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Jae McKee crosses a creek in Alaska with his nephew, Caleb Vardaman. McKee first moved to Alaska from Alabama as a summer missionary in 1991 — and never came back. He now serves as director of church planting and missions for the Alaska Baptist Convention.

Photo by Didi Vardaman

Stepping out in FAITH

Alabama native sees God ‘orchestrate’ path from home state to wilds of Alaska

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

As Jae McKee read the job description, he said it felt like a tap on the shoulder, like a clarion call saying, “This is the job for you.”

So naturally he applied — for something else.

“It’s kind of comical in hindsight,” he said. “I felt specifically

like my call to missions was a call to Juneau, Alaska. I didn’t question it. But it was like my fleece at the time — I wanted the decision to be God’s, not mine, and I wanted Him to confirm it.”

So that day in 1991, standing in the lobby of the Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) at the University of North Alabama (UNA) in Florence, McKee wrote down his top three choices for short-term missionary jobs — and none of them were Alaska. And then he waited to hear from the Home Mission Board (now the North American Mission Board).

Weeks later, the phone call came. “They only had two positions left. One was in Orlando at Walt Disney World and the other was in Juneau, Alaska. They asked me

if I would be interested in one of those,” McKee said. “I told him that Juneau was the only reason I’d applied anyway.”

The phone was quiet.

‘God had confirmed it’

“He said, ‘Why didn’t you tell us that?’ And I said that I had wanted God to orchestrate it,” McKee said. “I told him that God had confirmed it with that phone call.”

It might’ve been a turning point but his journey didn’t start with that phone call — it had started a long time ago.

McKee said his exposure to missions goes back almost to the cradle roll at First Baptist Church, Rogersville, where he grew up.

“The missions education there

was tremendous,” he said. “RAS (Royal Ambassadors) was a big deal then, and all the way through they made sure we understood the Cooperative Program and how it supported the mission boards.”

Then McKee got to UNA and his missions education found its feet.

“I truly realized my desperate need for Christ in college, and when I surrendered to whatever God wanted me to do, I realized that everything before that had been preparation,” he said. “Then when the opportunity came to go to Alaska, in my spirit and in my heart, it was very clear that it was the step God wanted me to take.”

Not to mention that Walt Disney World terrified him.

(See ‘Never,’ page 3)

To watch the videos from this week’s issue, visit our YouTube channel or use the HP Reveal app on your phone or tablet and hover over the segments marked “AR.”

COMMENT

Parts of Your Autobiography?

Do you ever find yourself pulled in a thousand different directions at one time? Each day the “to do” list grows longer instead of shorter. Your head spins because of all the demands and nothing gets the attention you know it deserves.

Each morning when you get up you are already tired. There is just too much to do. You do well to juggle the responsibilities by working on each one just a little.

Occasionally you ask yourself how you got in this situation. Is it because others are always asking you to take on more and more? Is it because you have a hard time saying “no”? Do you promise more than you can deliver? Do you end up unable to keep all the good intentions that drive you?

Are you the kind of person who likes to hold on to special memories? Do you enjoy reliving important events, retelling family stories? Recalling distinctive moments can be positive. It can help people bond.

Sometimes holding on to special memories can become neurotic. We all know the problems that can happen when one relives negative events. But it also is possible to get stuck in the glow of positive experiences. Are you tempted to live in the past instead of the present? Do you talk more about the way life (your church, your family, society) used to be rather than acknowledging the way it is? Are you able to live in the moment?

Healthy self-confidence

Not to be immodest but you know God has given you certain abilities. You have a healthy self-confidence. You don't mind assuming leadership. After all, you believe most problems can be solved once they are examined. Many times the solution is clear. It just takes someone looking at the problem and calling attention to the obvious answer.



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

When others are stuck on a problem or taking too long to present a recommendation, you don't mind talking to the appropriate person and helping them see the direction they should be moving. But in honesty, others don't always appreciate your approach.

Person of action

If you were to take a personality profile test, it would probably show you as a person of action. Once you see a way forward, it is time to act. There is no sense in being caught up in the “paralysis of analysis.”

Emotions are motivators. Reacting quickly while emotions are high is what you prefer. Others can sort out all the “whys” and “what ifs” later. Some may call you impulsive but they don't understand you are just leading by example.

Fairness is important to you. You carry a heavy load. It is important that others carry their fair share of the load rather than only one or two people. It is not fair for you to work hard and others not. You don't hesitate to make sure responsibility is passed around to everyone, even when you are not in charge.

You may have been called a “busy body” for asking about what someone else is doing or not doing but that is OK. Someone has to make sure everyone is doing their fair share.

Upholding your religious heritage is a part of your very being. You have been in the church a long time and you like the way things are done. You like the time the services are held, the songs Baptists have always sung, the choir and all the trappings to which you have become accustomed over the years.

Religious heritage

Others may say these things are trivial, that experiencing God is what is important. But the trappings of your heritage are important to you because you found God in their midst. Change is hard when talking about one's religious heritage.

Are these traits part of your autobiography? If so you may be kin to the Apostle Peter because the New Testament tells how each of these

characteristics were part of his autobiography. Unfortunately, the stories don't present him in a favorable light.

In Matthew 26:35, Peter promised that even if he had to die, he would never deny Jesus. He over promised. Before the night was over Peter denied Jesus three times.

Matthew 17 describes the transfiguration experience where Jesus' “face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light” (v. 2). Peter wanted to hold on to that moment rather than go back down the mountain to a hurting world. God spoke out of a cloud, effectively silencing Peter.

A chapter earlier we learn that Peter's self-confidence caused him to “rebuke” Jesus after our Lord said He would die in Jerusalem (v. 22). Peter was a leader of the disciples. He had just been praised by Jesus. Peter had little compulsion about setting Jesus and everyone else straight about the correct course of action.

In the Garden of Gethsemane Peter's self-confidence overflowed to impulsiveness that drew a rebuke from Jesus. When troops came to arrest Jesus, Peter drew a sword and attacked the high priest's servant (John 18:10).

‘Put your sword away’

Whatever Peter's good intentions Jesus stopped him in his tracks, ordering him to “put your sword away.” Impulsiveness can get us on the wrong side of our Lord.

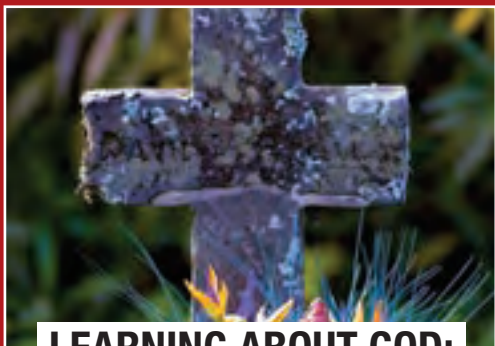
In John's final chapter, the author describes Peter being commissioned by Jesus to “feed my lambs.” But before the scene is finished Peter sees John and asks, “What about this man?” One can almost hear the exasperation in Jesus' voice when He answers, “What is that to you? You follow Me” (John 21:22).

Acts 10:9–16 describes an experience where Peter resisted direction from God because the command was different from what Peter had always been taught. Peter opted for heritage rather than being a part of new things God wanted to do.

None of the New Testament stories place Peter in the best light. They point to shortcomings that are shortcomings for most of us too. We share a similar autobiography.

But God used Peter in ways He used no other. It was Peter who declared, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” It was Peter who preached at Pentecost and saw more than 3,000 persons repent and be baptized. It was Peter who God used to open the door of salvation to the Gentiles. And it was Peter who became the undisputed leader of the early church.

God used Peter despite the character traits of his autobiography. And God will use you and me when we make total surrender to Him part of our autobiography just as Peter did. ✠



LEARNING ABOUT GOD:

A Personal Story

To read ‘Walking into the storm,’ see page 5.



"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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'Never looked back'

McKee working toward missions partnerships with Alabama Baptists

(continued from page 1)

"Send me out in the woods with the bears," McKee said with a laugh. "I'm happy with that."

And that's where he's been ever since.

Twenty-seven years later, he's still living in Alaska, serving as director of church planting and missions for the Alaska Baptist Convention. After his three-year missions term was up, he married Carole, a young woman who had been the first baby on the cradle roll at the first church he was sent to in Juneau — Glacier Valley Baptist Church.

'God was really working'

"She grew up there and we met at the church's 30th anniversary," McKee said. "God was really working in all that to get me right where He wanted me to be."

And all that fishing and hunting he had loved in Alabama came in handy — he and Carole moved to a remote area, where he worked part time as a big game and fishing guide. He volunteered over the years with Baptist churches in the area, then eventually joined the staff of First Baptist Church, Anchorage.

"We served there full-time for a little over 17 years as our kids grew up," McKee said.

His son is in Fairbanks in college now, and his daughter is back in his old stomping grounds at UNA. It's a blessing for McKee to see her in the place that meant so much to his own spiritual journey, he said. "The BCM there was a big part of my life. The week-in-week-out ministry opportunities really made a difference in my life."

Eddy Garner, who was UNA's Baptist campus minister at the time, said McKee's willingness to go anywhere was memorable.

"Jae was a committed Christian while in college," said Garner, now director of missions for Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association. "I always admired his adventurous spirit and willingness to follow the Lord wherever He might lead."

The young man stepped out in faith and "never looked back," Garner said. "It is excit-



Photo courtesy of Jae McKee

Jae McKee (left) leads a service in a retirement home. Over the past 27 years the native Alabamian has spearheaded the growth of groups and churches all over Alaska.

ing to see what the Lord is doing in Jae's ministry in Alaska."

Right now, that ministry is serving with the Alaska Baptist Convention, working closely with church planters for training, encouragement and missions involvement. McKee also is working to establish strong missions partnerships with Alabama Baptists. This summer, several state missionaries from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions will travel to Alaska to talk about ways the two states can partner together there.

Alabama partnership

And McKee is recruiting interns from UNA, just like he was recruited years ago.

"It's been overwhelming to see what God has done," he said. "Who would've thought that a kid who ran through the mud of Alabama and loves to go fishing would ever have a place in Alaska? And on top of that, who would've

imagined that God would open doors to build relationships with people who are hard to reach and open doors to share the gospel with them?"

