

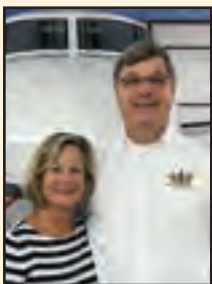


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*“Our church’s battle cry is love like Jesus, serve like Jesus. We figured this was where we needed to be.”*

Pastor Roy Hill, FBC Satsuma

Photo by Roy Hill

Men from FBC Satsuma repair a damaged roof for an 87-year-old Prichard resident. The old roof was sagging and needed some structural work.

# ‘Serve like Jesus’

## FBC Satsuma men rebuild roof for elderly woman in Prichard

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**R**oy Hill, pastor of First Baptist Church, Satsuma, said what happened recently in a tiny backyard in Prichard is a great story but a really, really simple one. It took a few nails and shingles and a half-day’s work, and it ended with a new friendship.

But before that, it started with a phone call.

A few weeks ago, God guided a woman in Oklahoma to pick up the phone and call Mark Wakefield when she was basically out of options.

“She worked for a mortgage company and one of their clients was an elderly lady in Prichard whose roof was damaged and she couldn’t get it repaired,” said Wakefield, director of disaster relief and chaplaincy for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. “She had exhausted all the possibilities.”

So after speaking with her, Wakefield called Hill to see if he had any suggestions for someone in the area with some experience in roofing who wouldn’t mind taking on the project.

Hill didn’t have to look far. “I’ve done some roofing, but I

don’t tell many people that,” he said with a laugh. “We have done a lot of World Changers in the past with our students and I’ve always gotten to travel with them and we’ve done a lot of roofing.”

His son was a barn builder by trade and a couple of other gifted men also quickly stepped up to help. “They have huge servant hearts,” Hill said. Others also volunteered to help, but the backyard was so tiny they decided to keep the operation small.

### ‘We made a friend’

The lady, an 87-year-old Prichard resident, had an old roof that was sagging and needed some structural work. The men went out, took stock of the need, ordered supplies and came back a week later. They

shored up the structure and built her a new roof.

“We feel like we made a friend,” Hill said. “She checked on us a lot, gave us a lot of hugs and was just really overwhelmed and blown away.”

And Wakefield said the woman from the mortgage company was overwhelmed too.

“She had gone above and beyond to find some help for this lady and she was thrilled to no end at how the church had been able to help,” he said.

But Hill said it wasn’t anything more than them just being who they were supposed to be.

“Our church’s battle cry is love like Jesus, serve like Jesus. We figured this was where we needed to be.”

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

## Blessed Is the Nation Whose God Is the Lord

It is not called a “National Day” but that is what July 4th is for those of us living in the United States of America. It is a day when citizens everywhere celebrate our nation, our freedoms, our ability to worship God according to the dictates of our hearts.

July 4th is a national holiday and Americans will celebrate with picnics and fireworks. There will be parades, concerts and a variety of other events all designed to acknowledge the rights, privileges and responsibilities of every citizen blessed to live in this “land of the free.”

Social commentators are likely to wax eloquently about the many components that make America great.

Some will point to the nation’s economic leadership. One study valued the U.S. economy at \$19.42 trillion annually, making it the largest economy in the world. The United States accounts for 25 percent of the global gross domestic product, the study said.

China, the second largest economy, was rated at \$11.8 trillion.

### Stronger economy

Most indicators point to a strong economy this July 4th. Nationally, unemployment has steadily fallen from 9.9 percent in 2009 to 3.9 percent at the end of April. Alabama unemployment has fallen from 11 percent in 2009 to 3.5 percent at the end of April.

Still, some people ask when salaries for average workers will rise and wonder about the dwindling number of good jobs — jobs that offer a livable wage along with basic benefits. Stakeholders in a business should be considered along with stockholders, some contend.

This July 4th there will likely be conversation about the nation’s military with President Trump promoting a parade displaying the nation’s military might. It has been decades since missiles and tanks paraded through Washington,



### THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

D.C., in a July 4th parade to demonstrate America’s military firepower but that does not mean it will not happen again.

Military units are expected to march in towns and cities across America as they regularly do on this holiday. But the parades are not to celebrate them. The military is celebrated for helping protect what the Fourth of July is all about — the nation’s bedrock commitment to individual freedom.

Patriotic Americans are grateful for the military and strongly support the military, but what we honor on the Fourth of July is freedom — God-given freedom for all.

Unlike in many countries, America’s “National Day” will not focus on government officials. Not on the president or Congress. Not on governors or mayors. Focus for America is on the individual citizen. It is his day and her day. It is a time for every citizen to celebrate the gifts of freedom and opportunity available in the United States.

Government officials are certainly important. We pray for them regularly just as God’s Word teaches (1 Tim. 2:1–2). These servants need our prayers. President Abraham Lincoln observed, “Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.”

John Adams, the nation’s second president, stated, “Because power corrupts, society demands for moral authority and character to increase as the importance of the position increases.”

In America and in Alabama we have witnessed firsthand the corruptive nature of political power. We know our elected officials need the fortifying power that can come through the prayers of God’s people.

Economic power, military strength, courageous leaders — these are important, but they are not what God looks for in a great nation.

In 1 Samuel 16:7, the Lord said to the Prophet

Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance but the Lord look on the heart.”

When the Lord looks at the heart of America, what does He want to see?

Part of the answer is provided in the Apostle Paul’s letter to Timothy. He writes in 1 Timothy 6:11: “But you, man of God, flee from all this and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.”

Paul’s instructions to Timothy are consistent with the teaching of Micah 6:8 where the prophet said, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.”

Many scholars consider this verse to be an accurate summary of the Old Testament teachings about righteousness.

Both biblical references relate to one’s relationship with others, with one’s self and with God.

How can what is inside the heart of an individual show what is inside the heart of America? Because what constitutes the character of a nation is the character of the many individuals who make up that nation.

If the majority of individuals tolerate hate, stimulate violence, pursue selfish ends and make life important only when it agrees with their own views, then that will be the character of the nation. History will show the nation as inhumane to all who did not choose its side.

### Daily lives

But if a people can show righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness in their daily lives, then history will show a “nation whose God is the Lord.”

While there are many “outward” things about America to celebrate this July 4th, let us not forget that God looks at the heart of our nation, the hearts of our people. May God see a people who do justice, who love mercy, who walk humbly before Him.

May God see a people whose God is the Lord.✠

**“While there are many ‘outward’ things about America to celebrate this July 4th, let us not forget that God looks at the heart of our nation, the hearts of our people.”**



**The Alabama Baptist  
will not publish a July 5 issue.  
The next issue will be July 12.**



"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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# Church robberies

## Burglars recently hit 2 churches in Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association

**T**wo churches in Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association were burglarized in recent weeks as part of a larger string of church robberies in the area.

Most recently Elam Baptist Church, Tallassee, was broken into sometime during the night of June 3 after the church had been locked up from Sunday evening services.

"They trashed my office and the secretary's office, every place they went," Pastor Joe Fain said.

Two 70-inch TVs were stolen and the two large TVs in the sanctuary were broken when the burglars were trying to get them down off the walls, he said.

The intruders also tampered with the church safe but were unable to break into it, Fain said.

No one has been arrested in connection with the burglaries yet.

"It's just something we're having to put up with in the area right now," Fain said.

First Baptist Church, Reeltown, in Notasulga, was also broken into several weeks ago, with similar vandalism and items stolen.

"They went through the entire church and got anything they could steal and use easily, like TVs and DVD players," Pastor Tim Smith said. "That's pretty much been the pattern at other churches as well. They cut the phone lines to disable alarm systems. And anything that's on the walls or in cabinets or drawers, it's pulled out on the floor."

### 'Pressing on'

Smith said the robbery is "disheartening, but it's not going to stop us from pressing on."

"It's all the more reason to go out and share the gospel, because the need is there," he said.

While not all robberies are preventable, Mark Wakefield, director of disaster relief and chaplaincy for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, offered these tips for se-



Consider an alarm system for your church. There are options that are not overly expensive. Alarms with outside sirens and a strobe warning system are good.

curing your church as best as possible:

- ▶ Have plenty of lighting. Consider LED lights. This helps prevent mischief and makes the area safer for attendees.

- ▶ Remove landscaping that may be blocking windows and may become a hiding place for criminals.

- ▶ Sturdy doors and commercial locks are recommended. Residential doors and locks are not as strong.

- ▶ Consider an alarm system. There are options that are not overly expensive (SimpliSafe). Alarms with outside sirens and a strobe warning system are good.

- ▶ Ask local law enforcement to look at your property and make specific suggestions. (TAB)

**The robbery is "disheartening, but it's not going to stop us from pressing on. It's all the more reason to go out and share the gospel, because the need is there."**

**Pastor Tim Smith**  
FBC Reeltown, in Notasulga

## Walsh wrapping up time as TAB assistant editor

**F**or the past four years Maggie Walsh has often been the person behind the camera, behind the social media posts and behind the week-to-week nuts and bolts of getting *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) produced and in your mailbox.

But at the end of June, Walsh, TAB's assistant editor, is passing the torch and taking on a new challenge. She will become financial coordinator for Gooch Family Dental in Birmingham.



WALSH

"Maggie has done exceptional work in her various roles for the past nearly four years," said Jennifer Rash, TAB's editor-elect. "I've come to depend on her in all that we do related to producing and sharing content through the weekly print edition as well as the other platforms branching out from the publication.

"It will be hard to let her go but I will always be among Maggie's biggest fans," Rash said.

"The Gooch Family team is going to fall in love with Maggie just like we did so I have no doubt she will soar."

Walsh first came to TAB as a summer intern in 2012, then rejoined the staff as an office assistant in June 2014 before becoming part of the editorial team that October. She was promoted to assistant editor in 2017.

She earned a bachelor's degree from Troy University and previ-

ously worked for Camfel Productions, which provides student development and bully prevention programs for schools.

"I'm beyond grateful for the opportunities that Dr. Terry and Jennifer have given me through TAB to learn and grow, both personally and professionally," Walsh said. "The Lord has graciously used the past four years to teach me so much about Himself and I will always be thankful for those who have poured into me and encouraged me during my time here." (TAB)

Tommy Lee (right) and his wife, Lindy, dedicate their time to the work of Pilots for Christ, an organization that provides free flights for people in need. They started the Monroeville chapter of the national organization 24 years ago.

# Pilots *for* Christ



Photo courtesy of Tommy and Lindy Lee

## FBC Monroeville couple invests decades praying for, flying people in need

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

One day Tommy Lee looked out the window and decided it was perfect plane-washing weather.

He got the hose out and pulled the plane out of the hangar, but before he could do anything else, his phone rang.

A man in Florida needed an organ transplant and someone had called and said that the organ was available. He needed a flight to the city where it was.

Tommy Lee asked how fast the patient could get to his local airport — 25 minutes.

He told them he would be there waiting for them with the plane.

