

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

‘Epitome of faithful’

Interim music leader continues filling in after 70 years of service

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

This church’s interim music leader, Gerald Burns, might be the longest-serving interim there ever has been.

“He took somebody’s place as a servant and has been doing that for a long time,” said Dan Arsenault, pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Ralph, which is located about 16 miles southwest of Tuscaloosa. “If somebody else came in, he’d probably back off and let somebody else do it — that’s just who he is,” Arsenault said. “But if there’s a need, he’s going to fill it.”

He’s been filling it for about 70 years.

Gerald Burns started leading the music at church when he was around 19 or 20, and now he’s 91.

He doesn’t want to take too much credit, though, because he said there were a few years where he left and came back.

Fabric of his life

His son, Terry, said some years ago the church recognized his dad for 50 years and then his dad stepped down from the role.

“But I came home one day, and he was doing it again.”

The church is part of the fabric of Gerald Burns’ life.

He was born about a mile from Shiloh Baptist and has remained close.

“I became a deacon at age 21, and I’ve served as a Sunday School teacher more than 50 years,” he said.

Favorite part of his role

He said his favorite part of serving as “interim” music leader is just simply hearing everybody sing.

“I’ve been blessed, that’s for sure,” Gerald Burns said.

Arsenault said they’re the blessed ones.

“He’s the epitome of Proverbs 20:6, where it says, ‘A faithful man who can find?’ He’s been that for sure,” Arsenault said.

‘He’s a servant’

“In a word, he’s dependable. He opens the doors every service; he comes first and leaves last every time. He’s a servant.”

Gerald Burns said — as he always has — that if someone else were to take over, he would step aside and let them.

But for now, “as long as I’m able, I don’t mind doing it,” he said. “I’m grateful for the opportunity.”

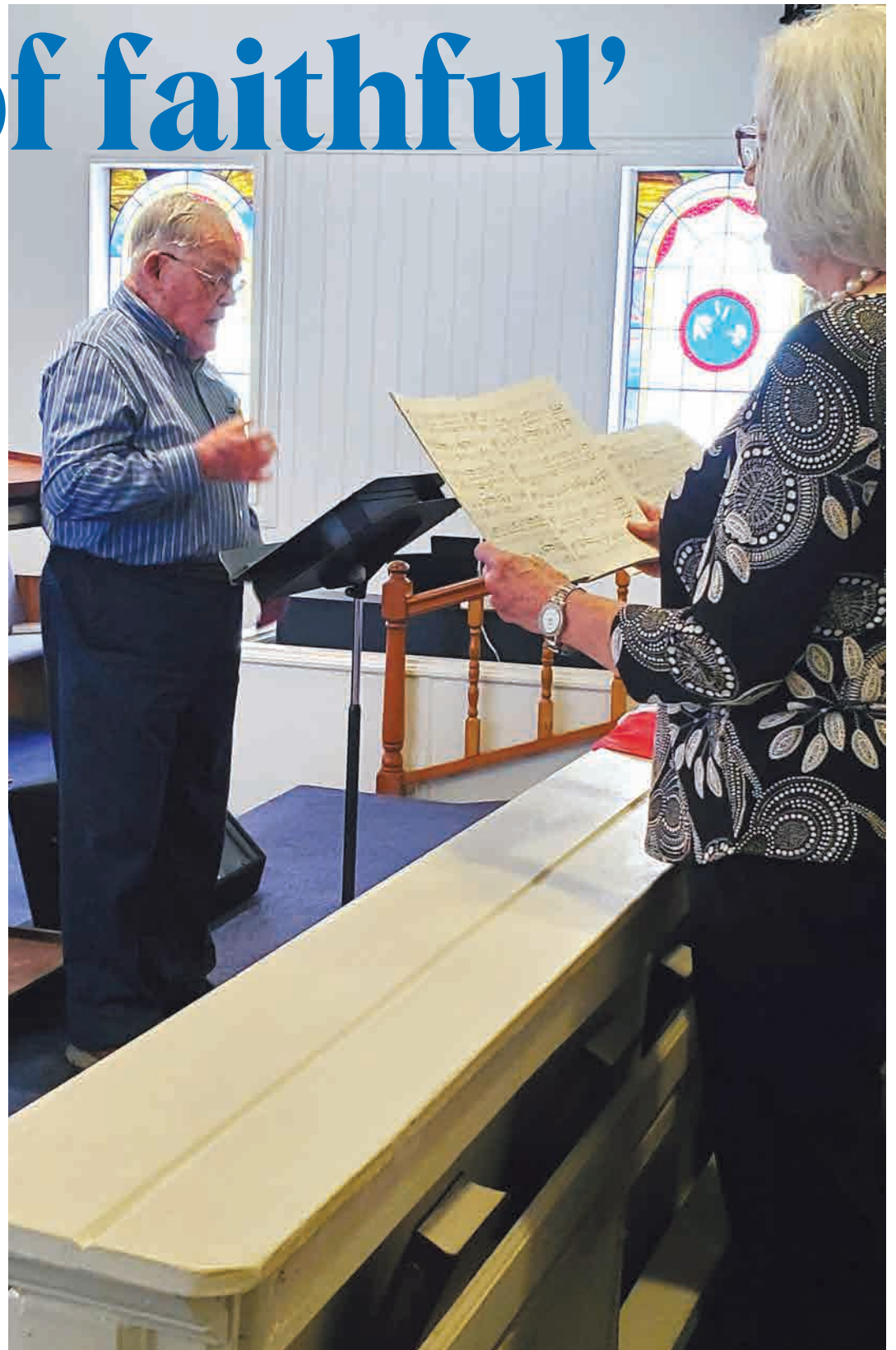


Photo courtesy of Pam Walker

Gerald Burns leads the choir at Shiloh Baptist Church in Ralph, an unincorporated community in Tuscaloosa County. He serves as the church’s interim music leader.

SBC ANNUAL MEETING COVERAGE

To keep up with coverage of the SBC Annual Meeting in Dallas, follow tbponline.org and check out future editions of the paper.

TAB, SBOM, Univ. of Mobile, Samford communications teams recognized

The editorial and communications teams of TAB Media Group (The Alabama Baptist and The Baptist Paper), the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, University of Mobile and Samford University all received honors recently for work done in 2024.

Those awards are grouped below by the presenting organization:

Associated Church Press

- **Overall Excellence/Best in Class:** Award of Merit, The Baptist Paper
- **Reporting (broader topic or trend), short format:** Award of Excellence, “A Chance at Life,” June Mathews, The Alabama Baptist
- **Meeting Coverage:** Honorable Mention, 2024 SBC Annual Meeting Report, The Baptist Paper
- **Theme Issue (Newspaper):** Award of Merit, “Aging Well,” The Alabama Baptist
- **Service Journalism:** Award of Excellence, “Facing the challenge of aging congregations,” Denise George, The Alabama Baptist
- **Newspaper Design, Spread or Story:** Award of Excellence, “Spreading the Gospel one cross at a time,” Tracy Riggs Frontz and Lauren C. Grim, The Alabama Baptist
- **Newspaper/Newsletter Design, Entire Issue:** Award of Merit, The Baptist Paper, Feb. 29, 2024, edition

Baptist Communicators Association

- **Audio Broadcast/Podcast — Individual Episode:** 3rd place, “Faith-based Artificial Intelligence,” Jennifer Davis Rash and Hannah Pruitt, The Alabama Baptist
- **Event Coverage, Single Photo:** 3rd place, “Faithful to the Nations,” Van Payne, The Baptist Paper
- **Portrait, Environmental,** 2nd place, “Fred and Velma Saunders,” Pam Henderson, TAB Media Group
- **Investigative Reporting:** 1st place, “Focused on Next Steps,” Jennifer Rash, The Alabama Baptist
- **Print Publications/Newspaper/Single Issue:** 1st place, The Alabama Baptist, Feb. 8, 2024, edition

- **Print Publications/Newspaper/Single Issue:** 2nd place, The Baptist Paper, Feb. 29, 2024, edition
- **Print Publications/Newspaper/Front Page:** 1st place, 2024 SBC Annual Meeting Report, Lauren Grim and Pam Henderson, The Baptist Paper
- **Print Publications/Newspaper/Spread:** 2nd place, “One Cross at a Time,” Tracy Riggs Frontz and Lauren Grim, The Alabama Baptist
- **Print Publication/Newspaper:** 2nd place, The Alabama Baptist, Oct. 3, 2024, edition
- **Web/Small Site:** 2nd place, CallingOutTheCalled.org, State Board of Missions and Dogwood Media Solutions
- **Web/Large Site:** 1st place, ALSBOM.org, State Board of Missions and Dogwood Media Solutions
- 2nd place, Beeson Divinity School website, Neal Embry, Samford University Web Services Team
- **Social Media/Campaign or Event:** 2nd place, Fortify Conference, State Board of Missions and Dogwood Media Solutions
- **Video Event Coverage/1–3 minutes:** 3rd place, Pursue Promo Video, Mitchell Bruce, State Board of Missions
- **Copywriting/Ceremony:** 2nd place, BCA Can Can, Doug Rogers, State Board of Missions
- **Copywriting/AV Production:** 1st place, Together, Doug Rogers, State Board of Missions
- **Total Public Relations or Development Campaign:** 2nd place, Day of Giving 2024, UM Office for Marketing & Public Relations
- **Single Article/Long:** 2nd place, “A Preaching Life,” Neal Embry, Samford
- **Print Collateral/Booklet:** 2nd place, Beeson Divinity School Viewbook, Samford Marketing & Communication
- **Digital Collateral/Landing Webpage:** 2nd place, Experience the

- Beeson Difference, Samford Marketing & Communication
- **Digital Collateral/Advertisement:** 1st place, “Local Training,” and 2nd place, “Who Will You Become?” Samford Marketing & Communication

Evangelical Press Association

- **Newspaper (Print):** Award of Merit, The Baptist Paper
- **Newspaper (Print):** Award of Merit, The Alabama Baptist

Religion Communicators Council

- **Newspapers/Single Work — Category Winner:** The Baptist Paper, Feb. 29, 2024, edition
- **Newspapers/Single Work:** Award of Excellence, The Alabama Baptist, Oct. 3, 2024, edition
- **Periodicals — Best in Class/Best of Show:** Beeson Magazine, Neal Embry, Samford
- **Magazines/Single Work — Category Winner:** Beeson Magazine, Neal Embry, Samford
- **Articles and Stories/Single Work — Category Winner:** Robert Smith Jr. story, Neal Embry and Evan Musgraves, Samford
- **Articles and Stories/Single Work — Certificates of Appreciation:** Morgan Champion story, Josiah Trombley story, Josh Hedrick story, Neal Embry, Samford
- **Organizational/Single Work — Category Winner:** Beeson website, Neal Embry, Todd Cotton, Donna Fitch and Daniel White, Samford
- **Booklets/Single Work — Certificate of Appreciation:** Beeson Divinity School Viewbook, Neal Embry, Sarah Waller and Scott Camp, Samford
- **Video — Promotional/Informational (Single Work) — Category Winner:** Experience the Beeson Difference, Neal Embry and Nathan Troost, Samford
- **Podcasts/Series — Certificate of Appreciation:** Beeson Divinity School Podcast, Neal Embry, Rob Willis and Doug Sweeney, Samford



Investigative Reporting: 1st place



Newspapers/Single Work — Category Winner

The Alabama Baptist

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

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JENNIFER DAVIS RASH
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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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.

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The crossword puzzle can be found on page 15.

Response to Rashional Thoughts

‘God glimpse’ comes from bird on a turkey hunt

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Harold Harmon had just gotten his campsite set up that morning when he got the phone call from his friend.

“He has brain cancer, but he had gotten some good news that the cancer isn’t growing right now,” said Harmon, a member of Lafayette Heights Baptist Church, just north of Opelika.

As the two talked about how grateful they were for God’s mercy in that situation, his friend began sharing with him about his brother-in-law, who had recently passed away from an illness. In his story, they had seen a different kind of mercy.

