



INSIDE



In aftermath of another mass shooting, local churches unite to lift community

◆ Page 3



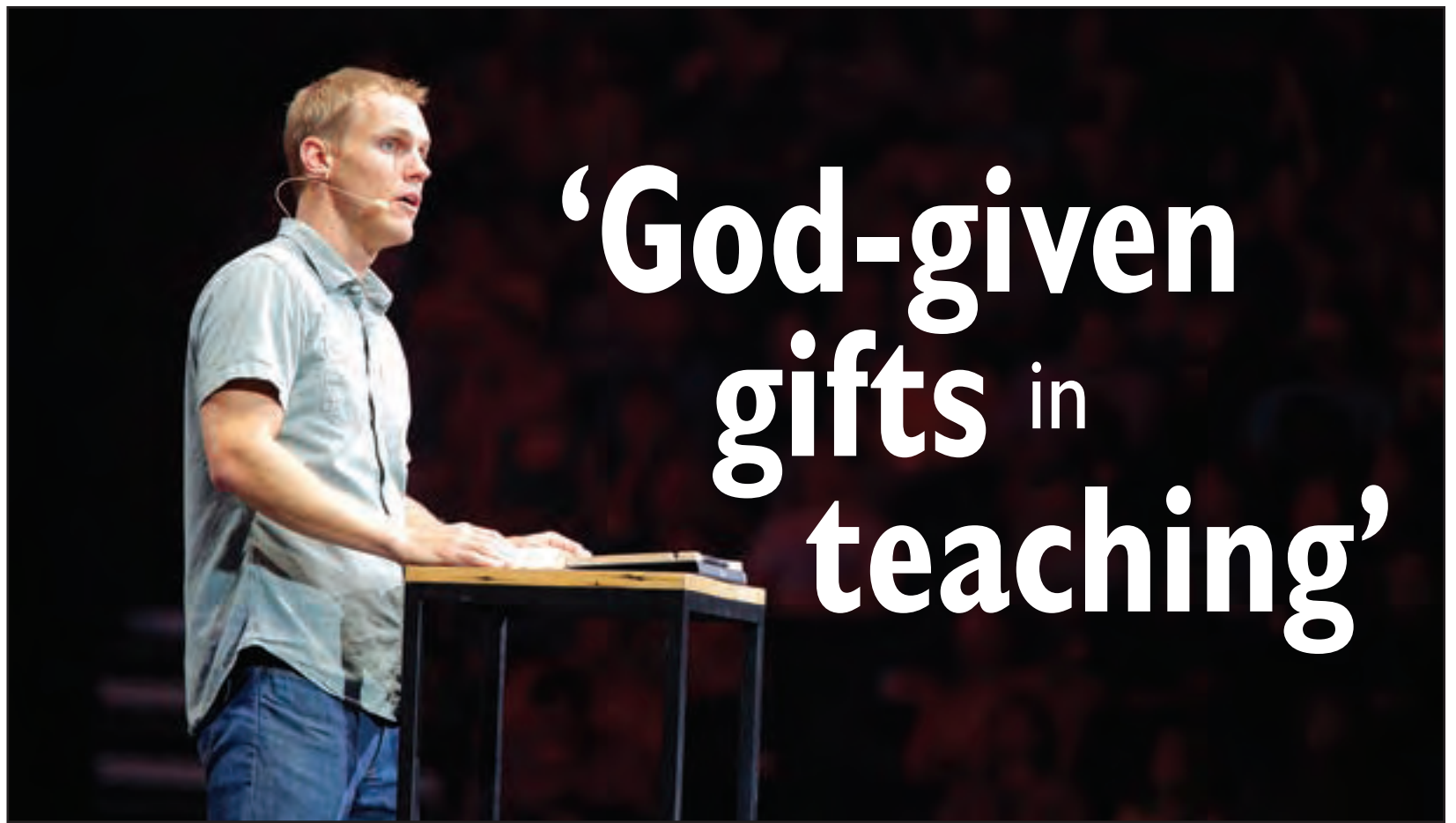
When churches prepare safe children's areas, parents can focus on worship, other events

◆ Pages 4-5



Spotlight on Christian Higher Education

◆ Pages 7-12



'God-given gifts in teaching'

Photo by Susan Whitley/NAMB

'I believe God has said I need to be in a different position. It's not about where you are but about being obedient,' David Platt says.

IMB trustees will search for new president after Platt's decision to step down

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

Alabama pastor and International Missions Board (IMB) trustee Cecil Sanders Jr. has no doubt that the IMB's work will move forward effectively in the time it takes to find a new leader for the organization.

Responding to the Feb. 12 request by IMB President David Platt that the search for his successor begin, Sanders, pastor of First Baptist Church, Headland, in Judson Baptist Association, said, "I know God has someone for us who will pick up the mantle and carry on. We want to make sure the main thing remains the main thing — exalting Christ in every corner of the globe."

Speaking to the Association of

State Baptist Publications (ASBP) on Feb. 14, Platt, who will continue as president at IMB until a new president is elected, downplayed his significance in the larger picture of the IMB.

'Disciples are being made'

"David Platt made an announcement this week, but I think we are in danger of missing the most important headlines," Platt said. "Disciples are being made. Pastors are being multiplied. The IMB is not David Platt. IMB is a coalition of 47,000 churches working together to support missionaries, some anonymous missionaries whose names can't be mentioned in public. They are risking their lives to share the gospel. They are the IMB."

Platt affirmed his commitment to leading the IMB until the new president is found.

"Nobody in the IMB wants to put a pause on our work," he said. "We are moving forward in strengthening our systems and training ... giving ourselves to the missionary tasks. The IMB is open for business. We are

financially healthy, we are biblically strong and we are practically ready to send limitless missionaries."

IMB trustee Jay Wolf, pastor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, in Montgomery Baptist Association, was in India on a church planting missions trip when the announcement came but contacted Platt afterwards.

"When I sent an email to (Platt) about his decision to step away from leading the IMB he immediately wrote me back and said, 'I wish I was in India with you, sharing Christ with those unreached people!' David has a burning passion to share Christ's love and light with all people," Wolf wrote (See 'Platt,' page 17)



IMB photo

David Platt interacts with schoolchildren in Indonesia.

COMMENT

Do Circumstances Make a Difference?

The writer of Proverbs 30:8–9 acknowledged a truth most of us are reticent to admit. Stated simply it is that physical situations often impact our spiritual condition.

In his prayer recorded here, the writer asks, “Give me neither poverty nor riches but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or I may become poor and steal and so dishonor the name of my God.”

The first of the two requests reminds readers of Moses’ warning to the children of Israel recorded in Deuteronomy 8. Moses cautioned the Israelites that prosperity can cause one to conclude, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me” (v. 17).

Moses urged them to “remember the Lord your God for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth” (v. 18).

Jesus alluded to the tendency of prosperity to make people indifferent to God and to their spiritual condition in Matthew 19:23–24 where He compared the difficulty of a rich man getting into heaven with a camel passing through the eye of a needle.

Unfortunately personal stories abound of once-faithful servants of God who became intoxicated with their prosperity and no longer valued a relationship with their Heavenly Father.

Choosing dishonorable actions

At the other end of the spectrum, the writer recognizes that circumstances could cause him to act in dishonorable ways. If he were poor, hungry, desolate, unable to care for loved ones, grieving or caught in any number of other situations, he might choose dishonorable actions. A relationship with God might take a back seat to basic survival needs.

Most of us cannot see ourselves walking away from God in either of these circumstances. If blessed, we believe we would heed Moses’ warning in Deuteronomy 8:11, “Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe His commandments, His laws and His decrees.”



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

If in poverty, we pray we would be like Job, who refused to turn away from God despite the urging of his wife and the misguided advice of his friends. No loss of wealth, health or family could cause him to forsake God.

Job lamented, “Even though He slay me, I will trust in Him” (Job 13:15).

With our minds we understand that a personal relationship with God does not guarantee prosperity, health, loving relationships or any of the other conditions often tied to personal happiness. Salvation is about being reconciled to God. It is about sin being forgiven, about living in the power of the Holy Spirit and a hope for eternity.

That is why we gladly declare, “God is good all the time and all the time God is good.” We know circumstances and situations do not determine God’s goodness. The two are unrelated. In prosperity or poverty, God is equally good. In sickness or health, God is equally good. Standing before an open grave or cradling a newborn baby, God is equally good.

Yet let some tragedy strike a Christian family and someone is likely to say, “They didn’t deserve that.” The comment may be intended to affirm the family but it conveys at least two questionable implications. First it implies a cause-and-effect relationship with every action, a concept taught in many eastern religions.

But in John 9:1–3, Jesus rejected this con-

cept. The disciples were sure the man’s blindness was caused by sin but Jesus told them they were wrong. Sin had nothing to do with the blindness. There was no cause-and-effect relationship.

The second implication is that some deserve tragedy. We often act as if certain behaviors deserve tragedies like disease, death and other heartbreaks. On the other hand, we seem to believe that “good people” should not be visited by such circumstances.

Jesus said otherwise. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “For (God) makes His sun shine on good and bad people alike, and He sends rain to the righteous and the unrighteous alike” (Matt. 5:45).

Those caught in the tragedy may even walk away from God thinking that a good God would not let bad things happen to them. It is as if faith is a transactional relationship — that in return for belief, God is obliged to keep pain and loss far from them.

The truth is “bad things happen to good people,” to quote a popular book title. Another way of saying the same thing is “life happens.” The corruptive nature of sin on humanity and on creation is pervasive and impacts us all.

The question is not “if” bad things will happen; it is “when” bad things happen. How will we act? Will we turn from God and trust our own strengths? Will we re-

ject God and dishonor Him? Will we cherish our relationship with God so much that we echo Job’s declaration, “Though He slay me, I will trust in Him”?

God never promises He will keep tragedies from us. He does promise that in the midst of tragedies He will guide, provide, restore, strengthen and comfort. That is what Psalm 23 is about.

‘My soul will boast in the Lord’

And Psalm 34:1–2 says, “I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the Lord.”