### Ready for takeoff

“I was only a 20-minute flight from them and God already had me out and the plane out,” he said. “Thirty seconds after I got the call, I was in the air. You can’t

plan stuff like that. Only God can do it.”

It’s for moments like those that Tommy Lee and his wife, Lindy, dedicate their time to the work of Pilots for Christ, an organization that provides free flights for people in need. They started the Monroeville chapter of the national organization 24 years ago when another pilot handed Tommy Lee one of the ministry’s brochures.

He read it and thought it seemed like a great way to invest his time. He had flown some in the Army, so he knew he could be the pilot. The only problem was he didn’t have a plane.

But he called the number on the brochure anyway and asked what he needed to do.

“They told me I needed a plane,

a pilot and 10 chapter members,” said Tommy Lee, a member of First Baptist Church, Monroeville, in Bethlehem Baptist Association. “So I called the first 10

people I could think of and they all said yes. And one of them said we could use his plane too.”

In less than a day, the Southeast had a Pilots for Christ chap-

ter all set up and ready to go. And in the years since, they’ve flown about 2,500 families, all for free, thanks to financial supporters who give to the ministry. The plane flies almost every day. It is always ready to go.

Some flights are routine ones — to take patients to places like Mayo Clinic, St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital and MD Anderson Cancer Center for regular treatments. Other flights are in

response to urgent calls, like the man’s organ transplant in Florida.

Never once has the plane flown without being covered in prayer. The Lees and their prayer team have prayed over families as they’ve been healed and as they’ve grieved.

Lindy Lee said to her it’s an amazing privilege.

### ‘Real blessing’

“The main thing we love to do is really pray for our people going through hard times and the people taking care of them,” she said.

“We try to form a relationship with people over time and that’s a real blessing. It’s just a joy to be a part of this ministry.”

Micah Gandy, pastor of First, Monroeville, said the Lees’ ministry is a “tremendous extension and example of the compassion and mercy of God.”

“In a way, Pilots for Christ fulfills the command of Jesus to minister to the least of our broth-

ers and sisters,” Gandy said.

“They literally care for others when they are at their least — needy, sick, hurting, grieving, even dying.”

Every Tuesday, local pastors from different denominations meet at the Pilots for Christ hangar to pray for the ministry. And every Thursday night, Lindy Lee leads a women’s Bible study there at the building.

Living their life and ministry out at the airport makes sense, Tommy Lee said.

“My granddaddy started the airport here in Monroeville, so I’ve been in aviation my whole life,” he said. “And Lindy’s dad was a Methodist missionary who flew in Africa, so it’s in her blood.”

The ministry also recently got a new plane, something Lindy Lee says is a direct answer to prayer.

“The Lord has just taken care of everything and provided and we’re so thankful,” she said. ✝

For more information about Pilots for Christ, call 251-282-9100 or visit [www.pilotsforchrist.net](http://www.pilotsforchrist.net).



Photo courtesy of Brad Hartsfield

“The strength of our church is probably our children’s program,” Pastor Brad Hartsfield says.

## Berry’s New Hope Baptist Church makes effort to reach its members, community

Every third Wednesday night of the month at New Hope Baptist Church, Berry, something big happens with a few small ingredients.

A few church members make several pies, maybe six or eight. Pastor Brad Hartsfield makes one too — he’s gotten his strawberry pie down to a bit of an art over the years.

### ‘Loving people’

And then they all gather together with their pies for an outreach effort called C4 (calls, cards, community and callout). It’s an effort where they visit people in the church and community, take them pies and let them know they’re loved.

“We want to love God and love people,”

Hartsfield said. “There’s more to it than the pie, though taking people a pie can go a long way.”

It’s named C4 because that’s the explosive ingredient for dynamite, he said.

And they are seeing something explosive happen at New Hope Baptist.

When Hartsfield came to New Hope about 11 months ago, he found a small church filled with people who were ready to serve.

“It’s a healthy congregation and it’s just been a blessing,” he said. “I think the church is staying on point. That’s been our whole thought this year — staying on purpose, reaching people with the gospel message.”

People are definitely being reached,

because the church is bursting at the seams. They’re running 140 for Sunday morning services — and 60 to 80 kids at Awana on Sunday nights.

### Children’s program

“The strength of our church is probably our children’s program,” Hartsfield said. For Vacation Bible School recently, volunteers were running van routes to pick kids up and going back through lists from past years to make contacts with kids who might want to come back.

It’s a church “that is just on fire,” said Gary Bonner, director of missions for Sipsey Baptist Association. “They’ve had a tremendous year in ministry.” (Grace Thornton)



## Herman Edge

### Retired Cherokee DOM dies at 82

Herman Edge, longtime director of missions (DOM) for Cherokee Baptist Association, died June 19. He was 82. Before Edge came to Cherokee Association in 1979, he had served as DOM for Lookout Mountain Baptist Association for six years. He retired from Cherokee Association in 2000 after 21 years of service.

He is survived by his wife, Margaret; his daughter, Delilah; and one grandson.

"I join other Alabama Baptists in mourning the passing of associational missionary Herman Edge," said Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. "He stood tall among us during his ministry. We are remembering his wife of 62 years as she celebrates his life with their family." (TAB)

## William Stewart "Billy" Sunday

### Oakdale Baptist pastor dies at 81

William Stewart "Billy" Sunday, pastor of Oakdale Baptist Church, Ramer, in Alabama-Crenshaw Baptist Association, died June 17. He was 81.

A native of Pike County, Sunday answered the call to preach at age 18 and served churches for 63 years. He spent the past decade at Oakdale Baptist.

He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Barbara; son, Kenneth; daughters, Jeanine and Bonita; six grandchildren; and one great-grandchild. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of Mel Johnson

A team from Autauga Baptist Association does medical missions in the city of Huehuetenango in the highlands of western Guatemala.

# Maintaining a footprint

## Autauga Association continues work in Guatemala

For the last nine years a team from Autauga Baptist Association has traveled to Guatemala for a medical missions trip.

From May 30–June 6 the team — representing multiple churches within the association and including Autauga Baptist's Hispanic missionary Carlos Lemus along with several college-aged students — served in the city of Huehuetenango in the highlands of western Guatemala.

"After ministering in this area for several years, we have become good friends with several people that we see every year in Huehuetenango," trip leader and doctor Rachel Chance said.

The team partnered with a local pastor who helped coordinate with the pastors of local Baptist churches to hold medical clinics in their churches.

During the clinics, they saw patients of all ages and treated a

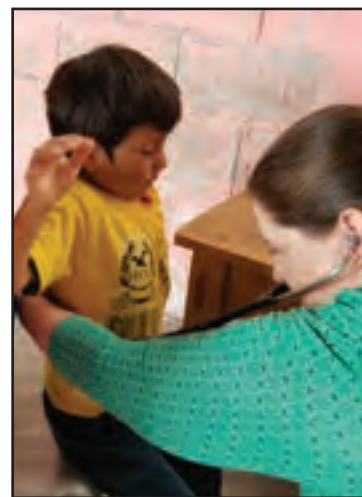


Photo courtesy of Mel Johnson

The medical missions effort is one of 10 associational missions trips calendared in 2018.

wide variety of medical problems.

"I hope that our trips help with their physical needs, but more importantly we also use the opportunity to witness as we see the

opening and connect people with the local church for an eternal impact," Chance, who is a member of First Baptist Church, Prattville, said. "One of our main goals is to create opportunities for the local church to be a friend to the community and make it easier for them to share the good news of Jesus Christ."

Interpreters worked alongside the team, and local church members participated by helping with organization and sharing the gospel with the people being ministered to.

"This medical missions effort is one of 10 associational missions trips calendared in 2018," said associational missions strategist Mel Johnson. "The holistic missions approach from these medical professionals and volunteers assures that our association maintains a footprint in every element of our Acts 1:8 strategy." (Jessica Ingram)

*"I hope that our trips help with their physical needs, but more importantly we also use the opportunity to witness as we see the opening and connect people with the local church for an eternal impact."*

Rachel Chance  
member, FBC Prattville

## Marion Association team builds churches, Kingdom for more than 30 years

Carol Ann Webb said she's never had an experience that touched her heart the way a Vacation Bible School (VBS) in Mississippi did last year.

For starters, it looked nothing like your normal VBS — it was under the trees in 100-degree heat. But as Webb, a member of First Baptist Church, Guin, and other volunteers waited, they saw a group of more than 25 people walking down the road toward them — kids, but also adults and teenagers.

And Webb soon learned they all intended to stay.

### 'Hungry for the Word'

She, along with Jeff Brantley, youth and education minister at First Baptist Church, Winfield, and his wife, Darla, quickly cobbled together activities for the other age groups. It worked, Webb said. "Those people were just

hungry for the Word of God," she said.

It touched Webb. Ten people were saved that week. And while her group led that effort, in another location other volunteers from Marion Baptist Association were renovating a Baptist camp.

That's what summers have looked like for the past three decades for Marion Association, according to Keith Box, director of missions. Every year, a construction team from the association goes out to help with a building project, taking a VBS team with it. This year, 72 are signed up to work on a church in Lamar County in July.

"It is probably the highlight of the year for me," Box said. "The sweat, the tears, the prayers that everyone puts into it — it's a great group of folks, and it's amazing what God does." (Grace Thornton)

# Friendship Association sees discipleship go grassroots

Ernie Carroll says what's happening with discipleship in Friendship Baptist Association right now is associationalism at its finest.

"It's about multiplying, and it levels the playing field between small churches and large churches," said Carroll, the association's director of missions. "It's a way to unleash the church in the community."

It's simple, he said, but Friendship Association is definitely not the first to do it. It's a biblical model that he saw working amazingly well when he went to visit his son, who is doing missions work in another country.

"I told him, 'I've been in associational missions for three decades, and you're teaching me how to do associational missions now,'" Carroll said.

## Simple concept

The concept is simple, he said. First he goes into churches in his association and walks them through "The Disciple Maker's Handbook" by Bobby Harrington and Josh Patrick, a book that offers seven elements of a discipleship lifestyle.

"We talk about things like the big story of the Bible and how to read the Bible with someone else and walk them through it," Carroll said.

Scott Gross, pastor of Philadelphia Baptist Church, Oneonta, said he's already seeing it take hold at his church.

"It was very encouraging. There's been fruit from it," Gross said.

His congregation is older, but one of the women heard Carroll's admonition to use technology to reach others, and she started a Bible study through a Facebook Messenger group.

Carroll said that's exactly the kind of thing he's hoping for — for people to

find ways to get out in their neighborhoods and communities and live life as disciples.

"This is a chain reaction where individuals in the churches go out and do a Bible study with an individual in their family, a co-worker, a classmate — somebody like that," he said. "It's not addition, adding people to the church, even though it could and can do that. It's about multiplying — spreading the gospel." (Grace Thornton)

**"It's not addition, adding people to the church, even though it could and can do that."**

**It's about multiplying — spreading the gospel."**

**Ernie Carroll  
director of missions,  
Friendship Baptist Association**

# ALABAMA UPDATES

PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE

## Randolph DOM Cooke marks 60 years in ministry

When Fred Cooke was 13 he felt God calling him to preach. He fought it for a couple of years, right up until just before his 16th birthday.