Childhood drawing

He didn't see it coming, but he said it's possible his mom did, at least a little bit.

When he was young, he drew a picture of a mountain, a cabin, a stream and a sheep and told his mother that one day he was going to live in Alaska.

"I don't remember doing it, but she tucked that picture away and has always kept it," McKee said.

God's hand has been guiding his path since before he can remember, he said.

"He's worked in a lot of ways I can see now looking back," McKee said. "It's amazing how He orchestrated the last 20 something years of my life to put me in a place He had prepared for me." ✠

My JESUS Story

By Jenni Ingram
Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

I got an order from God in worship one recent Sunday. It's been in Scripture all along but I never recognized it as an order from God. It's in Hebrews 10:24: "And let us con-

sider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." It says we are to "provoke" each other toward love and good deeds.

I'll go ahead and apologize right here because this sounds like fun to me. You see, provoking someone to do something good sounds like such a big undertaking and I love a challenge.

Now how should we go about accomplishing this? For me, it could be as easy as publicly praying for someone when they ask for prayer. Not loud enough

necessarily for anyone to hear us, just to see us joined together before God in supplication.

After all Jesus assures us in Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." This would be an example of a good deed, right?

What if we see someone standing on the corner, weak and weary, asking for food and we take them for a meal and buy them groceries? Look at what Jesus said about it in Matthew 25:40:

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did for Me."

Now for love. A simple example of this may be to respond with kindness and mercy when someone hurts me. It takes a lot of love and grace not to respond in kind. Just remember how Jesus loves us.

Take the opportunity today and provoke yourself to live in a godly, loving way. You may be amazed at the results. ✠



Photo courtesy of J.J. Watson

'We just preach the Word of God and let ministry happen out of the overflow of loving Him, needing Him and being hungry for Him,' Pastor Mack Elkin says.

Beatrice church, pastor both get second chance at new life

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Dial the clock back a few years, and J.J. Watson said you would find his church in a bit of a rough patch — rough enough that he thought the day might come that they would have to close the doors for good.

"It was a hard time," he said.

At that point, he was the only deacon at Beatrice Baptist Church in Pine Barren Baptist Association.

About a decade before, a church split had taken a large part of the congregation away, and the group of remaining deacons had slowly dwindled to just Watson.

"I got to realizing that we had an absence of men in our church and that we needed to do something," he said.

So he got to praying and reaching out.

Watson took an interest in leading the church's few youth, teaching them to dig into the Bible and apply theology to their lives. He put them to work leading music and doing other tasks in the church.

And they started growing.

Keeping the ministry going

Then Watson started reaching out to young men, discipling them and challenging them to step up and lead their families spiritually. All the while, other members of the church were stepping up to take on roles to keep the church's ministry going too.

Then in 2016, Beatrice Baptist called a new pastor — Mack Elkin, a former Marine whose life had been radically changed when Christ "got ahold" of him.

For him, the church was a second chance too — he had been called to preach, done an internship at a church and gone to seminary, but his first church to lead as pastor had let him go.

"That can be hard on a pastor," Elkin said. "Beatrice Baptist Church has been God's grace on me. It was unexpected, and it's been a gift."

Elkin didn't waste any time — he got straight to preaching the Bible, the thing Watson had told him was most important to the congregation.

The two were on the same page with that.

"There's no frills here," Elkin said. "We just preach the Word of God and let ministry happen out of the overflow of loving Him, needing Him and being hungry for Him."

It seems to be working. Beatrice Baptist has plenty of faithful, pillar-of-the-church ladies to be sure,

but for the first time ever, more men are involved in Sunday School than women, Watson said. The youth group is growing too.

The church has baptized three new believers already this year.

"That doesn't sound like many, but for a church that averages 40 or so, that's pretty good," Watson said.

They also recently gained seven new members, most of whom are young couples, he said. "We have

seen the older church members stepping up to take on tasks over the years, but now we also see the younger crowd taking initiative to lead."

It's building a strong community, Elkin said. Church members are digging into the Word and the studies are rich. They've even seen some reconciliation happening in the places where the rift happened all those years ago.

And they have real fellowship, Elkin said. After services and meetings, people don't go home — they stick around and talk for a while.

"God is doing something I haven't seen before," he said.

The people who were around when he got there — people like Watson — had been carrying a lot of weight, Elkin said. But God was getting glory from their sacrifice — the church has gotten a fresh start and new life.

"When we get together on Sundays, it's all eyes on Him — it's not about us," Elkin said. "That's what we want to be about. And through that, in many ways, we're just finding new life again."✠

"God is doing something I haven't seen before."

Pastor Mack Elkin
Beatrice Baptist Church

Someone You Should Know

By Leigh Pritchett, Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Joe Whitten



WHITTEN

First Baptist Church, Springville
St. Clair Baptist Association

FAVORITE VERSE: Romans 8:28–30

FAVORITE HYMN: "He Will Hold Me Fast"

HOBBIES: Researching St. Clair County; writing articles and poetry; collecting St. Clair County history of Baptist churches and death notices from 1873 to 1950 to aid genealogists

FAMILY STATUS: Widower for 7 years after 39 years of marriage to wife Gail; daughter, Miriam

Joe Whitten, 79, of Odenville believes in faithfully serving God and family. He is a deacon, co-teacher in Sunday School, church treasurer and team member on international missions trips. He and his wife were in music ministry together; she played piano and he played organ. Whitten was an educator in public and private schools for 39 years.

(before she died). But Ole Joe still needed work.

Q: When and how were you led into your ministry work?

A: In 1982, the nominating committee of Bethel Baptist Church in St. Clair Association asked me to teach Sunday School. And I have continued until now in Springville.

Q: What influences in your life pointed you to Christ at the beginning of your faith journey?

A: My mother reading from the Bible storybook to me. That is one thing from childhood I still have — the Bible storybook. When I was 7, I asked my mother how to go to heaven. She explained salvation to me and how to go to heaven. I've always looked at that as the time that I came to know the Lord.

There was a time in 1961 that I was going through a time of wondering. A teacher friend of mine said, "Joe, we're going to get this settled."

Then, after Gail died, it was just God and me in this empty house. He (God) began to show me what I was. It was a terrible experience but with wonderful results. Through Pathways Counseling,* Rod Campbell helped me see that God's grace had been with me all throughout my life. I had been building walls since I was 5 (because of sexual abuse by a non-family member). The walls began to come down and I allowed people into my life.

It has made all the difference. ... My wife had been conformed to the image of Christ

Q: What does your ministry work demand?

A: Time. I don't really see it as a demand. I'm just glad to be old and doing something.

Q: What do you get from your ministry work?

A: I do it because it is a service. ... There is a satisfaction in being useful in God's kingdom.

Q: How do family members support you?

A: The first time I went to Ecuador, I think my daughter thought I was too old to go traipsing off to Ecuador. ... Now, (she) is very supportive. And my sister (Eunice Cleeland, and her husband, Stretch) is supportive.

Q: What difference has Jesus Christ made in your life?

A: He has made all the difference. I can't imagine a life without Christ because He has been there and been faithful. ... I would be hopeless without Him.

*Pathways Professional Counseling (www.pathways-professional.org) is a ministry of Alabama Baptist Children's Homes & Family Ministries.✠

Walking into the storm

EDITOR'S NOTE — *This year marks the 20th anniversary of the death of my wife, Eleanor, who died from injuries suffered in an automobile accident in South Africa. For all of those 20 years I have tried to support people walking the grief journey as I was supported in that crisis time.*

It is only in the last few months that I have been able to write something I can share with others about the many crises of that experience and what I learned about God in the midst of grief. This article is part of that series. I pray it will be helpful to others walking the grief journey.

By Bob Terry
Editor, The Alabama Baptist

Two ambulances awaited when we arrived in Birmingham but I insisted on riding with Eleanor. It would be the last ride we would ever share. The next day, Monday, July 20, family members joined me around her bed as we sang, prayed and said goodbye. Then the ventilator was removed and within minutes Eleanor quietly and officially died.

During Eleanor's funeral a strong thunderstorm struck the Birmingham area. Trees and limbs were down across many roads causing the police escort to change the route to the cemetery. That storm became a metaphor of what awaited me.

Grief is an arduous journey under the best of circumstances (if there is such a thing as "best of circumstances" related to death). But an out-of-season death, a sudden and traumatic death compounds the difficulty.

No two grief experiences are alike just as no two persons or no two relationships are alike. But there are signposts along the way.

One has to form a new sense of identity. For 34 years we had been a couple. I knew myself as Eleanor's husband. That was no longer true and I had to determine who I was without her. It was like losing a part of my body. I had to learn to live and function without that vital part.

In seminary I received special training in pastoral care and death and dying. As a pastor and minister I had comforted bereaved families. I thought I knew what lay ahead. I was wrong.

I had little appreciation of the impact grief makes mentally, physically and emotionally, or its power and trauma.

The directors of *The Alabama Baptist* were considerate of me as I recovered from additional surgery and as my physical wounds healed. Yet, when I came back to work I had trouble thinking clearly. I could not remember things. At times I would sit and stare at a blank computer screen unable to write or edit.

Physically I renewed my exercise routines but I was weaker. I moved slower. Not even simple routines processed as quickly as before. Even my speech pattern had changed.

And inside emotional storms kept me from sleeping. I did not eat properly. Both contributed to unhealthy patterns which developed.

Later, information provided by Community Grief Support helped me realize I was not losing my mind. A common characteristic of grief is increased forgetfulness, inability to process information and slower reactions.

That is part of the reason people in grief have a higher



Graphic by Lauren C. Grim

rate of illness and a higher rate of accidents than the population at large.

In some ways society acknowledges these facts by the old adage telling the grieving not to make any life-changing decisions for the first year. But business expects the grieving to be back at work and at full speed a week after burying a loved one. That is not only unrealistic, it is impossible.

Someone said the best thing one can do to prepare for grief is to make friends 20 years earlier. I found that to be true. Expressions of sympathy from acquaintances were appreciated but comments by those who had known Eleanor and me, shared life with us, provided much more comfort. Perhaps it was because they lost something in Eleanor's death too. They lost a friend and we shared grief, although at different levels.

Friends patiently listened as I told my story over and over again (at least parts of it). Grieving people need to tell their stories. They need to hear others say the name of their loved one and hear how

that person was important in the lives of friends. Silence makes people think the loved one was not important or already forgotten.