That is our goal in prosperity and in poverty. That is our goal in sickness and in health. That is our goal amid loss and amid gain. Our relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ transcends circumstances.

Whatever the circumstance, Christian believers are in God’s hands and He will not let us go (John 10:27–28). That is worth celebrating whether we find ourselves in prosperity or poverty or somewhere in between.✠

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

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'Who wins?'

In aftermath of school shooting, local churches unite to lift community

Chad Ashby said that in the eighth grade, he was shocked at the news of the Columbine shooting, in part because it was so rare.

Now the pastor of College Street Baptist Church, Newberry, South Carolina, tweeted that it's "only familiar sorrow."

Alabama Baptists and the rest of the nation echoed that sentiment Feb. 14 as news spread about the deadly school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, where a former student killed 17 people and wounded 14 others with a high-powered rifle.

Among the dead was assistant football coach Aaron Feis, who threw himself in front of students as bullets flew.

In the wake of the tragedy, Florida Baptist churches in the area of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School mourned while offering words of hope and help to those hurting in their community.

The main campus of Church by the Glades is located less than 10 miles from the school; lead pastor David Hughes said many of the students in the church attend Douglas High.

Hughes held back sobs as he explained that a few families in his church had suffered a fatality and one family has a son who is "gravely injured."

'What now?'

At times like this, Hughes said, people often wrestle with the reasons for the tragedy but that's not the most important question to be answering.

"What now?" he said is the better question. And "Who wins?"

"Do we let fear and cruelty, violence and hatred win," Hughes asked, "or do we continue to fight against the darkness and continue to bring the message of hope and light that comes through Jesus Christ?"

Eddie Bevill is pastor of Parkridge Church, Coral Springs, just blocks from where suspected 19-year-old gunman Nikolas Cruz was taken into custody. Bevill said many Douglas High School employees and students are members of his church family and are still grappling with the tragedy. "From within our church there is great sadness and a sense of loss," he said.

Bevill recounted a conversation with a leader in his church who was friends with Feis, the coach who died shielding students.



Photo by Keila Diaz

A cross-denominational prayer vigil was hosted by Parkridge Church, Coral Springs, Florida, after the Feb. 14 school shooting in Parkland, Florida, in which 17 were killed and 14 injured.

The man said when they were students themselves, he and Feis had watched together as the events at Columbine High School unfolded on TV in 1999, both of them weeping over the senselessness of it.

Parkridge Church met at Douglas High School for the first seven years of its existence and Bevill said the church has enjoyed a good relationship with the school ever since. They stand ready to help the school and the community through the grieving process, he said.

Part of that was a prayer vigil the church hosted Feb. 15 on its property organized by Church United, a cross-denominational evangelical group.

Thousands, including Florida Gov. Rick Scott, turned out to pray for healing and protection and to seek solace and support with grieving neighbors. Many on the platform read Scripture to the crowd in English, Spanish and French and pointed toward "the

God of angel armies" as our ultimate source of strength.

"What we're trying to say to our county is that Christians care because Christ cares," Bevill said. "We want to be a present help in times of trouble."



Photo by Keila Diaz

Scripture is read in English, Spanish and French by leaders of the cross-denominational prayer vigil after the Feb. 14 school shooting.

Sal Cavarretta, pastor of the Boca Raton campus of Family Church who attended the vigil, said it was a great showing of how the community of Parkland and neighboring communities are able to come together and support one another.

A brother and sister in his church who attend Douglas High School lost friends and a teacher in the attack.

On his way to meet with the students' family, Cavarretta said, "It is my privilege to be able to go and be a comfort to anyone going through this kind of thing and that, even through this, the gospel would shine even brighter."

Billy Young, Next Generation Ministries catalyst for the Florida Baptist Convention, said while we don't have all the answers, we have the ability to point people to the one who does — and just be there for them.

'Ministry of presence'

"Sometimes working with students the most important ministry you can have is the ministry of presence," he said. "There's no perfect way to minister here."

"We find ourselves here once again, sadly," said Al Fernandez, Florida Baptist Convention catalyst for Southeast Florida. "But this is an opportunity for the church to be the church. My prayer is that churches around the school can demonstrate the love of Jesus and the gospel."

Parkridge's Bevill said it's also a time for prayer.

"Once you're off the front page, it goes out of people's minds unless you live in that community," he said, "but we will need to continue to be lifted up in the weeks and months to come." (BP, TAB)



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When churches prepare safe children's areas, parents can focus on worship, other events

By Denise George
Special to The Alabama Baptist

Today's parents are becoming more and more concerned about the safety of their infants and young children during Sunday worship services and other church events that provide care.

Pastors and church leaders have a tremendous responsibility to keep safe those precious little ones entrusted to their churches' child care programs.

Here are some practical suggestions you can incorporate to keep your church children safe:

▶ **Develop your church safety and security.** After the recent rash of church and school shootings, some churches are hiring security guards to monitor outside and inside children's areas. Churches also can provide more safety outside the building with additional and well-maintained lighting in parking lots. They can provide safe playgrounds for children that are securely fenced, monitored at all times and a safe

distance away from woods, public areas and roadways. It's also important to make sure that playground equipment that is age appropriate, routinely cleaned and maintained for safety.

Another way churches can make sure they are safe is for fire safety and emergency evacuation procedures to be written down, understood and practiced by children's workers.

Extra outside doors could be locked during church hours and a guard posted at entrances and exits that remain open to congregants.

▶ **Have a church/parent alert system.** In case of accident, excessive crying, illness, choking, vomiting, fever, etc., children's workers must be able to reach parents immediately. Some churches use a discreet private paging system that connects workers and parent. They do this through a church check-in system and a teacher-parent messaging system.

▶ **Choose safe classroom and nursery spaces within church.** It matters where the children's area is located within the church. For best safety, choose classrooms with outside windows that lock to prevent falling and unauthorized access. It's also a good idea for those windows to have safety

glass to prevent breakage and injury.

Classrooms also shouldn't have entrance or exit doors that open out to the grounds, parking lots or streets. It's also a good idea for there to be a viewing window in the classroom door so that pastors, staff and parents can see inside at all times.

Also make sure you have fire department-approved smoke alarms within or near children's areas.

▶ **Create and practice safety within children's classrooms.** Children's areas must be clean, child-proofed, and equipped with safety plugs in electrical outlets. They should have no electrical cords within children's reach.

They also should have cleared surface spaces to prevent items falling on children.

Cabinets and drawers should have child-proof locking devices to prevent accidental openings.

First-aid kit

Have on hand a first-aid kit for minor injuries, digital thermometer to check for fever, sanitary wipes (for toys, equipment, books), hand sanitizer (for workers) and a diaper disposal receptacle.

Make sure there are no toxic cleaning

Pastors and church leaders have a tremendous responsibility to keep safe those precious little ones entrusted to their churches' child care programs.



Unsplash.com

chemicals or hazardous materials stored in lower cabinets, and make sure trash cans and plants are out of reach.

Keep children's equipment in good condition and clean it regularly. That includes making sure baby beds and cribs are regularly wiped down. Cribs with slats need bumper guards to prevent arm or leg injuries. Cribs must be kept free of blankets, toys and books. Each crib needs only a fitted sheet on its mattress. Babies should always be placed in cribs on their backs, not stomachs.

All older cribs and painted equipment should be checked for lead paint.

Swings, jumpers and bouncers and other equipment should be checked regularly for soundness and cleanness. Each should contain secure safety straps to prevent children from falling.

Children's toys

Classrooms should only have age-appropriate children's toys that pose no safety risks from sharp edges, broken parts and small pieces that can be swallowed. Toys should be cleaned before, several times during and after classroom hours to prevent spread of germs.

► **Choose and equip qualified children's workers.** Whether churches hire children's workers or enlist volunteers from the congregation, all adults who work with church children must be interviewed by church leadership and approved to work responsibly with children.

They must also undergo a criminal background check and be a member of the church for at least six months.

They should not work alone but with at least one additional church-approved worker in the classroom. The two workers should not be married or related to each other.

Children's workers should be healthy, have no contagious diseases and be up to date on vaccinations. They should understand church safety policies, have access to a phone in case of an emergency, be trained in CPR and understand what to do in situations such as fire drills, evacuation procedures and potentially violent situations.

Volunteers also should understand and love children, encourage and teach them, and keep them safe and clean. Refrain from bringing personal food items or drinks into classrooms. Personal items, such as purses, should be locked away from the children. Purses can contain hazards such as breath mints, medications and car keys — things that can choke or harm children.

Refrain from wearing jewelry, scarves, high-heeled shoes (flat, soft-soled shoes are safer), hair ornaments, hairpins, perfume or scented hand lotions (in case of allergies). Make sure shirt, blouse and coat buttons are securely fastened. Keep fingernails trimmed and smooth.

Get to know each child by name and get to know and get along with parents and

family members. Keep an active log on each child, telling parents information such as how much each child has eaten, how many times they've gone to the bathroom and how much they have napped. Keep them informed also about any problems the child might have had.

Know who will be picking up children after services. Each worker should have church-approved and parent-signed written instructions determining the individuals who are allowed to take children from classrooms.

Report any inappropriate parental behavior to workers or children in classrooms, and any suspected parental child abuse (visible bruises, cuts, etc.).

► **Have good practices for food.**

Recently at New Orleans Theological Seminary's child care center, a 2-year-old choked to death while eating lunch. Children can choke on food and they can die from food-related allergies.

Children's workers must allow children to eat only the food sent with them by their

parents and disallow children sharing each other's snacks. Have on file an up-to-date list of each child's food-related allergies and emergency information on treatment in case the child accidentally consumes food in which he or she is allergic.

Know CPR if a child becomes choked and understand church policies concerning child emergencies.

► **Enable family members to take responsibility to help.** Parents and approved family members

can help church workers keep children safe by providing valuable information and observing church rules. For instance, parents can fill out and sign a church-approved information form that includes emergency contact information, food allergies and any special needs the child might have.

