

The Alabama Baptist

Toll free 800-803-5201
www.thealabamabaptist.org

December 26, 2024

Vol. 189, No. 26
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.



Maggie Evans



Susan Stevens



Sarah Gill



Hannah Pruitt



Deb Cowery



Pam Holt

HAPPY NEW YEAR



Carrie McWhorter



Jennifer Davis Ragh



Robin McCall



Grace Thornton



Shawn Hendricks



Amy Hacker

FROM TAB MEDIA GROUP



Annette Brown



Lauren C. Gish



Debbie Campbell



Dianna Cagle



Daniel Gilliland

2025

Go and serve

Deadline coming soon for student summer missions

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

At the end of every summer, The Alabama Baptist shares the stories of college students who spent their break sharing the gospel across the U.S. and around the world. This past summer, 106 college students from Alabama scattered to serve in 17 countries, 11 states and the District of Columbia. Serving as a summer missionary is a life-changing journey for many, and for those students interested in going in summer 2025, the journey starts now.

One Mission Students

Deadline: Jan. 31

One Mission Students is the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions' pathway for students to serve, and it includes projects on its list from the International Mission Board and North American Mission Board. But by applying through One Mission Students instead of directly through IMB or NAMB, Alabama Baptist students can get extra guidance and training plus financial support provided through local Baptist Campus Ministries missions fundraisers.

"One Mission Students provides resources to help students find their place of service," said Chris Mills, student missions mobilizer for the SBOM. "We work with Southern Baptist partners across the globe and train students to be better equipped as they serve. We want to be a resource for college students in Alabama seeking to go, helping them find the right place and be trained to better serve as they go."

Often students are connected with OMS through the BCM at their college or university, which offers the opportunity for financial assistance, Mills said. But students not connected to a BCM can still apply for trips directly through the OMS website and be eligible for a discount also.

OMS student summer missionaries must be maturing Christians who are active in an Alabama BCM or Alabama Baptist church. They also must be involved in sharing the gospel



Photo courtesy of Abbey Colley

University of Alabama student Abbey Colley (second from left) and her teammates share the gospel on the streets of Paris this past summer.

personally on their own campus and be in good physical and emotional health. After applying, they will have an interview with their BCM campus minister or their local church collegiate minister, then they will attend One Day at Anchor Church in Tuscaloosa on Feb. 8, where they will learn more information and participate in more interviews.

Other guidelines can be found on the OMS website. Once accepted, students are required to attend One Mission Students Weekend, which will be held April 11-12, 2025, at WorldSong Missions Place. This weekend provides information about their service opportunity and offers training in evangelism, safety and security.

To view international projects, visit onemissionstudents.org/go/international-projects. To see the list of projects in the United States, visit onemissionstudents.org/go/united-states-projects.

Projects for summer 2025 range from helping with campus ministry in Alaska to serving refugees in Greece.

International Mission Board

Deadline: March 15

If a student does decide to apply

straight to the International Mission Board to serve overseas for the summer, the deadline is March 15. You can find more information about the available opportunities and how to apply at imb.org/students/trips. Click on "Summer Student Trips" on the left to see the list.

North American Mission Board

Deadline: March 31

If a student would like to apply through the North American Mission Board, the deadline is March 31. All the details, available trips and guidelines can be found at gendsend.org/summer.

Regardless of what avenue students choose to go serve, Mills said his "heart and desire is that we have as many students as possible go." "God has called us to make disciples of all nations," he said. "All of us have that responsibility. Students have a unique opportunity to join God at work across the globe during their school breaks, and many times God uses those experiences to affirm or reveal next steps of ministry and missions service for them." It's a unique season of life, Mills said. "Why not use it for Kingdom impact?"

The Alabama Baptist

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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)
© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.
is published every other week by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 800-803-5201.
Website: www.thealabamabaptist.org
Email: news@thealabamabaptist.org or subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org
Periodicals postage paid at Baton Rouge, La.

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

Group Rate per subscriber per year — \$16.25

Individual — \$34.95 per year (26 issues)

JENNIFER DAVIS RASH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

NEWS SERVICES
Baptist Press (BP)
Religion News Service (RNS)
Morning Star News (MS)

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
The Alabama Baptist
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209

ADDRESS CHANGE
Send old and new addresses, and name of church to:
Subscription Department
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209
Allow two weeks.

To the best of our knowledge, all of the ads in *The Alabama Baptist* represent legitimate companies and offerings. However, one should always exercise normal business caution in responding to ads. Also, the information in Alabama News is typically provided by or approved by the individual, church or association represented.

Member of Alabama Press Association

Accredited member of Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability



TAB Media Group among top in nation


The newspapers, online content and other media offerings produced by TAB Media Group continue to be honored among the top in the nation in the Christian market and in the state's general market. Best in Class, Awards of Excellence and other top awards have been earned by team members every year for nearly 30 years.

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

The crossword puzzle
can be found on page 19.

Rashional Thoughts

By Jennifer Davis Rash
President and Editor-in-Chief

 jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

 @RashionalThts

Time to regulate, regroup and reset — you've got this

We made it! It's Christmas week and we survived. Whether you pushed through heart-wrenching sadness, found it difficult to tame over-the-top excitement or landed somewhere in the middle, the season can sometimes do a number on our emotions.

Still, nothing compares to celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And watching the season through a child's eyes can truly be magical. From there, the calm that seeps in Christmas Day and deepens the rest of the month can trigger depression for some, so be sure to stay connected to those who are isolated.

Challenge for us all

The week after Christmas provides an excellent time to regulate, regroup and reset — and that's a good challenge for all of us. Determining exactly where we need to regulate and regroup might be the hardest part of the challenge, but once that's accomplished, we can chip away at preparing to reset. It's not really about setting resolutions as it is resetting in general.

A bit of winter fresh air and sunshine on our face, finally mending the broken parts of the fence, enjoying a hot cup of coffee while catching up with a friend, heading out to the hunting house hours before sunrise, reading and finishing an interesting book, all-morning pickleball games with nowhere else to be, and so many other options — all ways to fill our souls.

My Aunt Linda would add quilting and my friend Janet working in the yard. My dad would say gardening and my friend Dale woodworking.

What activity slows your heart rate and calms your spirit? What do you enjoy doing so much that time zips by much too fast? Try to find a way to keep doing those things as often as possible, especially this week.

It's also a good time to tackle a few tasks we are dreading and get them out of the way once and for all. Think of how refreshing it will be to start the new year with one or two of those heavy items completed.

And before we find ourselves back in the routines of life, what if we take advantage of the expanded personal time to think

about how God has worked in us this past year? How have we grown in our faith? What have we learned about Him?

What was the hardest part about this past year? How will

persevering through that help us/change us/challenge us going forward? What part warmed our hearts? How can we use those memories to give ourselves and others hope and encouragement in the difficult moments ahead?



Photo by Maggie Evans/The Alabama Baptist

Jennifer Davis Rash makes it back to the TAB Media Group office a few days before Christmas and runs into editor emeritus Bob Terry, who was recording a podcast devotional you can find at tabonline.org/podcasts.

Your Voice



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

First person: You will fly again

By Shea Lowery
Entrusted Hope Ministries

As he looked intently into Nana's face, the look in my grandson's eyes said it all. Beckham spoke no words, but rather had a stare that silently communicated "I'm sorry," for a beautiful object nestled in his little hands had fallen onto the ground, shattering parts asunder.

It all started when Beckham (3 years old) had eyed a beautiful ceramic red bird sitting around my mother's home. The beauty of the bird drew his attention, and the mere thought of holding it generated much excitement.

As he sauntered around the room, protecting it as best he could, it was as if the little fellow were holding gold. Beckham's tender heart had grown quite fond of his new little friend.

Crashing onto the floor

As my grandson continued playing with the bird, suddenly his walk was disturbed by a stumble. Instantly, Beckham watched as the bird fell out of his grasped hands, crashing onto the floor.

The pretty red bird was now scuffed up and broken, with pieces scattered on the floor. Little Beck was troubled that his new buddy was broken. Even more so, he had no idea what would come next as he looked up to me with a saddened face.

Immediately, I knew Beckham needed reassuring that everything would be OK. As I began to comfort him, I walked over to the bird, picked it up, and held it in my

hands, while voicing promptly, "This bird will fly again, for God specializes in restoring broken things (people)."

"It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17).

Whether we have jumped headfirst into pits of sin or been wounded by the hands of others, the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ saves souls, mends the brokenhearted, heals the wounded and restores the fallen.

I have a big heart for the broken, the prodigals and the outcasts, for I have been all those things, but I remember the love of a Father who never once turned His back on me.

Sometimes I endured tough consequences brought on by myself. Yet the Lord walked with me through them — strengthening me, loving me and restoring me.

Prodigal son

In Luke 15, the author communicates the story of a prodigal son's return home, where he is met by a Father's love, forgiveness and acceptance.

The son had entreated his father to give him his inheritance early. Thus, with his request granted, he

gathered everything together, chose his own path and headed off toward a distant country.

While there, he jumped headfirst into the pits of sins, losing his entire inheritance. Eventually, the son found himself feeding swine for hire. He had lost it all — his inheritance and his integrity.

Yet in that field, doing what he never imagined he would be doing, something happened.

When he came to his senses, he said, "How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men'" (Luke 15:17-19).

First, the son came to his senses. He began to look around at where he had landed in life. He remembered the Father whom he had walked away from, and how good he had it back home.

Next, he made a decision to get up and go back to his father. Adjacent to this decision was required confession and repentance, which the son carried out.

So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long

way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found." Then they began to celebrate (Luke 15:20-24).

Open arms

The son's repentance was met by a loving father, who accepted him back and welcomed him with open arms.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

At one time in my life, my wings were broken, and flying again was a thought most foreign. Yet God, who is the author of my story, had other plans. My Savior picked me up, set me apart to Himself, and began a work in my life by which, to this day, I still stand amazed.

Whether we are the ones who jump into pits of sin or the ones affected by those who have, we have a loving Father who will mend, heal, restore and use us for His great glory and Kingdom purposes.

God is the One writing your story. Be encouraged! You will fly again!

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (Ps. 147:3).



Photo by April Lowery

Three-year-old Beckham holds the ceramic red bird that broke into pieces. It is a reminder that God restores broken things (people).

The Christmas Nativity: Separating biblical fact from fiction

By Denise George
The Alabama Baptist

When Netflix airs a Christmas nativity story like its recent popular film, “Mary,” both Christians and non-Christians have questions about what is fact and what parts of the story have been suggested through tradition or fictionalized to delight an audience with expected Hollywood drama.

Here are some facts about Jesus’ birth from Scripture:

► Betrothal, marriage and pregnancy

In ancient days, betrothal was a strong legal agreement made by the female’s family. Betrothal and marriage typically happened during a girl’s teenage years.

The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary (Luke 1:26–38) announcing she would conceive and bear Jesus. Gabriel never appeared to Joseph but spoke to him three times in dreams (Matt. 1:20–21, Matt. 2:13 and Matt. 2:19–20).

► Trip to Bethlehem

Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem before Jesus’ birth because Joseph, from the line of David, was ordered by the Roman Emperor Augustus to attend a census to register his household and to assess property, income and population.

Shepherds abiding

Scripture doesn’t place Jesus’ birth in December. Shepherds kept watch over their flocks (Luke 2:8) in spring when lambs were born. In winter months, sheep were housed indoors. The Roman Emperor’s census registration, involving travel, probably happened in warm weather rather than in cold winter months.

Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth (Luke 1:26–27, Matt. 2:23), 70 to 90 miles from Bethlehem. The journey usually took 4 to 7 days.

They probably traveled by foot rather than donkey or cart, as owning a donkey or cart would have been a luxury for poorer families like Mary and Joseph. We know the couple had little money. Joseph was a carpenter (Matt. 13:55), a trade that brought a modest income. When

Mary underwent the childbirth purification ritual, they offered doves or pigeons (Luke 2:24) because they couldn’t afford the customary lamb offering.

► The “inn” in Bethlehem

In Bethlehem, the term “inn” (Luke 2:7) was probably not a hotel. Hospitality was highly valued, and families usually provided a guest room to their traveling relatives.

Due to overcrowding caused by the required census, the family guest

rooms were already taken. Scripture does not describe the physical location of Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem, only telling us he was laid in a manger (Luke 2:7). Since a manger is a feeding trough for animals, tradition states that Jesus was born in a stable or cave where animals were sheltered. Scripture,

however, does not mention any animals being present at Jesus’ birth.

Scripture doesn’t tell us if Mary had female help during the childbirth, although in Jewish culture, female relatives, friends or midwives usually assisted. Since Mary was far from Nazareth, she probably gave birth alone or was helped by women in Bethlehem. Joseph was likely present with and supportive of Mary, but as a Jewish man, he was not trained to assist her with childbirth.

The popular old hymn “Away in a Manger” states that the infant Jesus didn’t cry (“no crying He makes”), but Scripture doesn’t suggest that Jesus didn’t cry like other babies.

► The shepherds and angels

The shepherds, who protected their lambs and sheep in nearby fields, were alerted to Jesus’ birth by the angels’ spoken — not sung — announcement (Luke 2:8–11).

The angels told the shepherds where they would find Jesus and how they would recognize the Messiah (Luke 2:12). The shepherds hurried to find Mary, Joseph and Jesus (Luke 2:16). After the visitation, the shepherds announced Jesus’ birth to others (Luke 2:17).

► Jesus’ circumcision

On the eighth day after His birth, in accordance with Jewish law, Jesus was circumcised (Matt. 5:17, Gen.