And then one Sunday night, he said yes.

That was 60 years ago. "I've been trying to preach ever since," he said.

For the past six decades, Cooke has filled the pulpit of Baptist churches, mostly in Georgia. But a few years back, a church in Randolph Baptist Association — Shiloh Baptist, Graham — pulled Cooke



COOKE

over the state line into Alabama to be its pastor.

"They loved me and I loved them," he said. "I was very much at peace there."

But a year and a half ago, Randolph Association asked him to be its director of missions and he said yes.

"I feel like that's where the Lord wants me right now," he said.

Cooke loves the churches. He loves seeing the young pastors working together and preaching revivals at each other's churches. He loves the association's two thrift stores, which fund its food pantry.

"To me, it's seeing the real thing, what Jesus called us to do — feed the hungry and clothe those who don't have anything to wear," he said.

And he loves doing it all in Alabama.

"All of the folks at the state office have been so helpful — every single one of them will help you if you'll let them. It's been a joy to get to know them," Cooke said.

In fact, everything about his role in Randolph Association has been a joy, he said. "I'm just a young 76-year-old having the time of my life. I thought I was done, but God just keeps giving me things to do." (Grace Thornton)

## New Chapel continues to see God's blessings

Ten years ago, Terry Godwin was faithfully attending his local church when he felt God call him to preach. Not too long after, he went to fill in one Sunday for New Chapel Baptist Church, Kinston, in Sardis Baptist Association — a congregation of six people.

"I left and they called me back and asked me about being their pastor," Godwin said.

He was nervous. This was all new, and he would be serving bivocationally while working his job in the aerospace industry.

But he said yes. And a decade later, the church is running 80 to 100 on Sundays.

"We've seen a lot of people saved, a lot of people delivered from drugs," Godwin said. "God's still moving. He's really blessed the church's ministry, and He's not done yet." (Grace Thornton)

## Burtram marks 20 years at Pleasant View Baptist

Randy Burtram says the two decades he has spent as pastor of Pleasant View Missionary Baptist Church, Holly Pond, in Blount Baptist Association have held a lot of life.

"It's a little overwhelming when you think about it," he said.

He's seen a generation rise up. The first baby born during his pastorate has graduated high school, gone to college and been set ablaze for missions.

During the past 20 years, teenagers have grown up, had families and begun raising them in the church. His own children grew up there and began having families of their own. Young men have grown up in Pleasant View and become pastors themselves.

"It's a blessing to see our church's ministry spreading its wings that way," he said. "Those are the things that just thrill my soul."

It's something he never imagined when he followed the call to Pleasant View 20 years ago. He was serving at 25th Avenue Baptist Church, Center Point, at the time,

a church he loved. But he felt God calling him to Pleasant View.

And though he didn't follow that call intending to leave, he said you never go there visualizing what life and ministry will look like in 20 years, either.

Keith Hinson, associate for public relations and Christian ethics for the State Board of Missions, said, "Brother Burtram is a preacher with a heart for pastoral ministry, biblical fidelity and outreach to the lost. He is respected throughout Blount County and beyond as one who loves the Lord and His people."

Burtram also never imagined what his personal journey would look like. About six years ago, he faced cancer treatment and transplant surgery and had to spend the better part of six months in Little Rock, Arkansas.

"It just goes to show the kind of church that I've been blessed to be a part of — they took care of me the whole time," said Burtram, now in full remission. "God taught me a lot through them." (Grace Thornton)

## FBC Arley gives away ice cream in Jesus' name



Photo courtesy of FBC Arley

As of June 3, there's a new truck in the small town of Arley — an ice cream truck. In looking for ways to 'love your neighbor as yourself' (Mark 12:31), FBC Arley, bought a 1976 ice cream truck, gave it a festive exterior and committed to use free ice cream as a conduit for that love in Winston County. 'We want to go through neighborhoods and love others by giving away ice cream to children and adults alike in the name of Jesus,' said Pastor Roger White. '[We're] looking for the opportunity to change someone's life one delicious bite at a time.'

# Total God thing

## FBC Hanceville pastor finds unexpected avenue of ministry through archery

**P**hilip Wigley said the way archery worked its way into his life is a total God thing.

"I'm not a sports person," he said. "I don't have a sports background."

But one day Wigley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Hanceville, in East Cullman Baptist Association, told his wife he thought he might buy a bow and try out archery. The second time he went out to shoot, he ran into the area's conservation officer.

### Reaching families

"He told me about the archery program in the schools," Wigley said.

And the next thing Wigley knew, he was NASP (National

Archery in the Schools Program) certified and serving as the archery coach for Hanceville Elementary School.

"The fact that I'm coaching something is very entertaining," he said with a laugh.

But what he's found is that it has opened up an unexpected avenue of ministry for him and his church. His work in the schools has given him a great way to meet teachers, children and parents in the area.

"I have absolutely loved getting to be a part of it. The archery program is really big in this area," Wigley said, noting that a couple of the local schools had been to national and world competitions. "It's a good sport for kids who may not be as athleti-



Photo courtesy of FBC Hanceville

Renee Jeffrey (left), one of Centershot coaches at FBC Hanceville, in East Cullman Baptist Association, helps to teach a young child the gospel principles through archery.

cally inclined to play football or basketball. It's not as intimidating. We have seen a lot of success with it."

And in the summer, his church hosts an archery-based ministry on Wednesday nights.

"We've had good attendance

through it," Wigley said. "We are able to draw a multitude of kids."

The ministry, called Centershot, is part of a nationwide organization aimed at teaching young people gospel principles through archery.

### Spiritual themes

"It takes the lessons of archery and ties them to spiritual themes," Wigley said. "For example, it talks about how sin is missing the mark. It takes those types of lessons and teaches about how we grow in the Christian faith."

Randy Makemson, director of missions for East Cullman Association, said the ministry has been very effective.

"On Wednesdays, they will shoot for a while, then go inside and talk about hitting the target with their faith," he said. "It gives a good opportunity to share the gospel." (Grace Thornton)

**For more information about Centershot, visit [centershot.org](http://centershot.org).**

## Famous Christians from previous centuries

# Heroes of the Faith

By Joanne Sloan

Joanne Sloan, a member of First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, has been a published writer of articles and books for 30 years. She has a bachelor's degree double majoring in history and English from East Texas State University (now Texas A&M University-Commerce) and a master's degree specializing in English from the University of Arkansas (1978).



## 2018 marks 600th anniversary of popular 'Imitation of Christ' book

**L**ottie Moon, the great Baptist missionary to China, loved "The Imitation of Christ." It was one of the few books next to the Bible she cherished.

The author of the book was Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471), and that volume was one of the most popular and best-known devotional books of all time.

This year marks the 600th anniversary of the publication of the classic book.

Thomas, a German priest, monk and author, was born to Johann and Gertrud Hemerken in 1380 in Kempen, near Dusseldorf, Germany. His father was a blacksmith and his mother a schoolmistress.

His name means Thomas "of Kempen," after his hometown. He followed his brother, Johann, to Deventer, Netherlands, to attend the famous Latin school there. Gerard Groote, founder of the Brethren of the Common Life, started the school. Thomas stayed from 1392 to 1399.

At 19 he entered the monastery at Mount Saint Agnes, which the Brethren of the Common Life founded near Zwolle. Thomas' brother, Johann, was the administrator of the monastery. In 1406, Thomas became a novice and the next year he took vows with the Augustinian canons. In 1413 he became an ordained priest.

He dedicated his time to prayer, study, copying manuscripts, teaching novices, offering Mass and listening to confessions of those who came to the monastery. For several years he served as an administrator but he preferred being alone.

He also wrote sermons, letters, hymns, biographies and stories about the lives of the saints.

"The Imitation of Christ" was based on four booklets he wrote between 1420 and 1427 while instructing novices. Its first treatise, "Admonitions Profitable for the Spiritual Life," sets out the main requirement for

the spiritually serious Christian. "We must imitate Christ's life and His ways if we are to be truly enlightened and set free from the darkness of our own hearts," Thomas writes.



KEMPIS

The next treatise, "Admonitions Concerning the Inner Life," speaks of basic spiritual virtues. Thomas writes, "Turn with all your heart to the Lord and forsake this miserable world and you shall find rest for your soul."

The third and longest section, "On Inward Consolation," deals with the trials of the spiritual life. "Don't think yourself totally abandoned, although for the time I have sent to you some tribulation or have even withdrawn some cherished consolation, for this is the way to the Kingdom of Heaven."

Another section, "Of the Sacrament of the Altar," examines how the Eucharist can help the faithful draw close to Christ.

"Go forward therefore with simple and undoubting faith and draw near to the Sacrament with supplicating reverence," Thomas exhorts.

### Widely translated

The book has been, after the Bible, the most widely translated and printed book in Christian literature. Thomas left his mark.

But despite living a peaceful life of solitude and reflection, the end of Thomas' earthly life was anything but peaceful. After spending more than 70 years in the monastery, Thomas was declared dead July 25, 1471, and subsequently buried. When his body later was exhumed, scratch marks were found on the underside of his coffin and wood splinters under his fingernails. Some reports say he had been accidentally buried alive and some note that this was why the Catholic Church never made him a saint. ✝



# Across ALABAMA'S Associations

## BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Missionary Church, Holly Pond**, will hold its summer revival July 15–20. Sunday's singing featuring Sonlife Quartet will begin at 6 p.m. Monday–Friday services will be at 10:30 a.m. and 6:45 p.m. Lunch will be served each day. For more information call 256-796-5986. Randy Burtram is pastor.

## COFFEE

► **County Line Church, Enterprise**, will host a day camp for preschool through sixth grade kids July 12, 12:30–5:30 p.m. The theme will be stars and planets. A family meal and activity at 5:30 p.m. will conclude the day. Online registration is available at [clbconthe.net](http://clbconthe.net). For more information call 334-347-6082. Danny Wiggins is pastor. ► **Lee Street Church, Enterprise**, will hold VBS on July 9–13, 5:30–8 p.m. Dinner will be provided. Slade Stinson is pastor. ► **Victoria Church, Elba**, will hold a VBS kickoff July 14, 2 p.m. VBS will follow July 16–20, 6–8 p.m. Donnie Marler is pastor.

## MONTGOMERY

► **Trinity Church, Montgomery**, will hold a concert featuring Marvin and Vernell Morrow on July 7, 7 p.m. Stanley Holt is pastor.

## SOUTHEAST ALABAMA

► **Mount Enon Church, Dothan**,

will celebrate its 130th anniversary and homecoming July 8, 10 a.m. Jerry Windsor will speak and special music will be led by Cricket Lee. A covered dish lunch will follow the service. Mount Enon Church also will hold VBS on July 9–13, 5:30–8:30 p.m. Don Tew is interim pastor. ► **Malvern Church**, will hold a revival July 15–18. The Sunday services will begin at 11 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Lunch will follow the morning service. Monday–Wednesday services will begin at 7 p.m. Hosea Parker is pastor.

