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MacGorman Chapel at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Photo by Alyssa Karr/SWBTS

New leadership

Southwestern Seminary enters time of transition

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's (SWBTS) new interim president is requesting prayer from all Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) churches. "Faithfully pray for Dr. and Mrs. Paige Patterson, Southwestern's administration, the trustee transition committee and me in the months ahead as we collectively work together in unity and love during this transition period," Jeffrey Bingham, dean of the School of Theology, wrote in a May

23 news release from the Fort Worth, Texas, seminary. "Jesus remains on His throne, and Southwestern Seminary remains faithful to its commitment to Preach the Word and Reach the World."

Ensuring 'best position'

Bingham was appointed to the interim president position after a long day of discussion and deliberation by SWBTS trustees. That decision came after they voted to appoint Paige Patterson president emeritus of the seminary and to relieve him immediately of his duties as president of the institution.

The SWBTS board of trustees met for 13 hours May 22 "to discuss our seminary, its future and our responsibility as trustees to ensure SWBTS is in the best position possible to fulfill our mission to biblically educate God-called men and women," according to a statement

released at 3 a.m. May 23.

SWBTS graduate Bill Wilks, who serves as pastor of North-Park Baptist Church, Trussville, and is co-author of D-Life disciple-making resource, said the incident has been difficult but he agrees that it is time for a change.

"It's painful to see fracture at your institution of higher learning for ministers, but I do think the trustees made the right decision to look for new leadership," Wilks said. "We, as men of God, we've always got to be first and foremost, loving and respectful of all people. And we are to always have the best interest of women in our minds and hearts."

Frank Jones, a SWBTS alumnus who leads Frank Jones Ministries and serves as assistant adult choir director at Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, agreed.

"I trust the work of the trustees



Photo by Adam Covington/SWBTS

Paige Patterson reads a statement to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary trustees at a special called meeting May 22.

that they made the decision that was right for the seminary," Jones said. "They didn't cast him (Patterson) out to the curb."

As president emeritus, Patterson will receive compensation and fulfillment of an offer granted in September 2017 for him and his wife Dorothy to live on campus as the first theologians-in-residence at the Baptist Heritage Center, a facility set to open at the seminary later this year. The Baptist Heritage Center (See 'Questions,' page 7)

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

The Farm Bill and the Bible

One of the major pieces of legislation currently before the Congress of the United States is the Farm Bill. Every five years Congress is supposed to re-authorize the Farm Bill which subsidizes agriculture production in the United States and funds various food assistance programs.

The debate over the Farm Bill with its \$867 billion price tag over 10 years is acrimonious. The bitterness is not over support prices for corn, cotton, soybeans and the rest. It is in large part over nutrition programs like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps, school lunches and other social safety net programs.

Statistics indicate 43 million Americans now live below the poverty line and rely on SNAP to help purchase food. The majority of recipients are women with children, with the disabled and elderly representing a smaller percentage of recipients.

Some want to raise the bar for eligibility which would eliminate about 2 million people from SNAP benefits. Others want to maintain current levels of support.

Re-authorization of the last Farm Bill was delayed about two years because of these issues. Presently there is little indication the current round of debate will be any different.

Safety net

At the root of the rancorous disagreement is whether the government should provide a social safety net for the poor and disabled of the nation and, if so, what kind of safety net it should be. Or, should the needy be the responsibility of the Church?

The disagreement provides opportunity to look at the Bible to see what God's Word says about roles individuals and society as a whole have in caring for the least of these.

Christians frequently tell the story of God's providential care of Joseph in Egypt. Less frequently do Christians reflect on the way God used government to gather, store and distribute food during the years of plenty and want.

Only the government had the resources to address the seven years of famine that stretched be-



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

yond Egypt to surrounding areas. It was because of governmental programs that Egypt weathered the crisis and that others like the House of Jacob could find food to survive the severe famine.

A one-time event? Perhaps. But before the Hebrews became a people God established guidelines indicating community responsibility for caring for the poor and needy.

Leviticus 19:9–10 introduces the practice of gleaning. The Hebrews were instructed not to harvest every corner of their fields or gather the fallen fruit of their vineyards. Deuteronomy 24:19–20 expands that principle to olive trees where trying to get a second harvest from the trees was forbidden.

The grain, the grapes, the olives were all left for the widow, the orphan, the needy, the stranger and the alien.

Additionally every third year each family was instructed to contribute a tithe of their produce to the Levites "because (they have) no portion or inheritance among you." This tithe, in addition to the regular tithe, was to be used by the Levite, the alien, the orphan, the widow and the needy "who are in your town" (Deut. 14:22–29).

Deuteronomy 15:1 declares, "At the end of every seven years you shall grant a remission of debts." Creditors were instructed to forgive the debt of a fellow Hebrew. Exodus 21 explains that one who has sold himself into slavery was to be released at the end of seven years.

After seven Sabbath years the principle of debt forgiveness was extended. Every 50 years, called the Year of Jubilee, all land was returned to its original owner no matter how many times it had been bought and sold (Lev. 25).

Laws laid down by the Bible concerned working conditions, wages, a sliding economic scale for sacrifices, equal justice for the rich, poor and the alien plus much more.

Instructions given by God to the community

did not lessen the responsibilities of individual members of society to care for the poor. Many of Israel's prophets pleaded with rulers and citizens alike to care for the poor and needy.

Isaiah said, "Learn to do good. Seek justice. Reprove the ruthless. Defend the orphan. Plead for the widow" (Isa. 1:17). Jeremiah 22:16 quotes God as saying, "He pled the cause of the afflicted and needy. Then it was well. Is not that what it means to know Me?" Zechariah 7:10 adds, "Do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor. And do not devise evil in your hearts against one another."

In Jesus' day all the Old Testament rules guiding the community's care for the poor and needy were still in place. He spoke against none of them but emphasized the importance of individual action adding to what the community provided.

In Luke 10, Jesus held up the model of the

Good Samaritan. In Luke 11:41, He commended giving "that which is within to charity." Luke 12:32–33 shows Jesus urging His "little flock" to give to charity which He calls an "unfailing treasure in heaven."

Perhaps it is because the Bible so clearly teaches that Christians are to care for the poor and needy that historians conclude that Christians were the first group to care about individuals beyond their family or tribe. Christians have always been at the forefront of ministries such

as education, health care, hunger relief, prison reform, child labor and caring for the poor, the widow and the orphan.

Christians have sacrificed themselves in personal service and Christians have sought to establish policies and practices that helped the community offer care and relief.

Recent poll

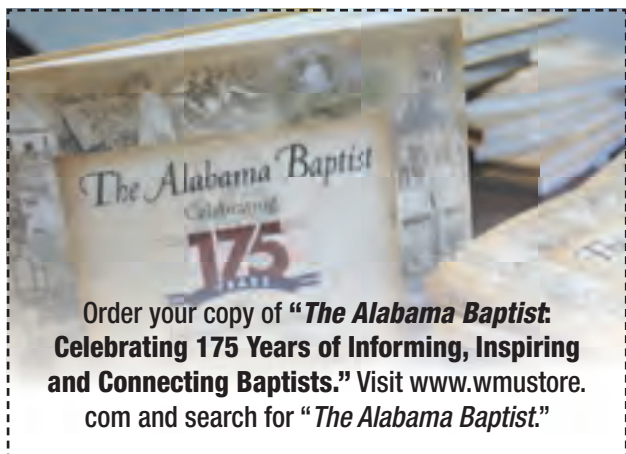
Recently a media outlet reported a poll indicating 80 percent of Americans oppose cutting Medicaid; 78 percent oppose cutting Social Security disability insurance; and 66 percent oppose cutting food stamps.

Some say the results indicate the strong self-reliant spirit of America is failing.

Others point to the Bible and conclude the results show the Church has helped people realize that care for the poor and needy is the responsibility of the community as well as of individuals.

Personally, I believe Christians are called to contend for what the Bible teaches in the public square as well as in their individual lives. What do you think? ✠

"Statistics indicate 43 million Americans now live below the poverty line and rely on SNAP to help purchase food. The majority of recipients are women with children."



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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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'Temple of the Holy Spirit'

Pastors, director of missions say physical fitness helps them persevere

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Ryan Whitley says for him, it comes down to this — he doesn't want to quit before he has to. "I never want to be the guy who must retire early due to poor physical health," said Whitley, pastor of Crosspoint Church, Trussville. "I want to serve the Lord with all my heart and soul and mind and strength. I want to be strong until the end." That's why when he turned 40 he decided it was time to start prioritizing his physical fitness.

"It was about then I started gaining unwanted weight and knew I needed to do something to take better care of myself," he said. "I was spiritually fit, but my physical fitness was nonexistent."

So Whitley started walking, and walking became jogging. Then jogging turned into running marathons. Now he has run at least a mile for more than 1,000 days in a row and he does CrossFit, an exercise regimen that adds muscle strength.

All of that has helped him in several ways, he said.

"First I sweat to forget. Sweating takes my mind off of the stress associated with shepherding a family of faith," he said.

He also runs to endure, he said. With three sermons each Sunday, exhaustion happens, but "exercise helps me press on."

And it helps him stay focused, he said. "I often practice my sermon or memorize Scripture when I run. In doing so, the exercise helps me think more clearly."

Staying disciplined

Exercise also keeps Whitley disciplined in other areas of his life, he said.

"The pastor must be the most disciplined person in the church. And people know whether or not he is disciplined by the way he takes care of himself physically and spiritually."

Physical fitness matters, he said.

