

The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.



Photos courtesy of Clio Baptist Church

Left: Cheryl Cornelius (left) and Jazzy Wisdom help with a VBS craft at Clio Baptist Church. The church recently held its first VBS in 11 years. **Above:** Tammy Price and her granddaughter, Marlee, pause for a photo.

‘Powerful testimony’

‘Revitalization’: Church that had dwindled to 8 holds first VBS in years

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

About three years ago, around the time he turned 60, Rick Campbell began to feel like it was time to step out and follow the calling he felt to become a pastor. He just didn’t know where.

He’d been doing some fill-in preaching, and a mentor had af-

firmed his calling. His local director of missions had too.

So he went for a drive to three small churches in the area that needed a pastor.

“And I just prayed in the parking lot around the church and said, ‘Lord, if this is where You would have me to be, call me,’” Campbell said.

Not too long after that, Clio Baptist — one of those three churches

— voted unanimously to ask him to be their pastor. There were 12 people there — a crowd that was on the larger side of what the church had gathering on Sundays at that time. More often, they ran about eight.

‘Holy Spirit moving’

“The first year I was here, we had no other staff, no one walked the aisle. I began to question my call,” Campbell said. “But you could see

the Holy Spirit moving, and God said to me, ‘Rick, you can’t save anybody, but what you do have the power to do is to do what I called you here to do.’”

He started praying not for God to fill the church with more people but for Him to fill it with ministry. He tried to love people in the community well and encouraged the church to do the same. Not long after that,

(See ‘Clio,’ page 13)

NEXT EDITION ...

Back to Campus — Resources and stories to help soon-to-be college students, as well as their parents and grandparents

Storytelling

Current, aspiring writers hone their craft at annual event

By Dianna L. Cagle
The Alabama Baptist

Participants in the recent Southern Christian Writers Conference left inspired and equipped with tools to better their craft.

Held June 6–7 at The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, the event attracted more than 155 attendees with 33 speakers and staff members. More than 30 people gathered for the Thursday night kickoff event. Thirty authors hosted tables in the book room.

Keynote speakers

Keynote speakers were authors Caris Snider and T.I. Lowe. “This year’s conference was a wonderfully uplifting event featuring two outstanding keynote speakers,” said Cheryl Wray, the event’s organizer. “Both Caris and T.I. were so inspiring and authentic.”

Six different breakout session times offered participants options to learn about various genres and professional training on how to develop websites, editing and even sketching cartoons.

Along with the on-site, in-person event, Wray said 32 attended virtually.

Access to recorded breakout sessions on a variety of topics was made available to all participants.

Wray said it’s always encouraging to see so many first-time participants and to see the group grow.

The 2025 Joanne Sloan Award for the Encouragement of Writers was

Writer and cartoonist Joe McKeever says everyone can draw. He shared a trick for drawing people during his session: draw different angles and sizes of the letter “c” to create the various elements found in a person’s face.

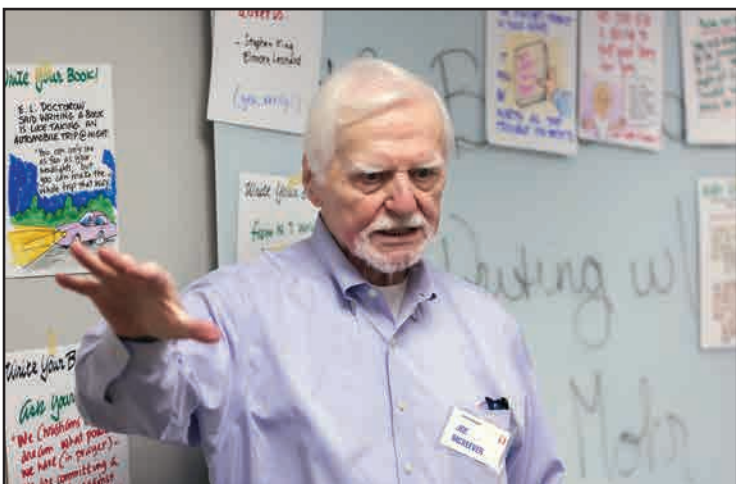


Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist



Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist

Above: Dianna L. Cagle of TAB Media Group shares tips on editing your own work during a breakout session at the conference. **Below:** Caris Snider, author of anxiety devotional books for a variety of ages, shares during the Friday evening session.

given to Jeanie Thompson, poet and essayist.

Thompson has spent some time working with juvenile offenders on their poetry through the Alabama Writers’ Forum.

Each year, SCWC also celebrates stellar writing with awards in different genres and mediums.

This year’s award winners included:

► Newspaper Article

1st place: Ann Nunnally, “Thank You, President Jimmy Carter,” published in Thomasville (GA) Times-Enterprise; 2nd place: Tracy Riggs Frontz, “Human Trafficking Should Rock the Soul of America,” pub-



Photo by Travis Frontz/The Alabama Baptist

lished in The Alabama Baptist; 3rd place: Laura Lee Leathers, “A Cup of Tea with Lydia,” published in The Country Register (KS) and others.

► Magazine Article

1st place: “A Thrill of Hope,” by Karen Allen, published in Home Life; 2nd place: “Life of a Missionary Kid: On Mission from the Amazon Basin to American Hospitals,” by Haylee Collins, published in Missions Mosaic; 3rd place: “Common Courtesies,” by Alonza Jones, published in Home Life; honorable mention: “Look What Love Did,” by Datha Whifield, published in Woman of Faith; honorable mention: “The Prize,” by Bill Patterson, published in Mature Living.

For a list of this year’s SCWC winners, visit tabonline.org/SCWC-2025.

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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The crossword puzzle
can be found on page 11.



Rashional Thoughts

By Jennifer Davis Rash
President and Editor-in-Chief

 jrash@thealabamabaptist.org

 @RashionalThts

Life-giving, forward progress might provide the energy you need

Making changes incrementally has always made the most sense to me. Small movements, minor adjustments, a few new items to learn at a time — those kinds of steps seem much easier than large-scale shifts all at once.

Others disagree and do well with more radical moves when a change is needed, kind of like a cold plunge.

Both options can be correct. They are merely different approaches for different people at different times.

For the month of July, I'm using my preferred incremental approach to develop new and improved, life-giving habits as I continue to regain strength from the severe ankle injury last fall.

Challenge for July: Incremental improvement

The goal each day is to determine a next step to improve a specific area.

Some days I'm adding something and other days I'm removing or minimizing something.

Think of all the areas of life and what it would take to make forward progress in each one. From there, you'll have a long list of small steps that can be taken to do better.

Health and wellness provide an excellent starting point — proper nutrition, appropriate exercise, quality sleep, medical checkups, achieving consistent calmness, improving emotional strength and on and on.

Our spiritual health also gets overlooked from time to time.

Spending time reading God's Word; focused time truly listening and seeking as we pray, read, meditate and absorb; serving others; sharing Christ and helping others grow in Christ are all areas to evaluate.

We also can improve our personal relationships and communication with others.

What if we took a few minutes each day, or even once a week, to reach out to family members and friends we haven't talked to in a while?

A quick call to say hello, a text with a basic "thinking of you" message or even sending

a full update through a letter mailed or emailed — all types of communication would be appreciated. The important thing is to actually communicate.

We might also find ways to sharpen our minds and continue learning through reading or listening to audio books, news reports and educational resources.

Working through the never-ending project and chores list might be the hardest to attempt to move forward. The items seem to multiply and grow extra tentacles along the way.

Still, tackling the most daunting item on the list almost guarantees an instant flood of relief and a surge of energy to knock out minor items in the afterglow of serious accomplishment.

Whether we start sitting outside for 20 minutes as a new way to start our day or wind down earlier in the evening to calm our mind before bedtime, the important thing is to find those small steps of life-giving improvement we can make.

Those steps propel us forward and help others do the same.



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash/The Alabama Baptist

Your Voice



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

Working through different expectations in life

By Morris Murray Jr.

Special to The Alabama Baptist

Sometimes we find ourselves working through different expectations in life, especially as it relates to the various relationships we encounter through the years. The variety of options might include confused, inadequate or differing expectations. What do each of those mean?

Confused expectations

Since the roles in our society about marriage, pastoring, teaching, etc., are commonly changing, it is often confusing as to what and how we should conduct ourselves.

For example, should women work outside the home?

Should children at school be disciplined?

What authority over children do teachers and principals have?

Should pastors/preachers be knowledgeable in all areas of life, demonstrating excellence or expertise in handling all the cognitive, emotional, social, sexual and spiritual issues with which people struggle on a daily basis?

Is it proper to refer to counselors/therapists who do not hold fast to the theological or church teachings which we ourselves maintain?

How commonly do people struggle with guilt, anxiety, depression, fear, suicidal ideation and a sense of hopelessness and are confused about the best way/ways to respond to these highly charged emotional matters?

In fact, such confusion may create more instability and lead to additional complications in an already complicated life.

Inadequate expectations

Is it possible that people may become so limited in their expectations that they conclude there is no need to even try or look for alternatives in their struggles with life?

People with little hope for what could be better may dissolve into the helpless stance of decision-making paralysis.

Some decide to simply “go with the flow” in whatever direction their inadequate expectations may lead them.

In many families today, for example, there are child-centered homes rather than spouse-centered homes.

It has been consistently discovered for many years that when children are the center of attention in family life, they get terribly disoriented.

It is in the nature of human nature that children seek and find satisfaction and purpose as they see parents who love and prioritize each other.

When this type of relationship does not exist, children grow up with inadequate or faulty expectations about life and their role in it.

It harms them as they eventually form their own families, as well as their responsibilities in jobs, churches, educational arenas and other civic domains.

As someone once put it, “If people know that we expect little of them, they will probably meet our expectations with disappointing accuracy.” Ouch!

Differing expectations

Another common experience in life is having expectations which differ from one another in marriages, churches, employments, community involvement, etc.

This inevitably leads to misunderstandings and conflicts.

For example, what if one person brings to the marriage scenario expectations which are opposite what the other person brings?

What if one spouse expects the other to be emotionally expressive and the other spouse has been raised in an inhibited environment?

