

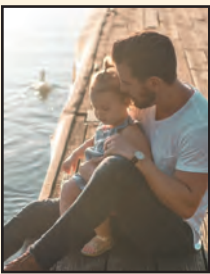


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Russian Orthodox church in Moscow, Russia

IMB photo

# Door for evangelism still open

## New restrictions placed on sharing gospel outside 'designated' places in Russia

By Carrie Brown McWhorter  
The Alabama Baptist

The number of people identifying as Christian has almost doubled in Russia since the fall of Communism. However, concerns remain about general apathy toward religious practice and tighter restrictions on religious liberty.

A recent study by Pew Research Center found that a solid majority of adults across much of the region say they believe in God and most identify with a religion. Orthodox Christianity and Roman Catholicism are the most prevalent religious affiliations,

with the number of Orthodox Christians in Russia rising to 71 percent, up from 37 percent in 1991 when the Communist-governed Soviet Union dissolved into 15 separate countries.

### Orthodox Christianity

The Pew survey of more than 25,000 adults ages 18 and older in 18 countries in Central and Eastern Europe estimates that 57 percent of people living in the region identify as Orthodox. Catholics make up about 18 percent of the region's population, including majorities of adults in Poland, Croatia, Lithuania and Hungary. Approximately 10 percent of

Russians are Muslim, though Islam dominates in several Central Asian countries of the former Soviet Union, including Tajikistan (95.9 percent), Turkmenistan (94.9 percent) and Uzbekistan (80.9 percent).

The number of people who identify as atheist, agnostic or "nothing in particular" also has fallen in Russia and across the region.

Evangelicals represent a small presence in the region.

According to the Joshua Project, only 1.22 percent of the Russian population is evangelical. Estonia (4.46 percent) and Latvia (6.38 percent) have a slightly higher percentage of

evangelicals than others in the region.

This rise in Orthodox Christianity has not been accompanied by high levels of church attendance, however. In Russia only 6 percent said they attend religious services at least weekly. Regionally about 10 percent of Orthodox Christians say they go to church on a weekly basis.

### Comparison to Muslims

The general lack of participation in religious activities also is common among Muslims in the former Soviet bloc countries. A 2012 study by Pew found relatively low levels of (See 'Prayer,' page 13)

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# COMMENT

## Examining the Samford Controversy

Who would have thought that a proposed student group at Samford University could strain the 175-year partnership between the university and the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC)?

Sadly that is where Alabama Baptists find themselves as Samford trustees ponder whether or not to approve a new campus student group called Samford Together. In the background is the warning of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) that to do so could have “serious implications” for the relationship between Samford and the convention.

The issue behind the debate is homosexuality and its related issues including gay “marriage” and gender identity.

But before swords are drawn and the battle joined, it is important to recognize that all the parties are on the same side concerning their view of homosexual activity. They oppose it. Furthermore, the parties also agree there is no place at Samford for any group to advocate for a homosexual lifestyle or homosexual activities.

### Call to Prayer

A Call to Prayer shared with SBOM and sent to all Alabama Baptist pastors from ABSC President John Thweatt declared, “We also believe in the full authority of the Word of God and Alabama Baptists have been consistently clear in affirming the Bible’s clear teachings on matters related to gender, sexuality and marriage.”

Like most Baptists in the state, leaders believe the Bible condemns homosexual behavior and that no Bible passage tolerates or affirms it.

Samford President Andrew Westmoreland is on record saying, “I hold what I consider to be, along with perhaps the vast majority of Samford’s constituents, an understanding of biblical marriage as between a man and a woman.” He called that understanding “biblical truth” and “timeless biblical teaching regarding human sexuality.”

### ‘Desire to be faithful’

Westmoreland further declared, “From the depths of my soul I desire to be faithful to a just and loving God and to abide by the authority of Scripture.”

While the Samford trustees have not voted on this issue, it is unimaginable that the trustees — all of whom are Alabama Baptists — would not follow the lead of their president and support this traditional understanding of human sexuality.

In the Call to Prayer, Thweatt, speaking for convention leaders, urged Samford not to grant official sanction to any organization that would “question or oppose” traditional biblical teachings regarding sexuality, gender and marriage.

When Westmoreland met with officers of the



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

state convention and SBOM, he assured them he would not allow any homosexual advocacy group to be approved or to operate on the Samford campus.

So if leaders of the state convention and Samford agree on what the Bible teaches about homosexuality and both affirm that homosexual advocacy has no place at Samford, what is the quarrel about?

It is about perception.

Samford understands the student organization as a discussion group to help equip participants to live in a world where they will face issues about homosexuality. Convention leaders see it as a homosexual advocacy group.

The Samford Together (ST) purpose statement as presented to the faculty said, in part, “Samford Together hopes to encourage students’ academic development, social consciousness, spiritual formation and relational clarity” by discussing topics relating to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Samford officials insist the organization is to foster conversation and dialogue which is appropriate in a university setting — even when the topics are controversial. Officials add the organization is “not to engage in theological and political advocacy.”

Westmoreland went a step further in meeting with convention officials. He promised to personally monitor the activities of ST if the student group is approved and to close the organization if it strayed into advocacy.

### Making a decision

Westmoreland and others argue the university must make decisions on what is before it such as what is provided in official documents and not on fears of what something might morph into over time. In the meantime Samford officials say they are willing to bear witness to the truth of God’s Word concerning human sexuality and

trust the Holy Spirit to apply it to hearts and minds.

Convention leaders contend the group is already an advocacy group no matter what the documents say. They point to the rainbow colors of the organizational logo, the fact that the student founder formerly worked for the Human Rights Campaign in Project One America.

Project One America is an \$8.5 million campaign begun in 2014 which focuses on Alabama, Mississippi and Arkansas. Among its purposes is to build “safe and inclusive faith communities for LGBT” people.

### ‘Accepting environment’

Convention leaders point to terms like “accepting environment” — a term used in the ST purpose statement — and argue that means accepting conduct that contradicts biblical standards.

For convention leaders, the proposed student

organization is nothing less than a wolf in sheep’s clothing. They point to what has happened in culture generally around homosexuality as well as what has happened in other Christian universities and conclude ST is the proverbial “camel’s nose under the tent.”

That is why the first official statement by convention leaders warned that Samford was considering recognizing a “student group that identifies with values contrary to biblical teachings on sexuality.”

There is much to commend regarding the convention’s perception even though it is mostly circumstantial. Unfortunately the convention statement did

not acknowledge the difference is about perception of the purpose of ST and not about commitment to what the Bible teaches about human sexuality.

### Linked together for 175 years

Samford and Alabama Baptists have been inexorably linked to one another for 175 years and the need of each for the other is as real today as it has ever been. The leadership of both the university and the convention cooperate together as closely now as any time in the past.

Those charged with finding a way through this current discord are good and godly people. They are all brothers in Christ. None is an enemy. All Alabama Baptists will want to pray that God will guide them to resolve this difference in perception without creating a rift in the body of Christ known as Alabama Baptists. †

**“All Alabama Baptists will want to pray that God will guide [those involved] to resolve this difference in perception without creating a rift in the body of Christ known as Alabama Baptists.”**

# TAB

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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# Loving people

## Coffee shop experience inspires Miss UM to start homeless ministry

The barista stands smiling behind the counter while preparing drinks. Meanwhile, an unkempt, older man walks in — dirty blue jeans, a shirt several sizes too large, his face unshaven and burned from the sun.

"Hey there, Chelsey," he calls to the barista.

"Hey, Mr. Jimmy," she returns, coming from behind the counter to reach out for a hug, still smiling.

This barista is Chelsey Sayasane, currently Miss University of Mobile 2017. The man is Mr. Jimmy, a homeless man and a frequenter of Moka's Coffee Company in Saraland where Sayasane has served as a barista for several years.

Their friendship sparked an idea that became a ministry to provide winter, rain and business coats to the homeless and create relationships with them.

Sayasane started Coats of Many Colors in 2016 as a college student at UM, which is in one of the rainiest cities in the nation. It became part of her platform in the Miss University of Mobile pageant, which she won in February.

Slingshot Inc., a national com-

pany based in Mobile and led by a UM graduate, liked the idea and promoted it nationwide through their business. Sayasane is continuing to share the ministry as she competes in the Miss Alabama pageant June 7-10.

Sayasane said God used Mr. Jimmy to open her heart to loving people in ways she hadn't before.

"He would come into Moka's every week and ask if he could pick up the trash in the parking lot," Sayasane said. "He just wanted to help out. When I would

see him, I would talk to him like I would to a friend. We talked about his family, what led him to become homeless and why he thought it was so hard to overcome. I saw him as a human being, not just

a homeless man."

Sayasane eventually asked Mr. Jimmy what the homeless community needed most from their neighbors throughout Mobile County.

### Meeting needs

"He told me that they needed emotional care (and) to know they aren't forgotten, but physically they needed coats," Sayasane said.

This conversation prompted her to pray for what God was calling

For more information, visit giving.umobile.edu.

## Reigning Miss Alabama 2016 uses platform to share purpose

When Hayley Barber was crowned Miss Alabama 2016, her father saw it as "a God thing."

"[God] wanted her on a larger platform to be able to share who she is and her purpose in life," said Mark Barber, pastor of Hillview Baptist Church, Forestdale, in an interview with *The Alabama Baptist* after

his daughter was crowned.

Over the past year Hayley Barber has used her platform to "shine God's light" through her community program, "Sight for Small Eyes."



BARBER

Hayley Barber will crown Miss Alabama 2017 on June 10 at Samford University's Wright Center in Birmingham. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of University of Mobile

Miss University of Mobile Chelsey Sayasane has collected more than 1,000 coats for her Coats of Many Colors ministry, which was inspired by a homeless man who frequented the coffee-house where she has served as a barista.

her to do: to actively work with the homeless community in Mobile. And soon, she went to work.

"I started to strategize. I made a goal to do one coat drop-off a month and collect coats throughout the month," she explained.

Sayasane collects coats from all over Saraland just north of Mobile — Saraland High School, Bridgeway Academy and Merle Norman. She picks up the coats from each location and partners with local organization One Meal to distribute coats one Sunday a month. The coats are distributed directly to homeless men and women in downtown Mobile.

During Sayasane's first coat delivery a local news anchor was running in Bienville Square, a public park in downtown Mobile. The anchor grew curious about what was going on, so she stopped running to ask. After hearing Sayasane's story, she conducted a brief Facebook Live interview with Sayasane.

"That interview opened so many doors," Sayasane said.

To date Sayasane has collected more than 1,000 coats and they just keep coming. Despite the

influx of donations, there are still needs to fill.

"Right now there are so many more women's coats than men's but there are more homeless men in Mobile than there are homeless women," Sayasane said.

But she remains patient as she considers ways to remedy the shortage of men's coats, keeping her focus on a more important issue: spreading the gospel.

In addition to collecting and giving away coats, Sayasane has prayed with more than 80 homeless men and women.

"It's much more than giving away free coats," she continued. "I want those

who are homeless to know they are not forgotten, that we see them in their struggle. This is about building relationships in our community.