"A call to ministry is a call to excellence. It is also a call to be prepared. It should also matter that as men and women of God, we should do our best 'to present our bodies as a living sacrifice' (Rom. 12:1). I work on my physical fitness in order to glorify God in all things."

Otis Corbitt, director of missions for Covington Baptist Association, said the fitness regimen he does three days a week benefits his ministry too.

"Twelve-hour days are common in the ministry and I have the endurance to negoti-



Unsplash.com

"The pastor must be the most disciplined person in the church. And people know whether or not he is disciplined by the way he takes care of himself physically and spiritually."

Pastor Ryan Whitley
Crosspoint Church,
Trussville

ate those easily because of my fitness level," he said. "Also, I believe physical fitness supports both emotional and spiritual resilience, as well as helping us maintain mental acuity."

Corbitt said he believes it even helps pastors resist colds and other illnesses.

"I believe the beneficial results are worth the time and effort," he said. "Exercising is a commitment, no doubt, but it maintains the temple of the Holy Spirit in good working order, so it is definitely worth it."

John Thweatt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pell City, said that's why he does strength training too.

"My weight has gone up and down over the years, but I think it sets an example when pastors are healthy," he said.

It also keeps him able to do the ministry God has for him, he said.

"It helps me keep going for longer and able to keep going on missions trips and do other things I wouldn't be able to do if I was in poor physical shape," Thweatt said.

He said going to the gym also provides his best opportunity to build relationships with the lost.

'Great ministry opportunity'

"It's the only place I'm around lost people on a regular basis," he said.

He's there five days a week for about an hour and a half, lifting weights and talking to people. And over the months and years he's built relationships, answered people's questions about life and the Bible and seen some of them start coming to church.

"It's a great ministry opportunity," Thweatt said. ✝

Where do I begin?

► One of the safest ways to get started is to try brisk walking (or some other low-impact activity) for spurts of 10 minutes.

► Aim for a pace where your breathing and heart rate are elevated but you can still talk in sentences. (This is called moderate intensity.)

► Next try building up from one brisk walk of 10 minutes a day to two brisk walks of 10 minutes (or 10 minutes plus five minutes). You can do it in one long block or two shorter blocks at different times in the day.

► Start doing this every other day and

work your way up. If 10 minutes a day seems too easy, start with longer, but you should still move up gradually. You can step up the time, intensity or both if you can handle it.

► Your goal is to get to 150 to 300 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise each week.

► Including some higher-intensity exercise (where your heart and breathing rate mean you can speak only a few words at a time) will bring extra health benefits once your body is fit and strong enough to do it.

Source: ABC News

Coming TOGETHER

Associations see celebration-style annual meetings drawing bigger crowds, inspiring involvement

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Neal Hughes said he can remember the days when associational meetings were three-day events.

“We would meet at this church one day, at another church the next day, have covered-dish dinners, walk through extended business meetings and have preachers at night,” he said.

Those were great in that day — everybody came, said Hughes, director of missions for Montgomery Baptist Association.

But over the years it was shortened to two days, then one. Then it “evolved into the reality that our people didn’t gather together like they used to,” he said.

And Hughes said his association began to try to figure out a way to adapt.

“We knew that the truth was we had one night a year to get the entire body of believers together to thank the Lord Jesus for all He’s doing in the River Region,” he said. “We wanted to maximize that.”

So they began to rethink their format, and as they did, they decided to go for the feel of a celebration rather than a business meeting.

At 6 p.m., they have a big meal that feels like a reception. People grab a plate of food, then walk around a missions fair to talk to local ministries and state Baptist entities. It gives people personal interaction with a number of ministries rather than hearing a few reports given from the pulpit.

“We want to be about inspiring because we realize we’re mobilizing our greatest missions force to the River Region,” Hughes said.

Then at 7 p.m., they start the celebration and “we punch it for an hour and a half,” he said. It’s a packed time of music, testimonies and video stories of what God is doing through area churches and ministries. This year that will include a mass choir.

The only business they do during the celebration is to welcome the watch-care churches into the association so that everyone can welcome them with applause, he said.

But to meet the associational bylaws’ requirements for other necessary business,

they have a brief, 45-minute business meeting at 5 p.m. before all the fun begins.

“It’s a sweet time,” Hughes said. “We want people to come and not want to leave.”

This celebration style of associational meeting “seems to really put a fire in folks for what’s happening in the association,” said Rick Barnhart, director of the office of associational missions and church planting for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

And the missions fair aspect lets networking take place so that people can get inspired by the opportunities around them, he said.

“It gives them the chance to fellowship and get to know each other,” Barnhart said. “They hear more stories of what’s happening, and it can cause more movement in their congregations.”

John Thomas, director of missions for Southeast Alabama Baptist Association (SABA), said his association moved to the celebration format in 2017. It was a format he had tried while serving as associate director of Calhoun Baptist Association (see story, page 5), and it worked so well

that he knew he wanted to start it in Southeast Alabama Association too.

“In Calhoun we had found that the people just weren’t coming to the business meetings, especially the young adults,” he said.

That was the issue at Southeast Alabama Association too, so he encouraged the switch. And in 2017 they had more than 750 people attend.

‘Celebrate what God is doing’

“We changed the name from ‘annual meeting’ to the ‘SABA Celebration,’” he said. “That’s the focus of what we want to do is celebrate what God is doing through our churches.”

Like Montgomery Association, they take a Sunday evening and invite area Baptists to wander through a missions fair.

“Last year they heard stories and they went away saying, ‘We can do that too,’” he said. “That’s what we were hoping for.”

They have missions activities for kids and they have a car show and other things to demonstrate outreach ministries that churches could use.

**“Younger people
aren’t into
institutions, they are
into relationships.”**

**John Thomas
director of missions,
Southeast Alabama Baptist
Association**



Photo courtesy of John Thomas

Southeast Alabama Baptist Association (SABA) holds a time of worship during its 2017 SABA Celebration. More than 750 people were in attendance.

And during the celebration service, they incorporate the music styles of all kinds of churches in the association.

“We orchestrated a worship set that was representative of all of our churches,” Thomas said.

A praise team from a multicultural church led, as did the Hispanic church. They also included contemporary music and hymns.

“It’s to celebrate the fact that we may worship differently but we worship the same God,” Thomas said. “On any given Sunday you can go and experience this in some of our churches. We’re very diverse. It’s a picture of that.”

All of this is geared to build relationships and let ministry flow out of that, he said.

“Younger people aren’t into institutions, they are into relationships. So we are trying to establish those relationships,” he said.

Thomas Wright, executive director of missions for Mobile Baptist Association, said his association has been working hard to find what works best for their people.

“The Mobile moderators and planning committee have tried various approaches to increase involvement at our annual missions celebration,” he said.

The challenge is often finding the most effective way to include parachurch organizations but also tell the story of the as-

sociation’s ministry well, he said.

“Churches support ministries they see make a difference. An association often works behind the scenes challenging and coordinating the work of the churches,” Wright said.

Telling their story

He and other Mobile leaders want to make sure they keep the focus on ministries with good financial and theological accountability, he said. They want to tell the right stories and tell them well.

They’ve done much research. They’ve tried different nights of the week. They’ve tried different kinds of services. And while they are still working through the challenges, they’ve found that a streamlined celebration is the most effective way for them to tell their association’s story.

This year will be their second year for a Sunday evening celebration and a children’s missions festival, he said.

Charlie Howell, executive director of missions for Madison Baptist Association, said his association started streamlining their business too and focusing more on a celebration several years ago.

“It brings us all together,” he said. “There are not just reports but fellowship, preaching, music and a big meal. People turn out for this.”

Rural associations hold semiannual meetings but consider changes

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Joey Rodgers says in his association there are no big churches.

“The biggest one may run 100 to 120,” he said.

But the beauty of Conecuh Baptist Association is that fellowship is sweet when everyone gathers together at one of those rural churches twice a year for meetings. For years now the association has met semiannually — once in the spring and once in the fall.

A handful of other rural associations including Cherokee, Dale, Sand Mountain and Tennessee River have done the same thing for years. The reason that got started was so that associational leaders could be elected in the spring, just in time for the statewide associational leaders conference held at Shocco Springs each year.

But this year that conference went away in favor of different kinds of leadership conferences, and with it went the necessity of the spring meeting, Rodgers said.

So now he and others are considering whether or not to move to just a fall meeting.

Dwight Everett, director of missions for Tennessee River Baptist Association, says that’s on the table for his association to consider — but he doesn’t know that anyone will actually want to change it.

“When I first came here as director of missions, I said, ‘Boy, we’re going to stop that spring meeting,’ but it was so well attended that we didn’t,” he said. “The fellowship is what makes that happen — they just love getting together. They don’t get to see each other too often.”

Rodgers said he sees the

same thing in Conecuh Association — small churches at the end of a long dirt road that love the excuse to get together and encourage each other.

“For instance, right now we’ve got three churches without pianists and they sing and do the best they can without it, but it’s such an encouragement for them to join together and get to worship with musicians from other churches,” he said. “It also lets them know they aren’t alone.”

Like Everett, he has a feeling most of his association won’t want to make the switch.

Community is vital

In larger cities and counties there’s a transient feel, but not in Rodgers’ area. Community among the churches that span the rural county’s population is vital, he said. “But we do want to stay effective and relevant, so we’ll be considering new ways to pull churches together and build up fellowship.”

Rick Barnhart, director of the office of associational missions and church planting for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said he’s seen the way semiannual meetings can build up community in the state’s rural associations.

They can bring opportunities for larger revivals, different music and different messages than they usually hear, and they “are able to build camaraderie that way” too, he said.

