

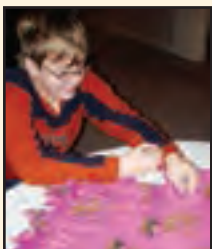


INSIDE



Executive director Taylor set to retire after 38 years at Shocco Springs

◆ Page 4



How to help children focus on serving others this Christmas

◆ Page 5



Pickens Assoc. holds Lottie-focused event for children

◆ Pages 8-9



123rf.com

# The 'perfect' tree

## Calculator creates uniformly spaced Christmas lights

A University of Mobile (UM) mathematics professor has solved one of the frustrations of the Christmas season by developing the Christmas Tree Lights Spacing Calculator that anyone can use.

Troy Henderson, professor of mathematics, developed the online calculator after he and his wife, Greta, were faced once again with figuring out how to evenly space lights on their tree without running out too soon or having too many left over.

"This year we were too greedy

with the lights at the bottom of the tree, and therefore we were in need of too many lights at the top to 'tweak' the spacing for complete coverage. We were forced to either pull the lights off and start again or purchase another strand of lights," Henderson wrote in a blog on The Torch, the digital magazine of UM.

They bought more lights, but the problem of uniform spacing still troubled him.

"As a mathematician and a problem-solver, I still wanted to know the optimal spacing of the lights so that the distribution is uniform and the precise number of lights are exactly used without tweaking them," he said.

The online calculator Henderson

created uses the diameter of the Christmas tree at its base, the height of the tree and the length of the strands of lights on hand. Input the numbers and the calculator computes the vertical spacing you should have between rotations; the number of rotations you will have; and creates a picture demonstrating the result.

The Christmas Tree Lights Spacing Calculator is just one example of how Henderson challenges students to see mathematical problems in everyday life and to have fun and a sense of personal accomplishment in discovering solutions. The professor also has worked out a mathematical model for the cooking process of smoking barbecue. (UM)

**For the Christmas Tree Lights Spacing Calculator, visit <http://www.tlhiv.org/treelights>.**

## Sports betting ban under review by Supreme Court

By Carrie Brown McWhorter  
The Alabama Baptist

The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments Dec. 4 in a case that could determine the future of gambling nationwide.

The case, *Christie v. NCAA*, seeks to overturn a federal ban on sports gambling that has been in place since the passage of the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act of 1992, also known as the Bradley Act because it was sponsored by Sen. Bill Bradley, a former basketball player who served three terms in the U.S. Senate.

Ted Olson, arguing for New Jersey, framed the issue as one of states-right versus federal control.

"New Jersey is being told it may not regulate in the way it chooses," Olson said, adding that the state must "enforce a law and keep a law on the books" that it has attempted to repeal, therefore "the executive branch and the legislative branch of the state of New Jersey have been conscripted."

Former U.S. solicitor general Paul Clement and current deputy solicitor general Jeffrey Wall represented the NCAA (National Collegiate Athletic Association) and several professional sports leagues before the court.

### Clear policy

In response to Justice Stephen Breyer's statement that "the federal government does not have a clear federal policy" on sports gambling, Clement contended that the federal law does outline a clear policy against sports gambling: It says "there's something that is essentially a cancer on interstate commerce that we don't want to take place."

Clement said "the Congress wanted there to be, putting aside the grandfather clause, (See 'Unfair,' page 3)

# COMMENT

## Don't Miss Christmas

**C**an you believe it is almost Christmas? Where has the year gone?

For many the question is about more than where the past year has gone. It is about what happened to the past 20 years, the past 30 years or more. For me it seems like yesterday my children were just kids. Now they are adults with families of their own. The memories of the birth of my grandchildren are as clear as if they had just happened. Yet two of them are college students.

Do you know that feeling?

Sometimes people get so busy earning a living, taking care of responsibilities, preparing for retirement and all the rest that it seems as if we somehow missed life. We look in the mirror and ask what happened.

Is that true of Christmas, too? Have we missed Christmases in the past? Will we miss Christmas this year?

Many people strive to make Christmas a picture postcard moment. Decorations have to be just right, the tree gorgeously trimmed. Every present has to have a handmade bow no matter how much one's hands hurt.

The Christmas dinner menu is carefully planned to include everyone's favorite dish and the dessert has to be flawless. Occasionally hosts even write down questions to keep the dinner conversation flowing and avoid subjects that might be uncomfortable.

### Christmas is a gift

But even if all the events go perfectly, one can still miss Christmas. Belatedly the realization dawns that Christmas is not something one can manage or create. Christmas is a gift that must be received.

Christmas is that moment of awe, of amazement, of wonder, of insight, of humility, of thankfulness, of acceptance.

Christmas is that moment of realization that God loved us so much that He sent His one and only Son to bring us back to Himself. While the world accentuates lights and tinsel, God's gift of Christmas is seen in a newborn baby whom the



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

angels declared "Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

That gift is offered to all. It is not dependent on social status or economic standing, not on race, gender, ethnicity nor any of the other artificial walls society builds to divide. The gift is for all. The only requirement is acceptance. "Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life," Jesus said in John 3:16.

### The first Christmas

Consider that first Christmas. The gift was announced to shepherds on a hillside caring for their flocks. Stargazers in a distant land saw evidence of the gift. Earlier God had spoken to Joseph and Mary. Joseph worked with his hands in an out-of-the-way village called Nazareth. He was a carpenter. Mary was a young woman just come of age to marry.

Earlier God had spoken to an older priest named Zechariah about the role his soon-to-be-conceived son would play as a forerunner of God's Gift.

No high ranking government official heard of that first Christmas. No titan of commerce got the news. God spoke to common people who were willing to listen for the voice of God.

God ordered the Psalmist to "Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). The word "still" used here means "to release or let go." Trying to manage Christmas, like trying to manage life, can cause one to miss the thing one desires most. "Be still," God says. Let the soul listen for

God. Receive the gift of Christmas. Ponder what God has done. Let God's grace change your perspective. Let His love change your values. Let the Christ Child lead you back to fellowship with God.

In Luke 2 the writer describes the amazement, the King James Version says "wonder," that filled all who were part of that first Christmas. Isn't that what happens to us when we encounter God at Christmas? Perhaps God visits in the words of a carol sung by a children's choir. Perhaps He comes in the words of Scripture which recount the Christmas story. Perhaps God comes through prayer.

### A special moment

Personally, I like to sit in front of a manager scene made by my late first wife's grandfather. I cannot sit there without reflecting on how God has blessed our family through the five generations which I have known. That is always a special moment.

Luke says the shepherds told everyone they saw about that first Christmas — about the chorus of angels, about the angel's message of the Messiah, about finding the Baby in a manger. And more. The shepherds glorified God, offering Him praise and thanksgiving after seeing His Gift.

Meeting God in Christmas has a way of changing us. Realizing afresh the gift of God provided through Jesus has a way of softening the blows and healing the bruises life often inflicts. Meeting God in Christmas helps renew our zeal for the Lord and our commitment to loving God and loving others as God has loved us.

Meeting God flames the desire to be an instrument of His peace by reflecting God's glory into all of life's experiences. Loving God always includes loving others.

### God is in control

But meeting God in Christmas does not happen because we plan it or because we carefully orchestrate every aspect of the celebration. None of us can control God.

Meeting God in Christmas happens when we accept God's gift. When we are still; when our souls are listening for His voice.

This Christmas, "Be still and know that I am God," as the Psalmist says. Receive God's Gift anew. Do not be so busy with all the holiday hubbub that you miss Christmas. ✝

***"This Christmas, 'Be still and know that I am God,' as the Psalmist says. Receive God's Gift anew. Do not be so busy with all the holiday hubbub that you miss Christmas."***

Connect with us  
**ONLINE**

thealabamabaptist.org

facebook.com/thealabamabaptist

twitter.com/alabamabaptist

Follow Bob Terry  
**Twitter**  
 @drbobterry



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

(ISSN 0738-7741;  
USPS 011-080)

© The Alabama Baptist, Inc. is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 1-800-803-5201. Fax: 205-879-6026. **Website:** www.thealabamabaptist.org. **Email:** news@thealabamabaptist.org or circulation@thealabamabaptist.org. Periodicals postage paid at Birmingham, Ala., and at additional mailing offices.

**PRINT**

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES**  
Church Budget — \$13.75  
Individual — \$22.25

**DIGITAL**

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES**  
Church Budget — \$8.50  
Individual — \$14.95

**DR. BOBBY S. TERRY**  
**EDITOR**

Jennifer Davis Rash  
*Editor-elect*

Maggie Walsh  
*Assistant Editor*

Lauren C. Grim  
*Designer*

Wanda Bergeron  
*Local Editions Coordinator*

Linda Harrison  
*Financial Administrator*

Bill Gilmore  
*Advertising Director*

Debbie Campbell  
*Director of Circulation and Public Relations*

**NEWS SERVICES**

Baptist Press (BP), Baptist News Global (BNG), Religion News Service (RNS), Forum 18 (F18), Morning Star News (MS).

**POSTMASTER**

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

**ADDRESS CHANGE**

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

To the best of our knowledge, all of the ads in *The Alabama Baptist* represent legitimate companies and offerings. However, one should always exercise normal business caution in responding to ads.

**Full member of**  
**Alabama Press Association**

Accredited member of  
**Evangelical Council for**  
**Financial Accountability**



**'Nation's Top Regional**  
**Christian Newspaper'**

1999, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016 as judged by Associated Church Press, Baptist Communicators Association, Evangelical Press Association or Religion Communicators Council

# 'Unfair and deceptive'

## Gambling decision could have implications for marijuana laws

(continued from page 1)

no state-sponsored or -operated gambling taking place by either individuals or by the state."

Under the Bradley Act, four states — Nevada, Delaware, Montana and Oregon — were exempted from the law's restrictions because of their history of licensed gambling.