"Jesus is so faithful. When I was praying about this, I asked the Lord to take control. I wanted Him to use me in whatever I did," she said. "When I began serving others, I always expected to make an impact but this has changed me and my heart." (UM)

The Miss Alabama Pageant will take place at Samford University on June 7-10. For details, visit www.missalabama.com.



# Advertising history

## How TAB's ad strategy has evolved with culture since 1840s

By Elizabeth Wells  
Special to The Alabama Baptist

**T**he Alabama Baptist (TAB) always had an advertising plan because subscriptions didn't pay all the bills. The early paper depended on advertisements to keep it afloat. Advertisements — informative, educational, often entertaining — grab the reader, present the product in an attractive package and even add testimonials from satisfied prominent customers. Important to the advertiser was the market base the newspaper provided. In addition, these items provided a glimpse into the ever-changing culture in which the paper lived.

In the 1840s and 1850s, advertisements were primarily on page four but could be found in other areas if there were too many or were used as fillers. Among the local ads were The Marion Hotel and Stage Office, Thomas Wheeler's Importers and Wholesale Grocery Store and C.M. High's Drugs and Medicine Company. There was the Exchange Hotel and McBryde's Druggist in Montgomery with Montgomery Commercial Prices Current providing the going rate for bacon, corn, molasses and cotton. Mobile's Anderson, Burkes, Factors and Commercial Merchants handled the brokering of crops which could be shipped by The Mobile and Montgomery Weekly Packet — but they did not operate on the Sabbath.

Some merchants were multipurposed in their stores. Loveland and Lockwood Furniture Company also carried "Fisk's Metallic Burial Case, an invention coming into general use from New York, fine mahogany coffins and a fine hearse prepared always."

McBryde's Druggist "handled all paints, oils, glass, varnishes, brandies, wines, teas, sugar, spices, teas, pickles and garden seeds." Other companies were single purposed as Rock Island Paper Mills Agency manufacturing paper, "seeking good clean linen and cotton rags."

Medical ads eventually became more numerous. Dr. S. Ball, a dental surgeon in Marion, had a "new way to set plate teeth."

Shelby Springs Resort offered a "quiet, healthy abode during the sultry summer months." Auburn Water Cure, for all acute diseases, was close to the railroad depot in eastern Alabama.

Advertisements could be found for schools such as Howard College in Birmingham and Judson Female Institute in Marion as well as professional and business "calling cards" for attorneys, teachers, piano tuners and political candidates. Alongside other ads were legal notices, news of land sales and auctions for land and goods.

### Agricultural advertisements

The latter 19th and early 20th century advertisements were for primarily agricultural products. Joe. S. McCrary from Portland, Illinois, was a producer, breeder and shipper of Portland Hogs. The new Brunley Plow was rust proof. Alabama Fertilizer Company in Montgomery supplied their product in water repellent bags for hauling and storage. Railroad Press and Warehouse would weigh and store your cotton prior to shipping. From South Carolina were the special buggies for doctors and those with long body and storage drawers for liverymen.

Advertisements for industrial operation equipment and technical goods reflected the cultural shift to industry. Iron and Brass Foundry and Machine Shop in Selma advertised as did Reynolds Lumber and Milling Company in Birmingham. Dewberry and Sons bought ads showcasing office supplies and printing. And the ads by Schapero-graph Company in New York for printing surfaces, negative paper, inks and typewriter ribbons illustrated the advances in printing and business. Steamboat and stagecoach schedules and later railroad routes and schedules were included.

Products encouraged intellectual and cultural development. American Baptist Publishing Society offered Christian literature and the Baptist Sunday School Board advertised their publications. E.E. Forbes was Alabama's Leading Music Dealer with cabinet organs for your home.

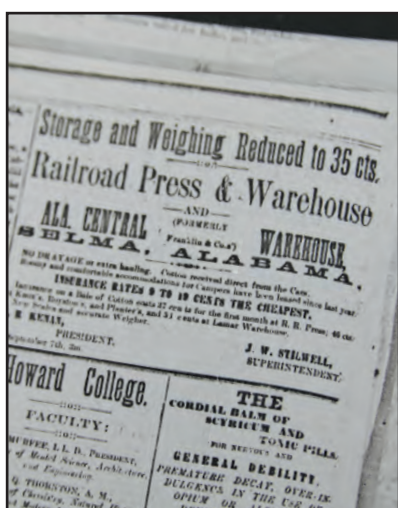


Photo by Hannah Muñoz

In the 1800s advertisements often informed readers about changing rates, such as the rate for storage and weighing in the ad above.

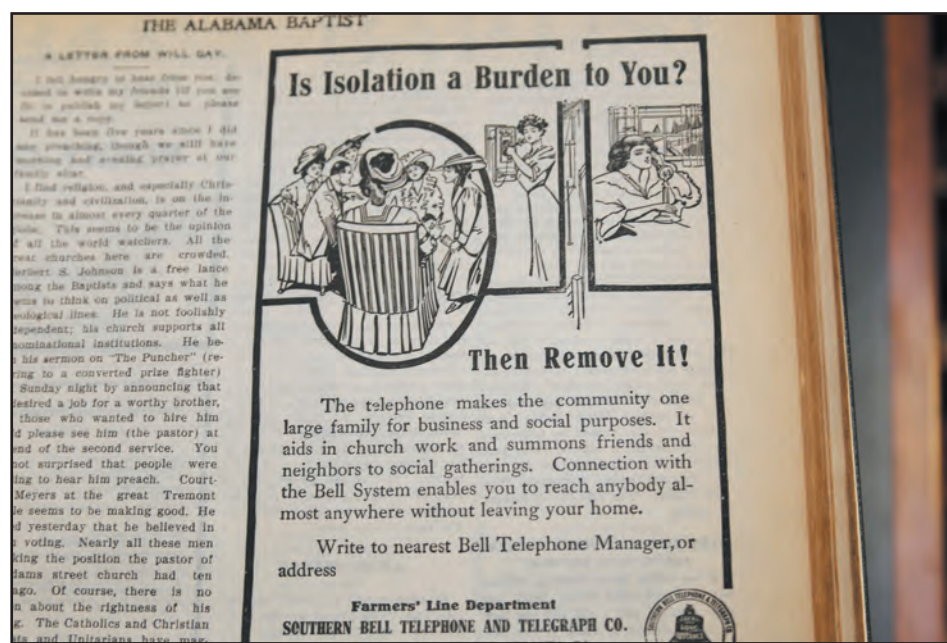


Photo by Hannah Muñoz

At the turn of the century advertisers, such as Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Co., began focusing on technology and appealing to female consumers.

Some companies focused attention on women. Wheeler Business College and Georgia-Alabama Business College illustrated the ad with women stenographers, adding that courses would raise salaries for bookkeepers, stenographers, schoolteachers and brain workers of all colleges."

Home products offered improved methods for the consumer. Fairbanks Gold Dust Washing Powder promised your glasses to sparkle and "it does the work your muscle has to do when you use soap." Royal Baking Powder, absolutely pure, "makes the food more delicious and wholesome." Pyrex dishes go from freezing to baking without breaking. Add glycerin, Bay rum and water to a small box of Barbo compound and gradually watch your hair become glossier, softer and darker.

There were lots of medicinal ads for a while: Mozley's Lemon Elixir, prepared with fresh ingredients to aid in digestion, sickness and nervous headaches; The Cordial Balm of Syricum and Tonic Pills to relieve nervous disability; Dr. Bill's Cough syrup to cure a cough or cold at once.

### Societal problems

But following warnings of the Alabama Medical Association about patent medicines, TAB Editor Frank Barnett screened the paper's medicinal product advertising, canceling contracts and not renewing others.

Advertisements also reflected societal problems. The growing concern about drug-

related ailments was illustrated by Dr. J.C. Huck's cure for Opium, Morphine Habit and intemperance. The Missouri Baptist Sanatorium offered help "for medical nervous case, surgical and all noncontagious medical cases."

The paper's advertising policy changed in 1919 after *The Alabama Baptist* became part of the Alabama Baptist State Convention. While a few medicinal ads remained, there were no patent medicine ads. With additional photographic capacities and printing techniques, advertisements had additional illustrations.

### War-related topics

During war years, patriotism invaded advertising. Larger companies, L&N Railroad, Alabama Power Company and the United States government's ads focused on war-related topics and services. Smaller companies sold blackout curtains, shared tips to stretch your rations and asked all to buy bonds.

*The Alabama Baptist* continues to accept advertisements. While there are none for Blymyer church bells, there are ads for baptistries, pews, hymnals, vans and church positions.

Do these still help pay the bills? Yes and a positive note for the advertiser: When the product appears in the newspaper, one third of responders in the most-recent readership survey were more likely to buy the product or service.✝

## 4 technology habits OF THE AMERICAN HOME

Barna Group conducted a public opinion survey among 1,021 U.S. parents with children ages 4–17 in January and February of 2016. The results, released in the new book “The Tech-Wise Family” by Andy Crouch, show the deep connection Americans of all ages have with their smartphones.

### #1: “Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep ... with My Smartphone”

When they do go to bed, most people take their phones with them. A full 7 in 10 parents say they sleep with their phone next to them. Alarming parents say their kids are even more likely to take their phones to bed: More than 8 in 10 parents of teens (82 percent) say their child takes their phone to bed and more than 7 in 10 parents of preteens (72 percent) say the same. And when that phone is right next to you, it’s tempting to reach for it when you wake up: 62 percent of parents say checking their phone is the first thing they do in the morning. What are they doing on their phone while they rub away the cobwebs of sleep? Most check their email (74 percent). Social media (48 percent), news (36 percent) and calendar organization (24 percent) also vie for their attention. Less than 1 in 5 (17 percent) are using a Bible or devotional app.

### #2: Parents Might Limit Kids’ Device Usage — But Don’t Eliminate It

Children are spending an average of five hours on an electronic device (tablet, phone, computer, etc.) every day. Even at this amount, most parents say they are limiting the amount of time their kids spend on electronic devices (60 percent). Millennial parents — perhaps because they have younger children or perhaps because they are more likely to be immersed in and therefore experiencing their own angst around electronic usage — are more likely (73 percent) than Gen Xer (57 percent) or boomer parents (57 percent) to limit their children’s time on electronic devices. Limiting time seems more popular than eliminating the devices: Most kids have phones. Nearly 9 in 10 parents with teenagers (88 percent) say their teen has a phone and just under half of parents with preteens (48 percent) say their child does.

### #3: Parents Say Technology Disrupts the Dinner Table

When it comes to family meal time (which parents on average say happens at least six times a week), parents are apt to admit this space has been disrupted by electronic devices: One-quarter (24 percent) say they strongly agree that electronic devices are a significant disruption to their family meals, with an additional nearly one-fifth (18 percent) saying they somewhat agree. However, about one-third of parents (32 percent) say devices are not allowed at the table and another 1 in 5 (22 percent) say family members rarely bring their devices to the table. Only 1 in 5 (19 percent) say their family members always bring their devices to the table.