Jim Hill, director of missions for Dale Baptist Association, said the extra fellowship time allowed by the spring meeting is definitely a bonus.

“Not only that, it keeps our folks accountable and keeps the association in the ‘news’ and in front of people,” he said. ☞



Photo by Debbie Campbell

Dwight Everett, director of missions for Tennessee River Baptist Association, speaks at the semiannual meeting April 16.



Photo courtesy of Roger Willmore

People gather at the missions fair during the Calhoun Baptist Association annual meeting at Westwood Baptist Church, Alexandria, in 2016, the first year the association switched to a celebration-style format.

New style of MEETING

Calhoun Association praises God for what He’s doing

Roger Willmore said he inherited the association’s new style of annual meeting when he became director of missions for Calhoun Baptist Association a couple of years ago.

And so far, he said, it’s been excellent.

Much like some others in the state (see story, page 4), Calhoun Association opted to rethink the traditional business meeting format in favor of a celebration service that invited area churches to praise God for what He’s doing through local and state ministries.

This year Calhoun Association will hold its meeting Oct. 14 at Golden Springs Baptist Church, Anniston. There will be a business session in the afternoon, but the main event will be a missions fair.

Disaster relief

The association’s disaster relief team also will have its trailers and equipment on site for messengers and guests to tour and see. “The fair will display and highlight the many ministries of Calhoun Baptist Association and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions,” Willmore said. “For many of our people, this might be the first time they’ve gotten to go inside a disaster relief trailer and see what they do.”

On the surface it might seem like not allowing entities to give reports would take away from state

ministries, but Willmore said he’s found the opposite to be true.

“What really excites me about that is that through visual aids, resources and personal contact we can communicate so much more than you can in a three-minute spot in a business meeting,” Willmore said. This year the evening worship rally will feature Richard Blackaby as guest speaker. It also will feature a combined choir.

“The last two years we’ve done that, and the choir and music leaders have hit home runs,” Willmore said.

In 2017 they hit some bumps in the road with severe weather, but the year before, 580 attended the worship rally.

“We are expecting a good attendance this year too,” Willmore said, noting that he’s already heard people in the community expressing excitement over Blackaby coming.

Blackaby also will lead a Monday morning pastors’ and church leaders’ conference the following day, an event to which directors of missions and others from the surrounding area are invited to attend. That will be held at Iron City Baptist Church, Anniston, which is led by Cody Hale — a pastor currently involved in Blackaby’s mentoring program.

“I’m excited about that and so is Cody,” Willmore said. “We’re going to try to make that a good discipling hour.” (TAB)



WILLMORE



Across ALABAMA'S Associations

BALDWIN

► **Jason Rothe** is the new pastor of **First Church, Silverhill**. He holds degrees from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and New Orleans Seminary. He previously served as a pastor of Summit Church, Loganville, Georgia; Mineral Springs Church, Clanton; and Berney Points Church, Hoover. He and his wife, Tracie, have two children.

ESCAMBIA

► **Larry Patterson** is the new interim pastor of **First Church, Atmore**. He previously served as pastor of Southside Church, Bay Minette. He and his wife, Wanda, have three children and five grandchildren.

COFFEE

► **First Church, Enterprise**, will hold VBS on June 3, 4–7 p.m. and June 4–7, 8:30 a.m.–noon. Ben Bowden is pastor. ► **First Church, New Brockton**, will hold VBS on June 3–6, 5:30–8:30 p.m. Nathan Sims is pastor. ► **Damascus Church, Elba**, will hold VBS on June 3–8, 6–8:30 p.m. Steve Watson is pastor. ► **Macedonia Church, Enterprise**, will hold VBS on June 3–8, 6–8:30 p.m. Randy Walker is pastor. ► **Church on Boll Weevil Circle, Enterprise**, will hold VBS on June 10–13, 5–8 p.m. John Granger is pastor. ► **Hillcrest Church, Enterprise**, will hold VBS on June 11–15, 8:55 a.m.–12:15 p.m. Day camp for children 1st–6th grade will be 12:15–2:30 p.m. Michael Mynatt is pastor. ► **New Home Church, Enterprise**, will hold VBS on June 10,

5–7 p.m. and June 11–14, 6–8:30 p.m. Family night will be June 15, 6 p.m. Clifford Quincey is pastor. ► **Mount Pleasant Church, Enterprise**, will hold VBS on June 10–14, 5:30–8 p.m. Roger Richards is interim pastor. ► **First Church, Elba**, will hold VBS on June 10, 5–8:30 p.m. and June 11–14, 8:30–11:30 a.m. Michael Woodham is pastor.

MORGAN

► **Grace Point Church, Somerville**, will hold VBS on June 11–15, 6–8:30 p.m. Family night will be June 15, 6 p.m. Food will be served each night. For more information call 256-778-0115 or visit www.gracepointbaptist.com.

ST. CLAIR

► **Cook Springs Church, Pell City**, will celebrate its 160th anniversary and homecoming June 3, 10 a.m. Special music will be provided by Richard Robertson. Lunch will be at noon.

WALKER

► **David Byrd** recently celebrated 20 years as pastor of **Northside Church, Jasper**. The church recognized him May 20 with a gift and framed proclamation. He and his wife, Marilyn, have two children.

WASHINGTON

► **Pleasant Hill Church, Millry**, will hold a homecoming service June 3, 10 a.m. Lunch will follow. Leon Parnell is interim pastor. ✝

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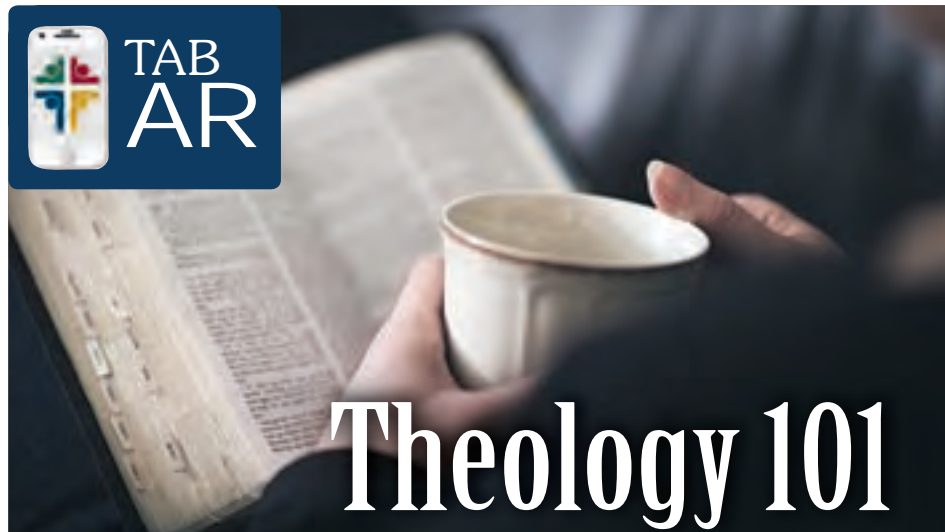
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Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Christology Through Imagery

Light of the World

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

We continue this week thinking about Christology through imagery. Previously we've discussed the images of word, lamb and bread. Today we add light. The Gospel of John opens with the declaration that in Christ "was life and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it" (1:4–5).

Jesus also uses this image of light on other occasions. One such occasion is recorded in John 8. He had just displayed divine compassion on a sinful woman whose accusers interrupted Jesus teaching in the temple by throwing the woman at His feet to test Him on the law's provision for stoning to death in cases of adultery. Christ was surrounded by spiritual darkness as He sat in the temple. Spiritual darkness blinded the religious leaders who sought to put Jesus on the spot by citing a provision in the Old Covenant law about stoning adulterers.

In front of Jesus where she had been thrown to the ground was the woman whose life was full of moral darkness. In His response Christ chose not to condemn the woman, but to admonish her to quit her sin, at which point Jesus continued speaking to the temple crowd, saying, "I am the Light of the World. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12). Both religious hypocrites and sinful outsiders were lost in their darkness.

'Works of God'

Later as Jesus left the temple He passed a man who from birth had been living in physical darkness. He saw in that blind man an opportunity for "the works of God to be revealed in him" (John 9:3). Just before restoring sight to the blind man, Christ declared to His disciples, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.

As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the World" (John 9:4–5). The double use of the claim "I am the Light of the World" on separate occasions reinforces the importance of the image of Christ as light.

During the week before His crucifixion Christ cried aloud to a crowd who demonstrated they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God: "I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness" (John 12:46). Not only was Christ the Light when He walked the earth, He will be so in eternity when new heavens and new earth are lighted by the Light of the World in all His glory (Rev. 21:23).

Be extensions of light

What are we to glean about Christ from this imagery of light? As to His person, the image suggests His divine nature in that the Bible tells us that God is light (1 John 1:5); thus, for Christ to also make a claim to light points to His divinity. He is God come in flesh. Light always operates best where there is darkness. Therefore when Christ enters a believer's life He dispels the darkness of spiritual ignorance, impurity and falsehood.

His presence in a person's life brings the light of spiritual understanding, purity and truth. The Light-bearer became the light-bringer in order to be the darkness-dispeller for sinners. As Christ shines through His followers, we become extensions of the light through His life reflected from us. ✝

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.



Questions remain

No word yet on Patterson's SBC convention sermon

(continued from page 1)

will house and curate the libraries of several prominent Southern Baptist leaders, including Patterson, as well as extensive archives from the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Conservative Resurgence, according to a March 14 press release from SWBTS. The center also includes an apartment for the theologian-in-residence.

