church can honor widows, orphans in their midst all year long

By Carolyn Tomlin  
The Alabama Baptist

**T**he Southern Baptist Convention designates the second Sunday of November to pay tribute to widows and orphans in the church and community, but those tributes can be 365 days a year.

One of God’s commands is to care for widows and orphans. In biblical times a woman without someone to care for her could become destitute. Women depended on a husband to provide food, shelter and other necessities, while her responsibilities were to care for the home and children.

### Sharing the burden

The local congregation has many opportunities to be “close to the brokenhearted.” And while it may be difficult for an individual to carry the weight of providing for a widow or a child in foster care, a group can share the burden.

“We need to instill in our children to respect all women,” said Randy Kellough, pastor of Woodland Baptist Church in Brownsville, Tennessee. “For example, on Mother’s Day, the second Sunday in May, most churches recognize mothers. But our younger generations must be taught to value women, regardless of age or married status.”

Kellough noted two programs in West Tennessee that are having an impact on children.

One is Friend-to-Friend, a mentoring program in local schools where a father helps a child without one in the home. The man may attend a sporting event or



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While some widows may need more help than others, God commands believers to care for each of them.

school program, developing a bond in which he is an encourager in both academics and life.

Another program is Lunch Buddies, where an individual sets a weekly lunch date and has lunch in the school cafeteria. There they can talk about concerns, problems or accomplishments the child may be experiencing. It’s a child-friendly way to open deeper conversations.

“Imagine how a child feels, especially on Grandparents Day,” Kellough said, “and you’re the only child in your elementary classroom

who doesn’t have a grandparent to show up.”

Church members can step in and change the lives of children, and when those children become adults, they will remember the kindness — and possibly repay it by being a support system for another child.

While some widows may need more help than others, God commands believers to care for them.

### Help with physical labor

“On a recent Sunday I overheard a conversation from a widow talking to a group gathered after the morning service,” Kellough recalled. “She related that she was having problems finding someone

to cut her grass. Immediately, a deacon spoke up and said, ‘I’ll be at your house in the morning. I’ll get that grass mowed.’”

### Business matters

After the death of a spouse many decisions must be made. Some widows are more equipped than others to handle business matters, but assistance that can be helpful includes:

- ▶ Advice on filing tax information.
- ▶ Recommending a reliable person to repair or maintain a house.
- ▶ Purchasing a tombstone.
- ▶ Preparing and delivering meals for a few days.

**“One of God’s commands is to care for widows and orphans.”**

# Asia Baptist Women's Union builds on strong network

**EDITOR'S NOTE —**  
*Baptist World Alliance is a global community of 51 million Baptists from 176,000 churches. Under that umbrella, BWA Women provides support for missions and ministries in seven continental unions representing more than 150 countries. This is the fifth in a series of eight stories about leaders in each region, the challenges they face and the way they see God working through women across the globe.*

**By Tracy Riggs Frontz**  
The Alabama Baptist

**T**he vision of the Asia Baptist Women's Union, one of the regions of the Baptist World Alliance Women, gets right to the point.

Its website states its vision: "To see women in Asia empowered for leadership, to confidently engage in various traditional and creative ministries, to bring the gospel to the lost."

ABWU's president, Dr. Vernetta Myint Myint San, goes into more detail about their work.

"ABWU has built up a very strong and close relationship through networking over the past four years and now has a huge platform supported by a large group of Baptist women in Asia."

The ABWU consists of 19 countries and 34 member bodies.

"My role is to stay connected with all member countries, to build up networking and support, to inspire them through activities and to reach out and help the

most vulnerable and weakest member," San said. "Seeing them flourish and growing in their ministries is the best reward for ABWU."

## Teamwork

San serves with four other women, all volunteers.

Though from different countries in the region, including Myanmar, Korea, Thailand and Malaysia, San said they "work extremely well as a team."

Along with ministering to women, San is passionate about humanitarian work.

In fact, one of the programs ABWU is involved in is Women Helping Women, a globally recognized humanitarian organization that works to curb climate change.

San has another route for this passion.

"I have been involved in medical missions along the Thai-Myanmar border since 1997," she said. "Initially it was treatment and relief work, which was later followed by training nurse

aides and medics along the borders and in cities with good infrastructures."

She said training local volunteers is important because "instead of giving them fish to eat, we teach them how to fish."

One of her biggest challenges is training and preparing new leadership both in ministry and in the secular world. She encourages ministry involvement starting at an early age and believes that children and youth should be involved in the primary church program and



Photo by Tracy Riggs Frontz/The Alabama Baptist  
Dr. Vernetta Myint Myint San is president of Asia Baptist Women's Union, one of the regions of the Baptist World Alliance Women. The ABWU consists of 19 countries and 34 member bodies.

its activities while also being involved in Sunday School classes and Bible studies.

San said her calling is based on Matthew 25:35–36: "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me. ... I was in prison and you came to visit me."

San's favorite aspect of

being part of BWA is the global networking and encouragement from the other leaders and members.

Transparency is also an important part of the BWA community.

## Support and prayer

"When there was a coup in Myanmar on the first of February 2021, BWA and BWA leaders came together to support and pray for me and offered emergency humanitarian assistance

without even asking," San said. "[It was] something very memorable, knowing our global Baptist family is together with us in solidarity."

Not only does San help lead ABWU, but she is also a lay leader in her church and runs a hospital and takes care of other branches of their medical group.

## 'God has blessed me'

"[The San family] helped found and build churches in Singapore and Chiang Mai, Thailand. God has blessed me with a medical career for over 40 years, and now I have a hospital with two branches in different parts of Myanmar," she said.


Since becoming involved with BWA, San has learned that "we are all a work in progress and will never stop learning. We don't have regrets, but we just move on."

ABWU asks for prayer for Asia, a vibrant continent with different cultural backgrounds but with people who still come together as one in serving Him.

**To find out more about ABWU, go to [bwawomen.org](http://bwawomen.org) and find this region under "Continental Unions" in the "About Us" tab.**

**"Instead of giving them fish to eat, we teach them how to fish."**

**Dr. Vernetta Myint Myint San**  
president, Asia Baptist Women's Union



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# 'EVERY APPOINTMENT IS A DIVINE APPOINTMENT'

Baldwin County women's centers give 'help and hope and love' to parents in need

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**T**he day Melissa pulled into the parking lot of a small church in Bay Minette, she was at the end of herself. She was 40, and she had recently found out she was pregnant.

"My first thought was abortion," she said.

She and her boyfriend, Michael, were on drugs, and they moved from Florida to Alabama to get help from his mom. But the situation got worse. Michael ended up in jail, and Melissa felt desperately alone.

"I ended up driving past this church every day," she said. "It was God pulling me in, and finally I stopped one day."

She walked inside the church — White House Fork Pentecostal Holiness Church — and told pastor Clark Beiler that something kept telling her to come in, even though she was an atheist.

## Uncertain future

He said she "began to unburden her life situation and the difficulties she was in the middle of."

"She didn't know what she was going to do," Beiler said.