“He got on hospice, and one of the nurses was so helpful — they just fell in love with her,” Harmon said. “My friend told me that his sister said she didn’t know how they had gotten so

fortunate as to have a nurse like that at their lowest point.”

Harmon said he knew how — a God who knows exactly what you need.

‘A step ahead’

“We kept talking about how God is always a step ahead of us,” he said.

When Harmon got off the phone, he finished breakfast with his wife and started to do his morning reading — and he saw a theme coming together.

“I had a copy of The Alabama Baptist (May 1 issue) laying on top of my materials, and the way I had it folded, Rashional Thoughts was the first thing, and it said, ‘Look for God at work and seek to tell others about it.’”

The column by TAB editor Jennifer Davis Rash encouraged

readers to consider starting a journal with the “memories of all the God glimpses” in their lives so that they could look back on it and give God glory as the years went on.

Harmon said that struck him.

“I could sit here all evening and tell you things that God has done in my life,” he said.

But he said he knows there are probably many, many more he’s forgotten.

“When I get back from this camping trip, I’m thinking about trying to find a journal so I can start writing things down,” Harmon said.

One story that stands out in his mind happened in 2003 when he retired from a long career. His wife had continued working, and as they thought through their finances, he wondered if he had made the right decision.

“I went turkey hunting one day, and I had a place that I would go and sit and meditate and pray,” he said.

As Harmon sat there with his gun up on his hand and knee

waiting for a turkey, a bird landed on his gun.

“I could’ve taken my hand and reached and touched the bird,” he said.

As he looked at it, the passage from Matthew 6 came to mind, where Jesus told His followers not to worry but to trust God to take care of them.

“That Scripture came to me, and I shared it with my wife later,” he said. “God really spoke to me that day and said, ‘As long as you’re serving me, you’ll be alright.’”

Over the years since, as situations have come up, Harmon has continued to remember that bird and the faithfulness of God it represents.

“God was showing me His love through His Word and through that little bird,” he said. “That’s definitely one of the things I’m going to write down.”

Do you have a story of a “God glimpse” in your life? Email us at news@thealabamabaptist.org or send us a note to 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.



Photo courtesy of Harold Harmon
Harold Harmon, a member of Lafayette Heights Baptist Church, reads the May 1 issue of The Alabama Baptist.

Maten selected as 2025 summer intern for The Alabama Baptist

Katelyn Maten, a junior majoring in production technologies at the University of Mobile, was selected as the 2025 summer intern for The Alabama Baptist.

Maten, who first connected with The Alabama Baptist staff in 2023, previously served in a photography correspondent role.

Along with enhancing her photography and reporting

skills, Maten is learning how to operate audio, video and lighting equipment.



MATEN

“I am so grateful that God has given me this opportunity, and I can’t wait to see where He will lead me next,” she said.

Maten is a member of First Baptist Church Butler in Choctaw County. Her twin sister, Kristyn, also attends UM and is majoring in music education. (TAB)

Your Voice



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

Disciple-making and cutting flowers

By Luke Long

Ministry intern, Birmingham Metro Baptist Association

Disciple-making is a familiar term in the local church, yet it often carries varied meanings.

This lack of certainty leads to confusion about how it works in practice. But perhaps we might consider disciple-making like the practice of cutting flowers. Were someone to take a scythe — that long curved blade fitted at an angle — to a row of blooming flowers, would he cut them?

One flower at a time

Surely he would, and as a matter of fact, he would cut the flowers far more quickly than if he had cut flower by flower.

The issue is that although a scythe may harvest flowers quickly, its broad sweep can bruise or shatter a flower's delicate form.

Understandably, a gardener would not engage in such a practice because he knows that the flower's beauty is preserved not by speed, but by care — by cutting one flower at a time.

Only through deliberate, individual attention can the flower's shape and splendor be maintained.

So it is with disciple-making. When pastors and lay members alike seek to make disciples, we must give great care to the delicacy of the souls of oth-

ers, focusing on the individual as a person, not a project.

By this practice, we allow for others to mature in the faith, "growing up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ" (Eph. 4:15).

Disciple-making often happens best in close proximity in which a disciple-maker can walk alongside the one being discipled, better understanding their context and unique needs.

So may we lay down the scythe of hurried strategy and take up the scissors of personal care, tending to souls with the same intentionality and reverence a gardener shows a flower.



LONG

Letters to the Editor

Thank you for the Rashional Thoughts published in the May edition — "Look for God at work and seek to tell others about it." Well done!

May I add to it this question for all of us to consider:

"Have you started?"

Most of us thought what you wrote is a good idea, but have we started? Our common response is "I'm not prepared."

Truth is if you don't do it right now, then tomorrow you will have the same excuse. So before you

close this edition of The Alabama Baptist, take out a notebook and start a clean page. Mark it #1, the date and start writing.

Nothing to write? Here are some ways to get started:

Did you pray when you woke up this morning? Did you see a special friend today? Do you need to visit with a special friend soon?

Write it down on page 1.

If you need better material than what you are able to write down for day one, then plan to do something today that you can write about to-

morrow on page 2. Go ahead, write it down, whatever it is, now, not later. Later never seems to arrive.

Use a notebook and keep it. It almost sounds like a journal, doesn't it?

I have notebooks that were scratched in from 20 years ago, really outdated and sometimes funny, but all full of great memories. Please don't put it off. Start today.

Bob Hamm
Mobile

Trust must be built day by day. It calls for consistency. You build trust with others each time you choose integrity over image, truth over convenience or honor over personal gain.

John C. Maxwell
Author on leadership

*I'm 'bout to have a good day
(good day)*

*In every single way
God who made the universe
Knows me by my name
So it's a good day.
Excerpt of lyrics from "Good Day" by Forrest Frank*

There is a very real connection between our faith in the Lord and trusting in His timing. When you walk in unbelief, you will always resent God's timeline.

Derek Allen, pastor
FBC Tillman's Corner

Silence and stillness is one of the most neglected practices among pastors. And yet it is essential for our overall health, focus and well-being. Pastors, try to get a little every day. You might be amazed at how helpful it is to have just 10 minutes of silence and stillness.

@PastorCroft on X

"The Bible is meant to be bread for daily use, not cake for special occasions."

Unknown

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us.”

EPHESIANS 3:20

Have you ever noticed how uncomfortable we get when we don't know something?

We Google it. We guess. We fake it. We stress over it. We even spiritualize it — saying things like “God told me ...” when maybe He didn't say anything at all. (Ouch, I've been there.)

But God never asked us to know everything.

He asked us to be teachable.

Somewhere along the way, we started treating not knowing as a flaw, a weakness, a gap to be filled fast.

But what if not knowing is actually a gift?

What if it's an invitation into relationship instead of a reason to panic?

Proverbs 3:5–6 says it like this:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.”

See that? Your job is trust. His job is direction.

He's not evaluating your intelligence. He's cultivating your humility.

Sometimes I wonder if God withholds answers just long enough for us to lean in and say, “Lord, I need You.”

That's not weakness. That's wisdom.

Today, if you're feeling unsure, uncertain or stuck in the “I-don't-know-what-to-do” zone — don't rush past it. Let it be holy ground.

Tony Martin

Jackson, Mississippi



NOAH NEEDS FLOOD ASSURANCE

Lass WORDS

BY KEN LASS

The Alabama Baptist



DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

Fill up On God's Word

I have always had a weakness for all-you-can-eat buffets. It seems like the ultimate self-indulgence — all your favorite foods just sitting there in unlimited supply.

At a buffet, you don't have to wait for the cooks to prepare your meal; it's ready as soon as you arrive. And the more you eat, the better value you're getting, right?

Why have to choose between the banana pudding, the peanut butter pie or the peach cobbler when you can have all three?

As you can tell, I have a problem with self-control when it comes to buffets. I eat way too much, especially sweets. It's like all common sense, all semblance of willpower, goes right out the window when I walk into the restaurant.

Different strategy

As I got older, I found I was not working all those calories off as efficiently, and the weight gain was starting to show. Something had to be done.

The obvious answer was to stop going to buffets, of course. But that made far too much sense and was far too difficult for a person as weak in resolve as I am. No, there had to be a different strategy.

Now the first thing I do is hit the salad bar — build a huge salad full of healthy stuff then wash

it down with a big glass of water. That fills me up to the point where there's little room left to overload my plate with meats and breads and sweets. It seems to be working, at least so far.

Godly activities

The same strategy might work for you in your walk with Jesus. If you're having trouble with temptation, fill your life with godly activities. Read the Bible, develop relationships with Christian brothers and sisters, get involved with church activities, pray more.

Chances are you will find yourself so filled up on God's influence you will have less time to face sinful temptations. There is an old saying that you are who you hang out with, and when it comes to spiritual influence, I believe this is especially true.

Getting to know Jesus and His followers better is the salad bar to your buffet. He's the good stuff. The peanut butter pie of sin is tempting. Just don't save room for it.

MEET THE AUTHOR

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

3 stories you should know

Forestdale's Westwood Baptist Church sells building, relocates

Westwood Baptist Church in Forestdale recently sold its property and relocated to a temporary location in the area.

Founded in 1947, attendance had declined in recent years.

"When the Lord brought us an offer from a growing church who desperately needed the space, we voted overwhelmingly to sell and relocate," said pastor Steve Potts.

Westwood members voted to sell March 2, celebrated a homecoming service May 4 and then held their final service in the building May 11.

Love City Church (formerly All Nations Church) in Fairfield purchased the property. Bishop Jonathan Woods is senior pastor.

Westwood will meet in the fam-

ily life center of Crumly Chapel Methodist Church in Birmingham for the time being.

"Our first Sunday in our new temporary location was a true blessing," Potts told The Alabama Baptist. "We filled the parking lot and had to park cars on the grass. We needed to add chairs to the worship area in the gym where we are meeting. We had a visitor who had never been with us before.

"I don't know how everything will unfold in the months ahead, but the Lord is faithful to His people," Potts said. "Sometimes we need to let go of those things we took for granted so that we will learn to trust God more deeply and serve Him more courageously." (The Alabama Baptist)

Some Cuban believers still persecuted for faith

The repression of freedom of religion in Cuba continues, according to a new report.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide documented 624 separate cases in 2024 of attacks on freedom of religion or belief. Most of those cases involved multiple violations of faith freedom, bringing the total number to 1,898.

Violations include arbitrary detention, intrusive surveillance, repeat interrogations, threats, harassment. In the case of some children, they also involved physical and verbal abuse at school because of students' religious beliefs.

"The Cuban government has continued to use oppressive measures to exert control over the population in a crackdown that has been ongoing since 2021," the organization stated. (Baptist Standard)

New law regulating vapes being challenged

Having just gone into effect May 1, Alabama's new law regulating vapes and electronic nicotine devices is being challenged in federal court by the convenience store and gas station industry.

The new law prohibits the sale of vape products outside of vape stores and specialty shops, except for a select few products authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Severe penalties, up to \$20,000 in fines or license revocation, are established for retailers who violate the new regulations.

A lawsuit against the Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control Board — the regulating authority under the new law — was filed recently on their behalf in the U.S. District Court Middle Alabama Northern Division. (Alabama Daily News)

Persecuted church

12 Christians killed in Nigeria due to land, religious disputes, locals say

ABUJA, Nigeria — Two Christians farmers were slain May 7 in an area of Nigeria where 10 others were killed the previous month.

The recent deaths were in the Otabi-Alpa village of Nigeria's Benue state, a local government council member told Christian Daily International-Morning Star News. On April 13, 10 Christians in the area were killed, residents report.

Christian leaders in Nigeria believe Muslim Fulani herdsman allegedly responsible for the killings seek to take properties of Christians and to impose Islam, the news outlet states.

Nigeria has led the world in the number of Christians killed for their faith. It ranks No. 7 on Open Doors' 2025 World Watch List of the 50 places most difficult to be a Christian.

