



INSIDE



Theology 101 —
Jesus Christ the
Son of David

◆ Page 6



Taylor Road
Baptist Church
to offer service
for those grieving
during Christmas

◆ Page 7



Rainsville-area
Baptists organize
event to share
gospel, combat
addiction

◆ Page 8



IMB photo

IMB missionary and physician Larry Pepper examines a young patient at Kigoma Baptist Hospital in Tanzania. For him, offering medical help and sharing the hope of the gospel go hand in hand. Larry and his wife, Sally, are among the hundreds of IMB missionaries whose work is supported by the prayers of Southern Baptists and their gifts through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

A big task

Giving through Lottie Moon Christmas Offering ‘makes all the difference’

Larry Pepper has spent the past two decades at the bedside of Africa’s dying souls, patching up their wounds and trying to offer them real hope, the kind only Jesus can bring.

The task is a big one. And he’s needed a lot of help. That’s why he and his wife, Sally, have been grateful for a lot of people and churches over the years. They’re thankful for the prayer warriors who ask God for

His help and leadership. And they’re thankful for partners who give and travel to work alongside them.

“In so many of our partnerships, it has usually been one missions leader or Bible study teacher who has caught a vision for what God is doing here and really grabbed hold of it,” Larry Pepper said. “It makes all the difference.”

The Peppers are among the hundreds of International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries whose work is supported by the prayers of Southern Baptists and their gifts through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO).

Every December since 1888 the LMCO has empowered Southern Baptist’s international missions work. The IMB partners with more than 47,000 churches which work

together to spread the gospel around the world to billions of people who have never heard it. The primary way this is accomplished is through the coalition of Southern Baptist churches sending and supporting thousands of missionaries.

National goal

One-hundred percent of LMCO gifts fund IMB missionaries who are making disciples and multiplying churches among unreached people and places. This year’s national LMCO goal is \$160 million.

The season of giving for international missions through the LMCO begins with the Week of Prayer for International Missions, taking place this year Dec. 2–9.

In addition to the Peppers, missionary work highlighted during this

year’s Week of Prayer include:

- ▶ How God is using a small church in Tennessee to make a big difference in the work of IMB missionaries in Asia.
- ▶ Hispanic churches who are crossing cultures and engaging the world with the gospel.
- ▶ A partnership between a Kentucky church and a Brazil-based team that is reaching Sao Paulo with the gospel.
- ▶ Ukrainian believers who are planting churches, trained by IMB missionaries and supported by a North Carolina congregation.
- ▶ The impact made when American students travel to East Asia to serve college students alongside IMB workers.
- ▶ Refugee ministry that is both

(See ‘Help,’ 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

Which Dog Do We Feed?

The famous Sioux Indian Chief Sitting Bull is quoted as saying, “Inside of me are two dogs. One is mean and evil, and the other is good. They fight all the time. When asked which one wins, I answer the one I feed the most.”

It was that same kind of inward struggle that led to what Christians today call the seven deadly sins. Early Christians found they wrestled with attitudes and longings that had to be brought under control if they were to be the kind of followers of Christ they were called to be and wanted to be.

It is the same kind of struggle Christians today face in determining whether they will embrace the practices and pleasures of modern society or whether they will prioritize biblical standards of personal conduct.

Historically, the list of deadly sins was longer than the current seven. But in the sixth century church leaders debated, combined and reworked the list to the seven deadly sins listed today — pride, greed, lust, envy, wrath, gluttony and sloth.

These seven deadly sins became teaching guides around which the church taught the principles of Christian living in an era before the printing press made the Scriptures available to everyone.

Selfishness vs. selflessness

Interestingly, each of the deadly sins is the negative outcome of a battle between selfishness and selflessness. Will the follower of Christ “feed” the selfish spirit of indulgence or the selfless spirit of service? This is a key question of life. For the early Jewish scholars it was “the” question. Rebellion against God was characterized by selfishness, surrender to God by service.

Pride was defined by St. Augustine as “love of one’s own excellence.” A more common definition is an exalted view of one’s value, status or accomplishments. The writer of Proverbs quotes God saying, “I hate pride and arrogance” (Prov. 8:13). In Proverbs 11:2 the writer adds, “When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.”



