



INSIDE



Alabama Baptist students spend summer serving, sharing Christ

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Photo by Robert Goodman

Volunteers at Summerville Baptist Church in Russell Baptist Association oversee pickup of classroom supplies for teachers in the Phenix City School System. Russell Association gave out more than 800 personalized bags to teachers in Phenix City, Russell County and Smiths Station.

'Better relationships'

Russell Baptist Association helps teachers 'jumpstart' new school year

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

Teachers in three Alabama school systems began the academic year with a little boost thanks to Russell Baptist Association churches.

More than 800 teachers in Russell County, Phenix City and Smiths Station received personalized bags filled with three classroom necessities in an effort coordinated by the associa-

tion's Missions Development Team.

The vision of the project was two-fold, said Russell Association Marty Holley, who took the helm at the association about 18 months ago.

"First, we wanted to build unity between our churches by doing a project together as sister churches," Holley said. "A lot of our churches do great ministries but have become independently minded rather than pulling together as an association."

Association leaders also wanted to open the door for better relationships

between churches and area schools so teachers and administrators would feel they could reach out when they

"[The bags are an] excellent way for us to represent our Lord Jesus Christ."

Marty Holley, director of missions, Russell Baptist Association

have spiritual and physical needs. So the association sent a letter and a survey to area schools and asked teachers to give them a wish list of their top three classroom supplies. The missions team compiled the lists, and 28 of 34 associational churches donated items like hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, colored copy paper and dry erase markers.

On July 26 volunteers set up at three churches — Smiths Station,

Summerville and Ladonia — to pray for the teachers and to pack more than 800 bags with each teacher's top three choices. The personalized bags had a printed message of appreciation to teachers. They also included a card with a special e-mail address and an invitation to use that e-mail to request prayer and share needs throughout the school year.

Sharing needs

"The teachers see their students every day and know those that have the greatest needs," Holley said. "Our vision is that teachers will begin to use that e-mail address to share those needs with us so we can help."

Holley envisions associational churches providing shoes, coats or other essentials for students in their (See 'We are praying,' page 6)

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

A Modern-Day Luke

Have you ever thought of *The Alabama Baptist* as a modern-day Luke?

I confess that I had not until David Platt, outgoing president of the International Mission Board, described the work of state paper editors as “modern-day Lukes.”

Platt’s comment came after a prayer time during the annual meeting of the Association of State Baptist Publications in February. He had addressed the group about missions work around the world and then we all participated in a season of prayer.

At the end of the final prayer Platt turned to the group and said, “I just realized that you are modern-day Lukes. You are telling the Jesus story today like Luke did in his day.”

Obviously, no one dares claim that any modern-day publication is inspired by God like Luke’s Gospel but, still, the comparison is intriguing.

Luke’s audience

Luke wrote to Theophilus which means “friend of God.” Some believe the book was written to an individual person by that name. Others believe the name is a literary device and that Luke’s Gospel was intended for all “friends of God.”

The latter view has lots of support. At the time Luke wrote, between A.D. 60 and 70, the new church was a divided lot. Believers debated the role of Gentiles, the relationship of the new faith to Judaism and appropriate political alliances to Rome. Understandings about the kingdom of God were still being worked out as were views about missionary efforts and even who Jesus was.

Theological, political and cultural differences among believers abounded. That sounds a lot like today.

Luke’s opening words provide insight to the confusion of his day. He wrote, “Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us.” Some writings argued that Jesus could not have been a physical being since all material is evil. That led to questions about His birth. Some writings were fanciful, even self-serving.

There was no shortage of accounts about Jesus but not all of them were trustworthy and reliable. Again that sounds much like today.

Luke recognized the need for an account about the life of Jesus that would provide “certainty of the things you have been taught.” The church needed a reliable and trustworthy source about the events of its day just like the church needs a trustworthy source today.

To provide that trustworthy source Luke said, “I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning.” He interviewed eyewitnesses. He talked to scribes. He examined other



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

writings. He poured over various accounts trying to find truth as directed by God’s Holy Spirit.

To all of this Luke added his own credibility. He was known to the Christian community as an able believer who was a physician. He was a friend and companion to the renowned Apostle Paul. Luke had a system of accountability because of his relationships in the church. He was a trusted source.

Luke’s “orderly account” of Jesus’ life and ministry merged information from various sources, viewpoints and accounts into one reliable source of information for Theophilus, whether that is an individual or all “friends of God.” The gospel could be read and trusted in churches in Galatia or Greece, in Rome or Jerusalem.

Just as the young church needed Luke’s Gospel, today’s churches need the ministry of the state Baptist paper.

Today churches are divided by theological, political and cultural differences just like the early church. And like the early church, there is no shortage of public voices. It is estimated that the U.S alone has more than 30 million active bloggers. Many of these write about the church and about Christianity.

Following Luke’s goal

Unfortunately, few of these can claim to have followed Luke’s example and “investigated everything” about which they write. Many write from passion or prejudice. They describe things as they want them to be or as they want others to think they are.

As Christian journalists, state Baptist papers are bound to verify information, to double check facts, to evaluate accounts in light of oth-

er testimony. That is what Luke did. The goal is accurate, reliable and balanced news that creates common understanding and that can be trusted and acted upon by today’s “friends of God.” Again that was Luke’s goal.

Since 1843 when *The Alabama Baptist* was founded, the publication has shared information that results in understanding and perspective. The paper’s content has inspired people to grow as Christian disciples in their family life, their church life and life in the public square. For 175 years the paper has connected Baptists for missions and ministries at home and to the ends of the earth.

Luke would be pleased with such a record.

Alabama Baptists have called their state Baptist paper “a trusted voice and welcomed friend” for generations, in part because the ministry belongs to them. It is not an outside voice. Only

Alabama Baptists serve as directors of the ministry.

The directors, in turn, hold the editor, also an active Alabama Baptist, and all staff members to the highest standards of Christian journalism consistent with Baptist heritage.

Like Luke, the paper is always accountable to the community of faith.

Every week *The Alabama Baptist* holds up gospel-centered values shared by Baptists across the state. *The Alabama Baptist* helps bridge differences created by geography, age, education, economics, race and more, reminding readers that we share a common faith centered on Jesus’ atoning death and resurrection.

Just as Luke tried to provide early Christians an “orderly account” related to Jesus, the state Baptist paper provides an orderly account of what God is doing today through those who believe in Jesus. *The Alabama Baptist* offers the first version of today’s Christian history. It offers an orderly account based on interviews with eyewitnesses and other appropriate sources. It is trustworthy and reliable.

Comparing Luke’s goals and how he worked with what state Baptist papers do today makes Platt’s comparison a little more understandable. Christians today need to read Luke’s Gospel to learn what God did through Jesus. Christians today also need to read their state Baptist paper to learn what God is doing today through those of us who believe in Jesus. 🇺🇸

TAB
THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

"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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'Everything went wrong' for a reason

Alabama Baptist students spend summer serving, sharing Christ

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

The day Rachel Pate met Greta, everything had gone wrong. It was Pate's second summer serving in Mexico City, and she and her teammates were trying to invite university students to their English conversation circle.

"Last year that worked really well, but this year they told us we couldn't pass out flyers on campus," said Pate, a student missionary from Auburn University at Montgomery who is studying Spanish. "That made it a lot tougher to get people to come."

Then one of her teammates got sick and another teammate had to take the sick one back home.

And on top of that, it looked like it was going to rain.

"We were sitting there praying it wouldn't rain, because everything else had gone wrong, and when it rains there, the streets flood and no one wants to go places," Pate said.

And then Greta arrived.

"When she first got there, she asked us why we were doing this," Pate said. "I told her we were there to serve people and help local churches with their ministry."

Greta shrugged and sat down.

And immediately, it started pouring.

"No one else came, and because it was just the two of us and a missionary who lives in Mexico City, we got to talk a lot," Pate said.

Their English groups are topical, and that day the topic was the word "priorities." When Pate shared with Greta that Jesus was her priority, Greta "believed me," Pate said. "She already knew that I had come all the way there because of God and the way I believe He loves people."

And as they talked, Greta told Pate that she would like to know God too, she just didn't know how. They talked about prayer. Pate told her that God not only hears her prayers — He answers them.

In fact, she told Greta that her very presence was an answer to prayer — Pate's name was on the summer missions prayer calendar that day.

'An answer to prayer'

"I told her that everything had gone wrong that day because there were so many people praying for me all over Alabama. I told her that they were praying that I would have conversations that were God-ordained and that were unmistakable displays of God's sovereignty," said Pate, a member of First Baptist Church, Tallassee. "I told her that she was an answer to prayer for hundreds of people she had never met."

And Greta believed her.

The two ended up meeting every Thursday morning to study the Bible for the rest of the



Photo courtesy of Rachel Pate

Rachel Pate (center, gray shirt) leads an English conversation circle in Mexico City. Pate is one of 94 student missionaries sent out by Alabama Baptists this summer to serve in 16 countries and 12 states.

summer. And now Greta is being discipled by Bella, a young woman whom Pate led to faith last summer while she was there serving.

"Even though the day felt like a total wreck, it ended up with me sitting one-on-one with a girl who desperately needed the love of

Jesus," Pate said. "It was a life-changing experience, and I wouldn't trade my time in Mexico City for anything."

Chris Mills, student missions strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said it was amazing to see what God did through

Pate's obedience.

"She relied heavily on the Lord for strength and for guidance," he said. "Rachel is a beautiful picture of taking her talents and training and applying it for God's glory in a strategic way."

Mills said he saw God write story after story

like that for the 94 students who went out as missionaries this summer.

The students, drawn from Baptist Campus Ministries at 18 Alabama colleges and universities, spread to locations across 16 countries and 12 states.

Encouraging stories

And because of their ministries, at least 310 more people know Jesus Christ as their Savior, Mills said.

"The stories that have come across my desk this summer have been so encouraging to me," he said. "The last few years, I have begun to see more and more students look at missions not just as a life-changing experience that happens for a few months but as an experience that they can build on. I believe this group of students are going to come back to their campuses recharged, reenergized and refocused to make a kingdom impact by taking what they've learned and put it into practice in Alabama."✠

Student missionary to continue work in New Orleans

Amber Kern didn't pick New Orleans. But it seems God might've picked it for her.

Last summer, she signed up for student missions and asked to be a part of the Boston team. She got assigned to New Orleans instead.

"But my heart completely broke for the city," said Kern, a student at Calhoun Community College in Huntsville.

Even so, this summer she signed up for the Chicago team — but she got sent to New Orleans again.

"Even when I didn't expect it, God kept my life on that straight path, one thing after another," Kern said.

And over the summer He worked something bigger in her heart — a desire to stay longer.

(See 'God,' page 5)

WRAPPING UP SUMMER MISSIONS

'Let me tell them'

Troy student sees young girls at camp in Kenya fall in love with the Word

Stargazing — that was what all the girls did at night after the worship service at Camp Blue Sky in Kenya. And one night while they were all staring at the sky together, Amy Lowe could tell that Yael had something on her mind.

"That week, I was working with the 10- and 11-year-old girls," said Lowe, a student summer missionary from Troy University. "Yael had told me the first night that she didn't want to be like her family — they were atheists. She said, 'I really like this Christianity you've been telling me about.'"

And then that night under the stars, Yael told Lowe she was confused.

'I know He's real'

"I asked her what she was confused about, and she said, 'Not Jesus — I know He's real,'" Lowe said. "She just told me that she wasn't sure how to have Him in her life."



Photo courtesy of Amy Lowe

So Lowe told her, and she gave Yael her very first Bible.

"After that, she didn't put it down," Lowe said.

And the next night, when Lowe decided to tell the girls in her cabin about Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden and the creation story, Yael started saying, "Please, please, please — let me tell them."

She had been reading in Genesis on her own.

Yael wasn't the only camper who blew Lowe away with her love for the Bible. Another young

Amy Lowe (left) spent her summer pouring into young girls at Camp Blue Sky in Kenya and saw a number of them come to faith in Christ.

girl, Samara, would surprise Lowe too.