They also can provide any supplies their child will need, such as diapers, skin ointment for diaper rash, sanitary wipes for diaper changes, bottles of formula, healthy snacks and drinks and a change of clothes. Parents should not bring children's personal toys and blankets into classrooms. Food, formula and snacks should be tightly sealed and labeled clearly with the child's name.

Be appreciative

Encourage parents to be appreciative, respectful and kind to children's workers. Parents should refrain from any type of conflict, from engaging busy workers in long conversations to interfering in classroom policies, but they should report to the pastor or a church leader any problems they see or experience with children's workers.

When pastors and churches carefully plan and prepare safe children's areas and classrooms, choose and train competent children's workers and work to make church a safe place for children, parents will worry less about their children as they attend worship services and events in another part of the church.✝



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Sharing porn illegal even if intent is to help, experts warn

A viral Facebook video that resulted in the arrest of a man in Alabama on child sex abuse charges may seem like a success story, but it comes with a serious warning — sharing pornographic images, even with good intentions, is a crime.

The video, which shows a man molesting a young girl, was shared thousands of times across social media platforms by outraged viewers who hoped their shares would lead to the abuser's identification and arrest.

That strategy seems to have worked but with a cost. Germaine Moore, an Alabama resident, was arrested after his mug shot and name were publicized. The girl is safe but her image has been broadcast to thousands of people.

"It's very disturbing that people feel like it's OK to post something awful happening to a child on social media," Tim Gann, Madison County chief trial attorney told Huntsville's WHNT News. "It's an awful thought that people can't understand that that's wrong."

Law enforcement officials warn that sharing or saving pornographic images, even with the goal of helping, is a crime. People who come across such images or videos should go through the proper channels to report the content, not take the law into their own hands.

The proper protocol is to report the offensive content to the social media platform for content violation. The social media site should then maintain a

copy of the image or video and follow its protocol for reporting the content.

Facebook spokeswoman Ruchika Budhreja told *The Washington Post*, "sharing any kind of child exploitative imagery using Facebook or Messenger is not acceptable — even to express outrage."

If pornographic content is received via email, the FBI warns recipients not to click on the image or any links in the email, nor to save the content to a device as "evidence," since any possession of child pornography, defined as "obscene matter containing a visual depiction of a person under the age of 17 years" engaged in a sex act, is a felony in Alabama, punishable by jail time and fines.

Reporting the right way

The right way to handle such material is to notify the appropriate authorities immediately.

Call your local FBI field office (Alabama has two: one in Mobile and one in Birmingham) or submit via the FBI tips line at 1-800-CALL-FBI.

Other reporting agencies are The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) at 1-800-THE-LOST or www.cybertipline.com and the National Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-4ACHILD (800-422-4453).

The reporting individual will not be asked to provide a copy of the content in any report. (TAB)

Philippine seminary leaders visit Alabama



Photo by Debbie Campbell

Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary President Armando Canoy (center) and academic dean Michael Janapin (left) visited the office of *The Alabama Baptist* on Feb. 9 to learn about the ministry of the state Baptist newspaper. TAB Editor Bob Terry presented the seminary leaders with a copy of TAB's new book *'The Alabama Baptist: Celebrating 175 Years of Informing, Inspiring and Connecting Baptists.'* Canoy and Janapin were guests of Samford University and Mountain Brook Baptist Church, both in Birmingham.



James 'Jim' Warren Sr. Longtime Alabama Baptist pastor dies at 83

James "Jim" Harold Warren Sr., an Alabama Baptist pastor for 42 years, died Feb. 11. He was 83.

A native of Mobile, Warren served in the U.S. Air Force before entering full-time ministry. He attended Baptist Bible Institute (now The Baptist College of Florida) in Graceville.

During his 42-year ministry, Warren served as pastor of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Pansey; Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Gordon; Lambert Grove Baptist Church, Citronelle; McIntosh Baptist Church; Navco Baptist Church, Mobile; and Manor Baptist Church, Mobile. Throughout his ministry he was active in nursing home ministry and sought to minister to his members in any way possible.

He also worked full-time as a maintenance engineer at Providence Hospital in Mobile for 22 years.

Warren is preceded in death by his wife of 61 years, Alice; his son, David; and a granddaughter, Kelly Warren. He is survived by three children, eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. (Charlie Warren)

Mike McLemore

BBA's Mike McLemore dies at 69 after serious illness

Mike McLemore, executive director of Birmingham Baptist Association and former longtime pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham, died Feb. 10 after a serious illness. He was 69.

McLemore had served at the helm of BBA since 2007. Before that he had served Lakeside Baptist since 1983. Throughout his pastoral ministry, McLemore served at many levels of Alabama Baptist and Southern Baptist life. He served as president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention from 2000 to 2002, having served as first vice president from 1999 to 2000.

He also served on *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) board of directors for 20 consecutive years, serving as board chairman for two years and was chairman of the board's search committee when Bob Terry was elected editor in 1995.

Gary Fenton, longtime friend of McLemore and fellow pastor within Birmingham Association, also served with him for several years on the TAB board.

"He loved *The Alabama Baptist*," Fenton said. "He really believed in it and enjoyed serving on the board. ... Mike also was a calming presence as chairman of the board in the late 1990s. He ministered to the Terry family during the tragedy of Bob's first wife,

Eleanor, dying from complications following an automobile accident in South Africa and Bob sustaining serious injuries.

"In all his roles, he was truly a denominational statesman who made unity within the body of Christ a priority," he added. "His kindness brought kindness out of others."

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said McLemore's years of service as president "demonstrated his statesmanlike leadership" in many ways.

"Mike served with excellence in the local church as pastor, in the Birmingham Association as executive director and in state convention life as both first vice president and president," he said. "He was an exemplary family man who loved his wife, Wanda, and their three children."

Lance said he first met McLemore when the two were in seminary. "We became close friends and throughout the years he has been there for me," he said. "He was more than just a colleague, he was a confidant. I will miss my special friend in the days to come."

McLemore was a trustee of the North American Mission Board at the time of his death.

He held a bachelor's degree from Samford University in Birmingham, a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and an honorary doctor of divinity degree from the University of Mobile. McLemore served in the U.S. Air Force from 1969 to 1973.

He is survived by his wife, Wanda; three children; and six grandchildren. (TAB)

'Junior' Jones Jr. Former longtime Cleburne Assoc. pastor dies at 91

William E. "Junior" Jones Jr. died Jan. 10. He was 91.

Jones was a farmer and auto salesman in Cleburne County when he was called to ministry. He served as a pastor for more than 40 years, well into his 80s.

Jones was licensed to preach by New Harmony Baptist Church, Heflin, on Oct. 2, 1967, and ordained by Bethsadia No. 1, Delta, in 1969. He was pastor of several churches in Cleburne Baptist Association, including Bethsadia No. 1; Happy Hill Baptist, Heflin; Union Hill Baptist, Ranburne; and Cedar Creek Baptist, Heflin. He also served as associate pastor at Pine Grove Baptist, Heflin, and interim pastor at New Harmony Baptist. He also served in Georgia.

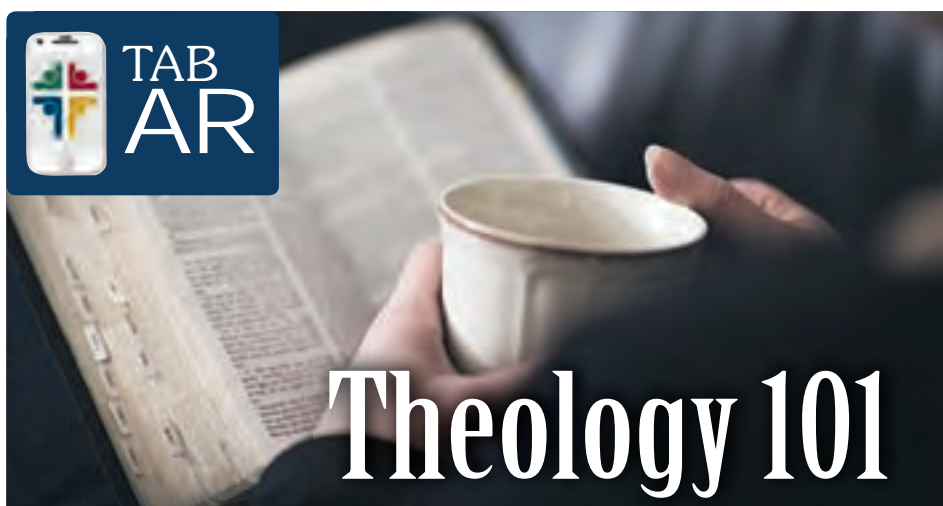
He was preceded in death by his first wife of 49 years, Erlene, and his second wife of 19 years, Jeanette. He is survived by two children, five stepdaughters, seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. (TAB)



WARREN



McLEMORE



BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

What's New?

A New Heaven and a New Earth

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

In the concluding and climactic passage of the Bible we are told about the exalted vision given to the Apostle John: "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" (Rev. 21:1). Might we not conclude that the ultimate outcome of the new covenant God made with His people, along with the new birth, new name and new life will be a new heaven and a new earth in which to live that new life forever?

We commonly speak of our eternal future being set in heaven, yet the Bible concludes with the thought that eternity future will be set on a new earth and canopied by a new heaven. The vision given to John continued with his testimony, "I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2). The vision seen also was accompanied by the loud voice that declared, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new'" (Rev. 21:3-5).

When Jesus comes

Included in the "all things" that God will make new are a new heaven and a new earth. The logical precursor to the creation of a new heaven and a new earth will be the dissolving of the old heaven and earth. This is precisely what 2 Peter 3:10-13 declares: "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what

manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire and elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and new earth in which righteousness dwells." Amazingly, eight centuries before Christ came, the prophet Isaiah heard God declare, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind" (Isa. 65:17).