Patterson's removal as SWBTS president comes after comments made by Patterson in 2000 regarding spousal abuse and divorce were brought to light once again in an article in *The Washington Post*. Patterson told the story of a woman in his church who had been beaten by her husband. Patterson urged her not to seek a divorce but instead to pray for her husband.

The article was not the first to discuss the comments, but it sparked three weeks of examination and criticism of the denomination's stance on issues of abuse and the treatment of women.

In response to the article, nearly 3,300 people, most of them Southern Baptist women, signed an open letter asking SBC leaders not to allow "the biblical view of leadership to be misused in such a way that a leader with an unbiblical view of authority, womanhood and sexuality be allowed to continue in leadership."

'Please forgive'

On May 10, Patterson issued "An Apology to God's People," in which he said his comments had "obviously been hurtful to women in several possible ways."

"I wish to apologize to every woman who has been wounded by anything I have said that was inappropriate or that lacked clarity. We live in a world of hurt and sor-

row, and the last thing that I need to do is add to anyone's heartache. Please forgive the failure to be as thoughtful and careful in my extemporaneous expression as I should have been," Patterson wrote.

While the trustees were meeting on May 22, *The Washington Post* released another article, this one recounting the story of a female student at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) in Wake Forest, North Carolina, who said she was raped by a male SEBTS student in 2003 while Patterson was president of that seminary.

When the woman went to administration, she said she was advised by Patterson not to report the incident to police.

'They shamed ... me'

"They shamed the crap out of me, asking me question after question," the woman told the *Post*. "He didn't necessarily say it was my fault, but [the sense from him was] I let him into my home."

In a statement by SWBTS trustees that broadly addressed Patterson's handling of comments and events, they affirmed a motion stating Patterson had complied with reporting laws regarding sexual assault and abuse and that the seminary stands against all forms of abuse.

The board also sided with SWBTS seminary Ph.D. student Nathan Montgomery — whose tuition break was revoked and who was fired from his campus job by SWBTS for tweeting an April 30 blog post written by Ed Stetzer, executive director of the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College in Illinois, calling for Patterson's retirement. The board said there was no evidence of misconduct in his employment file.

In that post Stetzer also said that if Patterson preached the convention sermon as planned on Wednesday, June 13, at the SBC annual meeting in Dallas, it would send a negative message to the world about Southern Baptists.

"If Patterson preaches at the SBC, he will, because of his past work, get a standing ovation. Every news story will point to that moment ... and say that Southern Baptists don't take abuse seriously. And it's not just a public relations crisis. It's a message to women that we must not send," Stetzer wrote.

In a May 23 blog post, Stetzer reiterated those comments.

"Dr. Patterson should not (and must not) preach the SBC annual meeting sermon," he wrote.

Frank Jones said he agrees with Stetzer. "I think it would be very awkward for him to speak," Jones said. "We would probably get the wrong kind of media coverage from outside media, and it would not help our cause as Southern Baptists."

Whether or not Patterson will deliver the convention sermon remains to be seen.

In a May 11 statement, SBC President Steve Gaines said he "does not have the authority to make that decision," nor does the SBC Committee on Order of Business.

"It was the messengers of the 2017 SBC meeting that selected Dr. Patterson to preach the 2018 Convention Sermon," Gaines wrote. "There are only two scenarios in which Dr. Patterson will not preach the Convention Sermon: 1) the messengers



BNG photo

Stained-glass windows of Paige and Dorothy Patterson as well as several other SBC leaders are on display at Southwestern Seminary.

of the SBC vote at the annual meeting in Dallas for him not to do so, or 2) Dr. Patterson personally withdraws from that responsibility. In either case, the alternate preacher, Dr. Kie Bowman, would preach the Convention Sermon."

Charles Patrick, vice president for strategic initiatives and communications at SWBTS, told *The Alabama Baptist* in an email May 24 that no decision had been made on whether Patterson would preach at the convention.

"He's presently out of town at his granddaughter's wedding," Patrick said.✝

Alabama pastor Patrick remorseful for social media comments

By Jennifer Davis Rash
The Alabama Baptist

His account had to have been hacked; surely it was hacked. This does not sound like Rick Patrick at all."

More than a few Alabama Baptists repeated this sentiment over and over in their minds — and many stated some form of it out loud — the afternoon of May 22. For those intricately involved in Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) life, the 13-hour Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary trustee meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, became an online reality show of sorts.

As the trustees met to decide the fate of their embattled leader (see story, page 1), concerned Baptists and others hung anxiously on the Twitter feeds of the media representatives camped out in the hallway outside the closed-door meeting at the seminary.

It was in the relentless hours of waiting to hear the fate of Paige Patterson that emotions built and online chatter intensified. Patrick, pastor of First Baptist Church, Sylacauga, was among those watching from afar and — in a self-described momentary lapse of judgment — ended up in a media firestorm of his own.



PATRICK

"I posted my comment when I was extremely upset at the news of my ministry hero's (likely) firing," Patrick wrote in his May 23 apology and letter of resignation from his role as executive director of the board of Connect 316 and publisher of the blog SBC Today. "I will not repeat the comment, for it was honestly reprehensible and completely unworthy of Christ. I do not speak of such things in my daily conversation. It is truly not who I am. After lashing out with sarcasm, I realized how

wrong I was and removed the post from the private Facebook group after about 90 seconds. However, someone had already taken a screen shot and posted it publicly. My sin was thus exposed on social media."

Patrick's comment targeted the timing of the latest round of news reports about Patterson as well as the #MeToo movement in general.

'Truly sorry'

At press time, Patrick was attempting to contact each of the five men he mentioned in his post to apologize. He also resigned from his position on *The Alabama Baptist* board of directors, effective May 23.

"Even preachers make mistakes and Tuesday (May 22) I made a big one," Patrick wrote in his apology letter to the members of First Baptist, Sylacauga. "I am truly, truly sorry. I am grieved beyond words. I will learn from this. And it will never happen again. If you can find it in

your heart to do so, please forgive me."

Larry Morrison, minister of education and administration for First, Sylacauga, confirmed that Patrick is "remorseful, very broken and really repentant" and said church leadership is committed to walking with Patrick through his healing.

"We are working with him to encourage him and help restore him," Morrison said. "This was out of character for Rick and while it doesn't excuse what he wrote, we do want to help him through this. None of us is without sin and none can cast the first stone."

Patrick met with church leaders May 23 to determine the plan going forward which will include a refocusing of his attention to be solely on God, his family and the church and removing himself completely from denominational politics.

"We want to move forward in a positive way and still be open to God's leadership," Morrison said.✝



'An Oasis'

Photo courtesy of Robin Caddell

Craig Coblentz (left), a member of FBC Montgomery, and Harold McLemore of the Alabama Department of Agriculture lay the plastic culture in the Master's Garden.

FBC Montgomery's 'Master's Garden' meets food needs in Chisholm neighborhood

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

A “food desert” — that’s the label the Chisholm neighborhood carried when volunteers from First Baptist Church, Montgomery, planted the first seeds in a vacant lot there several years ago.

“Being a food desert meant a large portion of the residents lived out of walking distance of a store where they could buy healthy food,” said Rhonda Thompson,

director of the Nehemiah Center.

And for her and others at First Baptist, Montgomery, that just wasn’t OK.

‘Relationship ministry’

The goal of the Nehemiah Center — an arm of the church’s Community Ministries — was to meet human needs in Chisholm in the name of Jesus. Some of that took place through mentoring, job training, kids’ clubs and English as a Second Language classes.

“We’re a relationship ministry,” Thomp-

son said. “We have been and always will be in it for the long haul. We want to meet human needs and build relationships.”

And as they assessed needs, one of the area’s biggest felt needs was food.

So the Master’s Garden was planted, a 2.5-acre plot of land that breathes life into the community. It has produced 6,000 pounds of produce to be shared with those who need it in addition to what’s harvested from the 66 10-foot-by-12-foot plots that Chisholm residents plant and tend.

“It has given an oasis there in Chisholm,” said Robin Caddell, who

serves as volunteer master gardener. “The gardeners come out, they’ll picnic and their children will play on the playground. They watch out for each other’s plots. It’s created community.”

Thompson said that’s her favorite part. “The best part of the garden is the community,” she said. “We’ve got people who are coming together, working side by side.”

That’s no small feat in an area where racial tensions run high, she said. In the area, which also is riddled with drug houses, residents tend to clash.

But at the Master’s Garden — where around a dozen nationalities tend plots — people get along.

“It’s been a way to integrate people in

the community, a place where they can come and feel wanted,” Thompson said.

And Caddell said it’s ever growing.

“Last year we had 47 residents apply for plots and this year we have 66,” she said. “It’s truly caught on in the community.”

In recent months, they planted 1,500 commercial strawberry plants and invited nearby elementary school classes for field trips to pick fruit. Back in the fall, they planted pumpkins and hosted similar trips.

And at certain times each year, volunteers host Vacation Bible School for area children

there at the garden.

Tim Cearley, minister of programs for First, Montgomery’s Community Ministries, said for him the impact on the children — and the impact on the world through the different cultures represented — is what it’s all about.

“That’s the heart of it for me,” he said. “One of the children who was there for one of the events a few weeks ago looked around and said, ‘This is heaven. This is heaven for me.’”

That’s what all the volunteers hope — that it will be a place for the neighborhood to find real peace.

“It’s a blessing to be out there and see God producing things as we do our part,” Cearley said. “It’s amazing.”

For more information about the Community Ministries of FBC Montgomery, visit montgomeryfbc.org/community-ministries.