### #4: Video Games and Family Time Dominate After School Hours

Aside from television watching, technology occupies a central place in many of the after-school activities of children: Four in 10 parents (42 percent) say their children regularly play video games after school, 3 in 10 (27 percent) are on social media or texting with friends and a quarter (25 percent) are online other than for homework. Of course, there’s plenty of offline activity too: Nearly 6 in 10 (56 percent) spend time engaging with family members, 4 in 10 (39 percent) are playing informally, one-third (32 percent) are reading other than for homework, a quarter (23 percent) are playing organized sports and more than one-fifth (22 percent) are hanging out with friends.

For more on this topic, visit [Barna.com](http://Barna.com) and read “The Tech-Wise Family,” available wherever books are sold. Copyright Barna Group 2017. Used by permission.

# Techy families

## Families breaking new ground with technology in homes

By Carrie Brown McWhorter  
The Alabama Baptist

More than three-quarters of parents believe it is more difficult to raise teenagers today than when they were growing up. The No. 1 reason? The prevalence of technology.

“We’re the first ones to have to deal with it,” said Andy Crouch, author of “The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology in Its Proper Place.” “We can’t go to the wisdom of previous generations ... and so we are all just figuring this out as we go along.”

Crouch, a former editor at *Christianity Today*, is the author of several books that examine the intersection of the gospel and culture. In “The Tech-Wise Family,” Crouch combines his own experiences as a parent with original research from Barna to explore the tensions of parenting in a digital age (see sidebar).

What the research found is that parents today face challenges that their parents never imagined, Crouch says. For the first time perhaps in human history, the younger generation is more knowledgeable about a critical area of life than their parents are.

“Children, youth and young adults ... figure [technology] out really quickly,” he said in an interview with Barna’s Mark Matlock.

Managing technology is another story, however. Both parents and kids are uncertain how to manage technology, including smartphones and social media apps, in healthy ways.

“The impulses and addictions that drive us to use (technology) badly are age old — boredom, distraction, laziness, greed, lust,” he said. “To fight these old vices requires old virtues — character, courage, wisdom. The tech-wise family isn’t obsessed with rules. It’s obsessed with cultivating character, curiosity and play. If you get that stuff right, technology is more likely to fall into its proper place.”

Teens turn to technology, especially social media apps, to determine who they are, said Emily Hamilton, ministry assistant at Etowah Baptist Association and a former Baptist campus minister at the University of South Alabama in Mobile. Hamilton frequently speaks to parents, youth leaders and teens about social media.

Hamilton emphasizes that teenagers of every generation have sought to find their place, to fit in and to create an identity for themselves. In the past that exploration happened in activities like sports and school clubs. Today it happens on Instagram and Snapchat. Parents play a huge role in helping kids see that their identity comes first from Christ.

“Kids are looking for a place to belong and parents are empowered to help children realize that our worth comes not from followers on Instagram or likes on

Facebook. When a child’s identity is firmly rooted in the Body of Christ, all other relationships are secondary to that,” Hamilton said.

Many parents are reluctant to get involved in their kids’ use of technology, which Hamilton said is a mistake. It’s okay to tell kids to put the phone down or to set limits on when and where the phone can be used, she argues. But it’s also important to realize how much kids’ lives and technology are intertwined.

“The way they celebrate is through an Instagram post. So we might have to say, ‘You can take a picture of your plate but then we’re going to put our phones down and have a conversation.’ We have to create an environment where technology and social media are acknowledged but are not the most important thing,” Hamilton said.

Youth leaders also have a tremendous influence in helping kids put technology in perspective, said

Scooter Kellum, youth ministry strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

“Social media and technology are great tools for gospel ministry and kingdom impact if we use them correctly,” Kellum said. “Youth pastors are learning and studying so they will know what’s going on in that world.”

Because parents sometimes aren’t in the online world, it’s youth ministers who often recognize problems first, Kellum said. So often, the youth pastor is going to parents to alert them to concerns.

“Our tendency is toward being reactive instead of proactive,” Kellum said.

“The resources to help kids make better decisions are out there, so if parents used those more I think we would see a big difference in what kids are doing online.”

Hamilton believes small groups will continue to make a huge impact on ministry, especially with students because that’s where they can interact one-on-one.

### ‘Monopoly’ on life conversations

“We as the Church have a monopoly on the market of being the place where life conversations happen,” she said. “Meetings at home, in coffee shops, wherever, is something we will see more and more and being very effective in ministry to youth and college students especially.”

Parents can use the same strategies with their children, Hamilton said. “It’s empowering parents. It’s discipleship. When mom or dad or youth pastor says, ‘Let’s go to dinner,’ it may be uncomfortable for teens but deep down they want that connection.”

Research backs that up, according to Crouch.

“When we ask kids, ‘What do you most wish was different in your relationships with your parents?’ their No. 1 wish is that ‘I wish my parents would get off their screens and talk to me.’”



123rf.com

# Persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia intensifies, targets children

Teachers have humiliated Jehovah's Witness children in front of their classmates. Arsonists have burned Witnesses' homes. Security forces have raided their meeting halls.

Since the Russian Supreme

Court on April 20 declared the Jehovah's Witnesses an extremist group, its members have faced increasing harassment from both authorities and suspicious neighbors.

And in late May, for the first time since the decision, a Jehovah's Witness has been not only detained by police but jailed by a judge.

"He read the Bible. That's why he was arrested," said Yaroslav Sivulskiy, a representative of the Jehovah's Witnesses in St. Petersburg.

For about a month the Witnesses had not felt the full force of the court decision, which calls for the liquidation of the Jehovah's Witnesses organization — not only its Russian headquarters in St. Petersburg, but also the 400 or so Kingdom Halls where more than 100,000 Jehovah's Witnesses meet.

Yet worship had continued at many of these Kingdom Halls.

Within the past few weeks, however, intensifying persecution has prompted most congregations to move group worship to private homes, Sivulskiy said.

Most worrisome to many Witnesses are the recent instances in which schoolteachers, principals and police have turned on children.

"Officials who were already minded to take action against Jehovah's Witnesses are now emboldened and ordinary people who have long disliked them are also emboldened," said Felix Corley, an Oslo-

based religious rights activist who edits the Forum 18 News Service which tracks abuses in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Sivulskiy, speaking from St. Petersburg, tells the story of an 8-year-old girl recently forced by her school principal to sing a patriotic song at school in front of her classmates.

Jehovah's Witnesses, an evangelical Christian group, remain neutral in politics. They pay taxes

but do not recite patriotic pledges, sing nationalistic songs or join the military.

In Bezvodnoye northeast of Moscow two sixth-grade girls were humiliated by a music teacher who defended her actions by noting that Jehovah's Witnesses are "banned." She reportedly said to the girls' mother: "You are now extremists and there will be no mercy."

The encounter with the music teacher is one of 50 detailed in a May 25 report the Witnesses — whose world headquarters are outside New York — released on harassment against their co-religionists in Russia.

## Labeled 'extremists'

Jehovah's Witnesses are far from the only religious group harassed in Russia, where President Vladimir Putin has aligned the government with the formerly communist country's dominant religion: Russian Orthodoxy. But only the Witnesses have been officially labeled extremists.

An "extremist" group in Russia can be defined as one that preaches that its path is the only one that can lead to salvation. Only the Russian Orthodox Church and a select few others may legally make that claim.

The Supreme Court will hear an appeal against the ban ruling on July 17. (RNS)

**"Officials who were already minded to take action against Jehovah's Witnesses are now emboldened."**

**Felix Corley  
Oslo-based religious rights activist**



## Kyrgyzstan leaders consider stricter religion laws

BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan — Enhanced restrictions on religious liberty and religious freedom currently are being considered in Kyrgyzstan. Proposed amendments to the existing Religion Law reportedly had their first reading in the Zhogorku Kenesh (Parliament) in the capital city of Bishkek on June 1.

If approved, there would be full state censorship of all religious literature published, distributed or photocopied in Kyrgyzstan or imported into the country as well as a ban on sharing beliefs in public — especially door-to-door.

The amendments were prepared by the State Commission for Religious Affairs and the timeline for consideration allows for a quick decision or could be extended into the fall.

Other provisions in the proposed amendments include an increase in the required number of adult citizens living in one place — from 200 to 500 — before a religious community can apply for registration. There also would be a requirement that anyone traveling abroad for religious education would have to inform the state where they are studying.

Punishments have not yet been set out for those violating these provisions.

Existing provisions in the law — which are reported to be a violation of Kyrgyzstan's international human rights commitments — include a ban on exercising freedom of religion or belief without state registration. (F18)

## Christians killed for refusing to cite Muslim creed

MINDANAO, Philippines — Eight Christians were among 19 civilians killed by an Islamic extremist group in the Philippines on May 23. And more than 100 others have been killed since the assault, according to media reports.

Government investigators said the eight slain Christian laborers had fled Marawi and were on their way to the neighboring city of Iligan when dozens of armed Maute militants stopped them. The Islamist militants tied their hands and shot them after the Christians refused to recite the Muslim conversion creed. Their bodies were reportedly thrown into the ditch and a signboard was placed beside them reading "Munafik," which means "traitor" or "liar."

They are the first Christians slain in the ongoing battle for Marawi City, capital of Lanao del Sur Province on the island of Mindanao, where more than 200 people reportedly have been taken hostage. An estimated 200,000 people have fled the city.

The Maute Group is one of the newest but most feared terror groups in the southern Philippines. Based in Central Mindanao, the Maute Group, locally known as the Islamic State in Lanao, was founded by brothers Omar and Abdullah Maute and originally had an estimated 100 members. Intelligence reports indicate they have joined forces with other terror groups operating in the southern Philippines. (MS)

## Hindu villagers come to Christ; pastor punished

HYDERABAD, India — Hard-line Hindus in southern India, upset that members of their caste-based group have become Christians, burned down a church building and the pastor's home in May, according to Morning Star News.

Assailants set fire to Pastor John Muller's house and church May 3 after he and his pregnant wife left for the store. Three days before, five young hard-line Hindus had threatened him, he said.

"They said, 'Don't stay here — get out of this area or we will see your end,'" Muller said. "Recently some villagers belonging to Vanniyar, a caste-based Hindu sect, came to Christ. The same caste group opposes conversions in the village because they treat Christianity as a religion of lower castes. They don't want anyone from Vanniyar to convert to Christianity."

The couple lost everything in the blaze and are staying with a church member, he said.

India ranked 15th on Open Doors' 2017 World Watch List of countries where Christians experience persecution. (MS)

## FBC Montgomery hosts annual SpringRing event



TAB AR

Photo by Doug Rogers

Eight handbell choirs from across Alabama — that amounts to around 70 ringers and 300 bells — came together May 20 for the 2017 SpringRing at First Baptist Church, Montgomery. Sponsored by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, the annual event is designed to allow ringers of any ability and choirs of all sizes to hone their skills under the direction of various clinicians, learn songs to play in worship and enjoy fellowship with other ringers.



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Doctrine of Sin

# Sin as Missing the Mark

By **Jerry Batson, Th.D.**  
Special to The Alabama Baptist

In past weeks Theology 101 gave attention to the doctrine of salvation. The Bible uses various analogies by which to help us grasp the truth about so great a salvation. Terms such as “birth,” “adoption,” “redemption,” “conversion,” “justification,” “reconciliation” and “forgiveness” had roots in both common life experiences and in its religious expressions.