Destined for heaven

Commonly envisioned and simply stated, the redeemed of the Lord are destined for heaven. Jesus spoke of this destiny as being with Him in His Father's house (John 14:1-3). However, contrary to this common vision of eternity future for the people of God as being in heaven, the Bible's concluding vision of that future describes the destiny of believers to be an earthly destiny, albeit not on this present earth but on a new earth.

The prospect of all things becoming new is not for the purpose of us speculating concerning the details of how and when God will accomplish it. This hope for the future is given us that we might be encouraged to live holy and godly lives in the present while looking forward to the fulfillment of God's promise of new heavens and new earth when sorrow, tears, pain and death will be no more. ☞

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.



SPOTLIGHT ON CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

KINGDOM mindset

More and more students see marketplace jobs as inroad to missions

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Kristen Jenkins says that, from a very young age, she felt God tugging at her heart to do missions.

But she also heard something else. “People kept telling me that I would make a good teacher,” she said. “I had a passion to work with children.”

And about a year and a half into her missiology studies at Judson College in Marion, she realized that the two didn’t conflict.

“I started to realize from my classes that most places I would like to go overseas wouldn’t let me come as a full-time missionary,” Jenkins said. “I felt like I was going to have to go another direction about it.”

That’s when the teaching passion came into play — she realized she could be a teacher anywhere, and that would give her the open door to live in a number of otherwise closed countries.

“As I started studying education, and being in the environment where I am at Judson, everything confirmed that this is something that the Lord can use anywhere,” said Jenkins, whose home church is First Baptist, Rainsville.

Need for teaching

It was further confirmed when she spent the summer in Southeast Asia.

“There is a need for teaching there, and there are multiple ways to go about that,” she said. “I will be able to share the gospel through my job. I don’t really know what

(See ‘Marketable,’ page 8)



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Marketable skills can be used globally while sharing gospel

(continued from page 7)
that looks like right now or how soon I'll get to go, but I know that's where I'm supposed to be."

A marketable major

More and more, students who are interested in missions are being encouraged to consider getting training in a marketplace job — teaching, medicine, business, engineering or a thousand other things — with the intention of leveraging those careers for the spread of the gospel.

J.D. Payne, a missiologist and

pastor for church multiplication at the Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, said the Church needs to move away from the idea that "tent-making" like the Apostle Paul is for the "junior varsity missionaries" who aren't as committed as those who go into full-time ministry.

"We need to cast the vision before college students to obtain marketable skills and degrees to be used in the global marketplace while they simultaneously labor to share the gospel, plant churches and raise up and train elders for

"We need to cast the vision before college students to obtain marketable skills and degrees to be used in the global marketplace while they simultaneously labor to share the gospel."

J.D. Payne
missiologist and pastor for church multiplication
Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham



The Center for Faith and Health works to establish relationships here at home and around the world to facilitate opportunities for students within the College of Health Sciences at Samford University to live out their Christian faith through compassionate care and service to others.

One way the center lives out this mission is by partnering with churches and their short-term mission teams. Jenny Dong, a third-year student with Samford's McWhorter School of Pharmacy, has had the opportunity to travel to Uganda and India through mission trips led by Gardendale First Baptist Church in Gardendale, Alabama.

"I had not met any of my teammates from Gardendale First Baptist before these trips, but both times, we just bonded immediately," Jenny said. "I chose to come to Samford because I was seeking a calling in my life to become a pharmacist, and traveling to Uganda and India was everything. I'm a student, and I still have so much to learn, but it was an honor to see these accomplished people putting their lives on hold to serve others with a greater purpose."

The Center of Faith and Health is continually looking for church partners who will help our students answer the missional call of using the gifts God has given to serve others.

**To learn how you can be a partner,
go to samford.edu/go/faithandhealth.**



"I'm a student, and I still have so much to learn, but it was an honor to see these accomplished people putting their lives on hold to serve others with a greater purpose."

—Jenny Dong



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those churches,” Payne explained. These kinds of jobs can put students in places they couldn’t have gotten to otherwise. It will give them financial support as they go. It can give them credibility in the place where they live and work.

Doug Wilson, dean of the office of global engagement at the University of Mobile, said recent alumni are now serving overseas through their majors in nursing, elementary education and business. But they are careful to avoid being identified as training for international missions while they are earning a degree, because being identified as such now may later be used by a closed country as a reason to deny them entry, he said.

“Such students often fly under the radar by choosing tent-making training and strategies,” Wilson said. “If their intent is to have marketplace skills to use in otherwise closed countries — closed to traditional missions agencies — publishing their names and strategies may undermine their goals.”

Missions mindset

Some students with missions in mind major or minor in intercultural studies and pursue additional training in marketplace skills “so that they can live and work as global Christians with a Kingdom mindset,” he said. “In fact, we have built-in language competency in three of our (See ‘Initiative,’ page 11)

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Career Plant points students toward cities

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

When John Turner met his future wife Courtney at the University of South Alabama in Mobile, he found one thing out quickly — she had a heart for the nations.

And he really didn't.

"My faith was more of a personal thing up until that point," he said. "We met at the BCM and I got challenged by others to pray about it. So I told God, 'If I'm really supposed to care about other people, I need you to give me that heart.'"

God answered those prayers, he said. "That's when everything changed."

And over the months that followed, as God brought interna-

tional students across John's path and led Courtney to South Asia for a semester, their hearts became certain.

They wanted to get married, and they wanted to do missions.

"We wanted to go to South Asia, but we have student loans, so we can't do that right now," said Courtney Turner, who studied to become a pharmacist.



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John Turner, who majored in engineering, had begun to wonder lately if he had made a mistake in choosing his career.

"But what we realized was that we could take our jobs anywhere, to any city and live and

work there and be part of what God was doing among internationals," he said.

That's the heart of Career Plant, an initiative designed by Jerrod

UM's new journal issues call for submissions

The forthcoming Journal of Christianity & Higher Education (JCHE) is issuing a call for papers for the inaugural volume, set for publication in October 2018.

JCHE, produced by University of Mobile (UM), is a peer-reviewed journal that aims to broaden empirical knowledge about the interchange of Christianity and higher education theory, practice, administration and experience, according to UM.

Submissions are due May 15.

JCHE, an interdisciplinary and interdenominational publication, seeks to enhance knowledge of the intersection

of the Christian faith with all areas of higher education through quality articles that highlight robust research and stimulate dialogue.

JCHE uses a double-blind peer-review process. The views and opinions expressed in the JCHE are those of the authors and are not necessarily representative of the editors or the sponsoring organization.

Interested contributors should visit ojs.umobile.edu for more information and submission. Questions may be directed to the editor, Kyle Beshears, associate dean of the UM School of Christian Studies, at kbeshears@umobile.edu. (UM)

part of what

DOING

es where they can live, work strategically



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Brown, Baptist campus minister at the University of South Alabama, which connects graduating students with church planters across the nation (see story, page 7).

“It’s like your job search done backward,” John Turner said.

Before you look for a job, you find people groups in need of a gospel presence.

One way to do that is to use a map provided at peoplegroups.org that shows where groups are concentrated in the U.S.

“Then after you find the people group you want to connect with, Career Plant helps you connect with a church planter there,” John Turner said. “And then you can find a job.”

That’s what he and Courtney Turner did — they followed their heart for South Asians to New York City and got connected with an existing church plant among

that people group in the city.

“It’s already there, we just get to come alongside what they are doing,” Courtney Turner said.

“Church planters need solid members who can serve alongside them consistently and tithe regularly. You can live somewhere and work there and have all of your free time to be invested in that community.”

This way, they can work, pay off student loans and not have to wait

years to take the gospel to South Asians, she said. “We wanted to be where the internationals are.”

If God has gifted you to do a particular job, He has ways He wants you to use that, she said. “That might be in Alabama but that might be in some other way too.”

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

If God has gifted you to do a particular job, He has ways He wants you to use that.

Courtney Turner

“What we realized was that we could take our jobs anywhere ... and work there and be part of what God was doing.”

John Turner

Initiative connects students with church planters nationwide

(continued from page 9)

Intercultural Studies tracks: French, Spanish and Teaching English as a Second Language.”

New avenues of sharing the gospel

This mindset can open up all new avenues of sharing the gospel, said Chris Mills, student missions mobilizer for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

In recent years, the North American Mission Board and International Mission Board have done a good job in challenging Southern Baptists to think outside the box of full-time ministry when it comes to missions work, he said.

So Mills and other student ministers have come together to make a way to help students who have chosen that path.

The initiative — called Career Plant — was designed by Jerrod Brown, Baptist campus minister at the University of South Alabama in Mobile, and connects students with church planters across the nation.

“As students graduate and consider where they want to work, they can use this network to find a church planter to come alongside,” Mills said.

For example, one young woman who majored in pharmacy feels called to South Asia, but she and her husband didn’t feel the time was right to go there (see story, page 10).

“They have connected with a church plant in

New York that works with South Asians, and they will go there to come alongside them and be involved members of the church who tithe and do ministry and give them support,” he said. “She will be able to continue to work in pharmacy and her husband will continue his work as an engineer.”

On the flip side, for instance, if a new graduate got a job in another city, Career Plant could connect him or her with a church plant in that area.

It would be a blessing for any church planter, Mills said.

“If you are a church planter and you have a solid follower of Christ who could come and plug into your church and has a job, understands tithing,

has a desire to serve and knows the need — how valuable could that person be on your team?”

He said he and other student ministers want to help students see that there is a place for them — the need is great, and the options are vast.

“I love it when a student tells me they are going to serve as a Journeyman,” Mills said of the IMB’s two-year overseas missions program. “But I also love it when a student tells me they are going to be a businessperson and use that for the spread of the gospel.”

EDITOR’S NOTE — Student name has been changed for security reasons.




For more information about Career Plant, visit onemissionstudents.org.

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SNAPSHOTS OF LIFE WHEN LIFE HAPPENS

The humbling nature of the fruit

I honestly believe if we would do more praying and less criticizing we would have a better nation,” Southern Baptist Convention President Steve Gaines said Feb. 14.

Speaking to a group of writers, editors and communicators, Gaines shared how at 60 he can look back now and see he has grown in this area himself.

