

INSIDE



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Reuters photo

A pro-government supporter shouts slogans to anti-government protesters during a march called 'March of the balloons' in Managua, Nicaragua, on Sept. 9.

'Empowering the church'

As violence in Nicaragua continues, so does ministry work

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

Thousands of Nicaraguans have fled the country because of continued violence, but the unrest has not stopped ministry efforts by Baptists in the Central American nation.

"Through the crisis, we still see the work of the Lord being carried out," said Omar Alvarado, director of Central American Missions for Crosspoint International Ministries.

"The work is being done right. We are empowering the church, encouraging them and facilitating some resources. ... We've seen associations collect funds and food to take to the cities most affected by the political violence. They are coming together themselves to support each other."

Mass demonstrations

The situation in Nicaragua has not improved in the past few weeks. The country's president, Daniel Ortega, has accused the U.S. of plotting a coup to overthrow his government. Since April, mass demonstrations against Ortega's policies have led to hundreds of Nicaraguans being killed or jailed.

In a Facebook post Alvarado said 23 people in his neighborhood were arrested recently "without due process, just for expressing discon-

tent or for participating in marches against the government."

World Watch Monitor reported on Sept. 6 that Ortega ordered the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) to leave the country after the organization "called on the government to stop the persecution of protestors and disarm masked gangs who it alleges are responsible for killings and arbitrary detentions" during months of anti-government protests. The UNCHR also "described the torture and use of excessive force used during interviews with victims and local human rights groups," reported the BBC.

A statement from the U.S. State Department issued Sept. 7 said in part that "the United States condemns the Ortega government's recent arbitrary detention of six
(See 'Ministry,' page 3)

Busy hurricane season puts DR on alert

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

The peak of Atlantic hurricane season has arrived, which has Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief (DR) volunteers on alert.

Hurricane Florence made landfall on Sept. 14 bringing heavy winds, torrential rain and freshwater flooding to North and South Carolina before moving inland. Alabama Baptist DR had already taken to social media to alert volunteers to be ready for a "multiple-week response" to the expected damage from flooding, wind, tornadoes and downed trees.

'On the ready'

Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, asked for prayer for those in the path of Florence and said in a Facebook post that Alabama Baptists are "on the ready in terms of response."

At the Facebook page of Alabama Baptist DR, officials said it was too soon to know what the specific needs would be, but that "logistical concerns and safety concerns will affect our plan."

And as plans were underway, meteorologists and DR officials were watching two other tropical systems developing in the Atlantic, noting that "partners in North and South Carolina are working diligently to get ready and across the Southern Baptist DR network, a strategic plan is being prepared."

Missions offering

The anticipation of a DR response in the coastal states came during the Week of Prayer for State Missions and the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering.

Gifts to the offering support DR and Alabama Woman's
(See 'Staying,' page 11)

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

Do Members Quit Churches or Church Leaders?

That church attendance continues trending downward is not news. It has for years. In the 1950s about 49 percent of respondents indicated they had attended a religious service in the past seven days. Today positive responses to that question are in the mid-30 percent range, according to the Gallup Research organization.

A Gallup Poll released Sept. 7, 2018, showed 38 percent of Americans indicated they attend religious services weekly or almost weekly. That number has steadily declined from 42 percent in 2014.

Another 12 percent said they attend religious services about once a month, a percentage that has been constant for the last four years.

The only number that is growing is the number who seldom or never attend religious services. That number grew from 44 percent in 2014 to 48 percent in the latest Gallup release.

Drawing a comparison from business and industry, Gallup has posited the question, “Do members quit churches or do they quit church leaders?”

That question reflects the finding from business and industry that employees don’t quit companies, they quit managers.

Who is to blame?

Certainly it is unfair to lay the blame for members leaving the church solely at the feet of church leaders — specifically the pastor. To do so fails to account for the changes in life situations of members and all the other reasons that impact decisions about where to worship or whether to worship at all.

Also, attempting to draw comparisons between employees and church members may be a “step too far.” Employees have a different relationship with their supervisor than church members have with their pastor, since church members voluntarily choose to be affiliated with a church.

Still, Gallup offers some intriguing insights into the relationship between church leadership and attendance. For example, when members who had attended church in the past seven days were



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

asked to rate three primary areas of their pastor’s ministry, responses were substantially higher than responses from members who had not attended in the past seven days.

The first group gave outstanding ratings for delivering sermons — 63 percent; having caring personal interactions with members — 63 percent; and managing operations — 56 percent. The second group gave outstanding ratings of 41 percent, 40 percent and 36 percent respectively. That is more than a 20 percentage point difference for each area.

When all church member responses were tabulated, 54 percent rated sermons as outstanding; 53 percent noted outstanding interpersonal relations with members; and 48 percent praised outstanding church management.

If activeness in the church is supposed to result in higher evaluations, then there seems to be a lot of work that needs to be done with about half the membership.

Gallup wrote, “The correlational data do raise the possibility that those who are staying away from church may be doing so precisely because they are less engaged by their church leaders than those who attend more frequently.”

While this conclusion is still somewhat specu-

lative, there are other studies which point to the importance of church leadership and participation in religious worship.

In 2017, Gallup released a study declaring that sermon content is what appeals most to churchgoers. That study found that “sermons or talks that teach me more about Scripture” and “sermons or lectures that help me connect religion to my own life” were the two most important reasons responders gave for attending church.

Not only were the sermons the most important factor for responders (76 percent and 75 percent respectively), they were rated “not a factor” (8 percent) or “minor factor” (16 percent) by the fewest number of people.

That finding was consistent with a study by Pew Research a decade earlier that found the quality of the sermon was the most important factor in deciding what church to attend (83 percent). The

next most important item was being welcomed by church leaders (79 percent).

Again, both the Gallup and the Pew studies stress the importance of church leadership in helping people find the value they seek in attending worship.

Earlier this year an article on Church Leaders’ website listed the top 12 reasons people leave a local church. The top reason was relationship conflict — someone gets mad at someone

else and one or both leave the church.


But three of the next four reasons pointed back to the importance of church leadership. The reasons, in order, were weak preaching, authoritarian leadership and neglected pastoral care.

It seems both academic and anecdotal research by church leaders concludes that pastoral and ministerial staff leadership is critical to whether someone stays or leaves a local church.

A few years ago a well-known professor of preaching declared, “People join a church because of the pastor.” Though not the only reason, it is an important reason and must not be overlooked.

Christ is the head of the church

At the same time churches are not personality cults built around the pastor or church staff members. The head of the Church is Jesus Christ. The church helps us worship Him, grow in His grace and live to exemplify His love for all people.

The New Testament describes the Church as the Body of Christ and every part of the body is important. But there can be little doubt that the role of the pastor and other church leaders in preaching, in relationships and in management are important (some would say critical) factors in the life of a local church. 

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

GRANDPARENTING IDEAS

As a new grandparent, the article in the Sept. 6 issue “Gift from God: 9 ways to share love of Jesus with grandchildren” caught my eye. There were some great ideas, but one of them needs tweaking.

It was suggested that grandparents volunteer with their grandchildren in missions opportunities. Great idea, however, the suggested activity was to take the children to a disaster relief

site to volunteer. These sites are not good places for children. Only credentialed volunteers will be allowed to participate at an Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief site.

These are people who have had training and understand how to do the work safely. There also is a minimum age of 18 for any volunteer. It would be disappointing to have a grandparent show up with a grandchild and not be allowed to work.

Instead, here are some other options that would be more suitable:

1. Many local associations have ministry centers that would have appropriate projects for children. Sorting food or clothing, stocking shelves, preparing things for distribution are
(See ‘Letters,’ page 10)





"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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Ministry in the midst of crisis

Church leaders have been arrested for trying to provide relief

(continued from page 1)

prominent student members of the National Dialogue. These students are the latest example of the thousands of citizens who are peacefully and democratically protesting government actions, only to be harassed, detained, disappeared or even killed. ... We also call on the Ortega government to ensure the safety of all who choose to exercise their universal rights to freedom of speech and freedom of assembly."

World Watch Monitor reported that church leaders trying to broker peace and provide assistance to injured protesters have been labeled "coup plotters" and "enemies of the regime," with churches and church leaders targeted as though they were terrorists, according to Rossana Ramirez, an analyst with Open Doors' World Watch Research unit.

Ramirez said the church has criticized the government and denounced its crimes against the Nicaraguan people. She added that "Catholic churches have been playing an important role in the protests, providing shelter and medical help, as well as using church bells to warn of any impending attacks by paramilitary groups and government supporters."

About half of Nicaragua's population belongs to the Catholic Church while around 33 percent of Nicaraguans consider themselves evangelical Christians. Ramirez said no citizen or religious denomination is safe from attack since military groups have adopted a "shoot-to-kill" approach to protesters.

Alvarado and his family have been in the United States since July. Alvarado has visited churches in the Southeast and has been in several in Alabama, including many in Calhoun Baptist Association and Southeast Alabama Baptist Association, both of which have partnerships with Crosspoint International.