The importance of understanding the fullness of salvation has much to do with a biblical understanding of sin. The doctrine of sin is the backdrop against which the gospel both presents and demands salvation. Last week we began with a consideration of the unholy alliance of the world, the flesh and the devil as the originating power of sin. For several weeks, we will think about human sinfulness by means of some of the terms the Bible uses to speak of sin.

### Term for sin

One of the terms used most often to speak of sin is one that expresses the idea of missing the mark. This is one of the common meanings of a New Testament Greek term for sin, “hamartia.” In the Old Testament the most frequently used Hebrew term for sin, which occurs hundreds of times, conveys the same meaning of “missing the mark.” A commonly cited Old Testament example of this basic idea about sin is found in Judges 20:15–16 where we read of 700 men from the tribe of Benjamin, all of whom were left-handed and “could sling a stone at a hair’s breadth and not miss.”

### ‘All have sinned’

When Romans 3:23 makes the summary statement about the universal sinfulness of all persons, it uses this very “missing the mark” word to declare, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” With the idea of missing the mark in mind we might say that

sometimes people miss the mark by aiming at the wrong target. Sometimes we may aim at the right target but miss the mark by coming short of it.

What is the target by which we define or measure sin as the missing of the mark? In short expression we might say the goal is godlikeness. Jesus put it like this: “You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). Thus, we would say that sin is any attitude, action or word that falls short of divine perfection, an indictment that is true of all of us. Again, Romans 3:23 expresses the missing of the mark as falling short of the glory of God.

### God’s perfection

Any failure to match the glorious perfections of God is sin. Yet again we might weigh Jesus’ admonition in Mark 12:30: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.” Failure to love God completely and consistently misses the mark Jesus set with this “greatest” of all the commandments.

We get the picture. Sin is registered every time any of us misses the goal of absolute love of God, failing to attain the glory of God in all that we are and do or coming short of God’s own perfection. Against the background of these considerations all of us in total honesty and openness must confess we have sinned and stand in need of the salvation God offers through His Son. †

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



# Faithful servant of God

## Pawnee Baptist’s 97-year-old organist serves church any time door is open

By **Anna Keller**  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Since 1978, Helen Matthews has held the role of organist at Pawnee Baptist Church, Birmingham. Now 97 years old, Matthews is still going strong and showing no signs of passing the baton anytime soon.

“I’m going to keep going as long as I can,” said Matthews, who was honored for her 39 years of service as church organist June 4 during the church’s homecoming service and celebration. She was presented with a cross and plaque during the service.

Matthews had never played the organ — or the piano, for that matter — prior to the late 70s but she said she’d always wanted to learn the instrument. She picked up a few piano tips from her children and then took a few organ lessons, practicing at the church as often as she could, before accepting the job as church organist.

“She’s been faithful to our church and playing the organ. I bet you could count on your hand the amount of services she’s missed,” said Karen Jenkins, a fellow Pawnee Baptist member and friend of Matthews.

Pawnee Pastor Joel Dison said he’s incredibly impressed with her commitment not just to playing the organ for the church but also her other contributions.

### ‘Dedicated’

“She’s one of the most dedicated ladies I’ve ever met,” he said. “She’s had some health issues and is always very upset when she can’t be there to play the organ. “Among other things, she helped out in the kitchen when she was younger and more physically able and she still serves as Sunday School director today,” Dison said.

Becky Foster, a Pawnee member, said, “She’s a very faithful member of the church, and if there’s any way possible, she’s always there. Any time the door of the church is open, she’s there like a little Energizer Bunny. She just keeps on going.”

### Profession of faith

Matthews is originally from Gary, Indiana, and was raised Catholic. She and her husband, Taylor (who was from the Birmingham area), moved to Alabama after he got out of military service. She said she became Baptist after talking with the church’s pastor who was a former Catholic himself. Matthews and her son were saved at the same time and were baptized together when her son was 12 years old.

Matthews has enjoyed being a member of Pawnee for many decades (she started attending back in the 50s) and describes it as “an incredibly welcoming” place.

“There’s a lot of love in the church and you’re greeted

with open arms,” Matthews said. “Everyone looks out for each other and does what the Lord leads them to do. I have a lot of help and a lot of love from people at the church.”

That love from people at the church certainly goes both ways.

Music minister Jackie Bagby, who has been at Pawnee for nine years, said, “Without a doubt, she enjoys playing.

“I enjoy hearing her play each week because she is using her talent to praise God.”

When she’s not at church, Matthews enjoys doing jigsaw puzzles. She and a group of ladies meet every afternoon to do puzzles and socialize over coffee and cookies. †



Photo courtesy of Pawnee Baptist Church

Helen Matthews has served as the organist for Pawnee Baptist Church, Birmingham, since 1978. She was recently honored for 39 years of service June 4.

# Fatherhood Program

## Ministry grows strong men, fathers from prison

By Anna Keller  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Fathers who are incarcerated at Limestone Correctional Facility in Harvest — northwest of Huntsville — have the opportunity

to learn skills to help them be better, more present parents thanks to an initiative spearheaded by the Alabama Justice Ministries Network (AJMN).

The 24/7 Dad fatherhood program that's offered at Limestone Correctional Facility is based around the National Fatherhood Initiative's curriculum, whose intent is

to "integrate fatherhood programming into rehabilitation and re-entry efforts." While the program contains a distinctly Christian slant it is open to both Christian and non-Christian men.

"We're trying to get people ready to get out [of prison]," said Donna Doyle Singleton, executive

director of AJMN. "It's not just about being a good father — it's about being a good man, a good person, a good husband, a good boyfriend."

The program is patterned after God, "the best Father there is,"

Singleton said. It uses biblical principles to pass along skills such as how to get an education in prison, pursuing job openings upon release, changing bad habits and working on inmates' relationships (with their wives, girlfriends, children's mother, children, etc.).

The fatherhood program has been going strong at Limestone for the past eight years. It's been so popular, in fact, that it had to be split in half and each class of 35 men rotates to meet every other Friday for an hour each session. It's one of the most attended program options the correctional facility offers, according to Singleton.

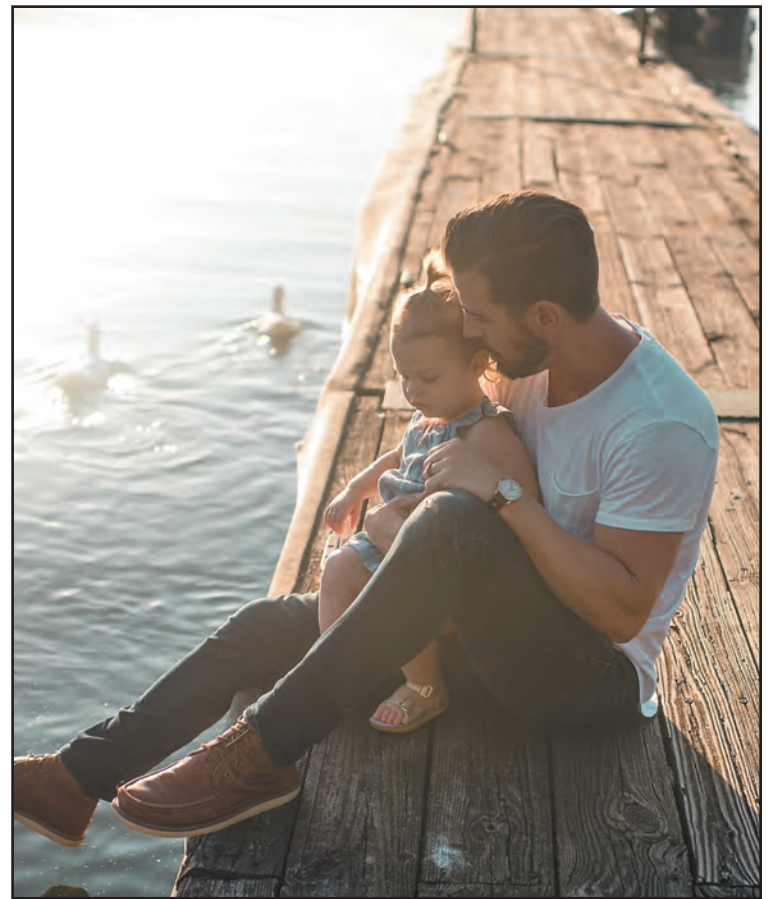
Upon completion of the program, participants are given a certificate that can help them in custody and visitation situations in the future.

### Success stories

"We had one gentleman who completed the program two years ago and earlier this year he was awarded full custody of his granddaughter," Singleton said. She says it's these types of stories that keep her and program volunteers motivated and encouraged.

Curtis Reynolds, now a chaplain at Brother Bryan Mission in Birmingham, used to volunteer with the fatherhood program through AJMN in 2013 and 2014. He gained full custody of his daughter because her mother was addicted to drugs and this personal experience attracted him to the program. Volunteering allowed him to connect with the incarcerated men in meaningful ways.

"I've always said a picture tells more than a story," he said. "If they can see what you're saying,



unsplash.com

they can understand what you're saying."

Reynolds said the program teaches participants that God takes care of His children, no matter what, that He never abandons them.

### 'So beneficial'

"We remind them how helpless they felt before they had a relationship with Jesus and let them know that's how their kids feel without a relationship with them," Reynolds

said. "This program is so beneficial. I've seen lots of men change their concept of responsibility and commitment by taking the class."

Singleton is proud of the course and is especially glad it can act as a way to share God's love with the inmates who participate in the program.

"If we can feed those people the Word of God and He changes their life because of it, they'll be better people when they come out," she said. ✝

**For information about Alabama Justice Ministries Network or becoming a volunteer, contact Donna Singleton at [dwoyle@ajmn.org](mailto:dwoyle@ajmn.org). For more information about the fatherhood program, visit [www.fatherhood.org](http://www.fatherhood.org).**

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# A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

## The Beautitudes series — Matthew 5:3-12

### 'Blessed are the merciful' (v. 7)

From the beatitude of our Lord on mercy, let us consider three characteristics of how mercy is a vital part of our relationship to God and to other people.

#### 1. Mercy provided — "They shall obtain mercy."

The Old Testament believer was directed by Moses' law to annually offer a sacrifice in the temple in Jerusalem as payment for the sins of the year. The ideal offering was a lamb without spot or blemish. The lamb would be offered by the High Priest as a sacrifice to appease God for the sins of the confessing people.

Once the blood was drained from the spotless lamb, the High Priest would carry the basin of the animal's blood into the Holy of Holies and sprinkle the blood on a piece of furniture called the mercy seat.

When the High Priest returned, the people knew their sins were forgiven because the blood on the mercy seat had been accepted by a Holy God. The place where forgiveness was found, where sinners were made clean — that place was known as the mercy seat.

#### Mercy seat in view

That mercy seat was in view in Luke 18 when Jesus told of two men who came to the temple to pray. One man stood in front and prayed, "I thank you, Lord, that I am not as other men. For I fast and I tithe." In essence, this man was extolling his own goodness.