THOUGHTS By Bob Terry

Pride prevents service while humility permits service.

Greed is characterized by unneeded excess. It is defined as an insatiable longing usually for wealth, status, power or food. Hebrews 13:5 urges, “Let your conduct be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have.” The attitude described in Hebrews allows one to invest in others through charity and other means. Greed on the other hand focuses on storing up treasures for one’s own pleasure.

Lust is about sexuality. It is also about things like money and power. It is an intense craving for something to fulfill an emotion. Lust is set against need. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, “Flee also youthful lust; but follow righteousness, faith, love [and] peace” (2 Tim. 2:22).

Lust is all consuming. Self-control of one’s passions allows for focus on things such as righteousness, faith, love and peace.

Envy is the desire for something another has or the wish that the other did not have it. Envy is destructive. Proverbs 14:30 says, “envy is rottenness in the bones.” It is the opposite of kindness, which is listed as one of the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22). Envy wants to supersede others. Kindness wants to help others.

Over indulgence vs. self control

Gluttony is over indulgence. It is over consumption of food or drink. Gluttony is about self, about the moment. Gluttony takes. It cannot hear the counsel of 1 Corinthians 6:12 not to be mastered by anything. Philippians 3:19 says of the glutton, “their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame.” Proverbs 23:2 adds their conduct is like putting a knife to their throat.

In place of gluttony, temperance and self-con-

trol can make one fit and able to serve others.

Wrath is defined as an expression of intense hostile emotions. It is anger unloosed. Both the Old and New Testament warn against wrath and anger. Psalm 37:8 instructs, “Refrain from anger and forsake wrath. Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.” James 1:20 adds, “For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”

Patience can mitigate wrath. Romans 12:19 adds, “Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’”

Lack of exertion vs. diligence

Sloth applies to more than physical laziness. It applies to both the mental and spiritual elements of life as well. Sloth is a habitual disinclination toward exertion of any kind. Solomon’s counsel to “Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise” (Prov. 6:6) is lost on the slothful.

According to the Bible, God does not invite us to a life of ease but urges us to be diligent in our service to Him and to others in His name.

It is impossible to review the seven deadly sins without noticing how they are interconnected. Gluttony involves greed and lust. Pride and wrath go hand in hand. All seem to center on the basic tension between selfishness and selflessness.

It is no wonder early Christians wrestled with these issues or church leaders found the list an effective outline to teach about Christian discipleship. To use the analogy offered by Chief Sitting Bull, the question really is which

of the spirits (dogs) will we feed — selfishness or selflessness?

One writer said feeding the selfish spirit is like trying to feed a hungry ghost. The more you feed it, the more it demands. It can never be satisfied and the process of feeding it will ultimately consume the one trying to satisfy its demands.

The tension between selfishness and selflessness is an appropriate issue to raise as we enter the Advent season looking toward Christmas and the celebration of the coming of the Christ Child. In Jesus, God acted in selfless, self-giving love to rescue us from perishing.

How do we respond to what God has done for us? That is a question worth pondering as the Advent season begins. ✝

“The tension between selfishness and selflessness is an appropriate issue to raise as we enter the Advent season looking toward Christmas and the celebration of the coming of the Christ Child.”

Connect with us
ONLINE



thealabamabaptist.org



facebook.com/thealabamabaptist



twitter.com/alabamabaptist



"If ye continue in My word, then ... ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."
John 8:31-32

(ISSN 0738-7741;
USPS 011-080)

© The Alabama Baptist, Inc. is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 1-800-803-5201. Fax: 205-879-6026. **Website:** www.thealabamabaptist.org. **Email:** news@thealabamabaptist.org or subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org. Periodicals postage paid at Hattiesburg, Miss.

**PRINT
SUBSCRIPTION RATES**
Church Budget — \$13.75
Individual — \$22.25

**DIGITAL
SUBSCRIPTION RATES**
Church Budget — \$8.50
Individual — \$14.95

**DR. BOBBY S. TERRY
EDITOR**

Jennifer Davis Rash
Editor-elect

Lauren C. Grim
Designer

Jessica Ingram
Editorial Assistant

Linda Harrison
Financial Administrator

Bill Gilmore
Advertising Director

Debbie Campbell
*Director of Circulation
and Public Relations*

NEWS SERVICES
Baptist Press (BP), Baptist News
Global (BNG), Religion News
Service (RNS), Forum 18 (F18),
Morning Star News (MS).