"One of the first things she said to me when she arrived was, 'I am not religious.' I was so worried and unsure about how the week would go," Lowe said. "That night, I had my Bible sitting in front of me and she came up and said, 'Is that a Bible?' I told her it was and again she told me she was not religious. I continued to read it to her anyways."

Later Samara told her that after Lowe read the Bible to her, she

realized how important it was — and she wanted one of her own.

"I got her one, and for the next day, she literally never put it down. I had to force her to sleep that night," Lowe said.

As the week went on, Samara continued to pepper Lowe with questions about God and the Bible. Then one day, after hearing the story of Peter denying Jesus, Samara told Lowe that she was like Peter and had denied Jesus too — and now she believed in Him.

'Deep in their hearts'

"It was just really incredible to see how the Lord changes those kids and really just gets deep in their hearts, even the kids you never expected to see that from," Lowe said. (Grace Thornton)

Troy student ministers to assisted living residents in Phoenix

This summer when Holly Walker went to do summer missions in Phoenix, she got a bonus — a chance to meet a great uncle that she had never met and a chance to share the gospel with 30 of his friends. "When I got to his assisted-living facility, I thought I was just going to get to sit down and talk with him, but he took me to a conference room where about 30 people were waiting," said Walker, a student at Troy University. "They asked me to tell my story, and that led to gospel conversations that lasted about a half hour. It was amazing how God worked that out."



Photo courtesy of Holly Walker

"They asked me to tell my story, and that led to gospel conversations that lasted about a half hour. It was amazing how God worked that out."

Football player brings Guatemala mindset back to UWA

Griffin Ricketson said that when Chris Mills came to First Baptist Church, Livingston, and did a presentation on summer missions opportunities, Ricketson didn't know what he was doing for the summer yet.

And then Mills, Alabama's student missions strategist, mentioned the Guatemala trip.

"It's like God smacked me in the face with it," said Ricketson, a student and football player at the University of West Alabama. "It sounded like me. I knew God was calling me to it."

It was his first time out of the country — and he says it changed his life.

While he was there, he went door to door sharing the gospel. He preached a number of times at youth meetings. And he delivered supplies and helped to meet needs in areas affected by the volcano eruption earlier in the summer.

"When I was on the trip, I felt this responsibility to be missions minded and gospel minded and on guard, well-equipped and in prayer. I felt a responsibility to the people I was going to reach out to — if I wasn't where I needed to



Photo courtesy of Griffin Ricketson

Griffin Ricketson, a student summer missionary from University of West Alabama, preaches during a worship service in Guatemala this summer.

be, I couldn't effectively share," Ricketson said.

'Inspiring to me'

While in Guatemala, he was around people who lived that way all the time, he said. "They were selfless and spent every second furthering the kingdom of God. It was very inspiring to me and convicting."

He said he wanted to bring that feeling home with him.

"I want to feel like I'm a missionary every day," he said. "As a college football player, it can be an environment that's tough. I want to take what God taught me in Guatemala and apply it. I know God can be glorified through that." (Grace Thornton)



Photo courtesy of Jeff Bell

Jeff Bell (left), a student at the University of Alabama, and his teammate Kate Temples (right), a student at the University of Montevallo, got to invest in students in Calgary, Canada, this summer, including these two friends whom Bell met while playing the piano on the campus of the University of Calgary.

Piano practice leads to divine appointment

At the University of Calgary, there's only one grand piano on campus. And Jeff Bell said he found out the hard way that it wasn't always supposed to be used.

"The building it's in is made of glass, and you can hear the piano being played throughout the whole building," he said. "I found out one morning that I had started playing it too early and maybe disturbed some people."

But it was Bell's favorite place — he's a piano major during the school year at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. And while he was serving as a student missionary this summer in Canada, it also was a

place of divine appointments, he said.

One day he wandered into the glass building and found a girl already playing the piano. He stayed to listen, and when she was done, he started applauding. It started a friendship, and he was able to share the gospel with her and one of her friends.

He also was able to play for residents at a local nursing home and start conversations with them about Christ.

"They got to hear my story and why I was there," he said. "It was another example of God using what He had given me to allow me to share with others." (Grace Thornton)

'God had perfect timing, and He broke my heart for this city,' Kern says

(continued from page 3)

During the six weeks she was there, she and other members of her team spent their time getting to know the Bywater area of New Orleans and doing research about the



Photo courtesy of Amber Kern

Amber Kern (second from left) and her fellow summer missionaries stand in front of a mural they painted in New Orleans' Bywater area.

people they would get to minister to.

"It's an interesting neighborhood. There's a lot of creativity, murals, graffiti — that's how they express themselves," Kern said. "As you start to get to know people, you'll see it's a seeker culture. There are a lot of people searching for an identity."

So she and her team, a GenSend team working with the North American Mission Board, were laying the groundwork for a new church plant to reach out to that neighborhood full of seekers.

And this fall, Kern will transfer to Leavell College at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary to finish her degree and to be the new church plant's missions coordinator.

"I'll organize teams and organize logistics," she said. "It's been a rollercoaster to say the least. I had no intentions of moving there — by my plans, I wasn't even supposed to be there. But God had perfect timing, and He broke my heart for this city." (Grace Thornton)

NorthPark missions teams serve children in 3 countries this summer

Feeding the hungry meets the most basic of human needs. Feeding the hungry in a garbage dump opens one's eyes to other needs not so easily met.

Ministering to people at the dump was just one outreach undertaken in Ciudad Victoria, Mexico, by a team of students and adults from NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, in Birmingham Baptist Association, this summer. But it was important, said Jared Wilks, a student videographer and missions team member.

"The people live there and collect trash all day to build stuff to live in and try to find stuff to sell," Wilks said. "The people have nothing but they are so grateful."

Ciudad Victoria is located about 200 miles south of the U.S.-Mexico border. The population of 300,000 or so residents is primarily Catholic, with an estimated 5 percent who consider themselves Protestant.

The major focus of the May missions trip was building a church building for

a pastor who needed a place to teach, Wilks said. The building project, coordinated by Mega Missions, an Oneonta-based missions organization, had a goal to build the church in two days. The team met the goal and spent additional time reaching out to locals, like those at the dump, to provide food and shoes and to share the gospel.

Wilks said the trip was a great experience for the small team of students, who grew closer to each other while serving in Mexico and were reminded of Jesus' command to "go."

Other teams from NorthPark went as well. In late June a team spent a week in Italy with NorthPark missionaries Robert and Lara Vitter.

Team members ran a sports camp and shared the gospel with local children. Another team served in an orphanage in Ecuador and gave children there 174 pairs of new shoes purchased with offerings given by children attending the church's Vacation Bible School. (Carrie Brown McWhorter)

The trip was a great experience for the small team of students, who grew closer to each other ... and were reminded of Jesus' command to 'go.'

**Jared Wilks
student videographer and
missions team member**

LifeWay camp sees many spiritual decisions



Photo by Sherie Johnson

Claire Burchfield (center), who attends Ezra Baptist Church, Bessemer, was one of more than 400 LifeWay FUGE campers on the campus of Louisiana College (LC) in Pineville, Louisiana, July 9-13. Campers participated in daily Bible studies, recreation, crafts and several hours of ministry at local churches and other humanitarian services organizations in the area. The camp saw 15 declarations of faith, 14 recommitments, five commitments to vocational ministry and 25 spiritual decisions marked 'other.' LC President Rick Brewer expressed gratitude to LifeWay for a second year of FUGE camp. "We look forward to a long relationship with LifeWay as we host future camps. We are grateful to God for how He used these students in ministry and also spoke to so many of their hearts."

Pleasant Grove Assoc. prepares students for upcoming school year

August can be a stressful time for students and parents alike. Students dread the end of summer and the beginning of a new school year. Parents worry about getting their students prepared for school with clothes, lunches, pencils, paper and all the other many things students and teachers need.

A team in Pleasant Grove tries to alleviate those back-to-school stresses. For the past 10 years, the Pleasant Grove Baptist Association Christian Ministries Center (CMC) has held a school supplies giveaway for the community.

"Our communities have many folks with needs," said Pleasant Grove Association director of missions Dan Wiggins. "We have many single parents and grandparents raising children in our area, and we thought they could use some help."

Pleasant Grove partnered with the associational Woman's Missionary

Union group to launch the first giveaway, and over the years since, the rest of the association wanted to get involved.

"The last two years our CMC has sponsored (the school supply giveaway) with our churches' support," Wiggins said.

Each summer before school kicks off, Pleasant Grove has a special week to serve its regular CMC clients. The association

also supplies its churches with the giveaway bags so they can provide for those in their congregation and in their community. Then the CMC opens up on a Saturday and they give away school supplies to anyone who comes by and asks.

The association supplies students with

many basic school supplies including paper, notebooks, pens, pencils, rulers and scissors. They also give away Bibles.

"One of the ways that it has affected the communities we serve is that other churches and more agencies are doing the same thing in our area," Wiggins said. "That benefits more children for the better. Some parents have come to know Christ as a result of our actions."

It's a team effort to organize and execute a ministry as large as this one, and Wiggins said the association and churches are up to the task.

"We are proud of our churches responding to our communities and children. We always have sufficient volunteer help to pack and give away the bags," he said. "In fact, this year we had to turn some volunteers away because of the tight quarters we were packing in. ... Every year we have enough supplies to help our children get started to school." (Jessica Ingram)



Photo courtesy of Dan Wiggins

Pleasant Grove Baptist Association gave away 409 bags of school supplies to students in the community. The bags filled the halls and rooms of the Christian Ministries Center as volunteers worked to pack and distribute the supplies.

'We are praying this is the beginning of building a bridge,' Goodman says

(continued from page 1)

area as the school year progresses. The teachers don't have to share the student's private information — just the need. The association will do the rest.

On Aug. 5 the three churches served as pickup stations for teachers to get their bags and enjoy a few refreshments as they met church members and other teachers.

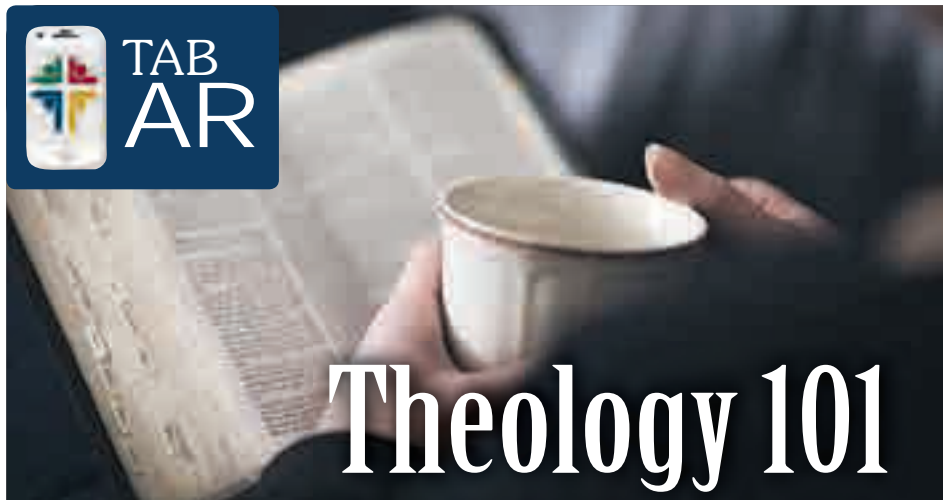
Summerville pastor Robert Goodman said the teachers who picked up supplies at his church expressed appreciation and even awe at the gifts, especially the fact that each one got exactly the three items they requested.

"One teacher who has been teaching for 25 years said it was the nicest thing that had ever been done for her," Goodman said. "She was very excited not just about the supplies but about the opportunity to have a

vehicle by which she could share prayer requests. We are praying this is the beginning of building a bridge and bringing the church into the lives of the teachers."

The thank you notes sent to Goodman already show the vision is taking hold. One teacher wrote to say she would "love to have someone come to my room once a month or so to visit for a few minutes with my students." Another wrote that the expression of love and support was a "great way to start off the new school year."