Though the violence has led to the cancellation of many scheduled missions trips, there



Photo by Hannah Muñoz

Omar Alvarado (center), Felix Ruiz (second from right) and Ruth Alvarado (right) joined TAB News host Jennifer Davis Rash (left) and co-host Debbie Campbell in the studio to talk about the impact of ongoing political unrest in Nicaragua on Christian ministries.

Hear more about the situation in Nicaragua in TAB News' Sept. 6 podcast. Special guests include Felix Ruiz, president of the Nicaraguan Baptist Convention, and Omar Alvarado, director of Central American Missions for Crosspoint International Ministries.

are still ways Alabama Baptists can help Nicaraguan pastors and Christians, Alvarado said. Prayer is the most important need.

"The Church in Nicaragua is facing a great danger because of the government's position," Alvarado said.

Economic crisis

Alvarado said many pastors have been affected by the economic crisis brought on by the violence. Hotels are closed, tourism has stopped and many businesses have closed, he said, leading to more than a quarter-million jobs lost.

"The economic crisis is hurting pastors, most of whom are bivocational," Alvarado said. "The lack of work in the country is hurting them."

Gifts from partners in the U.S. are being used to provide basic food packages for pastors and their families. Donations also support the emergency fund of the Nicaraguan Baptist Convention, which coordinates several ministries in the country, including a nursing home, radio station and Baptist university.

Alvarado also urges churches with partnerships in Nicaragua not to give up on the country.

"The Baptist Convention of Nicaragua and its associations, institutions, leadership and local churches continue to carry out evangelistic and missions work," he said. "The ministry of the local church continues in the midst of this crisis."

For more information about ministry efforts, visit www.crosspointinternational.org.

Platt 'released from IMB commitment;' Meador named interim

David Platt, president of the International Mission Board (IMB), has been released "from his commitment to the IMB," IMB board chairman Rick Dunbar announced Sept. 14.

Platt's resignation will be effective at the IMB board of directors' Sept. 27 meeting, the same day retired missionary Clyde Meador will become interim president if approved by the full board. Meador was approved by the executive committee of the IMB

board in a special called meeting Sept. 13.

"Trustee officers recently discussed with David the possibility of the need for an organizational transition to an interim time as the presidential search continues," Dunbar explained. "The board's executive committee met, and after prayer and discussion decided to release David from his commit-



MEADOR

ment to the IMB in order to allow him to focus full time on his new role ... and for the IMB to move forward into a transition period."

Platt has served as president since Aug. 27, 2014. Since September 2017, Platt also has served as pastor/teacher of McLean Bible

Church in metro Washington, D.C. On Feb. 12, 2018, Platt asked

IMB trustees to begin searching for his successor and stated his intention to continue serving as president during the process.

Referencing that initial intention, Platt also noted in a statement released Sept. 14, "I want to honor the authority God has placed over me ... and I want to do whatever is best for the IMB."

Meador has 42 years of service with the IMB. He previously served as IMB's interim president August 2010–March 2011. (IMB)

Baptist Nursing Fellowship (BNF) President Kaye Miller (left, at podium) leads a prayer of dedication for BNF Executive Director Lori Spikes (seated, at right) as BNF members gather around Spikes who was elected to the leadership role during the organization's Sept. 7-9 annual meeting.

'Glorifying God'



WMU photo by Trennis Henderson

Baptist Nursing Fellowship celebrates 35 years, elects former missionary as executive director

Launching a new era of leadership while celebrating 35 years of ministry, Baptist Nursing Fellowship (BNF) elected Lori Spikes as the organization's new executive director during its annual meeting Sept. 7-9 at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center.

Spikes, a longtime Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB) missionary to Chile, is a registered nurse with 40 years of experience in various settings. She currently serves as a volunteer triage nurse at Mission First, a primary care clinic for low-income, uninsured individuals and families in Jackson, Mississippi.



WMU photo by Pam Henderson
Lori Spikes is the newly elected executive director of Baptist Nursing Fellowship.

BNF, a ministry partner with National Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), was established in 1983. It provides continuing education, missions opportunities and fellowship for Baptist nurses serving in the U.S. and on missions fields around the world. This year's annual meeting, which highlighted the theme, "Glorifying God with Mind and Voice," involved more than 50 participants from 16 states.

Announcing Spikes' nomination as executive director, BNF President Kaye Miller told the group, "After much prayer individually and collectively, the Lord led the executive committee to a unanimous vote on the candidate." Noting that the committee compiled a needs list, a want list and a dream list for determining the new leader, Miller added, "On that

dream list, there was one item and it was 'missionary.' It's my great privilege to introduce to you today the woman that the Lord has put on the committee's heart."

Spikes, who holds a bachelor of science in nursing degree from Samford University, served as an IMB journeyman nurse in Honduras from 1980 to 1982. She and her husband, Dr. Jim Spikes, served in Chile for 20 years where her work included serving as a parish nursing volunteer, coordinator of volunteer medical teams and administrative assistant. They also served with the American Peoples Diaspora in Europe and Canada for five years before returning to the states in 2015.

She most recently served as chair of BNF's resource development committee.

'In wonderful ... hands'

Describing Spikes' skill set as "team leadership, budgeting and finance, strong verbal communications and experienced in global strategy," Miller said, "She's bilingual in Spanish and English and boy can she plan an event. Isn't it amazing when God provides? I think BNF is in wonderful, wonderful hands."

Spikes said her new leadership role "is a way I can continue my missionary desire and experience to reach out to those in need and to encourage and help this group go forward."

Spikes said her goals for BNF include organizing and hosting annual international and stateside

medical missions trips, making more nurses and health care professionals aware of BNF and reaching out to more nursing students.

As BNF celebrated 35 years of ministry, the three-day meeting included a BNF birthday party as well as worship and Bible study sessions, missionary field reports, continuing education sessions and hands-on missions projects such as writing notes of encouragement to student nurses, prayer walking and assembling activity books for chemotherapy patients.

Wanda Lee, former president

and retired executive director of National WMU, led Bible studies highlighting the meeting theme of glorifying God.

"Your life is a reflection of your thoughts," Lee reminded her fellow nurses. "What consumes your mind controls your life." Affirming that "our minds are wonderful gifts from God," she added, "They can be used for much

good. ... We're commanded to love God with all of our selves, including our minds. You make up your mind about what you believe and then you have to allow it to impact your life."

Citing Philippians 4:7-8, she said, "The peace of God will guard our hearts and minds when we fill them with the things of Christ."

Dr. Ellen Tabor, the founding president of BNF, was among participants who gathered to mark the organization's 35-year ministry milestone. She and her husband, Dr. Charles Tabor, served for 20 years as Southern Baptist missionaries to Korea and Macau.

'To advance His work'

Dr. Tabor noted that her dream for BNF has always been to invite nurses to use their nursing skills "to advance His work whether in America or on the missions field" by helping people live healthier lives physically and spiritually. (WMU)

For more information about upcoming missions opportunities and the ministry of Baptist Nursing Fellowship, visit www.wmu.com/bnf.

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Music and a **message**

Radio continues to be popular way to discover new Christian music in Alabama

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

When Joe May hears children singing the Praise 88.7 FM jingle, he can't help but smile. That smile just gets bigger when parents tell him how their kids sing along to the Contemporary Christian music playing on the radio.

"Our hope and our desire is to be more than just a music-playing station," said May, president of Alabama Christian Radio, the nonprofit organization that operates Praise 88.7, a station whose audience includes the Auburn listening area and beyond. "We cover a large area with a small staff, but we want to be here for people, to be a part of whatever helps people."

Alabama has some 400 radio stations broadcasting throughout the state. About 25 percent of those stations focus on some type of Christian programming, including urban gospel, southern gospel and Contemporary Christian music, as well as religious programs on everything from family to finances.

Consistent market

Despite the growing popularity of satellite radio, streaming music and podcasting, radio continues to be a market that reaches a great number of people. The 2017 Nielsen Music 360 survey reported that nearly half of Americans (49 percent) still discover new music "over the air" on AM/FM radio stations. Another quar-

ter of respondents said they discover new music through online AM/FM radio. And 72 percent of online music streamers said they listen to some form of radio.

'Primary way'

"Radio continues to be the primary way listeners discover music," according to Erin Crawford, senior vice president of Nielsen Entertainment and general manager of Nielsen Music. "The raft of new technologies and devices are opening up new discovery meth-

ods but also providing new ways for radio stations to deliver content — most notably via streaming."

And what keeps people listening to the radio? Though many factors are at play, Nielsen found that more than a third of listeners (37 percent) said the DJs.

That was defi-

nately true of the late Don Shepherd, long-time host of "Sunday in the Country" and the "Wednesday Night Gospel" programs on WCKF 100.7, a country music-format station in Ashland.

"Don had a passion for people," said WCKF general manager Teresa Goodman. "His ministry was showing God's love through the music but also talking to the people, praying with them, helping them. That was Don's legacy."