Villagers in India beat, threaten, expel Christian families

NEW DELHI, India — Approximately 45 individuals from 10 Christian families were expelled April 24 from Durandbha village in India's Chhattisgarh state, allegedly because they would not renounce their faith in Jesus.

Morning Star News reported the Christians were summoned to a village meeting where they were physically attacked and threatened with death.

The Christians fled to forests and hills until they found refuge in a church in Chintalnar, which is 11 miles away. Villagers then searched Christian homes for Bibles, bank doc-

uments and ration cards and burned the items.

On April 26, police escorted Christians to a government hospital for medical treatment and advised them against returning quickly to their village. Police warned assailants of legal action for further offenses, Bechem said.

A similar situation occurred April 12 in Karigundam village, in which an estimated 2,000 villagers demanded that 15 Christian families renounce their faith. Seven families buckled under fear, a local Christian leader told Morning Star. The other eight families were expelled.

India is No. 11 on Open Doors' 2025 World Watch List of the 50 places most difficult to be a Christian.



commons.wikimedia.org

Alabama news



Photo courtesy of Scotty Wallace

ALABAMA CRENSHAW ASSOCIATION

► **Scotty Wallace** is the new pastor of **Joquin Baptist Church, Goshen**. Previously he served for more than eight years as pastor of Ansley Baptist Church, Troy. He and his wife, Sara, have four children.

COFFEE ASSOCIATION

► **Alberton Baptist Church, Kinston**, will host Vacation Bible School June 22–27, Sunday 5–7:30 p.m. and Monday through Friday 6–8:30 p.m. This year's theme is Camp Firelight — A Summer Camp Adventure with God. All ages are invited, including youth. Will Jordan, the pastor, will teach an adult class. For more information and to register, call 334-804-2155.

COLBERT LAUDERDALE ASSOCIATION

► **Rodney Shewbart** is the new senior pastor of **Underwood Baptist Church, Florence**. He has been serving as the church's interim pastor and also campus pastor at Shoals Christian School, Florence. Shewbart earned a bachelor's



SHEWBART

degree in business administration from the University of North Alabama, Florence, and master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from New Orleans Seminary. He and his wife, Brandi, have two children.

ESCAMBIA ASSOCIATION

► **Rick Barnhart** is the new associational missionary for **Escambia Baptist Association** beginning July 1. He previously served 12 years with the State Board of Missions as director of associational missions and church planting and continues to serve as a consultant for SBOM. His years of ministry include church planting, pastoral roles for several churches and as associational missionary for Baldwin Baptist Association. Barnhart holds a doctorate of ministry from New Orleans Seminary with a focus on helping Baptist associations in rural contexts with strategic planning. He and his wife, Marcy, have three adult children and two grandchildren.



BARNHART

SHELBY ASSOCIATION

► **Andrew Webb** is the new serve pastor of **Liberty Baptist Church, Chelsea**. Most recently, he served as the associate pastor of teaching and discipleship at Verde Valley Christian

Church, Cottonwood, Arizona. He holds a bachelor's degree in biblical studies from Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, Illinois, and a master's degree in biblical and theological studies from Western Seminary, Portland, Oregon. Webb and his wife, Shea, have one child and another on the way. Tim Cox is pastor.



WEBB

TUSCALOOSA ASSOCIATION

► **John Brooks** is the new pastor of **Five Points Baptist Church, Northport**. He has been serving as the church's student pastor since 2019 and most recently as interim pastor. He earned a master of divinity degree from Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia. Brooks and his wife, Amy, have two twin daughters.



Photo courtesy of John Brooks

EDITOR'S NOTE — Please send news items to news@thealabamabaptist.org. Submissions that include complete details, a high resolution photo and name and phone number of a contact person at your church are greatly appreciated.

OBITUARIES

MATT ALDRIDGE

Matt Aldridge, former NextGen/student pastor at Vaughn Forest Church in Montgomery, died May 27. He was 28.



ALDRIDGE

A graduate of Southside High School, Aldridge studied history and religious studies at the University of North Alabama. Before serving at Vaughn Forest, he served as youth pastor at Cherry Street Baptist Church, Attalla, and North Glencoe Baptist Church. He also found joy and purpose creating music with his band, The Theikos Exchange.

Aldridge is survived by his wife, Jessie.

CHARLES GODWIN

Charles Godwin, a longtime Alabama Baptist pastor and associational director of missions, died May 9. He was 94.

A native of Clanton, Godwin earned a bachelor's degree at Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham and a master



GODWIN

of divinity degree from Southern Seminary.

During his years of ministry, he served as pastor of churches in Notasulga, Muscle Shoals, Huntsville and Cullman.

He also served churches in Kentucky and Ohio and as DOM for Etowah Baptist Association.

Godwin is survived by his wife of more than 70 years, Sue; sons, Mark and Scott; daughter, Tara; and one grandson.

JOHN HERNDON

John Herndon, an Alabama Baptist pastor and missionary to Portugal, died May 17. He was 93.

A native of Greene County, Herndon attended Howard College in Birmingham (now Samford University) and Southern Seminary.

Herndon accepted his first pastorate at Sumterville Baptist Church, Epes, in 1951, then went on to serve at Berry Baptist Church and First Baptist Church Vernon. In 1964, he and his wife, Norma, and their three children sailed for Lisbon, Portugal, to serve as missionaries with the Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board).

Herndon served as general secretary and executive secretary of the Portuguese Baptist Convention and started a Baptist radio program and a Baptist book store. He also directed a summer camp, started a church and served as its pastor.

In 1977, the family relocated to the Azores Island because of a political revolution in Portugal, and Herndon served as pastor of Azorean Baptist Church, which served U.S. military families. He also established a radio station there.

The Herndons returned to the U.S. in 1982, and he served churches in Virginia until he retired in 1995. He served as interim pastor several times in Alabama, and he and his wife moved to Huntsville in 2005. At the time of his death, Herndon was a member of Mount Zion Baptist Church.

Herndon is preceded in death by his wife of 68 years and infant son Charles Michael. He is survived by his daughters, Debbie and Susan; son, Mark; nine grandchildren; and 15 great-grandchildren.



HERNDON

College students spend summer around the world

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Ben Edfeldt said there's something powerful about being in the room with a group of students "who have committed part or all of their summer to take the gospel to the nations."

Currently, about 90 college students are serving in 10 states and 17 countries as part of One Mission Students, Alabama Baptists' collegiate summer missions program.

In April, Edfeldt was there when they commissioned that massive group during OMS Weekend.

"It's a really powerful weekend that is reflective of six months of prayer, preparation and affirmation from friends, staff and parents," said Edfeldt, director of the office of collegiate and student ministries for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Different contexts

During the weekend, students learn about culture, how to travel wisely and how to share the gospel in different contexts. The weekend ends with a commissioning service that is "a beautiful picture of Alabama Baptists coming together to send as many students as they can into the world," Edfeldt said.

In the months prior to that, SBOM and Baptist Campus Ministries staff were helping them pray and prepare to go. "We want them to weigh

and consider the cost of going," Edfeldt said.

Chris Mills, SBOM student missions mobilizer, said considering the cost was especially important this summer as two-thirds of the students are serving internationally and a "significant number" of those are in countries that are difficult to reach with the gospel.

"That's one of the most exciting things for me this year," he said. "We have a great class of students this summer, and I'm excited to see how the Lord will use them and how their lives will be impacted."

Some students serving this year are wrestling with whether God might be calling them to do missions long term, Mills said.

Some of them are also serving this summer alongside former OMS students who are now living on the missions field doing some type of long-term work.

"It's special for a student to see a recent graduate serving — that allows those students to really wrestle with, 'OK, I could do this,'" Mills said. "These kinds of relationships often also morph into partnerships down the road."

Another partnership he's celebrating this year is a new one with the collegiate ministries of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware. Four of the students sent out through OMS are from Maryland.

"One is serving at a camp in Alabama, one with a mis-



Photo by Doug Rogers/Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

Students gather at OMS Weekend April 11-12 at Cropwell Baptist Church in Pell City. They learned about culture, how to travel wisely and how to share the gospel in different contexts.

sions center in Houston, one in South Asia and one in Luxembourg," Mills said.

He said that as part of the partnership, BCMD collegiate ministry leaders asked if they could send students through OMS since Alabama already has a pipeline in place to vet and train students.

"They joined us at OMS Weekend also," Mills said.

Edfeldt said another training ground for some of the Alabama students this year was Beach Reach, a spring break evangelism project

in Panama City Beach.

"Six teams went to Beach Reach," he said. "It's such a strategic week for our campuses as they train their students and give them an opportunity to share the gospel in really intense environments."

Training ground

During that week, BCM students give van rides to students who are sometimes "at their lowest moments" and need a way to get safely back to their hotels.

"There's something really

powerful about watching our students pray for and prepare and go and sit on the van with spring breakers who are there for different reasons and point them to the grace and mercy of the Lord," Edfeldt said.

It's a catalytic experience for many of them, he said, and often afterward students feel that they can share the gospel more freely back on their own campus or anywhere.

"It's a powerful, powerful trip for our campus ministries," Edfeldt said.

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'Complete turnaround'

His Place and Hosanna Home offers 'bigger purpose' for those overcoming addictions

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Dakota Smith's story starts in a way many people in Alabama might find familiar. His grandfather was a Southern Baptist pastor. At age 8, he made a decision at Vacation Bible School to follow Jesus.

But in college, family problems led to drinking and depression. He started missing class, and his grades slipped.

After his parents divorced, they filed for bankruptcy and lost their farm, their homes and their vehicles.

"I was on my own and had to fend for myself," Smith said. "I started working entry level jobs and started smoking marijuana. I just felt like I didn't have a lot going for me, and I stopped trying. I became homeless."

From there, it was a "slippery slope," he said, and one day he was pulled over by the police and arrested when they found hard drugs in his car. After a brief stint in jail and then rehab, someone recommended

he try His Place, a one-year residential program in Opelika founded in 1986 by evangelist Rick Hagans and his wife, Kim. The program aims to help men overcome addiction and build a relationship with God. A companion ministry for women, Hosanna Home, opened in 1996.

New opportunities

Smith decided giving His Place a call was the best plan he had — and on May 3, he graduated from the program with 16 other men and three women from Hosanna Home.

"I've been sober for a little over a year," he said. "I've really seen a complete turnaround in my life."

Hagans said in the past, many residents would be from a really rough background. It's not that way anymore. Many of the His Place and Hosanna Home residents attended church in childhood, then "began to experiment with drugs, and the experimentation took them further and faster than years ago," he said.

They also often begin using drugs sooner — as young as 12 or 13.



Photo courtesy of Rick Hagans

Evangelist Rick Hagans (front) stands with some of the men who graduated from His Place on May 3. The one-year residential program in Opelika was founded in 1986 by Rick and his wife, Kim.

That's Blayden Woodall's story.

"I started doing drugs and alcohol when I was probably around 13," he said. "When people closest to me started dying, I started doing harder drugs."

When he was arrested on drug charges, a cellmate recommended he read the Bible, and something clicked.

He went to His Place and "fell in love with it."

"It's gotten me to a better relationship with God and opened up opportunities for me," he said. "I hate the steps it took me to get here, but I love where I am. I know it's for a bigger purpose."

For more information about His Place and Hosanna Home, visit harvestevangelism.org.

Hagans loves visiting churches and sharing stories of how God is working. He doesn't sugarcoat it — it's hard work to overcome addiction.

"We buried 12 men and women last year who overdosed, committed suicide or were murdered," he said.

But there are many stories of those who

make it. Seven men who have come through His Place are now pastors. And many of the women who come through Hosanna Home see God at work in their lives in a big way too — like Shanita Wright, who graduated May 3.

During her teenage years, Wright followed the influences around her down a darker and darker path. She ended up at Hosanna Home and is now two years sober. "Within my time here, God has restored my family and my health," she said.