Congress also added a special provision in the law that gave states with licensed casino gambling a one-year window of opportunity following enactment of the legislation to pass laws permitting sports wagering.

New Jersey, which legalized casino gambling in Atlantic City in 1976, did not act on the opportunity.

In 2011, New Jersey voters by a 2-to-1 margin approved a referendum to allow gambling on professional and college sports at the state's casinos.

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie signed legislation to that effect in January 2012. The NCAA, along with the NBA, NFL, NHL and MLB filed a federal lawsuit against New Jersey to prevent sports betting, based on the Bradley Act.

A federal judge ruled in favor of the athletic leagues and barred New Jersey from issuing sports betting licenses in 2013. That decision was upheld by the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals. Christie then appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

By some estimates, illegal betting is a \$150-billion annual industry, and cash-starved states see gambling as a potential source of revenue.

But to lift the federal ban on gambling



123rf.com

would be a mistake, said Mark Andrews, gambling chair for Eagle Forum, a conservative interest group.

### 'Would be devastating'

"Just think of the implications," he wrote in an email. "Open betting on sports events, blessed by state governments, would be devastating to our already suffering culture. Imagine the advertising and marketing aimed at young

people that families would be faced with."

Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP), agreed, which is why he signed on to an amicus brief filed by Stop Predatory Gambling. Godfrey serves on the board of directors of the organization.

The amicus brief points out how state-sanctioned gambling "uses unfair and deceptive marketing practices to target and prey on the financially desperate and the addicted, reduces opportunity for millions of American families to improve their economic standing and forces even those citizens who rarely or never gamble to foot the bill for the enormous social costs and state budget problems it leaves behind."

### Beyond gambling

The repercussions of this case could go beyond gambling. In an exchange between Olson and Justice Sonia Sotomayor, Olson said evidence supports that "betting on sports is taking place all over the United States. Five percent of it is legal in Nevada. The rest of it is illegal. New Jersey decided we are going to look at it."

Justice Sotomayor then asked "so why don't we — why don't we legalize — this is a hypothetical — marijuana ... and all drugs, because there's a rampant market out there for those drugs, but we've made a policy choice that we don't want the state involved in promoting that type of enterprise. ... Why is this any different?"

Olson acknowledged "that's in play right now because various states have done various different things."

A ruling in the case is expected next year. ✠

## My JESUS Story

By Jenni Ingram

Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

The Christmas season is one of celebration for most, but for a growing number of people it is a time of great sadness. Sadness may come because of the loss of a loved one, financial problems, being alone, etc. There is a way we can all have joy and that is my Jesus story.

First ask yourself, "Do I have true joy — not just during the holiday season, but any day?" I'm not talking about happiness. Happiness can be ruined by all of the outside influences of this world. Worries about money, health, relationships (or lack thereof), work — you name it, you can worry about it if you choose to. I

don't. I choose to accept that God has my whole life under control, whether I know it or not. There also is the issue of anger that becomes prominent this time of year. Perhaps it is a real or imagined hurt that has been buried in unforgiveness. Maybe it is anger at a family member or a close friend. The time is now to place it all under the precious blood of Jesus, forgive and let it go.

My greatest joy comes from time with my family and friends. My daughter's teenage years required an immense amount of forgiveness, but because we have been forgiven by Jesus, each time we forgave, it became easier. Now one of my most joyful times is seeing her, my husband, my son-in-law and my beautiful granddaughters sitting in church with me.

We can have joy while we are in the arms and the will of Jesus. We are new creations in Christ when He calls us as His children and we accept Him. We only have to know Him. Won't you take His gift of joy today? ✠

Buster and Mary Taylor are honored for their service during a retirement celebration Dec. 1 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega.

# 'Finishing well'



Photo by Bob Crisp

## Executive director Taylor set to retire after 38 years at Shocco Springs

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

Cory Horton was a brand-new hire at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega when he got a call that one of the toilets in the Springview dormitory wouldn't stop running.

"I was on call for the first time that night," he said. "I tried to fix it, but I wasn't familiar with the kind of pipe that particular toilet used."

The next thing he knew, a waterfall burst out of the wall and started flowing off the fourth floor.

Horton had no choice. Embarrassed, he called Buster Taylor, the camp's executive director, who was off for the night.

He was afraid he might not have a job when Monday came around.

But when Taylor arrived, he patted Horton on the shoulder and told him he would

take care of it. He knew Horton was in seminary and had studying to do and also needed some sleep.

"And not only that — he told me I could clock in again on Monday," Horton said.

Horton, now secretary of Shocco's board of trustees and pastor of Elkdale Baptist Church, Selma, told that story Dec. 1 at Taylor's retirement celebration. It was a story that surprised no one. The room, full of friends of Shocco, told story after story about Taylor's heart and his beginnings.

### Working his way up

He first came to the conference center 38 years ago as a maintenance man.

"We came to Shocco from a church ministry job," Taylor said. "We wanted something a little different."

He interviewed with George Ricker, Shocco's first full-time director, in 1979.

"Dr. Ricker said, 'Why are you here?'"

and I told him I would like to apply for a position," Taylor said. "He told me, 'We don't have positions — we only have jobs.'"

Taylor said that was fine by him.

He started out fixing toilets and anything else that broke, a skill that came naturally. He had grown up repairing mechanical things with his father, he said. He headed up maintenance for a while before being promoted to assistant director.

Then in 1989 he became Ricker's successor.

"It was not an intentional thing," Taylor said of the long tenure he and his wife, Mary, had at the camp. "We both felt we had been called into the ministry as teenagers, and this was an opportunity to do something different from church ministry for a few years. I never realized it would be a lifelong career."

But both he and his wife found that the way God changed lives at Shocco was "eye opening," he said.

"We were out there plunging toilets, raking leaves and making sure people weren't hot or cold," he said. "We and others on staff called ourselves 'distraction eliminators' — we wanted to keep everything out of the way that could distract them from hearing God while they were there."

And in the 38 years Taylor was at the helm of Shocco, a lot of people said they heard from God.

About 38,000 made decisions for Christ, either for the first time, to rededicate their lives or to commit to serve in ministry.

He was a strong spiritual leader for the camp, said Wendy Westerhouse, Shocco's public relations associate. He "quoted Matthew 6:33 more times than I can count," she said, saying he was always pointing the staff back to their main objective.

The face of Shocco changed a good bit while Taylor was there, too. Twenty new buildings were constructed. The property expanded to more than 800 acres. The annual budget is six times what it was in 1979.

The camp sustained a long partnership with Camp Carabobo, a sister conference center in Guatemala.

And in a months-long process in 1999, Shocco transitioned from being owned by the Alabama Baptist State Convention to becoming an entity of the convention.

"That was one of the biggest challenges to walk through," he said, but he was able

to use that experience to help others. Over the years, he has had the chance to counsel other camps in the Southern Baptist Convention as they made similar transitions.

Those challenges may be milestones, but when Taylor thinks back over his decades at Shocco, he keeps coming back to people.

"One word keeps coming to mind — grateful," Taylor said. "I'm grateful for all the people we have been able to do life with."

Some of those have been living alongside the Taylors in the Shocco community for decades. Others are new, like Russell Klinner, who will step into the directorship when Taylor leaves Dec. 31. When that happens, he and Mary will move to Jacksonville to be near his mother, as well as his brother, who runs the family business there.

### Retirement celebration

During the retirement celebration, person after person told Taylor that he had left his fingerprints all over the camp, and evangelist Phil Waldrep told him that he was "finishing well."

"Buster leaves one of the best, if not the best, Christian conference centers in the world," Waldrep said. "There are few men for whom I have greater respect, admiration and love. He has served well."

It will be hard to walk away from Shocco, but Taylor said he has "no qualms" about leaving.

"We've got a great staff that caught the vision," he said. "They know what it is to serve people like Jesus served and to provide Christlike hospitality. I'm excited for the future." ✝

Three generations of Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center leaders were together Dec. 1 (clockwise from top, left): Buster Taylor, retiring executive director; Russell Klinner, incoming executive director; and George Ricker, retired director who served prior to Taylor.



Photo by Bob Crisp



Photo by Carolyn Tomlin

Fleece throws are a great gift for children to make for loved ones.

## Fleece throw

Nothing says “love” like a warm blanket or throw. If your child can tie a knot, they can help make this gift.

### MATERIALS

- ▶ 2 1/2 yards of cotton fleece
- ▶ (45-inches wide or more)
- ▶ 5-inch cardboard cutting guide
- ▶ Scissors
- ▶ Large safety pins (for holding two sections together)

### DIRECTIONS

Cut the fleece into two 45-inch squares. Place one piece on top of the other. Allowing 5-inches from the edge, pin the two pieces together. Place the cutting guide on one corner and cut 5-inch strips all around the four edges. While still pinned together, tie the upper and lower strips into a double knot. When all strips are tied, remove the pins.

This washable throw makes a personal gift from your child to a loved one for Christmas. And they can say with pride, “I made it myself.”

# The thought behind the gift

## How to help children focus on serving others this Christmas

By Carolyn Tomlin  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**S**hoppers hurry to complete their Christmas list. Children wait patiently for Dec. 25 to arrive. Holiday foods encourage even the most health-conscious to over-indulge during the season. With the increasing demand of commercialism, it is sometimes hard to focus on the true meaning of Christmas.

What if children were taught that it’s not the gift that’s important but the thought behind the gift that is cherished? How can we teach children to serve other people? How can we make youngsters aware of community needs where they can make a difference?

### Showing Christ’s love

Start by making a list of family and friends with whom you would usually exchange gifts. Plan a “Christmas Wish List” night where parents and children come up with creative ways to show the love of the Christ Child to those on their list. Don’t forget to involve the kids in a simple snack to nibble on as you work. Perhaps some of these ideas

could work for your family.