But the other man sat in the back and beat his chest and just simply cried, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner." This man, a good Jew, knew the only hope for a sinner was in a sacrifice being made in his behalf. So he cried for mercy.

Titus 3:5 states the truth about our salvation so plainly as Paul writes, "Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but by His mercy, He saved us."

We are under God's judgment as sinners, as members of a cursed human race. There is no means to undo that judgment. All of the works we may produce cannot take away the guilt of our sin. Any reprieve from condemnation must somehow deal with our guilt. Any mercy must deal with what we have done.

This is further explained in Hebrews 9 where our Lord's work is described as superior to the Old Testament system of



By John H. Killian

John H. Killian is director of missions for Fayette Baptist Association and has taught at New Orleans Seminary's Birmingham extension center. He is a past president of the state convention.

of a slain animal dying as our substitute. John the Baptist presented Jesus as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." The blood of a spotless lamb is a picture of the Son of God who was spotless in His birth and sinless in His life, yet shed His blood to save us. Hebrews 9:26 says, "He (Jesus) has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." He goes on in verse 27: "Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many."

Death was appointed for all of humanity but Christ suffered to bear our death, to alleviate our judgment and to bring us mercy. That is how we have mercy in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Mercy produced — "Blessed are the merciful."

Luke 7 records the story of a sinful woman who came and anointed the feet of Jesus with expensive fragrance. Simon the Pharisee was critical of this action and rebuked Jesus for allowing a woman to touch him in this manner.

3. Mercy promised — "shall obtain mercy."

Positionally we have God's mercy now that has given us the promise of "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Once you are saved, you always possess the Holy Spirit and, if any tragedy comes and you leave this world, you will go to be with God.

But there will be a day when judgment falls on the world, a day when God brings the unsaved dead forth for judgment. What will then happen to us?

The Psalmist gave a glorious testimony: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Ps. 23:6). When judgment comes on the lost world, God's people are eternally protected by mercy. When time is over God's mercy still endures.

The mercy of the Lord Jesus was promised in His life, purchased by His death and guaranteed by His resurrection. His mercy has saved us and we know our sins are forgiven. His mercy is molding us into merciful people and when judgment comes, we know "God has not appointed us to wrath but to obtain mercy through our Lord" (1 Thess. 5:9).

Do you know His forgiveness? Are you under His mercy or under His wrath? We have no in-between, you are either under His wrath or protected by His mercy. ✠

Who are the ones who have the expecta-

tion of mercy? They are the redeemed children of God. Those who are saved by God's wonderful mercy are then given the grace to express mercy on others.

Scripture teaches over and over that pride is the predecessor of a spiritual fall. Think you are spiritual and watch God allow your flesh to show you what you really are. We are unable to live a clean life apart from the enabling grace of God.

#### Always on guard

You must always be on guard, ready for any challenge that could come your way, ready for any temptation you may face. You are not invincible nor are you beyond falling. Every one of us is capable of any sin imaginable.

See what you are and grasp your personal weakness and you will find yourself with a heart of mercy toward others in their weakness.

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Do you know His forgiveness? Are you under His mercy or under His wrath? We have no in-between, you are either under His wrath or protected by His mercy. ✠

## TAB staff honored by Alabama Press Association awards

The Alabama Press Association (APA) recently announced *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) was among its 2017 APA Better Newspaper Contest winners.

Editor Bob Terry and Neisha Roberts, former assistant editor, both won second place awards in TAB's division for work done in 2016. Terry won for his editorial "Mocking the Alabama Supreme Court" and Roberts won for her photo essay "The Value of the Church."

TAB has entered the APA contest for the last three years and brought home awards each year, including the top Freedom of Information — First Amendment Award last year. This year's contest had 2,753 entries submitted by 74 newspapers. The Georgia Press Association judged the entries.

TAB also won awards from Baptist Communicators Association, Associated Church Press, Evangelical Press Association and Religion Communicators Council this year and has garnered awards from these groups for more than 20 years. (TAB)

## BELIEVERS: A quick tip

### Starting a gospel conversation

Perhaps the most difficult part of verbally sharing the gospel is getting started. Here are a few tips to get the conversation going:

1. Show interest in the person by asking about his family or interests. If you are in a home, pick up on photographs or other items you can ask about. Be genuine. People can tell whether you care or if you just building up to the "sales pitch."

2. Remember your goal in the conversation is to bridge from earthly matters to eternal matters.

3. Most gospel presentations have the leading diagnostic type questions and most of these are fine. Be familiar with these so they can be used naturally and with ease. Have several different questions so if the one you normally use doesn't seem appropriate.

4. The question you use also is a way of testing the waters to determine if the individual is receptive. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you whether you need to back up and try another approach and or just back off until a later time. In the latter case ask if you could leave the gospel tract with them. I have found 99 percent of people are fine with that.

— Chip Warren, ministry leader ✠

"And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?" 1 Cor. 14:8



# Across ALABAMA'S Associations

To submit news items, email [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org) or call 205-870-4720, ext. 112, at least three weeks prior to the event.

## BESSEMER

► **Shady Grove Church, Bessemer**, will celebrate homecoming June 25. A luncheon will be at noon and Uplifted will perform special music at 1:30 p.m. Patrick Buckner is pastor.

## COFFEE

► **Coffee Association** is holding a gospel singing at New Brockton Town Park on June 10, 6 p.m. The Burning Bush Family, The Singing Miracles, Derek Snellgrove and Chosen will perform special music. There will be concessions. Please bring your lawn chair. A love offering will be received. For more information call 334-447-1036 or 334-282-3728. John Granger is director of missions. ► **Westview Church, Enterprise**, will hold VBS on

June 9, 6 p.m.–8:30 p.m.; June 10, 9 a.m.–2 p.m.; and June 11, 9 a.m. with lunch to follow. Lane Harris is pastor. ► **County Line Church, Enterprise**, will hold a day camp June 10, 12:30 p.m.–5:30 for preschool–6th grade. John Ham of Animal Tales will present “Animal Architects.” Camp activities will include Bible study, art, music and hands-on activities. A family meal and activity will end the day. Danny Wiggins is pastor. ► **Mount Pleasant Church, Enterprise**, will hold VBS on June 11–15, 5:30–8 p.m. Roger Richards is interim pastor. ► **Goodman Church, Enterprise**, will hold VBS on June 11–16, 5:30–8:30 p.m. Bruce Williams is pastor. ► **New Home Church, Enterprise**, will hold VBS on June 11, 5–8 p.m. and June 12–16,

6–9 p.m. Clifford Quincey is pastor. ► **Calvary Church, Enterprise**, will hold VBS on June 11–15, 5:30–8:30 p.m. Kerry Mitchell is pastor. ► **Hillcrest Church, Enterprise**, will hold VBS on June 12–15, 8:55 a.m.–12:15 p.m. for preschool and until 2:30 p.m. for grades 1–6. Michael Mynatt is pastor. ► **Westside Church, Elba**, will hold VBS on June 12–16, 9–11:30 a.m. Ken Wilson is pastor. ► **The Grace Place Church, Enterprise**, will hold VBS on June 14–16, 6–8:30 p.m. Randy Walker and Bryan Simoneaux are interim co-pastors. ► **Mount Gilead Church, Elba**, will hold a fun day June 17, noon–5 p.m. There will be hot dogs, hamburgers, ice cream and fun for the family. For more information call 334-494-

5161. Dewey Emfinger is pastor.

## COOSA RIVER

► **Westview Church, Sylacauga**, will hold VBS on June 19–23, 6 p.m.–8 p.m. Classes are available for 4 year olds through 8th grade. There will be Bible stories, science experiments, music and videos, crafts, games and snacks. To register visit [www.wherefriendsbecomefamily.com](http://www.wherefriendsbecomefamily.com) or come early on the first night. Jimmie Roberts is pastor.

## PLEASANT GROVE

► **Justin Hancock** is the new associate pastor of **Big Hurricane Church, Brookwood**. He previously served as youth pastor for Big Hurricane. He holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Alabama. He is married to Tammy. John Scott is pastor. ☞

## 11 Reasons to Not Drink Alcohol

1. God said to be sober (1 Thessalonians 5:6–8; 1 Peter 5:8 NKJV). The Greek word “nepho” means wineless, free from intoxicants.
2. We are to love God with all our minds (Mark 12:30). Alcohol impairs that mind.
3. It is expensive (Proverbs 23:21).
4. It makes you do foolish things you would never do in your right mind (Proverbs 23:29–35).
5. It is dangerous and addictive (Proverbs 20:1).
6. It hurts your testimony; you influence others to drink; you often harm others (Romans 14:21).
7. Drugs should not be used for recreation and pleasure.
8. Never take that first drink, and you will never become a problem drinker.
9. Drinking supports an industry that has destroyed untold thousands.
10. Not drinking is prudent and wise (Proverbs 20:1; 22:3).
11. You should rely on God, not drugs (Psalm 11:1).

— David R. Brumbelow, author of “*Ancient Wine and the Bible: The Case for Abstinence.*” [gulfcoastpastor.blogspot.com](http://gulfcoastpastor.blogspot.com) (Permission granted to reprint)

Questions about the Bible and Alcohol? Find answers in “*Ancient Wine and the Bible.*”

Also see: “*Wit & Wisdom of Pastor Joe Brumbelow*”

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## TAB CLASSIFIEDS

For information about placing a classified ad, contact the advertising department of The Alabama Baptist at 205-870-4720, ext. 102, or [ads@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:ads@thealabamabaptist.org). Copy deadline is two weeks before publication.

### CHURCH POSITIONS

#### SENIOR PASTOR

Full time for FBC Chalkville, Birmingham, Alabama. Please send resumé to: 2100 Old Springville Rd., Birmingham, AL 35215, Attn: Beryl McWaters or email [fbcchalkville@att.net](mailto:fbcchalkville@att.net).

#### PASTOR

James Memorial Baptist Church (Etowah County) is accepting resúmes for a part-time/full-time pastor. Please email to: [rachel@jamesmemorialbc.org](mailto:rachel@jamesmemorialbc.org).

#### PASTOR

Parrish First Baptist Church (SS avg. 100) is currently accepting resúmes for a senior pastor. Please email resúmes or inquiries to: [searchcommittee@parrishfbc.com](mailto:searchcommittee@parrishfbc.com) or mail to: P.O. Box 49, Parrish, AL 35580.

#### MUSIC DIRECTOR

First Baptist Church, Union Grove, is seeking a bivocational music director. Submit resumé to: FBC Union Grove, P.O. Box 125, Union Grove, AL 35175.

### OTHER POSITIONS

#### KEYBOARDIST

Wilton Baptist Church near Montevallo is prayerfully seeking a keyboardist. Please contact Randy Johnson at [crjohnso@](mailto:crjohnso@)

[southernco.com](http://southernco.com) or 205-903-4017.