Photo courtesy of Rick Hagans

Kim Hagans (left) and Christine Sullinger (right), Hosanna Home's office manager, celebrate with three Hosanna Home graduates in the middle.

JUGGLING A CAREER AND MINISTRY CALLING

Most Alabama Baptist pastors face joys, challenges of divided time

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

For the past 25 years, Keith Crouch has stood behind the pulpit of Belmor Baptist Church in Mooresville nearly every Sunday. And on the weekdays — at least up until he retired last year — he was also behind the wheel of a UPS truck.

“At about age 29, I was serving as a deacon and Sunday School teacher at my church, and the Lord just convicted me that I needed to do more,” Crouch said. “I felt the unmistakable call that He was calling me into the pastoral ministry.”

He didn’t have any ideas of what that would look like, but soon he heard of a need for someone to preach at Belmor Baptist while they looked for a pastor. He started filling in there, and it wasn’t long before he and Belmor — a small church that could only offer a part-time pastorate — agreed that maybe God wanted him to stay.

So during the week Crouch would deliver packages, and on Sundays he would deliver a message. He did that on repeat for nearly a quarter century.

“I’ve had people ask me, ‘Why have you not ever tried to be a full-time pastor?’ And I tell them that churches like mine need pastors too,” Crouch said.

He’s right, according to the numbers.

Bryan Blass, director of the office of LeaderCare at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said 60 to 70% of Alabama Baptist churches are led by bivocational pastors.

“When you realize that there are more than 3,000 Alabama Baptist churches, and 60 to 70% have a part-time staff, that number is staggering,” he said.

That means hundreds of men in the state are juggling a career and a min-



Keith Crouch, pastor of Belmor Baptist Church in Mooresville, takes a photo with four high school graduates his church honored June 1. Crouch has served at Belmor Baptist for 25 years, almost all of which he also was working a career at UPS.

istry calling every week, something that brings with it joys and challenges, Blass said.

► Challenge #1 — Doing member care

Andrew Brock, pastor of Kyuka Baptist Church in Attalla, said the greatest difficulty he has is caring for people who are sick or in the hospital during the week.

“Making it to those sorts of things is difficult,” said Brock, who teaches agriscience at his local high school. “I wish I could be there for people a little bit more.”

Being in two places at once

Crouch said he has also faced that struggle.

“Having people who were having a surgery that you needed to be at was challenging sometimes — I couldn’t always get off work,” he said.

► Joy #1 — Seeing members step up

But Brock said for him, even though the pastoral care element of bivocational ministry is the most challenging, it’s also the source of one of his greatest joys.

“It’s an opportunity for the church itself to pick up some of that, and my church does a great job of that,” he said. “When you have deacons and leaders in your church that will help out with that sort of thing and check on each other, the church really picks up a lot of that ministry because they help each other and minister to each other.”

Crouch agreed.

“One of the greatest joys has been teaching and equipping our people how to minister to each other and be there for each other,” he said. “They are realistic, and they know ‘he’s not full time, and he can’t always be there, so we’ve got to do what the Scriptures tell us to do.’”

Crouch said he “couldn’t ask for a

better committee of deacons,” and it’s been great to watch the whole church grow “to where if something is going on, Bro. Keith doesn’t need to be there right then.”

Kenneth Wells, pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Scottsboro, said he also was grateful to have a congregation that understood the demands of his full-time job in insurance compliance.

“Six years ago when they called me to the pastorate, I told them, ‘I have a full-time job, and I’ve signed a code of conduct that during the day, my core work hours are theirs,’” Wells said. “I asked our church, ‘If you need me, please call me at night unless it’s a major emergency.’ And they have been so respectful of my time over the years.”

► Challenge #2 — Sermon prep

Wells said another time management challenge for him as a bivocational pastor has always been finding time for sermon and Bible study preparation.

“One thing that helped me was knowing what resources were out there,” he said.

Asking trusted pastors

Many bivocational pastors haven’t attended seminary, and Wells said what he learned to do was to ask other trusted pastors what books and commentaries they use and let them mentor him in that.

He said other than that, discipline is a big factor in getting his sermon prep done.

“There are days when you get off work that you just want to eat and watch the Braves, but you need to prepare because Wednesday’s coming or Sunday’s coming,” Wells said.

He said he has to discipline himself to get into “digging” mode.

“It’s hard to make yourself find

the time, but once I get in that mode, I’m into it,” he said. “I love discovering things that help the congregation with their spiritual walk. It just takes discipline to get started.”

Crouch said finding time to prepare has been a challenge for him over the years too, especially at the beginning of his ministry when he had young children.

‘A little bit every day’

“For me, the best thing has been to study a little bit every day; don’t wait until the weekend and try to put it all together,” he said.

Crouch said when he was working at UPS, he would stay up a little later on Tuesday and Thursday nights and study, and by Thursday evening he would have most of his sermon together.

“I did that purposely because I wanted my Friday and Saturday to be available for my family. I didn’t want my weekend to be trying to cram a bunch of prep in,” he said. “I don’t think you do the Scripture justice when you do that, but also I think it robs you of time with your family.”

Brock said one thing he has done to maximize his time is to listen to commentaries and podcasts while he’s commuting to and from work.

“There’s a lot of multitasking in bivocational ministry, and I learned a few years ago that I could get a little bit more creative and listen while I’m driving,” he said.

► Joy #2 — Seeing members grow

Wells said even though finding time for prep is difficult, the joy of seeing church members grow spiritually is worth it.

“It is wonderful seeing prayers answered, seeing God do things within our congregation and watching people grow in their faith,” he said.

Crouch agreed.

“Seeing our people grow in their knowledge of Scripture and theology and having a passion for it is a joy,” he said. “I love seeing people grow to that point where they enjoy that and have a hunger to learn. Those things have really been a joy over the years and continue to be a joy.”

► Challenge #3 — Having community

Crouch said his church is “really like a

family,” and he’s enjoyed the friendships he has been able to have in his church over the years. He called it a “luxury” of the small-church pastorate.

But Blass said there’s something he continually hears from bivocational pastors — they miss connecting with other pastors and ministers because their work schedules won’t allow it.

“They crave fellowship. It’s not that their church family doesn’t love them — they do,” Blass said. “But say the associational director of missions has a Monday meeting for pastors — bivocational pastors can’t go because they’re working.”

He said he’s working to offer more opportunities for those connections, like the Bivocational Ministers/Spouse Retreat, which happened in February and will soon be scheduled again for 2026.

Wells is also president of the Alabama Baptist Bivocational Ministers association, which is working to find ways to connect bivocational pastors around the state.

“We’re trying to get more guys involved, to let them know there are more resources out there,” he said. “Sometimes, as a bivocational pastor, you feel like you’re on an island.”

► Joy #3 — Being in the community

But Blass said even though that’s a challenge, there’s a benefit too that comes with the bivocational setup. In their secular jobs, pastors are getting to know members of the community in ways they otherwise wouldn’t.

“They’re getting to rub shoulders with some people who will

never walk in a church, build relationships with them and then say, ‘Come to my church where I pastor,’” Blass said.

“They have their finger on the pulse of what’s going on in their community because they’re in their community. The people around them know, ‘That guy’s not afraid to roll his sleeves up and work with me.’”

Crouch said for him, when it comes to bivocational ministry, the joys definitely outweigh the challenges.

“I’m a cup-half-full kind of guy when it comes to bivocational ministry,” he said. “It’s what the Lord has called me to do, and there’s never more joy than being in the center of where God wants you to be.”



Craig Carlisle (right), director of missions for Etowah Baptist Association, attends a note burning celebration earlier this year at Kyuka Baptist Church in support of the congregation and Pastor Andrew Brock (left).

Filling bivocational positions is ‘one of the greatest needs’

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Many Alabama Baptist churches can afford part-time staff members, but Craig Carlisle said he has few resumés to offer churches in need of called and qualified ministers.

“The issue is not just for bivocational pastors; it’s bivocational worship pastors and student pastors too,” said Carlisle, director of missions for Etowah Baptist Association and president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

He said someone recently came to his office from an area church and said they were

looking to call a part-time minister of music and youth.

“The cupboard is bare for me to be able to recommend people to those positions,” Carlisle said.

A crisis on hand

What Alabama Baptists have on their hands is a crisis, he said.

“One of the challenges we face is raising up local bivocational ministers,” Carlisle said.

By that he means men who have careers that can support them but who also feel a call to

serve a small church near them that can’t afford a full-time minister. About 60 to 70% of Alabama Baptist churches fall into that category.

For younger men who might be feeling a call into the ministry, Carlisle recommends considering a degree in a secular field that could give them a stable career while they serve a smaller church.

For men who are further along in their career, he suggested considering a new calling that wouldn’t pull them away from their work.

“We need to call out newer but not necessarily younger pastors,” Carlisle

said. “It’s not necessarily an age thing — churches are crying out for pastors, period. These men may be in their 50s or early 60s who might be willing to go serve these churches.”

He also suggested that the staff of larger churches disciple men to follow the call of God to smaller churches who need them.

“It’s one of the greatest needs we have today,” Carlisle said. “If we don’t see an uptick in some bivocational ministry, a lot of churches will close.”

For more information, visit callingoutthecalledal.org and see page 14, under the Upcoming Events section.

‘Full circle’

Camp speaker Logan Meek desires ‘to share the gospel with people of all ages’

By Leann Callaway
The Alabama Baptist

As Logan Meek prepares to speak at camps this summer, including two Student Life Kids camps at Shocco Springs Conference Center in Talladega, he desires to help children connect with the gospel in fun and memorable ways.

Meek enjoys using visual illustrations to coordinate with Bible lessons — like adding a few extra ingredients to a birthday cake to show how sin “messed everything up.”

Suddenly the cake isn’t as appealing with toppings like ketchup, mustard and salad dressing, Meek said, adding he uses it as an opportunity to explain that, just like the cake was ruined, so is the ugliness of sin.

In addition to his speaking ministry, Meek also is young adults and college pastor at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky. Meek said he hopes audiences of all ages connect with the gospel on a personal level as he speaks at camps, retreats and ministry events around the country.

For Meek, the opportunity to minister full-time at his home church has brought him “full circle.”

“I definitely see the value of kids and youth ministry, and I’m grateful for the impact it had in my life,” Meek said. “When I got out of college I moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma, to teach in a public school with a program called ‘Teach For America.’ God used that time in my life to really help me own my faith. ... I got connected with a great church that helped me find community and purpose — that’s one of the reasons



Submitted photo
Logan Meek travels around the country speaking in a variety of settings including two camps at Shocco Springs this summer. He also serves as young adults and college pastor at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington, Kentucky.

I’m so passionate about college and young adult ministry.

“I was teaching in a sixth grade classroom in Tulsa Public Schools, and I was very involved in my church,” Meek recalled. “I remember having a moment where I realized in myself that my favorite part of my week was serving at church, and I began to pray, ‘God if You would allow me to use my job to serve You, I would say yes.’”

Unashamed

At the end of summer 2014, Meek joined Student Life’s full-time ministry team.

“God has been teaching me more and more to speak, act and live without being concerned about what other people might think,” Meek said. “We have no reason to be ashamed because God has adopted us as His children through Christ.

“I am always looking for new ideas; it’s such a blessing to be able to learn from others.”

While speaking at events across the country, Meek enjoys spending time off stage connecting with ministry leaders.

“I love to watch when leaders from a church have breakthrough moments with the students or kids from their church,” Meek said. “It’s an honor to be part of what God is doing in those moments. It’s also really a wonderful thing to be part of the rich heritage of many camps, conference centers or churches.

“While I was serving as a camp pastor last summer, one of the church groups invited me to join them for their morning quiet time. Starting with the leaders, they went around the circle and talked about how they all were learning what it looks like to have hope in difficult

situations. I was so encouraged to hear that even in the middle of these difficult things, they were all choosing to seek God and trust Him more.

“I’ve seen over and over how God uses camp in our lives to help us reconnect to Him. I am always reminded that it is God working in our lives that really matters.”