Shepherd would take 50–60 calls each show, she said, and that's one advantage smaller stations like WCKF have over satellite radio or music streaming services — personal connection.

"Radio ministry is where you can touch people who never leave their homes," she said. "We reach



Photo by Stephanie Freeman

The late Don Shepherd was the long-time host of 'Sunday in the Country' and the 'Wednesday Night Gospel' programs on WCKF 100.7, a country music-format station in Ashland.

people in nursing homes and those who are taking care of a sick parent."

That's not to say that the internet is not a valuable tool, however.

Many radio stations are available via an online stream as well, and that web presence means unlimited opportunities to reach listeners.

Goodman said Shepherd had

listeners in more than 14 countries, a global ministry from a small town in Alabama.

May regularly hears from soldiers stationed in the Middle East who listen to Praise 88.7 and appreciate the Christian content in a country where it's not easy to come by.

"I get excited about that," he said. "It's a blessing."

May said many listeners tune in

to the livestream from their computers during the workday, and listeners appreciate "music with a message," as well as local features like obituaries and the community calendar.

Praise 88.7 also partners with local food banks, women's shelters, churches and ministries like Tallapoosa Baptist Association.

The association hosts a daily devotional spot on the station.

Tallapoosa Association associational missionary/director of missions James Smith said the spot is generally 1–3 minutes and sponsored by a local auto parts store.

On Monday the topic is the Celebrate Recovery ministry. Other days the topics vary but the goal is always to be relational, Smith said.

Relating to listeners

"We try to relate to who (the listeners) are and to encourage them to walk with the Lord through prayer, Bible study and meditation," Smith said. "At least once a week, we speak to those who aren't believers and reach out to them."

Reaching the lost has to be part of the mission of Christian radio, May believes.

He knows Christians will seek out stations like his because they already value the message and the music.

But he also knows that a nonbeliever who would never step foot in a church might turn the dial and hear the station.

"God's able to speak to those folks even as they search for something on the radio," May said. "It's just God and them."

And because of that, radio is a ministry that God still uses, he said.

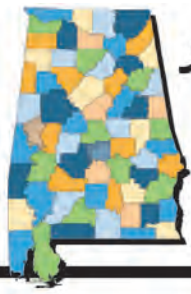
"It's a challenging market, but I'm excited about where we are and who we are," May said. ✝

Are you involved in programming at a Christian radio station in Alabama?

The Alabama Baptist would love to talk to you about partnering with our ministry. Contact us through our website at www.TheAlabamaBaptist.org or email news@thealabamabaptist.org.

"We try to relate to who they (the listeners) are and to encourage them to walk with the Lord through prayer, Bible study and meditation. At least once a week, we speak to those who aren't believers and reach out to them."

James Smith, director of missions, Tallapoosa Baptist Association



Across ALABAMA'S Associations

ALABAMA-CRENSHAW

▶ **First Church, Luverne**, will hold a homecoming service Sept. 30, 10:45 a.m. Clay Crum is pastor. ▶ **Magnolia Church, Lapine**, will hold a homecoming service Sept. 23, 10 a.m. and revival services Sept. 24–26, 7 nightly. Glen Kidd is pastor.

BALDWIN

▶ **Jason Hughes** is the new pastor of **Southside Church, Bay Minette**. He and his wife, Julie, have three children. ▶ **Michael Woods** is the new pastor of **First Church, Elberta**. ▶ **Three Rivers Church, Seminole**, will celebrate its 9th anniversary with a revival Sept. 30, 10:30 a.m. The revival will continue Oct. 1–3, 6 nightly. Dexter Truesdale will be the guest speaker. Dan Lowery is pastor.

BESSEMER

▶ **Southcrest Church, Bessemer**, will host a gospel singing Oct. 5 featuring Crimson Stained and The Campbells. Dinner will be served at 6 p.m. and music will start at 7 p.m. A love offering will be taken. Scott Bush is pastor.

CAHABA

▶ **Friendship Church, Lawley**, will host the annual Turnip Green Supper and Music Festival on Sept. 29, 4 p.m. William Harris is pastor.

CLEBURNE

▶ **Cleburne Association** recently welcomed **The Church at Pleasant Grove, Heflin**, into the association. The Church at Pleasant Grove is a church plant through the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Jason Bachus is pastor of The Church at Pleasant Grove. Larry Riddle is associational missionary/director of missions for Cleburne Association.

COLBERT-LAUDERDALE

▶ **Charlie James** recently retired from his position as pastor of **Washington Park Church, Muscle Shoals**, after seven years at the church.

MONTGOMERY

▶ **Capitol Heights Church, Montgomery**, will honor **Pastor J. Warren Culver** with a special service and retirement reception Sept. 30. Worship will be

gin at 10:30 a.m. and the reception will be held 4–6 p.m. Culver and his wife, Paula, have three children.

COOSA RIVER

▶ **Marble City Church, Sylacauga**, will hold a concert featuring The Shepherd Family on Sept. 30, 5:30 p.m. Mac McCaleb is pastor. ▶ **Joe Tolbert** is the new pastor of **First Church, Brecon**.

FRIENDSHIP

▶ **Union Hill Church, Oneonta**, will celebrate its 115th anniversary on Sept. 30, 10:30 a.m. The church also will dedicate its new Family Life Center during the service. Bill Barnett is pastor.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

▶ **Lookout Mountain Association** will hold a Youth with Christ rally Sept. 22, 8 a.m.–8 p.m. at Mount Zion Church, Collinsville. Lloyd Borden is associational missionary/director of missions for Lookout Mountain. ▶ **Mount Zion Church, Collinsville**, will host the quarterly Red Book Singing on Sept. 28, 6 p.m. Howard Holland is pastor. ▶ **Unity Church, Gaylesville**, will hold a revival Sept. 24–26, 6:30 nightly. Shaunathan Bell will be the guest evangelist. Robert Steele is pastor. ▶ **Pleasant Valley #1 Church, Gaylesville**, will host the quarterly men's ministry breakfast Sept. 30, 7 a.m. Ronald Berry is pastor.

MADISON

▶ **University Church, Huntsville**, will celebrate its 60th anniversary Sept. 30. Fellowship will begin at 9 a.m. and worship will begin at 10 a.m. Lunch will follow the service. For more information call 256-837-3611. Bobby Burt is pastor. ▶ **Whitesburg Church, Huntsville**, will hold Until Then, a senior adult revival, Sept. 24–26, 10:30a.m.–noon. Harold Fanning will be the guest evangelist. Worship will be led by Rick Stone and Becca Gillham. The revival will be held in the South Campus Chapel. Darryl Craft is pastor.

WASHINGTON

▶ **First Church, McIntosh**, will celebrate its 65th homecoming Sept. 23, 10 a.m. Jonathan Moore will be the guest speaker. Lunch will be served following the service. John Stone is pastor. ☪



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Stewardship

Stewardship of Time

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

The role of stewards and the idea of stewardship can be found throughout the Bible. Early in Genesis we read about Eliezer who was a steward over the household of Abraham (Gen. 15:2). Luke 8:3 makes mention of Chuza, the steward of King Herod. These and other examples combined with the mention of both just and unjust stewards in Jesus' parables to give us the idea of the role of faithful stewards in managing the affairs of the one whom they served.

Last week Theology 101 began thinking about the responsibility and opportunity of Christians to be good stewards of God's manifold grace by beginning with managing our possessions in ways that honor Him. Christian stewardship is not, however, only a matter of faithfulness with money. God also gives to us an allotment of time in which to serve Him as stewards. Hence, He expects us to be faithful managers of our allotted time.

Interestingly and instructively, the New Testament has two different terms to express time. One of the terms (chronos) typically refers to a span of time marked off by hours, days or years or to a specific point in time. This term gives the English language the common term chronology as a way of referring, for example, to the arrangement of events in the order of their occurrence. Another term (kairos) expresses time in terms of an opportune or significant season, such as the time of harvest, times of refreshing, the sufferings of this present time or the last times.

of wisdom" (Ps. 90:12). While most of us as God's children would acknowledge that we should be good stewards of each day of life, how often have we heard ourselves use such phrases as "I am just marking time until ..." or even "I was simply wasting time"? Periodic times for resting or refreshing are not, however, wasted time. Such periods can be very godlike in that God Himself established the pattern of resting on the seventh day of creation. He commanded Israel to "remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work" (Ex. 20:8–10). We are to be good stewards of each week at the point of how we manage our time under the Lordship of Christ.

'An open door'

Lest we forget, our Christian stewardship also involves seizing those special times or opportune seasons that God allows. We often label such times as being presented "an open door." Good stewardship of opportune time involves seizing life's special moments and walking by faith through doors that God opens. We are to be faithful in how we manage or use life's ordinary times as well as the special or opportune times. Someone gave expression to the importance of seizing those special times with the old adage, "Opportunity knocks but once." Thanks to God's grace, He does sometimes give us second or third chances to be a good steward of our kairos occasions. ☪

Managing time

Our stewardship has to do with both kinds of time. How we use our hours of the day or days of the week comes under the responsibility of being good stewards of the chronos or time God allots us. Out of appreciation for the need to be a good steward of one's days, the psalmist prayed, "So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart

Jerry Batson is a retired Alabama Baptist pastor who also has served as associate dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University and professor of several schools of religion during his career.