Reality of my new status

My church reached out with food and visits. My church also was the first place I experienced the reality of my new status. The first Sunday I was able to go back to church was the day dual Sunday Schools began and my former class had been dissolved.

The printed material announced couples' classes and singles' classes for my age group. Men's classes were for older men but I decided to try one anyway. That Sunday I skipped worship in order to try two Sunday School classes. The first was a singles' class. I felt like a fish out of water. I was not emotionally ready for that yet.

On my way to the second class a college friend stopped me in the hall and invited me to the class he attended. My response was that I did not qualify. The class was advertised as a couples' class. He assured me that did not matter and I went in. It is still my Sunday School home today.

These several years later, churches generally have abandoned advertising classes as "couples" unless they are special purpose classes. To me that is a good thing.

When grief work begins

Most of the time churches and friends rally around the grieving for about six weeks. Caring does not stop at that point but other deaths have occurred by then and life goes on. Unfortunately, purposeful church care ends just about the time numbness and shock created by death begins to wear off for the survivors. That is when the grief work begins.

For me a grief support group sponsored by Community Grief Support Service in Birmingham was a godsend. I did not think so at first. My first reaction was that I did not need it. I had my family, my friends, my church and I was a minister with special training and experience. I could handle this.

I went to the first meeting only because my pastor said he thought it could be helpful in my grief journey. Out of respect for him I went. I am thankful I did. With others who were on similar journeys, I learned about grief intellectually. I learned from the experiences of others. Sometimes others learned from my experiences.

Community Grief became important enough to me that for more than 15 years I served on its board of directors assuring its services were available to those grieving because of death. And I am grateful my church continues to support that ministry.

Despite all the support, storms still awaited me on the grief journey, storms that had to be faced. Unless one sets his face and walks into the storm it is easy to become mired in neurotic grief. That is not where God calls us to live.✠

LEARNING ABOUT GOD:

A Personal Story

Part 5 of 6



Across ALABAMA'S Associations

BIRMINGHAM

► **First Church, Pleasant Grove**, will honor Harold and Quin Newberry on May 6, 11 a.m. for 70 years of ministry, including 35 years at First, Pleasant Grove. Lunch will follow the service. Daniel Wilson is pastor.

EAST LIBERTY

► **County Line Church, Dudleyville**, will celebrate its 183rd anniversary May 6, 10:45 a.m. Jimmy Allen will speak. Lunch will follow the service. Mike Beck is pastor.

GENEVA

► **Maple Avenue Church, Geneva**, will host its monthly 39ers CLUB on May 8, 11 a.m. Kim Tate will lead the musical program. For reservations call 334-684-9617. Steve Wegmann is pastor.

NORTH JEFFERSON

► **North Highland Church, Warrior**, will host the Warrior Tent Revival on May 6-11 at 7 nightly. For more information visit facebook.com/warriorrevival. Steve Abney is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Cornelius Chapel Church, Buhl**, will celebrate its homecoming May 6, 10:30 a.m. Pastor Geoff Elrod will speak.

Lunch and a singing will follow the service. Guests are encouraged to bring a lawn chair.

SHELBY

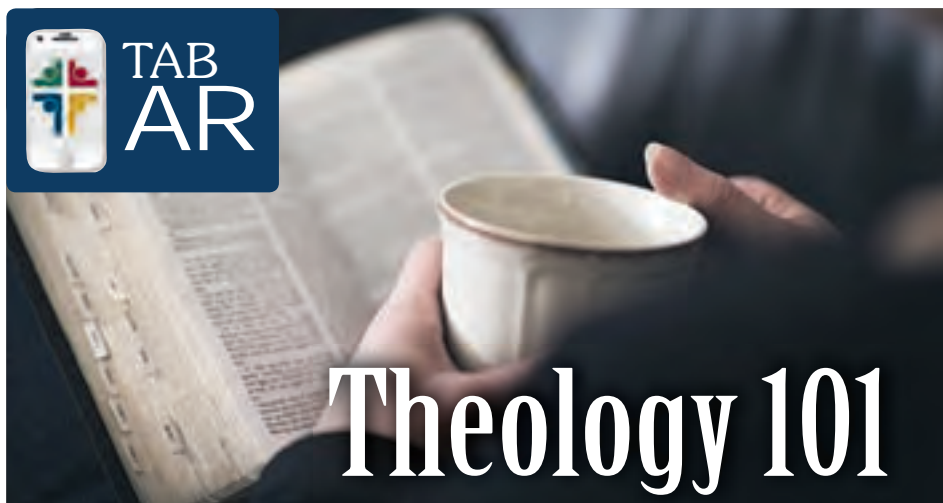
► **Paul Moore** will retire May 6 from **First Church, Pelham**, after 16 years as associate/senior adult pastor. Moore was a pastor for more than 39 years in addition to serving as executive secretary-treasurer of the Alabama Baptist Ministers Benefit Society for more than 13 years. To contact him for supply preaching or interim roles call 205-913-5125. He and his wife, Barbara, have three children and four grandchildren. Daven Watkins is pastor.



MOORE

OTHER

► Alabama pastor **John Sparks** has retired from full-time pastoral work. Sparks previously served as pastor of River Road Church, Tallassee; Center Church, LaFayette; and First Church, Uriah. He and his wife, Donna, have one son. They retired to Tallassee. To contact Sparks for pulpit supply, interim pastorates and bivocational work call 334-541-2168.✝



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

What's in a Name?

Christology Through Imagery

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

For a number of weeks Theology 101 has been looking at Christology or the Doctrine of Christ by considering some of the names and titles by which He is referred to in the Bible. Among the formal titles have been Lord, Christ or Messiah, Son of Man and Son of God. We then considered several functional titles such as Teacher, Servant and Shepherd.

Common images

There is yet another avenue through which to think about the person and work of Jesus: the various images that are associated with Him. Some were given by others and some He claimed for Himself. We might think of these as Christology through imagery. For example, the Apostle John begins the fourth Gospel by referring to Jesus simply as “the Word.” In addition John the Baptist introduces Jesus at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry as “the Lamb of God.”

Most notably Jesus Himself employed a number of common images to speak of His person and work. We find these images primarily in the Gospel of John, which has the longstanding reputation of being a “spiritual gospel,” a designation that focuses attention upon commonplace images that are vehicles or bearers of spiritual truths. The Gospel of John states that its primary purpose is so its readers might “believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing have life in His name” (20:31).

Conveying purpose

A practical way of accomplishing this purpose is to use ordinary and widely-known images to convey the truth about Jesus and His redeeming purpose so that people who were dead in trespasses and sins might have life in Him and have it more abundantly.

For the next few weeks Theology 101 will seek to unfold the theme “Christology through Imagery.” This means attention will be drawn to imagery such

as “Word,” “lamb,” “bread,” “water,” “light,” “door” and “vine” with the express purpose of seeking to unfold truths about the person and work of Christ that are expressed through these images.

Common images are helpful vehicles by which to communicate spiritual truths to common people. Jesus’ own use of everyday images in His teaching helps explain why people flocked to listen to Him. Mark 12:37 reports it this way: “The common people heard Him gladly.”

Jesus was quite adept at relating spiritual truths to images with which ordinary people could readily relate. Furthermore, those common images served as ongoing reminders of spiritual truths. Whenever people chanced to see a lamb, eat bread, enter a door, light a lamp or drink water, memories of spiritual truths would come readily back to mind.

‘Street level’ theology

Jesus seemed to avoid the high vocabulary of the Greek philosophers and complicated reasoning of some Jewish rabbis. Jesus’ aim was that gospel understanding might come to His hearers, rather than being admired for His intellect and vocabulary. Theology “at street level” that communicates meaningfully with ordinary people is always an admirable goal, even if it’s not easy to achieve.

Look for Theology 101 to call to mind some of these images that can be windows into understanding the kind of person Jesus came to be and the nature of the mission He came to accomplish.✝

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.



Opelika's Union Grove holds CPR training



Photo by Nick Ray

Union Grove Baptist Church, Opelika, in Tuskegee-Lee Baptist Association holds CPR training April 14 in order to certify or re-certify nursery workers and disaster relief workers. Nick Ray, a nurse and paramedic who also serves as worship leader at Union Grove Baptist, led the training. “We just feel that it is very important for our nursery workers to know what to do in the case of an emergency with one of our children,” he said. “This is something that we will continue to do.” Russell DeLee is pastor.

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news and features about missions and ministries from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions | (800) 264-1225 | alsbom.org

THE MYERS-MALLORY STATE MISSIONS OFFERING AND THE **YELLOW SHIRT ARMY**

As our friends in Jacksonville and other areas around the state continue along the road to recovery after the most recent round of tornadoes, I have been reminded of the truly heroic efforts of our Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers.

The Yellow Shirt Army, as they are known, responds quickly, efficiently and effectively every time disaster strikes, regardless of magnitude or location. I wish every Alabama Baptist church member could see them in action. Their servant-heartedness and orderly processes are remarkable traits of which we can be proud.

There are other heroes behind the scenes, however. I call these the silent heroes. You may be

one, even as you read this. I am thinking of the many thousands of people who give generously to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering and through the Cooperative Program.

One of the reasons our people are able to respond so quickly and so well is because

they have the training and infrastructure already in place

before a disaster occurs. The Myers-Mallory State



Missions Offering helps make that possible.

Not only do the silent heroes make a difference when it comes to disasters, but by contributing to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering, they are helping fund other Great Commission Ministries at the same time.

They are helping Alabama Woman's Missionary Union equip people of all ages to live out a missions lifestyle. They are helping our church planters reach the unchurched and unengaged. They are serving to encourage and partner with missionaries and ministries who are passionately advancing the Gospel. They

are helping churches that need revitalization and renewal.

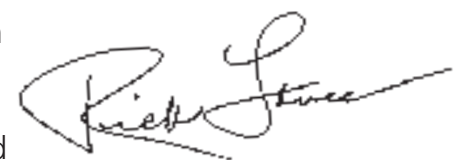
Last year, these silent heroes helped us reach the \$1 million goal for the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering. As we gear up for this year's offering



By Rick Lance
State Missionary

and for the Week of Prayer for State Missions in September, I can't help but spend a little

extra time in prayer thanking God for these who give generously and pray fervently—for they truly are heroes in my book.