**Gift Cards.** With the parents’ help, nonreaders can draw a Christmas greeting on card stock for a friend or family member with an offer of help, such as playing with a younger sibling, helping wash the car or setting the table. Insert cards in envelopes and deliver to the recipient.

**Donate a library book.** Help your child select a book for the church library that other children would enjoy reading. This could be given in honor of their Sunday School teacher or another church staff member who has shown a special interest in your child. Write your child’s name, the person honored and the date in the front.

**Clean a senior adult’s yard.** Is there a senior adult in your church that would appreciate some help with the yard? Parents and children working together can give a few hours to raking, pruning bushes and planting bulbs for spring. Plan to take a plate of homemade cookies or freshly baked bread.

**Contribute to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.** Tell stories of missionaries and locate the area

they serve on a world map. Make children aware of missions in the United States and other countries. Provide extra chores where they can earn money for missions.

### Helping the homeless

**Support a homeless shelter.** When you travel, save the complimentary bottles of shampoo, soap and lotion. Collect these throughout the year and deliver to a shelter for those without a home. Gently used clothing for men, women and children are other good options for donations. And having children select some of their toys that are in good

condition to donate not only fills a need but also helps clear space for new toys coming to them at Christmas.

**Fill a baby bottle.** Place extra change in a baby bottle and donate to a pregnancy center. These centers encourage women to consider life-affirming alternatives to abortion. The money collected helps these mothers buy diapers and formulas for their little ones.

Instead of parents giving children money to “buy” a gift, help them realize that giving of time is more important. Think of ways to serve others and show the love of God to family and friends. ✝

## REFLECTIONS

“AS WE APPROACH CHRISTMAS, MAY I REMIND YOU OF THIS COMMANDMENT— ‘THOU SHALT NOT GIVE THY PASTOR CHEAP NECKTIES, ANYTHING FATTENING, OR WHAT BELONGETH TO THE CHURCH’S CHRISTMAS OFFERING FOR MISSIONS!’ THANK YOU VERY MUCH!”



## Christmas snack mix recipe

If you’re concerned about offering healthy snacks for your family, this cereal and nut snack mix is for you. Teach measuring, counting and stirring as you have fun in the kitchen.

### INGREDIENTS

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 7 cups rice, corn and wheat squares (combination) | 1/4 cup margarine                |
| 1 cup small pretzels                              | 4 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce |
| 1 cup oyster crackers                             | 1 teaspoon seasoning salt        |
| 1 cup peanuts                                     | 1 teaspoon garlic salt           |
|   | 1/2 teaspoon onion powder        |

### DIRECTIONS

Using a large bowl, melt margarine in microwave. Stir in seasoning. Add cereal and other ingredients. Bake in large baking pan at 300 degrees for 30 minutes. Stir a couple of times. Spread on paper towels to cool. Eat and enjoy.

# Across ALABAMA'S Associations

## CENTRAL

► **Wayne and Margaret Henderson** are retiring from the ministry at the end of December. Margaret is retiring from her role as church secretary of **Rockford Church** where Jeff Fuller serves as pastor. Wayne is retiring from his role as director of missions for **Central Association**.

## CLARKE

► **Loren Robinson**, director of missions for **Clarke Association**, will resign to return to the pastorate effective Dec. 31. (See more information under Mobile Association.)

## FRIENDSHIP

► **Crossroads Church, Warrior**, will hold a walk through living nativity Dec. 13-15, 6-8 nightly. There will be live animals and refreshments and entertainment. For more information call the church office at 205-647-3880. Michael Jones is pastor.

## MOBILE

► **West Mobile Church, Mobile**, will not have Dennis Swanberg speak in the Dec. 31 service. It will be rescheduled in 2018. The church will have special services Dec. 17, 24 and 31 at 11 each morning. There will not be an 8:30 service these days. Families are encouraged to worship

together but preschool child care is available. Charles Gibbs is pastor. ► **Loren Robinson** is the new pastor of **Sonrise Church, Mobile**. He currently serves as director of missions for Clarke Association until his resignation at the end of this year. He also served at Dauphin Way Church, Mobile, and First, Tillman's Corner Church in Mobile. Robinson holds a bachelor's degree from Mobile College (now the University of Mobile) and a master's degree from Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He and his wife, Kathryn, have five children.



ROBINSON

## ST. CLAIR

► **First Church, Moody**, will host its third annual Chillbilly Motorcycle Ride on Dec. 16. Registration begins at 8 a.m. and the race begins at 10 a.m. at Barber Motorsports Racetrack. Lunch will follow at the church. There will be a few speakers and door prizes. Proceeds will benefit the Jimmie Hale Mission. For more information or to donate call Steve Raughton at 256-717-7912 or Leah Montgomery at 205-640-5328. Brad Moseley is pastor.✝

# Birmingham-area students invited to gather for night of prayer, worship

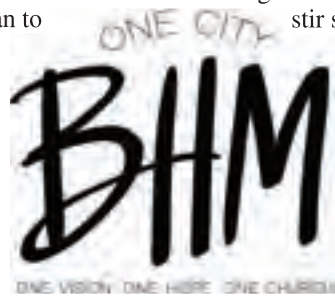
If your vision is contained to your ministry and your ministry alone, then your vision is too small."

Those words, spoken to a group of metro Birmingham student ministers about a year ago, stuck with Tyler Core.

"In that moment, God began to birth in my heart a vision for churches to partner together for a night of prayer and worship, to pray for our city and for God to move," said Core, minister to students at First Baptist Church, Trussville.

That very thing will take place Jan. 26 at "One City, BHM: One Vision. One Hope. One Church." All metro-area students in grades six through 12 are invited to gather that night at 7:30 at the Alabama Theater in downtown Birmingham. Student leaders and volunteers also are encouraged to attend.

"We want our students to know that they are part of something much larger than what's happening at their school and their church," Core said. "Our prayer is that 10 years from now, we will see that it was that night in that place that God began to stir something up."



Iron City Worship will lead the music and Jason Cook, associate pastor of Fellowship Memphis in Tennessee, will speak. City officials also have been invited to attend.

"It's going to be a special night," Core said. The theater seats 2,100, and he said they are hoping to pack it out.

Admission is covered by the financial sponsorship of First, Trussville. To sign up, visit <https://csummers.wufoo.com/forms/one-bhm> or email megans@fbctrussville.org. (Grace Thornton)



# Theology 101

## BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

### God's Self-Revelation

# Revealed in Human Nature

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

Last week we began looking at the biblical doctrine of general revelation by thinking about the created order as one channel through which God has offered His world insight about some aspects of His being.

The created order speaks about His eternal power and divine nature (Rom. 1:20). Not only has God chosen creation as a channel of self-revelation, He also reveals Himself in a general way through the constitution or makeup of human beings, since the Bible declares that in the beginning His creative intention was, "Let us make man in Our image, according to our likeness." Thus, we are made in God's own image (Gen. 1:26-27).

Of all that God made, human beings bear the greatest witness to God's existence and nature, thereby being a channel of His self-revelation. A thoughtful consideration of human nature bears witness to what God is like. This likeness is not to be found in our physical features, since God is Spirit. Rather, the likeness is to be seen in such nonmaterial aspects as humankind's mental capacities, moral sensibilities and spiritual possibilities.

When you and I look upon another person or in a mirror, we are beholding a living witness to an infinite, all-wise Creator. All of us are incredible and intricate beings, possessing qualities and abilities that are beyond all other creatures God made.

Of all living beings, humans possess wide-ranging skills and potential as thoughtful and communicative persons. Of all creatures, we humans can think about God and communicate with Him.

Although marred by sin, humans possess some degree of moral consciousness of right and wrong, good and evil, with the capacity to feel guilt after sensing that some actions are right but left undone and others are wrong but committed. Though crippled and sometimes distorted, our capacity for moral discernment bears witness to the perfect moral nature of our Creator whose image and likeness we bear.

Possessing the capacity for moral discernment makes it possible for human

beings to experience conviction over sin and realize the need for absolution or forgiveness. The human religious experience, however elementary or even misguided, witnesses to the felt need to appease a divine Being, even if the attempts seem crude and repulsive, such as child sacrifice, a practice expressly forbidden in God's law to Israel (Lev. 20:2-5), but which God's people encountered among the pagan Ammonites in their worship of Molech and even on occasion later practiced by some of their own kings, such as Manasseh (2 Kings 21:6) and Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:1-4).

### God's creative nature

Beyond moral consciousness and human creativity that bear witness to God's own moral and creative nature being imaged in men and women created in His likeness, the intricacies of our physical makeup with its nervous, circulatory and digestive systems, as well as the interconnectedness of bones, muscles and nerves, witness to an unbelievably wise, imaginative and creative God, whose characteristics we mortals possess to some degree. Humans, unlike any other living creatures, reflect creative characteristics in music, literature and art, as well as in inventions, medicine and technological advances. Whether through nature in general or human beings in particular, no one is without opportunity to know something about God. The fact is that human sinfulness suppresses or distorts truth about God. Every human being is responsible and no one is innocent. This fact is part of the missionary motivation to take God's offer of grace to all people in all places.✝

*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.*



The Alabama Baptist newspaper.

# Jesus' death

## Atonement sparks discussion at New Orleans Seminary forum

New Testament scholars N.T. Wright and Simon Gathercole addressed the meaning of the atonement at the 14th annual Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum on Nov. 10–11 at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

The question considered was whether substitution — the view that Christ died in the place of sinners — is enough to communicate the full meaning of atonement.

In a departure from previous Greer-Heard forums, the 2017 event featured conservative Christian speakers who agree on the doctrines that all Christians, Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox affirm.

### 'Shorthand'

Wright, former Bishop of Durham for the Church of England and a leading New Testament theologian, cautioned against reducing the atonement to a single summary statement such as Christ's death simply means be-

lievers "can go to heaven."