17:10–14). This was usually done in the home or at a synagogue by a mohel (a person trained in the ritual of circumcision) or the child’s father. At His circumcision, Jesus’ name became official (Luke 1:31, Matt. 1:21).

► The Temple: Mary’s purification ritual

When Jesus was 40 days old, Mary and Joseph took Him to the temple, fulfilling the requirements of the Mosaic law. Jerusalem was located about six miles from Bethlehem. Since a woman giving birth to a son was considered unclean for 40 days after the birth (Lev. 12:1–8), Mary needed purification. The purification ritual and required burnt offering restored Mary’s purity and allowed her to fully participate again in worship and community life.

► The wise men

The family may have returned to Bethlehem after leaving the temple in Jerusalem because Matthew 2:11 indicates the Wise Men visited Jesus in a house in Bethlehem.

The star had first appeared when Jesus was born, prompting the Magi to begin their journey. The non-Jewish wise men, or Magi, met with Herod at some point (Matt. 2:7) as Herod told the Magi to find the child and report His location to him (Matt. 2:8). Warned in a dream, the Magi did not report the location of Jesus’ birth to Herod.

Written by the prophet

The Wise Men were the learned elite, and we do not know the exact number of them. They likely traveled from Persia or Babylon or Arabia — a distance of 900 to 1,200 miles — following the star as the anticipated Old Testament prophecies and sign of the Messiah’s birth (Num. 24:17, Isa. 60:1–3).

They likely traveled by caravan, using camels or other pack animals, covering 15 to 20 miles per day. Since Herod ordered the killing of

all boys in Bethlehem two years old and younger (Matt. 2:16), Jesus could have been up to 2 years old when the Magi finally arrived.

The Magi brought three symbolic and practical gifts to Jesus: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gold symbolized Jesus’ kingship, frankincense His divinity and myrrh His humanity and sacrificial death. These particular gifts also proved useful to the family in their urgent flight to Egypt for safety.

► The flight to Egypt

After the Wise Men left, Joseph was warned in a dream that Herod was going to search for Jesus to kill him (Matt. 2:13). An escape to Egypt was chosen for several reasons: it fulfilled prophecy (Hosea 11:1, Matt. 2:15), it was a Roman province 75 to 150 miles away, it had a large Jewish population and it was outside Herod’s jurisdiction.

The family stayed in Egypt until Herod’s death in 4 B.C. (Matt. 2:20), and then traveled to the insignificant and obscure village of Nazareth in Galilee, where Jesus became known as a Nazarene (Matt. 2:23). In that day, Nazareth was associated with lowliness and rejection (John 1:46).

When we examine the Nativity story through the lens of Scripture, we uncover the truth of the narrative.

By separating biblical fact from tradition and Hollywood fiction, we gain a clearer understanding of the miraculous events surrounding Jesus’ arrival, reminding us that His birth was not just a historical moment but the beginning of a story that continues to transform lives today.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Denise George is the author of 31 traditionally published, nonfiction books. She and her husband, Timothy George, retired founding dean of Beeson Divinity School, live in Birmingham.



GEORGE



‘MARY’ on Netflix

imdb.com

Alabama news

BALDWIN ASSOCIATION

► **Jay Kimbro** is the new pastor of **First Baptist Church Silverhill**. He has served churches in Alabama, Georgia, Florida and Texas. Kimbro earned his bachelor's from the University of West Florida and a master's in worship ministry from Southwestern Seminary. Currently, he is working on his doctorate. He and his wife, Tina, have three adult children and 12 grandchildren.



Photo courtesy of Tina Kimbro

CHEROKEE ASSOCIATION

► **Jay Penton** is the new pastor of **Slackland Baptist Church, Leesburg**. He previously served as pastor of men's ministry at Prattmont Baptist Church, Prattville; a deacon and minister of men at Boones Chapel Baptist Church, Prattville; and men's ministry coordinator of Autauga Baptist Association. Penton served as military police on active duty in the U.S. Army for seven years and in the National Guard for 15 years. He was an Alabama State Trooper



PENTON

for over 24 years and retired to serve in full-time ministry. He is the outreach director for "Men in the Arena," a nonprofit Christian ministry based in Oregon focused on equipping men to honor God in their family, church and community. Penton attended Livingston University (now University of West Alabama) and Auburn University at Montgomery and is pursuing a degree in biblical theology from Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia. He and his wife, Dana, have two adult children.

► **East Centre Baptist Church** celebrated its 75th anniversary Oct. 13. Special music was provided by Jared and Emilee Crane.

During the service, the church received two commemorative plaques presented by Wendell Dutton, Cherokee's associational missionary and a commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. Accepting the plaques on behalf of the church were charter members, family of charter members and Chip Smith, pastor. Pictured are (l to r) Sandra Montgomery, Janet Russell, Dutton, Julia Whaley, Alice Trammel, Judy Hopper, Joan Stansell, Billy Crane and Smith.



Photo courtesy of Emilee Crane

► **Shady Grove Baptist Church, Leesburg**, celebrated its 175th anniversary Nov. 3. Former pastors were recognized by Jeff Barber, current pastor, and several shared memories from their time at the church. Mac Coley, the oldest living member, and Janis McCleskey, the longest continuous member, were recognized by Gary DeBerry, a former pastor. Special music was provided by Mary Leigh Gibson Hill, who grew up in the church; Emma and Sara Myrick; and the youth and children's choir. Wendell Dutton, Cherokee's associational missionary and a commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented the church with two plaques. Pictured are (l to r): Dutton, Wes Myrick, George Eubanks, Steve Beard, Heath Laney and Barber. Following the service everyone was invited to attend a tree planting ceremony to commemorate this milestone led by Johnny Pruitt, Emma Myrick, Barber and Hill. This is the third tree planted by the church to celebrate special events, the first tree was planted at the 150th anniversary and the second planting celebrated the 50th anniversary of the church building.



Photo courtesy of Madison Tyree Barber

OBITUARIES

ELWOOD SIMS

Elwood Sims — who served in pastoral ministry for 70 years, including 40 years at New Bethel Baptist Church, Braggs — died Oct. 15. He was 92.

Sims was saved at age nine and called to preach at 17. He was ordained in 1952. His first major preaching opportunity came when he assisted with revival meetings at Forrest Avenue Baptist Church, Gadsden.

While earning his bachelor's degree from Howard College (now Samford University), Sims served as interim pastor of South Park Baptist Church, Birmingham, and Macedonia Baptist Church, Bessemer.

From 1954 to 1957, he served as bivocational pastor of three churches in Selma Baptist Association (now West Central Baptist Association) — Benton Baptist; Sister Springs Baptist, Tyler; and Bethany Baptist, Collirene.

Sims then moved to Louisville, Kentucky, to attend Southern Seminary and served as a



SIMS

student pastor, led a mission church and served as pastor of two churches in Indiana.

He did post-graduate work at the University of Alabama, University of Montevallo and Livingston University (now the University of West Alabama).

In 1963, Sims was called as pastor of Semmes FBC. After four years, he moved back to Selma to serve as bivocational pastor of Orrville Baptist Church while working as a teacher and principal in Dallas County schools. In 1977, he became pastor of Ephesus Baptist Church, Spratt.

Then in 1983, he was called to New Bethel Baptist, where he served 40 years, retiring in 2023. He previously had retired from Dallas County schools in 1994.

Sims is survived by his wife, Sarah Ruth; one daughter; four sons; six grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

JACK KINLEY

Jack Kinley, who retired in 2009 after more than 64 years in pastoral ministry, died Nov. 24. He was 96.

Kinley served in the U.S. Army and in law enforcement for a few years before entering the ministry. He began his education at the Baptist Bible Institute (now the Baptist University of Florida) in Graceville, Florida.

After two years there, he transferred to William

Carey College (now William Carey University) in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He accepted his first pastoral position at Rolling Creek Baptist Church, Quitman, Mississippi.

That started a ministry that lasted more than 64 years.

After Rolling Creek Baptist, Kinley served as pastor of churches in Alabama, Florida and Georgia, including Beaver Creek Baptist, Phenix City, which named him pastor emeritus in 2009 when he retired.

He also served as headmaster and Bible teacher at Woodland Christian Academy, Phenix City from 1974 to 1980.

Later in life after losing most of his sight, Kinley started Vision Tape Ministry, which involved reading Christian materials and recording them on tape then distributing them to visually impaired people all over the world. He was

a big encourager and supporter of The Alabama Baptist's audio cartridge ministry.

Kinley is preceded in death by his wife, Gwen. He is survived by his daughter, Judy; son, Gary; three grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.



KINLEY

NEWS

CHILTON ASSOCIATION

► **Clay Daughtry Jr.** is the new minister of media and technology of **West End Baptist Church, Clanton**. He previously served as student pastor of Locust Fork Baptist Church and youth pastor of Riverbend Baptist Church, Gadsden. Daughtry holds a bachelor of arts degree in Christian studies from Mississippi College, Clinton, and is pursuing a master of divinity degree in Christian education from New Orleans Seminary. He is married to Madison. James Watkins is pastor.

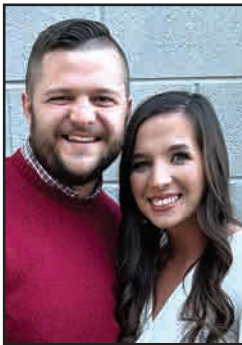


Photo courtesy of West End Baptist Church

CLARKE ASSOCIATION

► **Perry Dailey** is the new pastor of **Mount Vernon Baptist Church, Thomasville**. He previously served as a deacon and led worship at Midway Baptist Church, Thomasville, and sang with The Revelators Quartet of Grove Hill. Dailey has supply preached since 2008. He and his wife, Laci, have two children.



DAILEY

► **Jordan Matheson** is the new associate pastor of **First Baptist Church Jackson**, where he has been serving as youth minister. He was raised in the area and earned an associate's degree from Alabama Southern Community College (now Coastal Alabama Community College) and a bachelor of science degree in theology from the University of Mobile. He is pursuing a master of divinity degree from Southeastern Seminary. He and his wife, Taylor, have one son.



MATHESON

► **Tompkins Baptist Church, Grove Hill**, celebrated its 75th anniversary on Oct. 13. Kay Paul shared memories of growing up in the church, and Jessica Odom read a poem she wrote, "The Church that Built Me." Special music was provided by Amy Clark, Donna Counselman and Julie Wright. Jim Lambert (center), a commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a plaque to Thomas Armistead (left), deacon chair, and Johnny Kendrick (right), pastor.



Photo courtesy of Paul Williams

CLEBURNE ASSOCIATION

► **Cleburne Baptist Association** celebrated its 125th anniversary Oct. 13 during the annual meeting held at Hepsabah Baptist Church, Heflin. Special music was provided by an association-wide choir sharing Christian songs from 1899

at the beginning of the celebration, and a youth choir closed the service with a contemporary Christian song. Special presentations were made by Ryan Robertson, Cleburne County probate judge; Shannon Roberts, city of Heflin councilman; and Sonja Adams from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. Larry Vinson, (left, with Adams), associational missionary for Cleburne Association, accepted the honors on behalf of the association. Jeff Layton, Hepsabah's pastor, brought the message. Past moderators of the association in attendance were recognized, and those no longer living were honored with their photos in a display. The event also featured displays of each church in the association, and the association's founding churches displayed their history as centerpieces on the dinner tables.



Submitted photo

► **Patrick Nolen** is the new pastor of **Cedar Creek Baptist Church, Heflin**. He was called to ministry in 2022 and holds an associate's degree in industrial maintenance from Gadsden State Community College. Nolen serves as chief deputy of the Cleburne County Sheriff's Office and volunteer fire chief for the Turkey Heaven Fire Department.



NOLEN

► **Camp Creek Baptist Church, Fruithurst**, celebrated its 175th anniversary Dec. 1. It was one of the founding churches of Cleburne Association when it was established in 1899. Larry Vinson (left), the association's mission strategist, presented a commemorative plaque to the church on behalf of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. Accepting the plaque was David Morrow (right), who has been pastor of the church for more than 15 years.



Submitted photo

COFFEE ASSOCIATION

► During the Coffee Association's annual meeting Oct. 10, **Smyrna Church, Enterprise** — a new Korean church — was approved for membership under watch care. The pastor is Geumbo Baek. Messengers to the association's annual meeting also approved the **Church on Boll Weevil Circle** for full membership, where David Mason is pastor. Jud Waldrop is director of missions.

COLBERT LAUDERDALE ASSOCIATION

► **Earle Trent Baptist Assembly**, a Christian retreat center owned and operated by the Colbert Lauderdale Baptist Association, celebrated its 50th anniversary during the association's annual meeting Oct. 20. The afternoon began with an

open house to see the updated facilities. Events included games, a bounce house and the opportunity to make a small boat for a race down Shoal Creek. Special guests included Eddy Garner and Jim Warren, former associational missions strategists for the association. During the meeting it was announced that the road through the retreat center is now named Eddy Garner Way. Warren shared the history of the retreat center, and Jimmy Austin (right), a commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a commemorative plaque. Timmy Ray (center), current CLBA associational missions strategist, and David Quimby (left), assembly director, both accepted the commendation on behalf of the retreat center. Following the annual meeting, everyone was invited to a campfire service led by Larry Wright.



Photo courtesy of Karla Burdette

► **Highland Baptist Church, Florence**, concluded its year-long Living the Legacy centennial celebration Oct. 13. Beginning in January, each month the missions wall outside the worship center highlighted a different ministry of the church.

There were several guest speakers during the year with a church picnic in September leading up to the celebration. The church provided a centennial celebration guide booklet that included a list of guest speakers and a timeline of pastors and notable events through the years. Special music was provided by a centennial choir of more than 100, which included former choir members. Ronnie Hendricks, former music minister, was the special guest director.