Photo courtesy of Robin Caddell

Children from Highland Gardens Elementary School, just a couple of blocks from the garden, pick strawberries at the Master’s Garden on a field trip.

Providing fresh food

Shelby Association's garden to be 'positive enhancement' to its food ministry

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

For years, a woman in Texas had her eye on a piece of property in Shelby County.

And for years, the staff of Shelby Baptist Association had been praying about starting a garden that could provide fresh food for the community.

Neither knew God had something special in mind, said Keith Brown, church and community ministries director for Shelby Association.

"It was a 38-acre farm that was her old home place, and she had asked if the property came up for sale if she could be one of the first ones to make an offer on it," Brown said.

It did. She made her offer and quickly felt God telling her to do something specific.

"She told her realtor that she wanted to set aside a part of it for a garden for the community," Brown said.

That realtor was a member of First Baptist Church, Harpersville, and he suggested she contact Shelby Association.

"It was an answer to years of prayer for us," Brown said.

Extensive research

And with that, the association got busy preparing the two-acre plot for use. A Shelby Association intern who had studied financial planning did extensive research on the best way to leverage the garden.

"He did a really impressive six-page report with a proposed diagram for how to lay it out," Brown said.

They decided elevated grow beds would be the best way to use the space — and the easiest layout for volunteers to maintain.

And in the process they also realized they would need about \$5,000 to build it out.

But Hugh Richardson, Shelby Association director of missions, said God had that covered too.

Funding in place

"Recently Keith sat down with the lady donating the property, and as they were talking about the details, she said, 'The Lord told me I needed to give you \$5,000 toward this too,'" Richardson said.

Now they had the place, the funding and the manpower.

This July student teams participating in a local service week called Unite will work to build the beds and start planting.

The produce that comes from the garden will be a "positive enhancement" to the work of the association's food ministry, Richardson said.

"It will provide us with fresh vegetables for those who come to us for help in our daily bread shop," he said. "We have a lot of bread-type products, but people need vegetables too."

Brown agreed.

"For those who are food insecure, this will help them have a well-balanced diet. We serve a lot of people across the county through our food pantry and mobile food pantry. This will help us do that in an even better way."✝



BROWN



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"For those who are food insecure, this will help them have a well-balanced diet. We serve a lot of people across the county through our food pantry and mobile food pantry. This will help us do that in an even better way."

Keith Brown
church and community ministries director, Shelby Baptist Association

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YOUTH MINISTER

Babbie Baptist Church is seeking a full-time youth minister. The youth minister will oversee the communications/evangelism/discipleship training/events and activities of the youth ministry. For detailed job description, visit our website: babbiebaptist.com. Interested persons must send a resumé with references and work experience to: Babbie Baptist Church, 19863 Babbie Rd., Andalusia, AL 36420, or email to: babbiebaptist@centurylink.net.

STUDENT MINISTER

Full-time student minister position available at First Baptist Church, Alexander City, AL 35010. Please send resumé to: spsc@fbc-ac.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. Send email with resumé to: tnc4him.2@hotmail.com.

MINISTER TO CHILDREN & FAMILIES

First Baptist Church in Huntsville is seeking a full-time minister to children and families. More information is available at fbchsv.org/employment. Resumes and inquiries may be sent to: search@fbchsv.org.

OTHER POSITIONS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The Birmingham Baptist Association is a network of biblically faithful churches building one another up and working together to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of Jesus Christ. The executive director of missions provides visionary leadership for the association staff, its ministries and its financial support. The executive director of missions should be an effective communicator of the gospel who is able to work with leaders from churches of various sizes and settings. The ability to represent the association among other city leaders is vital. Resumes can be submitted to: Greg Corbin, 2865 Old Rocky Ridge Rd., Birmingham, AL 35243, or gcorbin@lakesidebaptist.com.

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My JESUS Story

By Sammie Jo Barstow
First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa

Books have guided me at every juncture of my life, including my salvation. In the 1950s there were few Christian fiction books available, but Grace Livingston

Hill was a writer whose books I enjoyed. One day, sitting at our family dining table reading a Grace Livingston Hill novel, I read the way to salvation along with the young girl who was the main character in the story. When she confessed her sins and asked Jesus into her heart, I did the same. I was baptized a few weeks later. I'm grateful that now we have so many wonderful Christian fiction authors and many books to tell the Jesus story.✝

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Edward & Sarah Lyrene

Retired ministry couple dies in car crash

Edward "Ed" Charles Lyrene, retired pastor of Mifflin Baptist Church, Elberta, and his wife, Sarah Ann Carnathan Lyrene, died May 16 in an automobile crash with a tractor



ED & SARAH LYRENE

trailer near Uniontown. He was 75 and she was 70. They had been married 48 years.

Edward Lyrene, who founded Mifflin Baptist in Baldwin Baptist Association in 1991, also served other churches, including Isney Baptist, Silas, in Choctaw Baptist Association.

He studied at the University of Alabama (UA); Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky; and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Sarah Lyrene also studied at UA and at Judson College in Marion and was a gifted pianist.

At the time of the accident, they were residents of Northport. (TAB)



REVERSE MORTGAGE

testimony



Charles D. Lewis

After some 40 years of ministry, my wife and I found ourselves with a mortgage balance of more than 50 percent of the equity. We had heard of reverse mortgages in Jimmy Dixon's article in *The Alabama Baptist*. I gave Jimmy a call. He came to our home and clearly explained all the details of a reverse mortgage. This was a wonderful time of getting to know Jimmy and have fellowship with a brother in Christ. We have been blessed by the Lord who led us to Jimmy and well might I say a very honest, straight-forward brother who happens to be a blessing to all he meets in the business world. In these difficult days, thank you Lord for Jimmy.

To make a long story short, we were able to close our reverse mortgage quickly and in the process we received some cash back, and most of all we retained ownership of the home for the rest of our lives and no monthly mortgage payment.

I highly recommend Jimmy. So if you have been thinking of a reverse mortgage, it costs nothing to find out the details. Call Jimmy and you will be glad you did.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Charles D. Lewis
Whitehouse Fork Baptist Church



Jimmy Dixon

CONTACT JIMMY DIXON:
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Someone You

Should Know

Christian Henry

By Leigh Pritchett
Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

Christian Henry, 24, played football at and received his degree from Kentucky Christian University in Grayson. He has been a youth pastor for six months. He also helps with the men's ministry and leads a men's fitness-and-Bible-study group.

MINISTRY TITLE: Youth pastor

CHURCH NAME: First Baptist Church, Scottsboro, in Tennessee River Baptist Association

LIFE VERSE: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile." (Rom. 1:16)

Q: Describe where you focus your greatest ministry efforts.

A: As a youth pastor my priority in the church is to help junior high and senior high students grow in their faith and to equip them to live Christian lives. Our teenage years really set us up for the rest of our lives and having a foundation rooted in Jesus is the best start we can have.

Q: Who was or is one of the most influential people in your faith life? Why?

A: I've had a lot of influential people in my life who encouraged me to grow in my faith, but I would have to say the greatest influence would have to be my dad. He has always been there for me regardless of what the question or need was. He's a true servant leader and always goes out of his way to help others. That's exactly what Jesus teaches us and I think my dad does a great job of that.

Q: Tell about a "turning point" in your life and how God was involved.

A: I was fortunate enough to grow up in a very Christian family. It wasn't very strict, but we had a fair share of rules. I went off to college and left the comfort of my home when I was 18. I went off to a new state (North Dakota) and a whole new culture. I was about 24 hours (by car) away from home and I didn't know anybody. It was there that I really questioned my faith. Not that I doubted God, but (I) asked myself, "Why am I a Christian? Was my faith my own or my parents'?" God took me out of my comfort zone to depend on Him. I would say it was then that God really helped me

shape my reason for believing and wanting to help others do the same.

Q: If there were one thing you could tell your younger self about faith, what would it be?

A: I would tell teenage Christian that he's not as cool as he thinks he is. Stop caring so much about what others think because you're not living for their approval in the first place. Also, don't worry so much about the future because God's plan for you is way better than yours.

Q: Have you ever read a book or heard a song that changed the way you think about God and faith? What was it and what did you learn from it?

A: I love hip-hop, especially positive Christian hip-hop. I could probably give you about a thousand songs of almost any genre that have affected me and changed the way I think, but one song jumps out at me: "Uncomfortable" by Andy Mineo. The challenge of the song is in the name, "Uncomfortable." I, just like everyone else, struggle with wanting to live life easy and comfortable. But God tells us that if we're to serve Him, we must get out of our comfort zone. We must learn to sacrifice things that hinder us from growing closer to God, whether it's money, fame or even another person. If God isn't at the center, then everything falls apart.✝



HENRY



Photo courtesy of Lee Tate

The congregations of Benton Baptist Church and Cutting Edge Ministry, both in Lowndes County, come together in early May for a worship service and lunch fellowship to celebrate God's love for all people.

Benton Baptist, Cutting Edge Ministry break racial barriers

By Jessica Ingram
The Alabama Baptist

The southern Alabama town of Benton may only have a population of 49 but God is still moving in a mighty way. On May 6, Benton Baptist Church, a majority white congregation, partnered with Cutting Edge Ministry, a majority black congregation, for a joint service and fellowship lunch.

"Eleven o'clock on Sunday morning can be the most segregated time. ... We wanted to have a mixed service where mixed services are hard to find," said Lee Tate, pastor of Benton Baptist, in Selma Baptist Association.