1 Corinthians 4:1-2

2018 MISSIONS ADVENTURE CAMP

WorldSong's Missions Adventure Camp (MAC) is an overnight camp that focuses on the adventure of living on mission with God. Nestled at

the base of beautiful Bald Mountain, WorldSong offers campers time away from the distractions of everyday life where they can connect with God in the midst of His creation. MAC features Bible study, time with missionaries, adventure recreation including ropes courses and ziplines, canoeing, archery, outdoor cooking, arts and crafts, hiking, overnight tent-camping and so much more!

JUNE 7-9 Mom & Me (one-night or two-night option) - NEW
11-15 MAC for Girls

11-15 MAC for Teen Girls
18-22 MAC for Girls
18-22 MAC for Teen Girls
25-29 MAC for Girls

JULY 2-4 Family MAC - NEW
5-7 Mini MAC for Girls and Boys
5-7 Mini MAC for Teen Girls - NEW
9-13 MAC for Girls and Boys
16-20 MAC for Girls and Boys
23-27 MAC for Boys - NEW
23-27 MAC for Teen Boys - NEW
27-28 Lad & Dad - NEW

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!
For girls and boys completing grades K-12 (Alabama Baptist Boys Adventure Camp now with expanded options at WorldSong).

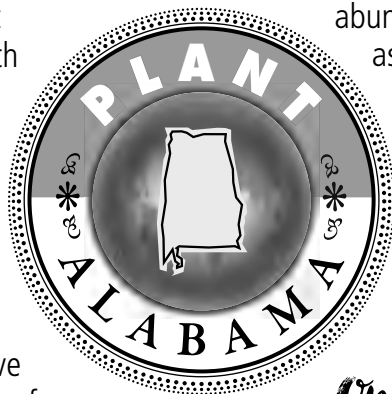
For more information or to register, visit WorldSongRetreat.com or call 1-800-264-1225, ext. 223, or (334) 613-2223.



In May 2014, a church in downtown Gadsden, not affiliated with a local association, lost a number of members after a period of conflict. Daniel Woodcock, the young adult pastor, remained, along with around 70 senior adults. He was 30 years old.

In a moment of desperation Daniel prayed to the Lord, "You must do something here that only You can do or just move me to where I can be a part of something like that. Those are your choices. In Jesus' name. Amen." His devotional thought for that evening was Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first..."

Daniel next reached out to Gary Cardwell, then the director of missions in Etowah Baptist Association, who pointed him to the State Board of Missions church planting office for assistance. Cornerstone Church was launched in the same location as the previous church on February 14, 2015, with 214 people present and Daniel as their pastor. They became members of the Etowah Association.



In August 2015, Daniel texted me that they had 289 on that Sunday. In January 2016, I received a text that they needed assistance with preschool and nursery equipment, as they had an abundance of young children. We were able to assist them because of the gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

Cornerstone Church has just celebrated their third anniversary with 312 people in attendance and one commitment to Christ. They have had eight decisions for Christ to date this year already.

Only God could do this!

For more information about church planting among and by Alabama Baptists, please contact State Missionary Lamar Duke (lead church planting strategist) at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 332, or (334) 613-2332, lduke@alsbom.org.

By Lamar Duke
State Missionary



WHY I BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

When I was a young pastor, I came under the influence of men and women who taught me the importance of the Cooperative Program. I remain to this day thankful for their contribution to my life and ministry. It is my responsibility to share with younger pastors the importance of the Cooperative Program. The Cooperative Program allows every church and every church member to have a part in



Sammie Reid

carrying out the Great Commission. — **Sammie Reid**, pastor,

Mount Zion Baptist Church, Warrior (North Jefferson Association)





ADVENTURE
CAMP
BOYS // GRADES 1-6

July 9-13

Earle Trent Assembly Camp, Florence

Boys will be involved in campcraft, mission classes and outside activities like canoeing, fire building, swimming, etc.

The greatest adventure
in life begins at the cross of Christ

-David Jeremiah

For more information, visit alsbom.org/adventurecamp or contact Monica Thompson at (334) 613-2227, mthompson@alsbom.org.

JULY 20-21
2018

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Tell Your Story

Eastmont Baptist Church
MONTGOMERY

YOUTH CONFERENCE

worship with
Ryan John Band



messages from
Adam Robinson
Ismael Pruitt
Sean Emory



in concert
Rend Collective

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





Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering

WEEK OF
PRAYER
FOR STATE MISSIONS

SEPTEMBER 9-16, 2018

YOUR GIFTS HELP SUPPORT THESE
GREAT COMMISSION MINISTRIES:

- ALABAMA WMU
- DISASTER RELIEF
- CHURCH PLANTING
- PARTNERSHIP MISSIONS
- CHURCH REVITALIZATION

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**State Goal:
\$1,000,000**





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Birmingham

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Students who participate will be challenged to deepen their faith and stand out as the leader God wants them to be.

The camp is open to any student in the state of Alabama who has completed the 8th-12th grade and exemplifies solid spiritual leadership in his or her church.

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No Registration
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\$5

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May 7



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**For further information, please contact
Ministry Assistant Lori McGough at
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(334) 613-2245, lmcgough@alsbom.org
~ alsbom.org/saec ~**



EQUIP
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FRIDAY-SATURDAY
JULY 27-28
SHOCCO SPRINGS

For all leaders/directors of any WMU age-level group, Women's Ministry, Girls Ministry and Royal Ambassadors.

FEATURES:

In-depth training for new and experienced leaders. Personal and leadership enrichment conferences. ~ Testimonies of North American and international missionaries. ~ Bible study and worship. ~ Equipping for missions, ministry and life.

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OTHER ONLINE INFO: AlabamaWMU.org/training

For more information, please contact Kathryn Helms at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 325, or (334) 613-2325, khelms@alsbom.org.

ONEMISSION: The Great Commission ONEPROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANYMINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

MIX MusiCamp@Shocco!

Monday-Friday, July 16-20

Shocco Springs

For grades 3-5, 6, 7-10. NEXT BEST PRICE DEADLINE:

Monday, May 14. Cost (best rate!): \$310 per person with

\$80 per person deposit at registration. If being at music

camp isn't enough, here are a few more things we'll be

doing: Wet Willie Super Slide • Putt-Putt Golf • Basketball • Aqua Jumps • Team

Relays • Bazooka Ball • Disc Golf • Rock Wall • Ropes Course • Paintball • Drift

Bikes • Swimming • Zip-lining!



Register online and get more info at mixmusiccamp.org or please contact Ministry Assistant Cindy Parrish at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 230, or (334) 613-2230, cparrish@alsbom.org.

Reaching the top requires training, patience and endurance. It means taking the time to strengthen your skills so you'll be further along tomorrow than you were yesterday. It's knowing that each step you take gets you that much closer to **THE SUMMIT.**

Are you a leader in your church? Do you want to be a leader in your church? If your answer is yes, then you probably don't need to be told that all good leaders need training. So, where can a Sunday School director or teacher, a deacon or a discipleship director find training?

Every church member has some responsibility to lead in some way. Maybe you need to come discover where you may best be able to serve.

Learn about different areas of service and leadership. Hear others discuss some of the responsibilities and rewards of different areas of ministry.

Almost any church leader, including pastors and staff, can find training and encouragement to enhance their church ministry at The Summit for Church Leaders!

ONLINE INFO: alsbom.org/summit

To register, please call Shoeco Springs at (256) 761-1100. For more information, please contact State Missionary Jamie Baldwin at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 240, or (334) 613-2240, jbaldwin@alsbom.org.

The Summit for Church Leaders
Friday and Saturday,
August 3-4, 2018
Shoeco Springs



ACTS 1:8 Connections Celebration

Thursday, July 12

• 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Taylor Road Baptist
Church, Montgomery

Global Missions invites you to join us at the **Acts 1:8 Connections Celebration**. Missionaries who serve in Alabama, missionaries from Alabama who serve in the U.S. and missionaries from Alabama who serve internationally will be with us to share.

- Participate in seminars with missionaries who are from Alabama and serve all over the world.
- Learn how to connect with these friends to help with their work.
- Meet others who are interested in fulfilling the Great Commission.
- Lunch included with \$10 per person registration fee.

For more information about registration, please go online to a18c.org/connectconf or contact State Missionary Scotty Goldman at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 387, or (334) 613-2387, sgoldman@alsbom.org.