#### MINISTRY ASSISTANT

Valley Creek Baptist Church is seeking a ministry assistant (30–32 hours) to serve alongside our lead pastor and pastor to families and children. Microsoft software experience is essential. Communication and public relations are vital to the collaborative team ministry approach. VCBC serves the areas of Hueytown, Bessemer and McCalla and is committed to making disciples who make disciples. Resúmes can be mailed to: Valley Creek Baptist Church, 3523 Virginia Dr., Hueytown, AL 35023 or emailed to: [info@vcchurch.com](mailto:info@vcchurch.com).

#### MINISTRY ASSISTANT

Taylorville Baptist, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, seeking full-time ministry assistant. Knowledge of Microsoft Office, phone tree and prior secretarial experience preferred. Email resumé to: [jnelson@taylorvillebaptist.org](mailto:jnelson@taylorvillebaptist.org).

### BUSINESS

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Romans 1:16

# Leaving footprints

Samford wraps up 175th celebration by reflecting on past, looking forward to future

Samford University wrapped up a yearlong celebration of its 175th anniversary this spring with a special convocation and a commemoration of the observance during recent commencement ceremonies.

Founded as Howard College by Alabama Baptists and chartered by the state of Alabama in De-

ember 1841, the university has prospered during the 175 years. It is now the largest private university in Alabama with more than 5,400 students from 47 states and 29 countries.

Earlier in the spring, the university dedicated a distinct piece of sculpture, an original armillary sphere, as a permanent reminder of the 175th anniversary. The sphere resides on a pedestal near the entrance to Reid Chapel and was created by renowned British artist David Harber based on a 250 A.D. design.

## Meaning of the sphere

The sphere is engraved with the names of the university's founders, a verse from the Book of Psalms and compass points to global destinations that reflect Samford's academic and spiritual roots. The compass points are Jerusalem; Athens; London; Providence, Rhode Island; and Marion, Alabama.

During a convocation prior to the unveiling of the sphere, University historian and history department chair Jonathan Bass traced Samford's origin to a movement sweeping the nation in the 1830s and 1840s to establish colleges "to train ministers; teach young people Western and Christian traditions; and provide moral order to the community."

Bass noted that those primarily responsible for the establishment of the school were prominent Alabama Baptists, including planter Edwin D. King, minister James H. DeVotie,



**Above:** Samford University in Birmingham was founded as Howard College in Marion in 1841. This is the first of three campuses the school has had. **Right:** Earlier in the spring, Samford dedicated an original armillary sphere as a permanent reminder of the 175th anniversary.



Photos courtesy of Samford University

businesswoman Julia Barron and educator Milo Jewett.

In addition to the convocation and sphere dedication, other highlights of the anniversary year included:

- Dedication of a statue honoring British prison reformer John

Howard, the school's original namesake.

- Dedication of the historic

state-of-the-art College of Health Sciences facilities.

- Eighth consecutive record enrollment.

- 175th anniversary convocation of thanksgiving and other 175th anniversary events during homecoming weekend.

- Launch of multiyear, \$300 million Forever Samford fundraising campaign.

- 175th anniversary of chartering by the State of Alabama on Dec. 29, 1841.

- 175th anniversary of first classes on Jan. 3, 1841.

- 175th anniversary convocation celebrating the university's heritage of teaching and scholarship.

- Approval by the board of trustees of the most sweeping campus master plan update in 60 years.

Samford President Andrew Westmoreland cited one of his favorite lines from William Faulkner in opening remarks of the fall convocation in August 2016, which marked the start of the academic year 175th observance.

## 'Headed somewhere'

"A monument says, 'I got this far,' but a footprint says, 'This is where I was when I moved again.' Footprints are more significant. They indicate that we were here but we are headed somewhere else to use what we gained here," Westmoreland said.

"We give thanks for those who built and sustained this institution," referencing the Alabama Baptist pastors and laypeople of Marion whose ideas and actions helped form Howard College in 1841. (Samford)



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**For more information about Samford's 175th anniversary, visit [samford.edu/175](http://samford.edu/175).**

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# 'Great need'

## Associations support, partner with Alabama Children's Homes

By Anna Keller  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**M**any Alabama Baptist associations support the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes (ABCH) & Family Ministries. Leaders from three associations — Bethel, Lookout Mountain and East Cullman — share what motivates their churches' giving and how they have helped ABCH through various outreach efforts.

ABCH, which has locations throughout the state, exists to "protect, nurture and restore children and families through Christ-centered services." Their key priorities include providing homes for children, educational services, family assistance, professional counseling and administration to help maximize resources.

"We support the Alabama Baptist Children's Homes because Paul Miller [former ABCH executive director] once said, 'Alabama Baptists will give if they know there is a need,'" said Bobby Hopper, director of missions for Bethel Baptist Association. "And there is a great need."

According to Hopper, 100 percent of Bethel Association

churches help support ABCH through efforts including using Mother's Day as a time to receive offerings specifically for ABCH.

The association also gets an "overwhelming response" to support ABCH's Camp of Champions, an annual event for the children in ABCH's care that is held at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega.

### Assist the needy

Lookout Mountain Baptist Association prioritizes support of ABCH because they feel called to assist the needy, said Director of Missions Lloyd Borden.

"We trust Children's Homes personnel to be good stewards of our time and money, and the people of our churches are personally acquainted with Children's Homes staff and management, as they have visited in many of our churches on numerous occasions and are always part of our annual meeting," he said.

"We have Sunday School teachers who receive offerings on a regular basis from their boys and girls, many of whom are from needy circumstances themselves, to be sent to the Children's Homes. We have grandmothers who pace the aisles



Associations across the state often support the various Alabama Baptist Children's Homes (ABCH) & Family Ministries campuses through food and supply drives. Below: Winston Baptist Association volunteers deliver items to the ABCH campus in Decatur that were collected during an association-wide food drive.

Photo courtesy of ABCH

of grocery stores during the food drive, searching for just the right items for 'those little children' down at Children's Homes. They do it because they have the love of God in their hearts."

Lookout Mountain Association's efforts to support ABCH are extensive, including an annual food drive, an annual benefit concert and work days at ABCH where volunteers build and repair structures at the facility, help with landscaping, etc. The food drive helps gather approximately 1,000 staple goods for ABCH each year, and the 2016 benefit concert garnered an \$8,000 donation toward the organization, Borden noted.

"Most of what we're doing for

Children's Homes has been done regularly for the past 15 years ... but the faces and needs of those involved are constantly changing," Borden said. "This cooperative effort works so well for our association because we are kept abreast of the needs of the ABCH and there is a mutual trust between us and them. We talk, we pray together, we learn about each other, we listen."

East Cullman Baptist Association also has been supporting ABCH for many years.

### Support through prayer

"ABCH is very near and dear to our hearts, and we are aware of the many needs — financial, physical and emotional — that

affect those that serve at the ABCH," said Debbie Keaton, ministry associate for East Cullman Association. "Not only do we as an association support them through financial and material needs but we also support them by praying for them on a regular basis."

The association's ongoing ministry for ABCH includes acting as a collection site for supplies for the Decatur campus, taking up a love offering at the association's annual meeting each October (in 2016, \$4,407 was raised during this effort), an annual golf tournament and using the association's office one day a week to provide space for ABCH counselors to meet with patients. ✠



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# ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

## Auburn Heights' Mitchell marks 30 years

Rodney Mitchell, associate pastor and minister of music at Auburn Heights Baptist Church, Phenix City, celebrated his 30th year at the church in April. After three decades serving at Auburn Heights Baptist, Mitchell said the most fulfilling aspect of his ministry has been to see "lives forever changed by the Father."

Mitchell first came to Auburn Heights as the church's youth minister after the church's pastor, Wayne Scarborough, asked him to join the staff.

"Pastor Wayne was my RA (Royal Ambassadors) director growing up," Mitchell said. "He called and asked if I would be interested in coming and being a part of doing the youth and music here at Auburn Heights and here we are 30 years later."

He said the congregation has a lot to do with him staying at a single church for so many years.

"Auburn Heights is a well diverse congregation and a loving people who have a heart for God," Mitchell said. "They have to be a congregation that is special to keep two pastors both for over 30 years."

Another 30-year milestone for Mitchell is his marriage to wife, Debbie. The couple has two children and two grandchildren. Mitchell's parents also attend Auburn Heights. (Anna Keller)



MITCHELL

# Prayer, support needed as Russian believers wrestle with legal obligations

(continued from page 1)

religious belief and practice among Muslims in the region compared with Muslims elsewhere in the world.

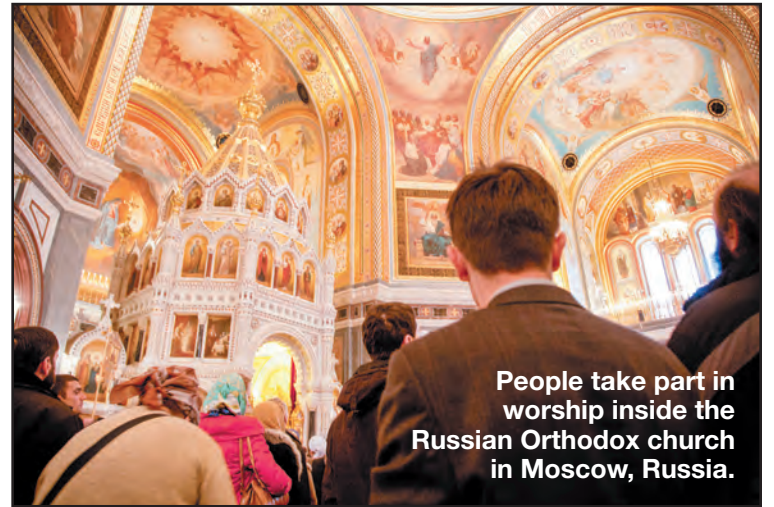
After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the region experienced an openness to religion and evangelism, both of which were outlawed under communist rule. Christianity, including the Russian Orthodox Church, Islam and Judaism were given privileged status in post-Communist Russia, according to researcher and author Vitaliy Proshak, an adviser with the Religious Freedom Initiative of Mission Eurasia, in an article published at IMB.org in January 2017.

"A formerly homogeneous society with dominating atheistic ideology gradually developed into a democratic society that accepted the existence of religious and cultural differences," Proshak wrote.

## Increased threats

However, threats to religious liberty in Russia have increased in the last decade, Proshak says. Laws passed in 2016 are especially troublesome because they ban "proselytizing, preaching, praying or disseminating religious materials outside of 'specially designated places.'" As a result, home group meetings where a Russian believer might speak about his or her faith would be punishable crimes because the home would not be an approved public space for worship.

"The door for evangelism in Russia is still open," Proshak says, but Christians in the region need prayer and support as they wrestle with the impact of these laws and



People take part in worship inside the Russian Orthodox church in Moscow, Russia.

IMB photo

determine how to be both a good citizen and a good Christian.

In Russia and other Eastern European countries this is an important question, since the recent Pew study found that in many Central and Eastern European countries religion and national identity are closely entwined. This is true in former communist states, such as the Russian Federation and Poland, where majorities say that being Orthodox or Catholic is important to being "truly Russian" or "truly Polish."

It also is the case in Greece, where the church played a central role in Greece's successful struggle for independence from the Ottoman Empire and where today three-quarters of the public (76 percent) say that being Orthodox is important to being "truly Greek."