## ST. CLAIR

► **McEntyre Church, Ashville**, will hold VBS on July 16–20, 9 a.m.–noon. The theme will be “Who is this Jesus?” Bobby Joe Winningham is pastor.

## TUSCALOOSA

► **Carrolls Creek Church, Northport**, will hold a homecoming service July 8, 10:30 a.m. A fellowship lunch will follow the service. Alan Roggli is pastor.

## WEST CULLMAN

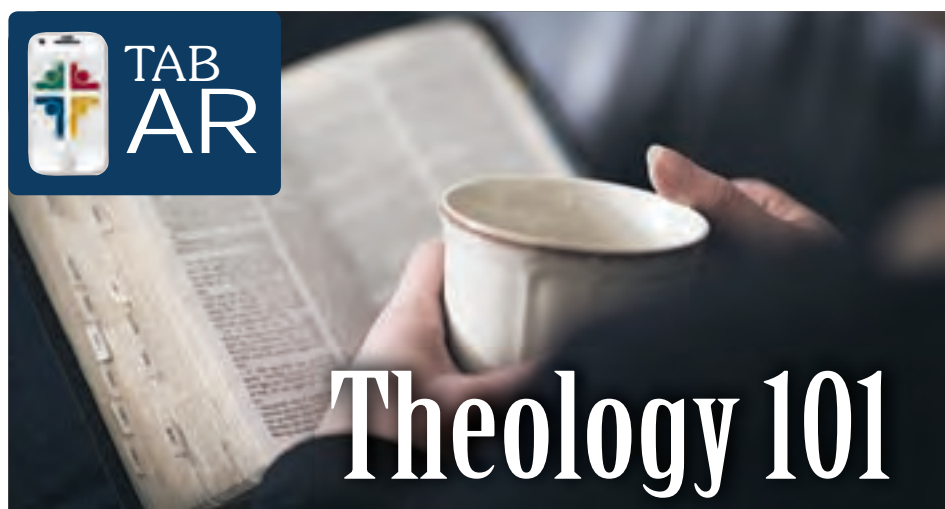
► **Bethlehem West Church, Vinemont**, will hold an Independence Day celebration featuring Rhett Walker Band on July 1, 6:30 p.m. and a firework show at 9 p.m. Guests are encouraged to bring blankets and lawn chairs. For more information visit [bwbc.us](http://bwbc.us). Shane Wheeler is pastor.✚

## Clay County churches raise funds for Kenya



Photo courtesy of Charlotte Robertson

Ten churches come together at Lineville Baptist Church in Carey Association for a ‘Building Hope’ dinner in May to raise funds for Mescal’s Children’s Center of Hope (MCCH), an orphanage in Kenya named for Lineville resident Mescal Griffin. ‘Because of her dedication to missions and love for people, it was named in her memory,’ Larry Cummings, transitional pastor at Lineville Baptist, said. Over 200 people participated in the dinner, which MCCH President Charlotte Robertson, Mescal’s daughter, called a ‘wonderful evening.’



# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Christology Through Imagery

# The True Vine

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

The imagery of a vineyard has deep roots in the Old Testament. Vineyards were rather commonplace in the life cycle of generations of Hebrew people. Vineyards and vinedressers easily adopted theological meaning in God’s dealings with His chosen people.

Isaiah 5 contains one of the better-known passages that uses vine imagery to describe the relationship that developed between God and Israel, declaring, “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel” (v. 7). However, that declaration comes at the conclusion of the prophetic message about Israel’s failure to please God, who in the passage is lamenting, “What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it?” His divine displeasure is expressed in a second question: “When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?” (v. 4).

Thus the image of a non-productive vineyard gave expression to God’s disappointment, as well as making a declaration about divine punishment that would befall the covenant nation for her disobedience. It was against the backdrop of Israel’s disappointment as God’s chosen people that Christ declared, “I am the true Vine” (John 15:1).

Christ as “the true Vine” thus comes across as God’s gracious corrective to Israel’s fruitlessness and His promise of fruitfulness for a new people whom He would call and bless through the Messiah. Jesus drew upon this imagery as a way of setting forth to His followers His role as a fruit-producing vine, including His Father’s role as the careful and faithful vinedresser and His followers as fruit-bearing disciples.

In understanding the relationship between “the true Vine” and the “branches” we do well to give careful attention to the verbs in the preceding sentence. Vines produce grapes while branches simply bear what the vine produces.

Thus our understanding of Christ’s

mission is to be seen in the intimate relationship that He seeks to maintain with all true believers. Most famously, the Apostle Paul taught this relationship in terms of believers being “in Christ” and of Christ being “in” us. This dual relationship furnishes a good image of the way of fruitfulness. Only by abiding in Christ can we bear the fruit He wishes to produce as “the true Vine.”

This imagery helps us grasp the importance of staying in fellowship with Christ in order to become spiritually alive and capable of bearing spiritual fruit.

## Fruit-bearing

The imagery of fruit-bearing occurs in several ways in the Bible. Since the risen, ascended Christ dwells in us by the Holy Spirit, Galatians 5 lists Christ-like qualities that He desires to produce in us, qualities termed the fruit of the Spirit, such as “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (vv. 22–23).

In addition to Christ-like qualities, “the true Vine” seeks to produce through us other “fruit-bearing” branches, hence, His Great Commission that we make disciples in “all the world” (Matt. 28:19). Disciples making other disciples leads to the multiplication of fruit-bearing branches. As has often been said, the fruit of a Christian is to bear another Christian, since all living things are to bring forth after their own kind. Christ concluded His analogy of the vine and the branches with the explanation: “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples (John 15:8).✚

*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.*



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# COMMUNICATING IN 280 CHARACTERS

During the past 10 years, I've been on a journey – along with millions of other people in the 21st century – of social media involvement.

Since I joined Twitter in December 2008, it has been humbling and a privilege to watch numerical growth to more than 4,300 followers for the @ricklance account.

One of the interesting aspects of writing posts for Twitter has been the challenge of word economy. Until late 2017, Twitter only allowed 140 characters per tweet. Many a writer can tell you that it's often much more challenging to "write short."

For several months, the Twitter limit has stood at 280 characters, and it's possible sometimes to post a brief paragraph with less necessity for telegraphic-type wording. Sometimes it can be an interesting exercise to look back over your social media postings from the past few

months. For me, it not only becomes a catalogue of my life but also a reminder of what God is teaching me.

Below are a few examples of some of my Twitter postings during recent months:

- As Christians, our most vital need for a negative time such as we face is to live a positive faith that makes a difference in the lives of others.

- Negative news never negates the Good News of Jesus. Our calling is to prayer, share and care.

- Talked with a disaster relief worker on Sunday who said, "Ready to roll when needed." Supported by #MyersMallory State Missions Offering.

- I am grateful to the State Board of Missions for their affirmation of the Great Commission Ministries initiatives known as BEYOND 2020.

- Every day, I try my best to begin the day with a prayer of gratitude to God for all He has done, and I pray

that my life might be an expression of thanksgiving to Him. Today, that prayer is more meaningful than ever before.

- Grateful to members of Alabama Faith Riders who stopped by en route to Montgomery to pray for SBOM staff and ministries and Alabama Baptist churches.

- Thankful for Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers – from the Yellow Shirt Army – deploying to Judson College to help with damage from floodwaters.

- Certainly not original with me but agree that being a grandparent is one of few things in life that is not overhyped.

- "There is no failure in God's will and no success outside of God's will." -George W. Truett. This is a good reminder to us all as we seek

to serve the Lord faithfully.

- The more we focus on our God as Creator, Redeemer, the less significant our temporal problems become. Psalm 19:1

- When dealing with vital issues, clarity not cleverness should be

the strategy. Cleverness can be mistaken for arrogance.

- "Every battle you face is ultimately going to be a battle designed



By Rick Lance  
State Missionary

to keep you from advancing the Gospel." – @JohnMeador

- Thank you, Alabama Baptists, for faithfulness in giving through the Cooperative Program and to the #MyersMallory State Missions Offering.

Corinthians 4:1-2



**Thursday, September 6, 10 am - 3:30 pm** » 9:30 - 10 – Check-in and refreshments  
**AT THE STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS FACILITY, 1404 FAIRVIEW AVENUE IN PRATTVILLE**  
 Meet your state missionaries » Discover how we can partner together to fulfill the Great Commission » Tour the new SBOM facility » Spouses welcome » Lunch provided »  
 Ideal for pastors, church staff, secretaries or associational staff who are new to Alabama, new to their position, or who have never attended a Get Acquainted Day  
 Register by calling or emailing Charleen Hobbs, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 231, or (334) 613-2231, chobbs@alsbom.org, or go online to alsbom.org/gad.



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## Saturday, August 18 • 9 a.m. - Noon **ONE DAY TRAINING**

**Choose from two locations:**  
East Gadsden Baptist Church  
First Baptist Church, Troy

This leadership training opportunity is open to all leaders/directors of any WMU age-level group, Women's Ministry or Royal Ambassadors. (This is a great opportunity for those who are unable to attend Equip in July at Shocco Springs.)

*For more information, including cost, please contact Kathryn Helms at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 325, or (334) 613-2325, [khelms@alsbom.org](mailto:khelms@alsbom.org).*



The Troy L. Morrison LeaderCare & Church Health Awards will be given to those individuals who have demonstrated evidence of leadership that has advanced the church in four key areas of kingdom growth: spiritual growth, ministry advancement, missions involvement and numerical growth.

**You're invited to nominate recipients in three categories:**

- New work (church less than 10 years old)
- Established work (church older than 10 years)

•Bivocational (church where the pastor holds dual employment)

For more information, go online to [alsbom.org/leadership](http://alsbom.org/leadership) and click on Leadership Resources to access award information and download a nomination form. You may also contact Ministry Assistant Debbie Dickey at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 218, or (334) 613-2218, [ddickey@alsbom.org](mailto:ddickey@alsbom.org). Nominations must be received **by mail** no later than Friday, September 21, 2018.

ONE MISSION: The Great Commission ONE PROGRAM: The Cooperative Program MANY MINISTRIES: Great Commission Ministries

## WHY I BELIEVE IN THE COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

I believe in the Cooperative Program, because I believe the Bible teaches us that the Christian life is intended to be lived in community.

Jesus instituted the church for the purpose of corporate worship (John 4:23-24), continuous fellowship (Acts 2:42) and cooperative missions (Acts 1:8).

Jesus has not only given us a mission, He has also given us His Spirit and each other. Jesus is building His church for His own glory, and He has called us to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and to partner with each other in carrying out His purpose of worldwide evangelism.

I believe in the Cooperative Program, because I believe it is good stewardship of the resources that God has given us as Southern Baptists.