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
The Alabama Baptist
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209

ADDRESS CHANGE
Send old and new addresses,
and name of church to:
Subscription Department
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209
Allow two weeks.

To the best of our knowledge,
all of the ads in *The Alabama
Baptist* represent legitimate
companies and offerings.
However, one should always
exercise normal business
caution in responding to ads.

**Full member of
Alabama Press Association**

**Accredited member of
Evangelical Council for
Financial Accountability**



**'Nation's Top Regional
Christian Newspaper'**

1999, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010,
2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017
as judged by Associated Church Press,
Baptist Communicators Association,
Evangelical Press Association or
Religion Communicators Council

Saved from the fire

Survivors of California wildfires reach out to help latest victims

When the deadliest wildfire in state history struck the Northern California town of Magalia, pastor Doug Crowder didn't get to preach his Veterans Day sermon about risking death to save others. But he got to live it.

With the Camp Fire speeding toward Magalia in the early hours of the morning Nov. 9, Crowder, pastor of Magalia Pines Baptist Church, was loading about 30 people who had been unable to evacuate into vehicles.

Crowder and four other church members had stayed behind to help those who had taken shelter at the church. "We were in the driveway planning to leave," Crowder said through tears, "and the entire world erupted."

Suddenly "the woods exploded. The Subway restaurant across the street exploded, and on all sides of us was fire."

The church members hurried people back inside the building and prayed — watching flames shoot horizontally between buildings and listening to thousands of gallons of propane detonate at a hardware store next door.

When they emerged the next day, everything around the church had been incinerated, but "we were totally unscathed — totally," Crowder said. "The fall leaves were still on the trees" on the church's property.

The church is one of the few structures in town spared, and the congregation hopes to turn the tragedy into a continued ministry opportunity. "It will be years before it's a town again," Crowder said. "But all through that, our church will be standing and our church will be ministering."

The Camp Fire began Nov. 8 and quickly leveled Magalia, home to about 12,000 residents 90 miles north of Sacramento, and adjacent Paradise, where about 27,000 people live. A Nov. 20 update from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) put the Camp Fire death toll at 81, with hundreds of residents still missing. Thousands



AP photo/Noah Berger (RNS photo)
Smoke hangs over residences leveled by the Camp Fire in a neighborhood of Paradise, California, on Nov. 15.

of homes, commercial buildings and other structures have been destroyed in the 152,250-acre blaze.

As firefighters worked to get the blaze under control, survivors also sought to regain some control of their lives. A Nov. 20 Facebook post from California Southern Baptist Disaster Relief said volunteers were already responding in the affected areas with chaplaincy, shower/laundry, feeding and recovery units.

Power of community

And as residents began returning to the area during Thanksgiving week, members of nearby communities went into action.

Amanda Woodley, who lost her 70-year-old grandmother and her 4- and 5-year-old cousins in the Carr Fire near Redding, California, four months ago, took to Facebook and said she

wanted to organize a Thanksgiving dinner for the Camp Fire victims.

More than 100 volunteers came together to organize a Thanksgiving Day meal for some 1,000 people at the VFW Hall in Gridley, California, about 30 miles from Paradise. Volunteers also delivered meals to shelters where evacuees are staying and to tents or homes whose residents lost their cars in the fire.

There was live music and gift card giveaways. Turkeys, gas cards, cash and other contributions came in from across the state to help with the holiday dinner — a show of love and unity that represents what Thanksgiving is all about, Woodley said.

"It's so nice to see, that even though there's so much hate in the world, people can come together. There's so much power in unity."
(BP, RNS)

Judson College named in sexual harassment lawsuit

Former Judson College student Alexis Burt filed a civil lawsuit Oct. 30 against the school and a former employee alleging sexual harassment and Title IX violations, according to numerous media outlets. Judson being named in the lawsuit was confirmed by Judson officials.

The lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama in Jefferson County. It claims Burt was sexually harassed through Facebook by J. William "Billy" McFarland Jr. in May.