A special plaque was presented to the church by Jimmy Austin (left), a commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, with John Brock (right), pastor, accepting on behalf of the church. Brock brought a centennial message based on Psalm 78:6-7. A 15-page commemorative booklet was given to each person attending the worship service.



Submitted photo

COOSA RIVER ASSOCIATION

► **Jerry Colquett** is the new pastor of **Bemiston Baptist Church, Talladega**, where he has been serving as interim. Colquett previously retired from Lineville Baptist Church after serving as pastor for 33 years. He also served as pastor of Little River Baptist Church, Uriah, and Carrville Baptist Church, Tallassee. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Alabama and a graduate degree from Southwestern Seminary. He and his wife, Carolyn, have two children and five grandchildren.



COLQUETT

Alabama news

DALE ASSOCIATION

► **Bethlehem Baptist Church, Midland City**, celebrated its 125th anniversary Oct. 6. Special guests included Jerry Grandstaff, former director of missions for Columbia Baptist Association, who brought the message; Travis Weed, a former member, who shared a testimony of how people in the church impacted his life as a young person; and Johnny Anderson, a former minister of music, who provided special music for the service. Paul Edenfield, pastor of the church, accepted a commemorative plaque presented by Jane Hughes, a commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. Lunch was served following the service.



Photo courtesy of Ellen Dewberry

ELMORE ASSOCIATION

► Women's Evangelism Conference "Kept" by Well Worn Paths will be held Jan. 25, 9 a.m.–3 p.m. at **Crossroads Community Church, Elmore**. Visit keptconference.com to register. Lunch is included. Brandon Wilemon is pastor.

ETOWAH ASSOCIATION

► **Ford's Valley Baptist Church, Hokes Bluff**, celebrated its 75th anniversary Nov. 17. The guest speaker was Adam Fielder, a former pastor. Members David Clough and Andrew Elliott recognized former pastors and shared an overview of the church's history. A letter of commendation from Etowah Baptist Association was read, and Wendell Dutton (left), a commissioner of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and associational missionary for Cherokee Baptist Association, made a special presentation. Pictured with Dutton are (l to r) deacons David Clough, Ricky Cole and Mike Howington.



Photo courtesy of Joanna Fielder

FAYETTE ASSOCIATION

► **Salem Baptist Church, Berry**, celebrated its bicentennial Oct. 13. Joe Jones, a former pastor, shared the church's history, and John Killian, director of missions for Fayette County Baptist Association, recognized special guests. David Nelson, a commissioner for the Alabama

Baptist Historical Commission, presented the church a commemorative plaque. Special music was provided by Phillip Pettus. Some members dressed in period costumes, and Clyde Stevens Jr., pastor, invited everyone to gather outside for the dedication of the church's historical marker. The church is the oldest church in the association. Pictured standing next to the marker are (l to r) Wanda and Clyde Stevens (holding the ABHC plaque), Nannie Joyce Clements (served as church treasurer for 65 years, 1959–2024); and Iris and David Hinton (Iris chaired the efforts to obtain the marker).



Photo courtesy of David Nelson

FRANKLIN ASSOCIATION

► **Wade Wallace** is celebrating 20 years as senior pastor of **Calvary Baptist Church, Russellville**. Over the years "God ... gave me a heart for missions," Wallace said. The church got on board with that vision, and they've been deeply involved with local, national and global missions, especially in Guatemala, he said.

SOUTHEAST REGIONAL DISCIPLE MAKING SUMMIT

APRIL 7-8, 2025

First Baptist Birmingham
\$67 Registration



DiscipleMakingAL.com/Summit

NEWS

JUDSON ASSOCIATION

► **Outlet Ministries Christian Life Center, Abbeville**, is now part of Judson Baptist Association. Freddie Smith is pastor; Brandon Turner is director of missions.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN ASSOCIATION

► **Lookout Mountain Baptist Association** celebrated its 150th anniversary Oct. 14 as part of the association's annual meeting held at Pleasant Valley #2 Baptist Church, Collinsville. Lloyd Borden (right), Lookout's associational missionary, received a commemorative plaque presented by Wendell Dutton (center), a commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical



Photo courtesy of of Scotty Goldman

Commission and associational missionary for Cherokee Baptist Association. Also pictured is James Maples (left), moderator for the association.

Stan Albright, retired associational missionary for Coosa River Association, was the guest speaker. The fellowship hall was filled with displays from each of the 15 churches affiliated with the association.

MARION COUNTY ASSOCIATION

► **Marion County Baptist Association** celebrated its 100th anniversary Oct. 13 during its annual meeting held at Guin First Baptist Church. Moderator Zaney Miles, pastor of Guin



Photo courtesy of Ray Kimbrough

FBC, welcomed everyone to the celebration. The history of the association was shared by Laura Kimbrough, associational secretary/ministry assistant, followed by a presentation by Debbie Campbell (right), commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission. Keith Box (left), director of missions, received the plaque on behalf of the association. Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, was the guest preacher. An association-wide choir led in worship. The centennial celebration closed with an outdoor fireworks show.

MARSHALL ASSOCIATION

► **Bel Air Baptist Church, Boaz**, held its final service Dec 1. The church has officially closed.

MOBILE ASSOCIATION

► **Spring Hill Baptist Church, Mobile**, kicked off its 75th anniversary celebration Oct. 6. Craig Carlisle (left), president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention and director of missions



Photo courtesy of Jason Pedersen

for Etowah Baptist Association, was the guest preacher. Debbie Campbell (right), a commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a commemorative plaque to pastor Ben Stubblefield (center). On Oct. 20 the church continued the celebration with dinner on the grounds.

MUSCLE SHOALS ASSOCIATION

► **Lisa Kirby** is the new part-time children's director for **Mount View Baptist Church, Trinity**. She directed Team Kid for many years before moving into the role. Mark Milwee is pastor.



KIRBY

► **Moulton Baptist Church** celebrated its 175th anniversary Oct. 20. The choir led in worship and sang favorite old-time hymns. During the service, the church received

two special recognitions: Roger Weatherwax, mayor of Moulton, read a proclamation from the city council honoring the church; and Jimmy Austin (right), a commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a commemorative plaque to pastor Jesse Reeder (left), who accepted it on behalf of the church.



Photo courtesy of Jimmy Austin



Kidzlinkal.org
is your website for
leaders and parents
to find resources and
events for reaching
the Next Generation.

Go to kidzlinkal.org/events for more information and to register or contact Julie Smith, jsmith@alsbom.org, 334-613-2255.

2025 VBS LIVE

VBS Live Dates and Locations:

- March 1 - Taylor Road Baptist Church, Montgomery
- March 8 - Hillcrest Baptist Church, Enterprise
- March 22 - Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville

Time: 9 am - 2:30 pm
Cost: \$10 (includes lunch)

Bible Skills and Drills

Treasure God's Word

Psalm 119:11

JANUARY 25 • 2025 • 9 AM - 2 PM

Shades Crest Baptist, Birmingham

Cost: \$20 (includes lunch)

NEXT GEN CONFERENCE

» April 10, 2025 » SBOM, Prattville
9 am-3 pm • Cost: \$20 (includes lunch)

Alabama Baptist STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS

These events are made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

Adobe Stock AI Enhanced

Alabama news

MORGAN ASSOCIATION

► **Flint Baptist Church, Decatur**, celebrated its 200th anniversary Nov. 24. It is the oldest continuous church in the association. The church was established by three men who had a vision for a church in the community and during the course of its ministry it has changed names three times: Cedar Springs, Mount Pisgah and currently Flint.

Former pastors and family members were recognized by Wendell Bennett (left), pastor. Steve Tucker, a former pastor and the youngest (age 17 when called as pastor in 1970) led the benediction and blessing. Two people with ties to Flint Baptist also were recognized: Gail Faulk was the first child baptized, and Jean Sams was the first person to be married in the current sanctuary.

Debbie Campbell, a commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a plaque to the church.

Bennett unveiled a long-lost part of the church's history, the foundation stone of Mount Pisgah. It was located in the flowerbed of a private home. The owner had mowed and trimmed around it for years but didn't know what it was. Bennett and Steve Hall (right), deacon chair, found it, dug it up and brought it to the church to present at the bicentennial celebration.

► **Hopewell Baptist Church, Danville**, celebrated its bicentennial Dec. 1. A history of the church and its missionary efforts was read by Andrew Campbell.



Photo courtesy of Alison Blackwood

Special music was provided by Gavin Erb, the pastor's son, and the New Hope Road quartet (former worship leaders). Ken Blackwood (right), Morgan Association's director

of missions and ministries and a commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented the church with a commemorative plaque, which Thomas Erb (left), pastor, accepted on behalf of the church.

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

► **Northside Baptist Church, Calera**, celebrated its 50th anniversary Oct. 27. The service began with a welcome from Bill Collum, interim pastor, followed by special music provided by different members of the church, including the children. The church received recognition plaques from Shelby Association, presented by associational staff member Delight Davis; the State

Board of Missions, presented by Mark Wakefield; and the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented by Debbie Campbell (right). Shelly Cofer (left), accepted on behalf of the church. Cofer's parents were charter members — her father served as the first music director, and her mother served as pianist. The celebration included a video of the church's history and various ministry milestones.



Photo courtesy of Mark Wakefield

ST. CLAIR ASSOCIATION

► **New Hope Baptist Church, Pell City**, celebrated its bicentennial Oct. 20. The service included several presentations: a congratulatory video from Rick Lance of the State Board of Missions; a pew plate unveiling by Shirley Echols; and the church's future master site plan by Matthew Pope. A commemorative plaque was presented to the church by Bridgett Junkin (left), a commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, with transitional pastor Bob Weber (right) accepting it on behalf of the church. At

the close of the service, select members from the congregation placed 12 stones on a platform, as Joshua had instructed the Israelites (Josh. 4:4-9) as a memorial for future generations.



Photo courtesy of Bridgett Junkin

TALLAPOOSA ASSOCIATION

► **Orr Street Baptist Church, Alexander City**, celebrated its 75th anniversary Oct. 6. Calvin Milford, a commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a plaque to David Grier, the pastor, who accepted it on behalf of the church.



Submitted photo

Gov. Kay Ivey's office also sent a commemorative plaque. The choir led in worship hymns, special music was

provided by Daniel and Linda Windsor, and Grier shared the sermon.

TUSCALOOSA ASSOCIATION

► **Five Points Baptist Church, Northport**, celebrated its 75th anniversary Nov. 10. Special music was provided by Ronnie Lett and Jim Hinton, both former music ministers, and Chris Whitaker, current music minister. Lance Hogan, a

former pastor, shared memories, and Bill Gray, a former interim pastor, brought the message. Larry Morrison, a member and former minister of education and activities, closed in prayer.

The church received two recognitions — a proclamation from Gov. Kay Ivey's office, read by Rep. Ron Bolton who is a member, and a plaque presented by David Nelson, a commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, with Teresa Black, chair of the church's historical committee, accepting on behalf of the church.

Weston Daniels, one of the youth, was recognized for his painting of the church used on the cover of the worship bulletin. Attendees received a historical booklet and a commemorative magnet. John Brooks, youth pastor, serves as interim pastor.



Photo courtesy of Lester Wayne Black

WINSTON ASSOCIATION

► **New Prospect Baptist Church, Haleyville**, celebrated its bicentennial anniversary Oct. 6. Several special guests honored the church: U.S. Rep. Robert Aderholt, whose grandparents were members, presented a proclamation and flag that was flown over the U.S. Capitol in honor of the church's 200 years; Bob Cooper, director of missions for Winston Association, recognized New Prospect as the oldest church in Winston County; and Jimmy Austin, a commissioner for the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, honored the church with a presentation.

Mark Wakefield, state missionary, was the guest speaker and also made a presentation. During the service Ron Horton was recognized and honored for his 30 years as pastor of the church. A special historical presentation was given by Carla Waldrop, a church member and head librarian of Haleyville Public Library. A historical marker will soon be erected on the property.



Photo courtesy of Mae Beth Allison

OTHER

► **Mount Moriah Fellowship Church**, located on Mount Moriah Drive on the Butler-Wilcox county line, celebrated three milestones at its homecoming service Oct. 13: the 1928 founding of the church; the 70th anniversary of the brick chapel and the presentation of an historical plaque by the Alabama State Society of Colonial Dames of the XVII Century. The service was followed by dinner on the grounds and dedication service.

LASS WORDS

BY KEN LASS
The Alabama Baptist



DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

Coming in out of the dark

On Nov. 18 the sun set in the small town of Utqiagvik, Alaska. It will not return for about 65 days. The roughly 5,000 residents will live in darkness and mostly below-zero temperatures for more than two months. This is because the town is located north of the Arctic Circle and is one of the northernmost cities in the United States. I can't help but wonder how the polar night, as it is called, affects the mood and energy level of the people. Studies show that many folks tend to be grumpier and more likely to be depressed at night. The reasons are not all that mysterious. Generally, we are fatigued by our day's work and activities by nightfall.

Easily frustrated

We are tired, and that makes us less patient and often more frustrated that we didn't get enough done, didn't resolve issues or didn't meet our goals for the day. Over time we connect those feelings to darkness.

We also connect darkness to evil. Satan is widely known as the prince of darkness.

When someone goes through troubles, we often console them by saying, "Don't worry. The sun will still come up in the morning." Of course, in Utqiagvik, that is not necessarily true. So how do you suppose

they cope with more than two months of night? I can't say for sure, but I'm willing to bet they lean heavily on their faith since 79% of Alaskans claim to be Christians.