Holley said it's widely known that many teachers take money out of their own pockets during the school year to meet their classroom needs. He called the bags a "jumpstart" and an "excellent way for us to represent our Lord Jesus Christ and show His love by showing appreciation to our teachers." ✠



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The Scriptures

Divine Instruction

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

In the prior two weeks Theology 101 has drawn attention to the first sentence in the Baptist Faith and Message statement which sets forth the truth of the Bible as the divinely inspired word of God and as God's self-revelation. The second sentence of this statement declares that we believe the Bible to be "a perfect treasure of divine instruction." Thus, we believe the Scriptures are not only to be trusted and treasured, but also to be obeyed as God's instruction about the kind of life that pleases Him.

This will not come about unless we possess a holy hunger for the Bible's truth for life.

The admonition of 1 Peter 2:2 uses the illustration of a baby to say, "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby." Whence comes a baby's craving for milk? Does it not come hand in hand with the baby's birth? Babies normally do not have to be schooled or cajoled into craving milk. Thus, might the analogy instruct us that a person who has been spiritually born possesses an innate desire for God's word, unless we have misdirected that craving by seeking to satisfy it with other than God's revealed truth?

The absence of desire for the word of God might well be a warning flag for one to examine the reality of having experienced a spiritual birth.

Paul's missionary companion Timothy serves as a case study at the point of the Holy Scriptures being the source of divine instruction. Timothy was born into a family that knew the influence of at least two generations of Christian faith, according to 2 Timothy 1:5, which says, "I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice."

Thus, later the older apostle could admonish Timothy about the importance of receiving instruction from the Scriptures: "You must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of,

knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." To this is added, "All Scripture ... is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:14-16).

To take the analogy of birth and babyhood craving for milk further, we might say that what is the case in the natural realm is also true in the spiritual one.

Craving biblical nourishment

With all things being healthy and normal, the creative intention in the natural realm is that the one who gives birth also supplies the milk needed for healthy growth.

In the spiritual realm, we are told that Christians have been born again "through the word of God which lives and abides forever" (1 Pet. 1:23). Our analogy would then tell us that what gave us life is also that which nourishes us unto spiritual growth. Namely, the instruction of God's word.

As we grow in Christ, the analogy of desiring the milk of the Word gives place to ingesting its solid food. At this point, issue was taken with some believers over the fact that they had remained spiritual infants having not matured so as to receive and digest instruction from the divine Word, as to become strong in faith, convictions and conduct (1 Cor. 3:1-2). In a practical way, for the Bible to be nourishment for our souls, we must crave it, ingest it, digest it and practice it in order for growth to occur. ✠

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.



BACK TO CAMPUS



BCM leaders help students face challenges of college

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Time management. Homesickness. Depression. Debt. Spreading yourself too thin.

College students can be up against a lot of challenges.

But the leaders of Baptist Campus Ministries around the state say they're ready to help students navigate what many experts call life's most critical years.

"In almost 40 years of working with college students and those who minister to students, I've never seen a more difficult and challenging ministry opportunity than today's college campus missions field," said Mike Nuss, director of collegiate and student ministries for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. "Alabama Baptists have strategically placed God-called, specially trained and equipped men and women on campuses across our state for a time such as this."

Nuss asked for Christians across Alabama

to add the state's campus ministers to their prayer lists alongside missionaries around the world. They are "at work every day to reach, disciple and mobilize college students here in Alabama," he said.

What are some of the biggest struggles those campus missionaries see in students' lives?

1. *Knowing who they are.*

It's not a new problem, Craig Hawkins said, but it's still a big one.

"The biggest challenge for college students is the biggest challenge for everyone — knowing who you are and why you're here," said Hawkins, Baptist campus minister at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) and Birmingham-Southern College.

Follow Jesus

He said he sees that challenge mirrored in a marketing slogan UAB uses — "Knowledge that will change your world."

"Students today have a desire to change the world, to matter," Hawkins said. "And they have a need to know who they are.

At UAB they seek to become someone by gaining knowledge."

His best advice to them is to find themselves in Jesus, he said.

"In following Jesus, they find the best, most accurate answer to who they are — they are a new creation in Christ. And they find the answer to why they are here — they are created in Him to do good works," he said.

When Hawkins ministers to students, he focuses on the basics of discipleship — relating to God through worship, prayer and Bible study.

"When a person does this they can learn from Jesus Himself the specifics of what they should do to face all the other daily struggles and challenges," he said. "They also have the power and desire to lead others to Jesus so that more can face this same challenge."

2. *Feeling overwhelmed.*

The collegiate setting itself can be overwhelming to a student, said Jerrod Brown, a campus minister with Metro Mobile Baptist Campus Ministries. It demands their time,

focus, academic performance and money — not to mention facing massive amounts of temptation, he said.

"This overwhelms students as they seek to manage time, the expectations of others, financial and academic obligations, and the pressure of the world to conform, all the while bearing the spiritual fruit of faithfulness," he said. "It is difficult for students to walk faithfully while anything and everything is clamoring for their attention and commitment."

Submit to God

His advice? Put Jesus first.

"All that is expected of you or required of you should be secondary to abiding in Christ, submitting to God and walking in the Spirit," Brown said. "Through this dependent relationship with God, the student will discover fruitfulness, purposefulness and the vibrant life of God in all areas of their life. The first step in dealing with the overwhelming demands of college is to give them up for Jesus. You live in Him and for Him. The rest is simply secondary to Him."

3. *Managing their time.*

Students have dozens of things tugging at them — there's no denying that.

But some students believe they are the busiest people on the planet when in fact they have more free time than they realize — they just don't know how to manage it well, said Kim Andrews, a Baptist campus minister at the University of Alabama.

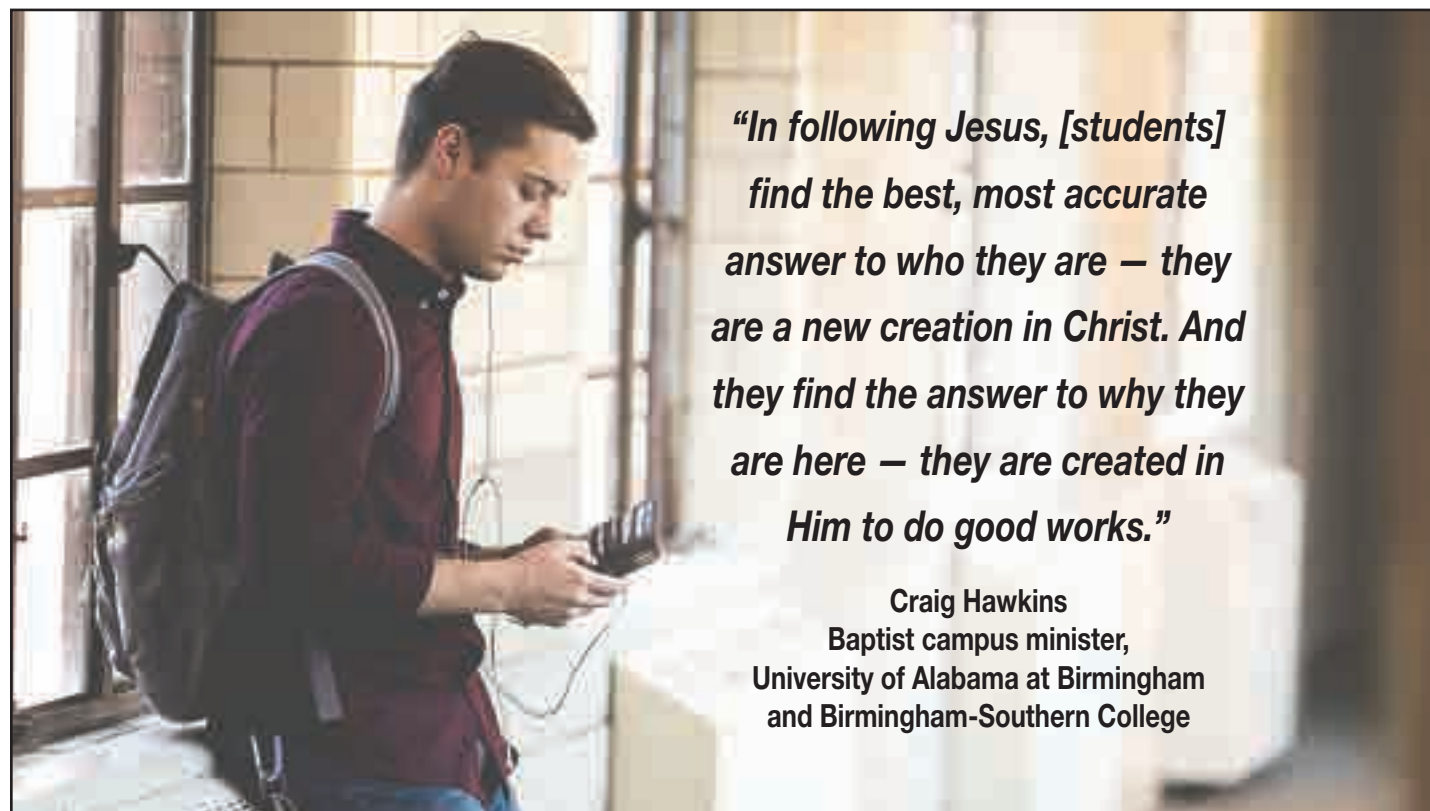
"Lack of perceived time can prevent students from considering ministry opportunities on campus and during breaks," she said.

Ryan Brooks, who serves with Andrews, said he knows many students who struggle with saying "no."

"I try to help students process what commitments are going to really matter in the long run, what commitments they want to be known for in a few years," he said, noting that he spends time mentoring students in how to choose where they invest their time.

Beth Gardner, Baptist campus minister for the University of South Alabama in Mobile, agreed. She said one area that can suffer quickly is a student's personal devotional time.

"Sometimes when we get overwhelmed (See 'Prioritize,' page 8)



"In following Jesus, [students] find the best, most accurate answer to who they are — they are a new creation in Christ. And they find the answer to why they are here — they are created in Him to do good works."

Craig Hawkins
Baptist campus minister,
University of Alabama at Birmingham
and Birmingham-Southern College

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Prioritize time with God through Scripture, prayer

(continued from page 7)
with managing our lives, we neglect our time spent with God," she said. "The truth is that we make time for what is important to us. When our lives seem out of control, we need to stop and ask ourselves if we are daily submitting our lives to God and allowing Him to be in control."

Students have to prioritize their relationships and other opportunities in a way that lets them accomplish everything that's required of them.

"Sometimes you have to turn down an opportunity to hang out with friends in order to study and that's not always easy to do," Gardner said. "Taking a break to check social media can easily turn into a 45-minute or longer 'break.'"

For those who struggle to stay focused on the "have tos," she recommends setting a timer when taking a break. For those who have the opposite struggle, she reminds them to build in time for self care — to spend some time over the weekends doing things they enjoy. But overall, all three campus

ministers agree — students have to learn to get their "have tos" done so that they can feel freer to invest in their relationship with God and in relationships on their campus for the sake of the gospel.

4. Facing anxiety or depression.

Because of all the demands placed on them, students sometimes have feelings of inadequacy. And sometimes in the midst of that, they struggle with anxiety and depression, according to Stephen Thompson, senior Baptist campus minister at Auburn University.

Alone time with God

"Any advice I offer comes from a holistic approach," he said.

First and foremost, he talks to them about the importance of their spiritual well-being — prioritizing consistent alone time with God through Scripture and prayer.

After that, "we talk through coping strategies of dealing with stress, time management and financial management," Thompson said. "We talk through the need for open, forthright communication with parents, professors and employers."

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		#5 nationally for best Christian universities <small>—CollegeAtlas</small>
		50,605 alumni worldwide

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BACK TO CAMPUS

And when it's appropriate, he recommends making an appointment to talk with their family physician about the cause of their anxiety and depression from a physical point of view. In those cases, he encourages them to be open to the possibility of chemical imbalances and the need for medication.

"Finally, I assess their need to see a mental health professional or counselor," Thompson said.

Andrews said she sees the need for that sort of holistic advice on her campus too. She quoted a statistic from Brookhaven Retreat, a women's recovery center — one in four college students has a diagnosable mental illness.

"These mental health issues can paralyze a student's ability to make wise decisions especially in critical moments," she said.