McFarland served as special assistant to the president for business development at Judson

College from July 2014 until he resigned in April. According to online records and social media platforms, McFarland lives in Reform and is founder of McFarland Consultants.

Even though neither his Facebook nor LinkedIn profiles had an ending date for Judson noted at press time, Judson officials confirmed McFarland has not been employed by the school since April.

And according to news reports, Burt, now 20, has withdrawn from Judson.

McFarland is reportedly 39 years old and, according to media reports, Burt says he sent her a

Facebook friend request following a luncheon in his honor May 21.

Lewd suggestions through private Facebook messages with offers of payment for sexual role-play followed, Burt says, according to media reports.

McFarland has denied the claims, according to *The Tuscaloosa News*. In a statement to the paper, he said, "The allegations are completely false and just an attempt to try and publicly embarrass me."

The Tuscaloosa News also reported that McFarland faced a similar accusation in Marengo County in late 2017. He pleaded no contest and agreed to pay the

woman \$730 in restitution, according to the news report.

Judson officials are currently working with legal representation and are unable to share comments, but Judson Interim President Scott Bullard provided a prepared statement to *The Alabama Baptist*.

"Judson College strongly opposes sexual harassment in any form and is committed to maintaining a positive and productive environment in which the dignity and worth of all people is respected," he said in the statement. "Judson College has policies and procedures in place to ensure that this commitment is met." (TAB)

'Kingdom business'

College ministry leaders share disciple-making tips

By Hannah Muñoz
The Alabama Baptist

Reach every student — that's the new focus of Alabama Baptist collegiate ministry leaders.

And to kick off the emphasis, a "TED Talks"-style event was held Nov. 12 at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, in conjunction with the Alabama Baptist State Convention meeting.

The event — "UNITE: A Gathering of Alabama Baptist College Ministry Leaders" — was hosted by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) collegiate and student ministries office, under the direction of Mike Nuss.

Featured speakers were Chase Abner, North American Mission Board's lead church planting catalyst in Iowa; Linda Weir, director of college and Ascend ministries at Pinelake Church, a multisite Baptist church in central Mississippi; Scott Kindig, pastor of Kingdom initiatives for Community Bible Church, San Antonio, Texas; and Michael Bozeman, counselor for Alabama's Pathways Professional Counseling.

"We are all here on Kingdom business," Nuss said, noting that of the approximately 330,000 college students in Alabama, an estimated 200,000 of them do not have a personal relationship with Jesus.

With the night's focus on discipleship, each speaker took turns describing and defining discipleship and its purpose in collegiate ministry.

Abner said, "It's important not that we disciple them as students, but that we disciple them as whole people for God's whole mission."

Abner, who previously served as collegiate evangelism strategist for the Illinois Baptist State Association, provided two keys to discipling students as whole people:



Photo by Hannah Muñoz

The UNITE event held Nov. 12 at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, kicks off the 'reach every student' focus of Alabama Baptist collegiate ministry leaders. The speakers were (l to r) Michael Bozeman, Linda Weir, Chase Abner and Scott Kindig.

see a bigger Kingdom and stop discipling so many students.

1. See a bigger Kingdom.

Some college ministry leaders are teaching students inadvertently that spiritual things are the only things that matter and in turn, students can toss aside all secular items in their life as unimportant, including classes and careers, Abner said.

But "we need to remember that through Christ, God is reconciling all things to Himself," he said, referencing Colossians 1:20.

2. Stop discipling so many students.

Most students would better benefit from discipleship from laypeople, those who are working "normal" jobs all while living for Christ, as opposed to a college ministry leader, Abner said.

"The vast majority of our students are not gonna be church staff or full-time missionaries," he said. "They're gonna work 40-plus hours a week at a job and they're gonna carve out hours here and there to serve the church and to make disciples. So the best way we can disciple college students for that life is to let them see people who are doing that

just a few steps ahead of them."

Weir said the staff at her church defines disciple as "one who learns from Christ, lives in Christ and leads others to Christ," based on Ezra 7:10. She also noted her ideal discipleship scenario is through small groups.