So he pointed her to Women's Care Medical Center, a pregnancy resource center with locations in Robertsdale, Gulf Shores and Bay Minette.

"I told her they have people at the Women's Care Medical Center who are well trained; they specialize in helping ladies who are in crisis pregnancy, and they will understand where you are, what you've been through and what you're going through," Beiler said.

Melissa called the center that same day, and the next day she sat



(L to r) Melissa, Dawn Charette, J.P. Charette (holding Bryson) and Michael all show the impact Women's Care Medical Center has on relationships.

and poured out her whole story to Dawn Charette, a volunteer advocate at WCMC.

"It was a mess," Melissa said. "But she sat with me and talked, and she went over my options with me." Things started changing then, Melissa said. "She made me feel like it was going to be OK, that I'm going to be OK."

That Sunday, she was at the church's worship service, Beiler said.

Melissa told Michael about her experience, and at first he thought it was a joke. But then he realized that she sounded like a totally different person.

He got out of jail soon after, and

one of the first things they did together was go to parenting classes at WCMC.

Those classes became a safe place for them, and after their weeks there came to a close, Melissa said she didn't want her time at the center to end.

She attended Bible study regularly. Dawn Charette continued pouring into her, and at the same time, Michael was meeting with Dawn's husband J.P., who also serves as a volunteer advocate.

"He accepted me for everything, all the flaws and everything like that," Michael said. "It was the first time anybody had ever taken me seriously, and it changed me."

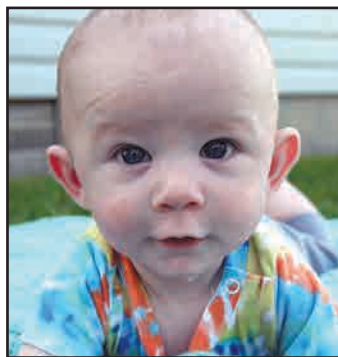


Photo courtesy of WCMC  
Bryson's life is forever different because of the mentoring and discipleship his parents received through Women's Care Medical Center.

"He's one of the best people I've ever met."

Over time, the couple's lives continued to change, and they decided to get married. They asked Beiler to perform the ceremony, and they invited the Charettes to attend. Then Michael asked J.P. Charette to pray for him before the wedding — and be his best man.

"I was just blown away," J.P. Charette said.

## 'Man of God'

Michael said he asked him because "he spoke to me about so many things that I never would've told anybody about. He's a real man of God, a real person."

That influence "helped me be a better man, be a better husband," Michael said.

Melissa said their lives — along with that of their son, Bryson — are different because God led her to the church and from there to WCMC.

Dawn Charette said she believes every appointment at WCMC is a divine appointment.

"There is a reason why God wanted Melissa to come here," she said, noting that the reason had nothing to do with her. "We give help and hope and love to everyone who walks through that door," she said.

Denise Mann, director of operations at WCMC and a member of Bethel Baptist Church in Robertsdale, said the center has been doing that for one person at a time since they opened in 1990.

Through all their services — from pregnancy and STD testing to men's mentorship to abortion recovery — "our mission to reach abortion-minded women but also share Jesus Christ with everyone we see," Mann said.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

# Happy Birthday, Alabama Baptists!

The first meeting of what would become the Alabama Baptist State Convention was held Oct. 28–29, 1823, at Salem Church near Greensboro, meaning this weekend we'll turn 200 years old! We'll celebrate that significant occasion in grand style at this year's State Convention annual meeting, which will take place Nov. 14–15 at First Baptist, Montgomery.

This Sunday would make a great day for you to promote the annual meeting and the bicentennial celebration in your worship services if you like. The Tuesday evening session beginning at 6:30 p.m. will be a wonderful time of celebration, testimonies, praise and worship featuring a multigenerational mass choir, and much more.

The convention theme this year is Unfinished, based on Philippians 3:13–14, a recognition of



For more information, visit [alsbom.org/convention](http://alsbom.org/convention) or scan the code below

with your smartphone's camera.

the fact that even though we have much to commemorate over the last 200 years, there is much more yet to be done in Great Commission ministries.

We hope you can join us for the celebration! For complete information about the 200th annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, plus

a slide and a video you can download to promote it to your church, visit [alsbom.org/convention](http://alsbom.org/convention).



## 2024 State Evangelism Conference: Jan. 28–29

Mark your calendar now for the 2024 State Evangelism Conference, set for Jan. 28–29 at First Baptist Church Pelham.

This free event encourages and equips believers to make a difference through evangelism. It will feature a Monday luncheon with a keynote message by Herb Reavis, pastor of North Jacksonville Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida.

Matt Queen, professor of evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, will also teach a session on "Getting to the Gospel" in our conversations.

Other speakers include:

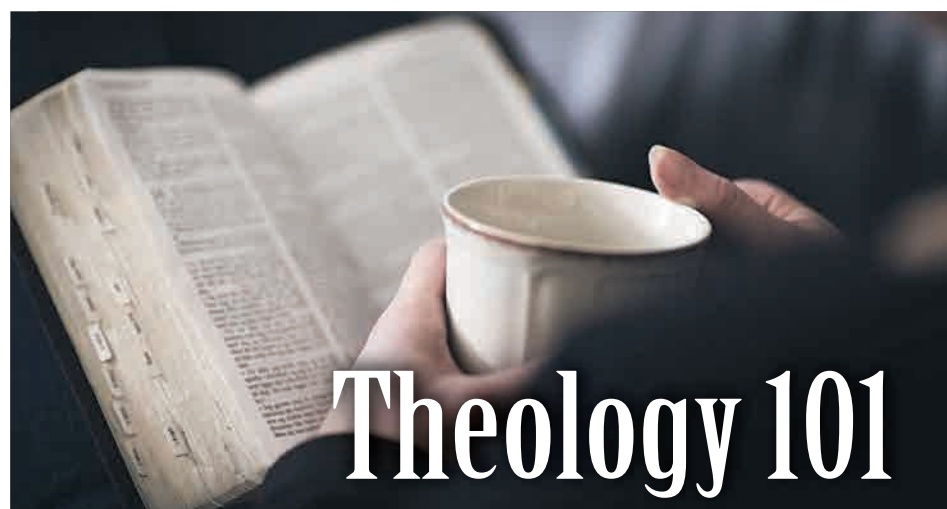
► Reginald Calvert, pastor of New Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church in Bessemer.

► Jamie Dew, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College.

► Charles Carter, pastor emeritus of Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham.

► Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Can't make it in person? Watch the Sunday evening session online at [live.alsbom.org](http://live.alsbom.org). For more information, visit [evangelizeal.org/sec](http://evangelizeal.org/sec).



BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

### Glorification

## The Ultimate Goal

By Jerry Batson, Th.D.

The Alabama Baptist

The Bible presents the Christian experience in three stages: justification, sanctification and glorification.

Several weeks ago we noted that justification is that divine act whereby God declares a sinner to be righteous or acceptable in His sight because of the sinner's faith in Christ Jesus. That declaration occurs at the moment a sinner places faith in the atoning work of Jesus in His perfect life, substitutionary death and victorious resurrection.