When talking with a student struggling with something like that, Andrews said she asks them

to consider these questions:

- ▶ What does the Bible say about this particular issue?
- ▶ Is professional counseling required?
- ▶ What are some practical

steps and goals to overcoming this issue? "This includes helping them look at the issue they're facing and coming up with an action plan to deal with it," Andrews said.

5. Applying their faith to everyday life situations.

Another problem Andrews said she sees is that students often come to college without a sound biblical foundation.

When that happens, they "will allow all aspects of culture to shape their worldview," she said. "I have students who fail to fully understand the gospel and the freedom we have in Christ. They minimize sin by indulging in sinful behaviors or feeding addictions, or they attempt

(See 'Keep,' page 10)

"When our lives seem out of control, we need to stop and ask ourselves if we are daily submitting our lives to God."

Beth Gardner
Baptist campus minister,
University of South
Alabama

What Are You Reading?
Tell us what you are reading, a quick summary of what it is about and your response to it so far. Email news@thealabamabaptist.org or send to 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.

BACK TO CAMPUS

Keep faith active, apply to everyday life situations

(continued from page 9)
to earn God's approval by doing 'good' things."

Willie Alexander, Baptist campus minister at Alabama A&M University and Calhoun Community College in Decatur, said he sees a similar struggle among the students he serves.

"The challenge for students is to apply their faith to everyday life situations," Alexander said. "Their faith seems to be inactive in their lives when facing difficulties. I remind students that your faith is not demonstrated by words. It's demonstrated by the way you live and respond during difficult experiences."

6. Dealing with apathy.

But before students can get their faith to affect their worldview and their choices, they have to care. That's a struggle that Jacob Freeman, a Baptist campus minister at the University of Montevallo, said he encounters on a regular basis.

"Probably one of the biggest challenges facing our students is apathy," he said. "Entertainment is so readily accessible that we can have our attention captured at all moments, day and night. We often

find things like cell phones, Netflix and video games fulfilling, at least to the point where it becomes 'enough' to get us by."

It's so simple to plug in electronics and unplug from real life, Freeman said.

"It's true that these devices aren't necessarily evil in and of themselves," he said. "However, when we allow them to create in us apathetic hearts and lazy hands, and we neglect the call of God to be present and active in reality, they turn into destructive idols."

Freeman said he sees students putting a lot of effort into things that don't matter and little effort into the things that matter greatly.

"My advice to students is the classic answer to all questions about faith — commune with God through prayer, Scripture and a local body of believers," he said. "Ask God to deliver you from idolatry and addiction. Let the word of God mold your desires and capture your attention. Be involved in the real lives of those in your church. These three areas will help guide our hearts, minds and feet onto a productive pathway, one with eternal significance."

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JUDSON COLLEGE

Continuing a legacy of service

On Tuesday, July 13, 1813, a battered ship carrying America's first international missionaries, Ann and Adoniram Judson, reached the shores of Rangoon, Burma.

The remarkable story of the Judsons' lives in the country now known as Myanmar spanned almost 40 years and was marked by innumerable hardships, sickness, political imprisonment and the deaths of all three of their children. Despite seemingly insurmountable odds, their faith and joy in God's strength, provision, and care led to the first Burmese translation of the Bible (the Judson version, which is still widely used today), the conversion of millions of believers over the next two centuries and the building of one of the largest populations of Baptists in the world today.

Though the results of the Judsons' work in Burma are extraordinary, Ann and Adoniram merely sought to remain faithful to God's call to love the people among whom they lived — meeting with them on their afternoon walks, building relationships with them, understanding their culture and meeting their needs. Ann later wrote of their arrival in Rangoon, "It was in our hearts to live and die with the Burmans, and we in this place induced to pitch our tent."

Twelve years after Ann Judson's death in 1826, a group of Baptists in Marion, Alabama, were still so inspired by Ann Judson's story of relentless, selfless sacrifice and service to the people of Burma that they gave their new college her name. Desirous that the Judson Female Institute would be a "place of Christ," the college's founders emphasized the importance of missions and the improvement of society through the Christian education of women.

A new generation

On August 19, 2018, a new class of

freshmen will "pitch their tents" at Judson College. Through the efforts of faculty, staff and Marion community partners, these new students can begin to learn about the legacy of service they join. Just as Ann Judson intentionally served her neighbors in her "everyday," Judson students learn to share the gospel of Christ as they enter the lives, share the burdens and meet the needs of their neighbors in Alabama's Black Belt.

This fall, new students and faculty will join the rest of the Jud-

son campus in Judson's community-wide annual service initiative called Marion Matters. This event gives students opportunities to meet some members of the Marion community, work alongside faculty and staff



Photo by Katlin Bailey

Judson College student Kayla Oliver works to weatherproof the deck and wheelchair ramp of a homebound Marion resident.



Photo courtesy of Judson College

Judson College students minister to members of their ESL class at Urban Nations Outreach in New York City during a spring break missions trip.



Photo by Sarah Fowler

Judson College's late president, David Potts, works with students at the Sowing Seeds of Hope Job Training Center during his last Marion Matters in 2017.

and think together about what it means to "love your neighbor." Many Judson students are so inspired by their Marion Matters experience that they initiate regular service projects through Judson's Faith-Based Service and Learning program.

Learning through service

Established in 2005, the Office of Faith-Based Service and Learning (FBSL) seeks to facilitate the meaningful engagement of faculty and students with the people and needs of the Marion community and beyond. In addition to coordinating service opportunities within the Division of Student Services, the FBSL office assists Judson faculty members in the planning and implementation of service projects that are integrated into course curricula. This innovative approach to service-learning garnered Judson the prestigious Community Engagement Classification from Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, an honor held by less than 5 percent of all colleges and universities in America.

Serving 'the least of these'

Monthly and weekly service projects, many initiated by students, give Judson women opportunities for sustained investment in their community as they get to know their neighbors' names, stories and needs. In the 2017-18 school year, Judson students took part in such weekly service opportunities as tutoring third graders in reading, adopting "grandparents" at nursing homes, cooking meals for and visiting shut-ins, reading to children at a local Head Start and teaching high school students about career and college readiness. Still others built

relationships with children in a low-income government housing community through organizing games, snacks and values lessons in a monthly event called Weekend Recess. Judson's Student Government Association provided monthly meals for inmates at the Perry County Jail.

Judson students' commitment to service doesn't stop in the Alabama Black Belt. During Spring Break this year, 20 students and four staff members partnered with churches and ministry organizations in the Jackson Heights area of New York City to serve immigrants, homeless men and women, and victims of human trafficking by helping address their physical, spiritual and emotional needs. Students who participated in summer missions served others through the work of churches, camps and non-profit organizations in Tennessee, Texas, North Carolina, Florida, Alabama, Cuba and Southeast Asia.

Serve 'here'

Baptists in Alabama built Judson College 180 years ago to prepare young women to carry the gospel wherever God called them, just as Ann Judson had. The theme for the 2018-19 academic year at Judson is "here," which emphasizes not only what has happened in Judson's history but also the nearness of God and students' opportunities to serve in the present. Each academic course, service opportunity, chapel service or interaction with faculty and staff is an opportunity for students to grow into the women God is calling them to be. As they embrace that calling "here" at Judson, they are preparing to be the hands and feet of Christ wherever they "pitch their tents." (Judson)

— Presidential search —

Please pray for Judson's Presidential Search Committee as its members seek the person God has appointed to lead the college. The search committee is composed of eight Alabama Baptists, which include five trustees and three employees.

More information about the search process can be found at judson.edu/presidential-search.

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walexander@alsbom.org

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Samford University

Campus transformation continues at Samford as fall semester begins

Samford is making significant progress on its 20-year campus master plan. Based on the university's strategic plan, the four-phase campus master plan addresses infrastructure needs for the entire campus, increases energy efficiency, practices campus-wide conservation and refreshes and renews every facility — all steps in the process of creating a sustainable future for generations of Samford students.

Nearing completion is the transformation of A. Hamilton Reid Chapel, Percy Pratt Burns Hall, James Horton Chapman Hall and Robert I. Ingalls, Sr. Hall to create a new home for many of the departments of Howard College of Arts and Sciences, Spiritual Life, Admission and Student Financial Services. The departments are moving into the newly refurbished spaces in August, while the Offices of Admission and Student Financial Services will move into their new spaces by mid-fall.

These vibrantly renovated spaces include a prayer room, upgraded classrooms and labs, student-faculty gathering spaces, a spacious new student commons, event spaces, offices, admission presentation rooms and integrated student services spaces.

The Rotunda and Rotunda Club in

Dwight and Lucille Beeson Center have been beautifully upgraded. The club will reopen in the fall and will include a new menu and dining options. Plans for a rededication ceremony will be announced soon.

The Daniel House, Samford's London study center, also underwent major renovation this summer, with its reopening expected in January 2019. The rooms and bathrooms are being expanded and kitchen, laundry area and gathering spaces are being updated.

Plans for a new data analytics lab in Samford's Brock School

of Business are taking shape and an expansion of the Athletic Success Services Center in Leo E. Bashinsky Field House is underway. A number of other renovation projects took place over the summer, including updates to residence halls.

Beeson University Center Renovation

The university community will benefit from major upgrades to the decades old Beeson University Center. When completed, the building will feature new student gathering spaces, an expanded food court, a renovated bookstore and new offices for the Division of Student Affairs.

The newly enhanced first floor is expect-

For more information on Samford's campus master plan, go to samford.edu/about/campus-master-plan.

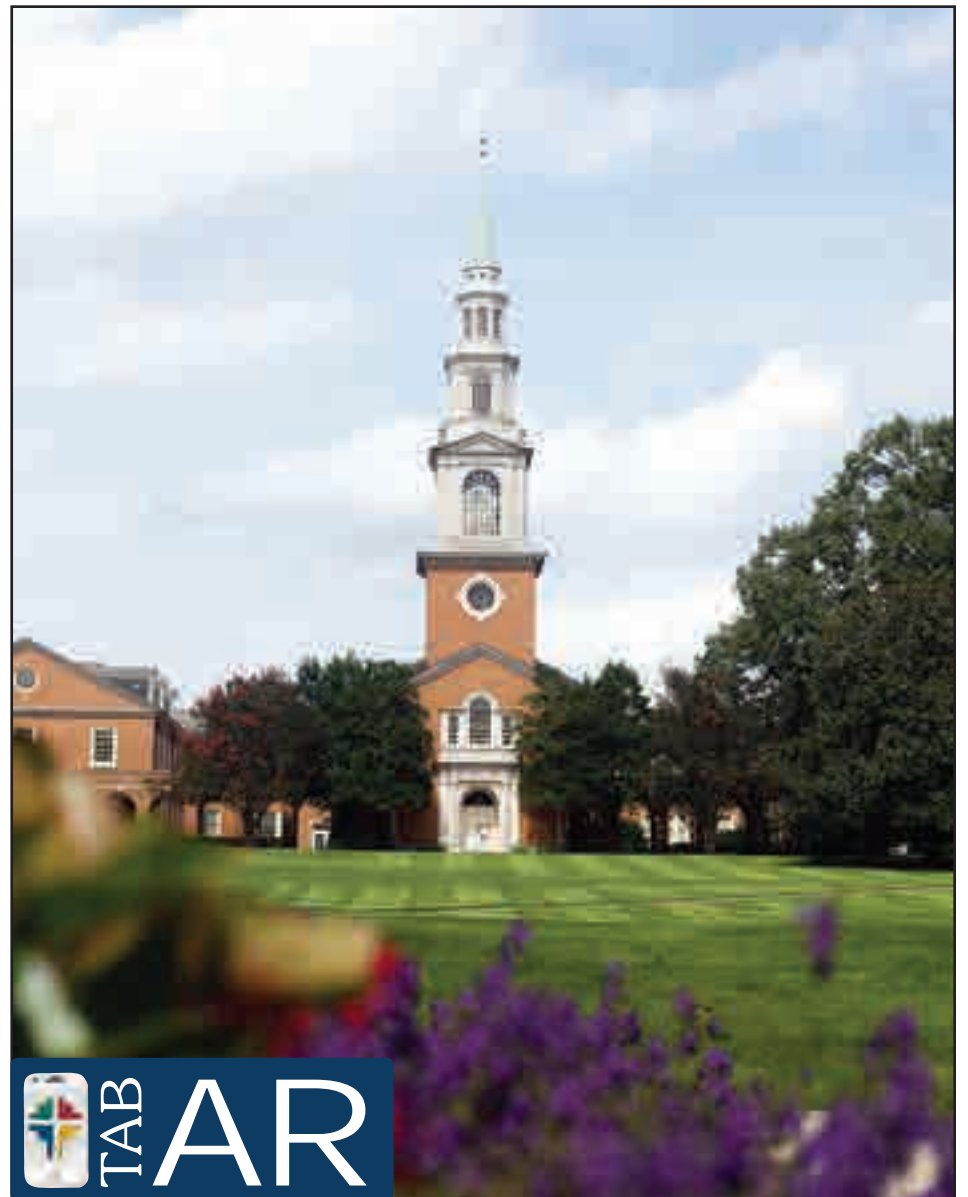


Photo courtesy of Samford University



Samford sees continued progress with new programs, enhanced facilities

Samford University begins its 177th year during some of the most significant progress in university history. The addition of new degree programs, record enrollments and major campus improvements will greet students as they return to campus in August. Undergraduate classes begin August 27, but many graduate and professional programs begin earlier in the month.