What the Bible says

There's plenty of fuel in the Bible to get you through both physical and mental darkness. In Psalm 18:28, David sings, "You, Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light." Jesus is always a source of hope for a brighter day.

He can deliver it for you and even for the fine folks of Utqiagvik. In late January, the sun will gradually reappear on the horizon there. By May, it will stay in the sky 24 hours a day, providing constant daylight — "the midnight sun," they call it. There will be no darkness until early August. Then the cycle begins all over again.

Life is like that — cycles of good times and bad. Staying with Jesus and His Word will help you make sure the power is always on.

MEET THE AUTHOR

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

Huntsville pastor undergoes successful kidney transplant

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Will Faulkenberry said he's had a lot to be thankful for in recent days.

On Nov. 9, Faulkenberry — pastor of Mosaic City Church in Huntsville — underwent a successful kidney transplant and is recovering well.

"Honestly, I feel blessed. I had a transplant 30 years ago, and even though that isn't something you want to go through, to have it last that long is a blessing," Faulkenberry said, noting that he was told his first transplant would only last 10 to 15 years.

He was also told in 2022 that he could be on the kidney transplant list for up to eight years — tough news to hear as he was already in full kidney failure. He was surprised in early November when he got the call that a kidney might be available.

Faulkenberry stayed in the hospital for a week after the surgery, then he and his wife, Missy, moved to a low-cost apartment provided by Red Mountain Grace. His medical team at UAB Hospital wanted him to stay close for the first three weeks after the surgery.

While there, the couple went for walks, and Faulkenberry built up to walking a mile a day, something he hadn't been able to do in a long time.

"I was struggling to keep my hemoglobin up most of the time, so I didn't have much energy," he said. "The Lord is blessing."

They went home to Huntsville on Dec. 3, and that Sunday, Faulkenberry was able to preach. He also led the church's Christmas backpack event.

His wife Missy said they would "still appreciate prayers that his recovery would continue to be as smooth as it has been."



Photo courtesy of Will Faulkenberry
Will Faulkenberry, pastor of Mosaic City Church in Huntsville, stands with his wife, Missy, on the balcony of the apartment provided by Red Mountain Grace.



Photo courtesy of Will Faulkenberry

Will Faulkenberry preaches Dec. 8, his first Sunday back in Huntsville after being released to go home following his transplant surgery in Birmingham.



February 22, 2025
Heritage Baptist Church
Montgomery
\$35 per person
Register by February 13



REGISTER
HERE!

Join us at Renew for:

Outstanding Bible teaching, moving
worship, a missions focus, an
environment for spiritual renewal, time
with friends and the WorldCrafts store

MORE INFORMATION:
AlabamaWMU.org/Renew
334.613.2223 | dclark@alsbom.org



Worship Leaders
Brooke &
Nathan **Dodd**



Bible Study Leader
Heather **Johnson**

Assistant Director for
Thrive, A Ministry
Wives Certificate,
New Orleans Baptist
Theological Seminary &
Leavell College



MARCH 7-8, 2025
BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH
MOODY, ALABAMA

\$40 PER PERSON

INCLUDES REGISTRATION, SATURDAY LUNCH & T-SHIRT

Come and bring your girls for a weekend of
SOLID BIBLE TEACHING, MISSIONARY TESTIMONIES,
AUTHENTIC WORSHIP, RELEVANT BREAKOUTS
FOR TODAY'S CULTURE *and more!*

Bible Study
Leader

EDEN RICHARDSON

DISCIPLESHIP DIRECTOR,
FIRST ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA



Worship Leaders

JENNA AND ZOË



SCAN THIS
CODE OR
FIND MORE
DETAILS AT

ALABAMAWMU.ORG / COMPLETE

Neglecting soul care a ‘vocational hazard’ for pastors

By Michael J. Brooks
The Alabama Baptist

David Eldridge, pastor of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham, said the essential thing for pastors is the “care of the soul.”

“We can be so busy in doing the Lord’s work that we neglect to spend time with the Lord,” he said.

Eldridge was one of two presenters for a recent Intentional Leaders event at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions facility in Prattville. State missionaries Ken Allen and Rob Jackson served as hosts.

Eldridge said, “An inherent vocational hazard in ministry is neglecting our own Bible study and prayer life. Of course we study every week for Sunday’s sermon, but we must study the

Bible for our own growth.” Eldridge said he tries to take some hours each week in solitude — not to reflect on his sermon but to commune with God.

Finding solitude

“We retreat not for work but for ourselves,” he said.

“And you don’t have to retreat far away. I’ve found local parks are good places to go to spend time with God.”

Taking the time to sit with God also allows us to “digest truth and share it from our hearts every week.”

Eric Hankins, pastor of First Baptist Church Fairhope, shared about “soul sickness.”

“We live in a society of contempt fueled by cable news and social media,” he said. “So many are condescending and critical of



Photo by Michael J. Brooks/The Alabama Baptist

David Eldridge, pastor of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham, speaks during a recent Intentional Leaders event at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions facility in Prattville.

others. I think pastors must work hard to avoid negative statements such as, ‘They’re never going to change,’ or ‘Nothing can be done.’

“We must never conclude that a person or circumstance is irredeemable; we must pay attention to opportunities for redemption.”

Jesus is the model, Han-

kins said, “His ministry can be summarized [with] truth, love and courage.”

Defending staff

Hankins also said church staff members should lead together.

“A church is no more unified than its staff,” he said.

“I try to befriend our staff

and defend them from criticism,” Hankins said.

“We must remember that when people come to us with criticism, they never tell us both sides of an issue but only their side.”

In the Q&A session both pastors reflected on making quality time for family despite the demands of ministry. They also reflected on the need for pastors to read widely.

Eldridge noted that ministers have more options today with audiobooks and podcasts and can make use of discretionary or drive time.

Hankins agreed, and added, “Even if you don’t like to read, you’ve got to read.”

The Intentional Leader series — concluding its second year — will continue in 2025 with four sessions.

For more information, call 800-264-1225, ext. 2210, or visit leadercareal.org.

Brookwood
Baptist
Health

Will
Soon
Be

Baptist
Health

As we embark on this new chapter, our commitment to your care is at the heart of everything we do. With a bright future ahead, we’re excited to enhance the exceptional, faith-based care you deserve. As Baptist Health, we will build a stronger, healthier community—now and for generations to come.

To learn more, visit BrookwoodBaptistHealth.com

Brookwood Baptist Medical Center | Citizens Baptist Medical Center | Princeton Baptist Medical Center
Shelby Baptist Medical Center | Walker Baptist Medical Center

Someone You Should Know

TOM AND BEVERLY TOONE

By Leigh Pritchett
The Alabama Baptist

Tom and Beverly Toone of Birmingham see their mission as serving. Since the 1980s they have worked as “doers” in different missions projects at their church and with the Birmingham Metro Baptist Association. The projects have included giving Christmas stockings to needy children in the Birmingham metro area and distributing bags of essential items at migrant worker camps in South Alabama. The couple are currently coordinators for those two ministry efforts. Tom holds a master’s degree in project management, and Beverly has been a legal secretary.

Q: What is your ministry description?
A: For Beverly, ministry service within the church has included teaching and directing Mission Friends for 42 years. For Tom, service included teaching fourth grade Sunday School for 18 years, teaching a men’s Bible study for 15 years and serving as a deacon and trustee, among other things. He has been in Lakeside Baptist Church’s orchestra since its inception in 1985.

Q: What has God been teaching you lately?
A: Tom: I’m a work in progress ... striving to be more patient and tolerant of people. I am often not very patient, but God has been working to fix that.

Q: If there were one thing you could tell your younger self about faith, what would it be?
A: Beverly: One thing I would tell my younger self is how important daily Bible reading is to strengthen our relationship with God.

Q: Who was or is one of the most influential people in your faith life? Why?
A: Tom: One of the influential people in my faith life was my men’s Sunday School teacher at Lakeside in the 1980s and 1990s. Wallace Daniel, a knowledgeable Bible teacher and deacon, made Sunday School enjoyable and a learning experience. He also answered many questions and provided insight about the deacon ministry at Lakeside.

MINISTRY: Doers

CHURCH NAME: Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, Birmingham Metro Baptist Association

LIFE VERSE: Beverly: “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph. 2:10). Tom: “I can do all this through Him who gives me strength” (Phil. 4:13).



Beverly: As a newlywed, I had a Sunday School teacher who took me under her wing when I moved far from family and friends and helped me grow in my faith.

Q: Does your church have any special traditions that mean a lot to you? What are they?
A: Lakeside has always

provided us with publications that are influential in our Christian walk. The publications include the monthly Journey, Stand Firm, Homelife and Mature Living magazines, as well as The Alabama Baptist newspaper (which is delivered to our home every other week, alternating with The Baptist Paper’s delivery).

ENGAGE your community with the
GOOD NEWS of John 3:16!

ENGAGE 3:16

For resources to assist your church to lead others to Christ, to baptize, and to disciple new believers visit alsbom.org/ENGAGE316, or contact Ministry Assistant Kirstin Goldwire, kgoldwire@alsbom.org, 334-613-2245, or scan the QR code.



Alabama Baptist
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS



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



You Gotta' Hear This!

Glimpses of God in the everyday moments

How big is your Jesus?

I love children. I love how they take things so literally. A father talked to his child about God, Jesus and Jesus' resurrection and ascension. The child asked, "Daddy, where does Jesus live now?" "Sweetie, He lives inside us," the father answered. Looking down at her little body, she asked, "Why don't I see his arms and legs sticking out?" This made me reflect on how much of Jesus the world sees when it looks at the average Christian. How much of Jesus shows in my life? Do I realize the power inside of me because He lives there?

Remembering He's able

Another friend told about her daughter's comment after her dad said Jesus lived within them. The child pondered that thought for minutes and then replied, "Well, Daddy, you must have the big Jesus living in you, and I have the little Jesus living in me." Then I considered just how big I envision the Jesus living in me. Often, I acknowledge He's large enough to take care of all my problems and concerns if I turn them over to him. But then I falter when I contemplate any problems my children and grandchildren might face — problems such as their safety, living in a nation which seems to be turning away from God, their future in general. Then the Jesus inside me whispers, "I can take care of them too."

Even unbelievers take note when we trust in the Lord and He delivers us, as with Daniel (Belteshazzar) and the king. "This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation, since all the wise men of my kingdom are not able ... but you are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God is in you" (Dan. 4:18). What problem/problems in your life seem insurmountable today? Are you willing to surrender them to God and rest, knowing He may not solve them according to your will but according to His? Do you believe your God is big enough to handle even the toughest situations? "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11). "Ah, Lord God! Behold, you have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for you" (Jer. 32:17).

MEET THE AUTHOR

Barbara Eubanks of Albertville is an author, conference speaker, Christian humorist and retired English teacher. She is the widow of Baptist pastor Steve Eubanks.



WORD search

- ADULTERY
BLESSING
COMMAND
COVENANT
COVET
CURSE
FATHER
FEAR
GRAVEN
HOLINESS
HONOR
- IDOLATRY
ISRAEL
JUSTICE
LAW
LOVE
MERCY
MOSES
MOTHER
MOUNT
MURDER
NEIGHBOR
- OBEDIENCE
RIGHTEOUSNESS
SABBATH
SACRIFICE
SINAI
STATUTES
STEAL
STONE
TABLETS
VOICE
WORSHIP

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

And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin."

Persecuted church

Parents in Pakistan seek justice for daughters

LAHORE, Pakistan — Two young women in Pakistan are among those who have been kidnapped or attacked in ongoing persecution against Christians in the Muslim-majority country.

Parents of Diya Iftikhar, a 16-year-old Christian, say their daughter was abducted from her home in Punjab province Sept. 12, forced to convert to Islam and marry. Her parents later received a video in which Diya said she converted to Islam and married one of her kidnappers. Police have delayed trying to find her, her parents told media outlets.

In the same province, the father of a 17-year-old girl reported his Catholic daughter was kidnapped Aug. 25 from their home. She was returned Sept. 5 and a medical examination confirmed multiple rapes and physical torture.

Five alleged suspects in the assault have issued threats against her family to try to get charges dropped, according to the girl's father.

Pakistan is No. 7 on Open Doors' 2024 World Watch List of places most difficult to be a Christian.

High level of persecution continues in Nigeria

ABUJA, Nigeria — On Oct. 9, Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria raided Ayilamo village and murdered two Christians, reported Morning Star News. One of the slain was a university student. Six days prior, herdsmen attacked Tse Wende, killing two Christians.

"Attacks by armed Fulani herders have become a common occurrence ... [and] the Nigeria government has not deemed it necessary to take steps toward ending these attacks on our communities," one source said.

Nigeria is No. 6 on Open Doors' 2024 World Watch List.

Man fatally beaten 17 days after putting faith in Jesus

KAMPALA, Uganda — Seventeen days after placing his faith in Jesus, Wanjala Hamidu, 32, a teacher at an Islamic school in Uganda was beaten to death by his brothers.

Hamidu professed faith in Christ on Oct. 4 during an evangelistic event in Bulange. His brothers demanded that he renounce his faith in Jesus, but he refused and was beaten to death.

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 reported.

Blasphemy charges triple this year in Pakistan

LAHORE, Pakistan — During the first seven months of 2024, blasphemy cases in Pakistan spiked, more than tripling the full-year total for 2023, according to an Oct. 31 report from Pakistan's National Commission for Human Rights.

The report reveals that 767 individuals accused of blasphemy from Jan. 1 to July 25 were in jail in Muslim-majority Pakistan. Comparatively, the total for the entire year of 2023 was 213.