“As I’ve gotten older, I’ve gotten kinder,” he said. “(I want to be) prudent, wise and merciful.

“I used to be a little bit more hard than I am now. ... A lot of it is how you see the people you are preaching to. I no longer see them as rebels who need to repent. I see them as people who are hurting and need to be set free.”

Gaines added, “If we are filled with the Spirit, it is the fruit of the Spirit that is going to come out.”

For me, the fruit of the Spirit outlined in Galatians 5:22 and 23 became a foundational Scripture as soon as I chose Jesus fully and completely at 19 years old.

I stray often but the simple, straightforward outline of qualities God desires for our lives to exhibit are always there to keep me grounded and bring me back when I slip — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Essential characteristics

The goal is for all of these characteristics to exist in our hearts.

I’ve heard some note how starting with love allows you to develop each of the traits, one building on the other.

I’ve also heard how they are

not individual attributes in and of themselves, that they are all essential characteristics of the fruit and must all be present for there to be fruit.

It’s always humbling to me when I go back to Galatians and recenter on each of the nine and see where some are missing and the ripple effect that caused.

By Jennifer Davis Rash
Editor-elect

If we were to only consider the first one — love — because it is February, then we might think about the depth of what that means and how we are called to love our enemies as well as our friends.

Real kind of love

Some people are hard to love, it’s true. And even the ones who aren’t hard to love still come with complex natures and baggage that sometimes surface whether intentionally or unintentionally.

No matter the relationship, we aren’t called to a fake, syrupy kind of act but a true, sacrificial, real kind of love.

It’s certainly not possible in our own strength. We must see others through the eyes of Christ.✝



Effective communication for the church

By Jerry Wilkins
Author and retired minister/DOM

People will pay the price to attend your church when they are convinced of the worth and value of it. You do, don’t you? You know the benefits, and you would pay any price to follow Christ and be in church, right?

We are not talking about price as related to an admission fee but the costs of time, energy, giving up other activities, the expectation of tithes and offerings, etc. It’s up to you and your church to communicate the value and the benefits to people so that they would pay any price also to follow Christ and be active in a church.

We expend great energy telling people about an event or program. We tell people the what, when and where, but we often fail

to mention the most important information. We forget the benefit or the why they should respond. Telling people why they should respond is of greater importance than the what, when or even where. If they see the why, they’ll search for the when and where.

Church communication is not an advertising or promotional project here and there. It should be a strategy that is ongoing throughout the year just as any other ministry. We must not expect overnight results. We must expect visible results to take time. The results come only if you begin the strategy and stay with it.

EDITOR’S NOTE — This is an excerpt from Wilkins’ new book “How to Reach More People: Compel Them in Through Effective Communication.”

@MichaelHyatt

The secret to becoming more productive is not managing your time but your energy.

@PaulAngone

Feeling uninspired? Keep doing the work. Sometimes the most inspired thing you can do is to keep showing up.

@brianknight

Entitlement is a learned behavior.

@christomlin

I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears. Psalm 34:4

@edstetzer

“If we want to win the hearts of the next generation, we must not be quick to judge, but quick to listen.” Sam Kim

@Brook_Hills

“There are a thousand ways to be broken and only one way to be made whole. There are a thousand ways to get lost and only one way to come home (to God).” Matt Mason, pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham

@crazylove

“The more you grow in your pursuit of Christ-likeness, the more you will naturally live out your God-given role.” Francis Chan

When you find yourself drifting from God you can repent and be restored.

No matter how many times we fall down, He’s there to pick us up and that doesn’t change.

Tim Boyd
Editor, *The Baptist Digest*
(Kansas)

I’m praying for a spiritual awakening, a real revival among our churches that He would fill our churches in such a way that when people leave they aren’t talking about the preacher or the music or anything else but the Lord. To achieve this, you can’t plan a worship service to attract people. You have to plan to attract the manifest presence of the Lord and that will attract the people. You have to have a spiritual ministry. When you have that, that’s when people get saved and see miraculous things happen in their lives.

SBC President Steve Gaines
Pastor, Bellevue Baptist Church near Memphis, Tennessee

Upcoming Disaster Relief trainings scheduled to take place across state

In times of crisis, trained Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBD) volunteers play a critical role in meeting the needs in the affected community, including helping first responders cope with the tragedy.

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is one of the upcoming trainings scheduled for this spring through Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM). Chaplains and others trained in CISM are better able to offer help to first responders and others who have been involved in situations that leave them emotionally and/or physically affected by those incidents. CISM training is useful for anyone who has an interest in serving law enforcement, fire or EMS as a chaplain, and is part of the curriculum of the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation.

The training will be held March

8-9 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center. Registration is open at www.shocco.org.

Several statewide disaster relief trainings are scheduled in March through SBOM and will be held at the Disaster Relief Center in Prattville.

Child care, March 17. Child care volunteers provide a safe and loving environment for children who have experienced crisis.

They provide care for children while parents attend to damages, paperwork and other needs following a disaster.

Communication, March 17.

Communications volunteers utilize amateur (ham) radio to assist in the coordination, placement, supply and support of ministry teams responding to a disaster. Emergency communications volunteers are a valuable link between first responders, volunteers in the field and administrative teams. An FCC license is required.

Administrative, March 24.

Administrative volunteers are needed to be part of the initial strike team that goes into a disaster area to set up the response network. Administrative volunteers arrange for housing, food and other logical needs for response teams and are responsible for keeping operations running smoothly.

Additional trainings

Several other trainings are available regionally and are listed in the Global Missions Disaster Relief Database at www.alsbom-gm.org. These trainings include sessions for new volunteers and current volunteers who need refresher training or wish to train in an additional area of service.

Associations offering training in the coming months include:

- ▶ Southeast Alabama Baptist Association, Feb. 22-24.
- ▶ Tuscaloosa Baptist Association, March 1-3.
- ▶ Coffee Baptist Association, March 9-10.
- ▶ Tuskegee-Lee Baptist Association, March 15-17.
- ▶ DeKalb Baptist Association, April 19-21. (TAB)

For more information call the SBOM office of global missions at 334-613-2356.



Uptick in sex offenses at Target stores

NEW WESTMINSTER, British Columbia — A study by Canadian pastor Paul Dirks of the Canadian “Woman Means Something” campaign documented 220 media-reported sexual offenses in Target locations from 2003 to August of 2017.

Target officially announced in April 2016 that it would allow transgender individuals to use their preferred restroom. A chart in the study, “Gender-Inclusion Policies and Sexual Violence: A Longitudinal Analysis of Media Reports at Target Stores,” reveals that in the 16 months that followed the policy change — May 2016 to August 2017 — 80 sexual offenses occurred, nearly twice the number of the previous 16 months. More than half of reports were voyeuristic incidents such as looking up skirts and peeping into stalls. One-fifth were classified as indecent exposures and one-third involved minors. All the offenses were perpetrated by males and almost all victims were female, The Christian Post reported. (TAB)

Walgreens to allow bathroom choice

DEERFIELD, Ill. — A new companywide policy permits customers at Walgreens stores to use the store bathroom that aligns with their gender identity. The policy announcement came in response to discussions with Walgreens initiated by the ACLU’s Southern California (SoCal) chapter on behalf of Jessie Meehan, who was refused entrance into a women’s restroom in a Walgreens store in Hollywood because she “dressed like a man.” Meehan identifies as female. The ACLU SoCal said Walgreens issued the new “Transgender Inclusion” policy after those discussions. The policy, dated Nov. 21, 2017, is to be implemented across Walgreens’ 8,000 stores nationwide. (TAB)

GENEVA

▶ **New Hinson Church, Slocomb**, will hold a communitywide “Bar-B-Que Cook-off for Christ” on March 3. Meats will be separated into categories and there also will be a category for sauce. Judging will be at 5 p.m. and dinner will follow at 6 p.m. Deadline to register to compete in the cook-off is March 1. Any donations made will benefit Paisley Corbitt. For more information or to register call the church at 334-886-3097. Bryan Klobe is pastor.

DEKALB

▶ Ted Traylor, pastor of Olive Church, Pensacola, Florida, will be the guest preacher at **First Church, Rainsville**, on March 11 in the 10:15 a.m. and 6 p.m. services. Everyone is invited. David Cofield is pastor.✝

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Video voyeurism

Alabama Senate passes bill to criminalize inappropriate 'upskirt' images

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**
The Alabama Baptist

A bill passed Feb. 8 in the Alabama Senate seeks to clarify that using a cellphone to secretly take pictures of another person's private areas is unacceptable.

Senate Bill (SB) 57 would criminalize video voyeurism, the practice of taking photographs or videos of the intimate areas of another person who is unaware of what is happening.

Technology has created a market for "upskirt" pictures, taken by sneaking a cellphone under a woman's skirt and capturing still or video images. Upskirt photos, along with "downblouse" photos, are often posted on pornographic websites or in online videos.

Alabama currently has no law against such practices. SB 57 would change that. Sen. Clyde Chambliss sponsored the bill in response to two cases in his district.

In one incident a man was charged with attempted criminal

surveillance after taking photographs of two women on separate occasions as they shopped in stores in Prattville.

One of the women had just come from church and was wearing a dress when she stopped at Wal-Mart to shop. She said she thought the man was looking for something on a lower shelf and then realized he was recording up her skirt. The second victim was shopping at Lowe's when the man recorded her.

'No excuse'

As reported by the *Montgomery Advertiser*, Prattville municipal Judge Louis Colley said there was "no excuse" for the man's behavior and expressed regret that under existing Alabama law, there were no grounds for criminal charges.

A 2012 state law prohibits spying on someone in an obviously private place such as a restroom stall but the aisles of a store are not considered private places.

SB 57 passed the Senate on a

27-0 vote and now goes to the House of Representatives.

Abortion, alcohol bills

Several other bills are being monitored by Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP).

House Bill (HB) 52 requires abortion clinics to refund a woman's money if she decides at the last minute not to abort her baby. That bill has passed out of the House health committee.