Sanctification describes the process in which believers are made holy in thought, word and deed. This stage is progressive and depends on obedience to the will and Word of God. We think of this process as growing in the Lord and gaining spiritual maturity and may express it as growing in Christlikeness.

### Removal of sin

If justification is the beginning point of the Christian life (and it is) and sanctification is the progression of that life (and it is), then glorification is its goal.

Glorification is God's final removal of sin from the life of His spiritual child so that each one of us will stand before Him in glory throughout eternity.

Romans 8:18 says, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." In the meantime, we can "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2).

We might express it by saying that justification is a one-time event, sanctification is a present process and glorification is a future event.

### God's grace

As Christians we are guaranteed all three truths: We are forever justified, we are being sanctified, and we will certainly be glorified. The whole process is dependent on God's grace.

We cannot earn our justification; we cannot achieve our sanctification; we cannot merit our glorification.

God works all three of these aspects of salvation out of His love for each of us.

The whole process has been summarized in the confession that we have been delivered from the penalty of sin, we are being delivered from the power of sin and we shall be delivered from the presence of sin.

Another way of summarizing this process says that Christians' ultimate destiny involves being in a place and being like Christ.

In the language of Hebrews 12:23, the ultimate destiny of all believers is to be "just men made perfect."

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.



# Shelby Association dedicates new mobile dental clinic

Shelby Baptist Association unveiled and dedicated its new mobile dental clinic during the association's annual meeting Oct. 15 at The Church at Old Town in Helena.

The new ministry aims to partner with the association's network of 65 churches to provide free dental care to Shelby County residents who are in need of high-quality and affordable health care, SBA's lead mission strategist Ric Camp shared during his presentation.

## Rural communities

"CDC data suggests that nearly half of Alabama counties have less than 10 dentists, some have none,"

he explained. "Those taking the hardest hit are patients in rural communities with little to no access to health care. It is estimated that more than 16,000 Shelby County residents do not have any form of health insurance and are oftentimes forced to go without necessary health care."

"SBA is determined to close the widening health care gap," Camp said. "The mobile dental clinic will meet these needs by taking health care straight to the communities they are living in."

The dental clinic sits in a fully outfitted seven-ton trailer, complete with state-of-the-art equipment, A/C, two dental chairs and a waiting and reception area.

The services range from cleanings to fillings and extractions. Those helping SBA fund the project are Send Relief, the Alabama



Photo by Susan Stevens/The Alabama Baptist

Dentists Kevin Morris (left) and Laurie Williams (center), both members of FBC Pelham, are helping Ric Camp (right) and the staff of Shelby Association set up and organize the new mobile dental clinic.



Photo by Susan Stevens/The Alabama Baptist

Pastor and incoming associational moderator Chris Jones leads the dedication prayer for Shelby Association's new mobile dental clinic during the annual meeting Oct. 15 at The Church at Old Town in Helena.

Baptist State Board of Missions and the Shelby County Community Health Foundation.

## Church partners

"By partnering with churches throughout Shelby County, the mobile

dental clinic will travel to different hosting sites and treat patients according to their specific needs with volunteer labor from licensed dentists and hygienists and support staff," Camp said. (The Alabama Baptist)

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

# Alabama churches eligible for ADF discount

The culture is changing. Threats to religious freedom are increasing. Is your church legally prepared?

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions has teamed up with ADF Church Alliance so your church can get legal guidance at a discounted rate and be as prepared as possible when it comes to your church's religious liberties.

ADF Church Alliance is an affordable legal membership program for churches. They help prepare your church and protect your right to operate, teach and minister according to biblical principles — without fear of unjust government intervention.

Here are four ways your ADF membership can immediately benefit your church:

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governing documents from a religious liberty perspective to help ensure your church has the greatest religious freedom legal protections possible.

► **Direct access to attorneys** — When religious liberty-related questions or threats arise, you can consult directly with an attorney.

► **Resources** — Stay on top of trending news and laws impacting churches with access to legal resources.

► **Representation** — Should your church ever face a religious liberty threat, ADF will represent your church in court, when necessary and appropriate, at no additional cost.

Visit ADFChurchAlliance.org today to apply, and receive a 20% discount on this already affordable program by using promo code ALSBOM20.

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## Get your tax questions answered at Dec. 7 event

Do you have responsibilities involving your church's finances? Are you unsure about what is taxable and about forms W-2, 1099 and 941?

The Early Bird Tax Conference will help answer questions to get you started out right.

The conference will be held Dec. 7 at the Alabama

Baptist State Board of Missions in Prattville from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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

To register, visit [alsbom.org/event/early-bird-tax-conference-3](http://alsbom.org/event/early-bird-tax-conference-3). For questions, call Lee Wright at 334-613-2263 or email [lwright@alsbom.org](mailto:lwright@alsbom.org).

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### CHURCH POSITIONS

**BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR**  
New Life Baptist Church located in Bay Minette, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor who unashamedly preaches the Word of God. Please email resumé/profile to: [newlifebaptistbmal@gmail.com](mailto:newlifebaptistbmal@gmail.com) or mail to: Pastor Search Committee, 15011 Glasgow Lane, Bay Minette, AL 36507.

**MINISTER OF WORSHIP**  
Fairhaven Baptist Church, Demopolis, Alabama, seeks a called, gifted believer for leading and engaging members in worship services. Interested candidates may forward resumé to: FBC, 1504 Cardinal Avenue, Demopolis, AL 36732 (ATTN: Worship Search Committee).

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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](http://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.

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

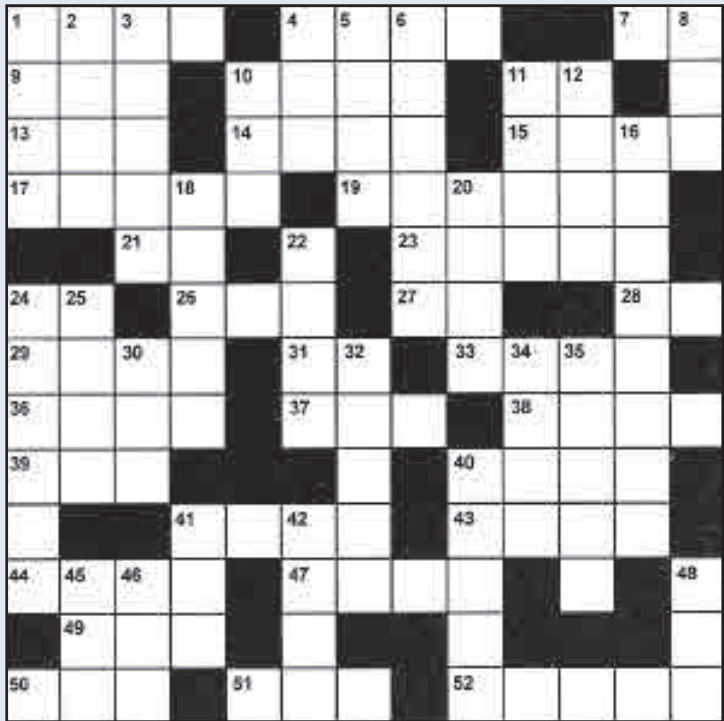
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**THE WELLNESS KITCHEN**  
The Wellness Kitchen is a blog and e-newsletter focused on healthy living, ingredients and recipes. The Wellness Kitchen was started by Pat Terry, a registered dietitian and nutrition professor at Samford University for 30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