Wright called for seeing the atonement as "shorthand" for the full biblical story of redemption history and new creation.

Wright noted the Gospels are primary witnesses to the meaning of Jesus' death; any model of atonement that stands alone becomes "wooden and disjointed;" Jesus' death during Passover is key and showed that the Last Supper replaced the temple sacrificial system and was Jesus' final interpretation of his death; and that understanding these points should change how atonement is depicted.

Affirming that Jesus' death broke sin's power, defeated the powers of darkness and reconciled the world to God, Wright cautioned that reducing the atonement to "God needed to kill someone and it happened to be his own son" is a pagan idea imported into today's thinking.

"When we look back at the long history of atonement theology, especially in the west, we find three things: we have Platonized our eschatology; moralized our an-



Photo by Chandler McCall

N.T. Wright (left) and Simon Gathercole discuss the meaning of the atonement during the Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary on Nov. 10.

thropology; and therefore we have paganized our soteriology."

### Rescues and renews

Paul's argument is instead about how God rescues and renews His creation, Wright said, adding that "the 'getting to heaven' narrative, which is still massively popular and influential, is the teaching of middle Platonism, not the Bible; you'll find it in Plutarch, not in Paul."

Wright warned that today's culture thinks Christianity teaches that an angry God had to be assuaged, a teaching Wright called "a lurch toward ... pagan narratives in which an angry God demands an innocent victim."

Instead, a "robust Trinitarian theology" is needed to show that Jesus' death radically changed the world and restored the vocation assigned to humans in Genesis 1, 2 and 3, Wright explained.

Disavowing any theology that teaches only "what people would like to hear," Wright concluded, "The scandal of the cross remains a scandal, but at least let's get the scandal right."

Wright is author of the recent work on the atonement, "The Day the Revolution Began."

### A defense of substitution

Substitution is integral to the gospel, Gathercole contended in his response.

Gathercole, Cambridge University New Testament scholar and author of "Defending Substitution: An Essay on Atonement in Paul," drew first from Ezekiel chapters 33 and 34 as examples of Scripture's

consistent witness regarding God's saving activity — "liberation and on the other side, forgiveness of sins."

The two themes cannot be separated, Gathercole said. He pointed to the phrase "according to Scriptures" in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4, then returned to the Old Testament to show that Scripture also links disobedience and death.

### Broken link

Drawing from 1 Kings 16:8–19, Gathercole noted that the "formula" describing King Zimri's sin in the Greek Septuagint is similar to the formula Paul used in writing to the Corinthians. In the passage, King Zimri usurps Israel's King Asa's throne.

"King Zimri died for his own sins," Gathercole noted. "That's the link between sin and death. The miracle of the gospel is that this link between sin and death has been broken. Christ died for our sins."

"Substitution is at the heart of the gospel. Christ died so that we don't have to."

Paul tapped into the substitutionary language of Isaiah 53 in his Corinthians letter and provided a link between substitution and forgiveness, Gathercole said. He explained that the Suffering Servant died both "in consequence of [others'] sins and in order to deal with them."

"The Corinthians don't have to die because Jesus did," he added.

Gathercole noted the stark contrast between examples of substitutionary death for "worthy" persons in pagan literature and Paul's emphasis in Romans 5 of Christ dying for the "unworthy."

Paul touches on a "life for life

exchange," Gathercole said, adding that Romans 5 points to the main tenets of the gospel: "justification through Christ's blood, salvation and reconciliation."

In the concluding exchange, Gathercole praised Wright for providing a comprehensive framework for the atonement, but questioned whether Wright gave a restored "vocation" for humans and a "restoration of the cosmos" too central a focus.

Wright answered by appealing to Revelation 5 to where the redeemed are made "kings and priests" and to Romans 8 to show that now that the power of sin is broken, humans are free to be as God's image-bearers, as God intended.

### Center of Christianity

"The doctrine of the atonement stands at the center of Christianity," said Robert Stewart, Greer-Heard Forum director. "N.T. Wright's expansive book on the doctrine says that we have made too little of this doctrine."

"Not everyone will agree with him but everyone must take him seriously," Stewart said. "He affirms a substitutionary atonement but not necessarily in the traditional way and brings to our attention other things to see in the death of Christ. ... [He] declares that this world really is a different sort of place, a better place, because Christ died for sinners."

Other speakers included Michael Horton of Westminster Seminary in Glenside, Pennsylvania; Douglas Moo of Wheaton College in Illinois; Edith Humphrey of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania; and Kevin Vanhoozer of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. (BP)

101.5 • 97.5  
**THE RIVER**  
Safe For **YOUR** Family

YOUR HOME FOR 24/7 CHRISTIAN MUSIC  
in the Alabama River Region: Montgomery, Prattville, Wetumpka, Millbrook and Troy.

[www.wrvfmtheriver.com](http://www.wrvfmtheriver.com)

For more information or event material, visit [www.greerheard.com](http://www.greerheard.com).

# Love Like Lottie

## Pickens Assoc. holds Lottie-focused event for children

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

For more than two decades, Lottie Moon was like a dear friend that Claren Dease was thrilled to see coming.

“Lyle and I were missionaries for 21 years in Uruguay, and when we would come home for state-side, Lottie always made it possible for us to go back,” she said.

The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering — named after the missionary who gave her life serving the people of China — funded the Deases’ work, as well as the work of thousands of other International Mission Board missionaries.

“It was important for us to be

able to plant our lives there, and the offering let us do that for so many years,” Dease said.

So when the couple moved back and her husband recently became director of missions for Pickens Baptist Association, she was thrilled to find out the women were planning a Lottie-focused event for children.

“They wanted to see the kids get excited about participating in missions around the world,” she said.

Love Like Lottie, held Dec. 2, was a chance for children in the association’s churches to come together and hear stories about the missions hero, as well as stories about how the offering is still being used today.

“We were able to FaceTime with some of the young women that I worked with when we were in Uru-



Photo courtesy of Claren Dease  
Destiny Cobb (left) and Ana-Jo Peeks of Friendship Baptist Church, Reform, hold ornaments they made during Love Like Lottie.

guay,” Dease said. “It was a great way to let the kids know that God is still at work through Lottie.”

It also was a good way to let them know about a local hero — Martha Crawford, a missionary who

For more information about the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, visit [www.imb.org/lottie-moon-christmas-offering](http://www.imb.org/lottie-moon-christmas-offering).

Reliable SIGN SERVICES DIGITAL SIGNS



“God is doing so much in our faith family right now and the folks at Reliable Signs are helping us tell others about it. Our new digital sign generates a lot of buzz and we’re so grateful for it. The work they’ve done has literally brought us into the future. They’ve not only met our expectations, they’ve exceeded them!”



— Adam K. Rice  
Assoc. Pastor of Education and Young Adults

[www.reliablesigns.com](http://www.reliablesigns.com)  
1.800.729.6844 • 205.664.0955

WISHING  
CHRISTMAS

For unto us a child is born ... Isaiah 9:6



**Main photo:** Pickens Baptist Association children participate in Love Like Lottie. **Below:** Allie Richardson of Friendship Baptist Church, Reform, works on an ornament.

Photos courtesy of Claren Dease

met Lottie's boat when she arrived in China.

"Lottie stayed at the Crawfords' house when she first arrived, and they mentored her and taught her the ropes of how to navigate the customs in China," said Janet Estis, director of Pickens Association's Woman's Missionary Union.

Crawford grew up at Grant's Creek Baptist Church, Fosters, in what is now Pickens Association.

"Pickens Association has a rich history and we wanted to share that with the kids," Estis said.

They also wanted to share with

the kids that they could change lives too, just like Crawford and Lottie Moon, Dease said.

"Lottie left a lasting mark and gave her life to love the people of China," she said.

To celebrate that legacy, the 25 children present made heart-shaped pincushions and ate tea cakes like Lottie often made for the children in her village.

"We just want them to know that what she did is not just something that happened 100 years ago — it's something real and living," Dease said. ✝



**Your \$1.95 = a holiday meal.**

It's more than meal for the homeless.  
It's a wonderful Christmas blessing.  
Please donate today.



[JimmieHaleMission.com](http://JimmieHaleMission.com)

(205) 323-5878 • PO Box 10472, Birmingham, AL 35202

**GIVE YOU THE PEACE OF  
HEAVEN AT THIS CHRISTMAS!**

**RICK BROWN & ASSOCIATES**  
Retirement and Financial Services

**205-970-6077**

# 'Great comfort'

## Benefit society helps with end-of-life financial burdens

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

Were your ears ringing this morning?" Janie Johnson posted that on Sue Lackey's Facebook wall after Tim Smith, president of the University of Mobile (UM), gave his report during the Alabama Baptist State Convention (ABSC) annual meeting Nov. 15.

Smith "mentioned your names," Johnson wrote, "and reminded us of the memorial and Great Commission Floating Globe that represents the labor of love for Lord done by you and Bro. Fred."

And under her post, comments spilled by the dozens.

"Amazing man. We were honored to know him."

"God threw away the mold. Only made one of Bro. Fred and Ms. Sue."

"A man that truly loved God."

Fred Lackey — a pastor, UM trustee and regent, ABSC president and leader in Southern Baptist life — died in July 2016.

And when he did, his wife, Sue, was left with a lot of decisions to make.

"You have so many decisions to make in a very short time," she said. "Many of those decisions are monetary."

So when she received a benefit check from the Alabama Baptist Benefit Society, it provided "great comfort" and "another little reminder of how Fred's life impacted so many others."

She was able to use the money to help pay for his headstone and other pressing needs, she said.

That's the purpose of the Alabama Baptist Benefit Society, a group that provides financial aid to

its members' families after their death, according to John Killian, a member of the society's board of directors.

"Many years ago a group of pastors saw pastors passing on in a time of poverty and need, so they started the society to meet that need," Killian said. The idea was that each member would give \$1 each time someone died, and those



123rf.com

dollars would be collected and sent to the family of the pastor.