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Serving the community

Judson students encouraged to be 'here' through annual Marion Matters

Judson College students and community partners at 17 project sites participated in Judson's 14th annual Marion Matters, a Perry County-wide community service initiative held each year since 2005.

This year's Marion Matters was held Aug. 24. Approximately 167 Judson students, faculty and staff members participated in Marion Matters, which was coordinated by Judson's Office of Faith-Based Service and Learning.

Judson volunteers worked on outdoor cleanup, maintenance and beautification at the Marion Cemetery and worked with Main Street Marion partners in downtown Marion's Pocket Park.

Various projects

Volunteers worked with community partners at schools in Marion, from organizing supplies and cleaning at Marion Academy to assisting with bulletin boards and preparing the greenhouse for the community garden at Francis Marion School. Some Judson teams visited and participated in activities with Perry County and Southland Nursing Home residents, and others visited shut-ins in the community, spending time with homebound residents and doing yardwork.

More Judson teams completed various projects at Sowing Seeds of Hope's Job Training Center, the Perry County Library and Eagle Grove Baptist Church. Still others installed Alabama Birding Trail signs near the entrance to nearby Perry Lakes Park.

Amy Butler, director of faith-based service and learning at Judson and coordinator of Marion Matters, said that in addition



Photo by Katlin Bailey

A Judson College team volunteers at downtown Marion's Pocket Park as part of Marion Matters on Aug. 24. Approximately 167 Judson students, faculty and staff members participated in the day of service.

to the completion of meaningful service projects in the community, Marion Matters teaches each new generation of Judson women the importance of working with each other and community partners to effect positive change wherever they are. Citing Judson's student life theme for the year, "Here," Butler explained that "Marion Matters gives students opportunities to explore how they can be 'Here,' not just at Judson, but in Marion,

through investing their time in service to our Perry County neighbors."

Tarica Crutcher, a freshman from Huntsville, learned about being "Here" as she worked in downtown Marion's Pocket Park with her team.

"I enjoyed my Marion Matters experience mostly because of the history I learned about the downtown area. It's amazing what people have yet to know about our city. It's already impacted me in a way that I want to reach out and help more people know about their community's story," Crutcher said.

At the afternoon debriefing session, Susan Jones, senior vice president and dean of students, reminded students that their involvement in the Perry County community can be a transformational experience. Jones explained that though Perry County is among the poorest counties in Alabama with almost 40 percent of its residents living below the poverty line, "when you get to know people in Perry County, you'll find that, in many ways, there are people here who have much more than you do — in terms of spiritual knowledge, in terms of wisdom acquired through a lifetime, in terms of perseverance through difficult

circumstances, in terms of strong relationships with people who love them and have been beside them through everything, both good and bad."

Jones said that the time many Judson students spend getting to know their Perry County neighbors allows them to engage with the physical, spiritual or relational poverty they encounter in their community with authenticity and creativity. This approach to service is inspired by the example of Christ, who called His disciples to love "the least

of these" by meeting their needs through selfless service.

Loving 'the least of these'

Scott Bullard, Judson's interim president, read Matthew 25 at the debriefing session, a tradition begun by the late David Potts, Judson president from 1990 to early 2018. Potts often quoted the passage as the inspiration for the activities of the faith-based service and learning program, as well as his own commitment to loving "the least of these" in the Alabama Black Belt.

Judson students will continue with other monthly and weekly service projects throughout the year. (Judson College)

For more information about Marion Matters or other service projects sponsored by Judson's Office of Faith-Based Service and Learning, contact Amy Butler at 334-683-5163 or abutler@judson.edu.



Photo by Katlin Bailey

Judson College students and education professors Allison Newton (front, left) and Lesley Sheek (front, right) assist Francis Marion School teachers and administrators in repairing and decorating bulletin boards.

CAMPUS News

JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson Fall Chapel Series Announced:** Stephanie Peek, assistant professor and head of Judson's religious studies department, kicked off the fall chapel series by challenging students to be involved in local church and community organizations. Fall chapel speakers include: Terrence Jones, Larry Hyche, Cory Horton, Chris Mills and others. Chapel services are held each Tuesday at 11:05 a.m. in Ramsay-McCrummen Chapel. The public is welcome to attend.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **UM's Alabama School of the Arts Announces Performances:** The 2018-2019 Performing Arts Series at University of Mobile (UM) will include the musical "Into the Woods" on April 5-6, 2019, and several music programs featuring UM's symphonic winds, jazz band and chamber opera. Tickets are available for all

events, including the Christmas Spectacular on Nov. 15-17 at 7 p.m. and Nov. 18 at 3 p.m. at Cottage Hill Baptist Church, Mobile. For season tickets visit umobile.edu/pas. Tickets for individual events are available at itickets.com and at the door for most performances. ► **UM Announces 2nd Piano Festival:** University of Mobile (UM), an All-Steinway School, will host a yearlong series of special events spotlighting Alabama School of the Arts' undergraduate and graduate programs in piano performance. The series includes master classes and seminars, student and faculty recitals, and special performances by Elite 88, UM's premier piano ensemble.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **WSJ Ranks Samford University No. 1 in Alabama:** The *Wall Street Journal* named Samford the top university in the state for the 2nd year in a row. Nationally, Samford is ranked No. 226 of the nearly 1,000 U.S. universities

and colleges that appear in the ranking. Samford ranks No. 12 in the nation for student engagement. Of the top 12 universities ranked in that category, nine of them have a religious affiliation. ► **Samford Economic Impact Study Released:** Samford University's estimated annual economic impact on the state of Alabama is more than \$424.8 million, including 2,424 jobs and \$16.1 million in income and sales taxes, according to a study released Sept. 5. The study also found Samford graduates earn higher incomes and generate more income tax and states sales tax as a result of their Samford education. The independent study was conducted by the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Alabama.

► **Record Enrollment at Samford University:** Samford's recent fall enrollment of 5,619 students representing 44 states and 30 countries marks the school's 10th consecutive record enrollment. The freshman class of 958 "is the largest, most academically accomplished and most diverse" in the school's 176-year history. 🇺🇸

I thought we lost everything in the fire. My agent was there before the flames were out.
— Steve Schroder, Business Owner

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Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

SBC CP 2.59 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 2.59 percent above the year-to-date budgeted projection, according to a Sept. 5, news release from D. August Boto, SBC EC interim president.

August's Cooperative Program (CP) allocation receipts for SBC work totaled \$15,652,713.29. Designated gifts in August totaled \$5,951,651.47.

As of Aug. 31 gifts received by the EC for distribution through the CP through the first 11 months of the convention's fiscal year totaled \$180,552,467.92. The gifts are \$4,552,467.92 more than the \$176 million year-to-date budgeted amount to support SBC ministries globally and across North America.

Designated giving of \$190,000,448.45 for the same year-to-date period is 1.69 percent, or \$3,157,163.59, above gifts of \$186,843,284.86 received at this point in 2017. (BP)

N.C. Baptists to begin immigrant assistance

CARY, N.C. — A new Baptist Immigrant Services ministry being launched by the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina will set up a number of immigration ministry centers across the state to help churches better welcome immigrants.

Churches and associations will be encouraged to establish a variety of ministry efforts to engage immigrants with the gospel.

The convention has named two leaders for the ministry: Long-time staffer Amaury Santos, a native of Dominican Republic and a former church planter, and contract worker Larry Phillips, who served as a Southern Baptist missionary to Peru.

Hispanics are North Carolina's largest ethnic group by far.

According to U.S. census data, the estimated Hispanic/Latino population makes up 9.5 percent of North Carolina's total population. (BP)



Photos by Jennifer Davis Rash

Pastor Morgan Bailey of Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer, introduces and applauds the bicentennial team members for their hard work during the past two years.

Bessemer's Canaan Baptist celebrates bicentennial

More than 700 people celebrated the 200th anniversary of Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer, on Sept. 9, including several former staff and former members.

Popular Christian speaker and "minister of encouragement" Dennis Swanberg captivated the audience with his message out of 2 Timothy 1 on being a refreshment to others through communicating with each other, sharing "our stuff" and showing up.

Rick Lance and Lonette Berg represented Alabama Baptists at

the state level, and several local and state governmental officials were on hand for the special day.

Pastor Morgan Bailey, Journey Pastor Charles Teague, Worship Pastor Jeff Stith and the bicentennial team under the leadership of Cheryle Ray all expressed satisfaction in the two-year planning and implementing journey that culminated with the service.