Today, as Meek travels around the country speaking in a variety of settings, he realizes the desperation, hurt and pain many students are struggling with and desires to pour into them with the gospel message.

“I enjoy the opportunity to share the gospel with people of all ages,” he said. “Students today are desperate for something real, and we have a calling that is urgent. I think about Romans 10:14, and it inspires me to just do my best to do something. God can use anyone to share the gospel, and He can use anyone to impact the life of a teenager or a kid.”

Creative and fresh ways

“I think it’s too often that people can falsely believe that a certain ‘cool factor’ is needed to be a difference-maker for a student. That’s just not true. I see students responding to the truth of the gospel.”

So many are searching for solutions to anxiety and loneliness, Meek acknowledged.

“The answer to all of these things at every stage of our lives is found in the truth of the good news of Jesus. Romans 1:16 reminds us that the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of all who would believe. I love to find creative and fresh ways to share that truth with anyone who will listen.”

“How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?”

Romans 10:14

Dynamic duo spreading God's Word with humor

By Leann Callaway
The Alabama Baptist

When Christian illusionists David and Kylie Knight want to quickly capture an audience's attention, they have been known to make it "snow" inside or cause objects to disappear.

But there is a method to their madness.

By using over-the-top object lessons, the husband-and-wife team entertains audiences in a variety of settings while sharing the gospel with all ages.

Illusions and stunts

With a distinctive blend of humor, illusions and stunts to teach valuable lessons, the Knights have become popular entertainers for sports award nights, children's programs, youth events, retreats and church services.

The Knights began their ministry in 2007 and have

since had opportunities to travel around the world and reach audiences with the gospel message.

Prior to that, the Knights worked as the backstage crew for one of the top touring secular illusion shows in the country and doing some local shows on their own.

"One night, we were performing our own show at Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia," Knight recalled.

"While we were backstage waiting to go on, God showed me a vision of how to use all that we had learned about performing high-quality, family-friendly shows ... and bringing it to the church to help them draw crowds and spread God's Word."

Kylie grew up in Melbourne, Australia, and was raised in a Christian home, but David admitted he dabbled with Christianity



Submitted photo
With a distinctive blend of humor, illusions and stunts to teach valuable lessons, David and Kylie Knight have become popular entertainers for special events, programs and services.

as a child and did not really come to faith until he was 19. At that time, he attended an event featuring Christian illusionist André Kole, who helped bring the gospel to life for him.

"André was an illusionist and an inventor of illusions," Knight said. "He was the creative consultant to Da-

vid Copperfield for many years. However, André was also a committed Christian and evangelist who used his shows to share the gospel. It was at one of those shows that I accepted Christ. Following that show, I was privileged to travel with André and his team."

Knight not only learned

about performing illusions, but also was discipled and grew in his faith.

After their shows, the Knights often hear testimonies of lives being transformed for God's glory.

One of those involved a Buddhist father who refused to go into a church but came to see their show to support his son at a sports awards night.

"Realizing that he was made in God's image, he approached the pastor afterward to say, 'What's my next step?'"

In their shows, the Knights remind audiences of God's divine power, plan and purpose for their lives.

"We love that God has given us a message that everyone needs to hear," he said. "This world is filled with conflicting ideas on our identity [so] we need to be reminded about Who created us and why He did."



SENIOR ADULT LEADERSHIP TRAINING

NORTH • TUESDAY, AUGUST 19
MOUNT CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH, ALBERTVILLE
SOUTH • THURSDAY, AUGUST 21
HERITAGE BAPTIST CHURCH, MONTGOMERY

SCHEDULE FOR BOTH EVENTS-9:15 AM-2:45 PM
(CHECK-IN BEGINS AT 8:30 AM.)

SALT (Senior Adult Leadership Training) is a one-day event for senior adult ministers, ministry leaders, and committee/team/council members. SESSION TOPICS: **Living Out the Gospel** – Rob Jackson, State Board of Missions, and **Setting the Pace in Ministry Life** – Bryan Blass, State Board of Missions.

EVENT IS FREE, WHICH INCLUDES BREAKFAST SNACKS AND LUNCH.

Registration required. Deadline for registration is Friday, August 15. To register or for more information, visit alsbom.org/salt or contact Frank Jones at 334-613-2221 or fjones@alsbom.org.

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

Senior adults encouraged not to be afraid in fearful age

By Michael J. Brooks
The Alabama Baptist

Seniors recently received encouragement through worship and messages at the Senior Adult Evangelism Conference at First Baptist Church Pelham.

Vocalist Guy Penrod told the audience how important they are, having the ability to show the current generation where the “potholes” are.

“You’ve seen the faithfulness of God, and your voice is important,” he said during the May 5 event. “I think we need to get ‘loud and proud’ for our Savior!”

Penrod was lead singer for The Gaither Vocal Band for 14 years, leaving in 2009 to launch a solo career. He performed two mini-concerts during the conference, and led the seniors to join him in singing several familiar hymns.

Rob Jackson, director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions office of evangelism and revitalization, noted the conference began in 2001 with the name “Re-vive,” but “Encourage” was chosen this year since “we want everyone who attends to be inspired and encouraged and to finish the race well.”

Achilles heel

SBOM Executive Director Rick Lance was featured speaker, noting he doesn’t get many invitations to do youth revivals or camps anymore since he is among the 20% of Americans 60 or older.

“We need to pray for the new generation to have good jobs and to work hard and pay for our Social Security!” he quipped.

Lance said he sees the



Photo by Doug Rogers/Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

Guy Penrod, former lead singer for The Gaither Vocal Band for 14 years, performs a mini-concert during the conference and asks the attendees to join him in singing several familiar hymns.

“Achilles heel” of many Americans as fear.

“We live in fearful times and daily events unnerve us,” he explained. “But a verse I find helpful ... is Luke 12:32. Jesus told us not to be afraid, then He gave us three pictures of God that teach us why.”

Lance noted Jesus addressed His “little flock,” reminding His followers that He was the shepherd and protector of the sheep.

Recalling a trip to Israel in 1994, Lance said

he met and quizzed a local shepherd.

“I told him I’d always heard shepherds knew their sheep by name,” Lance said. “Then he began to call names to the sheep, and I saw their heads bobbing up in response. Then I told him I’d always heard that sheep followed the shepherd’s voice. He called to the flock, and they all came running for treats. What I’d always heard about shepherds was real ... We hear His voice, and He knows our names.”

Lance also said the Father provides.

“We have a real ‘father hunger’ in America,” Lance

acknowledged. “There are so many absentee dads, and so many children who don’t grow up with a father. But we know our Heavenly Father will never turn away from His children.

“He is the ideal father, and He provides salvation, security, sustenance and strength.”

Finally, Lance noted believers have a King who empowers.

“How striking that Jesus said our King gives away His Kingdom.

“What other king has given his kingdom to others?” Lance asked.

“Christ invites us to be part of His royal family and then invites us to be part of His work in the world. We see glimpses of Kingdom glory now, but one day we’ll see the final glory of God’s Kingdom on earth.”

Lance told of a former parishioner, whom he remembered as a strong personality, who lay dying in the hospital. She asked him to visit.

“She asked me to conduct her funeral and told me how she was afraid of dying,” Lance recounted. “I tried to encourage her, and reminded her that Jesus promised to be with us in death and lead us to heaven. We don’t need to fear in life or in death.”



Called 2025

For a teenager or young adult, the call to ministry can seem like the most complex decision to wade through. That’s why the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions created the Called conference.

The conference, which will be held Aug. 2 at Samford University, is a one-day event designed to help young men and women, high school through college, who are considering the life-

changing call to ministry.

Called 2025 will feature powerful mainstage talks and breakout sessions led by people who’ve walked the ministry path themselves.

They’ll share real stories, wisdom and tips to inspire and guide students as they step into their own journey.

The cost for the conference is \$30. Lunch will be provided. For more information or to register, visit bcmink.org/called.

Calling Out the Called Sunday set for Aug. 10

One of our most urgent tasks is to help equip those He has called to take up the mantle of leadership in our churches. Bivocational, co-vocational and full-time pastors, as well as other church ministerial staff, are needed throughout the state. Your State Board of Missions desires to come alongside your church and foster those He has called through the Calling Out the Called initiative.

Sunday, Aug. 10, has been designated as Call-

ing Out the Called Sunday. Would you consider setting aside that day to preach, sing and teach about the importance of the call to ministry?

Resources are available to help you with this Sunday emphasis as well as the larger Calling Out the Called effort. Together we can be a part of encouraging and developing the next generation of church leaders.

For more information, visit callingoutthecalled.org.

Children’s Music Summit

It’s back — a hands-on training event for preschool and children’s music leadership to get you excited about teaching these precious children about God through music!

The Children’s Music Summit offers training for children’s choir workers and day care workers.

Discover new ways to make music time a favorite for kids. The summit will be Aug. 9, 8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. at First Baptist Church Pelham.

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

CHRISTIAN crossword

WORD search

ACROSS

1. Rather give ____s.
(Luke 11:41)

4. Crustacean.

8. Like a ____ planted by
the rivers. (Ps. 1:3)

12. Roman numeral 52.

13. Samuel answered,
____ am I. (1 Sam. 3:4)

14. Saul came after the
____. (1 Sam. 11:5)

15. Who will have all ____
to be saved.
(1 Tim. 2:4)

16. Grain. (plural)

17. How ____ble are
thy tabernacles.
(Ps. 84:1)

18. He shall give his ____
charge over thee.
(Ps. 91:11)

20. Meekness, ____ance.
(Gal. 5:23)

22. New. (prefix)

23. Mouths.

24. A cave.

27. He calls for ____
weather. (Ps. 147:18,
TLB)

31. ____ not two sparrows
sold. (Matt. 10:29)

32. Eggs. (Latin)

33. But seek not ____.
(Amos 5:5)

37. The vision of ____
the son of Amoz.
(Isa. 1:1)

40. Before (poetic).

41. And ____ brought
forth her firstborn
son. (Luke 2:7)

42. Of ____ many books
there is no end.
(Eccles. 12:12)

45. Sons of ____; Joseph,
and Benjamin.
(Gen. 35:24)

49. Belonging to
Hezekiah's mother.
(2 Kings 18:1,2)

50. Kemuel the father
of _____. (Gen. 22:21)

52. Short for Abraham.

53. Is not. (slang)

54. To be prolific.

55. The 22nd letter of the
Hebrew alphabet.

56. Loiters behind.

57. Good woman's name.

58. The sons of ____ were
sons of Belial.
(1 Sam. 2:12)

DOWN

1. ____ Mater.

2. Property right.

3. Chinese dynasty.

4. He was moved with ____
against him. (Dan. 8:7)

5. Let us ____ together.
(Isa. 1:18)

6. Nathan said to David,
thou ____ the man.
(2 Sam. 12:7)

7. Though I ____ all my
goods to feed the
poor. (1 Cor. 13:3)

8. Absalom ... had a fair
sister, whose name
was _____. (2 Sam.
13:1; alt. spelling)

9. Star of your god
____han. (Acts 7:43)

10. Great Lake.

11. Southward were
Kabzeel, and _____.
(Josh. 15:21; alt.
spelling)

19. Compass direction.

21. Historical period.

24. The fourth part of a
____ of dove's dung.
(2 Kings 6:25)

25. Form of "to be."

26. Former serviceman.

28. Me. (French)

29. Madame Peron.

30. Stadium cheer.

34. Robberies. (slang)

35. Sea eagle.

36. High-ranking officer.

37. Hear, O _____.
(Deut. 6:4)

38. Bezer, and Hod, and
_____. (1 Chron. 7:37)

39. Atomic Energy
Commission. (abbr.)

42. Out to the south
side to ____ehacrabbim.
(Josh. 15:3)

43. Solomon thrust out
____thar. (1 Kings 2:27)

44. ____ of kings.
(Rev. 17:14)

46. They that ____ the
righteous. (Ps. 34:21)

47. I command you this
day, in mount _____.
(Deut. 27:4)

48. Jacob's third son by
Leah. (Gen. 29:34)

51. Peleg ... begat _____.
(Gen. 11:18)

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ACCUSED

ACTS

ANGEL

APOSTLES

BLASPHEMY

CHOSEN

COUNCIL

COVENANT

DELIVERER

FACE

FAIRNESS

FORGIVE

HEAVEN

JESUS

LIES

MARTYR

MIRACLES

MOSES

POWER

PRIEST

RIGHT HAND

SEVEN

SIGNS

SPIRIT

STEPHEN

STONES

SYNAGOGUE

TEMPLE

VISION

WIDOWS

WISDOM

WONDERS

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

“And Stephen, full of faith and power,
did great wonders and signs among the people.”