Since then, membership has been expanded to include any church employee from pastor to janitor and people from outside the state of Alabama. Applicants must be 60 or younger and in good health. Eligible members pay a \$5 registration fee, \$10 in yearly dues, then \$1 each time a member dies. Those funds are collected and sent to the family of the deceased member to help with funeral costs or other needs. So, for instance, if the society has 2,000 members at

the time of a death, the member's family would receive \$2,000.

### Helping families

It's not life insurance — it's simply a benefit, Killian said. "By being a part, you're helping the family of every member who passes away."

For Sue Lackey, the check was both a help and testimony to her husband's ministry.

"I am grateful for the society's benefit check I received upon Fred's death but also what it represented in his life," she said. ✝

**For more information about the Alabama Baptist Benefit Society, call Mike McLemore at 205-991-6502 or visit [alabamabaptistbenefits.org](http://alabamabaptistbenefits.org).**



(augmented reality)

## Follow these instructions

- 1** Download the Aurasma app from your app store.
- 2** Choose the "ALBaptist" profile under channel and tap "Follow." You will only have to do this one time. (Any ALBaptist options will allow you to follow *The Alabama Baptist*.)

- 3** Tap the [ ] icon at the bottom of the screen.

- 4** You will see pulsating dots, which indicate the app is searching for a target. Once it finds a target the dots will turn to a bull's-eye. The bull's-eye will remain until the augmented reality image loads.

- 5** Hold your device over a page or image in *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) marked as augmented reality and watch the paper come to life.

- 6** If the image is slow to load at any point, then it may be your data speed or Wi-Fi strength. Change locations and try again.

- 7** Each week when TAB arrives, open the app and hold your device over the augmented reality articles.

Questions about  
**Medicare?**  
Call us today!



**VIVA MEDICARE**

**1-888-830-VIVA (8482) | TTY USERS 711**

Hours: Mon - Fri, 8am - 8pm • Oct 1 - Feb 14: 7 days a week, 8am - 8pm • [www.VivaHealth.com/Medicare](http://www.VivaHealth.com/Medicare)

Viva Medicare is an HMO plan with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in Viva Medicare depends on contract renewal. Viva Health complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-800-294-7780 (TTY: 711). 注意: 如果您使用繁体中文, 您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電1-800-294-7780 (TTY: 711).

H0154\_md0bc1913A CMS Accepted 10/20/2017

# A Certain Trumpet

Sermons by Alabama Baptists

Matthew 1–2; Luke 2

## What Is the Real Christmas Story?

**O**n Christmas morning many families gather together and read the Christmas story. Matthew 1–2 and Luke 2 recount one of the most marvelous and miraculous events in history. The second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ, stepped out of heaven, took on flesh and was born of a virgin.

Theologians call this the doctrine of the incarnation (God permanently taking on real human flesh).

The story of the Messiah's birth is one of great joy and triumph. While few knew the magnitude of the moment during those days, today we reflect, pondering all God has done for His people and the massive role Christ's birth has played in each of our own lives.

### Our redemption

For the believer Christmas is not about trees, lights or gifts. It's not about memories. It's not even about family. Christmas is about our redemption. It's a time we pause to worship, remembering we are wretched sinners but Christ is a wonderful Savior.

When you think of that night, where does your mind go?

What do you think it was like?

If we are honest, the most authentic picture we can paint in our mind is that of a manger scene.

In 1223 A.D., St. Francis of Assisi created the first nativity scene with the intention of visually telling the story of the Messiah's birth.

While it is a great object lesson, we must remember that the nativity was much different than we often assume. Too many times we impose our American ideas and traditions upon the biblical text.

The historical context of the first-century and the grammatical structure of the birth narrative must guide our understanding.

We must allow the Bible to speak for itself, not make it say what we assume or have always been taught.

### Important questions

So what is the real Christmas story? While most of us understand the basic plot, a few details need to be corrected.

A careful reading of the two accounts



**By Andy Waits**

*Andy Waits is associate pastor of First Baptist Church, Springville. He holds degrees from The Baptist College of Florida and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and is married to Kati-Ellen.*

of Jesus' birth reveals answers to several important questions.

How long were Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem? Mary and Joseph had been in Bethlehem for some time before Jesus was born, most likely staying with family (Luke 2:6: "while they were there ...").

Sadly the story is often told from a flawed perspective that they were hurried in their travels and immediately after entering the small town were turned away by the innkeeper.

### Was there an innkeeper?

What about the innkeeper? Part of the traditional Christmas story focuses on the heartless innkeeper turning away Mary and Joseph as she was about to go into labor. I have even heard sermons on the innkeeper.

But the Bible does not mention an innkeeper. Also, the word Luke uses for inn is not the normal word for motel but rather translated guest room in a person's home.

Where was Jesus actually born? A house in Bethlehem was similar to houses at the beach today.

The first floor was open to the elements, housing the family animals. The second story was the living quarters. It is probable Jesus was born on the first floor of a family member's home where the animals were kept (hence, the feeding trough He was laid in).

Was anyone else present at Jesus' birth? Nativity scenes suggest Mary and Joseph were alone when Jesus was born, surrounded only by animals.

While we won't know for sure on this side of heaven, there is a greater possibility that they were surrounded by family

when Christ entered the world. The family home they were staying in would have been very small (the average home was 24 feet wide and 15 feet tall). It would have been almost impossible for a family member to be in labor and keep it a secret.

How many wise men were there and when did they arrive? Traditionally, the church assumed there were three because of the three different gifts given to Jesus. However, the Bible doesn't give a number. There could have been 10 or 20 or even 100.

We also know from the timing of their arrival that they did not visit the nativity the night Jesus was born; rather they appeared two years later.

### Jesus' true father

Who was Jesus' father? I have heard several preachers say Jesus was an illegitimate child and had no biological father. However, a careful reading of Scripture reveals the correct answer to this question:

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:35).

Joseph accepts Jesus as his legal son but Joseph was not His human father (Matt. 1:24–25).

Jesus refers to God as His Father 165 times in the gospels.

Conclusion? God was Jesus' true father.

### Jesus' siblings

Did Mary remain a virgin until her death? Though the Roman Catholic doctrine of Perpetual Virginity says yes, no less than 10 passages in the New Testament mention Jesus having brothers and sisters. Matthew 13:55 even gives us a few of their names: James, Joseph, Simon and Judas.

The original language is unmistakably clear that the words used are referring to siblings and not cousins.

How Amazing — "The Son of God became man to enable men to become sons of God" (C.S. Lewis).

May Christmas come alive for each of us this year as we understand and share it with our families in its biblical and cultural context.

I can think of nothing that would make Christmas any merrier. ✝

## Shades Mountain ministry produces Christmas film

**O**nline shopping is a multibillion-dollar enterprise fueled by the promise of quick and easy delivery right to the front door. But what would happen if those orders never arrived?

That's the premise of "Out for Delivery," a short film produced by Shades Creative, a ministry of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills.

The movie follows Grin and Miles, drivers for a package delivery company who are feeling underappreciated as they face another busy Christmas season. They devise a way to get back at their employer but their plan is discovered by Kat, a savvy teenager who soon realizes her Christmas, and that of many others, is in jeopardy.

### Material gifts

The film explores the value American consumers place on material gifts and follows the pattern of storytelling Jesus often used, according to Shades Mountain Pastor Danny Wood.

"You can go all the way back 2,000 years ago to when Jesus was preaching and teaching, and He used story and He

used parables," Wood said in a video announcing the project. "He constantly told stories that the people could relate to the message, so they could understand what grace was, what forgiveness was and who God was."

"Out for Delivery" will premiere Dec. 15 at 6:30 p.m. on WBRC (Fox 6) and WIAT (CBS 42). It will be rebroadcast on WTOO (CW 21) on Dec. 16 at 7 p.m. and again Dec. 17 at 12:30 a.m. on WVTM (NBC 13).

The goal of the film is both to entertain and make people think, said Ethan Milner, visual arts director at Shades Mountain, who wrote and directed the movie.

### Asking important questions

"We started talking about making a film and not partnering it with an event we do here on campus," Milner said. "We tried to make a movie that worked on its own artistic merit and asked a great question."

The film does not preach at viewers but it does ask important questions and point viewers to the ultimate source of truth, according to Steven Browning, minister of community engagement at Shades Mountain and one of the leaders of the project.

"The beauty of that for us as the Church is that the Church gives great answers based upon the Word of God," Browning said. (TAB)

**For more information about the short film 'Out for Delivery' and to view a trailer, visit [outfordeliverymovie.com](http://outfordeliverymovie.com).**

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



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Terry Long (center), director of missions for Choctaw Baptist Association, won the grant and Technology in Ministry (TIM) peer learning group opportunity presented during the DOM annual meeting in November. Ed Landers (left), director of the Media Center at Samford University in Birmingham, and Michael Wilson, director of Samford's Center for Congregational Resources, are leading the TIM opportunities for churches and associations in partnership with *The Alabama Baptist*.

## TAB, Samford partner to teach technology in ministry options

**T**he *Alabama Baptist* and Center for Congregational Resources at Samford University in Birmingham are partnering with Baptist associations across the state to assist churches in using technology in ministry.

In some cases, grant money is available to purchase equipment to livestream Sunday School classes or Bible study groups.

The educational opportunities include simple ways to use a smartphone and a smart TV for teaching as well as how to use Facebook and other social media to communicate.

The importance of maintaining at least a basic website and how

to economically make that happen are also part of the training.

Resources, contact information for ministry-minded web developers and tips for effective and appropriate social media for ministry are provided to those working in the Technology in Ministry (TIM) peer learning groups.