SB 230 would allow areas in dry counties to establish community development districts that could choose to sell alcoholic beverages under licensure by the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Board. A specific resort area in Jackson County, a dry county, would benefit initially from this bill, ALCAP Executive Director Joe Godfrey said. SB 230 was passed out of committee and sent to the Senate floor for a vote.

Two alcohol bills are still in their respective committees and not yet passed out for full debate.

SB 243 would allow wine to be shipped directly to homes without the person having to go to the store to purchase it.

SB 298 seeks to privatize ABC stores. Godfrey said that "in states where this has happened, the consumption of liquor has increased dramatically and the revenues to the state have declined."

Several cities and counties also have Sunday alcohol sales bills under consideration.

In other legislative news, the House passed HB 228 by a 91-4 vote after lengthy debate and sent it to the Senate for consideration.

This bill permits but does not mandate state agencies to display the U.S. national motto "In God We Trust" in and on public buildings, including school classrooms, courthouses, libraries and office buildings, and on law enforcement or service vehicles.

On Feb. 15, the House also passed HB 34, which adds specific protection for churches under Alabama's "stand your ground" law. ☞

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CHILDREN'S MINISTER & WORSHIP LEADER

First Baptist Church of Blountstown, Florida, is in search of a part-time children's minister and worship leader or a minister of both. Please forward your resumé and personal testimony to: 16693 SE Pear Street, Blountstown, FL 32424, or fbcb@gtcom.net.

PRESCHOOL & CHILDREN'S PASTOR

The First Baptist Church of Mauldin, S.C., is seeking a full-time preschool and children's pastor. Send resumé to: First Baptist Mauldin, 150 South Main Street, Mauldin, SC 29662 or email: wleonard@fbcmauldin.org. For more information, visit www.fbcmauldin.org to view the job profile and job description.

fbcmauldin.org to view the job profile and job description.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

Bethel Baptist Association is accepting resumé for director of missions. Please send resumé to: Bethel Baptist Association, ATTN: DOM Search Committee, P.O. Box 481088, Linden, AL 36748, or email: bethelassoc@bellsouth.net.

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

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Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,
he is a new creation. The old has passed away;
behold, the new has come.

• 2 Corinthians 5:17 •

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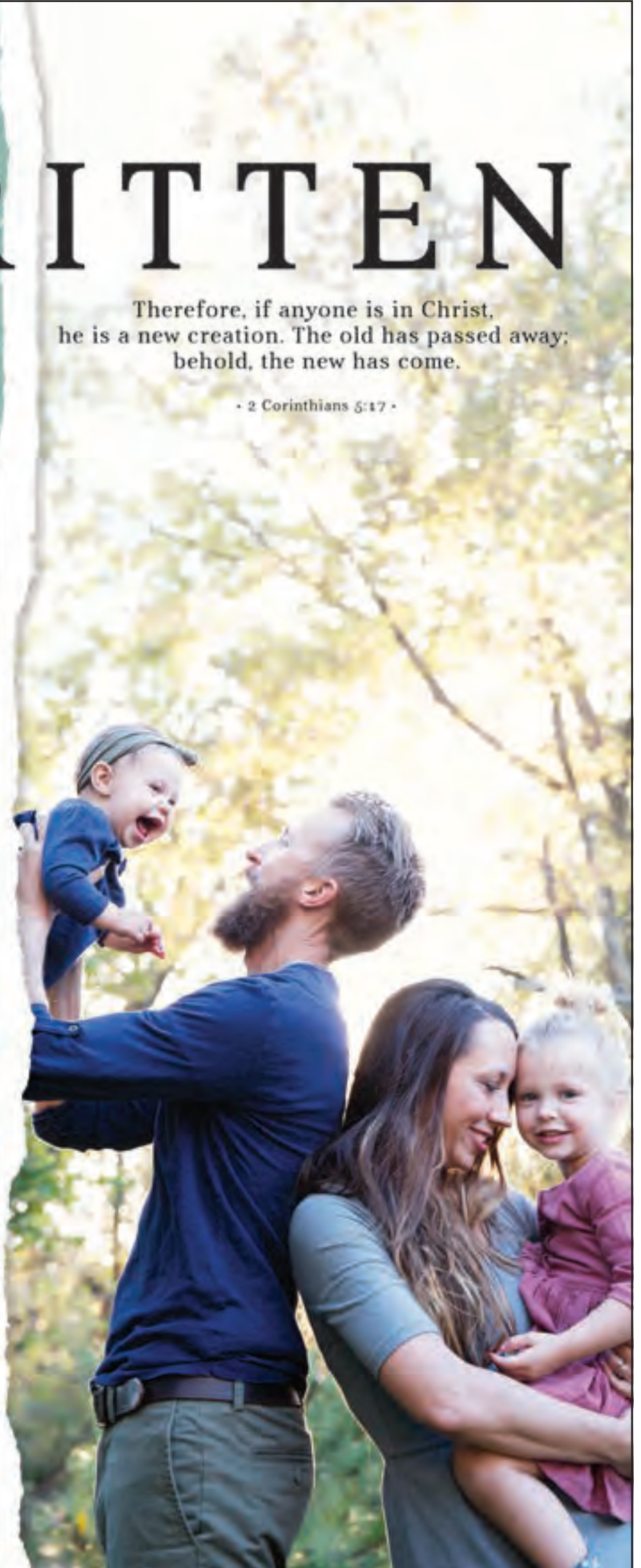
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Alabama Baptist
CHILDREN'S HOMES
& Family Ministries



Platt remains 'passionate' about global missions

(continued from page 1)
in an email to *The Alabama Baptist*. "While I am personally disappointed to see him step down as the IMB president, I'm confident that he will continue to serve as a missions mobilizer in coordination with the IMB."

Platt has served as IMB president since August 2014. Prior to taking on the role, he served as pastor of The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham.

'Burdened' to preach

In September 2017, Platt was granted permission by IMB trustees to take a teaching pastor role at McLean Bible Church in Northern Virginia alongside his leadership of the IMB. IMB trustee Ken Burnham, a member of Meadow Brook Baptist Church, Oxford, in Calhoun Baptist Association, said the plan was to review the status of that arrangement during the Febru-

ary meeting of IMB trustees.

"He wanted to be in a church with his family, which is only natural," Burnham said. "It was a good opportunity for him with his preaching and teaching gifts."

Platt told trustees, missionaries and staff that during his nearly four-year tenure at the IMB, he has been "burdened to continue preaching and leading in the local church," even as he remained dedicated to global missions.

"I am more passionate today than I have ever been about getting the gospel to the nations, and I want to spend what little time I have left on this earth with urgency toward that end," he said.

IMB trustee Max Croft, associate pastor of Agape Baptist Church, Scottsboro, in Tennessee River Baptist Association, said the news of Platt's intent to step away from the IMB did not come as a surprise.



IMB photo
IMB President David Platt claps the shoulder of past IMB trustee chairman Scott Harris during the closing prayer of a trustee meeting.

"I join many who thought he could not do two jobs, and he essentially said after receiving advice from friends and colleagues and through prayer and consideration, he decided he could not do both," Croft said.

Croft said he honors the decision because Platt "has said he believes his God-given gifts are in teaching."

"He's truly a man of God and I believe he's doing what he thinks is God's will," Croft said.

Richard Richie, an IMB trustee and pastor of Blue Springs Baptist Church, Somerville, in Morgan Baptist Association, also was not surprised by Platt's decision.

"We've felt there was a steady tension going on between David's

strong desire to preach and teach at the local church level while also continuing to serve on the world platform that the IMB presidency has afforded him," Richie said.

Platt said he had come to the realization that serving as president of the IMB and as a teaching pastor in a church was "not viable long-term."

'Being obedient'

"We all have parts to play, and I hope we are all playing the parts God has called us to play," Platt told ASBP members. "I believe God has said I need to be in a different position. It's not about where you are but about being obedient."

Croft said Platt has done an

"outstanding job as president of IMB" and was encouraged by Platt's expressed intent to continue in some future role at IMB.

"He indicated he will keep an attachment with IMB, and I look forward to that because he does have a heart for the nations. ... I hope we can keep him in some capacity with IMB," Croft said.

Search to begin soon

Platt reiterated his love for the IMB family and told ASBP members he wants "to serve IMB in any way I can. ... The specifics of what that looks like we will leave in the Lord's hand."

Wolf said Platt's vision for the IMB is "straight from God's heart" and said Platt "has done a good work and will continue to be a powerful leader in the entire evangelical world."

Burnham said IMB trustees will discuss the presidential search process when they meet Feb. 28-March 1 in Richmond and will follow the process outlined in the organization's bylaws for presidential searches, beginning with the appointment of a search committee comprised of IMB trustees selected by trustee chairman Rick Dunbar, a member of First Baptist Church, Madison, Mississippi.

The search team is expected to meet before leaving Richmond, and Wolf said he is confident in the process.

"God will provide an appropriate new IMB president," Wolf said. "Ultimately we are simply joining the Father's work. Our job is to trust the Lord, listen for His voice, act in obedience and faithfully serve as His witnesses until He calls us home."✠

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WHEN: March 1-3, 2018

WHERE: Andalusia City Hall, Martha and Solon Dixon Center for the Performing Arts, Local Churches — Andalusia, Alabama

LECTURES BY: Randall Bradley, Baylor University; Mary Louise Bringle, Brevard College; Sally Ann Morris, Wake Forest University School of Divinity; Eric Mathis, Samford University; Dan Schutte, composer/author/musician; Cynthia Wilson, Singer, Discipleship Ministries, United Methodist Church

FEATURING: "Songs of Hope: An Evening of Music and Reflection with Dan Schutte," March 1

HYMN FESTIVALS LED BY: Mary Louise Bringle and Sally Ann Morris, March 2; Cynthia Wilson, March 3

SESSIONS LED BY: Randall Bradley (Baylor), Mary Louise Bringle (Brevard), Kirk and Diane Hartung (St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Norwood, MA), Brian Hahn (Hymn Society in the United States and Canada), Matthew Hoch (Auburn), Eric Mathis (Samford), Sally Ann Morris (Wake Forest)

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 25

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

ALWAYS ON MISSION
Acts 28:17-28

Acts is the unfolding story of the people of God, filled with the Spirit of God, engaging in the mission of God. Acts ends on a big “to be continued.” Luke never set out to write a biography of Paul. His goal was to describe the acts of Jesus accomplished by the Holy Spirit. His first book, the Gospel of Luke, set out to tell “all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up” (Acts 1:1-2). The Book of Acts is about all that Jesus continued to do after that point. Luke ends the Book of Acts with Paul teaching about the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. The book is finished, but the mission Jesus gave to the church is not. Filled by the Holy Spirit, we spread the gospel to the nations.