GLOBALMISSIONS

Upcoming Worship & Music Leadership Enrichment Events

Children's Choir Summit Friday and Saturday • July 13-14 • Shooco Springs

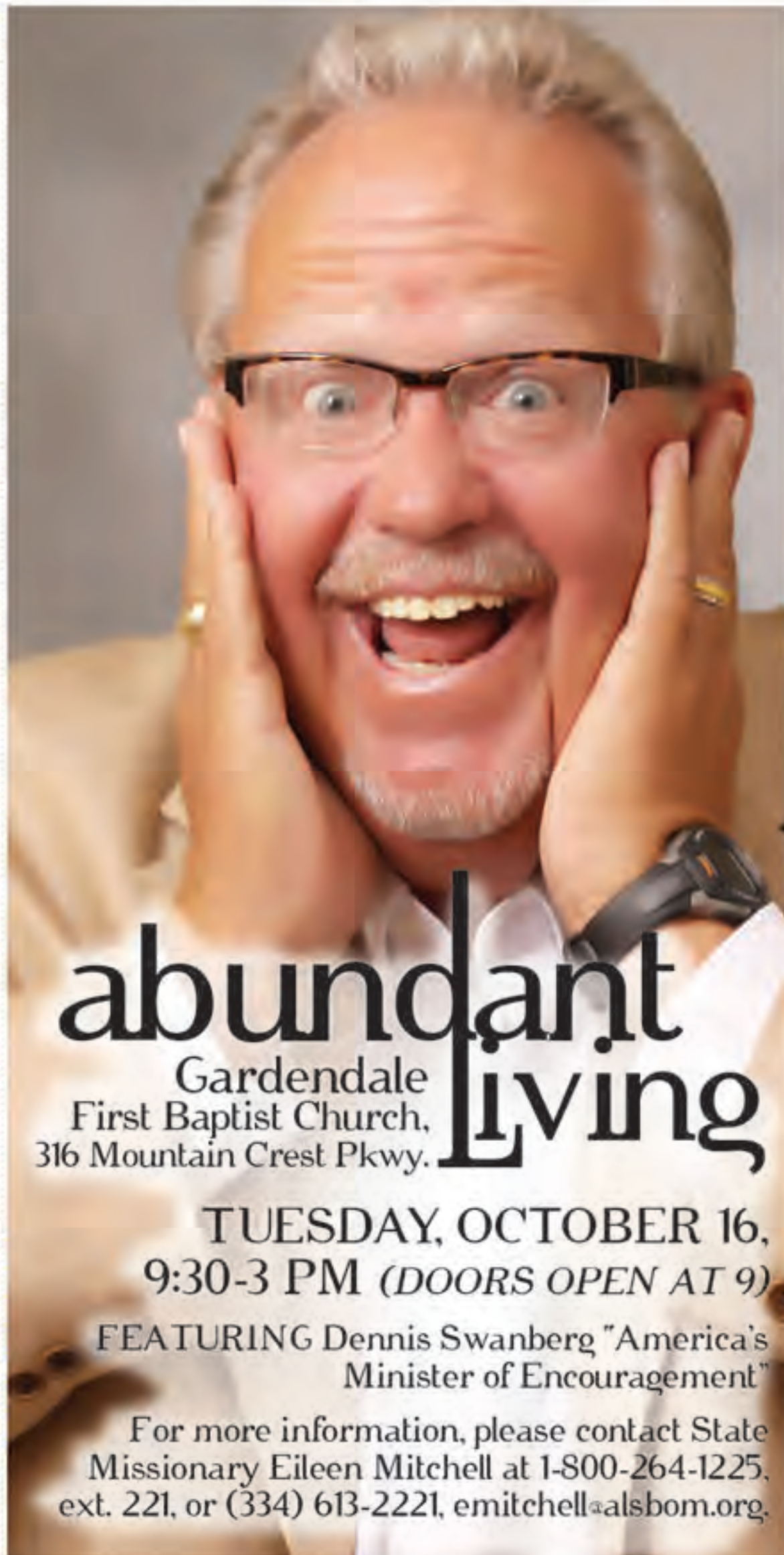
NEXT
BEST PRICE:
Deadline
May 14

COST: \$125 per person (3-4 people per room, includes three meals), \$20 per person deposit at registration. **This is the training event that you've been needing for your Children's Choir Leaders.** Experience the fun of teaching music to any age of preschooler or child. Discover new ways to make choir or music time a favorite for kids. Watch the love for worship come alive. Mingle with others in similar situations. Learn to use games and toys to add more excitement in your music time, plus more hands-on learning and fun in children's choirs. Plus it's a great conference for your daycare workers and can be used for CEU credits. Cost includes interactive sessions from top-notch clinicians and breakout times to interact with choir workers just like you. J. W. Pepper music vendor will be available so you can purchase whatever you might need for your choir, and so much more.

Register
online and

**children's choir
summit**

get more info at alsbom.org/children-summit or please contact Ministry Assistant Sharon Cleveland at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 279, or (334) 613-2279, scleveland@alsbom.org.



**abundant
Gardendale
First Baptist Church,
316 Mountain Crest Pkwy.**

Living

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 16,
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FEATURING Dennis Swanberg "America's
Minister of Encouragement"

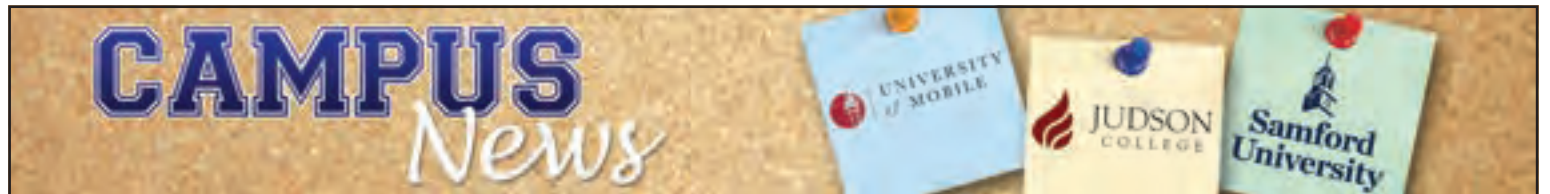
For more information, please contact State Missionary Eileen Mitchell at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 221, or (334) 613-2221, emitchell@alsbom.org.



(augmented reality)

Follow these instructions

- 1** Download the HP Reveal app from your app store.
- 2** Tap the [] icon at the bottom of the screen.
- 3** 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.
- 4** Look for *The Alabama Baptist (TAB) augmented reality logo* (example shown above). Hold your device over the logo and watch the paper come to life.
- 5** 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.
- 6** Each week when *TAB* arrives, open the app and hold your device over the noted articles, watching as the paper comes to life.



SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford University Hosts Symposium on King, Race and America's Future:** Samford University's Howard College of Arts and Sciences in Birmingham held the inaugural Samford Stockham Symposium on Western Ideas and Institutions on April 16–17. The symposium addressed the subject of "Where do we go from here? Martin Luther King Jr., Race and America's Future."

The event was organized in response to Samford President Andrew Westmoreland's charge for the university to seriously engage with issues of race.

► **Samford University Profes-**

or Earns International Fellowships: Samford University assistant professor of science and religion Josh Reeves recently earned two fellowships. He will spend three months in the Netherlands this summer as a research fellow in the Epistemic Responsibilities of the University project of the Abraham Kuyper Center and also will take part in the Bridging Two Cultures of Science and the Humanities seminars in Oxford, England.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **University of Mobile Announces New Bachelor Degree:** A new bachelor's degree in special education at University of Mobile

prepares graduates to teach special education in kindergarten through sixth grade. Graduates of the new bachelor of science in collaborative special education will be considered highly qualified by the Alabama State Department of Education and certified to teach special education in grades K–6.

► **University of Mobile Names New Assistant to the President, Assistant Professor:** Dustin Bruce has been named assistant professor in the School of Christian Studies and assistant to the president at University of Mobile. Bruce will be engaged in teaching, writing and establishing avenues to connect the university with churches and pastors.

Bruce holds degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological

Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He will graduate with a doctor of philosophy degree in May 2018.

JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson College Campus Chosen as Marion Garden Club Yard of the Month:** The Marion Garden Club selected Judson College in Marion as its Yard of the Month for the month of April. The campus of Judson is the focal point of the Judson College Historic District. The grounds are brightened by flowering trees, shrubs, flower beds and rose gardens and are anchored by several Alabama Champion Trees.†

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

For information on pricing or placing a classified ad, contact the advertising department of The Alabama Baptist at 205-870-4720, ext. 102, or ads@thealabamabaptist.org. Copy deadline is two weeks before publication.

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Camellia Baptist Church, 201 Woodvale Rd., Prattville, AL 36067 prayerfully seeking God's choice for a full-time pastor. Resumés with photo, may be mailed ATTN: Pastor/Search. www.cbcprattville.org.

PASTOR

Damascus Missionary Baptist Church seeking bivocational pastor for Sunday morning/evening services. Someone who enjoys preaching/teaching God's Word. Send resumé to: Collins Wilkie, 1149 Homestead Road, Hayden, AL 35079. 205-613-0866.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Johntown Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a bivocational pastor. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, Johntown Baptist Church, 5201 Vance Rd., West Blocton AL 35184.

WORSHIP LEADER

Clearview Baptist Church in the Clay/Pinson/Trussville area is seeking a part-time worship leader to lead our Sunday worship. Must be comfortable and familiar with modern worship music and be able to work with our worship team and band. Contact Pastor Robbie Weems at 205-617-1277 or send resumé and/or supporting files to: connie@clearviewbaptist.com.

MINISTER OF MUSIC

Eastside Baptist Church is

searching for a part-time minister of music. It would be 15 hours a week. Resumés can be sent to: churchoffice@ebcbirmingham.org.

STUDENT MINISTER/ASSOCIATE PASTOR

First Baptist Church, Moody, is accepting resumés for full-time student minister/associate pastor. Please send resumés to: ATTN: Search Committee, 902 Church Street, Moody, AL 35004.

YOUTH MINISTER

Deerfoot Baptist Church is seeking a part-time youth minister called by God who affirms the Baptist Faith & Message; who loves students and will model to them a growing relationship with Jesus. Minimum 2-years experience in youth ministry preferred. Deerfoot Baptist has a multipurpose facility to encourage growth of youth and family ministries. We welcome your resumé to: churchoffice@deerfootbaptist.org.

YOUTH PASTOR

Raimund Heights Baptist Church in Bessemer is looking for a part-time youth pastor to work with a small group of young people. If the Lord is leading you in a ministry like this, please contact us by sending us an email and resumé to: tnc4him.2@hotmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER

Sardis Springs Baptist Church, Athens, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational youth minister.

Please forward resumé/questions to Mrs. Cassandra Montgomery, church secretary at sardis1@integrity.com.

MINISTER/DIRECTOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Easley FBC, Easley, S.C., looking for a minister/director to children and families. 4-year degree/experience required, graduate study preferred. Web www.efbc.org/jobs. Submit resumés to: childrenministersearch@efbc.org.

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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.

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. 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955.

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

AFFORDABLE BEACHSIDE CONDOS

Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, Alabama. Rent direct from Christian family owners. Lowest prices on the beach for over 25 years! Call Donna 251-656-4935, Eddie 205-556-0368, Don 251-752-2366 or www.gulfshorescondos.com.

GULF SHORES CONDO — ISLAND SUNRISE

Gulf-front, 2 BRs, 2 BAs, condo on the beach. Sleeps 6, king/queen/queen sleeper sofa. Great view from 4th floor balcony. 3 TVs/free WiFi. Call 256-403-1068 or 256-453-2162. Email: ejtimmons2@cableone.net.

FOR SALE

BUS

1994 Ford Eldorado 28-passenger bus. Approximately 92,000 miles. Diesel engine, one owner. Good condition. \$10,900. Contact David O'Neal at 256-504-4030. Bus located at Cherry Street Baptist Church in Attalla, Alabama.