What if one spouse wants to save money and the other is a spend thrift?

What if a church expects their newly called pastor to be a replica of their former pastor — either spoken or otherwise?

How often do we examine or process our expectations of others in concrete, specific ways for pinpointed answers?

EDITOR'S NOTE — Morris Murray has experience in pastoral ministry, counseling ministry and theological educational ministries. He lives in Jasper, Alabama, and provides resources for a variety of informational and educational outlets such as *The Alabama Baptist*.

Then one day I grasped the significance of what Paul meant when he said we are in Christ. The Holy Spirit helped me realize I was a branch intimately and vitally joined to the vine — not just tacked to the vine but actually a part of it. I understood that just as the life of that vine flows naturally into the branch, so the life of Jesus Christ flows naturally into me.

Jerry Bridges

True Community: The Biblical Practice of Koinonia

A local church is a group of Christians who regularly gather in Christ's name to officially affirm and oversee one another's membership in Jesus Christ and His Kingdom through gospel preaching and gospel ordinances.

Jonathan Leeman

Church Membership: How the World Knows Who Represents Jesus

If we can't graciously handle tough but fair questions on our position without attacking the character of the questioner, we might want to rethink our position.

Steve Tillis, pastor
Briarlake Baptist Church
Decatur, Georgia

If the Lord doesn't build it, you don't want to run it.

Annie F. Downs
via Instagram

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“There is no panic in heaven.
God has no problems,
only plans.”

CORRIE TEN BOOM
Author known for her aid of Jews during the Holocaust

David wrote Psalm 34 in a time of great distress. In verses 19–22 we find three dimensions of suffering.

1. Presently, there is the suffering of the saint ... and the persecution of divine revelation. See also Psalm 34:6, 17; 2 Timothy 3:11–12.

2. Previously, there is the suffering of the servant ... and the propitiation of divine redemption. See also John 19:36, Isaiah 52:13–53:12, 1 Corinthians 5:7b, Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12 and 1 John 2:2.

3. Prospectively, there is the suffering of the sinner ... and the punishment of divine retribution. See also Revelation 20:10, 14–15.

David concludes this psalm, “The Lord redeems the soul of His servants, And none of those who trust in Him shall be condemned” (Ps. 34:22).

What about your soul? Are you a saint who is one of His servants?

You will never see yourself as a saint until you see yourself as a sinner.

Franklin L. Kirksey
Robertsdale, Alabama

Considering the most influential pastor, whoever that is ... (the one working) hard to prop up (all who are leading) in the church:

For you to personally share of your gratefulness for the way they serve goes a long way in not just encouraging them, but it goes a long way in creating ... the perception you want for the church and (for that to) be the reality you want in the church.

Brian Croft, Trench Talk
Practical Shepherding

“I GUESS THE FIRST THING WE SHOULD DO IS DECIDE WHETHER LIFE IS GOING TO BE A SIMPLIFIED SIT-COM OR A COMPLICATED GAMBLE.”



LASS WORDS

BY KEN LASS
The Alabama Baptist



DEVOTIONAL THOUGHTS

A smile is good for the soul

Why don't animals in the jungle play cards? Because there are too many cheetahs."

Ugh. Some jokes are so bad, they're good. They are so corny they make you groan, but then sort of force you to crack a smile, maybe out of sympathy for the teller if nothing else.

"Why did the employee get fired from the calendar factory? She took a day off."

Positive thing

It's a positive thing to make someone smile. A smile is good for the soul. It's difficult to dwell on the adversity of life when someone makes you smile. If only for a moment.

"Why do seagulls fly over the sea? Because if they flew over the bay they would be bagels."

It's interesting to note that the Bible says Jesus wept; Jesus was angry, sympathetic, focused and calm. Maybe even worried and afraid, like the garden of Gethsemane when He prayed to the Father about His impending crucifixion.

Sense of humor

But Scripture never mentions that Jesus laughed. Which is curious, because you know this holy man had a huge sense of humor. You can't tell me Jesus didn't flash a smile and giggle a bit at the reaction of the servants when He changed water into wine at the wedding. Or when

He was walking on top of the water and saw Peter clumsily get out of the boat and try to do the same thing, only to sink like a rock. Or at the astonishment of the fishermen who had caught nothing all day, then were told by Jesus to cast their nets one more time and hauled in so many fish their nets were bursting. Or the amazement of the crowds when He turned a handful of bread and fish into enough food to feed thousands.

Surely the Savior must have taken enormous delight in making folks laugh and smile.

'Brighten someone's day'

We can brighten someone's day. Sometimes a clean, corny old joke is just the right way to break the ice. God wants us to laugh. The book of Job tells us, "He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy."

"My doctor told me I had the flu. I said I wanted a second opinion. So he told me my nose was too big."

I see you smiling. Feels good, doesn't it?

MEET THE AUTHOR

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

Ready to assist veterans

Enterprise BRAVE ministry reaches out to vulnerable in time of need

By Tracy Riggs Frontz
The Alabama Baptist

Nearly 30 Alabama veterans take their own lives every day. Veterans in the U.S. face many issues that civilians don't. Probably the most well-known problem is post-traumatic stress disorder, but that's not all of the mental and physical issues they deal with.

To combat this crisis, the Church on Boll Weevil Circle in Enterprise attempts to minister to them through their BRAVE ministry.

"When a veteran leaves the military — either with good or bad circumstances, retirement, whatever — a lot of them feel like they were disposable," said John Logsdon, military pastor at the church and leader of BRAVE ministry. "You lose that sense of camaraderie. There's not a whole lot of emphasis given when people leave the military on what [to do] from there."

'Fill that void'

"So we're trying to fill that void and fill that need."

BRAVE — which stands for "Battle buddies Ready to Assist Veterans Everywhere" — meets the first Tuesday each month at 6 p.m. at the church. For the 40 or so who attend, the evening consists of fellowship, a meal, guest speakers and dedicated time to share with others who have walked a similar road.

"I'll just ask the crowd, 'Does anybody have anything?'"

"Frequently, we'll get somebody who will raise their hand and say, 'You know, I've really struggled this month. This is the whatever (like a difficult anniversary), and I'm having a hard time dealing with it,'" Logsdon said.

"Typically, what will happen is another veteran in the room will



Photo courtesy of John Logsdon

John Logsdon (center), military pastor at the Church on Boll Weevil Circle in Enterprise, and leader of BRAVE ministry, congratulates the two young men who were first to complete in the recent 5K ruck, crossing the line together.

say, 'Brother, I know where you're at. Sister, I know where you're at. Let's go out and sit at the picnic table.' The two of them will go outside off by themselves, and they'll do a little peer support."

For those who need more intensive help, BRAVE has a network of pastors, deacons and mental health professionals.

One of the most important rules in the group is confidentiality. To heal, the veterans need to know that what they say will be kept confidential. There is only one exception — when someone wants to hurt themselves or others.

Representatives from organizations such as the Alabama Veterans Administration, the Disabled

American Veterans and the American Legion also attend. SpectraCare provides counseling and suicide-prevention resources.

Job placement is facilitated through the Alabama Career Center.

Hand Up Enterprise and the Department of Human Resources helps those who need food, clothes and general household goods.

For those with housing needs, a Veterans Affairs social worker will discuss Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing — subsidized housing available through a partnership with the VA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

In the last 18 months, BRAVE has placed 19 previously homeless

veterans in apartments or houses complete with furniture and appliances.

BRAVE has provided two vehicles, including one equipped with a power chair and a power chair lift. They help with several types of mobility equipment.

One veteran's wife is an amputee and requires air conditioning due to her health condition. BRAVE stepped in and fixed the air conditioning in their truck.

Veterans in danger of losing utilities have water and power bills taken care of when needed.

BRAVE also addresses needs that are not simply physical.

Several have been baptized. At least seven suicides have been prevented. Many have found a purpose with their lives after the military.

While BRAVE is a ministry of the church, it's not funded by it.

"All of our funding comes from crowdsourcing. It comes from talking to other people and saying, 'Hey, this is the need we've got.' I will tell you that every one of those needs has been met," Logsdon said.

"The need is being met, but the need continues to grow. I think our biggest hurdle has been having enough workers to meet the need."

One steady contributor is the church's Woman's Missionary Union. They provide laundry baskets filled with cleaning supplies, towels and similar items for those placed in apartments.

Logsdon wants to reach beyond Enterprise and help veterans across Alabama. He's creating a resource guide, and they are hosting a free suicide prevention training July 19.

"We need other churches to do the same thing. I am willing to ... walk them through how to do what we're doing," Logsdon said.

For more information about BRAVE, visit churchonthecircle.com/brave.

To learn more about the upcoming resource guide or training opportunities, email cobwcbave@gmail.com.

Alabama news

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

► **Mike Dowling**, pastor of Leeds Community Baptist Church, is celebrating 50 years in the ministry. A native of Fairfield, he was licensed to preach in 1975, ordained to the gospel ministry in 1977 at Lake Highland Baptist Church, Birmingham, and gradu-



Submitted photo

ated from Samford University in 1979. He has been a pastor of churches in four Baptist associations: Birmingham and Bessemer (now Birmingham Metro),

North Jefferson and St. Clair. He and his wife, Sandra, have been married 54 years and have three sons, four daughters and six grandchildren.

In 2013, the couple sensed God calling them to plant a church in Leeds which became Leeds Community Church as well as a food pantry focused on meeting the needs of people living in the 158 apartments near the church.

BLOUNT ASSOCIATION

► **Pleasant View Missionary Baptist Church, Holly Pond**, will hold a summer revival July 20–25. Sunday kicks off with a singing at 5 p.m. featuring The Williamsons from Wetumka, Oklahoma. Monday–Friday morning services begin at 10:30 and evening services at 7. Dustin Smith is the guest evangelist. Lunch will be served each day. A prayer room will be open each evening at

6:45. For more information, call 256-339-1862 or 256-590-1501. Earl Harper is pastor.