There were 64 in 2022 and nine in 2021.

Pakistan's Punjab province — at 594 — accounted for the bulk of 2024's half-year number, the report shows.

In a recent case, Zafar Iqbal was accused of burning pages of the Quran at his home. He was arrested Nov. 3, a rights activist told media outlets. Conviction on blasphemy charges carries a life sentence, according to Morning Star News.



commons.wikimedia.org

LeaderCARE

2025 EVENTS

Intentional Leader Series PERSON

JANUARY 21, SBOM, PRATTVILLE
Led by Mark Dance, director of pastoral wellness for Guidestone Financial Resources
Cost: \$10 (includes lunch)

Bivocational Minister and Spouse Retreat

FEBRUARY 21-22, SHOCCO SPRINGS
Led by Mark Clifton, revitalization specialist at the North American Mission Board
Cost: \$40/couple or \$30/person (includes supper and breakfast)

Intentional Leader Series PATHFINDER

APRIL 8, SBOM, PRATTVILLE
Led by Buddy Champion, pastor of FBC Trussville, who will share a strategic plan for revitalization
Cost: \$10 (includes lunch)

Transitional Pastor Training

APRIL 21-22, SBOM, PRATTVILLE
Led by Dan Garland and Henry Webb
Cost: \$25 (includes supper and lunch)

Intentional Leader Series PREACHER

JULY 15, SBOM, PRATTVILLE
Led by Robert Smith, who served as professor of Christian preaching at Beeson for more than 25 years
Cost: \$10 (includes lunch)

Intentional Leader Series PASTOR

SEPTEMBER 16, SBOM, PRATTVILLE
Led by state missionaries Rob Jackson, Ken Allen and Bryan Blass, who will share strategies for shepherding well
Cost: \$10 (includes lunch)

For more information, visit leadercaredal.org/events or contact Ministry Assistant Lori Lockett, llockett@alsbom.org, 334-613-2218

These events are made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.



SCAN QR CODE FOR MORE INFO



Last honor quilt presented after Bama Rama 500

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

In 2023, Scott Watson fractured his pelvis and his elbow on a cross-country bike ride with his Naval Academy classmates. And while he was in the hospital in Nebraska, he met Loretta Daniels, a physician assistant who said Watson was her “divine appointment” for the day.

Then this year as Watson and his group prepared for another long bike ride — the Bama Rama 500, a 530-mile ride from Huntsville to Orange Beach — Daniels told him the whole group was her divine appointment. She came along with them as team medic.

Watson, a member of Valleydale Church in Birmingham, said during the ride Oct. 4–13, Daniels ministered to every person on the 17-member team. “Whether sharing the gospel or ministering to them when they get beat up and banged up or sitting with them over dinner talking about life things, she shared her faith with every one of the guys,” Watson said.

One of the men had a similar experience to Watson’s 2023 ride — he came off his bike and cracked his pelvis. Another had to leave the ride because his home in Florida was hit by Hurricane Milton.

All of them left the ride with personalized Quilts of



Photo courtesy of Scott Watson
Scott Watson is pictured at a church in Nebraska an hour before the accident that fractured his pelvis and elbow in 2023.

Honor made by Daniels and her friends in Nebraska.

Making an impact

“She made such an impact on us,” Watson said of Daniels’ ministry.

Members of the support team also got a quilt, as did

a “few special people” along the way, Watson said.

He presented the last quilt Nov. 10 to the pastor and veterans at Eagle Creek Baptist Church in Dadeville, which hosted the riders for lunch on day four of the ride.

Twelve other churches also hosted the riders for meals along the way.

“It made such an impact for those guys to come down here and be loved on during the ride,” Watson said.

Veteran-related

This year, Watson rode for Operation Patriots for Children, a fund set up at Lifeline Children’s Services to help veterans who are pursuing adoptions.

Others rode for other veteran-related causes, such as Operation Heal Our Patriots, a Samaritan’s Purse project to help foster healing in veterans’ marriages and families.

All total, they raised about \$150,000 through Bama Rama 500, bringing them to a total of more than \$800,000 from the two rides combined.

For more information about Bama Rama 500, visit navy-cycling.com.

For more information about Operation Patriots for Children, visit lifelinechild.org/veteran-cycling.

2025 CHURCH TAX & MINISTERS TAX CONFERENCES

CHURCH TAX CONFERENCES
10 am – 3 pm
COST is \$15 for materials and lunch

- JANUARY 9** – State Board of Missions
1404 Fairview Avenue, Prattville
- JANUARY 16** – Birmingham Metro Baptist Association
1449 Medical Park Drive, Birmingham
- JANUARY 21** – Madison Baptist Association
2318 Whitesburg Drive SW, Huntsville
- JANUARY 27** – Southeast Alabama Baptist Association
1308 Ross Clark Circle, Dothan
- JANUARY 28** – Mobile Baptist Association
616 Azalea Road, Mobile

MINISTERS TAX CONFERENCES
9 am – Noon
FREE

- FEBRUARY 6** – State Board of Missions
1404 Fairview Avenue, Prattville
- FEBRUARY 13** – Birmingham Metro Baptist Association
1449 Medical Park Drive, Birmingham
- FEBRUARY 18** – Madison Baptist Association
2318 Whitesburg Drive SW, Huntsville
- FEBRUARY 24** – Southeast Alabama Baptist Association
1308 Ross Clark Circle, Dothan
- FEBRUARY 25** – Mobile Baptist Association
616 Azalea Road, Mobile



FOR MORE information or to register, visit alsbom.org/events under date of conference or contact State Missionary Lee Wright, lwright@alsbom.org, 334-613-2241.



These events are made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.



UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

Next Intentional Leader Series set for Jan. 21

The next Intentional Leader Series, set for Jan. 21, will focus on the Person aspect of the four Ps of leadership: Person, Pastor, Preacher and Pathfinder.

Who you are is at the heart of what you do. As a pastor or church leader you are a Christian. Your first priority is relating to God well.

Intentionally relating to God and others and growing in an emotionally healthy way are vital to overall leadership.

Self-awareness is one of the keys to relating to others. Knowing who you are in Christ.

Mark Dance, director of pastoral wellness at Guidestone Financial Resources, will encourage you from his 28 years in pastoral ministry.

Your participation will allow you to gain much from his heart's desire to care well for pastors and other ministry leaders.

"This conference will benefit not only those who attend, but will transfer to the many church members in whose lives you invest your time and energy" said Bryan Blass, director of the Office of LeaderCare at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.



DANCE

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



The event will be 9 a.m.–2 p.m. at the State Board of Missions in Prattville. The \$10 cost includes lunch.

To register, visit alsbom.org/ils.

Bible Skills and Drills Event

Attention children, students and leaders — come join us to learn about God's Word, how to listen to Him through His Word and how to apply it to your lives!

The Treasure God's Word — Bible Skills and Drills

Event will be held Jan. 25, 9 a.m.–2 p.m. at Shades Crest Baptist Church in Birmingham.

There will be two tracks to choose from: one for children, students and leaders preparing to participate in Bible Drill this year, and

one for children who want to come learn God's Word and develop great Bible skills.

The cost is \$20 per person, and lunch will be served.

For more information or to register, visit kidzlinkal.org/events.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Pisgah Baptist Church, Sipsey, Alabama, is searching for a full-time pastor. pisgahbaptistal@gmail.com

PASTOR

FBC McIntosh, located in McIntosh, Alabama, is a traditional church seeking a pastor who is a servant leader with vision and passion for people, God's work and Word. The pastor should have a heart for evangelism and seek to grow and guide a small congregation needing revitalization. Send resumé to: FBCMcintosh1953@outlook.com.

PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Uriah, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a full-time or bivocational pastor. Please email resumé to Larry Boles at Wb4cva@yahoo.com or mail via USPS to: FBC Uriah, P.O. Box 337, Uriah, AL 36480.

PASTOR

FBC Shawmut, located in Valley, Alabama, is a traditional church seeking a pastor who is a servant leader with vision and passion for people, God's work and Word. The pastor should have a heart for evangelism and seek to grow and guide a small congregation needing revitalization. Send resumé to: sfbc.psc@yahoo.com.

PASTOR

Pineview Baptist Church, Brent, Alabama, is seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumé to: Pineview Baptist Church, 10291 Highway 5, Brent, AL 35034, or email pineviewbaptist@yahoo.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

New Life Baptist Church located in Bay Minette, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor who unashamedly preaches the Word of God. We are prayerfully seeking the pastor God has chosen for our church to help lead our congregation into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Please email resumé/profile to: newlifebaptistch@att.net or mail to: Pastor Search Committee, 15011 Glasgow Lane, Bay Minette, AL 36507.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Paden Baptist Church, Gadsden, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Mail resumé to: Paden Baptist Church, 900 Padenreich Ave., Gadsden, AL 35903, or Bruce Ragland, Chairman, Search Committee at Padenbaptistchurch@yahoo.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Enon Baptist Church, located in Wilcox County, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Send inquires/resumé to: enonbccamden@gmail.com or mail to: Enon Baptist Church, ATTN: Search Committee, P.O. Box 4, Camden, AL 36726.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR

Buhl Baptist is seeking an associate pastor with experience in all areas of pastoral responsibilities and some availability during the work week. Send resumé to: dmhicks630@gmail.com or Buhlchristchurch@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PART-TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTER

Pineview Baptist Church, Brent, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational part-time children's minister. Send resumé to: Pineview Baptist Church, 10291 Highway 5, Brent, AL 35034, or email: pineviewbaptist@yahoo.com.

PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC

First Baptist Church Rogersville, Alabama, is seeking a part-time minister of music responsible for overseeing the music ministries of the church, including planning and conducting blended worship services, directing the choir/praise and worship team and coordinating volunteer musicians. Request interested candidates submit resumé to Corwyn Tiede at tiedein@aol.com.

BUSINESS

CHURCH FURNISHINGS

Baptistries, portable baptistries with wheels, church steeples, pew cushions, new pews, church pew reupholstering and restoration, wall crosses, stained glass windows. Call 478-275-0235 or email: info@superiorchurch.com. Website: www.superiorchurch.com

SIGNS

CHURCH SIGN

Signs are your first impression. What kind of impression is your church sign making? Call us to replace/update yours with either digital or traditional. Statewide since 1994. 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955. www.reliablesigns.com

TRAVEL/VACATION

LOG CABIN

Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to <https://paradisevistatravel.com/2024/08/20/paradise-vista-cabin> to see pictures. Email Karen for reservations at kwlwdc@gmail.com or call 205-540-3600.

MINISTRIES

DOES YOUR CHURCH NEED HELP WITH A BUILDING PROJECT?

Carpenters for Christ looking for a project in 2025. Free labor to help build your church. Contact Jim at 256-230-5953.

..... End of Year Giving

Remember that gifts through the **Cooperative Program** and to the **Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering** are received by the State Board of Missions through December 31.

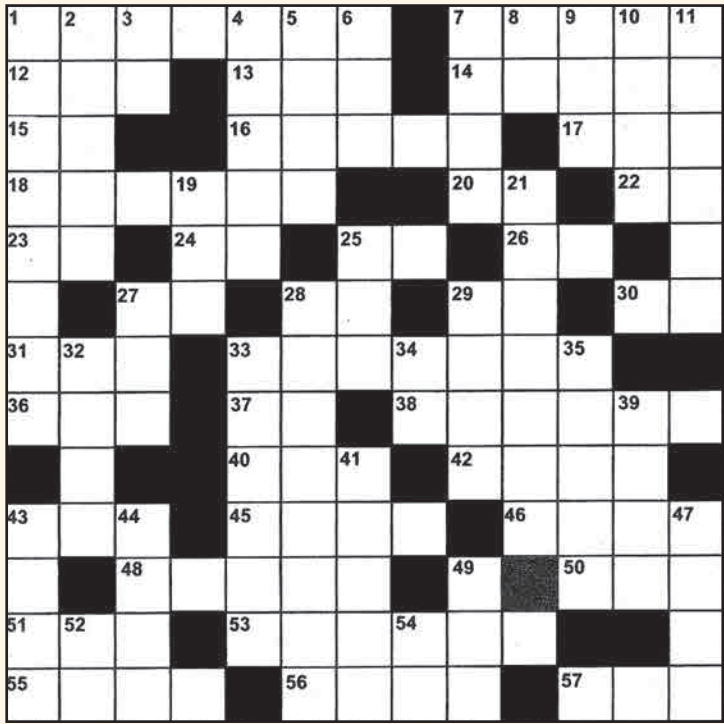
Thank you for your faithful giving to missions causes throughout 2024!