The church has had a year of celebration with monthly events since the bicentennial kickoff on Sept. 10, 2017. (TAB)



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— Pastor Shane Russell
Shoal Creek Baptist Church, Deatsville

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Court rules against cross in public park

A federal appeals panel ruled reluctantly Sept. 7 that a 34-foot cross standing in a public park in Pensacola, Florida, since 1941 must come down.

A three-judge panel of the 11th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals upheld a lower court decision ordering removal of the Bayview Cross in a lawsuit filed in 2016 by the American Humanist Association and the Freedom From Religion Foundation.

Bound by precedent

The judges said they were bound by precedent from a 35-year-old opinion that a similar display at a state park in Georgia lacked a “secular purpose” — thereby violating the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution — but two of the three said the previous case was wrongly decided and should be reconsidered.

In 1983 the 11th Circuit ruled that a lighted cross in Black Rock Mountain State Park in north

Georgia violated the Establishment Clause. While “constrained to affirm” that precedent, the judges in the Pensacola case said more recent decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court suggest that it should be overturned.

The earlier case relied on *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, a 1971 landmark Supreme Court opinion establishing a three-prong test for legislation concerning religion.

According to the “Lemon Test,” such statutes must have a secular legislative purpose, must not have a principal or primary effect of advancing or inhibiting religion and must not result in excessive entanglement between church and state.

While the cases are similar, the judges in the Pensacola case said more recent Supreme Court decisions — including a 2014 ruling upholding a New York town board’s practice of opening its meetings with sectarian Christian prayer — have “substantially weakened” the Lemon Test, described by one judge as the “sanitization of any evidence of religion in the public sphere.”



BNG photo

The American Humanist Association and the Freedom from Religion Foundation called the decision “a resounding victory for the First Amendment’s principle of church-state separation.”

Becket, a Washington-based

nonprofit, public-interest law firm that specializes in cases involving the free exercise of religion that is representing the city of Pensacola, said the city plans to appeal.

“The Constitution doesn’t require the government to scrub every religious symbol from the public square,” said Luke Goodrich, vice president and senior counsel at Becket. “The Supreme Court has repeatedly said that the government can recognize religion as a fundamental part of our history and culture, and we’re glad that the majority of the court agreed that the cross is constitutional.”

‘Preeminent symbol’

The Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty joined Americans United for Separation of Church and State in a 2017 brief arguing that Pensacola’s display of “the preeminent symbol of Christianity” on public property sends a “clear, unequivocal message to communicate governmental favoritism for Christianity.” (BNG)



RANDALL (LEFT) & WAYNE ATCHESON

Atchesons being highlighted

The Atcheson brothers have been connected to Alabama Baptists since birth, and they will both be highlighted in Birmingham in late September.

A new Christian ministry-based scholarship at Samford University in Birmingham has been established in honor of Wayne Atcheson.

Randall “Randy” Atcheson, a world-renowned pianist, wants to help raise contributions toward the scholarship, so he will be performing a piano concert at First Baptist Church, Birmingham, on Sept. 23 at 4 p.m. Tickets are not required but donations toward the scholarship will be accepted.

The church is located at 2209 Lakeshore Drive near Samford. (TAB)

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

PASTOR

First Baptist Church, Glencoe, is in search of a full-time Southern Baptist pastor. Send resumés to: FBC Glencoe Search Committee, P.O. Box 5305, Glencoe, AL 35905 or email to: fbcsearchcommittee@gmail.com. For more information, see our ad on www.thealabamabaptist.org/classifieds.

PASTOR

Maple Avenue Baptist Church in Geneva, Alabama, is seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumés to: 1009 W. Maple Avenue, Geneva, AL 36340, or email to: maple000@centurytel.net.

PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Foley is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resumés to: Sharon Collins at scollins@fbcfoley.com or P.O. Box 307, Foley, AL 36536.

PASTOR

York Terrace Baptist Church is seeking a full-time pastor who will lead the church under God’s direction to be a lighthouse in the Shoals area. An energetic, tireless worker who inspires the church to serve in the same way. Relevant ministerial experience is preferred. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, York Terrace Baptist Church, 1401

E. 30th Street, Sheffield, AL 35660.

YOUTH MINISTER

Westwood Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama, is seeking a part-time youth minister. For more information, contact Pastor Steve Potts (phone: 205-798-3341, email: stevepotts@westwoodbc.net).

STUDENT MINISTER

First Baptist Church of Chalkville seeking student minister. 20 hours per week. Emphasis on outreach to grow existing groups using Biblical-based program and activities. Email resumés to: gloriastuckey20@gmail.com.

STUDENT MINISTER

FBC Silverhill is presently searching for a part-time student minister to lead 7th grade-college. Info@Silverhill.org or P.O. Box 246 Silverhill, AL. 36576. 251-945-5182.

OTHER POSITIONS

KEYBOARD PLAYER

New Beginnings (Graysville) is looking for an experienced keyboard player. Needed for Sunday AM, Sunday PM and Wednesday PM services. Please send resumés to: secretary@nbccbaptist.com.

PIANIST

First Baptist Church, Union

Grove, is seeking a pianist. Send resumés to: FBC Union Grove, P.O. Box 125, Union Grove, AL 35175, ATTN: Personnel Committee.

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LETTERS

(continued from page 2) all things that grandparents and their grandchildren can do together.

2. Pack a Christmas Backpack for Appalachian Mountain Ministries or Mississippi River Ministries. (For more info, go to www.alabamawmu.org/backpacks.)

3. Help a senior adult neighbor or local school clean up outside and maybe plant a flower bed.

4. Bake cookies and deliver to your local fire station.

5. Take diapers, wipes or other supplies to the local crisis pregnancy center.

All of these activities help to teach children the importance of giving to others while spending quality time with their grandparents. Missions projects are a great way to do that.

Scotty Goldman
Alabama Baptist state missionary

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

By Joanne Sloan

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



Archbishop of Canterbury considered 'one of the greatest thinkers of the Middle Ages'

Anselm (1033–1109) was a Benedictine monk, abbot, philosopher, theologian and prolific author. He served as Archbishop of Canterbury from 1093 to 1109.

Today he is remembered as one of the greatest thinkers of the Middle Ages. This year marks the 925th anniversary of his becoming Archbishop of Canterbury in 1093.

Anselm was born in 1033 to Gundulf and Ermenberga in Aosta in the Italian Alps. His father was harsh but his mother was virtuous. She gave Anselm a thorough religious education.

Devout, young Anselm desired to become a monk at age 15, but his father would not give his consent. In 1056, after his mother's death, he left home with an attendant, crossed the Alps and traveled in Burgundy and France. He visited his mother's relatives in Burgundy and

studied there and in northern France for some time.

In 1060 he entered the Benedictine Abbey of Bec in Normandy to study under its prior, Lanfranc, a distinguished instructor in northern Europe. Three years later he was elected prior to the Abbey. In 1078 he succeeded Lanfranc as Abbot when Lanfranc became Archbishop of Canterbury.

In 1087, while still at Bec, he wrote one of the 50 books he would write in his lifetime. "Proslogium," his "ontological argument" for the existence of God, defined God as "that which nothing greater can be thought." He argued that this being must exist in the mind and in reality, since a being that exists in reality is greater than one that exists only in the imagination.

Under Anselm's leadership, the Abbey

of Bec grew in reputation and became one of the most important places of learning in Europe.

After the death of Lanfranc, King William II of England made Anselm archbishop of Canterbury in 1093.

As archbishop he maintained his monastic ideals, which included stewardship, prudence, prayer and contemplation. He continued, though, to push for reform. The king and Anselm continually disputed the king's right to intervene in church matters such as trying to appropriate church lands, offices and revenues.

Anselm was exiled in 1097 and remained in Italy until William died in 1100.

Anselm returned to England at the invitation of the new king, Henry I. The two disagreed about the lawful extent of Henry's control over the selection of bishops and ab-

bots. Again, Anselm went into exile for three years until he and Henry reached a compromise.

Anselm returned to Canterbury in 1107. For two years he continued to study, write and live in peace.

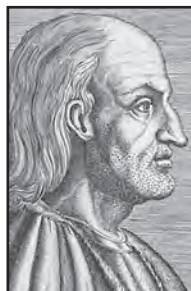
He died on Holy Wednesday, April 21, 1109, and was buried in Canterbury Cathedral, near Lanfranc.

Canonized as a saint

He was canonized as a saint after his death. Pope Clement XI proclaimed him a Doctor of the Church in 1720.

Anselm's motto was "Faith seeking understanding." He said, "I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand.

His legacy continues today. In 2015, *Christian History* magazine chose Anselm's book, "Why God Became Man," one of the 25 most influential Christian books in history. ✝



ANSELM

Staying on 'go' status

Trained disaster relief volunteers always needed

(continued from page 1) Missionary Union, along with church planting, partnership missions and church revitalization.

Funds from the 2017 offering helped purchase needed equipment, including a pickup truck for towing trailers and shower units, a box truck for hauling equipment and a tow-behind aerial lift. Funds also provide emergency

food supplies for volunteers and help support child care, shower and laundry units that can be placed into service in a crisis situation.