Frank Boggan, pastor of Cutting Edge Ministry, said the service was a step to forgetting the past and moving into the future. According to Tate, racism can become an acceptable sin to many people. "When you're unrepentant of it, it stops the Lord's work," he said.

The service with Cutting Edge Ministry was a way to face racism head-on for his church and the community. Boggan said the fellowship filled people physically and spiritually.

It was a time of delicious food and community.

"We sat among each other, shook hands and hugged," Tate said. "It was wonderful to get together and meet people we didn't know."

The pastors of both Benton Baptist and Cutting Edge are overwhelmed by their experiences that Sunday.

It was an extravagant event, Boggan said. "It was a blessing to see all of us come together as one and fellowship ... to be as one people because there's only one God."

Exceeded expectations

Tate is amazed at what can happen when people break out of their normal routines.

"I'm still processing it. It was that good," Tate said. "We had really high expectations and they were all exceeded. I speak for my congregation. We expected God to do something incredible and we sold Him short."

Tate and Boggan hope the service demonstrated the importance of love, not just among fellow Christians, but among all the world.

"It's important to love one another and pray for one another," Boggan said. "God is love and we should love others like God has loved us."

More than 150 people came together

at Benton Baptist for the service and the pastors know this gathering is just the beginning.

"We will just continue to pray and believe in God for the best," Boggan said.

He is confident that change is coming and Tate wants to stand alongside him and see how God will change Benton, Alabama, the United States and the world.✝



Photo courtesy of Lee Tate

Frank Boggan (left), pastor of Cutting Edge Ministry, and Lee Tate, pastor of Benton Baptist, look forward to how God will work in the future.

Do you know a person who should be featured as Someone You Should Know?

Send his or her name, a contact number and the reason you think he or she should be featured to Someone You Should Know, c/o *The Alabama Baptist*, 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209, or to news@thealabamabaptist.org.

Pickens Assoc. collects sunglasses for Brazil

Pickens Baptist Association has already collected 533 pairs of sunglasses to send with a missions team to Brazil — and there are more coming.

The sunglasses, which include children and adult sizes, will be distributed at an eyeglass clinic organized by the team. The Live Like Libby — Love Like Libby Foundation gave a donation to the project that allowed Pickens Association to purchase more than 200 pairs of sunglasses.

Many of the churches within the association also collected sunglasses for the trip.

In 2017 the team in Brazil ran out of sunglasses at the eyeglass clinic so collecting them was a big part of preparing for this year's upcoming trip, said Buddy Kirk, the

Pickens Association team leader. "This particular ministry is a big drawing card," he said. "When locals find out they can get free glasses, they come to the clinic and it gives us the opportunity to share the gospel with them."

This will be the 10th year Pickens has sent a group to Brazil.

In addition to the eyeglass clinic, the team will build a church in the village, host Vacation Bible School for the local children and hold a health clinic and haircut clinic.

Christians from several churches across Pickens Association

will partner with a group from First Baptist Church, Fairhope, to serve in a Brazilian village for a week in mid-June. (Jessica Ingram)



Photo courtesy of Buddy Kirk

The Pickens Baptist Association team ran out of sunglasses at the eyeglass clinic in 2017.



Photo courtesy of Buddy Kirk

For 10 years a team from Pickens Baptist Association has traveled to Brazil and shared the gospel with villagers through health clinics, Vacation Bible Schools and construction projects.

"This particular ministry is a big drawing card. When locals find out they can get free glasses, they come to the clinic and it gives us the opportunity to share the gospel with them."

Buddy Kirk, Pickens Association team leader



(augmented reality)

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SNAPSHOTS OF LIFE WHEN LIFE HAPPENS

Walking the lonely path of regret

Regret — it can be a tortuous wave of despair that keeps on rolling over and over through our lives.

Whether it be one momentary lapse of good judgment or a season of unhealthy patterns that form the perfect storm, the actual event that leads to regret changes everything.

And it is rarely ever a solo punch.

Most often the lives of everyone connected to the person suffering from regret are changed in some way — and some forever.

It is more than being disappointed about getting caught or offering false remorse for receiving negative pushback.

It is a genuine feeling of repentance that grips us at the center of our soul.

Regret is a true feeling of remorse, deep repentance and extreme sadness over what has happened.

You will know it when you see it. The humility, the despair, the brokenness seep from the person's pores.

Surviving the initial blow, humiliation and blowback is the first step.

And while that first step is hard the lonely journey that follows might be even harder for the truly repentant.

Space for grace

But brokenness leaves the regret-filled person with a choice just as it offers those around them an opportunity.

For the person walking through regret, it can provide a space for God to show us His grace in a way never experienced before.

When we know more of the

depth of our sin and brokenness, we can marvel even more at the unfathomable love and forgiveness offered to us through Christ.

Power in the pain

But we have to make that choice.

We have to choose to let those painful memories drive us to worship and gratitude for our forgiveness.

We have to choose to let our pain push us toward Christ and away from deeper sin.

And for people who are surrounding the person carrying regret, it's a chance to remember God's grace and remember our own sins too.

None of us is perfect. We all have the ability to dive headlong into sin.

We have to call each other to right choices, but when someone is truly repentant, we can choose to walk alongside our broken brother or sister in love.

That's who we are. We strive for holiness.

We repent with sincere hearts. We bind up our wounded.

The key is real repentance — and real love. 🌈

By Jennifer
Davis Rash
Editor-elect



RASHIONAL Extras

Invite everyone, invest in a few

By Kevin Blackwell

Excerpt from *drkevinblackwell.com*

Great disciple-making movements are not created through large-scale invitations to crowds. Great disciple-making movements begin small and grow big. Effective disciple making doesn't depend on additions to a ministry, it involves investing in a few who will multiply themselves in others.

Disciple-making movements foster multiplying momentum in the lives of a few, while traditional discipleship programs depend on the perpetual motivation of attendees. We have to look no further than the example of Jesus, the greatest disciple maker who ever lived, to understand.

Jesus never pandered to the crowds and never made it His goal to attract large audiences. Actually, the opposite is true. After He calls the disciples to be "fishers of men" we find Him with the masses 17 times and investing in His few disciples 46 times.

Jesus didn't preach to the whole world during His ministry, instead He spent the majority of His time discipling a few men who would later take His message to the world.

Clearly, when you study the ministry of Jesus chronologically that was His model. If it was good enough for Jesus, it should be good enough for us.

We are called to equip believers to be disciple makers. It is a call to repair or mend while also preparing for use. Mend and send; repairing while preparing.

As you prepare to welcome big crowds to church remember that God has not called you to fill the church, He has called you to a disciple-making movement.

Disciple-making movements eventually bring multiplication which, in time, will bring a great harvest of souls into the kingdom of God. Who are you currently discipling and equipping?

How to ruin your life

Excerpted with permission from "How to Ruin Your Life" by Eric Geiger. Copyright 2018, B&H Publishing Group.

All of us are prone to wander and fall, so we need people around us who ... love us enough to confront us when our hearts are unattended by truth, when our relationships are unattended by forgiveness and when our decisions are unattended by the Lord's agenda.

To set yourself up for an implosion, simply fail to surround yourself with people who will say something to you when they see your life unattended. To implode, choose isolation.

To set up your family or friends for implosion, cower and remain silent when you see something suspicious in their lives. Don't speak up; don't say anything. To help them to implode, enable isolation by looking the other way.

@ronniefloyd

Anyone can create suspicion about others, sow seeds of division in the faith family and disunity in relationships. Christian leaders are called to a higher standard. Lead high and lead others to unity.

"You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

"So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. ...

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other."

Galatians 5:13-26

Pickens Assoc. collects sunglasses for Brazil

Pickens Baptist Association has already collected 533 pairs of sunglasses to send with a missions team to Brazil — and there are more coming.

The sunglasses, which include children and adult sizes, will be distributed at an eyeglass clinic organized by the team. The Live Like Libby — Love Like Libby Foundation gave a donation to the project that allowed Pickens Association to purchase more than 200 pairs of sunglasses.

Many of the churches within the association also collected sunglasses for the trip.

In 2017 the team in Brazil ran out of sunglasses at the eyeglass clinic so collecting them was a big part of preparing for this year's upcoming trip, said Buddy Kirk, the

Pickens Association team leader.

"This particular ministry is a big drawing card," he said. "When locals find out they can get free glasses, they come to the clinic and it gives us the opportunity to share the gospel with them."

This will be the 10th year Pickens has sent a group to Brazil.

In addition to the eyeglass clinic, the team will build a church in the village, host Vacation Bible School for the local children and hold a health clinic and haircut clinic.

Christians from several churches across Pickens Association

will partner with a group from First Baptist Church, Fairhope, to serve in a Brazilian village for a week in mid-June. (Jessica Ingram)



Photo courtesy of Buddy Kirk

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For June 3

Explore the Bible By Douglas K. Wilson, Ph.D.
Dean, Office for Global Engagement, University of Mobile

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

RESPECTED

2 Samuel 1:22-27; 2:1-7

Within the books of historical narrative, 1 Samuel records the transition from the judges period to the monarchy under Saul and 2 Samuel records David's reign as king. In 1-2 Kings, the account of Solomon's reign precedes the split of the kingdom under his son Rehoboam, after which comes the eventual fall of Israel in the north and Judah in the south. All of this provides context for the reader who may be unfamiliar with Old Testament history.

God raises up individuals to lead His people. Sometimes He gives them leaders they ask for and deserve, as He did with Saul. At other times He raises up leaders who will govern His people well and point them to worship and honor God, as He did with David. Regardless of the leader Scripture calls Christians to submit to those who hold authority over them (see Acts 23:5 and Heb. 13:17).