CHRISTIAN crossword

WORD search

- ACROSS**
1. Art thou the \_\_\_\_ of the Jews? (Luke 23:3)
4. I am not \_\_\_\_ to destroy. (Matt. 5:17)
7. Do, re, mi, \_\_\_\_.
9. \_\_\_\_ said unto Samuel, Go, lie down. (1 Sam. 3:9)
10. Abihail, the son of \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Chron. 5:14)
11. Tuberculosis (abbr.)
13. She gave me of the tree, and I did \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 3:12)
14. Gold, silver, ivory, and \_\_\_\_ and peacocks. (1 Kings 10:22)
15. Full ears of corn in the \_\_\_\_ thereof. (2 Kings 4:42)
17. \_\_\_\_ king of Jarmuth. (Josh. 10:3)
19. Poured out my soul \_\_\_\_ the Lord. (1 Sam. 1:15)
21. The sons of Judah were \_\_\_\_ and Onan. (Num. 26:19)
23. The glory of the Lord shone \_\_\_\_ about them. (Luke 2:9)
24. Saint (abbr.).
26. Be as an \_\_\_\_ whose leaf fadeth. (Isa. 1:30)
27. Go \_\_\_\_ therefore. (Matt. 28:19)
28. \_\_\_\_ we love one another. (1 John 4:12)
29. Cut off his thumbs and his great \_\_\_\_\_. (Judg. 1:6)
31. And \_\_\_\_ came to pass. (Judg. 1:14)
33. Before the judgment of \_\_\_\_ of Christ. (Rom. 14:10)
36. Part in a play.
37. Take thou unto thee an iron \_\_\_\_\_. (Ezek. 4:3)
38. Your labor is not in \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Cor. 15:58)
39. It shall go \_\_\_\_ with him that is left. (Job 20:26)
40. Nothing.
41. Cain talked with \_\_\_\_



By Janice Buhl Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

- his brother. (Gen. 4:8)
43. \_\_\_\_ with joy receiveth it. (Matt. 13:20)
44. The \_\_\_\_, which they saw in the east. (Matt. 2:9)
47. Lo, the wicked \_\_\_\_ their bow. (Ps. 11:2)
49. Go to the \_\_\_\_, thou sluggard. (Prov. 6:6)
50. The beginning and the \_\_\_\_\_. (Rev. 22:13)
51. Noble poem.
52. So many \_\_\_\_ of voices. (1 Cor. 14:10)
- DOWN**
1. The Lord bless thee and \_\_\_\_ thee. (Num. 6:24)
2. \_\_\_\_ the Ahohite. (1 Chron. 11:29)
3. Wash thee with \_\_\_\_\_. (Jer. 2:22)
4. Ye cannot drink the \_\_\_\_ of the Lord. (1 Cor. 10:21)
5. They slew \_\_\_\_ upon the rock. (Judg. 7:25)
6. Thou shalt forget thy \_\_\_\_\_. (Job 11:16)
8. \_\_\_\_, and it shall be given you. (Luke 11:9)
10. Shem, \_\_\_\_, and Japheth. (Gen. 5:32)
11. \_\_\_\_ shalt deny me thrice. (Mark 14:30)
12. Did not our heart \_\_\_\_ within us? (Luke 24:32)
16. Him that for \_\_\_\_ and murder was cast into prison. (Luke 23:25)
18. Deborah \_\_\_\_, and went with Barak. (Judg. 4:9)
20. Until I make thy \_\_\_\_ thy footstool. (Acts 2:35)
22. To \_\_\_\_ like a calf. (Ps. 29:6)
24. Long, narrow pieces.
25. Not lift up any iron \_\_\_\_ upon them. (Deut. 27:5)
30. Building wing.
32. Preparest a \_\_\_\_ before me. (Ps. 23:5)
34. We have one father, \_\_\_\_ God. (John 8:41)
35. Is not \_\_\_\_ the Levite thy brother? (Ex. 4:14)
40. \_\_\_\_ the son of Ahitub. (2 Sam. 8:17)
41. Who \_\_\_\_ thou, Lord? (Acts 9:5)
42. Gaal the son of \_\_\_\_\_. (Judg. 9:26)
45. Convert skins to leather.
46. \_\_\_\_ it shall come to pass. (Ex. 4:9)
48. And the earth \_\_\_\_ without form. (Gen. 1:2)

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

- ABSALOM
- ANSWERS
- ARISE
- ATTACKS
- AWAKEN
- BLESSINGS
- CONFIDENCE
- COVERS
- DAVID
- ENEMIES
- FEARFUL
- FOES
- GLORY
- HELP
- HOLY HILL
- HONOR
- HOPE
- INCREASE
- LIE DOWN
- LIFT UP
- MOUNTAIN
- PEACE
- PEOPLE
- PRAY
- PROTECT
- RESCUE
- SALVATION
- SAVE ME
- SELAH
- SHIELD
- SLEEP
- SMITTEN
- SURROUNDED
- SUSTAINS
- TEETH
- TIMES
- TROUBLED
- WICKED

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

"But you, Lord, are a shield around me,  
my glory, and the One who lifts up my head."

# Unfinished!

PHILIPPIANS 3:13-14



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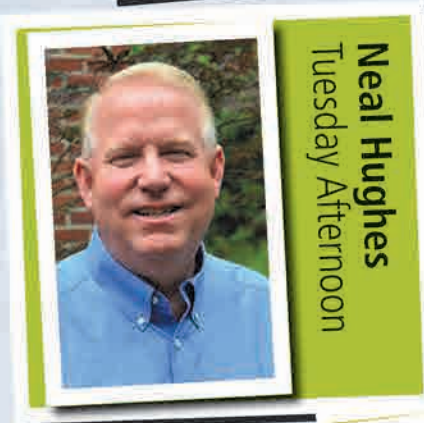
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**Buddy Champion**  
Tuesday Morning



**Neal Hughes**  
Tuesday Afternoon

*SPEAKERS INCLUDE:*

**Buddy Champion**, Tuesday Morning • **Neal Hughes**, Tuesday Afternoon • **Mark Bethea**, Tuesday Evening • **Peyton Hill**, Tuesday Evening • **Jarman Leatherwood**, Wednesday Morning



**Mark Bethea**  
Tuesday Evening



**Peyton Hill**  
Tuesday Evening

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**Jarman Leatherwood**  
Wednesday Morning



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# 5 social media rules for a pastor's online presence

By Mark MacDonald  
BeKnownForSomething.com

A pastor should have a social media presence. Why? Because the vast majority of people are present on social media platforms almost 24/7. They need a pastor too.

However, are there social media rules for a pastor's personal presence? Should a church mandate these rules? Even when they're not officially posting as a pastor?