Hurricane Florence

Hurricane Florence made landfall the morning of Sept. 14 near Wilmington, North Carolina. More than 500,000 were without

power at press time and flooding damage was a major concern.

Meteorologists also were watching tropical storms Isaac and Joyce and Hurricane Helene in the Atlantic.

In the Pacific, Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention (HPBC) Disaster Relief volunteers have been hard at work since Hurricane Lane dropped several inches of rain on the islands in late August. Darrell McCain, DR coordinator for HPBC, said volunteers, including a team from Texas, have been doing mudout and mold remediation in homes on Hawaii's Big Island.

"We have had several ministry contacts and gospel conversations," McCain said in a Facebook post. "Please continue praying for the survivors, volunteers and our government employees



Photo courtesy of South Carolina Baptist Disaster Relief

A feeding team from Crossroads Community Church, Summerville, South Carolina, prepares meals for first responders in Charleston following the landfall of Hurricane Florence.

working hard to keep our roads safe."

McCain said Hawaii DR volunteers would be on "go" status until the islands were in the clear from Tropical Storm Olivia, which weakened as it neared land on Sept. 12. Still, Maui was hit with heavy rain and powerful winds, with forecasters predicting 5 to 10 inches or more of rain for Oahu, Maui and the surrounding small islands.

Though natural disasters can

happen any time during the year, hurricane season is a good reminder that well-trained DR volunteers are always needed. New volunteers and current volunteers looking for additional training have two upcoming opportunities.

Madison Baptist Association will offer DR training Sept. 27–29 at Willowbrook Baptist Church in Huntsville and Dale Baptist Association will offer training at the Vineyard Christian Retreat in Ariton Oct. 5–6. ✝

How you can help

More information on training and Alabama Baptist DR is available at www.sbd.org and at Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief on Facebook or Alabama Baptist DR on Twitter. To donate to Hurricane Florence DR efforts, go to www.sbd.org/donate.

Conference to discuss intentional grandparenting

There are more grandparents living today than at any other time in U.S. history, and they are very different than the stereotypes.

"The average age of today's ... [first-time] grandparent is 48," says Cynthia Moss, GrandLife director at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills.

"Today's grandparents are more health conscious, physically fit and intellectually curious than grandparents of the past," Moss said.

"We are fairly tech savvy, have more time, resources and discretionary income than any generation of grandparents before now."

Nearly three-quarters of American grandparents also are directly involved in caring for grandchildren, either as regular caregivers or as legal guardians. The joys and challenges are real, but engaging with grandchildren is "worthy work," Moss said.

And that idea will be the focus of Grandparenting Matters, a confer-

ence for grandparents to be held Oct. 5-6 at Shades Mountain.

The two-day event will feature six workshops addressing topics of concern and interest for grandparents.

Friday evening sessions will focus on the "Amazing Influence of a Grandparent" and "What the Bible Says About Grandparenting."

Saturday morning sessions will focus on best practices of Christian grandparents, including being intentional and overcoming distance.

The conference will be led by Larry Fowler, founder of Legacy Coalition, a ministry whose aim is to equip the church to help grandparents and grandchildren connect in ways that have Kingdom impact.

The Grandparenting Matters conference will run 6:30 to 9 p.m. on Oct. 5, and 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Oct. 6.

Visit shades.org/grandconf for cost and registration. (TAB)

Registration is open online at shades.org/grandconf, via phone at 205-822-1670 or by email at sblackwood@shades.org.



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Montgomery ministry helps families in medical crisis

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Debbie Jones says that for a while, she didn't really know what Samaritan Inn Ministry was all about — even after she became director of the ministry in October 2010.

But then the April 27, 2011, tornadoes hit, and that all changed. Samaritan Inn — a ministry started by Montgomery Baptist Association in 1975 to provide hotel rooms for out-of-town families facing medical crises — was suddenly bursting at the seams.

Praying to God

“By May 1, I had 13 families,” she said. “We got a lot of Tuscaloosa people because the Birmingham hospitals were full.”

Jones had one hotel at the time that was helping her place families, but she needed more.

“I remember driving up and down a main road in Montgomery praying, ‘God these are your families. I need a place for them to go.’”

For more information, contact Debbie Jones at 334-201-6868 or samaritaninnministry@mgbaptists.org.

She got two more hotels on board that day. All the hotel rooms are subsidized with donations so the families only pay a small fee — or

even less, if they can't afford it, Jones said. The hotels provide breakfast, and local volunteers run a casserole ministry.

And a few years ago, Samaritan Inn also got a three-bedroom house for families to use. Dozens of volunteer teams came together to renovate it and get it ready.

“Hundreds and hundreds of

people saw the vision and helped make that possible,” Jones said. “Everything in the home has been donated, from electrical to plumbing to new furniture to appliances.”

This year, it has already provided a place for a dozen families to stay.

Love and compassion

“They're just so blown away that someone cares. They always ask why,” Jones said. “I tell them this is what God has called us to do. We're here to show love and compassion.”

For Jones, the ministry is personal. She gets to know the families, taking them gift bags, praying with them and offering whatever support she can. She remembers them all.

She remembers the truck driver's family from Texas who came to stay a month after he was hospitalized in Montgomery.



Photo courtesy of Samaritan Inn

Medical personnel talk with Ella Cate Cox, one of the children whose parents, Brandon and Shannon Cox of Cusseta, benefited from Samaritan Inn while Ella Cate was in the NICU after she was born.

And she remembers a recent family that has gotten back in church because of the impact the ministry made on them.

“We just try to be there for these sweet families and show them the love of Jesus,” Jones said.

‘Secret sauce’

Neal Hughes, associational missionary/director of missions for Montgomery Association,

said Jones is the “secret sauce” behind the work of Samaritan Inn.

“She leads with enthusiasm, compassion and administrative attention to scores of volunteers and has a ‘whatever it takes’ spirit that enables this ministry to thrive,” he said.

“We at the Montgomery Baptist Association are deeply grateful that God brought Debbie to lead Samaritan Inn's charge.”

“We just try to be there for these sweet families and show them the love of Jesus.”

Debbie Jones, director, Samaritan Inn Ministry

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For September 23

Explore the Bible By Kyle Beshears
Associate Dean and Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

Bible Studies for Life By Jeffery M. Leonard, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Religion, Samford University

TRUE HEIRS
Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-7

An Old Guardian (3:23-25)

If Paul revealed that the law was never intended to save us through our obedience to it, then the obvious question should be asked: "Why then was the law given?" (Gal. 3:19). The short answer is guardianship. The law was given to Israel as a guardian over them, to instruct and correct their hearts until the Messiah would come.

But the law was not just any guardian, generally overlooking behavior and practices to ensure that Israel got the gist of it. No, this guardian was strict and severe. The law nit-picked at every imperfection, flaw and sin of God's people in a bid to demonstrate how fallen they were without God. And as the law beat Israel down, they forgot that the promises of God made to Abraham predated the law.

We must never forget that God initiates relationships with loving promises, and only afterwards issues commands to obey. Israel paid more attention to their strict guardian than the gracious promise that preceded it, and we so often fall into the same trap.

When the Lord Jesus came, we were placed under a new guardian. Jesus Christ not only taught us the law, He demonstrated it as well. And to top it off, He has promised us the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower us for obedience to God's will (John 14:26).

We can know this for certain, because "all the promises of God find their yes in Him" (2 Cor. 1:20). And with our new guardian came a new community in which to live within God's perfect will.

A New Community (3:26-28)

Paul tells us that in Christ we are all family. The things that formerly divided us evaporate in the unifying power of the

gospel. The world has a way of bestowing its favor on certain races, economic statuses and genders.

God's economy works differently. He does not favor people because of the color of their skin, how wealthy they are or whether they are male or female. God shows his favor on whom He wills, to anyone created in His image and likeness (Gen. 1:26). He sees past race, money and gender into the heart of a person. The gospel is for all people without exclusion, and God is building His new community in incredible diversity.

As the world works to divide God's people among external diversity, the gospel works to unite them through internal conviction. Through faith in Christ, we are adopted into God's family forever no matter who we are.

A New Position (3:29; 4:1-7)

Why is adoption into God's family so important? It gives us a new lease on life, freeing us from a terrible master.

Before faith in Christ, we are people who work against God by serving sin. However, faith in Christ liberates us from the jail cell of disobedience. By God's grace, He rips off the jail cell doors, pulls us out of captivity and escorts us to the family courtroom for adoption.

Salvation means that the Lord simultaneously declares us free from the penalty of sin and adopts us into His family to bear His name well among the nations. It is as if we stand in one courtroom to hear the judge declare us "not guilty" and then immediately escorted across the hall to another courtroom where we are declared God's children by legal adoption.