National rankings

Samford's reputation as a premier Christian university continues to be affirmed by national rankings. In 2018, *U.S. News & World Report* ranked Samford No. 3 in the South, No. 5 in the South for most innovative and No. 1 in the South for best colleges for veterans among regional universities. *Kiplinger's Personal Finance* ranked Samford No. 50 among private universities in the U.S. for value and

affordability. Samford is ranked No. 87 nationally and No. 1 in Alabama by *The Economist* and is the top-ranked university in Alabama in national rankings conducted by both Forbes Inc. and *The Wall Street Journal*. Samford ranks No. 5 on the 2018 College Atlas list of the best Christian colleges and universities in America.

The university has strategically added new degree programs in arts and health sciences to meet the needs of today's workforce. New degree programs include a Bachelor of Arts in Worship and the Arts, Bachelor of Arts in Christian Ministry, Master of Music in Instrumental Performance, Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies and a Doctor of Audiology.

In addition to new programs, 40 new full-time faculty members have joined the Samford community since October 2017. (Samford)

ed to be a destination place for students to gather, collaborate, eat, study and attend events. The planning phase included partnering with Samford's interior architecture students, who developed beautiful designs for the space. The renovation will include an expanded food court with new venues — including a full-service Chick-fil-A and Moe's Southwest Grill. The bookstore will expand and include a convenience store with extended hours of operation.

Harry's Coffeehouse will be completely renovated with moveable walls to provide open space for students and dining or enclosed space for events. It will also include an outdoor extension, and a beautiful skylit stairwell will connect the first and second floors of the University Center. This project will extend through spring 2019.

Sustainability Initiatives: Giving Back

In 2017, the Board of Trustees of Samford University approved a 20-year plan to improve energy efficiency on campus. Samford partnered with Johnson Controls Inc. to complete this work. They installed more than 1,100 windows, new sanitary fixtures, over 22,500 LED lighting upgrades and several mechanical improvements, resulting in significant energy savings across campus. These savings are expected to grow as the final phases of implementation are completed.

It's an exciting time at Samford University. There are a number of events and activities on campus this fall that the community is invited to enjoy. (Samford)

Key fall events at Samford

- ▶ **Aug. 27** — Opening Convocation of the 177th anniversary academic session, Wright Center, 10 a.m.
- ▶ **Aug. 30** — Rededication of A. Hamilton Reid Chapel, Percy Pratt Burns Hall, James Horton Chapman Hall and Robert I. Ingalls, Sr. Hall, Reid Chapel, 9:45 a.m.
- ▶ **Sept. 7** — Healthcare Ethics and Law Conference, Cooney Hall, 8 a.m.
- ▶ **Sept. 14-16** — Family Weekend
- ▶ **Nov. 2-3** — Homecoming

For more information on these and other events at Samford, visit samford.edu/events.

BACK TO CAMPUS

Samford, UM earn top rankings in Alabama

Samford University in Birmingham and University of Mobile (UM) earned the top spots in College Consensus' Best Colleges in Alabama for 2018. In the rankings, which were based on reputation and quality, Samford came in at No. 1 and UM was right behind at No. 2.

The online ranking site combines respected national and international college rankings with student reviews to identify the best colleges and universities in Alabama for 2018.

Earlier this year, College Consensus selected UM as No. 1 in the Best Regional Colleges in the South category and No. 8 in Best Christian Colleges and Universities in the nation. The 2018 rankings released in April also placed UM among the top colleges and universities nationwide, ranked No. 141 on the Best Colleges and Universities list.

Samford also earned top ranks in the April rankings, receiving the No. 4 spot in the Best Regional Universities in the South

category and the No. 6 spot in the Best Christian Colleges and Universities in the nation category. Samford also ranked No. 131 nationwide in the Best Colleges and Universities category.

College Consensus pulls together rankings from *U.S. News & World Report* and *Forbes* and reviews from sites like Cappex, Niche, Student Review and others to

get the full picture of how students see their college.

"The top universities ranking is the real deal — the ranking of the best colleges nationwide. Regardless of size, location, form or classification, these are the colleges and universities that have the best school ranking based on publisher and student ratings," the website states. "It's not mixing apples and oranges — it's crunching the numbers, pure and simple, to see which colleges the experts admire and which ones the students love."

For the full list, go to <https://www.collegeconsensus.com/rankings/best-colleges-al/>. (TAB, UM)



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UM brings innovation to higher education

University of Mobile is implementing a new approach to teaching college courses — Prac-ademics™, an initiative that will expand traditional classroom learning into “living laboratories” where students have practical learning experiences to enrich the learning process.

“The old model of a professor lecturing in front of a classroom all semester just isn’t relevant to today’s students,” said University of Mobile President Tim Smith. “Students want to be in the classroom to pick up the theory in the professional discipline, but once that theory is learned from the textbook or from the professor, they will move to application and hands-on, where they can learn auditorily, visually and tactilely.”

Smith said today’s college students learn best when they have the opportunity to apply the theories they learn in the classroom to real-world settings while they are still in school, instead of waiting until they land their first job.

So the university is creating living laboratories like the new \$4.6 million

renovation in Weaver Hall, with cutting-edge healthcare and science labs in the College of Health Professions and College of Arts and Sciences. The project involves gutting two of the three floors of the university’s signature building on campus and creating spaces such as an operating room and anatomical laboratory, while bringing in the newest technology for healthcare and science education.



Photo courtesy of University of Mobile

During President’s Commissioning ceremony at the start of fall semester, new students touch the Great Commission globe as they proceed to Weaver Hall. New University of Mobile alumni touch the globe again at graduation to signify their commitment to fulfill their professional calling for a Great Commission purpose.

laboratories already on campus, such as the Roger Breland Center for Performing Arts in the Alabama School of the Arts that gives music, theatre and worship leadership students practical experiences traveling and performing in front of audiences. In the School of Business, a new student-run marketing and advertising agency will enable students to put their classroom lessons into practice while also offering low-cost services to churches and non-profit agencies.

Living laboratories extend into the community, as students in the School of Christian Studies gain experience serving in churches, the School of Education sends student teachers into public and private schools where they are mentored by experienced educators, the College of Arts and Sciences connects students to professional experiences across all majors, and students in the College of Health Professions have internships in healthcare settings throughout south Alabama.

The shift toward innovative teaching methods began two years ago when Smith



Photo courtesy of University of Mobile



University of Mobile’s Weaver Hall is home to new state-of-the-art living laboratories in the College of Health Professions and College of Arts and Sciences. The Great Commission globe on the Dr. Fred and Sue Lackey Great Commission Lawn is a focal point on campus and a visible reminder of the purpose of University of Mobile.

arrived as the university’s 4th president.

Since then, the university has rebranded, expanded the academic program to offer more than 90 areas of study, and moved to a four-day academic week with Focus Fridays for relaxation, study, missions and service projects, and internships.

When the university starts fall semester classes on Aug. 20, it will be with the addition of 19 bachelor’s degrees and its first doctoral degrees, the Doctor of Nursing Practice and the Doctor of Musical Arts in Vocal Performance.

Faith and learning

Smith said the changing methods and new academic programs are just part of what makes learning innovative at University of Mobile.

“As a Christian university, we deliver an education that goes far beyond simply providing the knowledge and skillset needed for a job. We provide ‘Higher Education for a Higher Purpose’ that integrates faith and learning for the purpose of fulfilling one’s professional calling,” Smith said. (UM)

2018 rankings

▶ **#1 Best Regional Colleges in the South** — College Consensus

▶ **#1 Best Regional Colleges in the South for Veterans** — U.S. News & World Report

▶ **#2 Best Colleges & Universities in Alabama** — College Consensus

▶ **#5 Best Regional Colleges in the South** — U.S. News & World Report

▶ **#8 Best Christian Colleges & Universities in the Nation** — College Consensus

▶ **10 Best Colleges for Jobs in Alabama** — Zippia

▶ **Best Value Regional Colleges in the South** — U.S. News & World Report

▶ **America’s 100 Best College Buys** — Institutional Research & Evaluation Inc.

▶ **America’s Best Christian Colleges** — Institutional Research & Evaluation Inc.

▶ **Top 5 Best College Dorms in Alabama** — Niche

UM fast facts

- ▶ 1,600+ students from 34 states and 21 nations
- ▶ 13,000+ alumni in 56 nations
- ▶ 10 colleges and schools
- ▶ 90+ Areas of Study
- ▶ 880+ acres
- ▶ 100% classes taught by faculty (not grad students)
- ▶ 14:1 student to faculty ratio
- ▶ Founded 1961 by Alabama Baptists
- ▶ Affiliated with the Alabama Baptist State Convention
- ▶ www.umobile.edu

Our ‘why’

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Our core values stand at the center of what we do: Christ-Centered • Academically-Focused • Student-Devoted • Distinctively-Driven. (UM)



Photo by Caleb Yarbrough

Association of State Baptist Publications (ASBP) President Tim Yarbrough (left) stands with Margaret Colson, who was named as ASBP's executive secretary, succeeding Bob Terry (right), who had served in that role for 25 years. Terry also was honored for his upcoming retirement.

Association of State Baptist Publications honors Terry, names new executive secretary

Two retiring state paper editors, Bobby S. "Bob" Terry of Alabama and J. Gerald Harris of Georgia, were honored by the Association of State Baptist Publications (ASBP) during its June 11 meeting prior to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Dallas.

Also during the editors' annual gathering, Margaret Colson was named as ASBP's executive secretary, succeeding Terry, a former ASBP president who had served in that role for 25 years.

Colson will continue to serve as executive director of the Baptist Communicators Association, a post she has held the past 10 years. Colson also is a writer and editor based in the Atlanta area.

A resolution of appreciation

for Terry, who will retire Dec. 31, noted that he has been president and editor of *The Alabama Baptist* since 1995, earlier serving 20 years as editor of the Missouri Baptist *Word & Way* and seven years as associate editor of Kentucky Baptists' *Western Recorder*.

Top-honored paper

The resolution stated that *The Alabama Baptist* has been among the top-honored Christian newspapers in the nation, being selected as either the first- or second-place winner in the 'Best Regional Christian Newspaper' category ... every year after his first full year as editor. The regional awards have come from the Evangelical Press Association, Religion Communicators Council and/or Associ-

ated Church Press, sometimes two of the three in the same year.

A resolution honoring Harris, who retired as editor of *The Christian Index* on May 31 but will continue as senior editor through December, noted that he has led the paper since 2003 after serving as a pastor in North and South Carolina, Mississippi and Georgia.

The resolution stated that Harris had overseen *The Index's* move "into an online format that has witnessed tremendous digital growth since its inception in January 2016." (BP)



Cecil Eugene Junkin

Former Pickens pastor dies at age 93

Cecil Eugene Junkin of Gordo died July 19. He was 93.