ACTS 6:8

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Sunday School Lessons

By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Systematic Theology, University of Mobile



For June 15

GOD'S GLORY Psalm 19:1-11

In Psalm 19 we learn that God made Himself known to people through general revelation and special revelation. General revelation is God revealing Himself through creation, the human conscience and history. Psalm 19 emphasizes God's general revelation through creation.

It provides basic truths about God's existence and attributes. Special revelation manifests God's greatness to people through the inspired Word of God, the Bible. It is special because it goes beyond the foundational truths of general revelation and testifies to how a person can be saved and live in obedience to God.

Creation (1-6)

God has revealed Himself through His universe. "The heavens" refers to the sun, moon, stars and planets. The creation above continually testifies to the existence and excellencies of the Creator who made it. The truth about God is made known by "the work of His hands," an anthropomorphism illustrating God's sovereign power.

God's revelation of Himself through His creation is unceasing. "Day after day" and "night after night" declare a never-ending testimony of God's glory. The creation reveals God's eternal power, goodness, genius, kindness and faithfulness.

Even though creation does not speak audible words that can be heard, its "voice" reaches to the ends of the earth and is accessible wherever human speech is spoken. No one anywhere is without God's self-revelation through creation.

David compared the sky and outer space to a tent in which God had placed the sun as a torch, lighting up the sky above. The sun is "like a bridegroom coming from his home" — radiant, glowing and bright. The sun

"rejoices like an athlete running a course" — tireless, enduring and always advancing. God is like the noonday sun — bright and blinding in the radiance of His glory.

The glory of God is seen clearly in the sun. As it makes its daily journey across the sky, it impacts everyone and everything.

It is important to note that neither the heavens nor the sun are deified as was the case in many pagan religions. In the Bible, God alone is the Creator and Ruler of all things.

God's Word (7-11)

The scene shifts from God's world to God's Word. The sun and the skies reveal the existence and omnipotence of God, but only in the Bible does God reveal how a person can be saved and know Him personally.

"The instruction of the Lord is perfect." It is complete and sufficient, lacking nothing. It is so perfect that it can convert, transform and renew the entire inner person. "The testimony of the Lord is trustworthy." "Testimony" derives from the root meaning "to bear witness." We can be assured that the Word of God is worthy of trust and that it will impart wisdom to the gullible.

God's Word is also described as "precepts" and a "command." God governs people through His Word. His commands align with His character and result in joyful hearts and lives filled with purpose and meaning.

God's Word is pure — without filthiness, defilement or imperfections. The Bible will never pass away. God's ordinances are sure and lay out the divine standard for living a life that is pleasing to the Lord. God's Word is infinitely more desirable and valuable than anything the world can offer.

The "instruction of the Lord" warns us of the consequences of disobedience and encourages us with the rewards to be experienced by living lives of righteousness through the power of the Holy Spirit.

For June 22

GOD'S REIGN Psalm 96:1-13

This enthronement psalm recaptures for us the triumphal entry of the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem.

Thousands of people were assembled, led by hundreds of priests clothed in white linen. As the priests moved toward Jerusalem with the Ark, the sounds of rams' horns and trumpets, clashing cymbals and large numbers of lyres and harps could be heard.

God crowned His victories by planting His throne in the enemy's former citadel. David called Israel to proclaim the good news of the Lord's salvation and to tell of His glory and wondrous works among all the nations. All the families from every nation should worship the Lord and declare that God reigns.

God's Reign (1-6)

The verb "sing" implies active, verbal praise, not just silent appreciation. Nothing passionless is befitting the worship of the true and living God. There is a crescendo in the threefold repetition of the command to sing to the Lord. The whole earth is considered to be the proper choir to praise the Lord.

The "new song" in verse 1 is not simply a newly composed song. It is a call to sing about some new thing God has done. In this case, it refers to how God has placed His throne in Jerusalem.

In Revelation 5 the "new song" is about Christ's atonement on the cross, which saves people from all the nations of the earth.

As the people sing to the Lord they are to "bless His name" — or speak well of who He is and what He has done. Worshipers are to bring the good news of the reign of God to the world at large.

God alone is worthy of our wor-

ship. There were many supposed deities worshipped in the ancient world, but the greatness of the Lord puts Him in a class by Himself. So-called gods designed by fallen human hearts are not worthy of worship. They are empty frauds.

God's Majesty (7-9)

In these verses we see a call to repentance. Every people group of every nation is commanded to forsake their false gods and declare their allegiance to the Lord. Because the Lord reigns over all peoples, He is worthy of universal praise.

The Gentiles are commanded to bring an offering and to enter into the temple courts with the people of Israel and worship the only God who is King over all.

The Gentiles are to bow down before the Lord as they recognize His holy splendor. The nations of the world are to tremble in reverential awe before God as they recognize that He is overwhelming in His holiness.

God's Judgment (10-13)

The glorious proclamation that the Lord reigns is to be shared "among the nations." The peoples of the nations are to turn from their idols to the living God. We are to repent while there is time because the Lord is coming to judge all the peoples of the earth. The universal rule of the One true God is good news to those who acknowledge His reign and bow before Him in obedience.

When the earth is filled with people who gladly submit to God's rule, the curse on creation will be reversed and all of creation will rejoice.

All the world is to worship the Lord, who created it in the past, rules over it in the present and will come to judge it in the future.

*"For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols,
but the LORD made the heavens."*

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Sunday School Lessons

By Bryan D. Gill, D.Min.

Director of the Office of Faith, Learning and Vocation, Samford University



For June 15

RAHAB: A FAITH NOT HELD BACK BY FEAR **Joshua 2:1–4a, 8–14; 6:22–25**

Whether composing a song, painting a picture, carving a sculpture or writing a book, all artists must answer the same question: “Who is my audience?” It doesn’t matter if other groups of people are drawn to their art. They are focused on creating art for their specific audience.

The same goes for our faith. When our audience is God, we live a life that pleases Him. Our faith reveals the One we aim to please. Neither cultural pressures, fear of what others might think nor anything else should keep us from living a faithful life.

Today’s lesson looks at Rahab, a woman whose faith was not held back by fear.

Faith calls us to do what is right even in the face of cultural pressure. (2:1–4a)

Rahab did what was right even though it meant going against orders from her king. She sheltered the spies that Joshua sent into Jericho not because she wanted to revolt against her government, but because she feared God more.

Chapter 2 of Joshua shows us that news of God’s miraculous works in the desert had reached Jericho. Because of this, Rahab knew she must shift the object of her faith from a worldly audience to God.

Even though she faced possible persecution from her government or even death for her actions, her faith in the God of the spies superseded the cultural pressures she faced. Rahab is a good example of someone who knew her audience and had a faith that reflected her devotion.

We might not face death or persecution, but we might have to choose between caring for marginalized people groups or ignoring them in order to maintain our comfortable lifestyle. Our audience will determine our actions.

Faith acts even in the face of fear. (8–14)

Rahab made it perfectly clear that the people of Jericho feared the Israelites because of the works of God.

When we face fear, our bodies typically respond with either fight or flight actions. Recently, other responses have been added to this list, including the potential to freeze, fawn or flop.

However, as a Christian there is another response: faith. Rahab’s fear led her to faith in God, and her actions revealed her faith. She could have run away or fought the spies or several other responses.

But Hebrews 11:31 tells us, “By faith Rahab the prostitute welcomed the spies in peace and didn’t perish with those who disobeyed.” There will be fearful times when we follow God. However, our response to fear should be one of faith and actions.

When we act in faith, others benefit. (6:22–25)

Rahab had faith in God, and her courageous actions revealed her faith. We wouldn’t know her faith without her actions.

James 2:25–26 says, “In the same way, wasn’t Rahab the prostitute also justified by works in receiving the messengers and sending them out by a different route? For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.”

Rahab’s faith story is a beautiful testimony of God’s faithfulness. God spared her family when the Israelites overtook Jericho, sustained her lineage generations beyond her life and included her in the lineage of Jesus (Matt. 1:5).

Rahab’s faith benefited her own family and countless others. Your faith will benefit others as well when you stand firm amid cultural pressures and fears.

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

For June 22

DAVID: A FAITH THAT MEETS ADVERSITY HEAD-ON **1 Samuel 17:3–8, 32–37, 45–47**

David’s story is one of boldness and faith in the face of adversity. The story of David and Goliath is probably one of the most well-known stories in the Bible.

Countless books and movies have been written with this theme. Any time a sports team is the underdog, the announcers will say, “This is like David versus Goliath,” meaning the underdog is David. However, David was never the underdog.

God was with David all along, and the one to be pitied in this story was Goliath. All Goliath had on his side was his own strength. David had the power of God and the faith to prove it. Goliath never stood a chance.

Adversity provides the opportunity to display our faith. (3–8)

In our passage for today, Goliath is the champion of the Philistines, meaning he was the war hero and would fight anyone who would challenge him. First Samuel 17:3–8 gives great details on Goliath’s stature, armor and weapons.

Each of these details were meant to strike fear into the champion’s opponent. It is easy to gloss over the enormity and horrendous appearance of Goliath, especially when we’ve heard this story so many times. There isn’t enough space in this commentary to convince us of just how big and fearsome Goliath was, but it’s safe to say that he was the most terrifying figure the Israelite army had seen yet.

However, when the rest of the army saw an insurmountable opponent, David saw an opportunity to lift up the name of the Lord. None of us will face an actual giant on the battlefield. But we might face cancer or dementia or the loss of a child. And somehow these are more terrifying than an actual giant.

Yet these are opportunities for us to show our faith in a terrifying world. When we have faith in the face of adversity, the opponent doesn’t stand a chance.

Past experiences can grow our faith. (32–37)

When Saul questioned David’s ability to defeat Goliath, David recalled his previous bouts against lions and bears — two of the most terrifying and deadly animals on earth. David felt that God had prepared him to face Goliath by giving him experiences against dangerous animals.

David’s confidence in defeating Goliath didn’t come from his own ability, but in God’s faithfulness to deliver him from his opponent.

He said, “The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.”

While David had the ability and skills necessary to defeat Goliath, he knew his deliverance was from the Lord. Defeating the lion and bear proved God’s provision rather than David’s ability.

Nothing is wasted in this life. Difficult times in life are not meaningless; they build resilience in us and strengthen our faith. Whatever battle you’re facing right now is preparing you for something even bigger, and the victory will be greater as well.

In the face of adversity, faith moves us forward. (45–47)

The Israelites and Goliath were not that different; both were relying on their own strength.

The Israelites were fearful because of their lack of strength, and Goliath was overconfident because of his perceived abundance of strength. However, David, who had little strength, was led to action because of his faith.

When the Israelites saw Goliath, they froze in fear, but David moved forward in faith because God would be with him and deliver the Philistines into his hands.

The Israelites were fearful because they were relying on their own strength to defeat their opponent. David was relying on the strength of God and his faith moved him to action.

When we face adversity, we have a choice to make — either rely on our own strength or rely on God’s.

Growing soybeans to battle hunger, share faith

In rural Nigeria, Southern Baptists partnered with Nigerians to introduce a new initiative that would improve food consumption and transform communities.