CLEBURNE ASSOCIATION

► **Ranburne First Baptist Church** kicked off its 175th anniversary with a memorial service May 11 and concluded May 18. Roger Willmore (right), a commissioner of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission, presented a commemorative plaque May 11 to Logan Sibley (left), pastor, and Linda Gibbs (center), the celebration event organizer, accepting the honor on behalf of the church. Special music was provided by Aubree and Abigail Marvin. Sibley delivered the message. Special awards and recognitions were made to the oldest member, 97-year-old Willie Curtis “Boots” Butler, the youngest member, 4-month-old Swayze O’Neal Gibbs, and three members over the age of 90: Jerry Lee (now deceased), Maylene Pollard and Roberta “Bobbie” Lowery. Hymns were sung from the 1800s. On display was a quilt made in 1928 to help raise money for seating in the new church, following a fire that destroyed the previous structure. The celebration concluded with a covered dish lunch.



Photo courtesy of Melintha Martinez

ESCAMBIA ASSOCIATION

► **Judson Baptist Church, Atmore**, will celebrate its 150th anniversary and annual home-

coming July 27. The service begins at 10:30 a.m. Former pastor Henry Wilson will be the guest preacher and special music will be provided by Matt and Joanna Black and the family band. Lunch will be served following the service and a history of the church will be presented at 2 p.m. by Pastor Brett Chancery. Revival will be held July 28–30 beginning at 6:30 each evening. The guest pastor and guest musicians from the anniversary celebration will be leading the services.

TENNESSEE RIVER ASSOCIATION

► **Kirk Griggs** is the new interim pastor of **Mount Ararat Baptist Church, Woodville**. He has served as pastor, associate pastor, youth minister and senior adult minister in Colbert-Lauderdale, Tennessee River and DeKalb associations. He also has served as adjunct instructor for New Orleans Seminary. He holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of North Alabama and a master of divinity from New Orleans Seminary. Griggs and his wife, Ashley, have one son, River, and are members of Center Point Baptist Church, Scottsboro.

OTHER

► **The Alabama Baptist Deacons’ Retreat** for all men and boys is set for Aug. 8–9 at Shocco Springs Conference Center. Mark Warren will be the worship leader. Pastors David Smith, Jarman Leatherwood, Michael Boatfield, Jon Wiggins, Randy Cater, Greg Corbin, Keith Pugh and Bob Pitman are the speakers. For more information and to register, visit alabamadeaconsretreat.org.

ALABAMA NEWS ITEMS COMPILED BY DIANNA L. CAGLE AND DEBBIE CAMPBELL

Persecuted church

Baptist worship service raided in occupied Ukraine

LUHANSK REGION, Ukraine — Russian security officers and regional police raided a Baptist congregation’s recent Sunday morning worship service in a Russian-occupied area of Ukraine.

Rights group Forum 18 reports that members of Luhansk Regional Police’s Anti-Extremism Center, accompanied by Russia’s Federal Security Service, showed up at the service in Stakhanov.

“After the service, Anti-Extremism Center officer Captain Gennady Turko ordered three church members — including the pastor Andrey Khmelevsky — to go with him,” reported

Forum 18. But a judge in Stakhanov Town Court, controlled by Russia, eventually closed the case against Khmelevsky for “absence of an offense.”

In another incident earlier this year, Ilichev District Court in Mariupol, also Russian-controlled, levied a fine of several days’ wages against Pastor Leonid Ponomaryov over his unregistered Council of Churches Baptist congregation. He was accused of violating Russia’s restrictions on “missionary activity.”



commons.wikimedia.org

83 more slain in violence against Nigerian Christians

ABUJA, Nigeria — The onslaught against Christians in Nigeria has sharply intensified, claiming another 83 lives.

Nigeria has led the world in recent years in

the number of Christians killed for their faith.

The country ranks No. 7 on Open Doors’ 2025 World Watch List of the 50 places most difficult to be a Christian.

According to Christian Daily International-Morning Star News:

► Muslim Fulani herdsmen murdered 42 individuals May 24 in three predominantly Christian villages in Nigeria’s Taraba state.

► Thirty-six people were killed in a matter of days in predominantly Christian villages in Plateau state. Sources said Muslim Fulani herdsmen are responsible for the raids, which occurred between May 25 and June 3. One of the slain was Mimang Lekyil, pastor of a Church of Christ in Nations congregation in Kwahas.

► Muslim Fulani herdsmen in Plateau state also targeted two villages in June, killing five Christians, sources said.

NEWS ITEMS COMPILED BY THE ALABAMA BAPTIST STAFF

‘MINISTRY CONTINUES’

Jesus Movement moments: Bob Curlee’s musicals remembered 50 years later

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Bob Curlee said he got an unexpected message from Tommy Ellison on Father’s Day. “He said he thought of me as being his father in drama,” Curlee said. “I never realized those plays meant so much to the people in it.” “Those plays” are three musicals Curlee wrote more than 50 years ago, right in the beginnings of the Jesus Movement, a major revival among the nation’s young people in the late 1960s and early ’70s.

Ellison, now a member of The Baptist Church at McAdory in McCalla, said he was playing football at Samford and attending Ensley Baptist Church when Curlee — then Ensley’s pas-

tor — approached him about being in one of those plays. “He said, ‘I’ve got you in mind for the cast of Daniel in the Lions’ Den,’” Ellison said. Though it was obviously a nod to the Bible story, the play followed the story of a peewee football player named Daniel who needed advice on how to avoid the “lions’ den” of drug and alcohol abuse.

Substance abuse

“What Bob had done, he had gotten in his mind a play about substance abuse, which was mainly marijuana and beer back then,” Ellison said.

Curlee and fellow singer-songwriter Ken Flowers already had one musical that had been having a successful run at Panama City Beach,



Photo courtesy of Tommy Ellison
Pictured here is the cast of Daniel and the Lions Den — (front row, l to r) Cindy Trail, Rick Carpenter, Sharon Taylor (back row, l to r) Martha McKinney and Tommy Ellison.

Florida — a biblical musical comedy called Jonah and the Whale. He got in touch with Alabama Citizens Action Program, the Baptist watch-

dog organization that fought against substance abuse, and they sponsored Daniel and the Lions’ Den.

“We started doing the play in youth rallies and bean suppers around the state, and then Bob approached the Gatlinburg ministerial association to bring the play up there,” Ellison said.

‘The beginning’

They said yes and helped fix up an old amphitheater in the Tennessee vacation destination, creating a stage out of an old house. “That was the beginning of the journey,” Ellison said. That summer, he and four

other cast members put on two shows a night, five nights a week, in front of 450 to 600 people.

‘Restaurant run’

“One of the most fun parts of the play was about 5 o’clock every afternoon, Rick Carpenter (another Samford student and major contributor to the songwriting of the Daniel show) and I would grab our guitars and do a restaurant run,” he said. “We would do a 90-second spot, and the restaurants were all for it because there were lines waiting for a table, and that kept the peace for a little while. It was a good advertisement for the play.”

Daniel and the Lions’ Den was free, and for families with kids, it was an easy yes, Ellison said. “It was an audience that appreciated good, clean humor and a good Bible story on top of that. I gave my testimony right before the invitation and invited people to come up and talk more about it, and there were those who made professions of faith.”

After the school year was over, Ellison and the cast traveled on Sunday nights to do the show at youth rallies. “We would race to get home before curfew at Samford,” he said.



Photo courtesy of Doug Bryant
Bob Curlee (left) and Doug Bryant reunite in Birmingham with others from the cast of those three early ’70s plays for the first time in about 50 years.

That season of his life was short lived, as college experiences often are — he soon took on a role as youth director at Vestavia Hills Baptist Church and couldn’t travel like he used to.

“But it gave me an opportunity to blossom not only as a Christian but as a musician too,” he said.

At that time, Jonah and Daniel were both running, as was Noah and the Ark in Fort Walton Beach, Florida.

Used as a vessel

Curlee, who became pastor of Centercrest Baptist Church in Center Point in 1972, said he was grateful that both Centercrest and Ensley Baptist were supportive of this

ministry. He said he was also thankful for the songwriters who helped him with the music, the talented cast who came from the churches and the doors that opened along the way.

“God did it, and He was only using me as a vessel,” Curlee said. “I never could’ve opened all the doors He would open for these things — miracle after miracle.”

All in all, over the course of his ministry, he wrote 12 plays, all modern-day versions of Bible stories.

Recently, Curlee, now 90, reunited in Birmingham with Ellison and others from the cast of those three early ’70s plays for the first time in about 50 years.

Ellison said as he looked around the room, he was “struck by how God had continued to use each person present.”

“Many went on to careers in ministry, music and education, carrying forward the passion for sharing Christ that those early productions had ignited,” Ellison said. “The seeds planted during those summer nights of outdoor performances had

indeed borne fruit across decades.” He said as they talked, they realized how those three productions were part of something bigger than they understood at the time.

Spiritual awakening

“We were unknowingly participating in the Jesus Movement that was transforming American Christianity,” Ellison said. “Our simple musical comedies, performed with guitars and youthful enthusiasm on makeshift stages, were part of the same spiritual awakening that brought Billy Gra-

ham to Birmingham’s Legion Field in 1972 and sent thousands of young people to Dallas for Explo ’72.”

He said as he looks back, he’s amazed at how God used Curlee’s vision and their obedience to create something that “would impact lives for decades.”

And he said that he realizes “that the real miracle wasn’t just the productions themselves, but the lifelong friendships and faith that grew from them.”

“The music may have ended, but the ministry continues in each of our lives,” Ellison said.



Photo courtesy of Doug Bryant
(L to r) Tommy Ellison, Larry Ferguson and Doug Bryant catch up at the reunion in Birmingham.



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Photo courtesy of Tommy Ellison
Pictured here is the cast of Jonah — (back row, l to r) Jacky Beck (Jonah), Ken Flowers (narrator), Doug Bryant (Hippy-Whale), (front row, l to r) Betty Jo Burch, Martha McKinney and Ruth Burch.



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Children's of Alabama



BEST CHILDREN'S HOSPITALS
US NEWS



UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

Week of Prayer for State Missions Set for Sept. 7-14

This year marks the 10th anniversary of our observance of the Week of Prayer for State Missions and the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering. During these years, the faithful prayers and gifts of Alabama Baptists have significantly undergirded and extended the Great Commission Ministries of Alabama WMU, Disaster Relief, Church Planting, Partnership Missions and Church Revitalization.