GATLINBURG CABIN

2 BR, 2 BA cabin. Call 281-855-4469 or email: pdw4760@att.net for more details and information.



SPONSOR *a child* AT CAMP OF CHAMPIONS THIS SUMMER!

Camp of Champions is our annual summer camp experience at Shocco Springs, designed to serve our campuses and foster families and their children. While at Camp, our foster and house parents are provided with excellent training to equip them to connect with the children in their care. Please pray for them to have opportunities to share Jesus with these children.

And while parents are in training, their kids are getting the opportunity to just be kids! Camp is a really special time for them . . . **They laugh and sing. They play and swim. They eat too much and stay up too late. They do the same things all kids do when they go to camp . . . They have FUN!**

More importantly, though, children are hearing and experiencing the gospel . . . *some maybe for the very first time.*

CAMP 2017 BY THE NUMBERS



833 

ATTENDEES
Largest Camp yet!

18 

PROFESSIONS
OF FAITH in Christ

6 

LEARNING TRACKS
OFFERED for parents

Camp of Champions happens at no charge to our families because of churches and individuals like YOU, who give so generously to our ministry. **You, your family, or your church group can also make a difference as a camp sponsor!**

Sponsorship Opportunities:

 **\$180**

TO SPONSOR
a child

 **\$900**

TO SPONSOR
a Foster Family

 **\$1800**

TO SPONSOR
a Campus Home

By sponsoring in this unique way, you're providing more than just a 3-day, 2-night experience at Shocco Springs. **You're helping to provide happy memories that last a lifetime.**

Sponsor today

 ALABAMACHILD.ORG/CAMP18

 OR CALL (888) 720-8805

 MAKE A GIFT FROM YOUR MOBILE PHONE BY TEXTING @ABCH #CAMP TO 52014

GRACE gifts

Memorials are listed below (the name of the deceased is bolded).

Andrews, Evelyn, Ozark: Rusty Andrews
Deerman, Weldon, Dutton: Kenneth & Joy Barnes
Dunn, Jimmy, Gallion: Providence BC of Gallion

Hill, Tommy Leroy, Linden: Bethlehem BC of Linden
Roberts, Gaye, Bessemer: Concord BC of Bessemer
Smith, Troy, Pine Hill: Phyllis & James Jackson
Smith, Virginia, Sylvan Springs: Concord BC of Bessemer
Stabler, Roy, Franklin: Eureka BC of Franklin
Summerlin, Inez, Repton: Mr. & Mrs. T.L. Haskew
Teal, Karey, Salem: Pleasant Grove BC of Salem
Tims, Linda, Hoover: Larry Tims

THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who made a Grace Gift to Alabama Baptist Children's Homes. To learn more about Grace Gifts or how to make one, visit alabamachild.org/give or call 205.982.1112.

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Burmese assistant pastors freed from prison

YANGON, Burma — After spending more than a year in prison, two assistant pastors arrested by the Burma (Myanmar) army were freed April 17 under a government amnesty program.

Dom Dawng Nawng Latt, 65, and La Jaw Gam Hseng, 35, were among more than 8,500 prisoners granted amnesty by newly elected President U Win Myint, sources said. The pastors had been arrested and sentenced for alleged connections to an ethnic independence organization. Area sources, however, said they were likely arrested and charged for speaking to media and helping local



LATT



HSENG

journalists cover the bombing of a Catholic church building, a house and schools in Shan state in November 2016. The pastors were arrested Dec. 24, 2016.

Burma is about 80 percent Buddhist and 9 percent Christian. It is

ranked 24th on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2018 World Watch List of countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)

Burial crosses destroyed in attacks in India

UKKINADKA, India — Christians have been attacked, church property vandalized and burial crosses destroyed in ongoing attacks in India's Kerala state.

Sajan K. George, president of the Global Council of Indian Christians, told AsiaNews that the most recent attack occurred at the cemetery of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ in Ukinadka on April 16. Unknown vandals destroyed the cross at the burial place and damaged another seven tombs, The Christian Post reported.

Others attacked in the past month include a group of 150 students, a priest and two nuns in the diocese of Neyyattinkara and the vicar at the Orthodox church of St. Gregorios of Punnamoodu in Alappuzha, who was attacked the day before Easter. The church also was van-

dalized in the Easter weekend attack.

George said "the surge in hostile acts and intolerance towards Christians is alarming." Others have noted Hindu nationalists have been converting Dalit Christians back to Hinduism in a push-back against the growth of Christianity. (TAB)

Islamist gunmen kill, injure Christians in Pakistan

QUETTA, Pakistan — Christians in Quetta, Pakistan, are living in fear after the second recent attack by suspected Islamist militants. The group killed two Christians and injured three more, including two girls, in front of a home in the predominantly Christian Isa Nagri neighborhood April 15.

Another attack in Quetta on April 2, Easter Monday, killed four Christians and injured one girl.

Islamic State (IS) group militants claimed responsibility for killing the two Christians in Isa Nagri, as they did in the Easter Monday slaughter, but their involvement in both crimes has not been verified. IS has created a branch in Pakistan and Afghanistan in recent years, mostly by recruiting among established militants. Its followers have claimed some of Pakistan's most deadly recent attacks. At least 15 Christians have been killed in a suicide attack and multiple targeted attacks since December.

Pakistan is ranked fifth on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2018 Word Watch List of countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)

Hindu extremists attack pastor during Lent service

NEW DELHI, India — A pastor in northern India was beaten and left for dead March 19 after Hindu extremists stormed into a house where a Lent meeting was being held.

While Pastor Rakesh Kumar Masih, 42, and other congregants sang worship songs on the first upper floor of the house, 12 to 15 people barged in and began to beat him, he said. One stole Masih's money bag, which contained all the money he had and important bank documents.

The attackers hit Masih as they dragged him outside where a crowd of 30 more attackers was gathered. The extremists beat Masih's genitals until he passed out.

Masih's wife took him to a hospital for treatment. He conducted Good Friday and Easter services and continues to recover from his injuries. (MS)



Screen capture from CP SBC Vimeo video

International Mission Board missionaries Jeff (left) and Barbara Singerman continue to recover from injuries sustained in a car accident in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Singermand's recovery slow but progressing

International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries Jeff and Barbara Singerman continue to recover in Johannesburg, South Africa, from injuries sustained in a March 14 car accident.

In an April 26 update from Jeff Singerman posted on the Congo4Christ Facebook page, Singerman said he is scheduled for shoulder surgery and a large skin graft on May 2. He had been battling infection in the wound that will receive the skin graft, but Singerman said the infection is now gone. The wound on his arm was sewn together by flashlight in a bush clinic following the accident.

"I shouldn't have an arm, but God protected my arteries and nerves in a miraculous way and has provided healing far beyond expectations in the growth of tissue," Singerman said.

Following surgery Singerman will undergo extensive physical therapy.

Barbara Singerman's physical therapy is continuing to help her regain movement after fracturing her left wrist. She said she

can now bend her elbow a little and touch her nose, though it takes great effort.

"I'm still quite a way from normal movement or being able to carry weight with either hand. But I can manage a coffee cup," she said in an April 22 Facebook update.

"We are continually praising God for your concern and prayers," Barbara Singerman wrote.

God has shown Himself

Jeff Singerman said God has shown Himself to doctors and nurses through their healing process and asked for continued prayers for the situation.

"Pray that God will use this situation in tremendous ways in Africa, America, in places unknown to us and in our lives," he said.

The Singermans have served in the Congo since 2015. Previously they served 24 years in Benin. Barbara Singerman wrote about serving in West Africa in a book, "Beyond Surrender." (TAB)

Alabama nonprofit wins 'Best Idea' to help end demand for sex trafficking

True Blue Tribe: Rediscovering Authentic Manhood Together, a soon-to-be launched initiative of Alabama nonprofit Undone Redone, earned the top prize in the "Best Ideas to End Demand" contest sponsored by the U.S.

Institute Against Human Trafficking in April.

The honor includes a \$2,500 prize for Undone Redone, which is a ministry partner of *The Alabama Baptist*.

True Blue Tribe provides a safe environment where men can tell the truth about their pain and address healing within a community of other men, according to Undone Redone founders Traylor and Melody Lovvorn. In this community men will learn practical life skills without fear of ridicule or condemnation.

"True Blue Tribe allows us to put processes in place which will enable men to transform from broken, hurting individuals, seeking out unhealthy ways to satisfy their emotional and physical needs, to

healthy, whole, authentic men ready to help others on their own journeys," said Traylor Lovvorn. "Ending demand for sex trafficking is the key to ending sexual exploitation."

The "Best Ideas to End Demand" contest was

part of the Coalition to End Sexual Exploitation Global Summit in Washington, hosted by the National Center on Sexual Exploitation. The goal of the competition was to aggregate ideas which could be worked collectively to help end sex trafficking in the United States. (TAB)

For more information about True Blue Tribe or Undone Redone, visit undoneredone.com or www.facebook.com/truebluetribe/.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For May 6

Explore the Bible By Robert L. Olsen, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

DISPLAYING THE GOSPEL 2 Corinthians 4:5-18

Proclaim (5-6)

The Corinthians had questioned Paul's authority but Paul demonstrated that he had the authority of an apostle by emphasizing how he lived and acted in the presence of the Corinthians. Many false teachers in Paul's day focused on what they could get from preaching the gospel instead of focusing on bringing glory and honor to God. Paul highlighted how he preached Jesus Christ as Lord with no regard for himself. Paul did not preach the gospel so he could get money or fame. This was one of the ways which showed the Corinthians that Paul was a real apostle — he did not preach for personal gain.

He also preached the gospel alone — he did not add anything to it. In our modern setting we have to be careful not to add anything to the gospel message. Throughout history many Christians have preached the gospel but then unintentionally added cultural or personal elements like how to worship or how to dress that become a form of legalism in the church. We need to focus on the gospel instead of personal opinion.

Live (7-15)

Clay jars were commonly used in the first century and Paul uses this reference to show how common and fragile the messengers of the gospel are. God delights in using the weak things of this world to confound the wise. The key point of this is to show that strength, worldly wisdom and fame detract from the gospel and emphasize ourselves and who we are and what we can do. The gospel is not about what we can do but what God does in spite of ourselves.