While other methods are not necessarily wrong or unbiblical, the vision and history of the cooperative efforts of Southern Baptists have been greatly used by God to bless millions of lost sinners, train thousands of called ministers and equip millions of our children in Bible knowledge and Christian morality.

Our Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and SBC institutions have been used by God to further His kingdom in effective and efficient ways because of our Cooperative Program giving.

I believe in the Cooperative Program because my family and our ministry have been supported by it for decades. We served overseas with the International Mission Board for almost 19 years, and we are grateful for the generous support that we received from our fellow Southern Baptists through the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Because of the Cooperative Program, we were able to serve in South America and then in Asia while enjoying the assurance that we were being supported both prayerfully and financially as Southern Baptists pulled and prayed together.

Cooperative Program dollars kept my children fed, housed, clothed and educated. Cooperative praying kept us safe, covered,

encouraged and unforgotten.

I believe in the Cooperative Program, because I believe it is an idea that came from the very heart of God. I believe God is honored and His Kingdom championed by our cooperative efforts. — **Ken Blackwood**, director of missions, Morgan Baptist Association, and member of Lebanon Baptist Church, Falkville



**Ken Blackwood**

## Earn a Certificate in Church Planting

**It is finally here!** There is now an opportunity to earn a Certificate in Church Planting through a partnership between the Ministry Training Institute and the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. This will enable bivocational church planting candidates and others to get training without attending the three-day conferences. It is all online!

The Certificate in Church Planting provides the components related to church planting from a Biblical basis through the planning processes that form the foundations for a planter or prospective planter to plant a healthy reproducing church. The courses will support a person's spiritual, evangelism/disciple-making, team and church leadership development in addition to understanding the appropriate church model for the context. Each

course will be taught by persons experienced in church planting.

The certificate is awarded upon the successful completion of these four courses:

- Introduction to Church Planting
- Church Planting Models and Methods
- Church Planting Essentials: Evangelism, Disciple-making, Leadership Development
- Strategic Planning for Planting a Church

The first course, Introduction to Church Planting, will begin August 21 and run eight consecutive weeks.

By Lamar Duke  
State Missionary



For more information about the Certificate in Church Planting or 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](mailto:lduke@alsbom.org).





**Thursday, September 13 • 9 a.m. - Noon**  
**Twelfth Street Baptist Church, Rainbow City**  
 Join other worshipers as we praise God through song, pray to God for revival and prepare our hearts for God's message that day.

Special guests include Mat Alexander, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Gadsden, and Craig Carlisle, director of missions of the Etowah Baptist Association.

You will want to browse the many displays set up by various ministry leaders at the ministry fair. No meals are provided and there is no cost. **Just come!**

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

## children's choir summit



**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.

**For more information, including cost, or to register, visit [alsbom.org/children-summit](http://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](mailto:scleveland@alsbom.org).**

## ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING

Great for those who are teaching locally or abroad

CHOOSE from three dates and three locations

**1 PRATTVILLE** First Baptist Church, 138 S. Washington Street, Friday and Saturday, **August 3-4, 2018.**  
**REGISTRATION/COSTS:** Please contact Christina Morgan at (818) 398-1940, [bruinmorgan@gmail.com](mailto:bruinmorgan@gmail.com), for more information. **Register by August 1.**

- Basic ESL Workshop: Friday, 1-8 p.m., and Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Bible Storytelling Workshop: Friday, 9:30 a.m.-8 p.m., Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Breakout Sessions for Experienced Volunteers: Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

**TOPICS:** "How to Share Your Faith with Your Students," "Lesson Plans," "Best Practices," "Bible Storytelling," "Music with ESL," "Get Acquainted and Beginning of Class Activities"

**2 AUBURN**, Lakeview Baptist Church, 1600 E. Glenn Ave., Friday and Saturday, **August 10-11, 2018.**  
**REGISTRATION/COSTS:** Please contact Pat Wilson at (334) 887-7094, [pwilson@lakeviewbaptist.org](mailto:pwilson@lakeviewbaptist.org), or Jerry Ferguson, [jferguson@lakeviewbaptist.org](mailto:jferguson@lakeviewbaptist.org), for more information. **Register by August 7.**

- Basic ESL Workshop: Friday, 5-9 p.m., and Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Breakout Sessions for Experienced Volunteers: Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

**TOPICS:** "How to Share Your Faith with Your Students," "Lesson Plans," "Best Practices," "Teaching the Bible to ESL Learners," "Teaching North American Culture," "Disaster Preparedness"

**3 TUSCALOOSA**, First Baptist Church, 721 Greensboro Ave., Friday and Saturday, **August 17-18, 2018.**  
**REGISTRATION/COSTS:** Please contact Kristy Myers at (205) 345-7554, [km Myers@fbctuscaloosa.org](mailto:km Myers@fbctuscaloosa.org), for more information. **Register by August 14.**

- Basic ESL Workshop: Friday, 1-8 p.m., and Saturday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Breakout Sessions for Experienced Volunteers: Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

**TOPICS:** "Teaching the Bible to ESL Learners," "Lesson Plans," "English for Missions Trips," "Bible Storytelling," "Music with ESL," "Conversation Cafe"

For other information about literacy missions among Alabama Baptists, please contact State Missionary Kristy Kennedy at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 311, or (334) 613-2311, [kkennedy@alsbom.org](mailto:kkennedy@alsbom.org).

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

For more information, including cost, or to register, visit [supersummer.ymlink.org](http://supersummer.ymlink.org) or contact Lauren House at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 262, or (334) 613-2262, or [lhouse@alsbam.org](mailto:lhouse@alsbam.org).

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or contact Kathryn Holers at  
1-800-264-1225, ext. 325, or  
(334) 613-2325; [kholers@alsbam.org](mailto:kholers@alsbam.org)



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# MIX MusiCamp@ Shocco!

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**For more information, please go online to [onegreatsunday.org](http://onegreatsunday.org) or contact State Missionary Daniel Edmonds at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 285, or (334) 613-2285, [dedmonds@alsbom.org](mailto:dedmonds@alsbom.org).**

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For other information, please contact State Missionary Lee Wright at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 241, or (334) 613-2241, [lwright@alsbom.org](mailto:lwright@alsbom.org).

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-David Jeremiah

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## ALABAMA ACTS 1:8 CONNECTIONS Celebration

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**Global Missions** invites you to join us at **ALABAMA 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.

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- 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 registration fee.

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

# 'Downward trend'

## Religious freedom deteriorated as persecution increased in 2017, US commission reports

The May 2 release of three American prisoners, two of whom are Christians, was welcomed news, but their captivity shines a spotlight on the increasing persecution facing Christians worldwide.

According to Open Doors USA, an organization that tracks persecution of Christians worldwide, North Korea is the worst country in the world for Christians. Some 300,000 North Koreans are Christians, some with a faith heritage dating to pre-Korean War days and others who have come to faith in other ways.

Open Doors reports that if Christians are discovered, they are either deported to the country's notorious labor camps as political criminals or are killed on the spot. Family members usually share their fate.

Though North Korea is the worst offender when it comes to restrictions on religious freedom, it is certainly not the only country where Christians face persecution for their faith. And the global situation appears to be worsening.

In a report released April 25, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) cited more than two dozen countries as main contributors to an "ongoing downward trend" in religious liberty worldwide and called on the Trump administration to prioritize the release of religious prisoners and assist in resettling refugees fleeing persecution.

"Sadly, religious freedom conditions deteriorated in many countries in 2017, often due to increasing authoritarianism or under the guise of countering terrorism," said USCIRF Chairman Daniel Mark.

In China, for example, the communist government of Xi Jinping has clamped down on house churches and other Christian activities not sanctioned by the government. Voice of the Martyrs (VOM), another group that monitors Christian persecution, reported that a Chinese court recently sentenced North Carolina pastor John Cao, age 58, to seven years in prison and fined him \$3,000 for "organizing illegal border crossings."

### Attempt to control

The pastor, who has been detained since his arrest in March 2017, allegedly crossed the China-Myanmar border to minister to 2,000 impoverished minority children in Myanmar's northern Wa state. He also helped build 16 schools there after building more than a dozen schools in China, according to VOM. Experts believe his arrest and sentencing are related to government attempts to control the house church movement.

The USCIRF report noted the range of severe abuses in 28 countries, including the



IMB photo

Iran is 1 of 10 nations designated as 'countries of particular concern' for egregious religious freedom violations.

so-called Islamic State's continuing "genocidal campaign" against Christians, Yazidis and Shiite Muslims; Russia's harsh treatment of Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslims and Scientologists; and "the continued unjust detention" of U.S. pastor Andrew Brunson in Turkey.

Commissioners traveled to a dozen countries in 2017 and early 2018 to assess religious freedom conditions, prioritizing religious prisoners of conscience, blasphemy laws and the connections between women's equality and freedom of belief. Two commission members visited Brunson in late 2017, becoming the first Americans to visit him outside family and consular staff, Mark said.

"This is a man who had just gone about his business peacefully for more than two decades and with no warning whatsoever was swept up in this horrible thing, accused of aiding terrorists and extremism and so on and facing a life sentence," he said. "So the chilling effect is incalculable."

As it did in 2017 the commission asks the State Department to re-designate 10 nations as "countries of particular concern," or CPCs, for egregious religious freedom violations: Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

It also reiterated its request that the

department add six countries to that list: Central African Republic, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Syria and Vietnam.

### Continued monitoring

Mark told reporters in a conference call that the repeated requests should not be viewed as a "status quo move" but rather the result of ongoing monitoring of each country. He pointed to the example of Russia, which was added to the list of suggested CPCs last year.

"All the news has only confirmed that move and suggested that the State Department should take a very serious look, for example, at Russia and the others as well," said Mark, an assistant professor of political science at Villanova University.

In addition to the CPCs, the report also cited 12 "Tier 2" countries that are considered to be less problematic but still violators of religious freedom: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cuba, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Laos, Malaysia and Turkey. The commission also recommended the State Department designate as "entities of particular concern" organizations its members consider severe religious freedom violators: the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, or ISIS; the Taliban in Afghanistan; and al-Shabab in Somalia.

In their report commissioners requested

that the Trump administration provide sufficient funding for the office of the international religious freedom ambassador, former Sen. Sam Brownback. They also called for prioritizing the release of people "imprisoned for their religious beliefs, activity, identity or religious freedom advocacy" and the resettlement of refugees fleeing religious persecution.

### Ongoing concerns

The report also noted the commission's ongoing concerns about the administration's expansion of "expedited removal" procedures in which Department of Homeland Security officials deport some noncitizens.

"We find that those in charge are not sufficiently sensitive to concerns of religious persecution at home," Mark told reporters. "It's important that when people come with credible fear of persecution if they return home, that be acknowledged and treated appropriately under the law."

In a note of optimism in an otherwise bleak report, Mark noted that 20 years after the passage of the International Religious Freedom Act, persecution does not remain hidden.