The 2025 Week of Prayer for State Missions is set for Sept. 7-14. Please mark your calendar to observe this significant time together as a church family. Now is a great time to prepare, including setting your

For more information and resources, visit [Myers-Mallory.org](https://myers-mallory.org) or scan the code below with your smartphone's camera.



church's giving goal, making a plan for promotion and lining up a special speaker if desired. Also, begin prayerfully considering your gift to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering this year.



Be on the lookout this week for a packet arriving by mail to your church, filled with a variety of promotional and educational materials, including samples of this year's poster, missions study, prayer guide, offering envelope and a bookmark, along with an order form to request larger quantities, free of charge.

Visit [Myers-Mallory.org](https://myers-mallory.org) for additional information, videos and other resources as they are made available. In late summer, feature videos will be added to the website for use during the Week of Prayer for State Missions. Thank you for your faithful and prayerful support of missions and ministry in Alabama and beyond!



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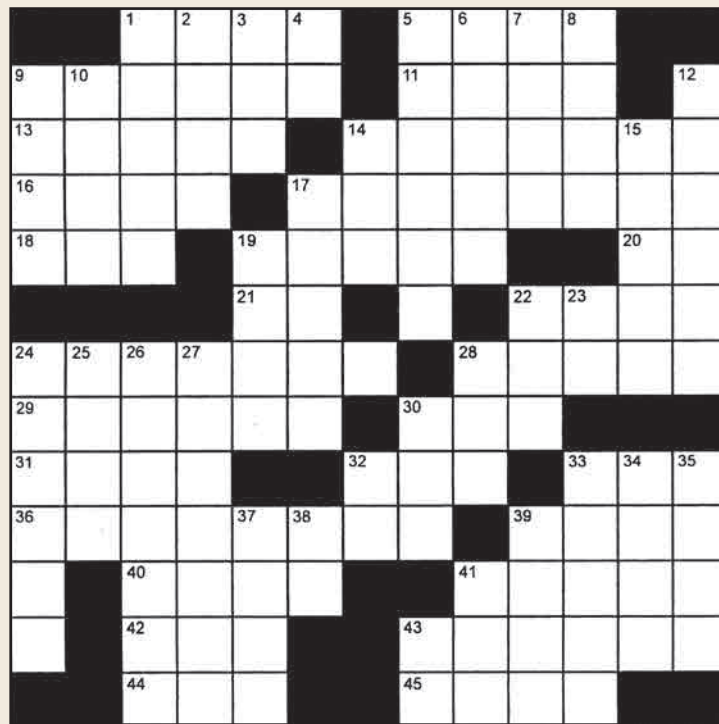
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*"Truly, in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills,
and from the multitude of mountains;
Truly, in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel."*
JEREMIAH 3:23

CHRISTIAN Crossword

ACROSS

1. Lot sat in the ____ of Sodom. (Gen. 19:1)
5. Son of Shem. (Gen. 10:22)
9. Rehoboam sent ____, who was over the tribute. (1 Kings 12:18)
11. Where the altar is in an Eastern Church.
13. Person.
14. Four great beasts came up from the sea, ____ from one another. (Dan. 7:3)
16. Elder son of Zeus.
17. Sanballat the _____. (Neh. 2:10)
18. Name prefix (Simon ____ Jonah).
19. Pertaining to an ecological sere.
20. Newspaper person. (abbr.)
21. British thanks.
22. False god.
24. Hide thyself by the brook _____. (1 Kings 17:3)
28. ____ in Me, and I in you. (John 15:4)
29. By the ____ of Babylon, there we sat down. (Ps. 137:1)
30. Fairy queen.
31. He was. (Latin)
32. Civil Aeronautics Authority.
33. Put on strength, O ____ of the Lord. (Isa. 51:9)
36. Let his habitation be _____. (Acts 1:20)
39. Curved molding.
40. Neighbor of Iraq.
41. Snatches.
42. Vertical take off. (abbr.)
43. When Sanballat ____, and ____ ____, heard of it, it grieved them. (Neh. 2:10)
44. A curvy shape.
45. Norse god.



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DOWN

1. Wife of Hosea. (Hosea 1:3)
2. Belonging to a son of Jether. (1 Chron. 7:38)
3. Sunbathe.
4. Printer's measure.
5. He laid the foundation thereof in ____ his firstborn. (1 Kings 16:34)
6. Edom ____ted from under the hand of Judah. (2 Kings 8:20)
7. So be it.
8. Seagoing prefix.
9. And ____ told Jezebel all that Elijah had done. (1 Kings 19:1)
10. He set it up in the plain of _____. (Dan. 3:1)
12. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a _____. (Matt. 19:24)
14. In the borders of ____ on the west. (Josh. 11:2)
15. Abraham ... offered him ... in the ____ of his son. (Gen. 22:13)
17. Warmths.
19. Mix.
22. Business watchdog.
23. The king of ____ they took alive. (Josh. 8:23)
24. Give recognition.
25. For the labourer is worthy of his _____. (Luke 10:7)
26. Avoiding.
27. Short answers.
28. Motorists' club.
30. Woman's name.
32. Court. (abbr.)
33. Once more.
34. Slew the kings of Midian ... Zur ... Hur, and _____. (Num. 31:8)
35. Network.
37. Southeast Asian country.
38. Is there any taste in the white of ____ egg? (Job 6:6)
39. NASA prefix.
41. In him ... is the love of ____ perfected. (1 John 2:5)
43. ____ visit the fatherless and widows. (James 1:27)

All Bible verses are KJV unless otherwise specified.



UPCOMING EVENTS

sponsored by the State Board of Missions

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. Ben Baber, lead pastor of the Fields Church in State College, Pennsylvania, will

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



be the featured speaker. Ministry leaders will 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, visit bcmlink.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

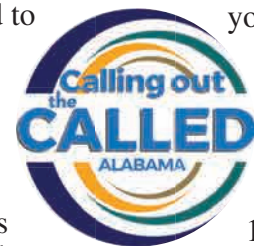
State Board of Missions desires to come alongside your church and foster those He has called through the Calling Out the Called initiative.

Sunday, Aug. 10, has been designated as Calling 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.



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



Retired Children’s Homes president Paul Miller dies

Paul Miller, retired president of Alabama Baptist Children’s Homes & Family Ministries, died July 2. He was 83.

ABCH was the only place Miller ever worked. After surrendering to God’s call to serve children while on the battlefield in Vietnam, Miller came back to Alabama and became an intern at ABCH. He served first on ABCH’s Troy campus as a social worker, then for 15 years as superintendent of their Mobile campus and eventually as president.

During Miller’s years at the helm, ABCH moved its headquarters from Troy to Birmingham.

Miller retired in 2012, nearly 40 years after he first joined the ABCH staff.

Rod Marshall, current ABCH president, called Miller a “visionary leader and a truly exceptional man.”

“He had a unique combination of strength and humility. The growth our ministry has experienced and the innovative programs we are providing to serve children and families in Alabama are absolutely built upon the solid foundation built upon the great work of previous leaders and especially the work of Mr. Miller,” Marshall said.

“On a personal note, I learned very much about leadership from Mr. Miller. He was my mentor and I will miss him greatly. He was a deeply committed follower of Christ.” (TAB)




MILLER



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TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

Cypress Shores Baptist Church in Mobile, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a full-time senior pastor. Please email resumé to: cypress9631@comcast.net or mail to: 4327 Higgins Rd., Mobile, AL 36619.

SENIOR PASTOR

Shiloh Baptist Church in Hartford, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a full-time senior pastor. Submit resumé to: admin@sbchartford.org.

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

Indian Grave Baptist Church is seeking a full-time/bivocational pastor. Please send a resumé to: mgracesmith83@gmail.com or mail to: 2398 County Rd. 19 N, Prattville, AL 36067.

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

Odena Baptist Church in Sylacauga, Alabama, is seeking a full-time pastor. The person should be excited to preach the Word of God, lead in outreach to the church/community and saving the lost. Odena Baptist Church is located in Talladega County about 50 miles south of Birmingham. We love God and others. We also provide a 4 bedroom pastorium (home) for our pastor. Please send your resumé to: dbtourt@gmail.com or mail it to: Odena Baptist Church, 115 Odena Road N., Sylacauga, AL 35150.

PASTOR

East Central Alabama (LaFayette) Southern Baptist congregation seeking the shepherd God has chosen to lead us — one who is bold in preaching the great gospel (even when it steps on toes). We are currently in revitalization/refocus stage; a mostly older congregation with a heart to grow — especially in spiritual maturity and generational diversity. SBC theological preaching/teaching a must. Full time or bivocational. Are you the pastor that God wants to shepherd us, push us out of our comfort zones, lead by example and disciple us? Is God speaking to you? If so, please send resumé and short personal tes-

timony to: LaFayette First Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, 201 S LaFayette St., LaFayette, AL 36862. 334-864-8545, lafayettefirstbaptistchurch@yahoo.com

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 12 miles from Thomasville, Alabama. Send inquires/resumés to: elambaptist.ap@gmail.com or mail: 53 Elam Rd., Thomasville, AL 36784. ATTN: Search Committee.

PASTOR OR BIVOCATIONAL

Snow Road First Baptist Church, Semmes, Alabama, 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.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Stowers Hill Baptist of Attalla, Alabama, is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Please submit resumé to: stowershillbaptist@gmail.com.

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.

WORSHIP PASTOR

Kennesaw First Baptist Church located in the northwest Atlanta, Georgia suburbs, has ministered in its community for almost 150 years. Kennesaw First has a rich history of long-term leadership and a commitment to its community. Worship is central to the church's life blending biblical truth and heartfelt praise to lead people into a deeper relationship with God. Kennesaw First's worship pastor candidate will have the proven skills to lead worship teams and collaborate with the pastoral team to plan and carry out the worship ministry. The worship

pastor is key in shaping the spiritual direction and corporate worship of Kennesaw First. Education and experience are required to enable the worship pastor to lead with passion and excellence. The worship pastor leads classic and contemporary worship services and other events as needed encouraging genuine, Christ-centered worship. This full-time position offers a generous salary and benefits package. Applicants should reach out with questions or submit a PDF copy of their resumé and cover letter to: pastorsearch@kennesawfirst.church.