To find out how to get involved with a TIM group, church leaders should contact their association or email [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org). (TAB)

# 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

**BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR**  
Bethel Baptist Church, Highway 5, Brent, Alabama, is searching for a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to: Bethel Baptist Church, c/o John D. Russell, 298 Tabernacle Rd., Brent, AL 35034, or email to: [russellcatering@bellsouth.net](mailto:russellcatering@bellsouth.net).

### PART-TIME MUSIC DIRECTOR

Lakeview Baptist Church, Oxford, Alabama, is seeking a music director. This is a paid, part-time position. They will supervise the planning and leading of our worship services in an energetic, blended style. Their primary additional responsibility will be to lead the choir ministry and choir rehearsals. Interested persons should send a resumé to: [lburell@cableone.net](mailto:lburell@cableone.net) and/or contact Lem Burell at 256-846-2807.

### STUDENT MINISTER

Bethel Baptist Church is seeking a student minister to lead, coordinate, plan and promote its student ministry with an emphasis on reaching students with the gospel of Jesus Christ and training them to serve Him. Resumés should be mailed to: Julie Bullington, 495 Britt Rd., Sycamore, GA 31790, ATTN: Student Minister. To learn more about Bethel Baptist Church, please

visit [www.bbsycamore.com](http://www.bbsycamore.com).

### MINISTER TO STUDENTS

First Baptist Church of Oxford, Alabama, is seeking a full-time minister to students. Our student ministry is a thriving ministry focused on reaching, equipping and sending students for the glory of Christ. This ministry position covers grades 7 through college. Please send resumés to: the Personnel Committee at: 95 E. Oak St., Oxford, AL 36203, or you may email resumés to: [stan@firstbaptistoxford.org](mailto:stan@firstbaptistoxford.org).

### MINISTER TO CHILDREN

First Baptist Church of Oxford, Alabama, is seeking a full-time minister to children. Our children's ministry is a vibrant ministry with incredible potential. This ministry position covers birth through 6th grade. Please send resumés to the Personnel Committee at: 95 E. Oak St., Oxford, AL 36203, or you may email resumés to: [stan@firstbaptistoxford.org](mailto:stan@firstbaptistoxford.org).

### BUSINESS

#### NEED A NEW CHURCH SIGN?

Reliable Sign Services — a Christian operated, full service, lighted sign company located in Pelham, Alabama, for 23 years — is ready to help you expand your church sign ministry. From digital message boards to

traditional signs, Reliable Signs will design, fabricate and install statewide. [www.reliablesigns.com](http://www.reliablesigns.com). 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955.

#### STEEPLES, ETC.

No job too big or too small. Call for free on-site consultation. Toll-free 1-888-699-9679 or Alabama local 205-699-9679. Ask for Terry Barnes, owner. Visit gallery at [leedsstainedglass.com](http://leedsstainedglass.com).

#### ELROD MOBILITY — GREAT PRICES

Stair-lifts, walk-in tubs, lift-chairs and lightweight take-apart scooters. Saving people a lot of money on walk-in tubs, stair-lifts and showers. Our lift-chairs and scooters are near internet pricing. A+ rating with BBB. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658.

### TRAVEL/VACATION

#### LOG CABIN RENTAL

Lake Guntersville area, beautiful view and fully furnished. Discounts to ministers. Log on to [www.paradisevista.net](http://www.paradisevista.net) to see pictures. Call for reservations at 205-540-3600.

#### GULF SHORES CONDO

1/2/3 BR luxury beachfront condos and 4 BR beach resort house. Owner direct save you \$\$\$. Chris 1-800-713-6435 or [cashley945@earthlink.net](mailto:cashley945@earthlink.net).



Financial condition of both the Foreign Mission Board and the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention were "steadily losing ground according to a report in the June 22, 1875, issue of *The Alabama Baptist*. "Many hearts are sad with the apprehension that the days of these illustrious bodies are numbered," the paper said. "We fear the debts will outlive the youngest readers. The question is whether Southern Baptists will sustain their missionaries."



### UAB Medicine Rheumatology

Is joint pain disrupting your life? Central Alabama's premier rheumatology clinic is the UAB Medicine Multispecialty Clinic at Baptist South. Our specialty-trained UAB doctors and compassionate staff from Baptist South offer the latest treatments, therapies and procedures to alleviate your discomfort from conditions like lupus, psoriatic arthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. You don't have to miss out on life's little moments. Give us a call today.

Specializing in: Rheumatoid Arthritis | Osteoarthritis | Psoriatic Arthritis | Gout | Ankylosing Spondylitis | Lupus | Scleroderma | Vasculitis | Osteoporosis | Bursitis | Tendinitis



WELCOME OUR NEW SPECIALIST  
Ximena Ruiz, M.D.  
Now Accepting Patients

JOINING SPECIALISTS  
Matthew Mullen, M.D.  
Carlos Gadea, M.D.

Knowledge that will change your world

**UAB MEDICINE**  
MULTISPECIALTY CLINIC  
BAPTIST MEDICAL CENTER SOUTH

334.613.7070  
[UABmedicine-Baptist.com/Rheum](http://UABmedicine-Baptist.com/Rheum)  
2119 East South Blvd, east of the Emergency entrance at Baptist South

# Pastors: 'Draw near to throne of grace,' set aside time to rest

After some 50 years as a preacher — including more than 38 of those years as pastor of Lakeview Baptist Church, Auburn — Al Jackson believes every pastor will have three lifelong “companions” for which he must seek the help of God to manage.

“These (companions) are unwanted but necessary for our sanctification and growth in Christ-likeness,” he said.

“Your first companion as a pastor is fatigue,” he told those attending Shelby Baptist Association’s monthly pastors conference Nov. 7. “Gospel ministry is hard work. ... The fatigue we face is physical, emotional, spiritual and mental.

“I read that (the late) Herschel Hobbs once said that a one-hour sermon was the equivalent of a 15-mile walk. Of course, there aren’t many one-hour sermons anymore but many pastors preach in multiple services on Sundays and this takes a toll.”

## Finding rest

Jackson pointed to John 4 and Mark 4 where Jesus was fatigued and set aside time to rest. Ministers must find a Sabbath other than Sunday to rest, Jackson said. For him it’s normally Friday — a day he guards.

“I’ve learned to say ‘no’ to some requests that aren’t vital



Photo by Michael J. Brooks

Al Jackson (left) chats with Hugh Richardson, director of missions for Shelby Baptist Association, during the association’s November pastors conference.

or that others can do, unless this is an emergency, of course,” he said. “I do this in order to pace myself and be faithful to Jesus. And I take every single day of annual leave our church offers me to recharge my batteries.”

Jackson said fighting fatigue includes eating wisely and doing some type of exercise.

The second companion is criticism, he said.

Criticism may be minimal in some seasons and expansive in other seasons but it’s never far away from any leader.

“Jesus was often criticized, so

it’s part of the territory when we follow Him,” Jackson said, noting the antidote for criticism

is to “draw near to the throne of grace” for God’s mercy and help, as Hebrews 4 teaches.

“And the third unwanted companion is discouragement,” he said. “Jesus was discouraged in John 6 so it’s not a sin to be disappointed. It’s part of our humanness.”

Pastors pour their lives into others, encour-

aging, nurturing and discipling, and sometimes the work seems fruitless, Jackson said. (Michael J. Brooks)

**“[The late] Herschel Hobbs once said that a one-hour sermon was the equivalent of a 15-mile walk.”**

**Pastor Al Jackson  
Lakeview Baptist Church,  
Auburn**

**JUNGLE RIVER ADVENTURE**  
THE CURRENT TO GOD'S PERFECT PLAN

ADVENTURE COMING SUMMER 2018

“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go.”  
Psalm 128

**bogard press**  
ALWAYS BEAT THE CHURCH

TRUST OBEY SERVE SHARE FOLLOW

[www.vbs.bogardpress.org](http://www.vbs.bogardpress.org)

**LEEDS STAINED GLASS & CHURCH FURNITURE**  
SINCE 1892

Toll-free: 888.699.9679  
AL local: 205.699.9679  
Call for **FREE** on-site consultation  
Ask for Terry Barnes, Owner  
information@LeedsStainedGlass.com  
Visit [www.LeedsStainedGlass.com](http://www.LeedsStainedGlass.com)  
for an online gallery of windows and church furniture!

**BEST CHILDREN'S HOSPITALS**  
U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT

**Russell Campus**  
1600 7th Avenue South  
Birmingham, AL 35233  
205.638.9100

Benjamin Russell Hospital for Children:  
Lowder Building  
McWane Building  
Children's on Third Outpatient Center  
Children's Park Plaza

1601 5th Avenue South  
1600 7th Avenue South  
1600 7th Avenue South  
1208 3rd Avenue South  
1600 5th Avenue South

**Children's South**  
1940 Elmer J. Bissell Road  
Birmingham, AL 35243  
205.638.4800

Outpatient surgery services, Pediatric Imaging Center, laboratory services, specialty care clinics and After Hours care

[www.ChildrensAL.org](http://www.ChildrensAL.org)

**Children's of Alabama is ...**

- The third largest pediatric hospital in the United States
- Licensed for 332 beds & 48 NICU bassinets
- The first LEED-certified hospital building in Alabama
- One of the Top 20 employers in Alabama with more than 4,700 employees across the state
- The pediatric teaching hospital for the School of Medicine at the University of Alabama at Birmingham
- Home to the Pediatric & Congenital Heart Center of Alabama, where more than 450 cardiac surgeries are performed annually
- Site of the only pediatric kidney dialysis program in the state — one of the largest in the country
- Home to one of the largest burn units in the Southeast
- One of the largest pediatric rheumatology programs in the nation and the only one in Alabama
- Provides care for more than 90 percent of Alabama children with cancer and blood disorders

**Children's of Alabama**

Advertise in *The Alabama Baptist*  
Contact Bill Gilmore  
at 1-800-803-5201, ext. 107 or [bgilmore@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:bgilmore@thealabamabaptist.org).