The Journey (17-20)

Three days after arriving in Rome, Paul called the local Jewish leaders. It had always been Paul’s strategy to speak first with the Jewish community. Despite the persecution he had experienced from the Jewish people throughout his ministry, he had no desire for vengeance, no countercharges to bring against his countrymen. Therefore, he called for the local leaders of the Jews to meet with him. Paul probably assumed they had heard about him from the Jews in Jerusalem. He faced a delicate task. He needed to explain why he was a prisoner and defend his innocence, all while not alienating the Jews in Rome.

After declaring his innocence, he mentioned that it was because of “the hope of Israel” that he was a prisoner of the Romans. This phrase was intended to create interest about Paul’s main message. By using Old Testament terminology familiar to them, Paul was setting up the Jewish leaders of Rome to hear his proclamation of the risen Christ.

The Seekers (21-23)

The group of Jewish leaders denied any knowledge of Paul’s case. They had heard nothing officially, having received no letters from Judea about him, or unofficially, since none of the brothers coming to Rome had reported or spoken anything evil about him.

The local Jewish leaders expressed interest in hearing his message. They claimed to have no real understanding of Christianity though there was a church in Rome. They did know that this “sect” was spoken against everywhere. Their first meeting with Paul set up the second meeting. The Jews wanted to hear more so Paul welcomed them and sought to persuade them about Christ’s significance through the use of the Law of Moses and the Prophets.

The meeting requested by the Jews was not a quick gospel presentation followed by a call to repent and believe. Paul taught them all day, taking time to unpack the plan of God within the context of the Hebrew Scriptures. People today are saturated with ignorance when it comes to the Word. We must patiently teach people that God created a perfect world that was broken by human sin. We must explain that God, out of love, sent His only Son into this world to redeem sinners. Paul magnified Jesus as the Messiah throughout his teaching, imitating the pattern set forth by Jesus on the road to Emmaus. He described Jesus as the long anticipated Ruler, the true and better David, whose kingdom was inaugurated at His first coming and will be consummated at His second.

The Response (24-28)

Some of the Jews believed the message while others did not. So Paul declared that the gospel will be proclaimed to the Gentiles. He spent two years teaching everyone who would come and listen. He taught about the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.✠

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

I AM A LIGHT
Ephesians 5:8-14

Live as children of light. (8-10)

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul reminded those believers that God had rescued them from the dominion of darkness and transferred them to the Kingdom of His Son. This was equally true of the Ephesians and for other believers to whom this letter was circulated. The Ephesians had also been under the dominion of darkness but now they had become “light in the Lord.” The light of life is fruitful (vv. 7-10) in contrast to the “unfruitful works of darkness” (v. 11). This light of life is a transformed life. The transformation of a believer’s relationship with God has now become a transformation of conduct.

Living in the light produces “goodness, righteousness and truth,” a trio of positive qualities which contrast with the negative trio described in verse 3. Goodness belongs to the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, which also can mean “generosity.” As for righteousness in Chapter 4, Paul had described the “new man” as “created according to God in righteousness” (Eph. 4:24).

Elsewhere Paul prays that his Philippian friends may be “filled with the fruit of righteousness” (Phil. 1:11). Truth is the antithesis of falsehood, which the Ephesians have already been urged to “put off” (Eph. 4:25). So just as the life of light is a transformed life, it also is tested life (see v. 10). Moral discernment tries to “learn what is pleasing to the Lord” as one lives in this new light. Those who strive to determine and to live out the will of God “shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15).

Expose the works of darkness. (11-14)

Believers once belonged to darkness. Now they are not only in the light but are light (see Matt. 5:14). Christians participate in

and mediate the light of Christ to the world.

Here Paul notes a significant function of this light: to expose and reprove the sinful deeds of others. The New Testament does acknowledge the dangers of a self-righteous, judgmental attitude (Matt. 7:1-5); however, hesitancy to judge others does not mean refusing to confront others as if their grievous sins are “none of my business.”

The light of Christians can glorify God by revealing and transforming the dark side of human depravity. Two complimentary verbs are used in these verses, one meaning “to expose” and the other meaning “to illuminate.” The order of these terms is significant: exposure precedes illumination, but once exposure has happened, then illumination begins and is completed when transformation into light is achieved.

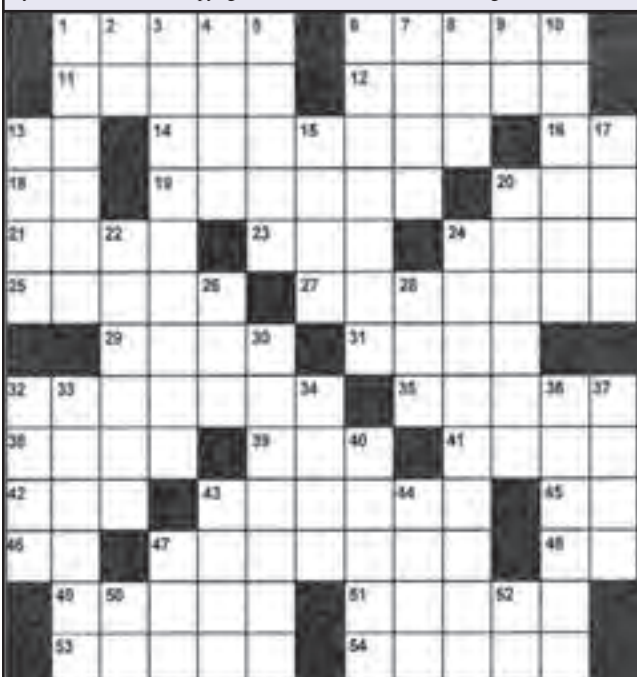
Paul inserts the quotation of a hymn to enhance the idea of illumination. The quotation is likely a Christian baptismal hymn built on certain Old Testament passages (see, for instance, Isa. 9:2, 60:1). Through the ordinance of immersion, a convert rises to new life — and new light — in Christ. Paul is urging his readers to fulfill now their baptismal profession by walking in Christ’s light as witnesses to the world.

John Raphael Peacey (1896-1971) bases his hymn, “Awake, Awake, Fling Off the Night!” on the baptismal imagery found in verse 14. The song highlights our call to an ethical lifestyle which is at the heart of Paul’s words in Ephesians 5. The first two stanzas illustrate this point:

*Awake, awake: fling off the night!
For God has sent His glorious light;
And we who live in Christ’s new day
Must works of darkness put away.
Awake and rise, like men renewed,
And with the Spirit’s power endued,
The light of life in us will glow;
And fruits of truth and goodness show.✠*

Christian Crossword

By Diana Rowland Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- He that earneth _____. (Hag. 1:6)
- Let all _____ that seek thee rejoice. (Ps. 40:16)
- Thou shalt _____. (Ps. 102:13)
- Eliab the son of _____. (Num. 2:7)
- And I will walk _____ liberty. (Ps. 119:45)
- He hath settled on his _____, hath not. (Jer. 48:11; 2 words)
- The ungodly are not _____. (Ps. 1:4)
- Exist.
- Ark of God came to _____ for there was _____ deadly ... (1 Sam. 5:10,11; 2 words)
- On the east side of _____. (Num. 34:11)
- _____ also the Jairite was _____ chief ruler. (2 Sam. 20:26; 2 words)
- How great is the _____ of them. (Ps. 139:17)
- Thou hast also turned the _____. (Ps. 89:43)
- As for such as turn _____ unto. (Ps. 125:5)
- More than twelve _____ of angels? (Matt. 26:53)
- Who is a _____ but he that denieth. (1 John 2:22)
- Thou art _____ God that ... (Ps. 5:4, 2 words)
- _____ will _____ his hand also

- _____ sea. (Ps. 89:25; 3 words)
- _____, so would we ... them _____ say. (Ps. 35:25; 2 words)
- And _____ out of the valley. (Ps. 60:6)
- Lyric poem.
- Beyond the tower of _____. (Gen. 35:21)
- National Institutes of Health (abbr.).
- Transgressions as _____ ... multitude, _____ did ... (Job 31:33, 34; 2 words)
- Texas Instruments (abbr.).
- I have given _____ unto the children. (Deut. 2:9)
- Borders of Archi to _____. (Josh. 16:2)
- Hewlett Packard (abbr.).
- Unto thy father that _____ thee. (Prov. 23:22)
- They that sow in _____. (Ps. 126:5)
- And _____ the lamp of God ... down _____ sleep. (1 Sam. 3:3; 2 words)
- To _____ these good at thy latter _____. (Deut. 8:16; 2 words, reverse order)
- Down**
- Beside the still _____. (Ps. 23:2)
- Given _____ unto the children. (Deut. 2:9)
- Of Brazillai the _____. (Ezra 2:61)
- He called the name of the well _____. (Gen. 26:20)
- Then shall the _____ be ashamed. (Micah 3:7)
- Obey God rather _____. (Acts 5:29; 2 words)
- City of Sepharvaim, _____, and Iyah? (Is. 37:13)
- God is my King of _____. (Ps. 74:12)
- I am _____ troubled. (Ps. 77:4)
- Lifted up as an _____ upon his land. (Zech. 9:16)
- Of the course of _____. (Luke 1:5)
- He restoreth my _____. (Ps. 23:3)
- May fall by his strong _____. (Ps. 10:10)
- Why make ye this _____, weep? (Mark 5:39; 2 words)
- What _____ thee now. (Is. 22:1)
- And _____ taken ... not any, _____ great. (1 Sam. 30:2; 2 words, reverse order)
- The meek shall _____. (Ps. 22:26)
- Called to _____ out into _____ place. (Heb. 11:8; 2 words)
- A damsel came _____ hearken, named _____. (Acts 12:13; 2 words, reverse order)
- Zophah, and _____, and Shelesh. (1 Chron. 7:35)
- _____ also shall _____ a possession. (Num. 24:18; 2 words)
- Beyond the tower of _____. (Gen. 35:21)
- Quit of thine _____ ... words, _____ be it. (Josh. 2:20, 21; 2 words)
- Voyage, flight or drive.
- To speak in a theatrical manner.
- Discovered _____ thy rebuke, O Lord, _____. (Ps. 18:15; 2 words)
- _____ God ... of _____ strings. (Ps. 144:9; 2 words)
- Mine _____ is as nothing. (Ps. 39:5)
- The sons of Judah were _____. (Num. 26:19)
- Rural Delivery (abbr.).