Junkin was a Southern Baptist preacher for more than 60 years and pastored 14 churches during his ministry. He served churches in Alabama and Mississippi, including Coal Fire Baptist Church, Reform; Double Branches Baptist Church, Gordo; Pine Grove Baptist Church, Ethelsville; Spring Hill Baptist Church, Carrollton; and Mount Tabor Baptist Church, Reform. He preached his last sermon May 25 at Arbor Woods Health and Rehab in Gordo, where he was an honorary chaplain.



JUNKIN

He is survived by daughters, Judy Cummins, Jane Burkhalter and Suzette Smalley; son, Cecil; six grandchildren; and 11 great-grandchildren. (TAB)

Henry Allen Johnson

Retired Dothan pastor Johnson dies at 83

Henry Allen Johnson of Dothan died July 23. He was 83. Johnson attended and graduated from Norman College in Norman Park, Georgia.



JOHNSON

He went on to serve in the Wiregrass area for more than 60 years as minister in many churches including Cloverdale Baptist Church, Dothan, and Jakin Baptist Church in Georgia. Henry also founded Pathway Baptist Church, Dothan.

He finished his ministry on staff at Memphis Baptist Church, Dothan.

Johnson is survived by his wife, Sarah; son, Gaius; and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. (TAB)

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Photo courtesy of April Brand

FBC Alabaster presented the LifeWay VBS theme Game On. Their total enrollment was nearly 600.

FBC Alabaster sees 34 decisions made during VBS

For April Brand, Vacation Bible School (VBS) week has a lot of great moments. But one of them definitely stands out.

“We had a child come who had not attended church, and when our pastor gave the gospel presentation, this child made a decision,” said Brand, who coordinated VBS this year for First Baptist Church, Alabaster. “It was the highlight of my week. It was a reminder that we can’t stop asking the unchurched to come to church. It only takes one time for them to hear the gospel and maybe respond.”

The child who accepted Christ was one of 34 who made a decision that week.

The week “went great,” Brand said. “It was fantastic.”

The church did the LifeWay VBS theme Game On, which encourages children to “realize God has given them His ultimate playbook.” Their total enrollment was nearly 600.

“Our volunteers did an incredible job,” said Jared Cornutt, minister of students.

The children who attended also gave more than \$1,700 to the missions offering collected during the week, he said. (Grace Thornton)

Oklahoma Baptist conference center settles alleged rape lawsuit

In a case that reminds ministry leaders how important background checks and screening processes are when it comes to children, the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma (BGCO) has settled a lawsuit related to the alleged 2016 rape of a 13-year-old at the BGCO’s Falls Creek Baptist Conference Center.

The victim’s attorneys alleged in a court filing that adults were sent to Falls Creek by churches without background checks despite a BGCO policy requiring churches to do so.

Vulnerability

The alleged rapist, Benjamin Petty, 37, pleaded guilty in January to first-degree rape, forcible sodomy and rape by instrumentation, *The Oklahoman* reported. Petty was a cook at Falls Creek at the time of the alleged offense, reports said.

A background check on Petty would have revealed a drunk driving offense in 2014 and a municipal drug paraphernalia offense in 2000, *The Oklahoman* reported, adding “it is unknown whether that information would have prompted church officials to exclude him from attending the camp.”

Both the Oklahoma case and the recent conviction of Gary Smitherman, a church member who worked with children at a church in Clanton (see sidebar, this page), are reminders that background checks are essential for those working with minors, but they might not tell the whole story, said Larry Felkins, director of missions for Chilton Baptist Association.

In the Smitherman case, “the church did a background check on him but everything checked out,” Felkins said.

He said many churches need children’s workers, which can make them vulnerable to predators. Official background checks and references from other churches are essential to assuring the safety of children.

Smitherman guilty of sexual abuse

A former children’s volunteer was found guilty Aug. 3 of sexually abusing a young girl he once tutored.

Gary L. Smitherman, 59, was convicted in Chilton County of one count of sexual abuse of a child under the age of 12. Smitherman was a member of Friendship Baptist Church in Clanton where he volunteered with the children’s programs.

According to testimony in the trial, Smitherman met the girl at church and then began to tutor her outside of the church. The girl told her family Smitherman was inappropriately touching her, and he was arrested in March 2017.

Media reports following Smitherman’s conviction identified him as the children’s minister, but Friendship Baptist Church pastor Hank Walker said Smitherman never served on staff at the church.

“Though an honest misunderstanding, it was a terrible

misrepresentation from our church’s perspective,” Walker wrote. “Gary Smitherman, the named perpetrator, was never employed by Friendship Baptist Church — in any capacity.”

Practical value

Walker said Smitherman, like all children and youth Sunday School teachers and volunteers at Friendship, underwent a criminal background check before being allowed to work with minors. Church policy also required another adult present in any children’s class for which he volunteered, Walker noted.

The background check yielded no previous convictions or problems, Walker said.

“Unless that person has a previous conviction, there is little practical value in background checks,” he said. “If something seems suspicious, be suspicious.” (Carrie Brown McWhorter)

Safe environment

Falls Creek policy now requires a signed Background Check Compliance Form from the lead sponsor of the church any non-camper over the age of 18 is attending with, according to its website.

Adults who arrive without background checks “will not be allowed to stay overnight,” according to the website.

The victim’s attorney Bruce Robertson told *The Oklahoman*, “We are glad the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma conducted a review of its policies and has recognized additional efforts are needed to provide Falls Creek campers as safe an environment as possible. We hope they follow through and implement the needed changes.”

BGCO communications direc-

tor Brian Hobbs said in a statement released to Baptist Press, “We have prayed for a respectful resolution of this very serious matter. Looking to the future, we are continually working with churches to take every measure we can, to provide a safe environment where our campers can experience life with Jesus Christ.”

Resources for checks

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions lists a number of resources on its website to help churches keep children safe on campus and during activities, including contact information for several providers of criminal background checks. Here are a few:

- ▶ Bradley Personnel Consultants: bradley-personnel.com/background-checks.html
- ▶ Employment Screening Services (full service screening including drugs and alcohol use): <http://www.es2.com>
- ▶ LifeWay Stores: www.lifewaystores.com/backgroundchecks
- ▶ MinistrySafe: MinistrySafe.org
- ▶ Protect My Ministry: www.protectmyministry.com
- ▶ Single Source Services: www.clearstar.net

See the full list and other resources at www.alsbom.org/safe/. (BP, Carrie Brown McWhorter contributed)

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Clean clothes ministry

Winston Baptist Association supports missions effort with 'workhorse'

She may not look pretty, but she's a workhorse." That's what First Baptist Church, Arley, member George Gibson said about the Winston Baptist Association laundry trailer. It was designed and built by volunteers 10 years ago and has provided untold numbers of laundry loads

for disaster victims across the South.

The trailer has three washers and three dryers and its own generator to run them all if there is no commercial power. Gibson provides maintenance on the trailer, the machines and the generator about twice a year.

Recently the laundry unit, as it is called, was put into action in support of rebuilding a church in Jackson County.

Macklin Baptist Church, Rosalie, was destroyed by a tornado just after midnight Nov. 30, 2016. Now a year and a half later, Carpenters for Christ volunteers are helping the church build a new sanctuary complete with classrooms and a fellowship hall across the road from its previous location. Hosted by the Macklin Baptist congregation and housed at the Rosalie Elementary School, 140 Carpenters for Christ volunteers completed most of the interior framing and the exterior brick and metal work June 4-15.

Sincere thanks

"Winston Baptist Association's laundry trailer helped the effort by deploying to the work site in Rosalie," said team member Bob Cooper. Three teams from Winston County, led by Winston's director of missions Don Smith and his wife Pam, rotated shifts



Photo courtesy of Winston Baptist Association

Three teams from Winston County, including volunteers Bob and Cathy Cooper, rotated shifts manning the trailer. The team provided a total of 150 loads of clean laundry for the volunteers.



Photo courtesy of Winston Baptist Association

Ten years ago the Winston Baptist Association laundry trailer was designed and built by volunteers. It has three washers and three dryers and a generator to run them all if there is no power.

manning the trailer. Other volunteers from Winston included Ricky and Diane Benford, Debbie Doss, and Bob and Cathy Cooper. Perry Lee, the Carpenters for Christ team leader, expressed a sincere thank you to the laundry teams that provided a total of 150

loads of clean laundry for the volunteers.

The Winston Baptist Association is returning on a missions trip to Rosalie to install drywall and other interior construction work. And if needed, the laundry "workhorse" will join the team. (TAB)

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RELIGION in America

Compiled from Wire Services

Retiree chooses ministry to reach the lost

WINGO, Ky. — At a stage in life when most people are settling into retirement, 66-year-old Forrest Ivy is launching a new career as a Kentucky Baptist pastor.

“This world needs the gospel, and I’m not going to allow my age to stop me from sharing it,” Ivy said. “I’d hope no one would ever use age as an excuse for not serving Jesus. The need for pastors has never been greater than now, so instead of quitting at Social Security age, we need to be doubling down.”

As a long-haul trucker, Ivy crisscrossed the U.S. in an 18-wheeler, listening to sermons and Bible studies and sharing the gospel one-on-one in truck stops from Virginia to California.

As he felt the Lord call him toward ministry, he weighed the excuses to refuse, but the multitudes of lost and hurting people who need the hope of Christ were the reason he said yes.

Now pastor of Fellowship Baptist Church in Wingo, Kentucky, Ivy says he won’t retire from ministry. “I want to spend every moment I have left serving Jesus,” Ivy said. (BP)

Willow Creek Church pastors, elders resign

CHICAGO — Both lead pastors and the entire board of elders of Willow Creek Community Church have resigned following new allegations of sexual misconduct against founding pastor Bill Hybels.

Pastor Heather Larson and the nine elders resigned Aug. 8, saying they had made a mistake in failing to believe the women who had come forward with sexual harassment claims. Pastor Steve Carter resigned Aug. 5 following publication of an article in *The New York Times* in which a former assistant of Hybels, Pat Baranowski, said Hybels allegedly touched her breasts repeatedly and rubbed against her, had oral sex with her on one occasion and once asked her to watch pornography with him as a research project. Baranowski is the tenth woman to accuse Hybels of misconduct.

In an e-mail, Hybels told the *Times* that the allegations were not true. (TAB)



Southwest marks 50th anniversary

Southwest Baptist Church, Hartselle, in Morgan Baptist Association, celebrated its 50-year anniversary June 24.

Former pastor Terry Napier was the guest speaker and the church choir performed special music. Jerry Armor presented the church with a certificate on behalf of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.



Photo courtesy of Jerry Armor

The names of all former pastors and deacons were read and all former members in attendance were recognized.

“We had over 100 (people) in worship. It was a wonderful day,” church member Alma Cunningham said.

A reception was held between services.

Greg Burcham is pastor. (TAB)

Shiloh commemorates 150 years

The members of Shiloh Baptist Church, Wadley, in East Liberty Baptist Association, gathered June 10 to celebrate its 150th anniversary.

Floyd Akin was the guest speaker and special music was brought by Reunion Quartet.

Everyone in attendance received a handout detailing the church’s history.

Pastor Chuck Goodwin presented the church with a

certificate on behalf of the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

Lunch was served in the fellowship hall following the service.

“It was a memorable day,” Shiloh member Linda McGill said. “The church was full.” (TAB)

Hermon celebrates centennial

Hermon Baptist Church, Jasper, celebrated its centennial June 24 with a service that honored the history of the church.

According to the church’s history, Hermon Baptist was formerly known as Oak Grove Church, which was established shortly after the Civil War. The church reportedly moved several times before establishing the church’s permanent location on Herman Road in 1918, when they also renamed the church.

Former pastors Ernest McKinnon, Larry Brown and Charlie Hannah each spoke briefly at the service, along with Faron Holloway, the son of Virgil Holloway who pastored Hermon Baptist three different times.

The congregation was led in singing by Deborah Self, and the church was presented certificates from Gerald Glenn with the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and David Miller, director of missions for Walker Baptist Association. James Self read the names of pastors and deacons through the history of the church.

The history of the church was printed on handouts and photos of pastors, deacons, members and various events and trips were displayed.

“I was thrilled to see everyone,” church member Harriet Wisener said.