"The importance of this foundational right is appreciated more now than ever, and egregious violations are less likely to go unnoticed." (TAB, RNS contributed)

# Alabama pitcher part of one-of-a-kind LS Warriors team

Joshua Stevens has excelled at baseball from a young age, despite having what some would call a setback — he was born without a full left arm. But recently the pitcher — in addition to completing his first year playing for Huntingdon College in Montgomery — was able to be a part of a brand-new team formed by Louisville Slugger (LS).

The team, called the LS Warriors, brought together 15 athletes who are all either U.S. military veterans, active duty personnel, Wounded Warriors, or current or former college baseball players. All of them like Stevens have either suffered a loss of limb or limb deformity. Some of the athletes play with prostheses, some don't. One player, Lucas Mayer, has an ocular prosthesis.

"We've all become more of a family," said Stevens, a member of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills. "We can be ourselves because some people who aren't disabled don't understand what we go through."

## First tournament

After a competitive tryout and selection process in January, the team played its first Men's Senior Baseball League (MSBL)/Men's Amateur Baseball League (MABL) tournament over Memorial Day weekend. The tournament, played in Las Vegas, pitted the LS Warriors against able-bodied teams, and the team won its first game 9-8 with Stevens pitching.

They lost their next two games, missing the playoffs by only one run.

"It was not a quick and simple process to find a team of extremely athletic and skilled amputee ball players," said David Van Sleet, the team's general manager. "But through a national tryout and after extensive research and collaboration with various references and prosthetic



Photo courtesy of LS Warriors

Joshua Stevens, who was born without a full left arm, is part of a team called the LS Warriors. The team consists of 15 athletes who have either suffered a loss of limb or limb deformity.

vendors, this team now consists of 15 players, 11 with college baseball experience."

The major league Washington Nationals committed its support to the team by giving the LS Warriors the Nationals' official

game hat to wear during the tournament. Several former major league players also had roles on the team's coaching staff.

The team's next tournament is the MSBL/MABL World Series in Arizona in October. (TAB)



Pastor Charles Lewis recommends Reverse Mortgage Specialist Jimmy Dixon




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## THOUGHTS



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### SNAPSHOTS OF LIFE WHEN LIFE HAPPENS

## Could people of faith be the answer?

Prison reform, prison overcrowding, funding for new prison facilities, prison problems, prisons, prisons, prisons — we've heard it, read about it and watched the news clips on it until we can't process it any more.

I'm not sure many people even notice the media reports, legislative debates and pleas for help any longer. They have become white noise nagging at our consciences but easy enough to ignore if we aren't personally affected. Plus when it comes down to it, the numbers, options for help and degree of hopelessness are all truly overwhelming.

But if we as Christians believe what we say we believe about the gospel, about grace, about forgiveness, about being a new creation in Christ, then why are we not walking alongside every single inmate striving to truly change? Why are we not knocking down the prison gates trying to make a difference?

Yes, discernment, appropriate boundaries and wisdom are needed in this area. Learning the dos and don'ts are a must.

But with nearly 1 million names on the rolls of the more than 3,200 Alabama Baptist churches, what type of reforms would naturally take place in the correctional system if every church was intentional about making a difference? If every church decided to focus on even one specific item needed by one specific chaplain at one specific prison facility? If each church saw the closest prison facility to them as a missions field?

### Grace and forgiveness

What if church members prayed for those in prison by name? What if volunteers from the churches consistently showed kindness to those behind bars, sharing the gospel with unbelievers and encouraging believers? What if they intentionally built relationships, sincere relationships, with those on the inside?

And what if churches became an immediate and automatic support system for those in their congregations who have a family member in prison or jail? What if the church culture was a safe place without fear of shame for those families as they shoulder the pain and daily difficulties of having an incarcerated family member?

What if those same churches encouraged, mentored, loved on and disciplined

the incarcerated men and women who are seeking forgiveness and grace? And what if the church was present during court hearings, on visitation days and when those returning citizens walked outside the prison gates?

The re-entry period is critical, prison ministry advocates contend. Attempting to transition from behind bars alone most often is disastrous, they say, noting reports and statistics that prove the greater the support system, the greater the chance of becoming a positive, contributing member of society.

With more than half of those released from prison returning for parole violations or new crimes, it seems logical that an easy place to start on solving the overcrowding problem is at re-entry.

The federal government agrees, said a Prison Fellowship representative, noting billions of dollars a year go into re-entry programs. But the money, which is funded by taxpayers, is basically wasted when there's no one to walk with and mentor the returning citizen. He described it like teaching someone to drive, giving them the tools to build a car and helping them build it, but then forgetting to provide a road on which to drive.

"We've got to provide the opportunity for people to know what they owe, pay it, be accountable ... and live in a world where punishment has an end, where men and women with a criminal record are valued and can give back to their communities at their highest potential," he said. 🙏

By Jennifer Davis Rash  
Editor-elect



## Who leads leader of God-initiated cause?

By Beth Bennett  
Ministry Ventures

Being the leader of a God-initiated cause can feel lonely and vulnerable. We are constantly viewed as the visionary and executor, with followers waiting for us to communicate the next move. We hear from God, move forward in faith (and being OK with this feeling very foggy at times) and then try to get everyone else on board.

The longer I work with leaders, the more I realize that those called out front need regular infusions of fresh creativity and boldness to do what God has called them to do.

Leaders need leaders too.

Here are 3 things to consider:

1. Leadership of the Holy Spirit. Follow God's voice as we let Him lead and love us each morning, reading the Bible and letting the Bible lead us. Without His nourishment and care, the confidence we need to lead just isn't there. Unless the Lord builds us personally and this house of ministry, we labor in vain.

2. Leadership of the Body. Regularly look for places where God is working in bigger movements. Webinars. Retreats. Training seminars. Your church. Desire to be led by the prophetic voices in the Body of Christ and eagerly submit to their teaching. Hearing their insights will resonate with what God is doing in you, will give wind in your sails, the needed courage to carry on and could keep you from a big mistake. The Body of Christ is meant to be guardrails for us.

3. Leadership of books. A leader is a reader. ... Books should be our mentors and friends.

What character trait sticks out from these three? Humility. Leader, recognize your need to follow. This will give you the authority to lead well.

Realize that God has resources right in front of us to sharpen, encourage and breathe fresh faith on us as leaders. And all we have to do is follow. Then we will thrive. (www.ministryventures.org)

Social media is now part of the world culture. It can be used for good or for evil; to build up or to tear down. As Christians, our call to live different than the world should be evident in what we post or tweet.

Bucky Kennedy  
Buckykennedyministries.org

@johnmarkclifton

Pastors of churches less than 100. As you prepare for Sunday 1. Love the church you have not the one you wish you had 2. Model for your church that your joy is in Jesus not the attendance. 3. Don't apologize for what your church lacks but rejoice in what you have — the risen Christ.

@BethMooreLPM

It will become increasingly vital that we learn to distinguish between what is pro-Christian and what is actually Christlike.

@GaryFenton07

Mediocrity is not simplicity. Simplicity requires intentional excellence while mediocrity requires only acceptable effort.

I can remember going to the pulpit a time or two with anger, lashing out at the congregation because of one or two members. I came to quickly regret this. If the pulpit is used in this way it becomes a "coward's castle" as Charles Spurgeon once said. In my better moments I try to remember Ephesians 4:15: "speaking the truth in love."

Moral issues must be addressed, but should less weightier issues such as the interpretation of some passages? For example, there are at least four major theories about the return of Christ. We need the wisdom of God to know what needs correcting with Scripture and what should be overlooked as simple interpretive differences between sincere brothers and sisters in Christ. Augustine wrote: "in essentials, unity; in doubtful matters, liberty; in all things, charity."

Pastor Michael J. Brooks  
Siluria Baptist Church

# Christians on Missions continues to build

More than 35 years ago, Larry Thompson was on a missions trip with some other men from Washington Baptist Association and something major happened. He doesn't remember exactly what year it was, or even what state they were in — he thinks it might've been Montana.

But he does remember what God impressed on their hearts.

"We all just got to thinking that the things we were doing out there we needed to be doing right there at home too," he said.

So when they got back to Alabama, Thompson and others put their heads together and started Christians on Missions, a group of men who did construction projects for people with needs in the community. They installed septic systems. They built bathrooms.

And they put on roofs — lots of roofs.

You can get a lot done with a few dozen men working every third Saturday of the month for 35-plus years, Thompson said.

In all those years, they only got rained out a couple of times and he can remember them specifically. One was when a hurricane was rolling in. They canceled their



Photo courtesy of Washington Baptist Association

Washington Baptist Association's Christians on Missions group builds the Caring Hearts Center.

work, but he says in hindsight he's "pretty sure we could've worked that day." It only rained a little, he said.

These days, the men have more years on them and prefer to stay on the ground, Thompson said. They've built more than 100 wheelchair ramps in the community, with more needs for that still on their list.


The group is "still plugging along" with about 60 on the roll, where in earlier years they might've had between 100 and 125, Thompson said. He's now serving as director of missions for Washington Association — has been for the past three years. In the decades prior he served three area churches as pastor and in various roles with the association.

And he always ministered faithfully through Christians on Missions.

"Over the years we've seen many people touched by the Lord. We've even seen people saved," Thompson said. "It's just been a fantastic thing the Lord has done. We're hoping some younger men will pick up the torch and carry it on." (Grace Thornton)



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### CHURCH POSITIONS

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Concord Baptist Church, a vibrant and growing church in Anderson, S.C., is seeking an associate pastor for worship and music. This person must have the calling, gifting, training and heart to lead a large and diverse ministry of worship. We are excited about our future! For a job description and/or to submit a resumé/profile, please contact [jjames@concordbaptist.com](mailto:jjames@concordbaptist.com). Please also visit [concordbaptist.com](http://concordbaptist.com) for more information about our congregation.

#### 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](mailto:tnc4him.2@hotmail.com).

#### PART-TIME STUDENT MINISTER

Siluria Baptist Church, Alabaster, is seeking a part-time student minister. Job description available

by request. Send resumé to: [siluriabaptist@gmail.com](mailto:siluriabaptist@gmail.com). The church website is [siluriabaptist.com](http://siluriabaptist.com).

#### PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER

Cypress Shores Baptist Church is seeking a part-time youth minister. Please send resumé to: Cypress Shores Baptist, 4327 Higgins Road, Mobile, AL 36619 or [cypress9631@comcast.net](mailto:cypress9631@comcast.net).

### OTHER POSITIONS

#### DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

The Butler Baptist Association is accepting resúmes for a part-time director of missions position. The deadline for resúmes is Aug. 1. Please submit your resumé to: Calvary Baptist Church, ATTN: Resúmes, P.O. Box 67, Georgiana, AL 36033 or email: [butlerbaptist@camelliacom.com](mailto:butlerbaptist@camelliacom.com).

#### 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. Resúmes can be submitted to: Greg Corbin, 2865 Old Rocky Ridge Rd., Birmingham, AL 35243, or [gcorbin@lakesidebaptist.com](mailto:gcorbin@lakesidebaptist.com).