The other religions of the world highlight what we must do to achieve salva-

tion. In contrast Christianity teaches that we can't do anything to be made right with God — God alone does this. Therefore salvation is dependent upon embracing the gospel which comes by grace through faith, not by human achievement. This is why the gospel is good news to those who recognize their weaknesses and need for a Savior. Human achievements like fame and riches put the focus on ourselves and away from God.

The fact that Christians are likened to clay jars also emphasizes our dependence upon God. If Christians were given superhuman power and ability we would be more apt to ignore God and depend on our own abilities. In fact, Paul highlights the weaknesses of Christians so that Christ may receive the glory and be magnified.

Focus (16-18)

Since we are weak vessels of clay we face hardships on a regular basis — sickness, age, death, persecution, etc. But Paul emphasizes that Christ sustains us in the midst of these difficulties. We are strengthened spiritually as we focus not on the hardships themselves but on the power of God who has given us eternal life. This is why Paul says we don't focus on the outward things but on God working in and through us.

This is how Christians can find joy even in the midst of the most tragic events. It is not that Christians are happy — happiness is based upon circumstances — but rather joyful, which is based on eternal realities and is permanent.

The world focuses on happiness and what it thinks can bring happiness, but Christians provide a great witness to a lost and dying world when we remain steadfast when facing trials. Our salvation is secure and our eternal destiny is certain. Therefore we can have peace and joy in a world that desperately needs it. ✠

Bible Studies for Life By James Riley Strange, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of New Testament, Samford University

STAND DOWN Esther 4:1-3, 10-16

Read chapters 3 and 4 to understand the setting of today's passages. Sometimes the Book of Esther uses hyperbole; drinking festivals and Esther's beauty treatments last extraordinary lengths of time, and the sum of money in 3:9 is astronomical. Also, King Ahasuerus is a bit of a buffoon; he will do just about anything people suggest to him, no matter how inane or how horrendous. For example, he can be persuaded to make the silly decree in 1:19-20. Also, look how little it takes to convince him to annihilate the Jews (3:8-11).

In 3:8-9, Haman begins with the truth (the Jews are indeed scattered and separated throughout the Persian Empire, and they do have distinctive laws), but quickly moves to lies (everything indicates the Jews do in fact keep the king's laws).

The author of Esther almost seems prescient for history tells us the Nazis used the same logic to vilify Jews, including concerns about assimilation, their distinct religious laws (relating to marriage, food and usury) and their national origin.

The truth was many European Jews were fully integrated into society and fought in wars to defend their countries. But like Ahasuerus, people were easily convinced otherwise, and those accusations led to genocide. Remember that German Christians initially supported the Nazi party. We must be vigilant not to take up the same rhetoric against non-Christians.

Grieve injustice and call out to God. (1-3)

The passage does not mention prayer but prayer is implied in the practices of fasting and dressing in sackcloth and ashes to show repentance. Here Jews all over Persia are crying out because of their own fate. Jesus will remind us that we

need to show the same concern for those outside our group. Even tax collectors and Gentiles love those who love them (Matt. 5:43-48).

Look for God's hand in where He has placed you. (10-14)

In verses 4-8, Esther finally learns of Haman's plot. Mordecai tells her so that she can inform the king. Esther hesitates, for the king is so callous that he will execute anyone who comes into the inner court whom he has not called. Even the king's wife is not exempt. Mordecai reminds her that her self-preservation is worthless. If the king carries out his decree, she will die because she is a Jew.

We should take his words to heart whenever we hesitate to do what is right because the consequences may be severe. I like how the ESV translation of the Bible puts it because the wording helps us apply Esther's situation to our own faith: "And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" This does not guarantee that Esther will survive but reminds us that, whatever our circumstances, God calls on us to act out His will.

Trust God and surrender yourself to God's work. (15-16)

In the end Esther agrees to see the king unannounced and thus to risk death. But first she instructs all Jews to fast for three days. Notice that she knows this is no magic trick. She might indeed die at the hands of her husband and if so all Jews will die. Like the three friends about to enter the furnace in Daniel 3:16-18, she says, "If I perish, I perish." What courage!

We of course know the end of the story but Esther doesn't. God willing, we will never face such a situation. If we do, may Esther's resolution and conviction be our model. ✠

Christian Crossword

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Across

- Joseph's firstborn. (Gen. 41:51)
- Kings of armies did flee _____. (Ps. 68:12)
- Then _____ my present. (Gen. 33:10)
- _____ with her suburbs. (Josh. 21:32)
- Cut off the ropes of the _____. (Acts 27:32)
- Do they not _____ that devise evil? (Prov. 14:22)
- Gather a certain _____ every day. (Ex. 16:4)
- Greatly _____ be praised. (Ps. 48:1)
- Built there an altar, and called the place _____ beth-el. (Gen. 35:7, KJV)
- Had devils long time, and _____ no clothes. (Luke 8:27)
- Noah begat three sons, _____, Ham and Japheth. (Gen. 6:10)
- Puttest thy _____ in a rock. (Num. 24:21)
- _____, every one that thirsteth. (Isa. 55:1)
- Judge me, O God, _____

- plead. (Ps. 43:1)
- Shechem which is in the land of _____. (Gen. 33:18)
- For the _____ that is in the land of Assyria. (Isa. 7:18)
- Ye shall not _____ my face. (Gen. 43:3)
- They _____ to and fro. (Ps. 107:27, past tense)
- Thou art Simon the son of _____. (John 1:42)
- Driven up and down in _____. (Acts 27:27)
- As the _____, because he cheweth the cud. (Lev. 11:4)
- Benjamin's _____ was five times. (Gen. 43:34)
- Men shall _____ him out of his place. (Job 27:23)
- _____ was concubine to Eliphaz. (Gen. 36:12)
- strange act. (Isa. 28:21)
- Israel went into the midst of the _____. (Ex. 14:22)
- _____, Judah's firstborn. (Gen. 38:7)
- Two men of the _____s strove. (Ex. 2:13)
- An adder ... that _____ the horse. (Gen. 49:17)
- They shall _____ ashamed. (Hosea 4:19)
- Having a live _____ in his hand. (Isa. 6:6)
- Thou shalt not _____ of it. (Gen. 2:17)
- The _____ of the children of Israel. (Ex. 28:9)
- They shall call his name _____. (Matt. 1:23)
- _____ unjust man is an abomination. (Prov. 29:27)
- Cast them into the ______. (Ex. 10:19, 2 words)
- And thou his _____, O Belshazzar. (Dan. 5:22)
- Sons of Reuben: _____ and Phallu. (Gen. 46:9)
- So _____ departed, as the Lord had spoken. (Gen. 12:4)
- As though he _____

Down

- I will _____ thy seed to multiply. (Gen. 26:4)
- Thou shalt set _____ unto the Lord. (Ex. 13:12)
- There were _____ windows. (Ezek. 41:26)
- To pass his _____, his

- anything. (Acts 17:25)
- The roebuck, and the fallow _____(s). (Deut. 14:5)
- The similitude of _____ transgression. (Rom. 5:14)
- The children of Gad called the altar _____. (Josh. 22:34)
- Whithersoever the governor _____eth. (James 3:4)
- Heber's wife took a _____ of the tent. (Judg. 4:21)
- Cast down your slain _____. (Ezek. 6:4)
- The abbreviation for the 17th book of the Old Testament.



Dr. Stanley Hanna (second from right), Adoniram and Ann Judson's great-grandson, and Rosalie Hunt (second from left) stand with Harriet Bain (left) and Joan Myint, great-great-granddaughters of Ah Vong, the first Burmese printer, at Judson's grave and memorial in Amherst, Burma.

'Extraordinary Story'

Hunt shares about Ann Judson's life in new book

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Rosalie Hunt says pickings are slim when it comes to finding out details about women who lived 200 years ago.

There's first lady Abigail Adams, who exchanged more than 1,000 letters with her husband John over the course of their relationship — letters we can still read today.

And other than her, there's pretty much only Ann Judson. "She started a journal when she was a young girl," Hunt said of Ann Judson, who was the wife of America's first Baptist missionary, Adoniram Judson. "That book went to 26 printings."

And Hunt for one is grateful that it did.

The young missionary's story is extraordinary, Hunt said. The courageous 19th century woman stared death in the face and decided the risk was worth it for the people of Burma to know Jesus.

She told her family goodbye, took a months-long ship ride and planted her life among a hard-to-reach people in a land difficult to call home.

Not a history book

And she lost her life there too.

Hunt tells Ann Judson's story in her new book, "The Extraordinary Story of Ann Hasseltine Judson: A Life Beyond Boundaries."

But it's not a history book — Hunt wrote it in a narrative, novel-type style.

"I know a lot of women who would say, 'I don't like history but I love novels,'" she said.

That realization spurred her to write in story form, "to put the conversation in people's mouths,"

Hunt said. "It has been well received."

She wrote the story of a lesser-known missions pioneer in novel form in "Her Way: The Remarkable Story of Hephzibah Jenkins Townsend" in 2016.

That story came 10 years after she penned "Bless God and Take Courage: The Judson History and Legacy," a book about the challenging lives of the three women who served alongside missionary Adoniram Judson in Burma. In 2013 she wrote "We've a Story to Tell: 125 Years of WMU" for the 125th anniversary

celebration of national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU).

Candace McIntosh, executive director of Alabama WMU, said Hunt is "fully vested" in the lives of the missions heroes whose stories she's written.

"What a blessing this has been to her readers as we get to

"We learn so much as we hear the faith stories of those early pioneers in missions."

Candace McIntosh
executive director
Alabama WMU



Photo courtesy of Rosalie Hunt

walk alongside these characters through her books," McIntosh said. "Rosalie has truly been a gift to us. She has taken our missions heritage and made it come alive. We learn so much as we hear the faith stories of those early pioneers in missions."

Hunt, a retired missionary to China, first became fascinated with the Judson legacy when she and her husband Bob spent time in Burma (now Myanmar) teaching at a seminary.

Doing explorations

"I thought, 'How could you be in Burma and not look for the footprint of the Judsons?' So we started doing explorations on the weekends and talking to people

For more information, visit www.rosaliehallhunt.com.

about the impact they had made," Hunt said. "Even people on the street there knew who the Judsons were."