## In need of guardrails

Sadly, anyone who browses X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, TikTok or LinkedIn understands that pastors (and all believers for that matter) need some guardrails.

Should there be a policing force for judging messaging that's posted by a believer?

I believe the answer is yes. He's called the Holy Spirit. But sadly, there are many

posts that seem to slip by His filter. So here are five social media rules for wisely self-analyzing a tweet before hitting the "post" button:

**1. Remember social media is a public forum.** If you wouldn't say it from a town square in the middle of your community, then pause before posting. Don't hide behind the anonymity of a social media window.

If your name is on your avatar, you're not anonymous. And if it's not listed as your profile, question why you want anonymity.

Stop arguing about theology to a mixed world of people. Most don't care about your opinion or your theology outrage.

**2. You represent God.** If anyone knows you as a believer or a Christian leader, they think your posts represent your heavenly Father.



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Or they use your posts to shape their view of God. If you're a Christ-follower, then represent Him.

The standard for a pastor or ministry leader is even higher. If in doubt, don't.

And above all, be known for love. Why? Because God is love.

**3. You represent the Church.** Sure, there's a valid argument that you represent

your local church if you're a pastor or church leader.

But of all these social media rules, this is the most critical. If you're a genuine Christ-follower, then you are the "big C" Church, the universal group of believers who should be "making disciples wherever they go" (Matt. 28:19a). Pause before pushing "post" to see if your opinion ranks high enough to reach that standard.

**4. Post opinion as though it "may" be wrong.** Stop posting opinions that divide when they don't matter for their eternity. Social media is ultimately not about you. It's about them.

"Post" them to Jesus. It's our responsibility.

**5. Use the opportunity.** The other social media rules may have you believing you shouldn't be on social media. I don't think so.

"Go into all the world" has never been easier.

Social media is a free path to travel around the world and engage with people. For many pastors, social media represents the greatest group of unbelievers who could be listening to them.

Do whatever it takes to engage them. Be a solution to their needs, concerns and goals. Love them. Post gospel-oriented content.

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pastor at Liberty  
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Worship will be led by  
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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For October 29

## Explore the Bible

By Robert Olsen, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



### CLEARs Mark 11:15–25

#### Zealous (15–17)

As Jesus entered the temple, He was confronted with the racket that had become “worship.” For the Passover, thousands of people from all over the known world would travel to Jerusalem.

Worshippers were supposed to have offerings to give, including animals for sacrifice. Instead of hauling livestock over land and sea for miles and miles, it was easier and more convenient to purchase the offering once in Jerusalem.

This was an acceptable practice; however, those in charge had used this as a means to carry out price gouging. When Jesus saw this, He was outraged and cleared the temple. It is one of the few times when we see Jesus’ righteous anger unleashed.

Jesus’ actions show us that He takes worship seriously, and those who hinder us from worship will receive God’s wrath.

There are preachers today who try to take money from the laity by manipulating the believers into giving them money that they use for ungodly purposes. Christians need to be wise as snakes (Matt. 10:16) so that we are not taken advantage of and so we can be sure that we are supporting ministries that are truly honoring the Lord.

This event is recorded in each of the Gospels. In John, the event takes place early in the Gospel, leading many scholars to believe that Jesus did this at least twice.

#### Jealous (18–19)

Most of the time when people in power are threatened, they lash out to solidify their positions. The religious leaders in Jesus’ day were no different. Jesus was a threat to their way of life, and they saw Him as a

thorn in their side. By killing Him, they believed they would be rid of His influence.

However, it was all a part of God’s plan. Christ was supposed to die; it is why He came. The religious leaders were just the means by which this would happen.

A lesson to be learned from this is twofold. First of all, if we see corruption or sinful activity within our churches, we need to call it out and expose it. Of course, we need to follow the formula laid out in Matthew 18:15–17. Second, we need to avoid becoming defensive if others confront us about our own sinful attitudes and actions. Having our sin pointed out to us helps us recalibrate and confess our sins, putting us back in a right relationship with God

#### Miraculous (20–25)

The fig tree Jesus had cursed was withered, confirming Jesus’ miracle. The disciples were amazed, but Jesus told them that God answers our prayers and that we need faith to believe this.

However, there are two caveats. The first is that we need to ask according to God’s will (1 John 5:14). If we are truly following Jesus, then we only ask for things that bring Him honor and glory. The Lord’s prayer is a good model to follow.

Second, Jesus says we need to forgive others in order for God to forgive us. Salvation is the ultimate act of forgiveness bestowed upon us. If God loves us so much that He sent Christ to die for us while we were still His enemies (Rom. 5:8), how much more should we be willing to forgive those who sin against us? It is one of the ultimate testimonies of God’s love for others when we forgive those who sin against us, even when they do not show contrition.

***“And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”***

Mark 11:25

## Bible Studies for Life

By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Biblical &amp; Religious Studies, Samford University



### WHY DO WE SUFFER? Job 30:26–31; 42:1–6

There are times when life just “works,” times when life is marked by order and blessing. The authors of Scripture would tell us that life works because there is a God who makes life work. God is a God of order, and He has built his orderliness into creation itself. When we follow the rhythms of God’s created order, He blesses us. When we follow the dictates of His Word, He blesses us.

This is the message of vast swaths of the Bible, including Deuteronomy 28, Psalm 1 and Proverbs 10. One could almost derive a formula from those passages: Obey and you’ll be blessed; disobey and you’ll be cursed. It makes perfect sense really, and it fits so many biblical texts. But then there is Job.

Job was the very model of obedience. Both the narrator of the book and God Himself attest that Job was “blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.”

And yet, despite Job’s great obedience, one afternoon saw all his blessings turn to cursings. For Job, at least, the “formula” of obedience and disobedience didn’t seem to work at all.

### We all experience suffering, even those who seek after good. (30:26–31)

Job’s three friends insist that the “formula” never fails. If Job is suffering, it can only be because he and his children have sinned; the formula is never wrong.

Job, however, will have none of this formula talk. He insists repeatedly — in keeping with what God Himself had also said — that he has not done anything to deserve this great suffering, and yet suffer he does. He laments, “When I hoped for good, evil came; when I looked for light, then came darkness” (30:27).

### We may not understand why we are suffering, but we can trust God in His sovereignty. (42:1–3)

In the end, Job’s laments grow so forceful that God responds directly to him, speaking to him “out of the whirlwind” (38:1).

The Lord’s speech to Job is a tour de force of divine knowledge, wisdom and sovereignty, showing Job that he cannot hope to comprehend all of God’s ways.

Of course, a careful reader will note that God’s speech doesn’t actually address the issues Job has been wrestling with.

Job never questioned God’s power; he just couldn’t understand why that power had been unjustly aimed at him. And so Job falls silent.

At the end of the Lord’s speech, Job gives up and says he won’t speak any more.

### We can experience the presence of God even in the midst of suffering. (42:4–6)

Importantly, this was not what God wanted. When Job fell silent at the end of His first speech, God uses a variety of images to tell Job that silence is not what He wants.