Media reviews

MOVIES

Also streaming this month

Netflix

“Lincoln” (PG-13, Feb. 21). Directed and produced by Steven Spielberg, this 2012 film spotlights Abraham Lincoln’s push to pass the 13th Amendment that abolished slavery. It makes some historical blunders and includes a bit too much language but is a fun watch for history lovers. (Its use of the f-word and its inclusion of Lincoln saying s—t is likely inaccurate.) Rated PG-13 for an intense scene of war violence, some images of carnage and brief strong language.



Hulu

“Akeelah and the Bee” (PG, Feb. 1). An 11-year-old girl from a rough part of Los Angeles has success in the Scripps National Spelling Bee. Writer/director Doug Atchison said his goal for the 2005 film was to show an African-

American girl defying stereotypes and overcoming challenges. Rated PG for some language.



Amazon Prime

“Logan Lucky” (PG-13, Feb. 16). A down-on-his-luck father and a few friends decide to rob the Charlotte Motor Speedway. “Logan Lucky” (2016) is one of the funniest comedies I’ve seen, but it’s not without its problems. It contains about 26 coarse words and a character who dresses slightly provocatively. Still, it contains no sex jokes —

a rare feat in a Hollywood comedy. Rated PG-13 for language and some crude comments. †



Photos courtesy of BBC Nature

‘Planet Earth 2’ now streaming on Netflix

By Michael Foust
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Theologians give the natural world a label: It’s called general revelation. Those animals, mountains, oceans and trees shout to everyone on the planet: God exists and He is glorious. It’s not enough to save you (that comes only through special revelation — Scripture), but general revelation is enough for every person on earth to be in awe of the Creator.

Are you still awake? Good. Because Netflix now is streaming “Planet Earth 2,” which is one of the best nature documentaries you’ll ever see and one that may leave your jaw dropping at the incredible world God made. In other words, “Planet Earth 2” is general revelation on display ... in high definition.

Up-close views

Like its predecessor “Planet Earth” (2006), “Planet Earth 2” (2016) was filmed by BBC Nature and gives you up-close views of obscure and well-known animals doing things you didn’t

know were possible. It is narrated by David Attenborough, whose distinguished British accent alone makes it worth a watch.

My 9-year-old son and I are in the middle of a “Planet Earth 2” binge, and we have enjoyed every minute: Draco lizards flying through the forest air, grizzly bears tip-toeing across avalanche-prone snow, and sword-billed



humming birds — who have a beak longer than their body — hunting for nectar.

There also are plenty of prey v. predator scenes, so you’ve been warned.

Racer snakes chase iguana babies in a deadly game that must be seen to be believed, and lions attempt to corner

and eat a giraffe — with the latter doing a little Houdini trick to escape.

Of course, “Planet Earth 2” includes a “millions of years” framework but that can be fixed with a parent-child discussion. (Although, to its credit, the series includes a reference to animals being “blessed” too.) Even the prey-predator scenes can spark a Bible discussion. After all, Scripture implies (Isa. 65:25) that

animals won’t eat each other in the future kingdom.

“Planet Earth 2” isn’t faith-based — far from it — but it nevertheless showcases God’s masterful creative skills. (See Ps. 8:3–4, Ps. 19:1–6.)

Other documentaries

Thankfully, “Planet Earth 2” isn’t the only BBC Nature documentary on Netflix. In fact, there are at least 12 of them, led by popular series “Planet Earth,” “Frozen Planet” and “The Blue Planet.”

That’s good news because it’s becoming difficult to find family-friendly content on Netflix, which spoiled my previous favorite show — “The Crown” — with sexuality and excessive language in season 2. (Although you can filter out the bad stuff with VidAngel.) †

Meet the reviewer

Michael Foust covers the intersection of faith and entertainment as a writer and podcast host for Heirloom Audio. He also is the husband of an amazing wife and the father of four small children.

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IMB photo

The risk of starvation is one of the main factors that drives people in North Africa to consider fleeing to Europe and other places. Such a journey demands great personal sacrifice and risk — sometimes even costing refugees their lives.

The forgotten refugee

IMB missionaries share hope with displaced North Africans

Six years ago, one of Seth Peyton's good friends paid a high price to escape the violence and famine of his home country. Like hundreds of other North African refugees, he gave his savings to a smuggler who packed him into a standing-room-only truck for a long, miserable trip across the Sahara Desert followed by a dangerous boat ride across the Mediterranean Sea.

Many don't make it — their bodies wash up on the shore of Europe's coast.

But Seth's friend said he wasn't sure the fate he found in surviving was better.

"After living here for six years, he recently went back home," reported Seth, an IMB missionary who works with refugees in Europe. "Refugees tell us over and over that this is not what the trafficker told them that Europe was going to be like, that it's horrible, that there is nothing for them here."

So as much as Seth's friend had sacrificed to escape the reality of his home country, he went back.

"He said people back there need to hear this so they do not risk their life to come up here," Seth explained.

In Europe, where Seth and his family live and serve, North African refugees often end up in government housing. They are piled as many as 15 to an apartment, and because of the type of visa they're given, they can't find work.

"They have nothing to do all day except go out and scrounge for food," Seth said.

"It's very lonely, very sad and very hopeless. They feel forgotten."

That's why he and other IMB missionaries across the region spend their lives trying to meet those "forgotten" refugees with the hope of the gospel.

"The church has a tremendous opportunity to engage these people, to pray over them, love them and share with them the hope that we have," Seth said. "We pray that through this time God will open their hearts and draw them into His kingdom through the hope that He offers."

And God is answering those prayers, he said — hundreds of refugees from closed countries in Africa and the Middle East are coming to Christ across Europe.

"There are great things happening in the midst of a heartbreaking situation," Seth said.

But, he conceded, their overwhelming heartache is still hard to watch.

"We recently had a group of refugees over for dinner in our home," Seth said. "One of the men revealed, 'I've been here eight years, I have no family, I have no job, I have nothing to do here, I have no hope. But tonight you guys have given me some joy in my life.'"

Pray for God to meet refugees in their pain with the hope of the gospel and that He will open their eyes to the eternal joy, peace and security offered through faith in Christ.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Name has been changed for security reasons. (WMU's Missions Mosaic, IMB)

"There are great things happening in the midst of a heartbreaking situation."

**Seth Peyton
IMB missionary**



Petition calls Franklin Graham 'hate preacher'

BOONE, N.C. — A petition on Change.org describing evangelist Franklin Graham as a "hate preacher" for his outspoken views on Islam and gay "marriage" has been signed by more than 7,500 people.

Graham is scheduled to preach at the Lancashire Festival of Hope in Blackpool, England, in September 2018, but the online petition seeks to bar him from speaking. The Christian Post reported that the petition has been signed by politicians and some church members.

Graham told London-based Christian media company Premier that he is not coming to Great Britain to preach against Islam or gay people but that he will "talk about God" and "preach about a Savior, Jesus Christ, who can make a difference in our lives if we put our faith and trust in Him."

In the interview posted online, Graham, the CEO and president of Samaritan's Purse and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, said such controversy is not new for him and noted that Jesus "offended many people" and the gospel "still offends people today."

Graham said people tried to stop his father, Billy Graham, from preaching in the U.K. too, but his father persisted and was able to win many of them over, The Christian Post reported. (TAB)



GRAHAM

Priest, others wounded in sword attack

YOGYAKARTA, Indonesia — A Muslim extremist attacked a Catholic church in Indonesia on Feb. 11, wounding a priest, two worshippers and a police officer.

The 23-year-old attacker, identified as Suliyono of Bayuwangi, struck during Mass at St. Lidwina Catholic Church in Central Java's city of Yogyakarta. He reportedly stormed into the service brandishing a meter-long sword and began striking people. Karl-Edmund Prier, an 81-year-old German-born priest, was reportedly standing at the altar when he was seriously wounded. Police arrived within minutes but not before the suspect decapitated statues of Jesus and Mary.

Police charged him with persecution, sharp-weapon ownership and terrorism, according to the *Jakarta Post*. He could face the death penalty under Indonesia's 2003 Terrorism Law, legislation that is under revision in the House of Representatives.

Indonesia ranked 38th on Christian support organization Open Doors' World Watch List of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to live as a Christian. (MS)

Gay 'marriage' reversed by Bermuda Legislature

HAMILTON, Bermuda — The Bermuda Legislature has outlawed same-sex "marriage" only months after the Bermuda Supreme Court approved such unions there, making the island the first nation to reverse gay "marriage."

The Bermuda Legislature approved the Domestic Partnership Act after a public referendum in favor of traditional marriage, effectively reversing the Bermuda Supreme Court ruling of May 2017. Bermuda Gov. John Rankin signed the act into law Feb. 7.

The new law denies marriage to same-sex couples but gives both gay and heterosexual couples the right to enter into partnerships with certain legal rights previously held only by heterosexual married couples. (BP)



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