#### PART-TIME SECRETARY

Southcrest Baptist Church, Bessemer, Alabama. Receptionist duties. Bookkeeping and payroll experience required (QuickBooks). Salaried position, 9 a.m.–1 p.m., M–F. Starting salary \$10–12K annually. Submit resúmes to: [office@southcrestchurch.net](mailto:office@southcrestchurch.net).

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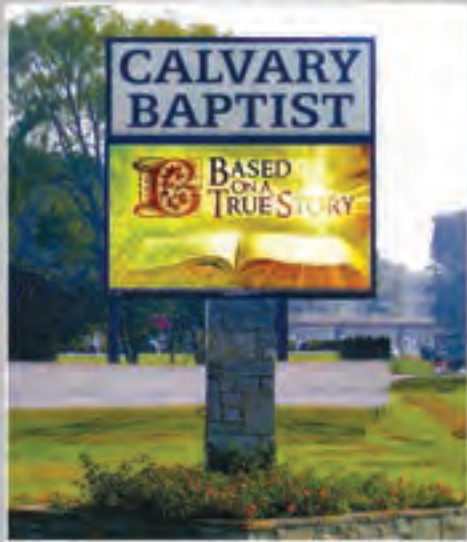
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## Barbour Association churches send gospel, God's love to nations

Christmas has come early to Barbour Baptist Association. For more than five years Barbour Association has encouraged its churches to participate in the yearly Operation Christmas Child campaign. The association started distributing empty shoeboxes two weeks ago and the project to fill them has been in full swing ever since.

According to Barbour Baptist director of missions Don Hatcher, they collected more than 1,200 boxes in 2017 and 80 percent of the association's churches participated.

Hatcher said the primary reason for the project is to get the gospel out through the boxes, hoping that the recipients will see the expression of God's love for them.

This event also is important to the association and its churches because they don't get many other opportunities to participate in missions, Hatcher said.



Photo courtesy of Operation Christmas Child

From children to seniors, church members pack shoeboxes each year to bless children in need around the world.

"The majority of members in these churches are elderly and unable to do some of the physical missions activities required of other missions projects," Hatcher said. "They readily accept the opportunity to get involved in Operation Christmas Child because it's so

simple and doesn't require a lot of physical activity. It's the highlight of the year for them."

The Great Commission tells us to make disciples of all nations, and though many of the church members in Barbour Association can't physically go to the ends of the earth, they have found a way to send the gospel and God's love to the nations.

### 'Relevant'

"It is a special missions project for our association and we wish we could do more," Hatcher said. "At least the churches are getting to do something that is relevant and underscores their interest in missions." (Jessica Ingram)

**For information on how you can get involved with Operation Christmas Child visit [www.samaritanspurse.org/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child/](http://www.samaritanspurse.org/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child/).**

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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 1

**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.  
Chair and Armstrong Professor of Religion, Samford University

**VALUED**  
**2 Samuel 9:1-13**

In both the ancient and the modern world, succession by coup has been a way to establish new authority. In America we use euphemisms like “tying up loose ends,” “drain the swamp” or “there’s a new sheriff in town.” Cultures driven by violence take a more brutal approach: “Kill them all.” The Israelite monarchy that followed Solomon’s reign was fraught with examples of new rulers slaughtering the families of the previous kings. Brutal coups were normative. By contrast David honored Saul as God’s anointed, both in life (1 Sam. 24:10; 26:9-11) and in death (2 Sam. 1). He also respected Saul’s family, both his dear friend Jonathan (2 Sam. 1:11-12) and his political rival Ishbosheth (4:8-12). David honored the legacy of his fallen friend by welcoming Jonathan’s son as his own. Mephibosheth would become a valued guest of the royal family.

**Searched (1-5)**

Who remained from Saul’s family? If David had not explained why he asked the question, one might assume that he wanted to destroy the surviving members of the fallen king’s household. But David explained he wanted to show God’s kindness to the survivors. He discovered Saul’s servant Ziba still lived. When David asked him about surviving family members, he told him Jonathan’s son survived. The prince had remained in hiding since Saul’s death, when Mephibosheth was five years old (2 Sam. 4:4).

Where was he? Mephibosheth hid at Lo-debar, where he grew to adulthood and fathered a son named Mica. He would soon return to the capital city for an audience with the king.

**Extended (6-8)**

Once the prince was located, David had him transported to the royal palace, where the king extended generous hospitality. Such a gracious reception was probably beyond Mephibosheth’s expectations. No doubt, the young prince had heard that the law banned individuals with infirmities and special needs from active priesthood (Lev. 21:16-23). Who could have foreseen such a royal welcome?

This passage reminds us of Jesus’ teaching on the judgment of the nations in Matthew 25:35-46. Feeding the hungry, satisfying the thirsty, clothing the naked, visiting the imprisoned, caring for the sick, welcoming the stranger — the least of these need ministry, care and compassion. As followers of Christ, how are we extending hospitality to those in need?

**Planned (9-13)**

David offered a plan that provided much more than a single banquet for the prince. As heir of his grandfather’s estate, Mephibosheth was entitled to Saul’s lands. This would provide income for Mephibosheth, as well as a home, work and livelihood for Ziba and his family of fifteen sons and his servants. As an added bonus, the prince was welcomed to eat with his king.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are heirs of an abundant life as adopted sons and daughters of God. All Christians have the gospel — Christ’s death, burial and resurrection — in common though we come from every ethnicity and language, from nobility and poverty, both youth and elderly, both literate and illiterate, from popularity and anonymity. Our gracious King has found us, welcomed us and provided for us. What a glorious King we have! 🌟

**WHAT SHOULD WE DO NOW?**  
**Acts 2:37-47**

The church of Pentecost was a church that experienced the breaking down of barriers as 3,000 people welcomed the message and were baptized into the life of the triune God of holy love. They were unified around the message of their living Lord, and Acts 2:42 gives us a description of a church that was filled with the Holy Spirit.

**Lead others to faith and growth in Christ. (37-41)**

We sometimes speak about doing things “by hook or by crook.” Normally the phrase has a negative connotation. However, it was originally used of the twin work of the church: to win people for Christ (fishers of men) and to enable them to grow in grace and godliness (the shepherd’s crook).

The early church was evangelistically active in bringing the good news of God’s love into people’s lives. They also sought to make disciples. They had a love to discern and devote themselves to the apostles’ teaching. This would have incorporated their knowledge of the teaching of Jesus that we now have within the four Gospels. However, Hans Denck, a leader of Anabaptists in Europe in the 16th century, never tired of saying that true knowledge of God and His will cannot be achieved simply from reading the Scriptures; it must be put into practice. Denck said that “no man can know Christ unless he follows after Him in life.”

**Support and help fellow believers. (42-45)**

Anabaptists believed the most effective environment in which they could be encouraged to live as disciples was in the context of a community. Apart from the Hutterites, most Anabaptists did not live in communes,

but they did believe that commitment to Christ could only be effective within the fellowship of sisters and brothers in Christ who cared for one another. Acts 2 simply states that the early followers of Jesus devoted themselves to fellowship, or “koinonia,” that rich expression of the life of the triune God of eternal love and encouragement. In relationship with each other they drew support to enable them to maintain their faith in and commitment to Christ as Lord of their lives.

**Live lives that honor God and point to Christ. (46-47)**

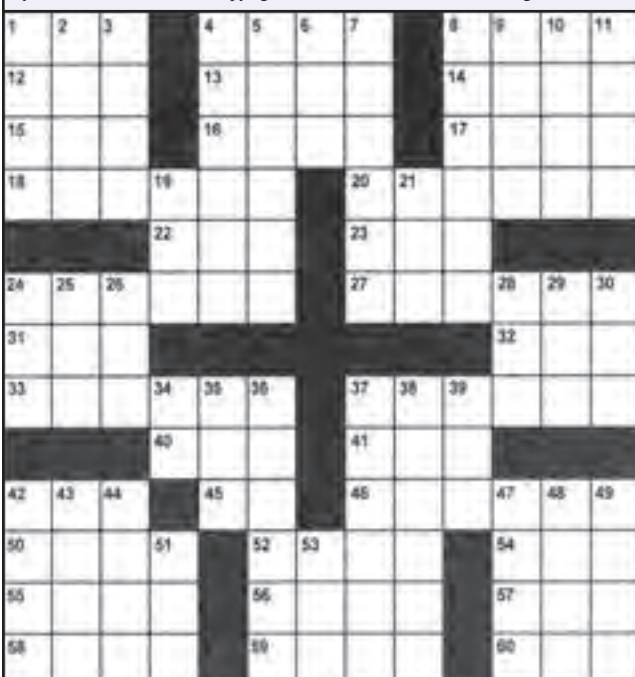
Luke tells us that they also devoted themselves to the “breaking of bread.” In verse 46 we are also told of how they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God. It’s difficult to distinguish between sharing food together and “taking communion” because the two events were joined together in their experience of worship, which often took the form of a common meal. Their worship experience was characterized by a sense of praise and thanksgiving. As a result they expressed their gratitude to God with a generosity of spirit in meeting the physical needs of their sisters and brothers as they had all things in common.

The final characteristic of their common life was that of prayers. Luke stresses the importance of prayer in the life of Jesus and the church. Acts begins with the early disciples constantly devoting themselves to prayer. The characteristics of the church of Pentecost, a fellowship that God blesses, is that of ordinary people who have encountered the risen Lord and who are committed to one another and the needs of the world. To such a community the blessing of God comes, and day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. 🌟

**The Alabama Baptist will not publish a July 5 issue. Sunday School lessons for July 8 will be available at [www.thealabamabaptist.org](http://www.thealabamabaptist.org). To receive your complimentary website credentials or to subscribe, go to the website and click on the gold “Login” button at the top of the site.**

## Christian Crossword

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



**Across**

1. Headwear.
4. Girl’s name.
8. Delete. (typesetter’s term)
12. Genetic material.
13. French city.
14. Black. (poetic)
15. \_\_\_ and outs.
16. Hawaiian welcome presents.
17. Englishman.
18. Get up and about.
20. To chant.
22. Mine \_\_\_ is as nothing before thee. (Ps. 39:5)
23. Dove’s sound.
24. We remember ... the melons, ... leeks and the \_\_\_. (Num. 11:5)
27. The king’s chamberlains, Bigthan and \_\_\_. (Esther 2:21)
31. Kinsman. (abbr.)
32. Dessert.
33. Do not interpretations \_\_\_ to God? (Gen. 40:8)
37. Thy \_\_\_ shall be to thy husband. (Gen. 3:16)

40. Civil Aeronautics Authority. (abbr.)
41. Historical period.
42. Wager.
45. Elevated train.
46. Unoccupied.
50. The sons of Mushi; Mahli and \_\_\_. (1 Chron. 23:23)
52. Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his \_\_\_. (1 Pet. 2:21)
54. Neither/\_\_\_.
55. Capital of Peru.
56. It is appointed unto men \_\_\_ to die. (Heb. 9:27)
57. Power maker.
58. Yet will they \_\_\_ upon the Lord. (Mic. 3:11)
59. Edgar Allan’s kin.
60. Whom do men \_\_\_ that I, the Son of Man am? (Matt. 16:13)