Commemoration (1:22-27)

"What a strange response," some might say as David commemorated Saul's life with poetry. King Saul had pursued David throughout the land of Israel, seeking to put him to death. Twice David spared Saul's life (1 Sam. 24:1-7; 26:1-11) because David chose to honor the king God had appointed over Israel. Why did David sing a funeral dirge for the king who had been so jealous of his popularity that he wanted to kill David (1 Sam. 18:6-9)?

The answer is honor, both for God and for the king. For all the injustice David experienced at the hand of Saul, this man was his ruler. His son Jonathan was David's closest friend, one to whom David entrusted his life when Saul was seeking to destroy him. Upon hearing of their deaths, David utilized his creative gift of poetry and his love for Saul and his family to honor the fallen king.

Coronation (2:1-4a)

David's coronation came as a fulfillment of prophecy and as a foreshadowing of the promised Messiah. Prior to Jacob's death in Egypt, he blessed each of his sons with a prayer and a prophecy. Regarding Judah, Jacob prophesied: "The scepter will not depart from Judah ... until he whose right it is [or "until Shiloh"] comes" (Gen. 49:10). God's later covenant with David (2 Sam. 7:12-13) was that his anointed descendant would reign over the eternal kingdom.

In this passage David demonstrated his dependence upon God. He sought God's counsel and he obeyed God's direction. Hebron served as his base of operation for the first seven years of his reign (1 Kings 2:11). Though David had been anointed privately while Saul still ruled (1 Sam. 16:10-13), an official coronation took place in which David was anointed as king over the tribe of Judah (2 Sam. 2:4a).

Commendation (2:4b-7)

David continued to honor Saul through his commendation of the men who buried him. While this may seem like nothing more than political gamesmanship, David's conviction to honor the Lord's anointed continued even after Saul's death (see 2 Sam. 1:11-16). David waited patiently during the reign of Saul and he would continue waiting while Saul's son Ish-bosheth ("man of shame," also known as Esh-Baal, "man of Baal") reigned over the rest of Israel's tribes (2 Sam. 2:9).

The Apostle Paul instructed the church at Rome, living under a dictatorial emperor, to "give honor to whom honor is due" (Rom. 13:7). Peter wrote to "honor the emperor" (1 Pet. 2:17) and for household servants to honor their employers, "not only the good and gentle ones but also to the cruel" (1 Pet. 2:18). God's grace through Christ enables us to respect, honor and obey leaders to whom God has entrusted leadership over us. †

WHY ARE WE EVEN HERE?

Genesis 1:1-5, 26-31

The Book of Genesis was never intended to be read in the context of modern scientific discovery but rather as an expression of faith in the God who is ultimately described by the Apostles' Creed as "Maker of heaven and earth."

God is the Creator. (1-5)

The first message of the Bible is a message of creation: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The creation of the world is the first of the many majestic and gracious acts of the triune God. Yet the doctrine of creation is a matter of faith. No microscope or telescope ever observed the creation of the universe, no balance can weigh it and no mathematical formula can define or analyze it. It is not within the reach of scientific method because it is inaccessible to our senses.

However, without an understanding of the biblical doctrine of creation, the world cannot be truly understood because it has no plan or purpose within itself unless it is part of the creative will of God moving toward a final destiny.

The creation narrative sets the scene and provides the context in which God's purpose is to be worked out in human history. Creation is the beginning of the acts of God, the first of many great deeds upon which both life's current meaning and the eternal destinies of believers will depend.

We were created in God's image. (26-27)

The drama of creation is all about relationships — the relationship of God to His creation and the relationship of humankind, male and female, to each other and to the rest of God's creatures, both animate and inanimate. Human identity

is rooted in being created in the image of God. We are radically dependent on the generosity, wisdom and power of God in whom we are to place all our trust and confidence and whom we love and worship.

As those who have been created in the image of God, we are called to honor, respect and care for all who are created in His image. No matter who we are — woman or man, black or white, rich or poor, Republican or Democrat — we are called into relationships of trust and respect toward all people.

We were created by God to steward and enjoy His creation. (28-31)

The Bible declares that God has created the world and gave the stewardship of its resources to humankind to care for its structures and inhabitants so that righteousness, peace and justice will prevail and be a means of blessing to all of God's creatures.

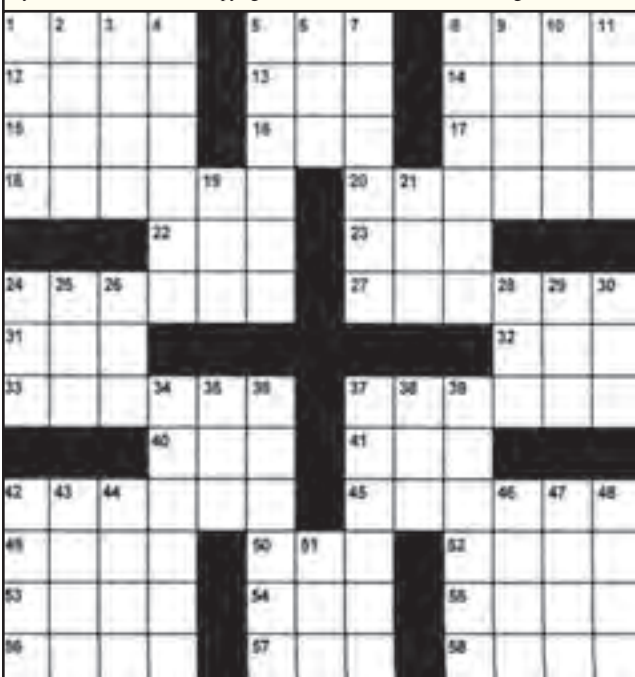
One aspect of the biblical doctrine of creation is a rediscovery of stewardship rather than humankind's selfish indulgence of its resources. At each stage of creation, as God surveys his handiwork he declares that "it is good." Spirituality is not to be found by rejecting God's gifts of sexuality, intellect, art and culture as evil but as God-given gifts to be enjoyed.

Creation thus fittingly expresses the true character of God, who is love and whose love and will-to-community are freely displayed in the act of creation. In the act of creation, God already manifested the self-communicating, community-forming love that defines His eternal triune reality that was later revealed decisively in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

The love of the Trinity spills over into creation. His nature of goodness and love is so great that He takes delight in sharing it with others. †

Christian Crossword

By Janet W. Adkins Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. ___-a-brac.
5. Type of lettuce.
8. Canadian Indian tribe.
12. Sons of Benjamin ... Ehi and ____ (Gen. 46:21)
13. Mouth.
14. ___ avis; rarity.
15. Vapor. (prefix)
16. Prominent sea. (abbr.)
17. Company that tries harder.
18. The ___ of the righteous is only good. (Prov. 11:23)
20. And mine hand shall be upon the prophets ... that ___ lies. (Ezek. 13:9)
22. West Coast state. (abbr.)
23. Greek letter.
24. ___ of errors.
27. That ye might be partakers of the divine _____. (2 Pet. 1:4)
31. Onassis.
32. Uncooked.
33. Orthodontist's product.
37. Death, and mourning, and _____. (Rev. 18:8)
40. The name of the

- wicked shall _____. (Prov. 10:7)
 41. Compass direction.
 42. See that ye ___ not him that speaketh. (Heb. 12:25)
 45. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath ____ (d) me. (1 Tim. 1:12)
 49. Ammihud, the son of _____. (1 Chron. 9:4)
 50. Priest's robe.
 52. Platform.
 53. Render therefore to all their _____. (Rom. 13:7)
 54. Bad. (prefix)
 55. Margarine.
 56. This. (Spanish)
 57. South by east. (abbr.)
 58. A thready fragment.
- Down**
1. Nail with a small head.
 2. Learning by repetition.
 3. Belief systems. (suffix)
 4. God made ___ among us, that the Gentiles ... should hear the gospel. (Acts 15:7)
 5. Thy cheeks are ___ with
 - rows of jewels. (Song of Sol. 1:10)
 6. Mine product.
 7. To cause dejection.
 8. Tie.
 9. River in India.
 10. Ireland.
 11. Take thine ___, eat, drink. (Luke 12:19)
 19. Radiation measure.
 21. ___'s boy!
 24. The fourth part of a ___ of dove's dung. (2 Kings 6:25, KJV)
 25. Hockey name Bobby ____.
 26. ___ Farrow.
 28. Geber the son of ___ was in the country of Gilead. (1 Kings 4:19)
 29. His father saw him ... ___, and fell on his neck. (Luke 15:20)
 30. Poor man had nothing, save one little ___ lamb. (2 Sam. 12:3)
 34. Ocean trip.
 35. Greek goddess of the dawn.
 36. Cooks vegetables.

37. Lift up the hands ... and the ___ knees. (Heb. 12:12)
38. Girl's name.
39. A grassy field.
42. Past tense of ride.
43. Australian flightless birds.
44. They shall ___ themselves, and curse their king. (Isa. 8:21)
46. Indonesian island.
47. Ye have eaten the fruit of _____. (Hos. 10:13)
48. Employee stock ownership plan.
51. Experiment room.



TOP 10

best-selling Christian books in May

NONFICTION

1. **Everybody, Always**
By Bob Goff (Thomas Nelson)
2. **The 5 Love Languages**
By Gary Chapman (Moody)
3. **Girl, Wash Your Face**
By Rachel Hollis (Thomas Nelson)
4. **Jesus Calling — Hardcover**
By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
5. **There Is More**
By Brian Houston (Waterbrook)
6. **Embraced**
By Lysa Terkeurst (Thomas Nelson)
7. **The Rock, the Road and the Rabbi**
By Kathie Lee Gifford (Thomas Nelson)
8. **Total Money Makeover — Classic Edition**
By Dave Ramsey (Thomas Nelson)
9. **Jesus Always**
By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
10. **Uninvited**
By Lysa Terkeurst (Thomas Nelson)

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“I’m so thankful God could use what I could do.”