The project, supported by Send Relief, aimed to empower women with the knowledge and skills to improve their families' diets and generate income. At the heart of it was soybeans, a rich source of plant-based protein, carbs and fat.

International Mission Board missionary Angel Oswood said this soybean project, which began in 2020, was started by Nigerian women who were instructors in the women's training department at a Nigerian theology college. As pastors came for training at the college, their wives attended classes as well.

"We teach them how to read, and then the ones who can read enroll in a two-year

women's program," said Oswood, who is a member of the college's training department for women.

Instructors noticed the children coming to the classes with their mothers were "malnourished and sickly," so they provided soy milk.

"The children could get more nutrients from drinking soy milk, and that's how the project started," Oswood said. "Of course, we didn't have any money to buy the soybeans, so that's where Send Relief came in to help us get the project started, and they've been continuing to help us."

Women were cooking on rocks outside, so Send Relief also provided funding to build a kitchen where students and their families could make meals.

The new kitchen offers better arrangements for food preparation and relief from the hot sun.



IMB missionary Angel Oswood (middle, left) and members of the women's program at a Nigerian theology college taste the results of their labor from the soybean project in the kitchen funded by Send Relief.

As the women learned and practiced together, they discovered the project was not just about food; it was about community transformation and sharing the gospel.

Each graduate received 22 pounds of soybeans to take back to their villages, jumpstarting a journey toward healthier eating habits.

Financial benefits also came from the soybean project. One woman sold enough beans to pay for her husband's school fees.

Bridging divides

The soybean project provided the opportunity to bridge the divide between communities often burdened

with religious tensions. Muslim women are attending the soybean trainings, and friendships are forming.

Oswood said a pastor shared about two Muslim women who came to a training and heard the gospel. The pastor requested prayer for their husbands to allow the women to continue to connect with the Christians leading the training.

An estimated 6,700 people have been touched by the project, with 600 people hearing the gospel and two Bible study groups started.

The project has also strengthened the network of local churches and empowered 418 people with training in areas like agriculture and health care.

According to Send Relief, "Children are healthier, families are stronger and communities are coming together." (International Mission Board)

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CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

Southside Baptist Church in Fayette, Alabama, (Size 200–250) is prayerfully searching for our next senior pastor. Our current pastor is retiring after 26 years of faithfulness. Please submit your resumé to: Stephen Fulmer at Sfulmer@centurytel.net.

SENIOR PASTOR

Bethel Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a full-time senior pastor. Please forward resumé to: pastorsearch@bethelpgal.com or USPS to: P.O. Box 127, Pleasant Grove, AL 35127.

LEAD PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Decherd, Tennessee, is seeking a full-time lead pastor. Access our church website at fbcdcherd.com for further information and resumé submittal.

PASTOR

Pintlala Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor. The candidate should be a self-starter, enthusiastic about the Word of God and excited for opportunity to bring new members to the church. Pintlala Baptist Church, which is located in the southwestern portion of Montgomery County, has a loving church family that is here to share the good news of Jesus Christ to serve our community (and beyond) in His love. We are genuine in our atmosphere and enjoy supporting one another. For more information, please go to: <https://pintlalabaptist.com/ministry-position-open>.

PASTOR

Elam Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a full-time pastor whose life aligns with 1 Timothy 3:1–7, a heart for seeking the lost, and helping believers grow in their faith. Located in rural Clarke County community twelve miles from Thomasville, Alabama. Send inquires/resumés to: elambaptist.ap@gmail.com or mail: 53 Elam Rd., Thomasville, AL 36784. ATTN: Search Committee.

PASTOR

Pastor or bivocational, seeking experienced, seminary trained man. Contact Douglas Kaul: 251-591-5525, or church office: 251-649-7722. Send resumé to: drkaul7100@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Fairview Baptist in Samson, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please email resumé to: fairviewbaptist.samson.al@outlook.com or via USPS to: 3159 N State Highway 87, Samson, AL 36477.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Spirit-led bivocational pastor is prayerfully sought by Turnerville Baptist Church near Mobile for

established congregation. Resumé and letter of application to Pulpit Committee at turnerville3610@bellsouth.net.

WORSHIP DIRECTOR/ MINISTER OF MUSIC

Clanton First Baptist Church is seeking a full-time worship director/minister of music. We are a growing church of around 300 in worship and enjoy a blended style of worship. Our vision for this position is to lead the worship team in our corporate worship services, direct our choir and provide insight for youth and children's music/band/choir. Inquires and resumé submissions may be directed to: justin.nelson@clantonfirstbaptist.org.

PART-TIME WORSHIP LEADER

Vincent First Baptist Church is seeking a part-time worship leader. Please contact Robbie Weems (pastor): 205-617-1277, email: weems1969@aol.com.

PART-TIME WORSHIP LEADER

Centreville Baptist Church is seeking a part-time worship leader. He or she must be prayerfully committed, biblically sound and morally faithful. As worship leader, you will be asked to lead a blended form of worship which will include choir/praise team on Sunday morning. The church provides good financial support for its staff. We are located at 74 Court Square East in Centreville, just 30 miles from Tuscaloosa and 60 miles from Birmingham. Please email resumé to: centrevillebc@bellsouth.net.

OTHER POSITIONS

RECEPTIONIST/MINISTRY ASSISTANT

First Baptist Church of Birmingham has a job opening for a receptionist/ministry assistant. Responsibilities include answering the phone and door, weekly publications, assisting the ministerial staff and communication with members. Needs to be proficient in Microsoft with experience in Adobe or other graphic design software. The position is 29 hours a week. Please email resumé to Cyndy James: cjames@fbcbbm.org.

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS/ ASSOCIATIONAL MISSION STRATEGIST

The Dale Baptist Association (Ozark, Alabama) is currently accepting resumé for a full-time director of missions/associational mission strategist. Please submit resumé to: dbasearchcommittee26@gmail.com. Resumé will be accepted through July 7.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Etowah Baptist Missions Center of Gadsden, Alabama, seeks a full-time executive director.

The executive director serves as the chief executive of the Etowah Baptist Mission Center, providing strategic leadership, operational oversight and spiritual guidance. This role is pivotal in advancing the mission, fostering community engagement and ensuring the center's programs align with its core values of faith, service and outreach. The executive director works with and under the direction of the Board of Directors. Resumé and inquiries can be submitted via email at: jobebmc@gmail.com. Visit our website for more information about the agency <http://www.etowahbaptistmissioncenter.com>. Please contact Todd Hindsman, Etowah Baptist Missions Center Board Chairman, 256-490-8391.

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SPECIAL EVENTS

WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

A Weekend with Rosaria Butterfield is a women-only conference hosted by Lakeview Baptist Church in Auburn, Alabama on Aug. 1–2. Heather Payne, formerly of Point of Grace, will lead



worship. Eventbrite tickets and information available via this QR code. Early bird pricing ends June 15.



Unsplash.com

'Stop the Scroll': Mental health and social media

A bill proposed in the U.S. Senate aims to inform social media users of the negative mental health impacts that can come from using the platforms.

The bipartisan Stop the Scroll Act was reintroduced this year by Sen. Katie Britt, R-Alabama, and Sen. John Fetterman, D-Pennsylvania. The legislation, which did not advance during last year's session, would require mental health warning labels on social media platforms.

"Equipped with the knowledge of the dangers and empowered with the resources to address it, this simple solution will help parents and kids thrive," Britt said in a statement.

The warning would pop up when a user opened a social media app. The user

would need to acknowledge the mental health warning before proceeding to access the platform. The label would also have to include a way for people to learn about available mental health resources.

Warning labels

The former U.S. surgeon general called on Congress last year to require warning labels on social media, citing the mental health crisis among young people.

Fetterman has been open about his own mental health struggles.

"As a Senator, but more importantly, as a dad to three young kids, I feel a duty to address how dangerous unchecked social media use can be for our mental health," Fetterman said in a statement. (Alabama Daily News)

Event discusses child abuse prevention at SBC annual meeting

More than 45 million online images of childhood sexual abuse were reported by tech companies in 2019.

That's more than double the reports the previous year, and up from 3,000 a decade before, the New York Times wrote in 2019.

Pornography is a major driver of childhood sexual abuse, according to the National Center on Sexual

Exploitation, adversely impacting all within its path.

Those in attendance at "Safeguarding the Next Generation," a discussion held June 9, at the 2025 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting in Dallas, learned about the various faces of childhood sexual abuse and how they can join other Christians in its prevention. (Baptist Press)

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Tragic story

By Thom S. Rainer
Mississippi's The Baptist Record

First person: The phases of a pastor firing

EDITOR'S NOTE: First, some pastors are fired for moral failure. This article does not address that category of firing. Second, this article makes some church members the bad guys. I want to be clear that they are the exception and not the rule. Third, I realize that each firing has its unique characteristics. What you will read is a typical pattern, not a fixed sequence of events for every dismissal. This story was written by Thom S. Rainer and originally published by the Baptist Record. Rainer is founder and CEO of Church Answers.

This article reflects on seven phases of the firing of a pastor. I have worked with countless pastors who shared their stories with me. These phases are common in many of them. Also, I will use a recent conversation to provide a real narrative of a real pastor in a real church. I made some slight adjustments to protect the identities.

The following is the anatomy of the firing of a pastor:

Phase 1: The pastor made a decision a power broker did not like.

This phase can begin with an individual or with a small group. It can be cumulative decisions or one decision. The church I'm using as my case study began with one person who had significant influence. The pastor declined to recommend the power broker's family member for an open ministry position.

Phase 2: The power broker forms a negative coalition against the pastor.

At this point, the pastor has no idea the power broker is working against him. The broker never meets with the pastor. Instead, he



Photo courtesy of Baptist Record

goes directly to the personnel committee. It is a strategic move by the power broker. He has considerable influence over five of the seven members. The other two are weak and will not question the. Also, the personnel committee acts as the pastor's supervisor.

Phase 3: The negative coalition gathers "fake facts" against the pastor.

The power broker never mentions the issue of his family member not being recommended for the worship minister position. Instead, he leads several of the members of the personnel committee to create a false narrative about the pastor. "He didn't visit Jane in the hospital when she had surgery." "He spoke rudely to Marion." "He made some decisions where he did not have authority."

Phase 4: The negative coalition asks to meet with the pastor.

The pastor is caught off guard by the requested and unscheduled meeting with the personnel

committee. The pastor contacted me (Thom) to ask if he should be worried. I told him that I was concerned and that he should be prepared even though he couldn't think of any reason why there would be a problem. The expressions and body language of the personnel committee immediately communicated a bad situation to the pastor when he came to the meeting, especially since he thought most of them were his friends.

Phase 5: The negative coalition presents the concerns to the pastor and asks for his resignation.

All of the concerns were false and prefaced with these three cowardly words, "People are saying." The pastor's first thought is to fight the charges, but the power broker makes a sinister comment without explanation, "If you do not resign, your family will suffer." The pastor accepts the four months of offered severance and signs a non-disclosure agreement. If he says anything

negative about the church, he will lose his severance.

Phase 6: The pastor announces his resignation the following Sunday during the worship service.

The NDA prevented him from saying anything other than that the dismissal was not due to moral failure. The church is stunned. The absence of any explanation causes the rumor mill to create multiple false narratives.

Phase 7: No one comes to the pastor's defense.

This church is congregational in its polity. The personnel committee does not have the authority to fire a pastor without a congregational vote. Such is the reason the personnel committee demanded his resignation. Any member of the church could have met with the personnel committee and demanded transparency. But no one was willing to rock the boat. Pastors typically tell me that this phase is the most painful. One pastor called it "the sinful silence of the majority."