**Down**

1. Manger.
2. Queen \_\_\_ furniture.
3. As the flower of the grass he shall \_\_\_ away. (James 1:10)
4. Every man shall pitch

- with \_\_\_ of their father’s house. (Num. 2:2)
5. As vinegar upon \_\_\_, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart. (Prov. 25:20) (pl.)
6. Frozen water.
7. Describe.
8. I am \_\_\_ both to the Greeks and ... Barbarians. (Rom. 1:14)
9. River in Spain.
10. Cut of meat.
11. Between. (prefix)
19. Chinese religion.
21. As the days of \_\_\_. (Matt. 24:37)
24. Sphere.
25. Born.
26. Love worketh no \_\_\_ to his neighbour. (Rom. 13:10)
28. Upon, over. (prefix)
29. \_\_\_, we would see Jesus. (John 12:21)
30. Part of a giggle.
34. In the work cited.
35. Scottish no.
36. Horse’s gait.
37. Graven by art and man’s \_\_\_. (Acts 17:29)

38. Expunges.
39. Internal pouch.
42. A \_\_\_ and a pomegranate. (Ex. 39:26)
43. Singer \_\_\_ Gorme.
44. Son of Ishmael. (Gen. 25:13-15)
47. The \_\_\_ are a people not strong. (Prov. 30:25)
48. A suddenly bright star.
49. Salver.
51. The herd \_\_\_ violently down a steep place. (Luke 8:33)
53. \_\_\_ch walked with God: and he was not. (Gen. 5:24)



**MUSIC**

**Media reviews**

**WHAT ARE YOU READING?**



**Alabama Baptists share about what they are currently reading**

**HANNAH MUÑOZ**

Member, The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham

**“Love Your Life Not Theirs: 7 Money Habits for Living the Life You Want”** by Rachel Cruze

I bought this book for my mom for Mother’s Day last year and decided to buy a second copy for myself.

I enjoy listening to Dave Ramsey and his daughter, Rachel, when she visits his podcast, so as a recent college graduate learning to live on a budget, the topic and the author grabbed my attention. So far I’ve enjoyed reading this book because it spaces out the seven money habits with very practical tips for achieving the goals.

Cruze’s voice is very prominent in the way she writes so reading it seems personal. And I enjoy the humor and her individual anecdotes she adds to the story.

**GARRETT WALDEN**

Pastoral Intern, Grace Heritage Church, Auburn

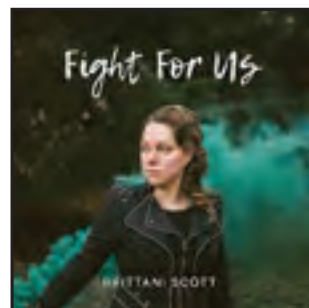
**“Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cures”** by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

So much so-called Christian literature is really just pop-psychology cloaked in spiritual-sounding language. This classic from Lloyd-Jones is a biblically sound and theologically rich insight into the emotional life and spiritual warfare in the Christian’s experience. †

**Brittani Scott**

*Fight For Us*  
Independent, 2018

**F**ight For Us,” the debut four-song contemporary gospel EP from worship leader and church planter Brittani Scott, is fabulous. To be honest I wouldn’t mind if the whole thing was just the opening title track played four times. It’s that catchy and it packs a punch.



There is a unique sincerity to Scott’s voice that is suited perfectly to the brand of pop praise she’s crafting up in Seattle. Want a great song for Sunday morning? Pop in “Fight For Us.” Want a soundtrack for your windows-down road trip? Pop in “Fight For us.” It’s good.

**Jerry Fee**

*The Bigger Picture*  
Records DK, 2018

**A**re you into To-byMac, Imagine Dragons, twenty one pilots, MuteMath? Get this. Eight songs of synth-pop with soul that stick with you. And there’s probably more where that came from because Fee is as prolific as they come.



With “The Bigger Picture,” the 35-year-old Nashville (by way of Indiana) singer-songwriter has released three full-length albums and two EPs in just four years, making a name for himself by proclaiming the name of his Maker.

Take the chorus of “Stars,” for example, which is straight out of Romans 1. God, Fee sings, is

**Meet the reviewer**

Jeremy Henderson reviews music for The Alabama Baptist. He is co-host of Rich and Jeremy in the Mornings on Wings 94.3 FM, editor of The War Eagle Reader.



[news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org)

“Proven in the stars / Written on our hearts / Every galaxy / Made for us to see / More of who you are.” Recommended.

**Hawk Nelson**

*Miracles*  
Fair Trade Services, 2018

**H**awk Nelson’s brand of pop went from punk to polished years ago, but “Miracles,” the first album since their 2016 collection of early crunchy hooks, has turned the radio friendliness up so high I wouldn’t be surprised to hear “Weightless” in a commercial.

The band doesn’t break any new ground with these 10 sing-a-longable songs, but why reinvent the wheel? Lyrically, as the title suggests, they’re sticking with Jesus. “Even if you don’t see it now / Without a doubt, He’s already moving / There is not a pain that you hold / He doesn’t know, and He isn’t using.” †



**TOP 8**

downloaded songs from iTunes

**CHRISTIAN & GOSPEL**

- 1. I Can Only Image**  
By MercyMe (Almost There)
- 2. Reckless Love — Single**  
By Cory Asbury
- 3. joy. — Single**  
By for KING & COUNTRY
- 4. Grace God You**  
By MercyMe (Lifer)
- 5. The Breakup Song — Single**  
By Francesca Battistelli
- 6. So Will I (100 Billion X)**  
By Hillsong UNITED (Wonder)
- 7. I just need U. — Single**  
By TobyMac
- 8. Reckless Love**  
By Cory Asbury (Reckless Love)

Source: iTunes at press time



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Photo by Bob Carey

Thousands of attendees at the Crossover Harvest America event in Dallas hold up their phones with the lights on as a sign that they will be 'a light' in their world.

## Crossover Dallas, Harvest America crusade proclaim gospel prior to SBC annual meeting

**I**'m not here to talk to you about religion," pastor Greg Laurie told the crowd gathered June 10 at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, for the Crossover Dallas Harvest America crusade.

"I'm here to talk to you about a relationship with God that you can experience," he said. "Christ can fill that big hole that is in your heart right now. We all need Him. We all need a Savior. There's so much stuff to distract us and emptiness to make us feel alone. Yet, Jesus, who created us, also gives us purpose. Jesus loves us all — no matter what we do or say or have done before — so much."

In an era of divisiveness and lost hope, Laurie brought a message of unity in Christ and salvation to a crowd that preliminary counts put at 35,000 people. Laurie repeatedly pointed those in attendance back to the cross — back to Jesus.

By the end of the evening, Harvest America reported that 2,339 made salvation decisions at the event. The event was live streamed and 100,000 people viewed online and 400 churches participated. There were 875 salvations reported from online viewers.

"We wanted to make sure that those who could not attend in Dallas could still hear what we had to say about Jesus Christ," Laurie noted.

### Alabama Baptists

Southern Baptists also reported 1,015 salvations from several door-to-door evangelism events leading up to the crusade. Alabama Baptists were among those participating in the events, including a team from Alabama Baptist Campus Ministries.

The five-member team of college students was led by adult leaders Beth Gardner, campus minister, University of South Alabama; Jeff Gardner, pastor, St. Elmo First, in Mobile Baptist Association; and Chris Mills,

Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Team members were Aaron Ayers, University of South Alabama; Becca Carver, Judson College; Michaela Morgan, University of South Alabama; Faryn Fryer, University of Alabama; and Dawsen Miller, Wallace State Community College-Hanceville.

The Harvest America crusade included musical guests Switchfoot, Crowder, Trip Lee, Phil Wickham and Chris Tomlin, who kicked off the event with a mix of new music and classic songs that supported the crusade's straightforward, evangelistic message — the world needs Jesus.

"There is Someone who loves you and Someone who values you," Laurie said. "He's called Jesus Christ. He'll give you a future worth living."

In the wake of two high-profile suicides the previous week — designer Kate Spade and television personality Anthony Bourdain — Laurie's message and the entire event aimed to send the hope of the gospel to people in attendance and those watching at simulcast locations worldwide.

"So many people in our generation and across generations are living in quiet desperation," said Jack Graham, pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church in nearby Plano, Texas. "Those two were celebrities. So, their stories are all in the news. Yet many struggle with depression and thoughts of suicide. So

often you hear people say, 'We didn't know they were living in such pain.' As Christians, this makes us aware that every person needs the Lord. There's a hunger for meaning and purpose in life. There's so much brokenness in people's lives, but we know of a way they can heal from those wounds — the gospel message of hope and love."

The event, Laurie said, could not have come at a better time as the nation and the world seem to be on edge with each other and themselves.

Graham agreed. "People might say crusades are over but all you have to do is look around," Graham said of the thousands who gathered that night. "It works because it brings people together in a time when we have so much dissonance and division."

Graham played a key role in leading his church and many others in the Dallas area to mobilize their congregations to invite lost friends to the event and support it by volunteering.

"I believe in invitational evangelism," Graham said. "We invite many to come to know and follow Christ in our churches. And in a great environment like AT&T Stadium a crusade can bring churches together and allow a great evangelist to proclaim the gospel and invite people to Christ in an effective way."

Before his message, during a tribute to evangelist Billy Graham, Laurie said, "In

every generation, music will change, customs will change, many things will change, but never the gospel. Our God is able to do abundantly more according to the power of Jesus who works in us. This generation desperately needs good news."

### Outreach activities

The crusade followed a week of evangelistic Crossover Dallas activities throughout the city. Participants from all over the area and the nation came into town early before the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) annual meeting so they could take part in outreach activities.

Believers who brought friends to the event were encouraged by how clearly the gospel was proclaimed.

"This was a great opportunity for people to hear, 'God loves you,'" said attendee Brian Cole, minister of communications and worship at Hillcrest Baptist Church, Cedar Hill, Texas.

Sabrina Gordon, who made a 20-minute drive to Arlington, said she was drawn in by the music and "captivated by the artists who used their talents God gave them."

"I couldn't keep calm," attendee Jane Mwangi said. "Harvest America was where thousands gathered in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and declared He is King of kings and Lord of lords."

Laurie ended the evening by inviting people to the stadium floor if they wanted to begin a relationship with Christ.

"No matter what, come with your sins. Come with your questions," Laurie said to a quiet crowd. "Don't live another day without Jesus Christ."

Plans are already in the works for next year's Harvest America event, which will be held at the University of Alabama Birmingham's (UAB) Bartow Arena in conjunction with the SBC's 2019 annual meeting in Birmingham. (BP, TAB contributed)



Photo by Sarah Chelf

Russell Steel (left) a student at Southwestern Seminary, shares with a Fort Worth teenager during Crossover.