Perhaps as a result, many people in these countries support strong church-state ties. Roughly a third or more of respondents in

every Orthodox-majority country surveyed say government policies should support the spread of religious values and beliefs in their country. They also expressed strong support for government financial assistance to their national Orthodox church.

As evangelism efforts continue in the wake of tighter government control, Proshak urges believers worldwide to pray for the region and the Church in Eurasia.

## Ethical understanding

"Through the prophet Jeremiah, God taught Israel to pray for the well-being of the city while not conforming to the ways of the city," Proshak writes, referring to Jeremiah 29.

"Likewise, a Russian believer must develop a personal ethical understanding of how to conform to the legal obligation of the new anti-extremism law while continuing to share the faith." ✠

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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For June 11

**Explore the Bible** By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D.  
Dean, School of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

**Bible Studies for Life** By Kenneth B.E. Roxburgh, Ph.D.  
Professor of Religion, Samford University

**THE PAST**  
**Psalms 78:5-8, 32-39**

Our psalm this week comes from Book Three (Pss. 73-89), attributed almost exclusively to official prophets, musicians and gatekeepers in the Davidic dynasty of united Israel and later in Judah, including Asaph and his descendants, the sons of Korah, Heman and Jeduthun (1 Chron. 25:1-7; 2 Chron. 29:30; 35:15).

This particular song in its superscription is identified as a "maskil," a term used 13 times throughout the Psalms, most likely to indicate a didactic or instructional psalm. In the Greek Old Testament (or Septuagint) the term is translated as "intelligence" and in the Latin Vulgate as "understanding." The psalm is a history lesson of the faithfulness of God in the midst of rebellious generations who were ungrateful for God's deliverance throughout their history.

**Teach for the Future (5-8)**

In order to understand verses 5-8, we need a context. The psalmist calls for his listeners to be prepared to hear and heed what he says in the opening verses. Unlike Israel's past, when fathers failed to instruct their children about the things of God, he calls for his hearers to listen and understand the faithfulness of God, the failure of Israel through the generations and the responsibility of fathers to teach their children.

Bible students must recognize the serious responsibility God gives to fathers who are believers. When Israel was delivered from bondage in Egypt by the mighty hand of God, they complained. Rather than rejoicing in God's deliverance and teaching their children to do the same, they whined. That generation died out without seeing the fulfillment of God's promise of a homeland.

When Moses delivered the Ten Commandments to a second generation (Deut. 5), it was accompanied by instructions to

fathers to love God with utter abandon, to know God's commandments and to teach them to their children (Deut. 6:4-9). Moses warns that generation not to forget the Lord (6:10-19) but to tell of God's faithfulness to each passing generation (6:20-25). The verses between the highlighted passage and the next are the psalmist's reminder to teach by remembering the past.

**Remember the Past (32-37)**

In verses 10-31 our poet refers back to the events recorded in Exodus and Numbers when God showed compassion upon His people despite their wayward hearts in the wilderness of Sinai and Kadesh Barnea. When they openly rebelled against Him, He struck them down in His wrath. Throughout Numbers they whined and cried and complained, repenting only when others died under God's judgment. Even then their repentance did not remain long, as they turned to other gods. While they were faithless, God remained faithful.

**Compassion in the Present (38-39)**

"Yet He was compassionate." Here the psalmist returns us to Mount Sinai, when God introduced Himself to Moses, highlighting both His compassion and His judgment: "Yahweh is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in faithful love and truth, maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations. ... But He will not leave the guilty unpunished, bringing the consequences of the fathers' wrongdoing on the children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation" (Ex. 34:6-7).

Why is it important to know God's Word, live it out and share it with the next generation? Why is it important to make disciples of all the peoples of the world, including our own families? We are setting a pattern that others will follow. Let us follow Christ with utter abandon, knowing we are stewards of the gospel for such a time as this.✠

**FORGE TRUE FRIENDSHIP**  
**1 Samuel 18:1-4; 19:4-7; 20:10-13**

The phenomenon of Facebook has both enhanced and diminished the importance of friendship in people's lives. People speak of having 300 or 2,000 friends. But for many people who invest time and energy in Facebook, the vast majority of their "friends" are people they may have never and will never meet. Friendship in biblical terms is something which we forge in daily living.

**Strong friends exhibit selflessness. (18:1-4)**

The relationship of friendship between David and Jonathan is described as covenantal — they made a covenant with each other. A covenant is different from a contract. It is not a legal agreement but it is a commitment made between two people, which includes promises and obligations, selflessness and sacrifice. It is rooted in the nature of God's love for sinful humanity as God makes various covenants with Adam, Noah, Moses and even David.

It is this covenant which is the foundation of all friendships and comes to its fulfillment in the covenant which Jesus made with His people, signed and sealed with the blood which He shed on Calvary's cross. This covenant is one of faithfulness, filled with promises, assuring us that His selfless and steadfast love will never let us go or give up on us even when we fail Him.

The bond of friendship which is described in these verses is described as one in which Jonathan loved David as his own soul. This love led him to give David the robe he was wearing as a token of his affection and his armor and weapons so David would be prepared for any attack which came upon him. This is a friendship which is thoughtful about specific needs and

opens itself up to danger and discomfort. **Strong friends serve as advocates for each other. (19:4-7)**

This second passage comes at a crucial period in David's life when Saul is plotting against him. Jonathan acts as an advocate before his father, urging him not to harm his friend and indicating that David has never done anything to harm Saul. This act brought David back into the court of the king and for a period of time protected him from harm.

The New Testament speaks of how, when we sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ who died for us on the cross and lives in the presence of the Father in heaven praying for us, interceding for us, seeking the blessing of the Father on our lives.

In a similar way we are called to act in specific ways as advocates, to speak up for friends in distress and bring comfort and security into their situations.

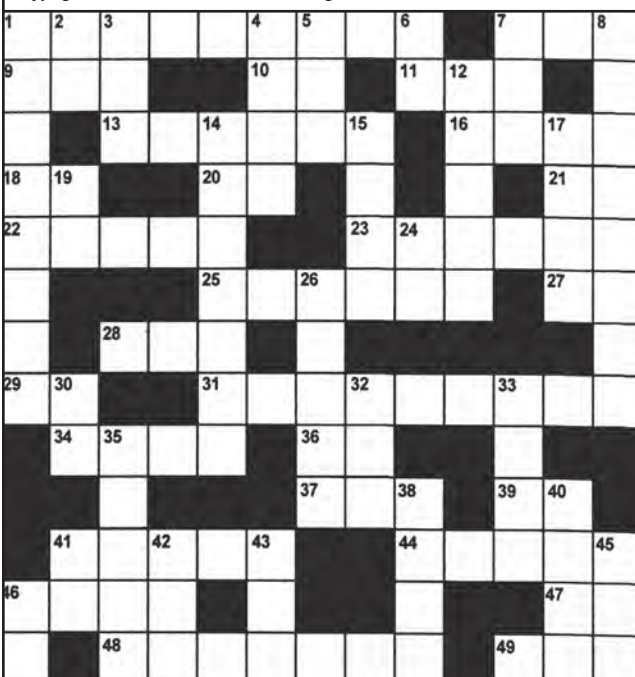
**Strong friends maintain and fulfill their commitment to each other. (20:10-13)**

The final picture which we have in this section of 1 Samuel tells of how Jonathan will send word to David to let him know if he is in danger of being hunted down by Saul. In a very practical way it reminds us that friendship is demonstrated by both small and large acts of kindness, thoughtfulness and generosity to people in need. Jonathan never forgets the covenant relationship he made with David and he never gave up thinking about him and looking for ways to help him in his life.

Yet in the midst of life when human friends may fail us, we can say: "What a friend we have in Jesus All our sins and griefs to bear, What a privilege to carry Everything to God in prayer."✠

## Christian Crossword

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**Across**

- Johoiada was leader of the \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Chron. 12:27)
- A serviceman who did not return from war may be one of these.
- To forbid.
- Learn to \_\_\_\_ well. (Isa. 1:17)
- Abraham would be called this today.
- Remember what \_\_\_\_ did. (Deut. 25:17)
- A wise guy.
- Speak unto ... Israel, that they \_\_\_\_ forward. (Ex. 14:15)
- He will \_\_\_\_ a wild man. (Gen. 16:12)
- Familiar form of *you* in German.
- \_\_\_\_ the son of Ner. (2 Sam. 3:25)
- Parts of a play.
- Sons of Zeruiah, Joab, Abishai, and \_\_\_\_\_. (2 Sam. 2:18)
- Saint. (abbr.)

**Down**

- Extol him ... by his name \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 68:4)
- Compass direction.
- All the \_\_\_\_ and strangers. (Acts 17:21)
- Judah and \_\_\_\_\_. (Jer. 9:26)
- For example. (abbr.)
- Thou shalt not ... \_\_\_\_\_. (Lev. 19:13)
- Elevation. (abbr.)
- The name thereof is called \_\_\_\_\_. (Ezek. 20:29)
- \_\_\_\_ and Caiaphas being high priests. (Luke 3:2)
- Captains over \_\_\_\_\_. (Deut. 1:15)
- 1,001 in Roman numerals.
- Carried them captive to \_\_\_\_\_. (2 Kings 15:29)
- From \_\_\_\_ to Beersheba. (Judg. 20:1)
- Antiaircraft. (abbr.)
- Ribonucleic acid. (abbr.)
- Not working.
- Upon the great \_\_\_\_ of their right foot. (Ex. 29:20)
- South America. (abbr.)
- The sound a kitten makes.
- A decree from Caesar \_\_\_\_\_. (Luke 2:1)
- The beginning of his kingdom was \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 10:10)
- Sarah died ... and \_\_\_\_ came to mourn. (Gen. 23:2)
- King Saul's father. (1 Sam. 10:21)
- Fruit drinks.
- Obstetrician. (abbr.)
- Chemical Engineer. (abbr.)
- And Leah ... called his name \_\_\_\_\_. (Gen. 30:13)
- \_\_\_\_ are labourers together with God. (1 Cor. 3:9)
- \_\_\_\_, id, superego.
- The young men of \_\_\_\_\_. (Ezek. 30:17)
- Made silver shrines for \_\_\_\_\_. (Acts 19:24)
- Passing through the valley of \_\_\_\_\_. (Ps. 84:6)
- An Eastern monk.
- To \_\_\_\_ or not to be.
- Manuscripts. (abbr.)
- The \_\_\_\_ is withered away. (Isa. 15:6)
- Which taketh away the \_\_\_\_ of the world. (John 1:29)
- Their cry came up \_\_\_\_ God. (Ex. 2:23)



## My JESUS Story

By Jenni Ingram  
Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

The last couple days have been difficult for me. I have been feeling useless and beaten down. I know in my heart it is just the enemy trying to ruin my witness but sometimes I feel like Job, wondering what I did wrong.

Then today God has broken through that depression and given me His word that lifts my spirit.

First of all Jeremiah 29:11 comes to mind: "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

It's incredible to me to think the Lord took His time to make plans for me, His lowly creation. If that's not enough to make you puff up with happiness, I don't know what is.