Elaine Herrin Onley
author



ONLEY

‘Amazing MOM’

Former missionary honors her mother’s sacrifices

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**
The Alabama Baptist

On her first Sunday as a young pastor’s wife in Birmingham, Elaine Herrin Onley was invited to play the piano. There was one problem — she didn’t play.

“They were so surprised,” Onley said. “Every pastor’s wife played piano. I didn’t fit the mold.”

What Onley did do well was write, and she has been using that gift for most of her life — a life that includes 14 years of missions service in Grenada and Guyana, and public relations work for the Georgia Baptist Convention and Truett-McConnell University in Cleveland, Georgia.

“I’m so thankful God could use what I could do,” she said.

Still writing at 82, Onley’s story “A Ragged Nightgown” is featured in “My Amazing Mom,” the latest in the Chicken Soup for the Soul series.

The true story focuses on Onley’s mother, a hardworking woman who did all she could for her twin daughters, Elaine and Eleanor, and her son, Alan, despite being given little money from her husband, a man Onley describes as someone who didn’t really understand what it meant to provide for a family.

Double expenses

Having twin daughters doubled all the expenses, Onley said, recalling her senior year when class ring orders were due. Everybody was getting a ring, Onley told her father.

“‘But everyone doesn’t have to buy two,’ he said. And that was that.”

Of all the stories Onley has written, the story of her mother’s sacrifices for her children was the

most important she’s written, she said.

“I wanted to honor the memory of my mother. It took me becoming older and looking back to realize how very much she sacrificed for us as children. I wanted to do this for her,” Onley said.

Other books

Onley has been published two other times in Chicken Soup for the Soul books.

In “The Cancer Book” she shared the story of the death in 1983 of her first husband, Manget

Herrin, who was diagnosed with cancer while they were on furlough and died nine months later. Then in “True Love,” she shared the story of meeting her husband Ed, a widower she served with at the Georgia Baptist Convention.

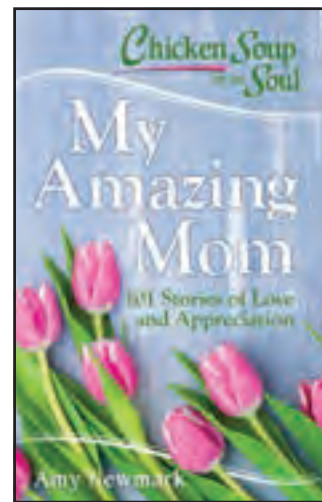
Onley is the author of three books and co-author of a fourth. Her first book, “When We Say Never,” was underway when Herrin fell ill, and Onley abandoned the manuscript in the wake of his illness and death.

“My faith was so challenged,” she said. “He was only 49 years old, so dynamic, and we had so many plans... But I came through that crisis of faith.”

She also is the author of numerous missions studies, book reviews, devotions, articles and editorials that have appeared in a variety of publications.

Now retired in Dothan — where she and her husband are members of First Baptist Church, Dothan — Onley is working on a memoir about growing up as a twin and she continues to write poetry and nonfiction stories. Stories are important, she says, especially in the lives of believers, because stories communicate truths.

“If it’s condensed to two or three little things, you just don’t get it.” ¶



“It took me becoming older and looking back to realize how very much [my mother] sacrificed for us as children.”

Elaine Herrin Onley
author

Living by example

Jackson sees every day as chance to be better Christ follower

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

For Justin Jackson, small forward for the Sacramento Kings, getting better is about more than just a game.

It's about spending every day trying to be more like Christ.

"Each day is a new journey, a new day to try to be a better me, to try to be a better follower of Him. That mindset helps me a lot," he said.

Jackson accepted Christ and was baptized when he was 11, but he said it wasn't until recently that he started living for Him.

"I think I was one of those who knew I was saved and went through the motions," he said. "Now I realize He is all that really matters and that is the best feeling. Without Jesus we wouldn't even be here. Without His sacrifice of Him coming and dying for us this life is null and void. He means everything to me."

In 2017 he led the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) to the national championship, but Jackson said the banner year was about "giving God glory and thanking Him each and every day for the talent I have."

Jackson was the 2016–17 Atlantic Coast Conference Player of the Year and a Consensus First-Team All-American. During his junior season, his last before entering the NBA Draft, he averaged 18.5 points, a career-high 4.7 rebounds and scored a school-record single-season 105 three-pointers.

During UNC's run to their sixth national championship he averaged a team-high 19.5 points in the NCAA tournament. Beginning in the 2014–15 season through 2016–17, Jackson was 1 of 2 UNC players to score 1,600 career points with 150 three-

pointers and have 400 rebounds and 300 assists.

Drafted by the Portland Trailblazers in 2017 in the first round and 15th overall, he was traded to the Sacramento Kings on draft day. He is one of several homeschooled NBA players including Blake Griffin (Detroit) and Michael Beasley (New York).

Jackson finished his rookie 2017–18 season averaging 6.7 points, 2.8 rebounds and 1.1 assists while averaging 22.1 minutes. He started 41 games.

"He is a smart player. He knows how to play," said Kings guard Bogdan Bogdanovic. "Off the court he is a great person. He jokes a lot. He is a good guy."

Sacramento Kings forward Zach Randolph said Jackson "brings everything."

"He undoubtedly works hard and puts time in," Randolph said. "He is very professional at his age. Everything about him has been great."

On and off the court, 23-year-old Jackson wants to reflect his faith by the way he lives.

"I hope by the way that I live I can live by example and they can see there is something different in me," Jackson said.

He also does Bible studies with Randolph and other teammates.

"He is a kid who is always reading the Word," Randolph said.

Kings forward-center Jakarr Sampson said of Jackson, "He wears his faith right there in the open. He lets everybody know his faith. He is a true believer. He shows it around us in everything."

One way that Jackson relates his faith to teammates is through his positive attitude.

He is not a "Debbie Downer," Sampson said. "He is always positive, always looking forward. You never see him down or upset. He has that vibe to him." ☛



Justin Jackson

Photo by Sara Molina/Sacramento Kings

"[Justin Jackson] wears his faith right there in the open."

Jakarr Sampson, forward-center, Sacramento Kings

RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

US uninsured rate rose in 2017, survey shows

WASHINGTON — The uninsured rate rose by statistically significant margins in 17 states in 2017, the first time since the full implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2014 that any state had a rate increase. Nationwide, an estimated 12.2 percent of Americans were uninsured in 2017. This is a 1.3-point increase from 2016 and represents roughly 3.2 million Americans.

In 2013 the national uninsured rate hit its peak at 18 percent prior to the implementation of several ACA guidelines. In Alabama the uninsured rate in 2013 was 17.7 percent. In 2017 an estimated 13.3 percent were uninsured.

The data for the survey was collected as part of the Gallup-Sharecare Well-Being Index. The Gallup analysis suggests several factors for the decline, including insurance premium increases in many states, reduced public marketing and uncertainty about the future of the ACA in light of multiple congressional attempts to repeal and replace the plan. (TAB)

DC's new Bible museum draws a crowd

WASHINGTON — The Museum of the Bible, the newest tourist attraction near the National Mall and U.S. Capitol, has drawn 565,000 visitors since it opened six months ago, according to museum figures released May 17.

More than 1,700 groups have visited the 430,000-square-foot museum co-founded by Steve Green, president of Hobby Lobby Stores Inc. It opened with 1,600 items in its permanent collection, about three-quarters of which are Bibles and biblical manuscripts.

Museum officials said they are pleased with the numbers and expect large crowds during the summer tour season. The museum has free admission to visitors, who reserve timed-entry passes or walk up to its doors, but it suggests a donation of \$15 per person. (RNS)

Churches can support addicts, prof. says

BLOUNTVILLE, Tenn. — Churches and church members can help heal and support those caught in opioid addiction, says Raymond Barfield, a pediatric oncologist and professor at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, who led a May 18–19 gathering of clinicians, clergy and educators serving in southern Appalachia where opioid addiction is rampant.

Barfield said church leaders can have "some significant impact" if they see addicts as "broken, fragile people who are in need of love and help and healing." A church philosophy that the way out of addiction "is to pull yourself up by your bootstraps or just believe enough" won't solve the problem, Barfield said.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services says that in 2016 more than 42,000 Americans overdosed on opioids and 11.5 million Americans misused prescription opioids. (RNS)

Oklahoma governor signs adoption bill

TOPEKA, Kan. — Oklahoma Gov. Mary Fallin has signed a law granting legal protections to faith-based adoption agencies that cite their religious beliefs for not placing children in homes of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) people.

The law, which says no child-placement agency will be required to violate its written religious or moral conviction or policies when placing a child for adoption or foster care, is similar to laws in other states, including Alabama.

Fallin said the law will not restrict the ability of LGBT people from getting a child through adoption or foster care, but critics of the law disagree and have threatened legal action. (TAB)

Godless choir defends atheism in song

LOS ANGELES — Voices of Reason, the only atheist choir in the United States according to its members, says one of its goals is to defend atheism through music.

Voices of Reason performs at science presentations, Unitarian Universalist churches, libraries and atheist events. Members say their musical selections don't simply avoid religious references but draw attention to their rejection of religion. (RNS)