What God wants from Job when he is faced with injustice is for him to keep speaking, to keep crying out, to keep lamenting. This is just what Job does here in the last chapter of the dialogues.

Importantly, the Hebrew of verse 6 does not suggest Job repented of any wrongdoing on his part. The text actually says, not “I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes,” but “I reject and repent concerning my dust and ashes.”

“Dust and ashes” is biblical shorthand for silence.

After the Lord’s second speech, Job now agrees to forego silence, to keep on speaking, to keep on crying out to God.

***“I know that  
You can do all  
things, and that  
no purpose of  
Yours can be  
thwarted.”***

Job 42:2

# MEDIA REVIEWS

By Leann Callaway

The Alabama Baptist

## Worship leader Kristian Stanfill connects worshippers to unshakeable truths

**T**hrough his latest project, “Make It Out Alive,” worship leader, singer and songwriter Kristian Stanfill seeks to help audiences grow in their faith while connecting worshippers to unshakeable truths.

The album, released last year, is his first solo project since 2011 and represents the hope and healing that have taken place in his own walk with the Lord over the past decade.

Stanfill hopes the project encourages listeners to worship God in the midst of the storms in their lives.

### God’s promises

“God’s promises are real and unshakeable,” Stanfill told The Alabama Baptist. “I want to give people a voice to express their hearts and places where they have been. It’s an amazing moment of worship with a room full of people praising our Savior who set us free. My prayer is that these songs will lead people closer to God and help them experience Him in a powerful way.”

“God is so faithful and a perfect Father. No matter what our situation is on earth, we know that our situation for eternity has been

spoken for and we can rest in His love.”

As he writes worship songs that are being sung in churches around the world such as “God, You’re So Good” and “One Thing Remains,” Stanfill says he realizes the huge responsibility of crafting theologically sound worship songs and spends a great deal of time reading the Bible and consulting with ministry leaders about songwriting material.

“For me, the songwriting process always starts with a specific inspiration or a phrase,” Stanfill noted. “After thinking about the message I want to convey, then I come around that theme with lyrics and music. It’s so important to have other people involved in the songwriting process to offer suggestions. These songs are a collaboration of people and ideas coming together and discussing how God is moving in our lives.”

### Younger years

As a teenager, Stanfill developed an interest in music and taught himself to play the guitar. Not long after, he began leading worship for his church youth group.

From there, Stanfill began receiving invitations to lead in musical worship for youth and college ministries.

“In 2004, I was leading worship at a summer camp where Louie Giglio (founder and director of the Passion Movement) was speaking, and he invited me to be a part of Passion ’05,” Stanfill recalls. “They were planning to break up into small community groups at night and needed worship leaders to assist with those groups. That was a huge honor because

when I started leading worship during high school, I collected all the Passion albums that I could get my hands on and listened to them all the time.”

Today, Stanfill maintains a busy

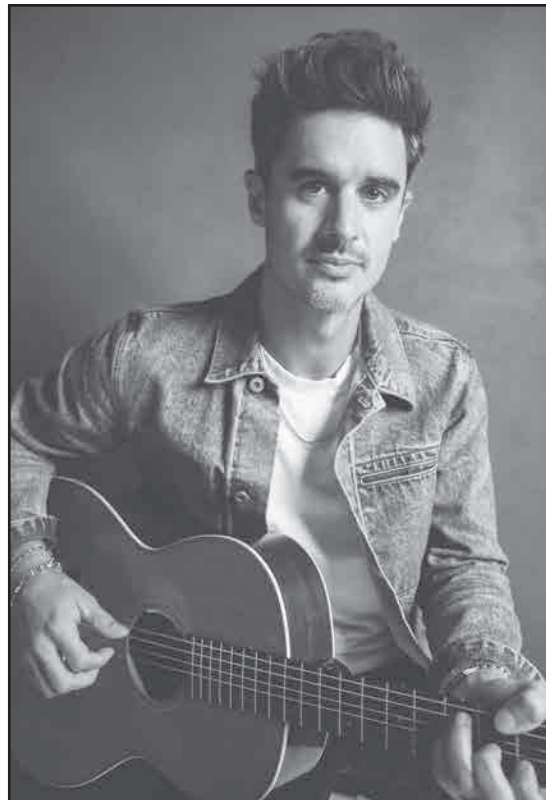
schedule leading worship for events, leading on stage at Passion Conferences and serving as the worship pastor at Passion City Church in Atlanta.

“For songwriters and worship leaders, the goal of what we do is to get songs into the Church and into the hearts of people,” Stanfill said. “One of the coolest things is hearing stories from people about the songs speaking to them and bringing them closer to God.”

“I love being able to carry songs to people. I am always encouraged when it doesn’t feel like there is any separation between the stage and the room, when everyone is singing together as one and worshipping God together.”

### ‘Honest worship’

“When everything comes together, it’s a beautiful moment of honest worship to God. I don’t think it gets any better than that. At that point, I could walk off stage and everything would keep going. At that point, no one needs me to keep singing. We are all just focused on God and worshipping Him.”



KRISTIAN STANFILL

Photo courtesy of Kristian Stanfill



*“I want to give people a voice to express their hearts and places where they have been. It’s an amazing moment of worship with a room full of people praising our Savior who set us free.”*

Kristian Stanfill  
worship leader, singer and songwriter

### EDITOR’S NOTE

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UPCOMING SPECIAL EDITION

NOVEMBER 30 ISSUE

# Aging Well

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— The Alabama Baptist —

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# Church conflict

By Meredith Flynn  
The Baptist Paper

## Online forum for Hawaii pastors addresses solutions

**N**o church is exempt from conflict, said Brian Croft in an online forum for pastors.

But, said the founder and executive director of Practical Shepherding, the Bible has wisdom for pastors seeking to lead a church through conflict and toward unity. That wisdom was the focus of a spring forum hosted by the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention. Pastors from the convention joined Croft online for a time of teaching and a question-and-answer session.

Croft began the forum with his own story of church conflict.

As the new pastor of a small congregation in Kentucky, his first five years included multiple efforts to fire him — waning support from the committee who called him, even threats of physical violence against him.

The church was struggling financially and his own health was deteriorating, he said. But, Croft told pastors God — in His kindness — turned things around in year six. Relationships were redeemed, and Croft led that church as pastor for many more years.

### Unnatural response

Staying when conflict abounds isn't our natural response, he said. But Paul's example in 1 Corinthians 16:5-9 encourages leadership that remains because of the adversaries that are present.

"What do we do when we have conflict in the church? What do we do when adversaries actually come against us in our ministries? What I want us to see from this — it's not what we think," Croft said.

Instead of running from conflict, he said, pastors have an opportunity to confront it in a way that ultimately brings restoration.



Screenshot

"What if the most difficult person in your church is actually evidence from God that you're supposed to stay there?"

Croft addressed two kinds of conflict common in churches: conflict with the pastor and conflict between members. Help for the latter, he said, is also found in Scripture.

Croft pointed to the example in Romans 14 when Christians are arguing about what foods are appropriate to eat.