Thinking about a  
**REVERSE MORTGAGE?**

Call Jimmy Dixon  
**205-567-4800**  
for a free reverse mortgage proposal or brochure.

NMLS #207518

EMAIL: [jdixon@mcgowinking.com](mailto:jdixon@mcgowinking.com)

# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For December 17

**Explore the Bible** By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

**AVAILABLE TO ALL**  
**Acts 15:6-11, 24-31**

**No Distinction (6-11)**

Acts is the unfolding story of the people of God, filled with the Spirit of God, engaging in the mission of God. As we share the gospel of Jesus Christ, we need to be clear in our understanding of how a person is saved. As the gospel was shared among the Gentiles, the question arose as to how they could become members of the church. Some of the Jewish leaders taught that the Gentile converts had to be circumcised and keep the Mosaic law if they were to be truly saved and a member of the church.

The apostles and elders gathered in Jerusalem to discuss this important matter. The solution did not come from a new word of revelation from a prophet but through careful reasoning based on Scripture's teaching. Three speeches that defend the gospel of grace are recorded.

Peter said his preaching to the Gentiles was not his idea but part of God's sovereign plan. He said God had given the Gentiles the Holy Spirit just as He did to us. This is proof that Jews and Gentiles are equal in Christ. Peter also reminded them that God makes no distinction between Jew and Gentile.

The Gentiles heard the gospel and believed. Therefore God cleansed their hearts by faith. Jewish Christians are saved by believing, just like the Gentiles. That's the only way anyone is accepted by God. Salvation is by faith alone. It has nothing to do with circumcision or any other human work.

**Clear Expectations (24-29)**

The entire council agreed, so the apostles, elders and the whole church decided that some leading men should accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to give a report on the meeting. The letter the council sent with

the men contained three crucial points. First the council declared that circumcision does not save anyone. Second the messengers, who would not only deliver the letter but also give an oral explanation of the matter, had the council's full approval and authorization. Third they emphasized the Holy Spirit-directed unanimous decision not to burden the Gentiles with anything such as circumcision but to request that the Gentiles abstain from four particular matters out of respect for their Jewish brothers in Christ. The fellowship matters were not conditions for salvation.

**Secure Encouragement (30-31)**

Having been sent away with the blessings of the Jerusalem church, the messengers went down to Antioch. The entire congregation in Antioch, which had been anxiously awaiting the news of whether their salvation was genuine, gathered together to hear the apostles' decision.

The reading of the letter and the report of the messengers resulted in three responses from the believers in Antioch. First they rejoiced. The confirmation that salvation was indeed by grace alone lifted a tremendous burden of worry from their shoulders. The second response was consolation. They no longer needed to fear that their salvation was not genuine. A third response was faith-building encouragement, as Judas and Silas added their own heartening words to those of the letter.

The apostolic church survived the greatest challenge it had yet faced and established the doctrine of salvation by grace. Satan's attempt to inject heretical teaching into the church was thwarted. So was his attempt to divide the church along racial and cultural lines.

There are two life-changing realities to ponder as we conclude: we must never abandon the gospel of grace and we must lovingly preserve the unity of the body. ✠

**Bible Studies for Life** By Jim Barnette, Ph.D.  
Samford University and Brookwood Baptist Church, Mountain Brook

**JESUS RULES**  
**Mark 4:35-41**

**Following Jesus does not exempt us from storms. (35-37)**

It is the evening after a full and exhausting day of teaching. Jesus wants to spend some quality time with His disciples, so they leave the crowd by taking a boat. The Sea of Galilee is like a basin: it is 700 feet below sea level, and it is surrounded by mountains. Through a slight opening at the southern cleft, violent winds from the southwest can blow down suddenly upon the water. Since the wind is nearly always stronger in the afternoon than in the morning or evening, fishing was done at night. But when a storm arises in the evening, it is all the more dangerous.

All the fishermen among Jesus' most intimate disciples knew from experience the danger of sudden storms at sea. They knew this sea to be a deep one, and that consequently these storms could produce waves of eight to 10 feet. As this particular storm emerged, even these seasoned anglers could not help but be terrified.

**Jesus is present with us in the storms. (38-39)**

While the storm rages, Jesus lay sleeping in the stern. His head is on the pillow that was customarily kept under the coxswain's seat for those who were not involved in the actual sailing or fishing. The frightened disciples interpret His sleep not as faith but as indifference to their plight. They awaken Jesus, and their cry carries a sharp tone of rebuke: "Teacher, do you not care if we drown?"

There are connections here with the Jonah story, which has a boat on the sea, a huge storm, terrified passengers and Jonah asleep below deck. There are significant contrasts, however, to the two stories. Jo-

nah embarks on the sea to avoid preaching God's word to the unbelieving people of Nineveh. Jesus, on the other hand, sails to take His good news to Gentiles on the eastern side of the sea. Another significant contrast is found in Jonah 1:6 — the captain awakens Jonah to pray for their situation, and this is what the disciples should have done.

Having received an undeserved rebuke from the unwitting disciples, now Jesus directs two amazing rebukes at the storm. First He rebukes the wind. The word here for "rebuke" means "to muzzle." The literal translation of His command to the waves, "Be still," is "be muzzled like a dog." This is the same language used to rebuke and silence the demon in Mark 1:25. A terrible storm can remind us how vulnerable we are to the dark forces of this broken, chaotic world. The miracle of calming the storm underscores for us the power that Jesus has to help us weather whatever types of storms we might face.

**Following Jesus requires faith. (40-41)**

"Have you no faith" does not capture the temporal unbelief of the disciples. "Are you still without faith" (NIV) or "Do you still have no faith?" (NLT) more correctly portray the "incomplete" belief of the disciples. Once they experience the miracles of Easter and Pentecost, their faith is transformed into a mighty force. Such is the challenge for us to carry on that confidence of our early church brothers and sisters that indeed the Lord Jesus is "ruler of all nature."

It is not surprising that in early Christian art, the church is depicted as a boat driven upon a perilous sea; with Jesus in the midst, there is nothing to fear. A contemporary word of such faith is found in the words of a sign hanging in my church treasurer's office: "Don't tell God how big your storms are; tell your storms how big God is." ✠

## Christian Crossword

By Janet Hopper Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



**Across**

- Sermon on the \_\_\_\_\_. (Matt. 5-7)
- Barabbas was in prison for insurrection and this. (Luke 23:19)
- Old Testament priest and book.
- Hill made of sand.
- Beersheba means "well of the \_\_\_\_." (Gen. 21:31)
- The Lord will do this to Zion. (Isa. 51:3)
- The Sovereign Lord will \_\_\_\_ his anger on Israel. (Ezek. 7:3)
- O taste and \_\_\_\_ that the Lord is good. (Ps. 34:8)
- Master of Education. (abbr.)
- A, B, C, \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_.
- What the risen Jesus did with broiled fish. (Luke 24:43)
- Mister. (abbr.)
- I will not \_\_\_\_ you as orphans. (John 14:18)
- Annum. (abbr.)
- Where lions lie down. (Ps. 104:22)
- Radium. (abbr.)

- Nehemiah prayed before the God of \_\_\_\_\_. (Neh. 1:4)
- One of Noah's sons. (Gen. 6:10)
- J, \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_.
- Slang for simple.
- Little Jack Horner's pastry. (Deut. 15:17)
- District Superintendent. (abbr.)
- The apostles were unschooled, \_\_\_\_ men. (Acts 4:13)
- Jesus' garment did not have one of these. (John 19:23)
- I \_\_\_\_ WHO I AM. (Ex. 3:14)
- Expression of mild sympathy.
- Is the Lord's \_\_\_\_ too short?
- Boaz told his men not to do this to Ruth. (Ruth 2:15)

**Down**

- Come to \_\_\_\_, all you who are weary. (Matt. 11:28)
- Layer of the atmosphere.
- Mountains in Asia.
- Nickname for Nathan.
- You expected \_\_\_\_, but see, it turned out to be little. (Hag. 1:9)
- One in Spain.
- Type of place where 5,000 were fed. (Mark 6:35)
- One of the kinds of love.
- Believers receive this kind of life.
- Song of Rehob. (2 Sam. 8:3)
- Others \_\_\_\_, He seems to be advocating foreign gods. (Acts 17:18)
- An inheritance of Asher. (Josh. 19:30)
- Number of Sceva's sons. (Acts 19:14)
- \_\_\_\_ Gedi. (1 Sam. 24:1)
- An inheritance of Issachar. (Josh. 19:19)
- Paul appealed to him. (Acts 25:25)
- Jewish Queen of Persia.
- This of the wicked is like

- that of a snake. (Ps. 58:4)
- Zacchaeus sat on one of these. (Luke 19)
- Bachelor of Arts. (abbr.)
- The people of Rabbah labored with these. (1 Chron. 20:3)
- Starting a quarrel is like breaching one of these. (Prov. 17:14)
- Salvation Army. (abbr.)
- I \_\_\_\_ the light of the world. (John 8:12)
- \_\_\_\_ a hen gathers her chicks. (Matt. 23:37)



**BOOKS**



# Media reviews

## The Christmas Blessing

Melody Carlson. Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2017. 167 pp. (Paperback).

I have reviewed a Melody Carlson book every Christmas since I began doing this for *The Alabama Baptist*, and I decided not to do one this year. That is, until I read this one. It was so good that I didn't think it was fair to keep it to myself!

One of the things I enjoy about Carlson's books is her versatility — with a new Christmas book every year,



her books have not become predictable or boring. Her characters are believable and appealing, and she still somehow manages to come up with unexpected plot twists. I won't say anything about the surprise in this one because I don't want to spoil it for you.