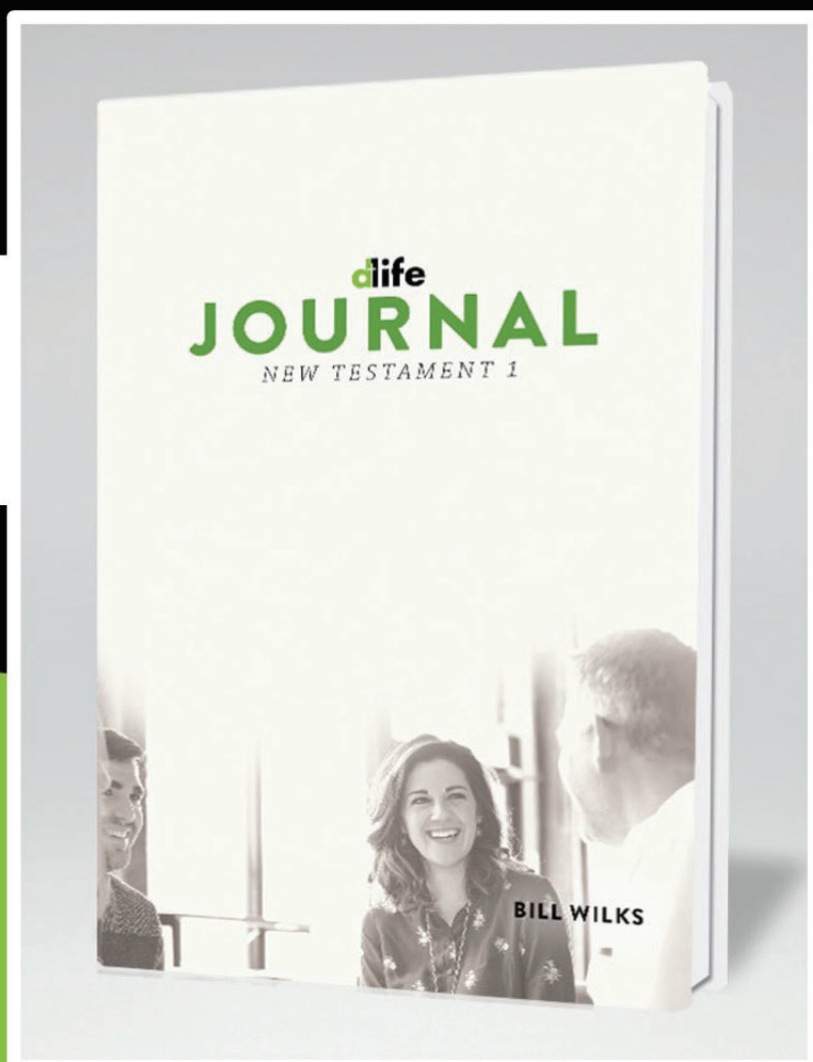
In this particular case, the pastor was able to receive a call to another church just as the severance ran out. Most pastors are not that fortunate. A number of pastors never return to vocational ministry after such a traumatic event. The pastor and his family are traumatized.

In most cases, the church that fires the pastors suffers as well. One member of the church noted in my story told me, "I will regret forever that I did not speak up. It took me a year to ask my former pastor for forgiveness. Since the evil event took place, it's like a cloud of darkness is over our church. I wonder if it will ever go away."

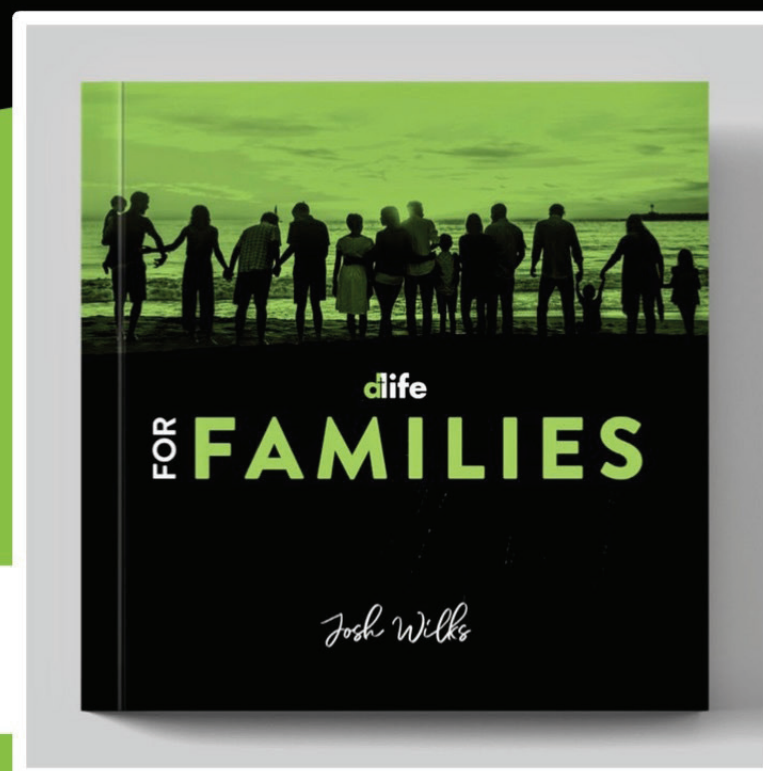
It is a sad story. It is a tragic story. Sadly, it is a story that is much too common.

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'God story'

By Laura Erlanson
Baptist Press

How an HVAC hero saved a life and found hope

As far as David and Marilyn Killian are concerned, God sent Cameron Lowe to save David's life so David could help save Cameron's.

An HVAC repair worker, Cameron is trained to get compressors and blowers back up and running — not human hearts. But that's exactly what he had to do recently.

David had made an appointment with North Georgia Heating and Air weeks earlier to get some work done on his central air conditioning unit. The appointment had been rescheduled once. Then that day, Sept. 5, David was mowing his neighbor's yard, while his wife Marilyn was volunteering at church. Cameron was supposed to be there in the afternoon, but he called and said he was running early and would it be OK to go ahead and come.

"I said sure," David said. "I'll see you when you drive by, and I'll come over to the house and get you started."

Soon Cameron arrived and went to work. As he worked, David began to feel ill.

"I started to feel dizzy and just really sweating profusely. So I shut the mower off and sat down on a swing in the backyard trying to figure out."

Cameron was nearby working on the unit, and when he finished, he turned to talk to David and knew something was wrong.

'Not breathing'

"I was not breathing," David said. "He's maybe half my size — he grabbed me in a bear hug and got me on the ground."

The 911 operator asked Cameron if he knew CPR, and he said no.



Photo courtesy of Baptist Press

Cameron Lowe (left) saved David Killian's life after David suffered a heart attack while Cameron was working on his air conditioner.

She told him to put his phone on speaker and she would talk him through it.

Cameron performed CPR for 11 minutes until paramedics arrived. He thought he'd been unsuccessful, as David was still unresponsive.

But in the ambulance on the way to the hospital, David revived. The paramedic began to quiz him on basic facts — his name, his wife's name, his address, etc.

"And then he got right in my face and he told me, 'I want you to understand how blessed you are,'" David recalled. The man said he'd never seen someone who was out as long as David was wake up so quickly and with no lasting damage.

The event was David's second heart attack. The first was 15 years prior.

One of the phone calls he received during his three-day hospital stay was from Cameron, who was

still shaken by the whole ordeal.

"We had him out for supper the same day that David got home from the hospital," said Marilyn.

That night at supper, Marilyn asked Cameron to tell her about himself. He told her of growing up in church and even being baptized.

"I said, 'Oh, are you saved?' Marilyn recalled.

"And he said, 'I'm still working on that part.'"

They also learned that night that during those tense 11 minutes while Cameron was working on David, he cried out, "God, I'll do whatever you want me to do to save this man's life."

The following Sunday, the Killians invited Cameron to their church, Red Bank Baptist in Chattanooga, where he heard a sermon that seemed to be tailor-made for him.

That morning, Pastor Sam Greer preached a message titled "Gospel

Urgency is an Ongoing Emergency." He asked the congregation if they'd ever been in an emergency situation in which they had to respond with urgency.

"It's just amazing how God set this up," Greer said later. "I shared a story at the end of the message. I wasn't going to share the story. I thought about it all week, and I decided, you know what? I'm going to share it. And so I did."

Similar lives

Greer shared about a car accident when he was 10. His father died. Greer, his brother and mother were injured. They all missed the funeral because they were in the hospital.

After the service, the Killians brought their new friend Cameron to meet the pastor.

Cameron shared that he lost his father at age 10. Greer told Cameron he was saved at age 21, Cameron's age.

The young man asked Greer where he found peace after such a loss, and Greer shared the gospel with him. It wasn't the first time Cameron had heard it. His grandfather was a Baptist preacher. And his boss at the HVAC company had been sharing with him and had taken him to church a few times.

Marilyn calls the whole thing "such a God story."

"It was so beautiful. It choked me up," she said of the conversation after church that day. "We got to witness it, you know, it was just their dialogue back and forth. Sam just gently led him to the Lord."

"It was just, it was so beautiful."

EDITOR'S NOTE — This story was written by Laura Erlanson and originally published by Baptist Press.

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Welcoming

By Sue Sprenkle
International Mission Board

English club opens doors for missionaries in Argentina

English club in Buenos Aires, Argentina, started out simple enough. Participants learned a few phrases, talked about American culture and listened to English vocabulary.

As part of the curriculum, Chris and Rhonda Richard, International Mission Board missionaries from Hebron Baptist Church in Kentucky, introduced club members to “Three Circles.” This tool is often used by American churches to share the gospel.

That’s when the club morphed from training potential Spanish-language translators for short-term volunteer teams to an evangelism tool and step toward planting a church in their Buenos Aires neighborhood.

“We taught them how to share the gospel and to give a 15-second testimony. They couldn’t believe how easy it was,” Rhonda said, adding that in the beginning, the small club was made up of mostly local believers.

“This interaction made us realize that some of these believers struggled to articulate the gospel message.”

The process of learning this in English required club members to break down the words and really figure out the meaning.

They realized they had the tools and words to share about Jesus’ love with their own families and friends.

Getting the word out

It didn’t take long before club members brought their family and friends to the meetings, many of whom were not believers, so they could learn about Jesus.

Chris created a public Instagram



IMB Photo

English Club started out as a way to train translators to help American church mission teams for Chris and Rhonda Richard. It turned into an evangelism tool and is now the first step in planting a church in Argentina.

page for their group in the hopes other nonbelievers might be interested in coming to their meetings. They wanted to open the club to anyone.

The Richards went from not knowing if anyone would show up for English club to not having enough chairs as people squeezed into their apartment.

They welcomed strangers to their home.

Rhonda made American-style snacks each meeting.

She hung flags over the door, representing the nationality of those who came to their home.

Chris said the 15 flags are good representation of the neighborhood

and city they live in. Many people want to learn English.

“... this English club just happened organically. God used what we had ... to create a community.”

Chris Richard
International Mission Board
missionary

“We were looking for a way to get face-to-face with our neighbors,” Chris said.

“We were doing everything we could think of, but then this English club just happened organically. God used what we had, English and Rhonda’s hospitality skills, to create a community.”

The missionaries meet with club members outside of meetings, investing in their lives.

They disciple the believers, so they can share with the non-believers who attend.

They meet with those who do



not identify as followers of Christ to talk more and answer questions that might have arisen during English club.

Inviting stranger

Chris said one man he meets regularly confided the only reason he’s even interested in learning more about Jesus is because a stranger opened his home to other strangers. It’s an unheard-of concept, and this man wanted to know why.

A small Bible study also meets in the Richards’ home. Two-thirds attending are from the English club.

They pray for this Bible study to continue growing toward becoming a church.

There’s even a possible pastor Chris is discipling to lead the way. They met through English Club.

Ways to pray

The Richards ask for you to pray for this Bible study group to grow in their knowledge and desire to share the gospel with others.

Please pray for wisdom as this young man who feels called to pastor is disciplined.

Thank God for using something as simple as English to open doors within a community to learn more about Him.

EDITOR’S NOTE — This story was written by Sue Sprenkle and originally published by the International Mission Board. For more stories and resources, visit imb.org.