That particular issue of conscience, he said, is similar to many of the things that cause division in churches today.

But rather than pick sides in the debate, Paul gave the church an admonition to love one another.

"It's not about who's right and who's wrong. The issue is a lack of love between one another," Croft said. Paul is diagnosing the bigger issue as that lack of love, and telling the church that if they really loved

one another, they would be mindful of the convictions the other party has on the issue.

Croft referred to 1 Corinthians 13, a chapter of Scripture that he said is often taken out of context. It's not just a passage to be read at weddings. It's a clear definition of the love to which Christians are called.

"We have to remind Christians in our churches to love each other, to love Christ preeminently," he said. "And our love for Christ would make us love people we disagree with, would make us love people who irritate us, would make us love people whose personalities rub us the wrong way."

He added, "It's a lack of love that creates a lot of the conflict in the church."

And if we can encourage our people to love one another, then a lot of times, the Holy Spirit does that work in the hearts of our people, to help them overlook those differences

in our lives that usually create the conflict."

During a Q&A time, Croft addressed some specifics of church conflict, including how to navigate the tension between pursuing reconciliation and acknowledging it might not happen this side of heaven.

### Chipping away

Croft told pastors it takes years, not months, of faithful shepherding and preaching God's Word to chip away at the hurt and pain in many established churches.

Sometimes, a pastor realizes they're working with someone who doesn't have it in them anymore to work toward reconciliation, Croft said, and a realistic perspective is warranted. But the default position, he advised, is to encourage people to stay and work through the conflict.

"I think you have to earn the trust with those people, which takes I think five plus years, to be able to speak into these situations in a way that you might be the one God uses to bring mediation."

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# MEDIA REVIEWS

By Tracy Riggs Frontz  
The Baptist Paper

## Christian humorist combines Bible teaching, love of humor

**D**ebbie Childers, author, humorist and Bible study leader, says she had “sort of always done comedy,” but she first realized she could combine her desire to teach the Bible with her love of humor during a breakout session at a Woman’s Missionary Union event.

“I did a comedy thing based on Martha Stewart and Martha in the Bible and compared the two. It was a good lesson but it ended up being hilarious,” Childers said.

Her first breakout session had a great response. The crowd doubled during the second session and for the third, there were women sitting out in the hall.

Childers remembers thinking, “This might be something I want to do.”

Meanwhile, studying the Bible was an unquenchable thirst. She started teaching Sunday School and began adding humor to the lessons.

### Opportunities

She was asked to speak at a women’s retreat, and soon others heard about her and began inviting her to their events.

“It was kind of different from anything else out there, so I got lots of opportunities,” Childers said.

### EDITOR’S NOTE

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DEBBIE CHILDERS

Photo by Tracy Riggs Frontz/The Baptist Paper

“I’ve done that the whole time (my husband) Tim’s been in ministry — I’ve had my own thing on the side.”

One person who has given Childers these opportunities is Frank Jones, musician and worship leader with Frank Jones Ministries. He and Childers met at a church where they had both served.

After becoming quick friends with Childers and her husband, Tim, Jones invited Childers to headline at some of his events. She also started speaking at OASIS, an annual event for older adults sponsored by Frank Jones Ministries.

Then, a couple of years ago, what many could call her biggest break occurred.

Childers had an intense admiration for humorist Jeanne Robertson,

had emulated her style for 30 years and always dreamed of meeting her. In fact, Childers called herself a “walking, talking encyclopedia of Jeanne Robertson.”

“Pretty much my style is a lot like Jeanne’s style. I tell different stories, but I tell them in the same style,” Childers said.

Childers’ Sunday School knew about this desire and talked her into entering a contest Robertson held for fellow humorists. The prize was performing as the opening act for Robertson for one show as well as being mentored by her.

Childers won and ended up getting to perform with Robertson four times. And if Robertson wasn’t available to speak at an event, she would sometimes refer the client to Childers.

Though performing with Robertson was “a gift from God” and Childers was excited by the mentoring, the best part was getting to be close friends. She even went to Robertson’s house and met her friends.

### Gift from God

“I realized that was a gift to me from God. He gave me those two years with her. He knew how much I wanted to meet her. Standing on that stage with her after dreaming of that for so long was very memorable, very touching,” she said.

Tim recently retired from pastoral ministry and has joined TAB Media Group as an advertising representative. Childers said she couldn’t imagine having had a better life than they have had in their many years of ministry.

“My home church is Valley View Baptist in Leeds [Alabama]. I was so close to them. When we left there in 1985, we left with broken hearts because we loved that church and loved those people. They were like family to us. We left our families too,” she said.

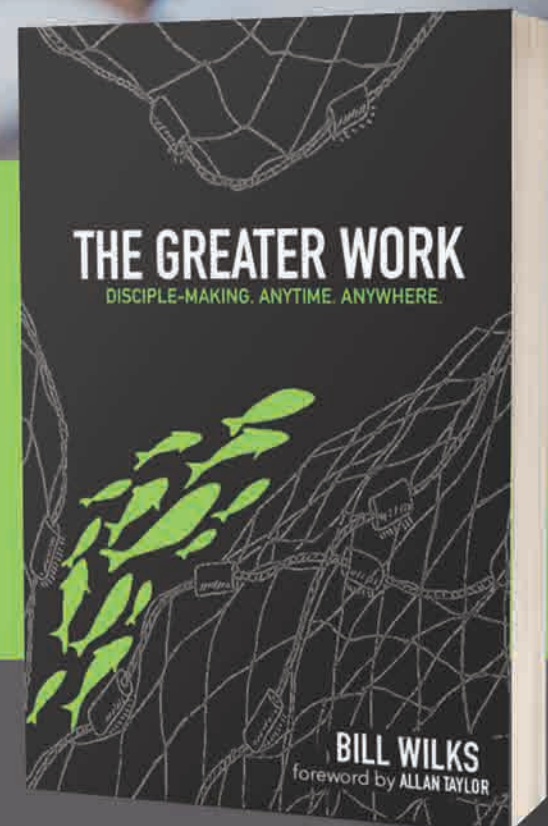
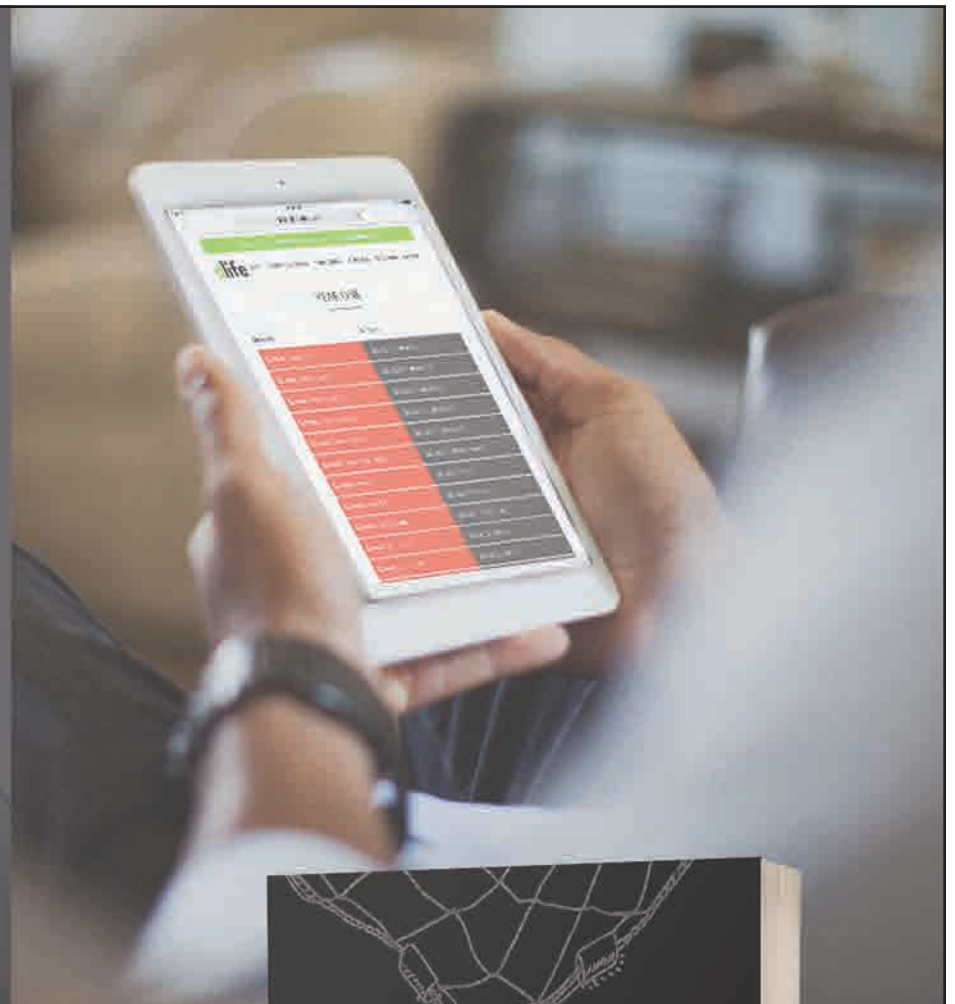
However, Childers clung to the promise of Luke 18:29–30: “‘Truly I tell you,’ Jesus said to them, ‘no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.’”