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.

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@fbcbm.org.

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Clio Baptist's growth 'an encouragement'

(continued from page 1)
the numbers grew. Slowly they increased to 15, then 20, then 25.

"This year, one of our biggest crowds, we had 67," Campbell said. "We've had a sixth baptism this year."

They've started having Sunday School, a women's ministry and a men's ministry. And they've dusted off the church's VBS tradition. The first week of June, they had 12 children come.

"That has just been a shot in the arm for the church," he said. "This is the first time there's been a Bible school here in 11 years."

They also called a music minister, one with a personal connection to the church, its VBS and its pastor — Campbell's cousin, Bobby.

Things still hang on the wall at Clio Baptist that Bobby Campbell helped hang there as a kid during VBS in 1985.

"I still find books here with my name on it," he said.

Now, as he's dusting off those books 40 years later, he's one of the redemption stories happening at the church.

Church split

When Clio Baptist split in 1989, the situation left him with some church hurt that grew into bitterness.

The years passed, choices were made, and he ended up in prison for 20 years for manufacturing methamphetamine. While he was there, he got beaten up to the point he was in the hospital for four months.

"I started to realize that God was still over there where I had set Him off at," Bobby Campbell said. "In my journey, I started saying, 'You know what, God — I cannot do this by myself. Help me, please.'"

New relationship

God continued to move in his life, and eventually Clio Baptist called him as music minister.

Rick Campbell said his cousin's story is a testimony of redemption.

"Now he's out, and he's working for the Lord," Rick Campbell said.

Bobby Campbell has gotten involved in starting a youth ministry too, including working with the Love Like Lexi project, which aims to help teens find hope and prevent teen suicide.

Clio Baptist hosted a Love Like Lexi event June 21.

Rob Jackson, director of the office of evangelism and church revitalization for the State Board of Missions, said he's been excited to see what God is doing at the church. His dad served as pastor of Clio Baptist when Jackson was young.

"Our family has followed this church's journey over the years, and I knew it had dwindled to just a handful," Jackson said.

"Pastor Rick ... encouraged the congregation to believe God for great things, to seek His face in prayer and to actively minister to their community in the name of Christ. What followed was nothing short of revitalization."



Photo courtesy of Clio Baptist Church
Clio Baptist Church had 12 children attend VBS this year.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Sunday School Lessons

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



For July 13

GOD'S DELIVERANCE Psalm 18:16–29

Psalm 18 is the fourth longest psalm in the Book of Psalms. It is the first long psalm in the Psalter, consisting of 50 verses. Psalm 18 is a thanksgiving psalm, which follows naturally after Psalm 17, a lament psalm. In his lament David described himself as being surrounded by deadly enemies who were intent on his destruction.

He cried out for deliverance and confidently waited for God to rescue him. In Psalm 18 we have David praising God for repeatedly delivering him from all his enemies.

The psalm is divided into five sections. First, David declared that the Lord was his God and worthy to be praised (vv. 1–3). Second, David described how the Lord saved him from his enemies (vv. 4–19). Third, David recounted God's persistent faithfulness to him (vv. 20–29). Fourth, David set forth how God had prepared him for battle and enabled him to prevail (vv. 30–45). Fifth, David concluded this thanksgiving psalm by thanking and praising the Lord (vv. 46–50).

The God Who Rescues (16–19)

The second section of Psalm 18 is David's account of how the Lord saved him from a near-death experience at the hands of his enemies. God came to David's rescue, intervening dramatically on his behalf. This bursting upon the scene is represented poetically as an earthquake and a parting of the heavens as the Lord came down in vengeance to deal with David's enemies (vv. 7–15).

Using poetic language, David painted a picture of himself about to drown in the midst of a violent storm at sea. His situation was hopeless. He was being overtaken by powerful enemies who had him surrounded. He would have died if God had not rescued him

by reaching down and delivering him from his enemies. God made a way for David when there was no way.

Why did God rescue David? Verse 19 says God rescued David because He delighted in him. God lavishes amazing grace upon those who trust in Him. Trust God when you are drowning in the depths of uncertainty and battered by the waves of opposition.

Faithfulness Rewarded (20–24)

These verses must not be taken out of context, making David appear to be an arrogant boaster. He was not claiming sinless perfection.

He acknowledged that he was responsible for living with integrity in the covenant relationship with the Lord, but he was fully dependent on God's resources to do so.

David expressed the principle that God honors righteousness and judges sin even in this life. When we, by God's grace, live for God and seek to walk in His ways, God cares for us and blesses us. When we go our own way, we bring misery and destruction on ourselves.

Hope Given (25–29)

God rewards man according to his character. God will bless those who are faithful, blameless and pure, but he will harshly judge those who are wicked. God will help the humble because they depend on Him, but God will humble the people who pridefully trust in themselves. If a person insists on pursuing his devious ways, God will reward him accordingly, giving him what he deserves.

David testified that God was with him as he contended with his enemies and faced dark times in his life. God lightens the darkness and sustains His people with hope. When God illuminated David's dark thoughts of defeat and despair, he was emboldened to press on and stay in the fight.

For July 20

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS Psalm 105:1–11, 42–45

In Psalm 105 the psalmist praised the Lord for how He faithfully kept the promises He had made to Abraham and his descendants in spite of the fact that Abraham's descendants were consistently unfaithful to God. The psalmist recalled events from Israel's history, highlighting Israel's time in Egypt and exodus out of Egypt.

Call to Worship (1–6)

Gathering with the saints of God and worshipping Him is essential for God's people. Worship occurs when we set our mind's attention and heart's affection on the One true God and praise Him for who He is and for what He has done for us in and through the person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ.

In this psalm God commanded His people to worship Him. In the first five verses there are 10 imperatives that call the people of God to a time of remembering, celebrating and spreading the report abroad of the work of God on behalf of His people as a result of God's covenant with Abraham. This psalm was written to remind Israel what God had done for them.

Christians are to proclaim the Lord to the world, delight in what He has done and said and who He is and show thanksgiving for past mercies by coming back to Him for more. We would be far more thankful people and more godly than we are if we would merely take time to remember God's many mercies to us.

Covenant Made (7–11)

Although the opening stanza helps us identify Psalm 105 as a thanksgiving psalm, it is not until the second stanza (vv. 7–11) that we discover the theme of the psalm. It is about God's faithfulness to keep His covenant with His people, specifi-

cally His covenant with Abraham. The word "covenant" appears three times in these verses.

A covenant is a solemn commitment, in this case made by God to Abraham and his descendants. God promised Abraham that He would give Abraham's descendants a land of their own. The details are found in Genesis 15 and 17.

This covenant was a unilateral covenant, meaning that God alone set the terms and promised fulfillment apart from the faithfulness or lack of faithfulness of His people.

We cannot, however, suppose that the people were absolved from any response at all. Although God initiated the covenant and committed Himself to fulfilling it, He still expected obedience within the confines of the terms of the covenant (Gen. 17:9). The Apostle Paul recognized the fulfillment of these promises in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3).

Covenant Fulfilled (42–45)

One striking characteristic of this psalm is its repeated use of the pronoun "He" to refer to God. It is used 15 times in Psalm 105. This emphasizes the sovereignty of God in the affairs of man — in this case over Israel and even over her enemies.

The psalmist stressed that the Lord "remembered" His covenant with Abraham, thus recalling God's faithfulness to His people. This final stanza rushes ahead from the events of the exodus to the time of Joshua, recalling that God "remembered His holy promise" to establish His people in the promised land.

Everything God had done for Israel was so they would "keep His statutes and obey His instructions." God expected His people to live in obedience to His commandments in the land He gave them. The psalmist concluded this encouraging psalm with the command for the people to praise the Lord because of His faithfulness to them.

"He remembers His covenant forever, the word that He commanded, for a thousand generations."

Psalm 105:8

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 July 13

CAN I LOSE MY SALVATION? John 10:7–11, 14–18, 27–30

In the Book of John, Jesus used seven metaphors to describe Himself. This collection of sayings is called the “I am” statements of Jesus. This week’s lesson looks at two of these seven statements: “I am the Gate,” and “I am the Good Shepherd.” Both of these statements are referring to the practices of a shepherd. Sadly, these metaphors can sometimes be lost on us since shepherding isn’t a profession we see that often in the United States. However, the original hearers to whom Jesus spoke would have known exactly what He was referencing. The goal of this week’s lesson is to show that God, like a good shepherd, keeps His children — His flock — safe and secure.

When we come to Jesus, we are promised salvation. (7–11)

When Jesus said, “I am the Gate for the sheep,” we might picture a door made out of wood and equipped with a knob. But for a shepherd, this image would be completely different. Shepherds in the first century would sleep in the entry of the fence. They would literally become the door or gate, and their bodies would be the barrier that would keep the thieves or wild animals out and keep the sheep in where it was safe.

In the same way that true safety for the sheep was only through the shepherd, true salvation is only through Jesus. Jesus protects us and saves us not only for eternity, but for today and tomorrow.

Jesus secured our salvation by laying down His own life for us. (14–18)

In verse 12, Jesus introduces two different groups — the wolf

and the hired hand. Both the wolf and the hired hand could be referencing the pastors mentioned in Jeremiah 23:1 who are described with similar language. Speaking for God, Jeremiah says, “Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!”

Some people believe the wolves are the false teachers, and the hired hands are the religious leaders who were too cowardly to stand up against them. Neither the

“I give [My sheep] eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand.”

John 10:28

wolf nor the hired hand cared for the sheep; they only wanted what was best for themselves.

Unlike the hired hand who runs away after seeing the wolf, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, protects His sheep at all costs, even to the point of dying for them. Our salvation is secure because Jesus laid down His life for us on the cross. We didn’t ask Jesus to die for us. He did so willingly because He knew it was the only way to atone for the sins of the world.