Over time, she realized the information should be compiled into a book, and she decided to ask an author she knew if she would be interested in writing it.

"Somewhere along the way, one of my children said, 'Mom, you should write it,'" Hunt said.

And after balking initially, she did.

"We as Alabama Baptists need to know the Judsons," Hunt said. "We don't even know sacrifice in this day like they did. They boarded the ship with the idea that they wouldn't come back home. They waited three and a half years to get their first letter from home."

Their story was wrought with joy, sorrow, adventure and fear, she said.

"I tried to get in her mind and imagine how she felt and convey that in the story," Hunt said. "I want the generations still to come to know where we come from, that we have the same faith that Ann Judson had, and that we have the same source of strength." ✠



Photo courtesy of Rosalie Hunt

Dr. Stanley Hanna (left), great-grandson of Adoniram and Ann Judson, and Rosalie Hunt examine the priceless Judson miniatures housed in the archives of the American Baptist Historical Society.

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'I know God is real'

Spiritual walk top priority for Suns' center/forward

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Brandon Knight may have been out for the recent season with an injury but his influence still carries weight with his Phoenix Suns teammates.

"Brandon is a tremendously talented individual," said Alan Williams, Suns center/forward. "He is an all-around great guy who brings an element of good character to our team. He is very well-respected and very well-liked here. He is very active in his faith. He is definitely not shy to talk about it or bring it up any time. It is definitely good to have a guy like that in the locker room."

Knight, a former University of Kentucky standout who decided to enter the 2011 NBA draft after his freshman year, was first selected by the Detroit Pistons as the eighth overall pick. He was named to the NBA All-Rookie first team in 2012.

He spent time in Milwaukee prior to being traded to the Suns in February 2015.

In July 2017, 26-year-old Knight tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee. He had surgery in August and missed the 2017-18 season. Though he has undergone therapy for his physical walk, his spiritual walk is his top priority.

"(Jesus) is No. 1. Without Him we would not be here. His grace, His mercy is everlasting. He knows we are not perfect but He was loving enough to love us when we didn't know Him and give us an opportunity. I have been able to say that I know God is real. Everything He has done for me, I will forever be committed to trying to walk that walk," said Knight.

Knight's commitment to his faith makes an impression on teammates.

'Man of God'

Devin Booker, Knight's teammate at both Phoenix and Kentucky, said, "I know that he is a man of God. He always has his Bible on him. With him being injured he has been a great personality around the locker room. We all know that he can play basketball very well, but due to the unfortunate events of his injury it has held him off the court. He has been in good spirits around us every day. It doesn't go unnoticed."

Knight, who grew up in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and was Gatorade National Boys Basketball Player of the Year in 2009 and 2010 while at Pine Crest School, did not even know where Kentucky was when he was being recruited.

"When you are a Florida kid and from the South, I didn't know if Kentucky was in the Midwest or

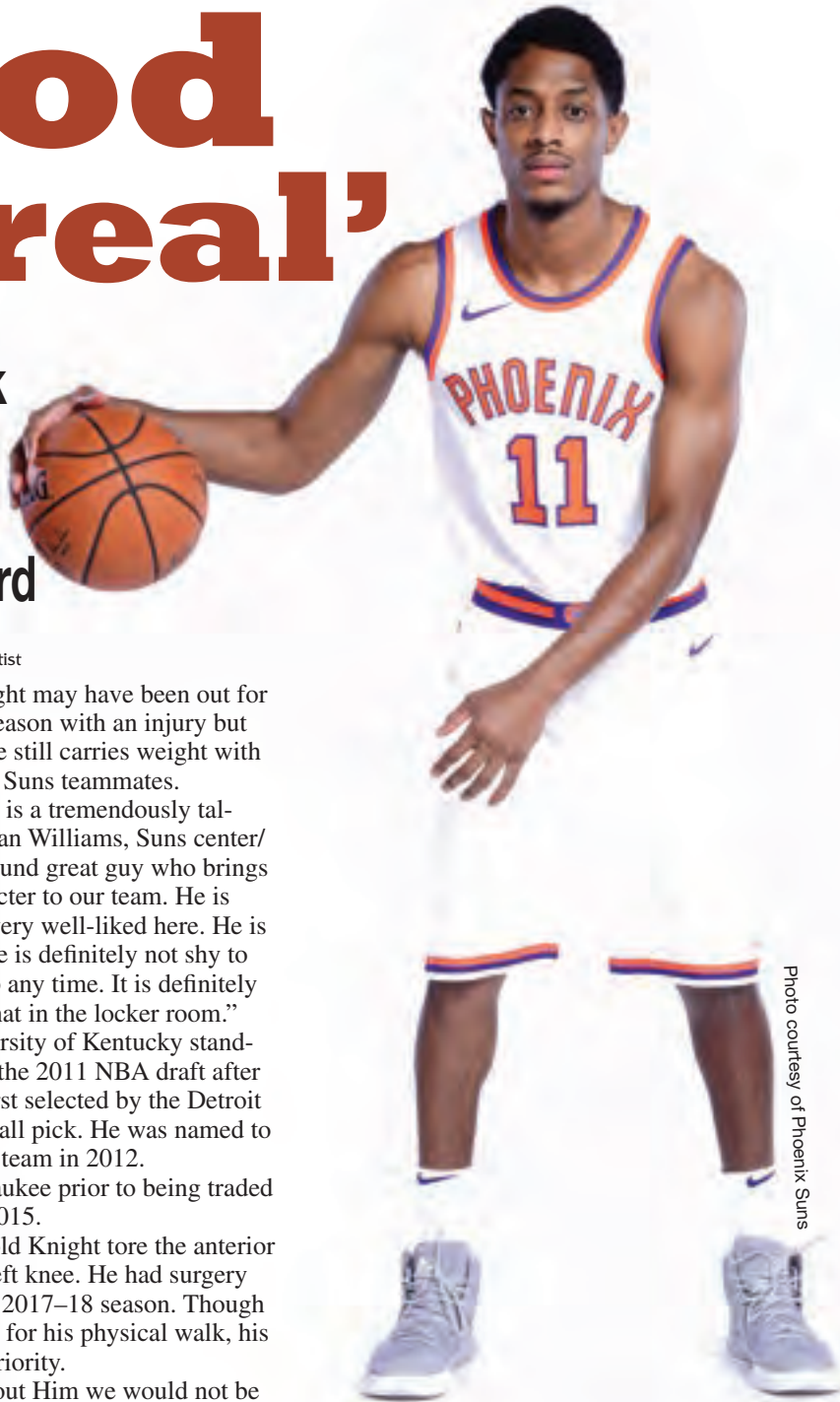


Photo courtesy of Phoenix Suns

what. I realized that it was on the East Coast. It was like 'Wow,' " he said.

Kentucky was not his first choice.

"God started weeding all of them out. I loved Kentucky but I wasn't sure about it. That was literally the last option that He left open to me and it ended up being the best one," said Knight, who was first team All-Southeastern Conference in 2011.

Now Knight wants to use his NBA career as a platform to lead others to Christ, he said.

"I love the Lord. I love my family. I love to hoop."

Knight also provides veteran leadership with a desire to see teammates improve.

Guard Troy Daniels said, "If he sees somebody in need he is going to help them. That is the type of guy he is."

Knight said prayer and reading the Bible consistently are important to his spiritual growth, and he trusts the Lord to lead him in big things and small.

"On your journey He will let you know what your purpose is. He will direct you toward it," he said. "The things I have been through and looking back at what God has done for me, you don't forget those things."✝



Online Bible sales now banned in China

BEIJING — The Chinese government announced a ban on online Bible sales beginning Easter weekend, one more move in the country's recent crackdown on Christianity.

Persecution.org cited a source in China who said the long-standing rule is that the Bible cannot be sold publicly or on the internet, but in recent years online bookstores have been able to sell Bibles. The Bible is printed in China.

Following the government's announcement, people searching for Bibles on e-commerce sites were greeted with the message: "Sorry! No products in this category available."

The New York Times reported that among China's major religions — which include Buddhism, Taoism, Islam and folk beliefs — Christianity is the only one whose major holy text cannot be sold through normal commercial channels.

Persecution.org reported that the move came as China's communist government was engaged in talks with the Vatican on a deal to appoint bishops.

The *Times* reports that the goal of negotiations is to end the nearly 70-year split between the government-run Catholic church and the underground church.

In the week before Easter sources report Bishop Vincent Guo Xijin of Mingong, who is designated by the Holy See but not recognized by Chinese authorities, was taken by police and banned from celebrating Mass upon his release. (TAB)

Jailed American pastor tried in Turkey

ALIAGA, Turkey — The trial of American pastor Andrew Brunson on charges of terrorism and espionage began April 16.

Brunson, 50, has served in Turkey for 23 years and was serving as pastor of a small Presbyterian congregation in the coastal city of Izmir when he was arrested. He denied all the charges against him on the first day of court, after which the judge sent Brunson to a prison described as "overcrowded and extremely grim" by an attorney for Brunson. Brunson's case will resume May 7. He faces up to 35 years in prison if convicted.

Brunson's trial began despite efforts by U.S. officials, including President Donald Trump, according to the White House.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has suggested a prisoner swap but U.S. officials say they believe Brunson is innocent and trust Turkey's judicial system also will come to that conclusion.

Both U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback and North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis were in the courtroom April 16. (TAB)

Egyptian Cabinet approves churches

CAIRO, Egypt — The Egyptian government approved legislation April 18 that will legalize 166 unlicensed churches and services buildings.

The action came from a committee formed in January 2017 whose purpose was to study and verify applications submitted by Christian congregations, according to Egypt Today magazine.

Andre Zaki, head of the Evangelical Community in Egypt, earlier said 450 applications have been submitted. The Middle East News Agency estimates there are more than 3,500 churches awaiting approval. Christians comprise about 10 percent of the Egyptian population. Egypt Today reports that 2011 statistics show some 2,869 churches and more than 108,000 mosques in the country.

Egypt ranked 17th on Open Doors World Watch List, a ranking of the most difficult countries to live as a Christian. Egypt ranked 21st on the 2017 list. (TAB)



BRUNSON