“God promised me that and He has kept that promise to this day. We have friends who are like family in four different states. Even right now if I called one of them, they’d say, ‘What do you need? We’ll send it to you right now.’ He’s given us more friends and family than we ever would have had if we hadn’t gone into ministry.”

**DEBBIE CHILDERS IS AVAILABLE TO SPEAK AT EVENTS ACROSS THE SOUTHEAST. CONTACT HER AT [DEBBIECHILDERS1975@GMAIL.COM](mailto:DEBBIECHILDERS1975@GMAIL.COM) FOR MORE INFORMATION.**

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# Cultural shift

By Meredith Flynn

The Baptist Paper

## ‘Anxiety of [selecting our gender] is something we were not created to bear’

On issues of gender and identity, the world has seemingly changed overnight. In light of a sweeping cultural tide, what can the church do? That’s one of the questions Katie McCoy addresses in her recent interview on the Digital Public Square podcast, hosted by Jason Thacker.

“Here’s the world that we’re living in; now, what do we do with it? How do we respond to it? How do we be faithful disciples in a world that is so philosophically, ideologically, culturally anti-Christian, anti-what the Bible says about who we are as image bearers of God?” she asked during the interview.

These questions are also at the heart of McCoy’s book, “To Be a Woman: The Confusion Over Female Identity and How Churches Can Respond.” McCoy is director of women’s ministry for the Baptist General Convention of Texas and a leading voice on some of the most challenging questions churches are facing related to gender and identity.

Her recent interview on the Digital Public Square podcast also touched on topics including the cultural forces shaping the shifts we see now and the responsibility the church has to the next generation in terms of a robust theological response to these issues.

### Bridge from shock to action

For people struggling to keep up with the changes around them, McCoy hopes the book is a bridge from initial shock to awareness, then to understanding — and finally, to a response — she told Thacker on the podcast. Thacker is an assistant professor of philosophy and ethics at Boyce College in Louisville, Kentucky, and a research fellow in



KATIE MCCOY

Photo by Sam Evans/The Baptist Paper

Christian ethics and director of the research institute for The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

“Gender identity” is a relatively new term in our common parlance, McCoy said, but a powerful one that is shaping the way people think about who they are.

Generally, it refers to how you view yourself — man, woman or a combination of the two.

Culturally, she said, gender identity is understood as completely distinct from a person’s biology.

But the Bible offers a different picture, McCoy noted.

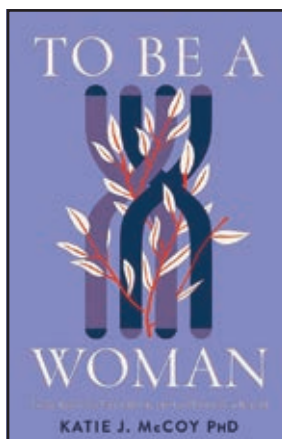
“Everything we see in Scripture, especially in the creation account, tells us that our body indicates our gender,” she said. “It is something that is a distinct aspect of who we are, but it’s not a divisible aspect of who we are.”

Where current views around gen-

der identity would say the body has no meaning or significance, God created our bodies not only to be good, but also to be a guide, McCoy said.

“They tell us who we are. They tell us not only in whose image we are made, which is what all of creation displays — the glory and reality of God — but they actually tell us who we are. Not only our identity, but then how we are, in response to that identity, to relate to other people.”

McCoy’s book highlights some of the cultural forces that have shaped the current confusion around gender, including the sexual revolution of the 1960s and the earlier, foundational idea of romanticism. That movement, McCoy said, says the best thing you can do is to be an authentic version of yourself.



To avoid society’s efforts to fit you into an inauthentic mold, romanticism says, separate yourself from external influences and let your feelings be your guide.

In the interview, McCoy also explained expressive individualism, which doubles down on some of those ideas. It claims anything that would get in the way of one’s emotional or psychological self is oppressive and those influences should be gotten rid of: religion, parents, even one’s own body, she said.

Many people are looking for that sense of true self in a declared gender identity, McCoy said.

“Most of them are looking for a sense of wholeness, integrity, peace, fulfillment and being their true, authentic self,” she noted.

For the believer, that’s good news because that’s exactly what a Christian worldview offers, she said. But it’s not through self-identity that we find fulfillment.

### The solution

“If we were going to boil it all down, we could say this: We will not understand the meaning of our gender and find peace within ourselves until we understand that we are created in the image of a creator God, and we are at peace with Him through Christ,” she said.

Gen Z is the first generation to grow up in a post-Christian culture, McCoy noted. They are fraught with gender confusion, and mental health crises are epidemic.

Those issues are all linked when young people are told their identity is only found in their feelings, which are ever-changing, she said.

“The anxiety of having to pick and choose who you truly are is something that we were not created to have to bear,” she said.