Jeff Wiggins is interim pastor. (Jessica Ingram)

Compiled by the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and TAB

My JESUS Story

By Jenni Ingram
Member, First Baptist Church, Gantt

Is the Word of God alive? Yes it is.

Let me tell you how I know and how Jesus has proven it to me. I have read the Bible all the way through several times and each time I read it, something pops out at me that I never saw before. Maybe it is a verse that I have underlined already, but it seems to have a different application at different times in my life. For example, I was reading Romans 8:17 today: “Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.” Now I had underlined this before and I remember

underlining it for the part about being heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, thinking about how that glory will be incredible.

However, today the last part of that hit me — “if indeed we share in His sufferings.”

Hmmm ... I missed that part before. So as I am told in Hebrews 12:1, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

There are many sufferings in this world. There is pain, financial distress, health issues — so many more but I have limited words here. The point is, no one is exempt from suffering, but we have a living, relevant, potent resource available to us in God’s love letter to us — Scripture. Then, at the end of our race, we will meet our Heavenly Father and celebrate the finish line — in glory.✠

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**BETHLEHEM/
PINE BARREN**

▶ **Bethlehem and Pine Barren Baptist Associations** will hold a retirement reception in honor of director of missions **John Marks** on Aug. 19, 2–3:30 p.m. at First Church, Monroeville.

BLOUNT

▶ **Pleasant View Missionary Church, Holly Pond**, will hold its third Sunday night singing Aug. 19, 6 p.m. with Kingsland Quartet. Everyone is invited. Randy Burtram is pastor.

CLARKE

▶ **Randy Davis** is the new pastor of **Unity Church, Grove Hill**. He and his wife, Audra, have one child. ▶ **Chris Ozment** is the new pastor of **New Faith Church, Coffeeville**.

COOSA RIVER

▶ **Marble City Church, Sylacauga**, will hold a concert featur-

ing The Kempters on Aug. 26, 5:30 p.m. Mac McCaleb is pastor.

EAST LIBERTY

▶ **County Line Church, Dudleyville**, will hold a concert featuring The Ball Brothers on Aug. 17, 7 p.m. A love offering will be taken. Mike Beck is pastor.

FAYETTE

▶ **Billy Cagle** is the new pastor of **Pleasant Grove Church, Carbon Hill**. He previously served at Flint Church, Decatur. ▶ **Tim Meherg** is the new pastor of **Pleasant Hill Church, Fayette**. He previously served at Pleasant Grove Church, Hamilton. He also has served at Harmony Grove Church, Fayette; Fellowship Church, Fayette; and First Church, Reform. ▶ **Casey Watkins** is the new pastor of **Macedonia Church, Fayette**. He previously served at Pisgah Church, Fayette.

FRIENDSHIP

▶ **Union Hill Church, Oneonta**, will hold a concert featuring Phil Cross & Poet Voices on Aug. 19, 6 p.m. Bill Barnett is pastor.

MUD CREEK

▶ **David Hobson** is the new director of missions for **Mud Creek Association**. Before coming to Mud Creek, he served as pastor of family discipleship for Wilton Church, Montevallo, and as a high school teacher for Kingwood Christian School in Alabaster. Hobson has a doctorate and master's degree in education from Southeastern



HOBSON

Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. Mud Creek Association also thanks Dennis Smith for serving in an interim capacity during the transition.

GENEVA

▶ **New Hinson Church, Slocomb**, will hold a fish fry Aug. 18, 6 p.m. benefiting Bringing Baby Shelley Home. Bryan Klobe is pastor.

ST. CLAIR

▶ **Cropwell Church, Pell City**, will hold a women's event Aug. 25, 9:30 a.m. Liz Curtis Higgs will be the guest speaker and worship will be led by Austin & Lindsey Adamec. Tickets available at lizcurtishiggs.com. Dan Moran is transitional pastor.

TUSKEGEE LEE

▶ **Jim Strickland** is the new pastor of **Cowboy Church of Lee County, Waverly**.



(augmented reality)

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- 2** Tap the [] icon at the bottom of the screen.
- 3** You will see pulsating dots, which indicate the app is searching for a target. Once it finds a target the dots will turn to a bull's-eye. The bull's-eye will remain until the augmented reality image loads.
- 4** Look for *The Alabama Baptist (TAB)* augmented reality logo (example shown above). Hold your device over the logo and watch the paper come to life.
- 5** If the image is slow to load at any point, then it may be your data speed or Wi-Fi strength. Change locations and try again.
- 6** Each week when *TAB* arrives, look for the AR logo and hold your device over the noted articles to watch the video extras.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

Taylorville Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, is seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumés to: 7201 Moundville Lane, Tuscaloosa, AL 35405, or email to: Kcollins@taylorvillebaptist.org.

PASTOR

Riverside Baptist Church is looking for a pastor. Send resumés to: Riverside Baptist Church, ATTN: Earl Collier, 3130 Dauphin Island Parkway, Mobile, AL 36605 or call 251-680-1298.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

In need of bivocational pastor for small church in Chilton Association. Send resumé to: Cane Creek Baptist Church, c/o Betty Ray, 58 County Rd. 250, Clanton, AL 35046.

STUDENT MINISTER

Eastside Baptist Church student minister K4–12th grade, 20 hours. Must affirm the 2000 BF&M; emphasis on organization, planning Biblical based programs, activities, events. Please send resumés to: BessieBranyon@sleepingbees@bellsouth.net.

YOUTH PASTOR

Southside Baptist Church, Russellville, Alabama, searching

for youth pastor. Send your resumé to: Southside Baptist Church, ATTN: Joseph Medina, P.O. Box 60, Russellville, AL 35653.

MINISTER OF MUSIC & YOUTH

Sisters Baptist Church is seeking to fill the full-time staff vacancy of minister of music and youth. We are a conservative Southern Baptist church. Serious applicants may send their resumés with a cover letter to: office@sistersbaptist.org or to: 1807 E McCarty St., Sandersville, GA 31082.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER

Hopewell Baptist Church, Hanceville, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational music minister. Send your resumé to: Hopewell Baptist Church, ATTN: Ed Hart, P.O. Box 423, Hanceville, AL 35077. eedhart@yahoo.com.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR FOR WORSHIP & MUSIC

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. Please also visit concordbaptist.com for more information about our congregation.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF WORSHIP

First Baptist Church, a vibrant and growing church in Zachary, Louisiana, is seeking an associate pastor of worship. Must be able to lead a large and diverse ministry of worship; traditional and blended/contemporary services. Must be able to lead a large choir, praise team, band and media/tech team. Email resumés to: dharrell@fbcz.org.

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LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR



WOMAN IN MINISTRY

On being a woman in the ministry, I have had no problem discerning the Scripture and what God wants for my life. God called me to teach Sunday School. I teach only women or children, never men. I have been in perfect peace with my calling for over 45 years.

“But I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man but to be in silence” (1 Tim. 2:12). “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2a).

A woman cannot be the husband of a wife, only a man can.
Sherra Claunch
Oxford, Ala.

FEMALE SBC LEADER

I want to respond to Bob Terry’s editorial in the July 12 issue “Can a Woman Lead the SBC?” as a woman who tried to serve the Lord as called by Him for three and a half years as a youth director in a small Alabama Southern Baptist church. The answer is “no.”

First, it won’t matter if she is called by God to serve in the position, there will be males in the leadership that will not respect her or her opinions and will see her

as a threat to their leadership. ...

Second, she will be paid less and given less chance for advancement. As youth director, I worked 20 hours a week making a small hourly rate. My replacement, a male, was given full-time status and the title associate pastor.

Third, I believe the male leadership of the SBC will ignore Galatians 3:28 that says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

I have no desire to be a pastor. I just have a desire to go where God calls me to go and do what God calls me to do.

Thankfully Jesus did not limit His ministry to only men but recognized the special qualities of women, even when they were still in their sin. The woman at the well leaves Jesus’ side and goes into her hometown and by her testimony, causes a revival to break out and most of her hometown got saved.

Teresa Elliott
Harvest, Ala. ✝

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For August 19

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

THANKFUL 2 Samuel 22:26-36, 50-51

This week we find ourselves with an interesting passage. We'll look at the content of David's psalm in the lesson, but first let's take a look at the song's context.

According to 2 Samuel 22:1, David expressed this song of rescue when the Lord delivered him from his enemies, including Saul (Ps. 18). This chapter may be out of historical sequence within 2 Samuel, but it carries the weight of repetition in two sections of the Hebrew Bible, the Prophets and the Writings.

In this personal, intimate testimony of gratitude for God's protection and provision, David freely uses personal pronouns: I, me and my. David refers to Yahweh in the early verses of this song as "my rock," "my fortress," "my deliverer," "my God," "my shield," "my stronghold," "my refuge" and "my Savior." The real focus of this psalm is not David or his occasion for writing the lyrics. Instead, the subject of the song and the object of his worship is God Himself.

Holy (26-29)

God is holy (Lev. 11:44-45). The angelic hosts declare His holiness (Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8). In this passage David utilized synonyms of holiness as attributes of God: faithful, blameless, pure and perfect.

God is set apart from His creation in that He is always faithful. God is the measure of righteousness and is thus without blame. God is pure in perpetuity; that is, He is and will always be pure. God is perfect, lacking nothing.

We might also consider Paul's exhortation to believers in Philippi: "Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true ... honorable ... just ... pure ... lovely ... commendable — if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy

— dwell on these things" (Phil. 4:8). Whatever commendable things are worthy of our attention, they are but dim reflections of the brightness of God's glory.

Shield (30-36)

These verses are full of martial imagery: barricades, walls, refuge, rock, heights, war, bow and shield. Through much of his life, David faced war. He protected his flocks from wild animals. He confronted a seasoned warrior, a blasphemous giant whose arrogant pronouncements became silent with a single stone. David survived attacks from friends and family members.

Through it all, he found solace and strength in Yahweh. His shield was the Lord's deliverance, His salvation.

As I write this lesson, my heart breaks for Christians suffering in Nicaragua. People are taking paving stones off the roads to build barricades and block trucks from delivering food and medical supplies. Armed thugs are desecrating churches and killing those seeking refuge inside.

How can Christians remain thankful in such circumstances? Paul's words are instructive both for them and for us: "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18).

Eternal (50-51)

The intervening verses speak of God's faithfulness, David's deliverance and nations bowing before him. David kept all of this in eternal perspective. This occurred for the glory of God. Even David's status among the nations was for the purpose of praise. Notice 2 Samuel 22:50 — "I will give thanks to you among the nations."

God's eternal plan has been to redeem people to Himself from every tribe, tongue and nation. Jesus, the son of David, redeemed us through His blood.✠

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

PRIORITIZE Nehemiah 6:1-3, 15-16; 8:1-13, 5-8

Chapter 6 begins with the resounding news that the wall has been completed and that there are no gaps to be seen. The city is secure. The only thing that remains to be done is to raise the gates. At that point the enemy tries to interfere with the progress that is being made and to distract Nehemiah from the task that is still to be finished.

Stay focused on the task until God's work is completed. (6:1-3, 15-16)

It probably seemed harmless. A letter arrives which invites Nehemiah to leave Jerusalem and go to one of the villages about 20 miles northwest of Jerusalem. Perhaps it came as a suggestion of some respite, some relaxation after such an arduous time of activity. However, Nehemiah detects a plan to lure him away from his post and do him harm. So he declines very politely, indicating that he is too busy to come.

Four more invitations quickly follow, one after the other, until finally he receives a letter which contains a threat, spreading a rumor that Nehemiah is actually plotting against the Persian Empire and intending to put himself forward as a new king of Israel.

Words can be deceptive and harmful. If enough lies are told about a person, even a leader, then some people will conclude that there is "no smoke without fire."

Nehemiah, however, stays focused and doesn't deviate from the work that God has called him to do. As a result, the wall was completed.

God's word deserves our attention. (8:1-3)

As the story progresses, the call of God shifts from being engaged in active service

to reflecting on personal spirituality and how a spiritual leader, indeed any member of the people of God, can sustain the life of faith.

At this stage, Nehemiah is joined by Ezra the scribe, the teacher of the law, and over a period of several hours the law is read and people listen attentively.