From that moment on, we enjoy the incredible gift of crying out to God as our Father, provider, discipliner, protector, role model and encourager. We are no longer a mere slave to sin but a child of God. ✠

INTENTIONAL LOVE
Luke 10:25-37

When our sons were still at the age where cartoons formed the larger part of their TV-watching diet, each new episode was accompanied by a predictable battle over which son got to be which character in the show. "I'm Larry! You be Bob," one would say. "That's not fair. You got to be Larry last time," the other would reply. It made no difference at all whether the characters were talking vegetables, superheroes or sea-dwelling sponges and starfish — both boys wanted to watch the cartoon through the eyes of a particular and highly-coveted character.

This tendency to choose a character with whom we sympathize and through whom we experience a story's events is by no means limited to grade school boys watching cartoons. We all tend to gravitate toward particular characters, and we identify with them as we watch the plot of a story unfold. Unfortunately, when it comes to reading the Bible, we often identify with the wrong character in a story. We find ourselves thinking, "How can those Israelites be so stubborn and rebellious? Why don't those disciples ever seem to understand?"

We shake our heads in disbelief at the terrible waywardness of "the people," failing to realize that our role is their role in the story. We are those wayward people.

Our love for God is tied to our love for others. (25-28)

The parable of the Good Samaritan is one that is ripe for misunderstanding when it comes to knowing our place in the story. The story begins when a certain man, learned in the Law, asks Jesus how he can inherit eternal life. As they discuss what the Law says about the matter, they come to a consensus: Love God and love your neighbor. This will give eternal life.

We fail to love when we are indifferent to others. (29-32)

Then, the lawyer asks the pivotal question: "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus' reply is to tell him the famous parable. A man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho was waylaid by robbers who beat him and left him for dead. A priest happened to come along, but he passed the man by. Then a Levite arrived, but he did the same. No one, it seemed, would help the dying man.

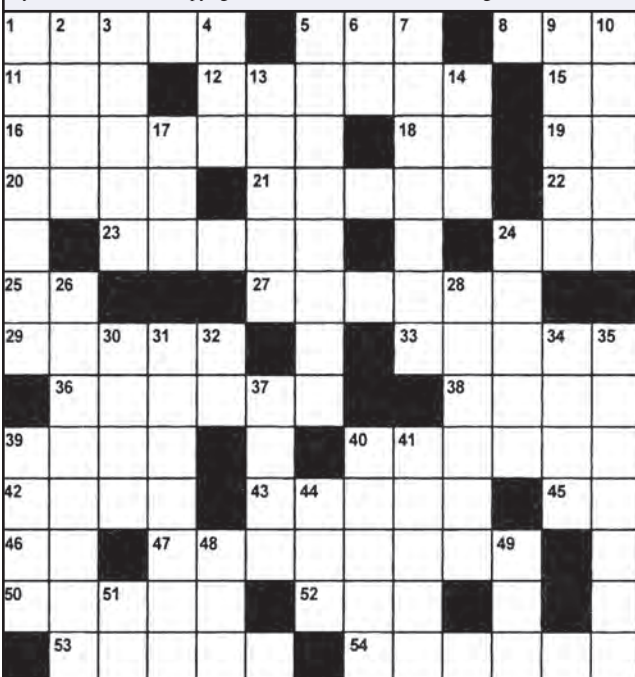
We are commanded to love even when it is costly or inconvenient. (33-37)

But then, just as all hope seemed lost, a Samaritan happened upon the scene. If the priest and Levite passed by, surely the Samaritan would do the same. He did no such thing, however. Far from passing him by, he had compassion on the man, bound up his wounds, set him on his animal, took him to an inn and paid the innkeeper to see that he was nursed back to health. The Samaritan turned out to be a neighbor to the beaten man even when the priest and Levite had refused.

The parable is one with which we are all familiar. We've seen it illustrated, acted and preached. And yet each time we hear the story we find ourselves shaking our heads at the terrible callousness of the priest and Levite, wondering how they could pass by the poor, broken victim lying beside the road. All the while, we miss the fact that as we read the story, we are not the Samaritan. We are not even the victim. We are the priest. We are the Levite. It is our own callousness toward our neighbor, our own failure to help those in need, that Jesus challenges. The voices raised by the prophets against the people's mistreatment of the poor and downtrodden were voices raised against us today when we do the same. True faith is faith that doesn't just keep walking. True faith stops to help. ✠

Christian Crossword

By Teresa Zeek Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. Seek ye the Lord while He may be _____. (Isa. 55:6)
5. Go and _____ no more. (John 8:11)
8. In the beginning _____. (Gen. 1:1)
11. When we come to the _____. (Gen. 43:21)
12. In Gaza, in Gath, and in _____. (Josh. 11:22)
15. The second tone of the diatonic scale.
16. Cunning in knowledge, and understanding _____. (Dan. 1:4)
18. University of Iowa. (abbr.)
19. Pennsylvania. (abbr.)
20. Son of Canaan. (Gen. 10:15)
21. O come let us _____ Him.
22. God, who _____ sundry times. (Heb. 1:1)
23. And the tree of the field shall _____ her fruit. (Ezek. 34:27)
24. An exclamation of relief.
25. Road. (abbr.)
27. The power of _____ and Media. (Esther 1:3)
29. Heard me out of his holy hill. _____. (Ps. 3:4)
33. Another name for Mount

36. Christ _____ in me. (Gal. 2:20)
38. Thy will be _____ in earth. (Matt. 6:10)
39. White starchy grain.
40. It will _____(s) him to powder. (Luke 20:18)
42. Shall bake your bread in one _____. (Lev. 26:26)
43. Borrow money take _____. (2 words)
45. Southeast. (abbr.)
46. Today shalt thou _____ with me in paradise. (Luke 23:43)
47. Paul studied at the feet of _____. (Acts 22:3)
50. Who concerning the truth have _____. (2 Tim. 2:18)
52. In the beginning _____ the Word. (John 1:1)
53. A well from which Joab called Abner. (2 Sam. 3:26)
54. Baruch's father. (Jer. 32:12)

Down

1. I will make you _____ of men. (Mark 1:17)
2. It is appointed unto men _____ to die. (Heb. 9:27)
3. Endeavoring to keep the _____ of the Spirit. (Eph. 4:3)

4. A son of Jacob by Bilhah. (Gen. 30:5-6)
5. Whoso _____ man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. (Gen. 9:6)
6. Identification. (abbr.)
7. I will _____ you, and your little ones. (Gen. 50:21)
9. Naomi's daughter-in-law. (Ruth 1:14)
10. _____ is swallowed up in victory. (1 Cor. 15:54)
13. God shall wound the ... hairy _____. (Ps. 68:21)
14. Blessed are the dead which _____ in the Lord. (Rev. 14:13)
17. One of the sons of Benjamin. (Gen. 46:21)
24. Moses' brother. (Ex. 4:14)
26. The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and _____ them. (Ps. 34:7)
28. A nonmetallic chemical element used in medicine.
30. The third plague. (Ex. 8:16)
31. Still the enemy and the _____. (Ps. 8:2)
32. _____ restoreth my soul. (Ps. 23:3)
34. He shall be great unto the _____ of the earth. (Micah 5:4)
35. I _____ you therefore, brethren. (Rom. 12:1)
37. A group of people playing together.
39. Jonathan stripped himself of the _____. (1 Sam. 18:4)
40. One of the cities of refuge. (Deut. 4:43)
41. The Lord shall _____ him up. (James 5:15)
44. It is written in the _____ of Moses. (1 Kings 2:3)
48. A woman's name.
49. A garland of flowers.
51. Rhode Island. (abbr.)



TOP 10

best-selling Christian books in September

NON-FICTION

1. **Girl, Wash Your Face**
By Rachel Hollis (Thomas Nelson)
2. **The 5 Love Languages**
By Gary Chapman (Moody)
3. **Everybody, Always**
By Bob Goff (Thomas Nelson)
4. **Unshakable Hope**
By Max Lucado (Thomas Nelson)
5. **Jesus Calling** — Hardback
By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
6. **100 Days to Brave**
By Annie F. Downs (Zondervan)
7. **Total Money Makeover Classic Edition**
By Dave Ramsey (Thomas Nelson)
8. **Uninvited**
By Lysa Terkeurst (Thomas Nelson)
9. **Love Life Again**
By Tracie Miles (David C Cook)
10. **Anxious For Nothing**
By Max Lucado (Thomas Nelson)

Source: Christian Book Expo



Media reviews

BOOKS

There is a Time: Stories of Heartbreak and Hope

A. Ray Lee. BAM! Publishing, 2017. 130 pp. (Paperback).

A well-known former pastor from Morgan County who turned to chaplain work after he retired from the pastorate, A. Ray Lee also worked for 15 years as assistant director of a funeral home. When he writes about bereavement, you know he has something of interest and great value to share.

“There is a Time,” according to the author, targets those in the bereavement professions — chaplains, pastors, hospice professionals and funeral home personnel, but after reading it, I think it would actually appeal to a wider audience.