We are secure through the Father and the Son. (27–30)

Our salvation is secure because of God’s strength to hold onto us, not our strength to hold onto God. We follow Jesus because He loves us; we are His sheep and we know His voice. The Good Shepherd protects us against anything trying to strip us away from His grip. When we are in Christ, nothing can separate us from God.

In Paul’s letter to the Romans, he wrote, “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38–39). Our salvation is secure because God cares for His children and protects them yesterday, today and tomorrow.

For July 20

CAN I WALK AWAY FROM MY SALVATION? Hebrews 6:1–12

Charles Carter was my pastor in college when he was the interim pastor of First Baptist Church Opelika. Then he became my professor, mentor and friend when I was a student at Beeson Divinity School at Samford University. In fact, he was one of the reasons I attended Beeson. In one sermon, I remember him addressing the issue of someone walking away from God. He said, “If there is a fizzle before the finish, there was a fatal flaw from the first.”

That tongue twister has stuck with me for 25 years. He went on to say that rather than a “once saved, always saved” mentality, we should have an “if saved, always saved” theology. If God has truly transformed someone’s heart, they will not want to walk away from their faith. In this lesson, we are going to look deeper into the life of a persevering Christian.

Perseverance calls for growing in our faith. (1–3)

The writer talks about the elementary teachings of Christ. We must not mistake the word “elementary” for “unimportant.” The elementary doctrines are foundational and essential for understanding the impact of Jesus’ death on the cross and resurrection from the grave. I would never say these elementary doctrines are unimportant. However, what the writer is saying here is that there is so much more!

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, “I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, since you were not yet ready for it” (1 Cor. 3:2). There comes a time when we grow spiritually by moving beyond our salvation experience toward a life lived in obedience to Christ. Living a life of obedience and perseverance is when we begin to grow into mature Christians.

Perseverance is grounded in what we have in Christ. (4–8)

Verses 7 and 8 help us grasp a better picture of what the writer is talking about. Here, the writer uses a metaphor of a farm that produces good and useful crops juxtaposed to one that grows thorns and thistles. Sound familiar? Jesus used a similar reference when He said, “I am the true Vine, and my Father is the Gardener. Every branch in Me that does not produce fruit He removes, and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce even more fruit” (John 15:1–2).

A true believer’s life will bear good fruit that glorifies Jesus. This is not to be confused with works-based salvation. We come to Jesus dirty, and He cleans us. Without Jesus, we cannot do good works or bear good fruit. However, as a response to the gospel, our lives should be full of good works and bear good fruit — not in an effort to earn our salvation but as a result of it.

Perseverance calls for diligently walking in Christ. (9–12)

If you have ever been working hard or competed in an endurance race, encouragement goes a long way. In this passage, the writer is encouraging believers to keep doing good and serving each other. There may be times when we feel like our work goes unnoticed by others, but be encouraged that God sees our service to Him.

Persevering in the faith means that we are serving the Lord and only seeking His praise. Keep serving the Lord with gladness and trust that, as Paul told the Corinthians, “Your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58).

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

“And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope ...”

Hebrews 6:11

Leveraging medicine as a bridge

Medical missionaries helping people in Southeast Asia hear gospel for first time

Every day is a little bit different.” That’s how Jim Vale explained what life is like for him and his wife, Ashley. Both are family medicine physicians who serve with the International Mission Board in Southeast Asia.

They spend two to three days a week working in a clinic and dedicate time to teaching health education and meeting needs in rural villages.

Jim started a Christian fellowship for medical students, and he mentors a young pastor at a local Chinese church, which has a history of helping persecuted pastors seeking asylum. In addition to medical work, Ashley leads a women’s Bible study.

The Vales have served with the IMB for more than 16 years, initially in East Asia where they did medical missions for more than 12 years and are now in their fourth year at their current location.

Their ability to speak the language of many of their patients has been invaluable, they said. They make it a point to pray and share the gospel with every patient they see.

‘Engaged in the study’

Recently, they helped with a clinic organized by a national church in an area with many elderly people who had never stepped foot in a church. “Over 50 people believed in Christ that day, as they came and heard the gospel for the first time,” Jim said.

Ashley started her women’s Bible study with mothers whose children go to school with their kids.

“It’s been a slow process,” Ashley said, “but it’s been neat to see what has happened over the two years that we’ve been meeting. Another lady just started coming to the Bible study. Her family is new to the



IMB photo

People in a Southeast Asian village come to a medical clinic that Jim and Ashley Vale host. As IMB medical missionaries, the Vales dedicate time to regularly teach health education and do clinical work in rural villages.

school. She’s very engaged in the study, and I think over time she will also become a believer.”

Through the Christian fellowship for medical students, Jim offers guidance and prayer for those going through residency at a Christian hospital in the area. Many of the students have minimal education, so to get a residency is coveted.

“Those who come through residency at this hospital receive a solid foundation of biblical truth because they have devotions every single morning,” Jim said. “If they don’t become believers, at least they are learning the Bible and are exposed to the gospel.”

The Vales’ distinctive roles in

medical care enable them to spread the gospel in remote and underserved regions.

By leveraging medicine as a bridge, they connect with people who might not otherwise be receptive to the good news of Christ. Additionally, they disciple new believers, empowering them to join in the mission of discipleship and furthering the Great Commission.

“The local medical students are very interested in learning from me as an American physician,” Jim said. “At the same time, I have a unique platform to share Christ with them and develop them as Christian leaders for the next generation. That wouldn’t happen without medicine.”

Jim and Ashley know their influence on tomorrow’s health care workers is important because they too were once medical students seeking guidance on becoming missionaries.

Mentorship matters

“There was a doctor who worked in Central Asia and the Middle East,” Jim said. “I felt like he took me under his wing and encouraged me. He shared how he did house calls and didn’t have a formal practice set up.”

The doctor told Jim how he shared the gospel in unengaged, unreached places where he otherwise would not have been accepted.

The Vales heard how some medical missionaries were involved in clinics in areas where Christianity is forbidden and found ways to share the gospel and to pray with patients.

Being mentored by medical missionaries broadened their vision of what is possible.

It influenced how they currently operate on the missions field, ministering in different ways to spread the gospel and plant churches.

The Vales’ first opportunity to connect with health care workers on the missions field was in 2007 at the inaugural meeting of MedAdvance, IMB’s annual medical missions conference. It was the same year they applied to serve with the IMB.

The Vales remind those interested of the wide array of options.

Agriculture, physical therapy, fitness programs and mental health are among the growing opportunities to consider where health care workers can make a difference in sharing the gospel.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Names have been changed for security reasons.

Interested in health care missions?
You are invited to attend MedAdvance 2025 Aug. 21–23, in Raleigh, North Carolina. For more information and to register, visit imb.org/medadvance.

Winners

By Leann Callaway
The Alabama Baptist

Bicyclists on a mission to help end modern-day slavery

On a mission to help end child trafficking, eight bicyclists and their crew headed for the 2025 Race Across America — a non-stop, transcontinental, six-day relay race that started June 14 in Oceanside, California and ended in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

Although it was a grueling endeavor, the cycling team representing ZOE International realizes their 3,000-mile trek pales in comparison to the horrors child sex trafficking victims face.

They are spurred on by their desire to help children find hope and healing.

The race draws cyclists from around the world. Relay teams have nine days to complete the journey while solo cyclists have 12 days.

Team effort

The eight-man team, which is based out of Pennsylvania, finished first in the eight-man team division. Ages of team members range from 33 to 56.

Nate Eakin is a sixth-grade teacher. Tom Jordan is a bank president.

Merv Beiler is a project manager and owner of a drive-thru coffee company.

Kevin Quinter is a police detective working with Homeland Security to fight human trafficking.

The men want to make a difference in their community, in the United States and throughout the world, with many team members beginning training as early as the fall of 2024.

They spent hundreds of hours on stationary bikes, outdoor rides and strength training.

Founded in 2002, ZOE Interna-



Photo by ????

On a mission to help end child trafficking, eight cyclists and their crew headed out in the 2025 Race Across America — a non-stop, transcontinental six-day relay race that began in California, and ended in New Jersey.

tional's mission is to reach every person with God's love and rescue every child from human trafficking through prevention, rescue and restoration programs in the United States, Thailand, Mexico, Japan and Australia.

Brad Ortenzi, a former undercover police online child exploitation investigator in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, is the team's race director and Eastern USA regional director for ZOE International.

During a trip to Thailand in 2014 Ortenzi and his wife, Lori, were profoundly impacted as they saw the influence of ZOE's ministry and God's redemption story at work.

"We expected to see shattered,

broken kids, but instead, we saw children overflowing with joy," he recalled.

"They were healthy and healing, exceeding our expectations. Lori and I were stunned.

"When we saw what was happening, it was a mystery I needed to solve.

"I wanted to get to the bottom of this. What in the world was going on here?"

After the trip Ortenzi was inspired to take action, prompting the idea of competing in the race, knowing the potential impact it would

make in efforts against child trafficking.

"The children's fight inspired me," Ortenzi declared.



Photo by Betsy Meenk via Facebook
ZOE International team members greet each other at a shift change.

"Every one of them was a fighter — fighting to get their life back. Competing in Race Across America allows ZOE to take this fight against child sex trafficking across the United States."

As the cyclists race they raise \$20,000-50,000 each, going a long way for ZOE International to rescue more children to begin the restoration journey.

In 2019, ZOE competed in RAAM and claimed third place, helping raise more than \$175,000; in 2021, the team won first place and received donations totaling more than \$380,000.

This year's goal

This year the team goal was \$750,000. The team had raised \$610,000 at the finish of the race but were expecting more donations.

With some 49 million victims of modern-day slavery worldwide, according to the International Labor Organization, including more than 50,000 in the U.S., ZOE International knows the team is on a mission to shine a light through the darkness.

"If we pull one child out of sex trafficking, it's worth it," crew chief and former cyclist Allen Fisher declared.

One of ZOE International's crew vans was in an accident with an elk the second day into the race, but the team powered onward to the finish line.

The team faced 25-mph headwinds at one point along with 6-7 hours of torrential rain and a tornado warning.