CHRISTIAN Crossword

ACROSS

- 1. Daniel the _____. (Matt. 24:15)
- 7. _____ stilled the people. (Num. 13:30)
- 12. Lord, _____ long? (Isa. 6:11)
- 13. Iron _____.
- 14. Not live by bread _____. (Matt. 4:4)
- 15. _____ I my brother's keeper? (Gen. 4:9)
- 16. The family of _____. (1 Sam. 10:21)
- 17. Measure of weight.
- 18. A pharaoh.
- 20. Middle Atlantic state. (abbr.)
- 22. _____ will we sing. (Ps. 21:13)

- 23. I am _____ the Father. (John 14:10)
- 24. How _____ it that ye have no faith? (Mark 4:40)
- 25. Go up _____ Jerusalem. (Acts 25:9)
- 26. Old Testament. (abbr.)
- 27. Saint. (abbr.)
- 28. That it shall _____. (Acts 27:25)
- 29. Social Security. (abbr.)
- 30. Yes. (Spanish)
- 31. (Samuel) ran unto _____. (1 Sam. 3:5)
- 33. He looked on the _____. (Num. 24:21)
- 36. Variation of aeon.
- 37. And the Lord shut him _____. (Gen. 7:16)
- 38. To scheme. (2 words)
- 40. Disc jockeys. (abbr.)
- 42. _____ he is come. (John 4:25)
- 43. Long _____.
- 45. To the slaughter, like _____. (Jer. 51:40)
- 46. Christ _____ me. (1 Cor. 1:17)



Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

- 48. Elimelech's wife. (Ruth 1:2)
- 50. Standard in golf.
- 51. Long, narrow fish.
- 53. Type of acid.
- 55. Nos.
- 56. Orderly.
- 57. Mine enemies and my _____. (sing.) (Ps. 27:2)

DOWN

- 1. A certain _____ besought him. (Luke 11:37)
- 2. Art thou a _____? (Acts 22:27)
- 3. Exclamation of pain.
- 4. Houses.
- 5. Periods of time.
- 6. Asian holiday.
- 7. _____ and Abel.
- 8. American League. (abbr.)
- 9. _____ sat in the gate of Sodom. (Gen. 19:1)
- 10. Seth's son. (Gen. 4:26)
- 11. Name Rachel called Benjamin. (Gen. 35:18)
- 19. _____ thou on my right hand. (Matt. 22:44)
- 21. _____ coat of many colors.
- 25. Number of lepers.

- (Luke 17:12)
- 27. All manner of _____. (Matt. 12:31)
- 28. The sons of Rachel: Joseph and _____. (Gen. 35:24)
- 29. Put away (on a boat).
- 32. _____ ago.
- 33. Passest over the brook _____. (1 Kings. 2:37)
- 34. Consider _____ in thine heart. (Deut. 4:39)
- 35. Let us not _____, as do others. (1 Thess. 5:6)
- 39. Was one _____, a prophetess. (Luke 2:36)
- 41. I will _____ all thy borders with frogs. (Ex. 8:2)
- 43. So be it.
- 44. The _____ true God. (John 17:3)
- 47. The _____ of life. (Rev. 22:2)
- 49. The _____ wherein Ishmael had cast ... the dead. (Jer. 41:9)
- 52. Each. (abbr.)
- 54. Egyptian god.

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.



UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

Pray for revival in your community

Praying for revival in your area? Gather with others! Praying Alabama 2025 is designed to be an opportunity for your community to gather over the needs of your community and ask God to make a difference in them. Each Praying Alabama 2025 event will be 6–7:30 p.m.

- Jan. 9 — FBC Russellville
- Jan. 16 — FBC Rainsville
- Jan. 23 — FBC Enterprise
- Jan. 30 — FBC Bay Minette
- Feb. 6 — FBC Greenville
- Feb. 13 — Greensboro Baptist
- Feb. 20 — Parkway Baptist in Auburn
- Feb. 27 — Meadow

For more information, visit evangelizeAL.org/prayingalabama or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



- Brook Baptist in Birmingham
- March 6 — Central Park Baptist in Decatur
 - March 13 — Iron City Baptist in Anniston
 - March 20 — Imago Dei in Lowndesboro
- For more information, visit evangelizeAL.org/prayingalabama.

Conclave Youth Ministry Conference: Jan. 23–25

Are you involved in leading youth ministry in a staff or volunteer capacity? We would love to see you at Conclave Youth Ministry Conference, an annual leadership event in cooperation with eight state conventions. Each year, Conclave serves as a training event for youth pastors, leaders and volunteers. Corporate worship, breakout ses-

sions and networking are designed to equip and rejuvenate your youth ministry team. This year's Conclave will be held Jan. 23–25 at Chattanooga Convention Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The speakers are Kara Powell, J.J. Washington, Jamie Dew and Jeff Wallace. For more information or to register, visit ymconclave.org.

Alabaster's Spanish-speaking community 'blessed'

By Grace Thornton

The Alabama Baptist

Several years ago, Kenneth Bruce had a burden. He was coaching his kids' soccer teams, and he was struck by how many Hispanics were playing on his teams and in the rest of the league.

So Bruce — pastor of Westwood Baptist Church in Alabaster — came back and told the leadership at his church that he felt like Westwood needed to start a ministry for Spanish speakers.

Prayers answered

Rick Swing, the church's executive pastor, said they began to pray, and through those prayers, God brought people across their paths who had helped plant Spanish congregations before.

One of those was Brian Harper, church planting strategist for the State Board of Missions.

"We talked to him, and he knew a young man named Juan Aristizabal, and we interviewed him," Swing said.

In the years before, Aristizabal had been using his vacations to go and serve with church plants in Iowa and Texas. He felt like God might be calling him to Alabama, and Swing and the others at Westwood agreed.

Swing spoke with Ben Hale, evangelism and missions pastor at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham, who shared about a residency program for Hispanic church planters.

"They wanted to invest financially and also through a development strategy where they had one of their church planter pastors help our pastor with a time of preparing and mentoring," Swing said.

"That was such a blessing and confirmation of God's



Photo courtesy of Rick Swing

Westwood en Español averages 70–80 in attendance on Sundays. "We are so blessed to be here; it's a beautiful community, and they want to know more about the Lord," says pastor Juan Aristizabal (pictured speaking).

desire to plant a Westwood Hispanic church."

After Aristizabal had spent a year in Dawson's program serving alongside Joshua del Risco, pastor of Iglesia Bautista Vida Nueva in Fultondale, he began to start Bible studies in the Alabaster area.

"He started with one family, and that one family grew

to two families and then three, and before you knew it, he had 15–20 people who would gather for Bible study," Swing said.

Westwood en Español

Aristizabal said it "was the Lord of course, not us."

They kept growing, and in August 2023, they launched

Westwood en Español.

"We have been working hard, and the Lord has been so good to us," Aristizabal said, noting they have 70 or 80 in attendance on Sundays now. "We are so blessed to be here; it's a beautiful community, and they want to know more about the Lord. We can tell the Lord is doing something here in the Alabaster area."

From this ministry, Westwood also launched an English as a Second Language program as an outreach to the community, as well as a Spanish as a Second Language program for Westwood members to learn Spanish.

Swing said they had 50 people in the SSL program this semester, and they will "continue that progress to learn Spanish so they can be useful in sharing the gospel with people in our county who speak Spanish."

2025 Senior Adult Events

Psalm 92:12-14

SINGFEST (Senior Adult Singin')

Tuesday, March 11

Golden Springs BC, Anniston

Tuesday, March 18

Northport BC, Tuscaloosa

Tuesday, September 9

Woodmont BC, Florence

Tuesday, September 16

FBC, Troy

SAINTS ALIVE (Abundant Living)

Thursday, October 23

FBC, Prattville

SALT CONFERENCES

Tuesday, August 19

Mt. Calvary BC, Albertville

Thursday, August 21

Heritage BC, Montgomery



State Missionary **Frank Jones** serves as senior adult strategist through the Office of Sunday School & Discipleship. He is also president of Frank Jones Ministries, a ministry of music and encouragement.

For more information, visit alsbom.org/senior-adults or contact Frank Jones at (334) 613-2221 or (205) 393-7020, fjones@alsbom.org.



THESE EVENTS ARE MADE POSSIBLE BY GIFTS FROM ALABAMA BAPTISTS THROUGH THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM.

STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE



Sunday-Monday
January 26-27

Lakeside Baptist
Church, Birmingham

STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE

—FREE EVENT (except

for optional lunch)

*A conference to
encourage and train
Alabama Baptists to
share and live out
the Gospel.*

FEATURING Phil
Waldrep and Tim
Dowdy and the music
of Charles Billingsley,
plus practical breakout
sessions. Optional
Monday lunch (\$5)
with Scott Dawson.

**REGISTRATION
ENCOURAGED!**

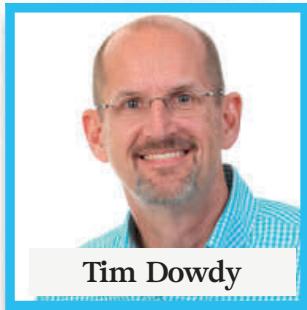
Visit evangelizeal.org/E3
to register or contact
Ministry Assistant Kirstin
Goldwire, [kgoldwire@
alsbom.org](mailto:kgoldwire@alsbom.org), 334-613-2245.



Alabama Baptist
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS



Phil Waldrep



Tim Dowdy



Charles Billingsley



Scott Dawson

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



Photo courtesy of Humberto Medina

Humberto Medina, pastor of Iglesia Bautista Familia de Fe, baptizes Juan Diego during the church's anniversary celebration Oct. 27.

Hispanic church in Huntsville celebrates fruitful partnerships

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Some years back, Humberto Medina planted a church in Louisiana, but he had the thought that one day God might move him somewhere else.

That next place was Alabama, and now his new church plant in Huntsville, Iglesia Bautista Familia de Fe (Family of Faith Baptist Church), is growing — with nearly 50 attending worship each week.

On Oct. 27, the church celebrated its first anniversary and seventh baptism.

"I'm so thankful for the support because it is impossible to do alone," Medina said.

The story of that support began in 2020 when his friend Joshua del Risco introduced him to Dawson Memorial Baptist Church in Birmingham and its Spanish-speaking congregation, Congregación Hispana Dawson.

Story of support

Those two churches had brought del Risco to serve as pastor of a new church plant, Iglesia Bautista Vida Nueva (New Life Baptist Church) in Fultondale. That partnership grew into a residency program centered on preparing Spanish-speaking pastors to plant churches in the state.

Del Risco now directs that effort, and Medina was the first one to take

part in the program. He served on staff at del Risco's church for a year before moving to Huntsville in 2023 to plant Familia de Fe.

That time of waiting and learning connected him with other resources and partners, such as University Baptist Church in Huntsville, which offered to host the new church plant.

A Bible study group launched in October 2023 and the first worship service in December 2023.

"When I came here ... I prayed for God to provide people who are believers who are equipped with the Word of God who can support us," Medina said. And God has.

Dawson and del Risco have walked alongside him, as has the leadership at Madison Baptist Association and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. They've also found a ready support in their host church, which has found itself in a new season of ministry too — University Baptist merged with a collegiate church plant in January to become Church on the Hill.

To celebrate Familia de Fe's anniversary, Church on the Hill gathered with them for a joint service Oct. 27.

Jon Hathcock, Madison Association associate director, was also present that day and said Medina is "genuine and kind" as well as "willing to sacrifice so much to serve God in this way."

**For more
information, visit
dawsonchurch.org/
[iglesia-bautista-
familia-de-fe](http://iglesia-bautista-familia-de-fe).**

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Sunday School Lessons

By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D.
Professor of Biblical Studies, University of Mobile



For December 29

POWER REVEALED Exodus 14:19–31

God’s power is revealed through natural and supernatural means, through general revelation and special revelation. The author of Psalm 19 clearly recognized this, as he pointed to the work of God in astronomy (v. 1) and the Word of God in the Torah (v. 7). The Apostle Paul affirmed this in Romans 1:18–20.

After God demonstrated His authority over Pharaoh (Ex. 9:16) and over all the gods of Egypt (12:12), He led Israel into an impossible situation where they would have to trust Him completely. Unless the Lord delivered them, the people of God had no way to escape the Egyptian army.

The Escape (19–22)

Protection. Through the night, the angel of God and a pillar of cloud separated Pharaoh’s forces from the families of Israel. No matter how large an army they were, the Egyptians could not reach the Israelites. God protected His people from this fickle pharaoh.

Provision. Moses’ outstretched hand. A mighty east wind. Walls of water standing on either side as the Israelites walked across the sea floor on dry ground. It’s hard to imagine exactly what they looked like, although Hollywood has attempted to envision it. However it looked, God’s provision of escape accompanied His protection for them so that the pursuing army was unable to detain them.

The Defeat (23–28)

Disaster. Throughout the night, the Israelites crossed the sea bed unscathed. As the new day was dawning, the Egyptian army pursued them, only to face disaster. Chariot wheels came off and horses and riders became disoriented. They were enveloped as the sea walls collapsed and the water returned to its normal lev-

els. Pharaoh’s army was defeated.

Debate. Scholars have long argued the location of the crossing. Some point to the name “yam suph” (sea of reeds, 13:18), suggesting a marsh. This addresses the reeds, but it does not explain the drowning of the army. Others argue for a crossing through the Gulf of Suez. Still others believe that there is better evidence for the Gulf of Aqaba.

Details. Swedish marine biologist Lennart Moller and others have argued that there is a ridge across the sea floor with physical evidence of Egyptian chariot wheels in the Gulf of Aqaba. In “The Exodus Explored,” a film series produced by La Mirada Films, they point out that if Sinai is in Arabia (Gal. 4:25) rather than on the so-called Sinai Peninsula, then Aqaba is the portion of the sea that was split.

The Powerful One (29–31)

Firsthand knowledge. What a contrast! The entire company of Israelites — tribe by tribe, clan by clan, family by family — passed through the split sea safely on dry ground. Pharaoh’s eastern army — every man in every unit — drowned in the sea. Israelite parents and children witnessed the power of God over their enemies.

Fear. Death brings out fear in people. Seeing dead bodies on the shore reminded the Israelites of the brevity of life and their own mortality. It also reminded them of the power of God and their own accountability before Him.

Faith. Israel believed God, having seen His power over Egyptian deities and the Egyptian army. They had watched Him protect them as a trained army pursued them. They witnessed God’s provision of an exodus from Egypt and an escape through the sea. Yet Israel would prove to have a short memory. Over and over again, they would complain against God, Moses and their other leaders.