"The Christmas Blessing" is set in the World War II era and centers on a young woman who is down on her luck — near desperation — in a strange town. Sound like a Hallmark movie? Well,

maybe a little, but Carlson doesn't hold back her Christian references the way Hallmark does. If you're a Carlson fan, you'll want to add this one to your Christmas collection.

## The Christmas Code: Daily Devotions Celebrating the Advent Season

O.S. Hawkins. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2017. 60 pp. (Small Paperback).

You may remember O.S. Hawkins from "The Joshua Code." I did and was happy to find a tiny little book of advent devotions he has written. And by tiny, I mean really small — small enough to tuck in a purse or pocket, and inexpensive enough to tuck in someone else's pocket if you need a little gift for holiday hosts, a co-worker or just see someone who could use a little reminder of what Christmas is all about.

The short devotions really don't contain anything new, but the old, old, story is exciting enough in itself to stir the heart and get us ready to celebrate the blessed birth.

Hawkins' writing showcases the richness and depth inherent in the story, inviting the reader to experience it once again, and leaves the reader with a "code word" to ponder each day. The book is a wonderful way to prepare our hearts to celebrate the reason for the season.

## 'Twas the Evening of Christmas

Glenys Nellist, Author; Elena Selivanova, Illustrator. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017. 30 pp. (Large Hardback).

You can probably guess a lot about this book from the title. Yes it is a take-off of the old favorite about Santa and it is a children's book. I confess that I get a little tired of all the rewrites of the Clement C. Moore poem — it seems that everyone has a knock-off version. What attracted me first to this version



was the absolutely beautiful painting on the cover. As it turns out, every page of the book is just as beautiful as the cover. The artwork throughout is rich with color and detail.

The poem is fairly predictable in form and subject, but it's hard to complain much when it revolves around the birth of the Savior — and this one is well done, giving new meaning to the phrase, "and

to all ... a good night." I can see this book becoming a family favorite as we celebrate that blessed night; the beauty of the book would make it a nice gift.

## 12 Days at Bleakly Manor

Michelle Griep. Uhrichsville, Ohio: Barbour Publishing, 2017. 192 pp. (Paperback).

Bleakly Manor? Must be set in Victorian England, right? Right! Some people love stories set in Victorian England. I don't. But for readers of *The Alabama Baptist* who

cried when "Downton Abbey" ended, I thought I would share this book with you.

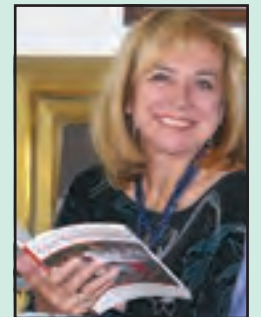
"12 Days at Bleakly Manor" is about an impoverished young woman who was invited to spend the 12 days of Christmas at a grand English manor house. She doesn't want to go but the promise of cash at the end of the 12 days lures her in. When one of the other guests turns out to be her former fiancé who disappeared just before the wedding with her family's fortune, she knows it will be a long 12 days.

The cast of characters, the setting, the wry twists of plot and the sprinklings of humor are all carefully crafted, making this book distinctly Victorian. I couldn't quite decide whether some of the elements (especially the characters) were created with the author's tongue in her cheek or if she was just trying too hard. Overall, though, it was a nice little read that wove the birth of Jesus throughout. ✝



## Meet the reviewer

Martine Bates Fairbanks, Ed.D., reviews books and movies for *The Alabama Baptist*. She is a university professor and retired principal. She is a member of Central Baptist Church, Decatur.



[BookReviews@charter.net](mailto:BookReviews@charter.net)

If you have a book you would like reviewed, mail a copy to: P.O. Box 1504, Hartselle, AL 35640.

**THE Misfits TOUR**  
AN EVENING WITH  
**BRANT & SHERRI**  
AND SPECIAL GUEST  
**JASON GRAY**

**Jan. 11, 7 p.m.**  
Flint River Baptist Church  
12945 Hwy 231/431 N.  
Hazel Green, AL 35750

**TICKETS AVAILABLE  
AT WAYFM.COM**



Photo courtesy of Laine Scales

Local children participate in Crafternoon at Good Neighbor House in Waco, Texas.

# Community interaction

## Revamped settlement house fosters faith-based social work

**K**endall Ellis is on a quest to discern her vocation. It began with studying for a career in medicine when she, and her undergraduate work at Georgetown College in Kentucky, changed direction.

"I ended up with a French degree and a minor in biology," the 24-year-old Ellis said.

Language study sparked a passion in her for cross-cultural experiences and to learn how societies view and process life. That led to a tantalizing glimpse into social work.

"You could maybe call it a calling," the Frankfort, Kentucky, native said.

To find out, Ellis has become the resident of a faith-based activity center in Waco, Texas.

Like the other "settlers" who live at Good Neighbor House in Waco's Sanger Heights community, Ellis will spend a year planning and hosting meetings of neighborhood groups and encouraging other activities aimed at fostering relationships in the area.

The home is the brainchild of Baylor University Professor Laine Scales, who purchased the abandoned property in 2011 in hopes of it becoming a social and spiritual hub in the community. It has been in operation for a year.

### Inspired by the past

Scales, who teaches education and social work, said her idea was inspired by the settlement house movement of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Settlement house practitioners purchased or rented homes in urban areas to use as community centers from which to provide social and educational services to the working poor and other impoverished Americans. The movement helped spawn what later became the social work profession.

Inspired by that work, members of Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) of the Southern Baptist Convention opened a settlement house in Louisville

in 1912. It functioned as a school for women who at the time were ineligible for seminary study. Through it they prepared for missionary and social work careers. The house eventually became the Carver School of Church Social Work and that work led to the opening of more WMU houses.

### Living together as neighbors

The story also inspired a book on Carver's history that Scales is researching and writing with Howard Payne University assistant professor Melody Maxwell.

"The idea behind the settlement movement is we are going to live with you and stand beside you as neighbors," Scales said.

That's also the idea behind Good Neighbor House in Waco, she added. Its neighborhood is diverse. Fifty percent of its residents are Hispanic while blacks and whites make up 25 percent each.

Those residents and their various clubs are welcome to use the house for formal and social gatherings. A local Girl Scout troop meets at Good Neighbor House. Settlers simply welcome them in and, over time, try to build relationships with the girls and their parents.

"We don't want to set the agenda," Scales said. "We want to say 'bring us your interests, bring us your groups' and we'll figure out what do we can do to help," she said.

The live-in settlers are being helped in discerning or living out callings at the Good Neighbor House, which consists of a main house and a cottage in the back.

Currently there are two couples and Ellis living and working there. There will be an opening for another two to three settlers in 2018, Scales said.

Settlers pay a small fee to live at the house and work seven to 10 hours a week. The rest of the time they either work or go to school. (BNG)



## Christians in Egypt lose more worship sites

SHOBRA EL-KHEIMA, Egypt — Fear of Islamist attacks was again cited as the cause of stopping worship in Egypt recently, even though parishioners said local Muslims supported the opening of the shuttered church outside Cairo, sources said.

Anba Morcos, Coptic Orthodox bishop of Shobra El-Kheima, decided to close the Pope Kerlis VI and Archdeacon Habib Gerges church before Nov. 17 services after consulting with the governor of Qalyubia, who had warned of possible Islamist attacks, according to Egyptian newspaper *Almasry Alyoum*.

After Friday mosque attendance on Nov. 17, Muslim families gathered outside the closed church building to show their support for it, Amir Aiad, a 42-year-old Christian in the area, said.

The church building had been rarely used since construction was completed in 2015 as it took two years to meet all legal obligations for opening, Aiad added. But when it opened in early November, it served around 1,000 Coptic Christian families.

Other reports indicate at least four other Egyptian churches have been closed in recent weeks and that there have been attacks on churches and Coptic believers. Egypt is ranked 21st on Christian support organization Open Doors 2017 World Watch List of the countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)

## Restrictions on worship continue in Kazakhstan

EKIBASTUZ, Kazakhstan — Local police in Kazakhstan continue their crackdown on Christian church services. In October police raided the Sunday morning worship service of Baptists in Ekibastuz. A police official "stood at the door of the meeting hall not letting anybody out," the church pastor said. The official reportedly said the raid was "because you do not have registration."

Twenty church members were fined and told that they "should not meet for worship until they register." The pastor said police accused everyone at the meeting of the unlawful unregistered exercise of freedom of religion and belief, despite Kazakhstan's constitutional guarantee of freedom of conscience.

Kazakhstan's council of Baptist churches refuses to register with state authorities because of fear it would lead to state control of their churches. Kazakhstan's Code of Administrative Offences states that "leadership of an unregistered, halted or banned religious community or social organization" may be fined without due legal process. Fines typically equal one to three months wages, according to Open Doors.

In Oskemen (Ust-Kamenogorsk), meetings for worship by New Life Church remain banned until Dec. 19 after church members, relatives and friends sang religious songs at a holiday camp in August without state permission. (F18)

## Iraqi Christians now fearing 'Shiafication'

DUHOK, Iraq — Amir Yaqu, an Iraqi Christian who fled his hometown of Bartella in northern Iraq because of the rise of the Islamic State (IS) in 2014, said circumstances have gotten "even worse" following the liberation of Mosul and the surrounding Nineveh Plains.

According to the pro-Kurdish news outlet Rudaw, Bartella's population of around 40,000 is mostly Christians. Yaqu said the situation is getting worse day by day as Hashd al-Shaabi forces are "systematically trying to change the Christian demography of these places." The new school in Bartella was named after Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini.

An anonymous security source aware of the details of the opening of the school told Rudaw that the opening of the school was "an attempt at Shiafication of the region." The security source reported that members of the Shiite militia have adorned most streets and public buildings with sectarian banners and graffiti. In Hamdania, he said, "There are Christians associated with the Hashd al-Shaabi but they have no power."

Iraq currently ranks 7th on the Open Doors Watch List of countries where persecution of Christians is highest. (TAB)