The book is a compilation of stories from the author’s experience, but instead of the dreary tales of death one might expect, the stories are infused with the faith of the author, making them filled with light and hope. Oh, there are the sad stories about a person who had no service at all, and one whose son — the only one who went to the graveside service — raced off immediately after the short ceremony.

But there also are stories like the one when Lee comforted the daughter of a woman who had just died, then witnessed her using his own words to comfort the rest of the family. He slipped out quietly, knowing the family was in good hands. And the intensely personal note at the end, as the pastor and chaplain contemplates his own departure is moving and at the same time hopeful as he speaks of healing of a different kind.

The book is beautifully written, making me wonder why Lee hasn’t written other books.



— Pearson also has included a chapter on lessons learned the hard way, one on do-overs he wishes he had and even one providing guidance on choosing veterinary medicine as a career.

Pearson and his wife are members of First Baptist, Hartselle, in Morgan Baptist Association.

The Road Less Traveled Leads Home: The Journey of Elliott Aiken Ellis

Kelly Gordon. Self-published, 2018. 95 pp. (Paperback).

“The Road Less Traveled Leads Home” is a book that addresses a serious issue in today’s world: the conflict that can enter into a family when a widowed parent decides to remarry. The story revolves around Elliott, a 10-year-old boy whose dad has died and whose mother has announced her intention to remarry. Elliott is unhappy about his mother’s plans.

I don’t want to give away the story — that’s the hard part of reviewing fiction — but Elliott runs away into the woods with his dog and has some experiences that change his thinking.

I see a lot of books that are in need of a book doctor or at least a skilled editor. Usually, this is because the book is just a bad book.

This book needs a book doctor for the opposite reason: it is a good book that fills a need. But it has some issues that keep it from being a great book and will probably keep it from being as successful as it might be.

For one thing, the book doesn’t seem to know where it belongs. It hovers somewhere between being a children’s book and one for adults. The language is simple, but some of the ideas seem a bit complex for a 10-year-old. The opening paragraph reminds me of a 1950s book, when we were more patient with a slow beginning; I wonder if a young reader would wade through it or put the book down.

The story uses a mystical encounter to effect a change (remember, I’m trying not to give the story away). I have seen this device used successfully before, but this one was a bit clumsy and rushed and not as effective as it might have been. A good book doctor could take this good book and make it great. ✝



What a Way to Make a Living! Tales of a Small Town Veterinarian

Dr. Steve Pearson. Self-Published, 2018. 150 pp. (Paperback).

I was eager to read this book, fairly certain I would read stories I had heard before from the author’s mouth. Sure enough, I did recognize some of them. Dr. Steve Pearson is a well-known and well-respected veterinarian in Hartselle, Alabama, and a personal friend. Our families have sat around the table many times and listened to “tales of a small-town veterinarian.”

Now everyone can enjoy the stories of his adventures in an engaging and entertaining book. Over the course of a 29-year career, Pearson treated dogs and cats, but also pigs, goats, sheep, birds, horses and even snakes and tigers. Besides the stories — and you can imagine some of the predicaments a veterinarian who treats such a variety of animals gets into



Meet the reviewer

Martine Bates Fairbanks, Ed.D., reviews books and movies for The Alabama Baptist. She is a university professor and retired principal. She is a member of Central Baptist Church, Decatur.



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Ethan Wolf

Photo courtesy of Tennessee Titans

'Give everything'

Former UT tight end focuses on faith before football

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Whenever Ethan Wolf had struggles playing football at the University of Tennessee (UT), he would turn to his favorite Bible verse, Colossians 3:23: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as though you were working for the Lord and not for people."

"I tell myself to work as hard as I can to please the Lord and not anybody here on earth. ... That is my goal," said Wolf, who has the verse tattooed inside his right bicep.

"I give everything I have every day. I am going to push myself every day to get better."

Now a rookie tight end at the professional level, Wolf has focused on faith, even as he has waited for his chance in professional football. Attending church, listening to Christian music, reading the Bible and praying keep God central to his life, he said.

"It is not easy to be a Christian at all. It's hard to do the right thing sometimes in this world. Everyone is driven to be liked. You have to make hard decisions that people don't want you to make. I don't like to upset people. I am a pleaser, but I can't fall into peer pressure."

Coming to know Christ

Baptized at age 8, Wolf grew up going to Brandywine Community Church in Greenfield, Indiana. His parents and grandparents were instrumental in leading him to Christ. He moved to Minster, Ohio, in the fifth grade.

At Minster, Wolf was second team All-Ohio as a senior and junior. He was rated by 247 Sports as the No. 15 tight end and No. 16 prospect in Ohio, and ESPN ranked him No. 15 tight end and No. 24 prospect overall.

At Tennessee he was the first true freshman to start at tight end in school history. He ranks fourth all-time in receiving yards for a tight end with 822.

His junior year he caught a touchdown pass to help UT in a comeback victory over Florida. The win was his biggest thrill as a college player.

He opened the 2015 season with two touchdowns against Bowling Green, the first tight end to score two since Luke Stocker, now a tight end with the Titans, did it in 2009.

Helping people

"I always thought God's purpose is to play football and help people with the platform that He gives me," Wolf said.

Another of his goals is to help people and be known as a hard worker with good character.

Titans safety Kevin Byard, who played at Middle Tennessee State, said, "He handles himself like a pro, like a gentleman, yes sir, no sir. It's great to see that. I think (Titans head coach) Mike Vrabel and (general manager) Jon Robinson only sign guys who are not only great teammates but are great people. Ethan represents that as well."

Recently cut from the Titans 53-man roster, Wolf is waiting to see how football will play a role in his future. But he has not let setbacks discourage him or stop him from passing on what he's learned to others, like his younger brother, Eli, a redshirt junior at Tennessee.

A member of Cross Point Church, Nashville, Wolf also reaches out to teammates.

"I am a follower of Christ. We have an NFL Outreach. I am a big fan. I look forward to that conference every year. As a veteran, I invite young guys."

Time spent in ministry with other players is important, he said.

"It is a time we can get together and worship Christ." ✠



Franklin Graham to preach despite protests

BLACKPOOL, England — Franklin Graham will be preaching at the three-night Lancashire Festival of Hope on Sept. 21–23 at the Winter Gardens Center in Blackpool, but feelings on the evangelist's presence remain mixed.

People are expected to pack the auditorium to hear Graham, whose father, Billy Graham, visited Blackpool 36 years ago. Some 200 independent and Anglican churches have been involved in planning the event.

But many people in the town oppose Graham's visit, citing his past comments about gay people and Islam. Blackpool has a small Muslim population but one of the largest LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) communities in Britain, with approximately 10 percent of residents identifying as LGBT.

Efforts have been underway for months to halt the festival and Graham's appearance there. Some 8,000 people signed a petition requesting the home secretary to deny Graham entry to the country. Blackpool's two ministers to Parliament have also expressed their concern, with one suggesting that Graham's comments amounted to hate speech. (RNS)

More churches being closed in Egypt

ESNA, Egypt — Authorities in Al-Zeneqa village closed a church Sept. 5 that had been holding worship services at the site for 18 years.

The church was the third one in Luxor Governorate, 435 miles south of Cairo, closed in four months after Muslim extremists protested their existence, giving police the pretext of "security" threats for shuttering them. Hundreds of churches have submitted applications for legalization under a law passed on Sept. 28, 2016, regulating church construction, with little hope of obtaining licenses soon.

In the past 11 months, authorities approved only 220 of the 3,730 church and other ministry buildings that have applied, the country's *Watani* newspaper reported on Aug. 26. Many churches have already waited 15 years for decisions on their applications for permits, and at the current rate, it will take 17 years to obtain decisions on applications from "unofficial" churches, according to *Watani*. (MS)

New DNA analysis surprises evolutionists

ASHEVILLE, N.C. — A landmark study published in August appears to push back on evolutionists' assumptions about human ancestry.

DNA analysis of an ancient bone fragment, recently published in the journal *Nature*, concluded the fragment belonged to a 13-year-old girl with a Neanderthal mother and Denisovan father. Evolutionists generally consider Neanderthals and Denisovans to be two groups of ancient human relatives that share a common ancestor with modern humans, but who do not come from the same species and who rarely if ever mated.

Creationists say such scientific discoveries affirm the truth that God created one human species with a variety of characteristics. "From a biblical perspective, [Neanderthals] were a post-flood, Ice Age people, specializing in hunting the large, grazing animals that were abundant toward the end of the Ice Age and afterward," young earth creationist and anthropologist Marvin Lubenow wrote. (BP)

Large house church in China shut down

BEIJING — One of China's largest underground churches said it would hold services outdoors after it was shut down for refusing to install government surveillance cameras.

According to China Aid, government officials notified Zion Church on Sept. 9 that it is violating registration requirements for religious activities and shut down the church. Chinese officials continue efforts to clamp down on religious activities, with reports of churches being raided and religious materials, including Bibles, crosses and furniture, being burned. (TAB)