For January 5

PROVISION GIVEN Exodus 16:11–19; 17:1–6

God provides for the needs of His people. His mighty hand provided Israel with freedom from Egyptian slavery by means of plagues and the Passover. Through His presence, He provided escape for Israel from Egyptian slaughter.

After days of travel without clean water, God provided Israel with sweet water for bitter water before leading them to an oasis of 12 springs.

Like your family on a long trip without cellular service or air conditioning, Israel became uncomfortable quickly. Moms had children to care for with limited supplies. Dads were responsible for their families, their livestock and their possessions.

Imagine a few kids asking, “Where are we going? Are we there yet? I’m hungry. I’m thirsty. Can we go home now?” Once the kids get whiny, then moms and dads begin griping. Before long, tempers are flaring toward each other. Next thing you know, everyone was blaming Moses and Aaron because they had no meat or bread like they had back in Egypt.

Provision (16:11–15)

Meat. The Israelites complained about their lack of meat, so God provided quail for them. While quail is nothing compared to the “Arnold Schwarze-turkeys” that we Americans eat for holidays, God provided sufficiently to satisfy their desire for meat.

When they later complained about their lack of meat, God made them sick of it. (See Num. 11:20.) Be careful to be grateful for God’s provision.

Manna. Have you ever been introduced to unfamiliar food from another culture? Naturally, questions arise such as, “What is it? What is it made of?” Each morning when God provided this food for them, they asked what it was. They began calling it “manna,” meaning “what?” (See Christian Standard Bible footnote to verse 31.) Moses. When they asked, Moses

directed their attention back to the divine name of God. “It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat.” You may be like me, prone to chasing proverbial rabbits. We need a Moses in our lives focusing our attention on our Provider, not just His provisions.

Instruction (16–19)

Enough. Gather enough for your family. When they tried to hoard food, it rotted overnight. This prevented them from being selfish and taught them to trust God for their provision.

A valuable lesson from this is that we cannot depend on spiritual leftovers. We need fresh provision from God daily.

Each day. Every morning, they were to gather food provisions for the family. As the day heated up, the exposed food melted away. They awoke each day with the responsibility to get their supplies. They learned to count on the Lord every day to provide for them.

Exception. In the verses that follow this passage, an exception was made for the Sabbath day. As a precursor to the Sabbath day (20:8–11) and Sabbath year (Lev. 25:1–22) instructions, the Israelites could not gather manna on the Sabbath. Instead, God provided a double portion on the sixth day of the week that would not spoil on the Sabbath.

Further Provision (17:1–6)

Water from a rock. Israel camped at Rephidim but they had no water. They bemoaned leaving Egypt and blamed Moses. God provided water from a rock that Moses struck in the presence of the elders. The Lord made the impossible possible by giving the people enough water for themselves and their livestock.

Water from the Rock. Paul points to Jesus as the spiritual Rock who provided for Israel (1 Cor. 10:4). Jesus provides living water that satisfies our thirsty souls.

EDITOR’S NOTE — The Sunday School lesson outlines are provided by Lifeway.

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Sunday School Lessons

By Adam Winn, Ph.D.
Chair and Professor, Department of Biblical and Religious Studies at Samford University



For December 29

**LOOKING FORWARD
IN WORSHIP
Matthew 2:1–11, 16–18**

**Jesus, the King of kings,
is worthy of our worship. (1–6)**

These verses describe the events that follow the birth of Jesus. Quite unlike our modern nativity sets, they depict the visitation of “Magi,” most likely a reference to astrologers, coming at some point after Jesus has been born.

The observation of a new star is presumably the catalyst for their journey to Jerusalem in search of a new king. How the Magi connected the star’s appearance to the birth of a new king of Judea is unclear. Some have sought to link the star’s appearance with Numbers 24:17, which states “A star shall come out of Jacob, a scepter shall rise out of Jacob.”

While this connection is possible, ancient people often associated astrological events with the birth of great rulers. Though answering these questions fully is difficult, the result and purpose of their journey is more important than explaining its catalyst. It is clear they traveled to find this king, yet they also declare a desire to grant him “proskuneo.”

This Greek word can mean either to pay homage or to grant someone worship. Matthew’s intention for the word is unclear. Matthew may intend for us to see in their actions the rightful worship of, even if unknowingly, the true universal king, as his disciples will offer at the end of the gospel (28:17).

In these verses, Matthew makes it clear that Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem is the fulfillment of Scripture (Micah 5:2). But as will become clear, Matthew sees even more connections to Israel’s Scripture in the visitation of these Magi.

**Some do not worship the
rightful King and even
oppose Him. (7–8, 16–18)**

In these verses, we see the evil intentions of Herod, who also

claims a desire to grant “proskuneo” to the new king. Yet, Herod’s desires are in fact to eliminate this new king, whom he believes to be a threat to his own power.

When Herod’s efforts are thwarted, the evil lengths to which he will go to secure his power are manifest, as he has all children of Bethlehem that are two and under executed. Such behavior is consistent with other known efforts of Herod to maintain his power or punishes those who resent it.

Herod executed one of his wives and three of his sons because he believed they had conspired against him. And as Herod’s death approached, he ordered that when he died, a significant number of Jewish elders be executed, so that while the Jewish people might not mourn his death, they would be mourning at the time of his death all the same.

In Matthew, Herod is clearly an opponent to the purposes of God rather than a worshipper.

**Jesus’ rule should lead
us to worship Him. (9–11)**

When the Magi finally find Jesus, they bow down before Him and offer Him valuable gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Though Matthew does not explicitly cite the fulfillment of Scripture here, it seems he clearly has Psalm 72 in mind, a psalm that depicts kings from afar bowing down before Israel’s king (v. 11) and bringing him valuable gifts (v. 10), including gold (v. 15).

It seems clear that Matthew sees in Jesus the king described in this psalm, a king who reigns “from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth.” His reign is characterized by righteousness, justice and deliverance for the poor and those in need.

This Christmas, may we, like the Magi, recognize Jesus as this great king and give Him the worship He deserves. Instead of gifts like gold and expensive ointments, may we give Him the gift of lives lived in full obedience.

For January 5

**LOOKING FORWARD
WITH EXPECTATION
Matthew 24:32–44**

**The return of Jesus
is near. (32–35)**

These verses come at the end of a long discourse in which Jesus is addressing His disciples’ question about His coming at “the end of the age.” Jesus has told them of many difficulties the world will face between the time of His departure and His Second Coming (vv. 4–31). Yet in verse 34, we find a passage that has troubled many Christians.

On the surface it appears to be a claim that everything from verses 4–31 (including Jesus’ Second Coming) will happen within “this generation,” that is the generation of Jesus’ own time, a problematic claim given that 2,000 years have passed and Jesus has not returned. However, here we need the eyes of first century Jews.

Jews of this time divided time into two ages, the present evil age and the future glorious age, which would be brought about by God’s Messiah.

The question asked by the disciples at the outset references this notion of a present evil age, and it sees Jesus’ Second Coming as the end of that age. Jesus’ use of “this generation” is using the same concept, with “this generation” being equivalent to the people of “the present evil age.”

With these words, Jesus is challenging common Jewish expectations, namely that when the Messiah returned, the evil age would end and a glorious age would replace it.

Here Jesus is claiming that though He has come, the present evil age, and the generation that live in it, will not pass away until he returns. Thus, those who follow Jesus the Messiah will live in an evil age and generation until the second coming.

**The return of Jesus will
surprise most people. (36–39)**

Here Jesus tells His disciples that no one knows the day or the hour of His return except the Father. Perhaps surprisingly to us,

Jesus claims that not even He knows the time of His return.

While this may trouble our trinitarian sensibilities, this comment may mean nothing more than that Jesus, during his earthly life, did not have such knowledge and thus could not share it, while the risen and resurrected Jesus may in fact know.

This is one of many possible theological explanations to something we cannot resolve here. What is most important about this text is that Jesus’ return is not something that can be predicted. It will come as a surprise to all. For those who are engaged in the everyday activities of life, it will disrupt them and catch them completely off guard.

**The return of Jesus calls
for us to be prepared. (40–44)**

This text continues describing the unexpected nature of Jesus’ return, with people doing ordinary things when suddenly one is taken away and one is left.

There is debate about whether it is the righteous who are taken or the wicked (see Matt. 13:24–30, 36–43 that may suggest the latter), something that cannot be resolved here. However, what is most important in the passage is the message that God’s people be prepared.

They are commanded to “stay awake” and “be ready.” These instructions do not mean that God’s people somehow figure out the time of Jesus’ coming, something Jesus’ claimed not to know. Instead, it means they must be living faithfully at the time of Jesus’ coming, and that as such, they will be on the right side of His judgment when He comes.

Those who are living faithfully when the Son of Man comes, though they also do not know the day and the hour, will be prepared as Noah was when the flood waters finally came (v. 38).

This Christmas, may we not only look back to the Messiah’s first coming but look forward to the second; and in looking forward, may we live faithfully so as to be prepared when He comes.

‘Made to worship’

Young ‘hype-man’ picture of authentic praise despite life’s difficulties

By Tracy Riggs Frontz
The Alabama Baptist

Most Christians love musical worship in some form or another. But for 14-year-old Noah Humpherys, he lives for it.

According to his mom, Cheryl, Noah’s nickname is “Hype-man.” For all those who have seen Noah at a Christian concert, it’s obvious how true that is.

Noah usually has a seat on the front row but actually does little sitting. Before the concert starts, he darts back and forth in the front of the auditorium, raising his arms and hyping up the crowd. During the concert, if the crowd is standing, he’s standing.

“He earned that nickname. He is hyped and is willing to try to get the whole crowd hyped,” Cheryl said.

To those who haven’t seen him, it might seem an exaggeration, but his mother attests that it’s all true.

Deep love

“On certain songs, he’s jamming out and enjoying the music. Then you’ll see him go into worship mode. He throws those hands in the air and is closing his eyes and singing. And you know, he’s not faking it. My mama heart knows,” Cheryl said.

Noah has always had a deep love of music and of worship, possibly related to trials he encountered due to developmental delays caused by being born with a hole in his heart.

“His love of worship started when he was little. Everything was a microphone or a drum,” she said.

“Probably when he was 2, we realized that we couldn’t understand him but eventually recognized what he was doing was worship music. He would also just walk up and



Photo by Tracy Riggs Frontz/The Alabama Baptist
Noah Humpherys raises his hands on the front row of a Danny Gokey concert.

down preaching to his grandparents on the couch. We wouldn’t know what he was saying, but we believed he was preaching.”

This was happening during the years it took to repair his heart defect — and at a time of constant physical struggles in Noah’s life.

Twice the doctors attempted surgery to close the hole with a balloon — once when he was an infant and a second time when he was 2. It wasn’t successfully repaired until he was 4.

During that time, his oxygen saturation when he was healthy stayed around 80%. This lack of oxygen during his developmental years caused medical issues, including epilepsy.

Foundation of faith

Now in eighth grade, Noah has delays with fine motor and cognitive skills.

“We have had to lean into God more than anything else in our lives

with this situation. We believe that God’s got His hands on him and has a plan for him. We just don’t know what that is,” Cheryl said.

But being in special education classes hasn’t kept Noah from displaying his naturally outgoing self.

Saying he’s “very social,” his mother said he knows everyone at school, and everyone knows him.

Outgoing nature

His outgoing nature is evident even before going into a concert’s venue.

“With the concerts, really it’s not just about the music. It’s his love for people. He gets energy from being around people, and he doesn’t meet strangers. If we’re standing in line for a concert, he’s going to meet people around him.

“I’ve got so many friends on my Facebook page that are from people who were standing in line with us. I wouldn’t have asked their names and where they were from. I wouldn’t

have started up a conversation with them,” Noah’s mother said.

Though he loves the people performing the concerts, Noah doesn’t worship them. He’s not star-struck in any way. He considers them his friends, his buddies.

But that’s not to say that he doesn’t love interacting with them.

‘Not restrained’

Noah said that one of his favorite moments was during a We the Kingdom concert when he “got pulled up on stage and got to sing with them.”

Cheryl explained further.

“They were about to sing something a cappella, and he kept starting the song before them. Finally, they said, ‘OK, Noah, just come on up here.’ So they pulled him up on stage, and he got to sing the whole song with them.”

Other concert attendees have told Noah’s mom that “we should all worship like Noah because he doesn’t have boundaries. He’s not restrained. If he’s feeling it, he’s showing it.”

“They’re right about that,” Cheryl agreed. “Why are we not all so enthusiastic when worshipping Jesus?”

When he’s not at school or a concert, he spends a lot of his time worshipping at home on his own. He loves to play around on his drum kit — having started when he was 4 — and he has his own stage on which to perform.

“He does a concert — somebody’s set list — on his stage every day, and he’ll sing and he’ll give testimony to nobody because he’s just in there playing pretend,” Cheryl said.

“Worship has come into our family so strongly,” she added. “His love, especially early on, was just so innocent. It really made me understand how much we’re made to worship.”

A calling

By Adam B. Dooley
Kentucky Today

First person: Is God moving you to ministry?

One of the distinctive characteristics of my home church was the clear invitations offered by my pastor each Sunday. Added to his encouragements for people to repent of their sins in order to follow Christ were the consistent appeals for baptism and church membership. Nearly every weekend, he also proposed the possibility that God was likely calling some to ministry as he admonished us to discern the Lord's leading.

Without question, God is still calling individuals to offer their lives in ministry service to Him today. What is less frequent, though, are the regular appeals that used to be commonplace in the church. My conviction is that we should

talk more, not less, about raising up the next leaders for Christ's church.

So, how does one identify an initial call to ministry?

What signs give evidence of a genuine directive from God that a person is set apart for vocational service?