This is the first public recognition in Israel's history of the authority of Torah, the law of God, teaching God's people how to live a life which will lead to wholesome and joyful community.

God's word is to be both read and studied. (8:5-8)

Not only did Ezra and his fellow scribes read the Law publicly, but they made the meaning clear so that people understood exactly what God was calling His people to do and how to live their lives.

In a period of time, even within the Bible Belt, when personal Bible reading is less and less important to many Christians and Bible knowledge among young people is depressingly low, this passage of Scripture calls the people of God to give themselves to the reading and study of the word of God.

As we are attentive to God and begin to understand what it means to be people of faith, then our hearts are filled with joy and gladness. So we read that the people bowed their heads, worshipped and responded to what they were taught by saying amen. They made their own affirmation of commitment and loyalty to Scripture: Yes, may it be so!

This story reminds us that we do not worship a book, but through our reading of the Bible, we come to know God more fully and love Him more fervently. John Calvin expressed it this way: "We owe to the Scriptures the same reverence as we owe to God since it has its only source in Him."✠

Christian Crossword

By Connie Holman Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

- Are they ___? (2 Cor. 11:22)
- Pronoun for male.
- There hath ___ temptation taken you. (1 Cor. 10:13)
- Move laboriously.
- A flattering mouth worketh ___. (Prov. 26:28)
- Precious stone.
- Athaliah the daughter of ___. (2 Chron. 22:2)
- Second note of musical scale.
- Good works for necessary ___. (Titus 3:14)
- Death shall ___ from them. (Rev. 9:6)
- Garment edge.
- Opposite of came.
- Yes in Spanish.
- Selenium. (abbr.)
- His only ___ son. (John 3:16)
- Work.

- ___ the hart panteth. (Ps. 42:1, KJV)
- Father.
- Times when sun is farthest north or south in the elliptic.
- Do not set up any wooden ___ pole. (Deut. 16:21)
- You.
- ___ de Janeiro.
- A tropical bird.
- Three measures of barley for a ___. (Rev. 6:6)
- I am ashamed and ___. (Ezra 9:6)
- Yellowish green fruit.
- ___ ye even so to them. (Matt. 7:12)
- Too.
- ___ Him were all things created. (Col. 1:16)
- Belonging to a female.
- Type of grain.
- Selenium. (abbr.)
- For we ___ His workmanship. (Eph. 2:10)

Down

- Brings upon himself.
- Therefore.
- Silver, ivory and ___. (1 Kings 10:22)
- Type of shade tree.
- And, ___, I am with you. (Matt. 28:20)
- Honoring false gods.
- ___ Lanka.
- All the ___ thereof shall be burned. (Mic. 1:7)
- Make thine ___ thy footstool. (Heb. 1:13)
- Acquire.
- A help ___ for him. (Gen. 2:18)
- Veil of the temple was ___. (Mark 15:38)
- Israel's female judge.
- Apostle, and a ___ of the Gentiles. (2 Tim. 1:11)
- ___ things of the world. (1 Cor. 1:28)
- ___ in Bashan. (Deut. 4:43)
- They were sawn ___.
- (Heb. 11:37)
- At ___ westward. (1 Chron. 26:18)
- Like ___ dove. (Hos. 7:11; 2 words)
- Worth doing. (2 words)
- Very long time.
- Built his ___ upon a rock. (Matt. 7:24)
- Time long past.
- ___ shall we ever be with the Lord. (1 Thess. 4:17)
- Decline.
- Location.
- Expression of triumph



Stepping out in **faith**

Elmore Association ministry assistant writes book to disciple women in Latin America

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

For the past couple of years, Barbara Kay Edwards has traveled with a team to Nicaragua, gotten set up under some trees and led a women's Bible study.

Then, "when we would leave my heart would just be so burdened," said Edwards, ministry assistant for Elmore Baptist Association. "Some of these places are so remote down these dirt roads. We would leave Bibles, but we would leave them mostly with the men of the family. I just felt like the women were left out."

So she would come back to Alabama, and those women would stay on her heart.

"I was driving to work one day and I was just in tears. My heart was breaking for those people who hadn't had the opportunity to be discipled," Edwards said. "I felt God telling me I needed to use what I'd been taught to go teach others."

So she decided to take some of the basic concepts God had taught her and put them in a 15-day devotional.

"I wrote them so that new Christians and women who have never heard the gospel before can understand," Edwards said. "I used the passages and the basics that have helped me grow in my faith and wrote about those."

Then she approached a friend with a printing company and told him that she didn't know where to start.

"He told me if I could get them written and translated, he would take care of the rest," Edwards said. "God really brought it all together."

She finished writing the book and named it "Well Worn Paths," a name she says represents the ruts we live our lives in and how God calls us to step out in faith to a new life.

Then Edwards asked a Brazilian friend with a ministry in the Amazon basin to translate it into Portuguese, and Zuly Lemus, the wife of Elmore Association Hispanic strategist Carlos Lemus, translated it into Spanish.

Zuly Lemus said it was meaningful for her that Edwards took the time to finish the project.

"Since I translated it, I had a lot of time to read over it and really

For more information or to get copies of "Well Worn Paths," contact Edwards at 334-391-7723 or ministryassistant@elmorebaptist.org.



Photo courtesy of Barbara Kay Edwards

Denise Renfroe (left), a member of Shoal Creek Baptist Church, Deatsville, teaches from 'Well Worn Paths' through a translator in the Amazon region of Brazil with a ministry called Amazon Hope.

think about it," she said. "It really encouraged me to know God well and to really love Him through reading His word and praying. I pray it will encourage other women to do the same."

In July a team took the books to the Amazon and used them to teach a women's Bible study.

"They sent a picture of the women using it, and my heart almost jumped out of my chest," Edwards said. "These are women who have never heard the gospel, can't get Bibles and have never heard anything like this."

Used by God

Ray McKenzie, director of missions for Elmore Association, said God is using Edwards' books already in Brazil and Guatemala.

"God has used it to open the door for her to lead a pastors' wives conference on the Amazon this October," he said. "It is amazing to see the things God has done with this little book in just two months. I can only imagine how many women He is going to change through His word as they read these lessons in the years to come."

More copies of the book are on their way to Guatemala soon, and others will be used in the local pregnancy resource center. †



Photo courtesy of Barbara Kay Edwards

Barbara Kay Edwards took some of the basic concepts God had taught her and put them in a 15-day devotional called 'Well Worn Paths.'

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Photo courtesy of Life Church

Bobby Gruenewald (right), innovation leader for Life Church and founder of the YouVersion Bible app, works with his team in Edmond, Oklahoma. Celebrating its 10th anniversary, the app has been downloaded on 330 million devices and in every country in the world, according to the church.

Digital Bible

With 330 million downloads, first Bible app celebrates 10 years

A high-tech Bible in your pocket? In 2018 it's a reality for hundreds of millions of smartphone users around the world.

But a decade ago, when leaders of Oklahoma-based Life Church developed the popular YouVersion app, the concept was new.

"We just thought, 'What if the Bible could be among the very first group of apps?'" said Bobby Gruenewald, pastor and innovation leader for Life Church.

Life Church enlisted a 19-year-old staff member named Sam Soffes — now a San Francisco-based software engineer for Lyft — to create the Bible app in 2008.

When Apple launched its App Store in July 2008, YouVersion was one of the first 200 free apps available — and the only Bible app.

"That first weekend, from Thursday to Sunday, we saw 83,000 people install it on their iPhones, and it blew our minds," Gruenewald said. "We had no idea that was possible."

That was only the beginning. Since then, YouVersion has been downloaded on more than 330 million devices and in every country in the world, according to Life Church.

Mission through technology

Countless other Bible apps have followed, but YouVersion remains the "Gutenberg Bible" of online technology, religion researcher Scott Thumma said, referring to the first mass-produced book, printed in the 15th century.

"It is true there are many others now, but YouVersion was the early front-runner and has continued to improve and offer features that make it the best and by far most often downloaded worldwide," said Thumma, director of the Hartford Institute for Religion Research in Connecticut.

At the beginning, YouVersion offered the Bible in 15 versions and two languages. Through partnerships with publishers and Bible societies, those numbers have expanded to 1,700 versions and 1,200 languages.

YouVersion — the first option that shows up in an App Store search for "Bible" — remains free with no commercial advertisements. Benefactors support a mission to reach as many people as possible through their phones and introduce them to Jesus.

Nationally, the use of technology to read the Bible has grown steadily, according to the 2018 State of the Bible survey, conducted by the Barna Group in partnership with the American Bible Society.

About 42 percent of Americans who read, listen to or pray with the Bible on their own have a Bible app on their phones, the survey found.

Still, 89 percent of Bible users say that a print version remains appealing to them, Barna reported.

"Print is still king," said David Kinnaman, president of Ventura, California-based Barna, a Christian market research firm.

However, he explained: "A lot of times, it's a both/and situation — so it's not that print is being replaced or that digital is not being used. It's just that they're adding digital usage along with their print usage of the Bible."

But while overall Bible reading has remained steady, Kinnaman said, the digital availability of the Scriptures "doesn't seem to be making significant inroads with people who were previously unreached."

"I think the future is going to be churches helping people realize that it's a lot more than just having access to Scriptures," Kinnaman said. "But it's also about how do we apply principles and understand what it means for us to live with discernment in this digital Babylon." (RNS)



Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

SBC CP 3.06 percent ahead of projection

NASHVILLE — Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) national and international missions and ministries received by the SBC Executive Committee (EC) are 3.06 percent above the year-to-date budgeted projection. However, the gifts are 0.36 percent below contributions received during the same time frame last year, according to a news release from D. August Boto, SBC EC interim president.

As of July 31 gifts received by the EC for distribution through the Cooperative Program Allocation Budget through the first 10 months of the SBC's fiscal year totaled \$164,899,754.63. This total is \$4,899,754.63 above the \$160 million year-to-date budgeted amount to support SBC ministries globally and across North America, and is \$603,898.24 less than the \$165,503,652.87 received through the end of July 2017. This year-to-year comparison is affected by a one-time \$3.1 million gift from the Florida Baptist Convention in June 2017 following the sale of the state convention's building. (BP)

New Billy Graham tributes launched

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — On Aug. 20 the permanent Sirius XM channel dedicated exclusively to messages from "America's Pastor" will launch, providing messages by Billy Graham 24 hours a day on Channel 460 and online.

The Billy Graham Channel began a series of limited runs last November, beginning with Graham's 99th birthday, and included a temporary tribute channel in conjunction with Graham's death. The channel is a response to listeners who contacted his ministry, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, and Sirius XM requesting continued broadcasts of Graham's messages.

Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., opened an exhibit on Aug. 5 to honor the late evangelist and give visitors a glimpse of his impact on the world. "Pilgrim Preacher: Billy Graham, and the Challenges of the Modern World" will be on display for museum visitors through Jan. 29, 2019. The exhibit includes rare video footage, photographs and artifacts to help tell the story of how Graham became a leading evangelical presence in the world. (BP)

Hammond nominated to lead Ga. Baptists

DULUTH, Ga. — The search committee for the next executive director of the Georgia Baptist Mission Board has nominated Thomas Hammond, lead pastor of First Baptist Church, Alpharetta, for the position. The Georgia Baptist Convention's executive committee plans to vote on the search team's recommendation during its Sept. 11 meeting. Hammond would succeed J. Robert White who has held the office since January 1993.



HAMMOND

As pastor, Hammond has been active in church planting. He also spent 13 years with the North American Mission Board, where he supervised teams for personal evangelism, event evangelism, prayer evangelism and student evangelism. (BP)

Survey: most churchgoers invite others

NASHVILLE — Nearly two-thirds of U.S. Protestant churchgoers say they've invited at least one person to visit their church in the past six months, according to a report from LifeWay Research.

The survey asked participants how often they had invited an individual or a family to attend a worship service in the last six months. Invitations counted even if they were turned down.

Seventeen percent say they extended an invitation. Twenty-one percent extended two invitations, while 25 percent extended three or more. Nine percent say they don't know how many invitations they extended. Three out of 10 say they didn't invite anyone. (LifeWay)