ZOE team members rode with the name of a woman trapped in human trafficking on their arms to inspire them to keep going even in the tough challenges.

Praying for the persecuted church

One of eight Nigerian Christians kidnapped found slain

Eight Christians were kidnapped at gunpoint, and one of them was found slain six days later.

Yuda Garba, head of the predominantly Christian village of Dnako in Abuja, was abducted March 11 with seven others in a late night raid upon the area, reports the media outlet Christian Daily International-Morning Star News.

Garba was kidnapped along with two of his grandchildren and five other individuals, residents told the news outlet.

On March 17, villagers found Garba's body in proximity to Nomadic Forest near Kuyeri. (The Alabama Baptist)

Christian wins victory in forced marriage, conversion case

A Pakistani judge has granted an annulment to a woman given as a child to a man who forced her to convert from Christianity and marry him.

In a move Feb. 12 seen as a human rights victory, Afzal Baig, a civil judge in Bahawalpur, invalidated the Muslim marriage of 25-year-old Shahida Bibi, reports Christian Daily International-Morning Star News.



Photo courtesy of Morning Star News

In addition, "the judge directed the National Database and Registration Authority to make a fresh identity

card for Bibi, restoring her religious status as Christian and deleting her marital status," attorney Lazar Allah Rakha told the news outlets.

In 2012, when Bibi was 11, she was given to the Muslim brother of her mother's new husband. Bibi was sexually exploited. The man fabricated conversion and marriage documents and forced Bibi into a Muslim marriage at 18. She birthed children while captive. (TAB)

Driver veers 18-wheel truck into crowd, kills 6 Christians in Nigeria

Six Christians were killed in Nigeria when a driver intentionally recently veered his 18-wheeler truck into a procession of people.

This was one of several Easter-related incidents of persecution against Christians that Christian Daily International-Morning Star News recently reported.

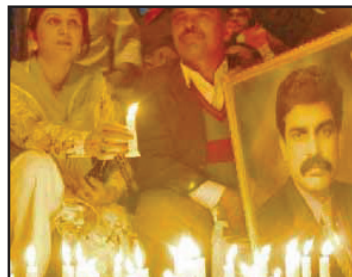
In the April 21 ramming incident in Billiri in Nigeria's Gombe state, more than 30 Christians were injured, requiring hospitalization.

According to the news outlet, "Police initially attempted to attribute the incident to brake failure, but a committee formed by Gombe state officials concluded that the driver deliberately plowed into the procession." (TAB)

Assassinated Christian lawmaker honored 14 years after death

Christian rights activists and church leaders in Pakistan vowed to step up efforts to protect persecuted Christians as they honored the memory of assassinated politician Shahbaz Bhatti on March 2, the 14th anniversary of his death.

Bhatti, an ardent advocate for a diverse, multicultural and multi-religious society, was assassinated on March 2, 2011, by Taliban militants outside his mother's home in the federal capital, Islamabad.



Morning Star News via Pakistan Today

The Catholic government minister was a vocal critic of the misuse of the blasphemy laws and was known as a champion of religious freedom. He was also instrumental in creating 5% job quotas in government departments for religious minorities. (Morning Star News)

Judge sentences man to death for killing Christian in 2023

A judge in Pakistan has given the death penalty to a man convicted of the 2023 murder of a Christian.

The parents of Farhan Ul Qamar shed tears March 27 when the judge ordered the maximum punishment for their son's killer, Muhammad Zubair, reports Christian Daily International and Morning Star News. On Nov. 9, 2023, Zubair killed Ul Qamar during a hate-filled rant against Christians and Jews. (TAB)

Man kills wife for putting faith in Jesus during Ramadan

Two days after putting her faith in Jesus, a mother of six was stabbed to death by her husband for becoming a Christian during the Muslim observance of Ramadan.

Nasiimu Mirembe, who put her faith in Jesus Christ on March 21, attended her first worship service March 23 in Uganda's Busembatya town council, sources told Morning Star News.

Soon after leaving the service, her Muslim husband, Adamu Mukungu, approached and chastised her for being in a Christian service during Ramadan. He slapped Mirembe, then

cut her with a long knife, a friend of the woman told Morning Star.

Church members rushed to get her treatment. Mirembe — whose children range in age from 3 to 18 — died early the next morning, a source informed Morning Star. (TAB)

Court allows Pakistani man to register as Christian

A Pakistani court has granted a man the right to register as a Christian after his employer fraudulently changed his national identification card in an apparent attempt to enslave the man, reports a legal advocacy organization.

Alliance Defending Freedom International says Masih, 24, "was fraudulently converted and registered by his employer as a Muslim on his National Identity Card. The employer registered Masih as a Muslim in an attempt to enslave him, including withholding pay and prohibiting him from returning to his family. The employer claimed that he adopted Masih when he fraudulently switched his identity to a Muslim."

A judge in May 2024 rejected Masih's case, saying the card could be changed only if converting to Islam or if an error could be proven. "As stated by civil judge Mian Usman Tariq, 'Islam teaches that everyone is Muslim at birth,'" reports ADF International.

In November 2024, a judge "set aside the earlier verdict, holding that Masih was a victim of fraudulent conversion by his employers," states ADF International.

Masih now has a card reflecting his Christian faith. (TAB)

Twin Christian brothers acquitted of false blasphemy charges

Two Christian brothers in Pakistan have been acquitted of the false blasphemy charges that had been brought against them, reported Christian Daily International and Morning Star News.

Eighteen-year-old twin brothers Sahil Shahid and Raheel Shahid are out of prison after a district judge in Kasur in Pakistan's Punjab province handed down the acquittal Jan. 25, the news outlets reported.

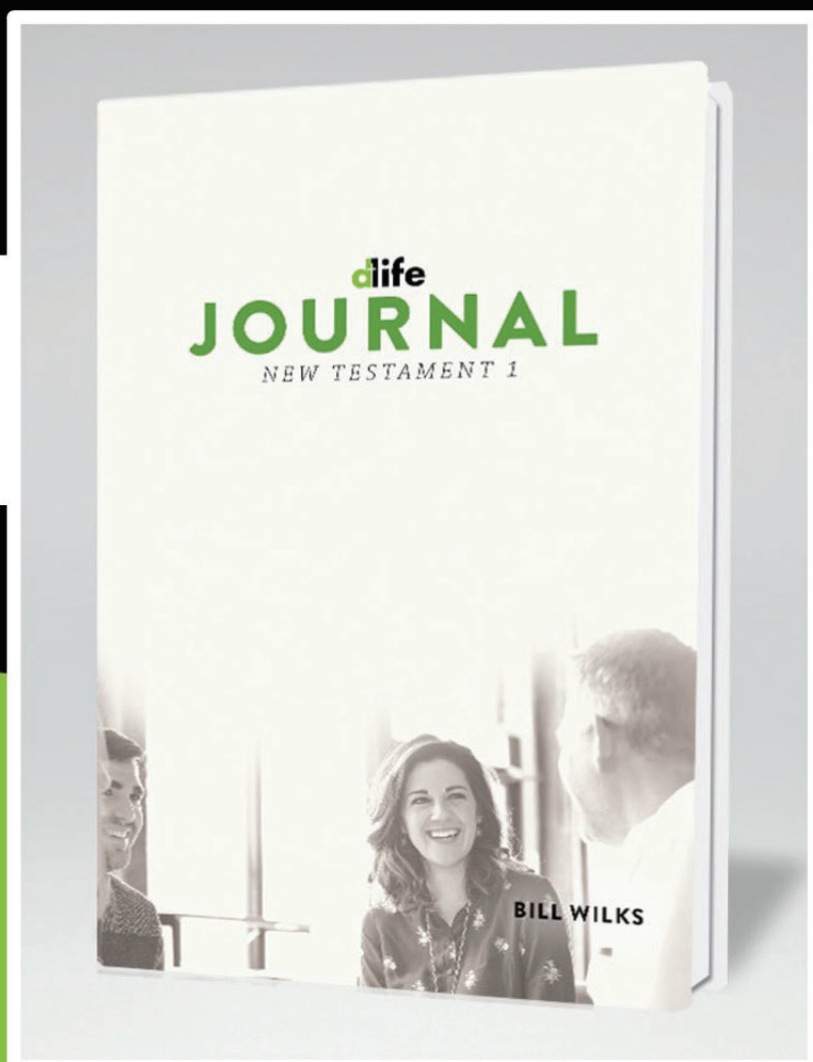
Javed Sahotra, their attorney, said the defense showed that the charges were false and that police did not investigate thoroughly. (TAB)



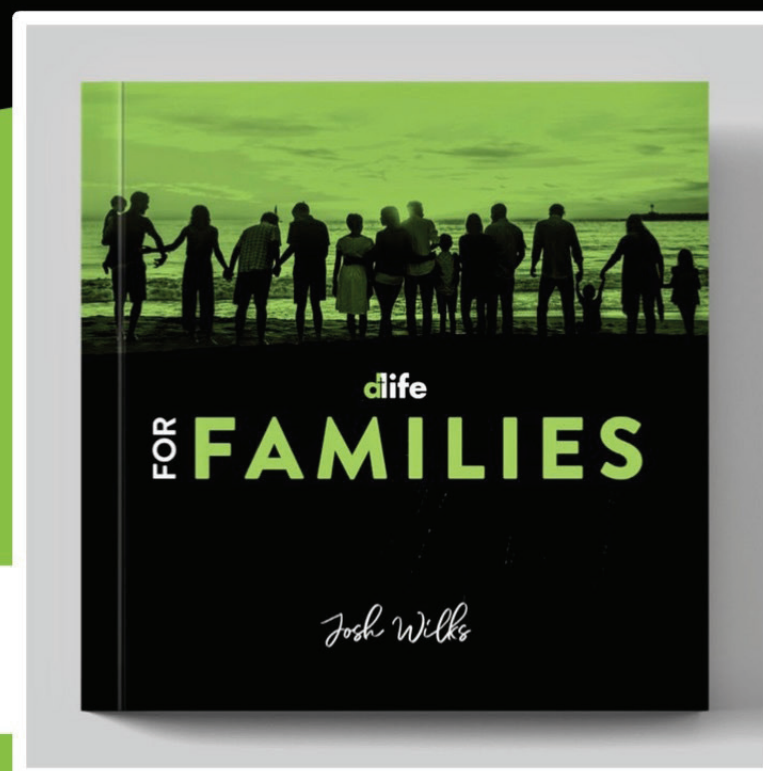
Photo courtesy of Morning Star News

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'We're unified'

By Karen L. Willoughby
The Baptist Paper

FBC Monticello leads by example in Utah

Six elders have led First Baptist Church Monticello, Utah, southwest of Moab, since February 2022. All were ordained to pastoral ministry this February and serve jointly to pastor the church where about 40 people attend Sunday morning worship services.