DOOLEY

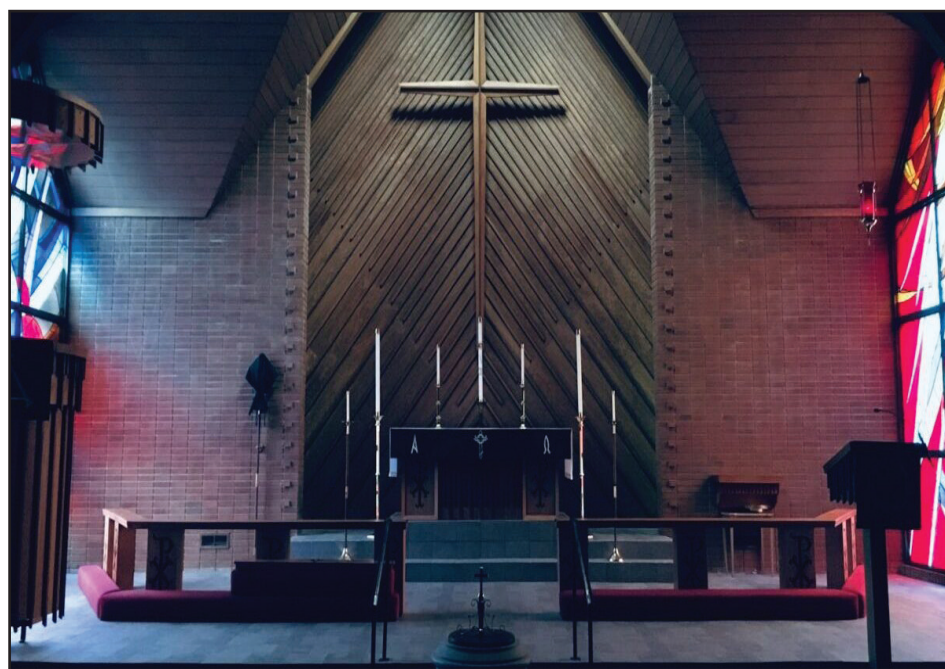
If God is still raising up leaders to shepherd, teach, and oversee congregations, how does He do it?

The following patterns served me well as a teenager wrestling with questions like these.

Deep desire

You have a deep desire to know the Lord and a compulsion to do His work. When I was 17 years old, God began burdening me that I should preach the gospel and pastor His people.

Initially, I resisted the urge, but



Unsplash.com Photo

through prayer and fasting I was able to evaluate my motivations and reservations.

Over time, my excuses gave way to enthusiasm for people and Scripture.

At a pivotal moment, I concluded that God indeed was calling. Much like the words spoken to Jeremiah the prophet, it seemed as though the Spirit was whispering, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jer. 1:5).

From that time forward, the word became like a fire in my bones (Jer. 20:9) that had to come out. Despite earlier plans to pursue a career in pharmacy, I found myself saying with the Apostle Paul, "Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16).

Today, I cannot imagine spending my life on anything but serving the Lord in this way. Though we arrive at this conclusion in different ways, all pastors share a common conviction

that we are stewards of an assignment from the Lord.

God will empower you for the tasks that compel you. Desiring to serve the local church is noble, yet doing so effectively requires God's gifting for service. God grants spiritual gifts to each member of the church to promote the health and vitality of the congregation (1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12).

The focus here is on the supernatural enablement that accompanies each assignment from the Lord. Ephesians 4 emphasizes that God gives apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers to equip "the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12). Thus, when speaking of the pastor, Paul insisted he must be "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2) and Peter requires that he should be able to exercise oversight (1 Peter 5:2). Those whom the Lord calls to particular assignments will receive divine empowerment.

Others will confirm the unique activity of God in your life. The

importance of the local church for ascertaining one's call cannot be overestimated. Long before I recognized God's movement toward ministry in my life, godly men and women within my church began to encourage me with their words and prayers. My pastor mentored and positioned me to pursue God's unfolding plan for my life, which seemed apparent to him.

Ordination

The same pattern emerges in the New Testament. Even as Timothy was gifted for service, the spiritual leaders in his life confirmed his initial calling (2 Tim. 1:6). Before Paul sought this young man to join him in ministry, Acts 16 tells us Timothy was "well spoken of by the brethren." Today, through a process of ordination, the local church not only recognizes a unique call on a member's life, but also affirms it as evident and effective for gospel service.

God will create opportunities for you to utilize your gifts while serving others. When God calls, He opens doors. First, I began speaking at Fellowship of Christian Athletes worship services. When these messages became sermonically, invitations to preach in churches followed. My pastor gave me a Sunday School class to teach. Working with children and students also honed my ministerial development. To this day, I've never sought an opportunity to preach, and yet, God continues to open doors.

Is it possible that God is calling you to ministry?

EDITOR'S NOTE — This story was written by Adam B. Dooley and originally published by Kentucky Today.

UNFORSAKEN MINISTRY



Walking with those in addiction and their families through the journey of recovery.

EMAIL: glenn@unforsakenministry.org

WEBSITE: unforsakenministry.org

Evangelism consultation helps reignite movement for church

Illinois Baptist staff

Every church and pastor goes through seasons of ups and downs. There are years when baptisms come in waves, and new people show up each week. And there are dry seasons, where it can feel like a struggle to reach the lost.

When pastor Will Ferguson of Temple Baptist in Canton, Illinois, came to an Ignite evangelism training in Peoria, he was personally in a dry season. “I was starting to lose a little bit of my passion for (evangelism),” he said.

Ferguson went away encouraged to lead his church to be more outwardly focused, but wasn’t sure where to start. He reached out to Illinois Baptist State Association’s Scott Harris for consultation where Harris guided him through IBSA’s Next Step process that “help(s) pastors think through that one key

next step that you can take and lead your church toward that really captures the heart of what you feel like God is doing in your heart as a pastor.”

Starting with prayer

That led to diagrams and a plan drawn out on large sheets of paper that still hang on Ferguson’s office wall. The current cycle started with a prayer movement for specific names of friends, family, and neighbors and will end with church members participating in planned opportunities to engage the community around needs.

“God’s at work,” Ferguson said. “People are praying for people, and they’re sharing their stories.”

After a few months of specific prayer and invitations to people on

their list, Temple had one of the highest attendance Sundays in their history and has more than doubled baptisms from the previous year.

In his evangelism work around the state with churches like Temple, Harris sees a common denominator in turning churches inside-out to reach the lostness in their communities.

“If your people aren’t praying for lost people that they know by name, then they’re not sharing the gospel with people that they know are lost,” he noted. “They’re not inviting them to church. Because it’s through prayer that God gives us his heart for these people.”

‘Pray and go’

With between 8 and 9 million lost people in Illinois, it can be

easy to pray for this large number, but become numb to it, Harris said. His work keeps the gravity of the enormous mission field right here in Illinois in view, but helps move churches to local action in places like Canton by helping them reach the lost people they know.

“When we start to pray and go, Oh, God, my mom’s lost, my son’s lost, my spouse is lost, my daughter’s lost. We began to think about that and pray for them with a passion of God.” And according to Harris, changed prayers turn into personal action, “God’s heart wasn’t just broken over lostness. It moved God’s heart to do something about lostness.”

EDITOR’S NOTE — This story was written by Illinois Baptist Staff and originally published by Illinois Baptist.



HARRIS

AZ missions team engages multifaceted ministry in Zambia

By Terri McElrath

Arizona’s Portraits

Seventeen members of Calvary Baptist Church in Lake Havasu City, Arizona, left the comfort of home to travel nearly 10,000 miles to Zambia in 2024. The group was divided into three school teams, five preaching teams and one team dedicated to introducing Zambia to Celebrate Recovery.

The mission trip was part of the Arizona Mission Network of Southern Baptists’ partnership with the International Mission Board’s Sub-Saharan Africa Affinity. The Calvary group was in Lusaka for 10 days, and the preaching teams branched out to five Baptist churches.

Impressed with transparency

Zambia church leaders were impressed with the transparency of those who told their stories of walking with Jesus. The stories exposed real struggles that are not commonly spoken of in Zambia, especially among church leaders. These stories showed that as Americans, we have problems, too, and Calvary’s transparency helped Lusaka church leaders see that it is all right to be vulnerable.

“I have learned that when we trust God and share our testimony, it is not only for our freedom but also gives others hope that they aren’t the only ones to experience certain sins or trauma,” said teammate Stephanie. “It encourages others to stay connected to God and helps them to know healing is possible from the worst of circumstances.”

During the week, school teams visited numerous schools throughout Lusaka. At the schools, team members shared their testimonies as well

as the gospel with thousands of students. The teams delivered Bibles as well as new soccer balls for all the schools. The soccer balls were so well received that whoever showed them to the students was the hero of the day.

On one school visit, a team led by Pastor Mike decided to do things a little differently and opened up the visit to questions from the students. On the second Friday and Saturday of the trip, the Celebrate Recovery Team was planning on providing two days of Celebrate Recovery training to four of the five Baptist churches.

Everything changed on the first Saturday evening with the addition of another team member from Kenya, Pastor Jarod. Jarod is the Kenya Celebrate Recovery regional representative and has numerous contacts with various church denominations in Lusaka.

So on Monday and Tuesday, members of the CR team introduced this ministry to nine additional churches, which included their pastors, bishops, other church leaders and their wives.

“The CR training was enriching and unexpected,” said Bishop Davies of God At Work Ministries. “We thought it was only concerned with drugs and alcohol but now understand it is more, so much more!”

There was one Baptist church that was resistant to the idea of Celebrate Recovery. However, Calvary’s transparency helped the Lusaka church leaders understand that we all have issues.

Additionally, with the team members sharing their testimonies at churches and schools as well as the additional pastors spreading the news about Celebrate Recovery, the final hold-out church decided they should take part in the



Photo courtesy of Arizona’s Portraits

Calvary mission team members meet with pastors in Zambia.

training and adopt the Celebrate Recovery ministry as well.

The Zambia pastors thought the CR training was unexpected and enriching. Most believed the program was only for those dealing with drugs or alcohol and were surprised to hear about the wide variety of issues that Celebrate Recovery addresses.

“What impacted me the most was seeing the relief wash over those in attendance when they realized Celebrate Recovery is for more than just drugs and alcohol addiction,” said teammate Coral. “Without realizing it, church members often place unrealistic expectations on pastors. Pastors feel and respond to that pressure believing they must present an air of perfection.”

The Calvary Baptist team have been invited to return, to continue sharing the gospel in the schools, and to provide further Celebrate Recovery training.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Terri McElrath is a member of Calvary Baptist Church in Lake Havasu City.

EQUIPPING DISCIPLE MAKERS
FOR **EVERY CONTEXT**,
FOR **ALL PEOPLE**,
FOR **THE GLORY OF GOD**.

MDiv MASTER OF
DIVINITY



SCAN HERE TO LEARN MORE
OR VISIT [SEBTS.EDU/MDIV](https://sebts.edu/mdiv)



Southeastern
Baptist Theological Seminary



MAKE DISCIPLES

Part of the body

By Mark MacDonald
BeKnownforSomething.com

Churches can communicate with new members

It's important to establish a rhythm in communicating to a new member. As visitors attend your church in person or online, communicate the gospel so they understand their need of salvation through Christ. Also, the Church should communicate why joining a fellowship of believers is critical. A believer must have the ability to connect with others to have teaching, accountability, baptism, communion and interaction.



MACDONALD

Most people will start online, so your church needs to communicate reasons regularly for someone to experience your local church and invite them to visit and join your local body or find one near them.

Then once someone commits to membership (or whatever you call it), it's essential that you're communicating to a new member in such a way that they grow in their faith and become active in your local church.

Here are five essential tips for doing that effectively:

1. Ensure they know your language, culture and expectations. Offer regular new membership classes and orientation. In this class (or classes), start with a gospel explanation and altar call if needed. Don't assume someone is joining your fellowship for the right reasons.

Start with gospel

Don't belabor the steps, but adequately start with the gospel, the reasons for membership, explana-



Unsplash.com Photo

tion of your church's brand, mission, vision, values and the benefits of being part of your denomination. Concentrate on their benefits as you explain expectations. Explain acronyms and internal language.

Don't assume they know anything about your church culture. Walk them through your website for benefits for them.

2. Make the welcome personal. People who are joining a fellowship want to ... fellowship. So, be as personal as possible.

Introduce them to key leadership and contacts.

Even better, if there are several in the membership class, spend a few moments for them to get to know each other. If they're similar demographics, consider starting a small

group or Sunday School class with them.

The more names or people a new member knows after three months, the more likely they'll stay and be active.

3. Follow up after a couple of months. Establish a line of communication with a new member. That can be an email, personal letter or text. Also, make sure they're subscribed to your weekly email newsletter and tag them in your database so you can send special communication from time to time.

Personal request

The likelihood of them getting more involved in a small group, volunteer service or missions activity rests on a personal request to

solve a need in their life or in the church.

4. Explain why giving is part of worship. Each time you're communicating to a new member, regularly explain how many others in your church give and why God ordained giving as an act of worship to Him.

This may be a foreign concept to them. Be gentle, scriptural and practical as you explain the ways that they can be a blessing to the ministry and others.

5. Use the first anniversary of membership to check in. Your first year communicating to a new member is crucial for establishing them into your local church and the universal Church. Consider a special meal, class, call or personal email on their anniversary. Check in with them.

Ask them if they have concerns or faith stories. Make sure they're happy, getting their needs met and using their spiritual gifts.

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

Establish a line of communication with a new member. That can be an email, personal letter or text.

Mark MacDonald
communication pastor, speaker, consultant