He created me for Him, for His purpose.

Then I read 1 Peter 1:2-3 and was reminded that not only did He create me with a plan for my life in mind but He knew beforehand that I would accept Him even when I doubted.

Here is what that passage says: "Dear friends, God the Father chose you long ago and knew you would become His children. For it is His boundless mercy that has given us the privilege of being born again so that now we are members of God's own family" (The Living Bible translation).

He loves us so much that He created us with a plan in mind to be part of His eternal family. What a way to make the enemy run. Don't let depression steal your joy, remember these verses and that we are His. ✠

## '10 Questions': Page's guide for pastor searches

Pastor Searches for Dummies" would have been a fitting title for the latest book from Frank S. Page, he wrote in the book's introduction.

Instead, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee president and CEO chose "Looking for a New Pastor" as the title of his new guidebook. The book released June 1 from B&H Publishing shares biblical instruction and practical insights gleaned from Page's 34 years in the pastorate and additional ongoing denominational service.

"I was inspired to write this book out of a deep sense of need. Having been a pastor a long time and now helping churches across our convention, I found that many churches, if not most, struggle when it comes to finding a new pastor," Page said. "In almost every situation, laypersons are charged with seeking a new pastor and many of them are unprepared to ask the right questions. Thus the subtitle of the book, '10 Questions Every Church Should Ask.'"

Page designed the book for laypersons who serve on pastoral search teams as well as pastors seeking new posts.

### 'Vetting' process

Thousands of pastors resign from their jobs in the U.S. each year, Page said, leaving about 10 percent of churches with the task of hiring a new leader. Making sure pastors and churches are well suited for one another and communicating needs and expectations clearly during the search process can often make the difference in a pastor's length of service, Page said.

"The pitfalls which churches often encounter are many and varied," Page said. "Often the 'vetting' process is weak and this leads to difficult and sometimes disastrous situations. In the book I help churches learn how to truly discover the DNA of their own church as they also discover the true DNA of the pastoral candidate."

Page reveals such insights as "10 things a pastor wishes the search committee had revealed," "10 things churches wish their former pastor had told them" and "10 things the candidate will not tell the committee."

Getting started in the pastoral search, strategies to avoid, deciding what to look for in a pastor and questions to ask during interviews are included.

"I believe church leaders can learn a great deal from reading the book because I share real life examples of things to watch for, warning signs to be aware of and successes and failures which are often replicated across the nation," Page said. "It is a highly practical book which deals with the struggles that most search committees and churches deal with."

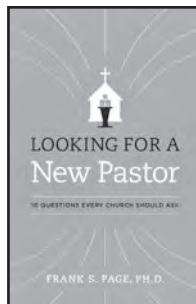
Page served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Taylors, South Carolina, and churches in Georgia, North Carolina and Texas before his 2010 election to lead the Executive Committee.

He was SBC president from 2006 to 2008 and has served several congregations as interim pastor.

The book is available at LifeWay Christian Book Stores and other retail outlets. (BP)



PAGE



LOOKING FOR A New Pastor

10 QUESTIONS EVERY CHURCH SHOULD ASK

FRANK S. PAGE, PH.D.

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## RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

### Farmers market bans farmer over marriage views

EAST LANSING, Mich. — A Catholic farmer in Michigan is suing the city of East Lansing after he was barred from a municipal farmers market over his views on same-sex "marriage."

Stephen Tennes filed a lawsuit at a federal court May 31, seeking his reinstatement. In it Tennes says he was prohibited from selling his products after his business, Country Mill Farms, refused to host a lesbian couple's wedding at its orchard in Charlotte, 22 miles outside the city and he stated on Facebook "his Catholic belief that marriage is a sacramental union between one man and one woman."

Country Mill Farms had sold fruit and produce at the market for six years but after city officials learned about the Facebook post they "strongly and immediately pressured us not to return to the farmers market," Tennes said during a news conference.

In a statement the city of East Lansing said the farmer's refusal to host a same-sex wedding violated a "long-standing ordinance that protects sexual orientation as well as the Supreme Court's ruling that grants the right for same-sex couples to be married."

The Alliance Defending Freedom, a Christian-based nonprofit legal organization representing Tennes, said his religious views have no bearing on his involvement at the market and said the city's actions amounted to a First Amendment violation.

Flanked by supportive state lawmakers at the news conference, Tennes insisted his views on marriage had not prevented him from serving all farmers market customers equally.

"It's our faith that informs us how to treat all who come to our farm and the farmers market with dignity and decency ... serving customers of many races, religions, cultures and those who identify with the LGBT community," he said. (RNS)

### Creationist view of humans hits all-time low

WASHINGTON — The percentage of U.S. adults who believe that God created humans in their present form at some time within the last 10,000 years, which is the strict creationist view, has hit its lowest point in 35 years, according to a recent Gallup poll.

Research shows that 38 percent of adults now accept creationism while 57 percent believe in some form of evolution, which says humans developed over millions of years from less advanced life forms. Included in that 57 percent, however, are those who believe that God guided the evolution process.

Since 1982 agreement with the "secular" viewpoint stating that humans evolved from lower life forms without any divine intervention has doubled, Gallup reported, although it's still far from the majority — fewer than 1 in 5 Americans hold this view.

Those with higher education levels are less likely to support creationism than those with only a high school diploma, Gallup found.

Overall most Americans believe God had a role in creating humans, whether through the strict creationist viewpoint or as part of the evolutionary process. (TAB)

## TAB's Sloan writes introduction for classic book

Joanne Sloan has written the introduction for a new edition of Richard Baxter's classic book "The Saints' Everlasting Rest."

She is the author of the "Heroes of the Faith" series that appears each month in *The Alabama Baptist*. She wrote article about Baxter



SLOAN

in "Heroes of the Faith" in December 2015, which was the 400th anniversary of his birth.

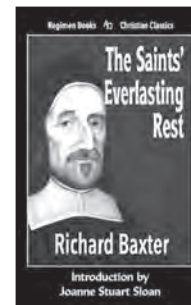
Baxter was a prominent English pastor and theologian in the 1600s and was the foremost spokesman of the Puritan cause in the Church of England. His book, "The Saints' Everlasting Rest," was one of the most

popular books of the 17th century. Today it is a Christian classic.

No book, Sloan said, has done a better or more vivid job of describing the probable nature of heaven and hell. Other than the Bible, perhaps no book has done more than "The Saints' Everlasting Rest" in persuading people to seek God, re-

pent and be saved, she said. "The number of accounts of the impact the book had in persuading people to repent is legion," said Sloan, a member of First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa.

The book is available for purchase on Amazon.com. (David Sloan)



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**Right:** International Mission Board President David Platt (right) and North American Mission Board President Kevin Ezell (left) host the Send Conference 2017 in Frisco, Texas. **Far right:** Austin Stone Worship leads music for the main sessions.



Photos by Nick Drake



# Spirit & enthusiasm

## FOR MISSIONS

### 'Refreshing' Send Conference challenges participants to examine, redefine their lives on mission

**A**mong a sea of participants and volunteers in the Dr. Pepper Arena, the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and the International Mission Board's (IMB) Send Conference challenged those present to examine and redefine their lives on mission.

More than 4,000 people registered for the sold-out conference May 19–20 less than 30 miles north of Dallas in Frisco, Texas, which drew people from all states and three continents.

"Be careful not to manufacture a heart for missions outside a heart for Christ," IMB President David Platt said to the crowd during the opening session. "There is no one without the other and if you think there is, you've got to redefine your thinking. There are times in your life that are redefining and that's what we're praying the next couple of days will be."

#### 'Called to be sent'

The theme, "Redefine," brought church revitalizer John Herring of First Baptist Church, Prosper, Texas, back to Send even though he had attended the first one in Long Beach, California, earlier this year in February. This time Herring brought 20 church members to Dallas for two days of biblical teaching and next steps.

"The conference was encouraging and refreshing for us personally and it was incredibly helpful for us in our work at First, Prosper," Herring said. "We talk a lot about Jesus' mission at our church — that we are called to be sent. Send helped us refocus on that mission and put feet to it."

This year's Send included worship led by Austin Stone Worship, Thomas Keys III and Crowder; main sessions; and breakouts with 30 diverse topics and speakers.

"The breakout sessions were especially helpful," Herring said. "At the conclusion of Send, my notebook was filled with pages of ideas and resources. What a blessing to have some 'blue sky' moments under the wisdom of these experienced leaders."

Church planter Aaron Clayton of Remedy Church, Waxahachie, Texas, also was taking notes with hopes to bring

back "some nuts and bolts for how we can effectively equip and send church planters."

"I am also looking forward to bringing back some fresh enthusiasm and energy," Clayton said. "I am hoping our people catch more of the vision for why and how they can live on mission in all of life. I hope they feel better equipped and more confident themselves and in their ability to rally together in community to live out the mission of God."

With breakouts such as "Addressing poverty through local schools," "Risk in missions," "Leading women to advance the gospel," "Leveraging the power of ordinary" and "Giving purpose to our jobs," the conference reinforced how every believer — at any time — can be on mission.

New Orleans youth minister and bivocational church planter Dallas Guidry, of Lakeshore Church, New Orleans, called the conference "unlike any other."

"There are so many lost where our church plant is," Guidry said. "But it's all about relationships. Right now I'm in seminary and coaching a baseball team. I'm developing trust and relationships with those around me by being engaged in the community. And coming to this Send Conference, I feel more refreshed than ever. It's awesome to see how people here are so willing to support one another in living on mission for God's glory. Everything we do is for Him."

#### Reaching students

A similar spirit and enthusiasm for missions gripped many hearts at the event. Georgia College and State University (GCSU) student Carson Gregors and her peers drove 14 hours to be a part of Send.

Gregors and 12 others started Full Accord Ministry to

serve their fellow students on campus with authentic family relationships. They came to the Send Conference to take leadership tips and engagement tactics home to students at GCSU in Milledgeville, Georgia.

"I was especially looking forward to what Kathy Litton had to say about women in missions," she said. "She has incredible insight and hearing her breakout talk was inspiring. It was so great to hear such strong truth spoken over discipleship. It revolutionized how I'm going to approach my small group when I get back to school in the fall."

Kevin Ezell, NAMB's president, said, "It's so encouraging to see thousands of people at an event focused on helping believers take Jesus to the people around them as an everyday lifestyle. I am thrilled as well to see such a young, diverse group. So many pastors worked hard to bring their people. The conference is for them, so it is great to see so many participate."

Every video, social media post, breakout and main session was designed to share messages that moved people toward their next missional opportunity.

"It's exhilarating to see local churches taking missions seriously," Platt said. "And that's what this conference is all about: Men and women from churches in all 50 states and Canada — and a few other countries, as well — considering how God has sent them right where they live for the spread of the gospel and contemplating where God might lead them around the world to people who've never heard of the gospel."

"It's an awesome sight to see thousands of people at a conference representing thousands of churches in the [Southern Baptist Convention] and beyond who together are saying that we want to spend our lives making disciples from our neighbors to the nations." (BP)



Photo by Nick Drake

Main session speaker Trip Lee encourages Send Conference participants to speak out about Jesus.