"I wouldn't say we have a plan," Russell Schafer told UI Connections, the online newspaper for Southern Baptists across Idaho and Utah. "We feel like we want to be led by the Holy Spirit every minute, and oftentimes that doesn't equal a plan as such."

"In the very beginning we said we wanted to be led by the Spirit," Schafer continued. He's the owner of Schafer Auto Clinic in Monticello and one of the six elders.

John Williams retired after serving as pastor of FBC Monticello for nearly 30 years. He was followed a while after by Richard Collins, who was pastor for seven years until he felt called back to a ministry he had operated for the previous nine years with the Navajo Nation.

Working together

When the men of the church met to discuss the formation of a pastor search committee, they decided not to pursue calling one from outside the area. Beginning in February 2022 the six men have ensured that one of them is preaching every Sunday, and they work together to handle the pastoral duties.

In addition to Schafer, the elders are Allen Barry, a farmer in irrigation sales; Reid Sifford, teacher of the visually impaired; Paul Plemons, fuels technician for the U.S. Forest Service; Joe Harris, plumber and recreational vehicle park owner; and Rhett Sifford, radio broad-



Submitted photo

Six men ordained to the pastoral ministry in February, 2024 served as the pastor of First Baptist Church of Monticello, Utah.

caster, newspaper writer and editor.

"The church, like many others, faces the challenge of mediocracy," Schafer stated. "One of the biggest things we ask God for is to lead us away from that. We pray about that quite a bit."

"We want to see the church baptizing many people," the elder continued. "The church has been in this small Mormon community since 1955, and it's been difficult over the years, though it's gotten better."

"We're seeing 20- to 40-year-olds are unhappy with the Mormon church," Schafer said. "We're trying to evangelize them. It's very difficult because they don't trust religion. We let them know we're not about religion but about Jesus Christ, and He's a different Jesus than they've ever known."

Sunday School at FBC Monticello begins at 9:45 a.m. for all ages, and Sunday morning worship fol-

lows at 11. The church has a time of fellowship with a potluck on the first Sunday of every month, a tradition that goes back decades.

The men of the church meet every Wednesday morning for a prayer breakfast. The women meet at 11 a.m. on Wednesdays for lunch and a Bible study.

The junior high and high school youth group meets Wednesday evenings at 6:30, led by the wife of one of the six elders.

"We have [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] folks coming to our prayer breakfasts," Schafer said. "We evangelize as much as possible and provide as much discipleship as we can to every person."

"Things are changing," the elder continued. "I think we see lots of new and good things happening. More Mormon people are coming all the time, people looking for truth."

FBC Monticello allocates up to 10% of its budget for missions — including 2% through the Cooperative Program — and also helps support the Arches New Hope Pregnancy Center in Moab and a missionary family serving in the Dominican Republic.

Generosity

The church also raises extra funds each year to help support a small village in Zimbabwe where Collins ministered for a number of years. It also directly supports in several ways the former pastor's ministry among people in the Navajo Nation.

Every Christmas season several teams from FBC Monticello work with Collins' ministry to deliver about 1,500 gift boxes to children there.

It's similar to the Operation Christmas Child shoebox program, and the church participates in that program as well. Collins' partners in Kentucky supply the filled shoeboxes for the work on the reservation.

"This community is shrinking," Schafer said of the town the church calls home. About 1,750 people live in Monticello now, which is down from 1,952 in 2010.

"There's a fair bit of financial difficulty in our community ..., but our obligation to Jesus is to reach those who are here," Schafer continued. "In our community it's 100% about relationships."

The six elders meet once a month for about three hours to encourage each other, pray together and discuss the needs of the church body.

"I think for the most part the people feel like the church is moving forward," Schafer said. "We're unified."

Flipping the. narrative

By Diana Chandler

Baptist Press

Report: More men attending church, volunteering rebounding

Men have outpaced women in church attendance the past three years, reversing a longstanding trend of more women in the pews that narrowed in 2016, Barna said in its 2025 State of the Church release, created in partnership with Gloom.

Women had outpaced men in attendance since 2000, then at 47% to 38%, before men began outpacing women in 2022, at 35% to 30%. In 2024, 30% of men were attending weekly, compared to 27% of women.

“As a leader,” researchers said, “consider how your church is reaching and connecting with women, who have traditionally been more engaged but now waver.”

Several reasons could be driving the gender flip in attendance, researchers told Baptist Press, but cited none as definitive to any degree.

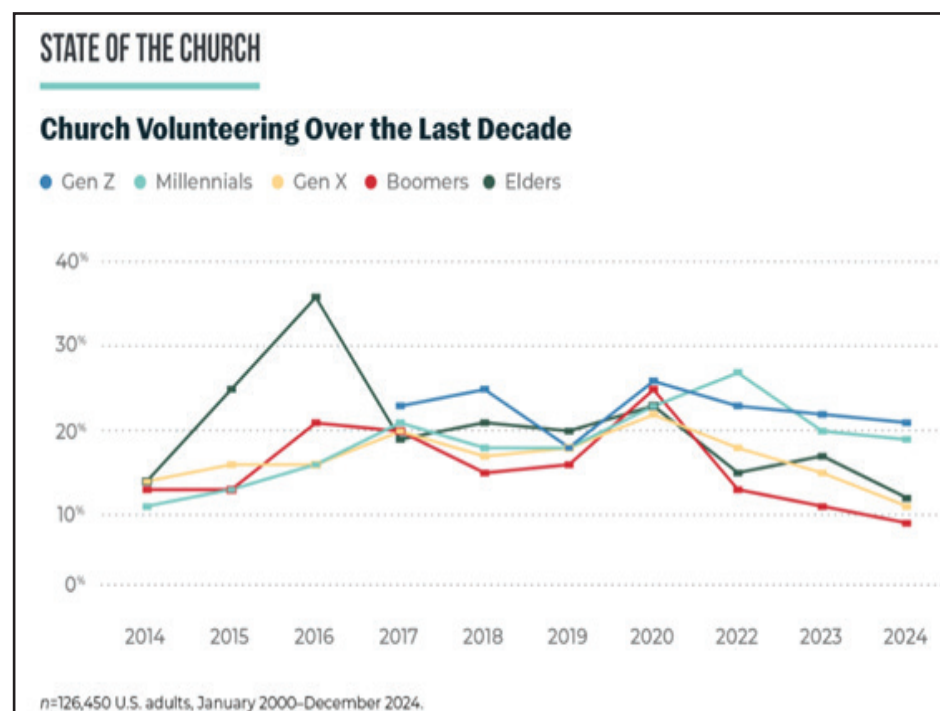
Among them:

- ▶ Women are overwhelmingly responsible for home and child care and increasingly work in the marketplace because of a rising cost of living.

- ▶ “More women are single today than ever before,” researchers said, “and many feel discouraged by the dating pool at church, as church attendees are more often married than not.”

- ▶ Researchers pointed to the lingering trauma of the COVID-19 pandemic and its shift on remote engagement in church and work.

- ▶ “A troubling number of Christian ministry leaders have publicly and egregiously fallen to sexual



sin, which tends to make women in particular feel uncomfortable and unwelcome,” researchers said. “These hurtful experiences cause great dissonance for women.”

Overall, 2024 closed with 28% of U.S. adults attending church weekly. But early 2025 shows signs of promise with as many as 32% of adults attending church weekly, researchers said.

Top trends

The flip in attendance was among five top trends Barna and Gloom announced in their State of the Church report released in March.

Other trends cited:

- ▶ Weekly church volunteering, at 24% of U.S. adults, surpassed pre-COVID 2019 levels of 18%, with Gen Z and Millennials leading the efforts.

- ▶ 65% of U.S. adults, including Christians and non-Christians, be-

lieve the church is still relevant.

- ▶ Most adult church goers actively seek relational connections at church, engaging in conversation before or after church with a pastor (57%), other attendees (53%), or church staff (50%).

- ▶ Spiritual encounters make church meaningful, Christians said. Top spiritual encounters cited were “connecting to God,” chosen by 73% of respondents; the “presence of the Holy Spirit,” chosen by 68% of respondents; “growing closer to Jesus,” 67%; “praying together,” 59%; “emotional comfort,” 58%; and “the sermon” and “worshiping together,” each drawing 56% of respondents. “Serving,” 47%; discipleship, 41%; and “giving or tithing,” 39%, ranking lowest among factors that make church meaningful.

Volunteerism is rebounding from the hit it took during the pandemic,

researchers found, with the highest rates of weekly volunteering seen in adult Gen Z, at 21%, and Millennials, 19%. That’s far more than the 9% of Boomers and the 12% of Elders who volunteer weekly, and far different than 2000 when the older generations were the top volunteers.

Researchers suggest the flip might amount to the dynamics of life stage and desire.

Giving through service

Younger generations have more time flexibility, physical energy, excitement and opportunities to serve, researchers said, and are more able to give through service than financial resources.

“It could be that young people are offering what they have in abundance: their time, presence and passion,” researchers said. “It’s also important to think about this from not just the rise in volunteerism among next generations but the decline in volunteerism among older adults.”

Post-COVID, a plurality of Boomers and Elders have not rebounded back into active life.”

Gen Z, tending to be cause-driven, sensitive to problems and injustices, and wanting to see real change, appreciate the structured opportunities churches provide to make a difference, researchers said.

Churches are offered free access to articles and quick insights from the research at Barna.com.

EDITOR’S NOTE — This story was written by Diana Chandler and originally published by Baptist Press.