"Groups and discipleship go hand in hand," Weir said. "This should be a group of 8–12 students in similar life stages (only underclassmen, only upperclassmen and sometimes only men and only women) sharing the gospel and sharing life."

Kindig agreed.

"If we don't do groups really well, people won't be known and understood," he said. "More time plus less people equals greater community," Kindig said.

Kindig pointed to Jesus' example of discipling during His ministry. "He spent three years with 12 Jewish dudes."

Using Mark 4, Kindig showed Jesus speaking to the crowds in parables and then "when He was alone with His own disciples, He explained everything" (v. 34).

Kindig also outlined the steps of disciple-making with the acronym "FIGS: friendship, influence, growing, sending."

Building relationships

"Friendship is where it all starts and then influence," he said. "Then comes moving closer to the gospel and then into the Kingdom. There should be both growth and reaching out to others."



Photo by Tracy Riggs

Pastor Scott Ferguson (left) accepts the 2018 Outstanding Alabama Baptist Missions Volunteer award on behalf of Ruth Coggins, who wasn't present at the convention.

Ruth Coggins recognized for missions service

Ruth Coggins wasn't present when she was honored with the 2018 Outstanding Alabama Baptist Missions Volunteer award Nov. 13.

Coggins, a member of First Baptist Church, LaFayette, works closely with a Korean congregation, and one of the ladies she ministers to there had five heart bypasses just days before.

"Today they were getting her up for the first time, and she said she would not get out of bed if Mrs. Ruth was not there to help her," said Scotty Goldman, director of the office of global missions at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. "Mrs. Ruth is there now doing her ministry."

Coggins is an individual who has worked in all areas of the Acts 1:8 commission — Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria

and the uttermost parts of the earth, Goldman said.

She has missed only 10 Sundays at church in 30 years — one when her mother died and nine others when she was deployed in disaster relief.

Through the years she's served in Haiti, Mexico and Venezuela. She also has served faithfully in ministry at the county jail, the Christian Service Center and as an interpreter for the deaf.

Goldman presented the award to her pastor, Scott Ferguson, who accepted it on her behalf.

Ferguson said that even if Coggins had been there, she wouldn't have gone up on stage.

"She told me that she is only doing what we are supposed to be doing," he said. "I pray God would raise up more like her. May her tribe increase." (Grace Thornton)



Photo by Scott Ferguson

Bozeman shared how his commitment to discipling students shifted as he began working with Pathways after serving as a student pastor for several years.

"As pastors we want to just tell people the answer, but as counselors the goal is leading people to find the answer and understand it," Bozeman said. "Listen and they'll talk."

A Q&A panel also was held with the speakers, and Bozeman and Nuss wrapped up with a word for student ministry leaders.

"Your presence in the world when it comes to mental health and the struggle here and your willingness to sit across from them and say 'I'm here for you' makes the difference," Bozeman said.

Nuss added, "You get students in different places in discipleship when they come to you, and they leave before you're finished. It's messy and it's hard, but it's more real that way too."

"And know that we are in this missions field together."✠

'Helping to resource churches'

Associational leaders part of 'strong partnership' with state convention, entities

By Hannah Muñoz
The Alabama Baptist

Arose by any other name still smells as sweet," quoted Randall Stoner, associational mission strategist (AMS) for Marshall Baptist Association, referencing the recent name change from director of missions to AMS.

Stoner served as president of the Alabama Baptist Conference of Directors of Missions through the recent Nov. 12 meeting at First Baptist Church, Trussville. The group met in conjunction with the Alabama Baptist State Convention annual meeting taking place the same week.

Featured speakers included Bob Terry, editor of *The Alabama Baptist (TAB)*; Rob Jackson of University of Mobile (UM) and Kevin Blackwell of Samford University.

During the meeting members approved the nominating committee's recommendation of electing Thomas Wright, AMS for Mobile Baptist Association,

as president elect for 2019. Don Smith, AMS for Winston Baptist Association, transitioned from president-elect to president at the end of the meeting. Barry Cosper, AMS for Bessemer Baptist Association, will continue in his role as treasurer.

During the morning portion of the meeting, Terry expressed his gratitude for the unequalled partnership between *TAB* and Baptist associations across the state.

'Thank you'

"No other state convention comes close to this kind of partnership," he said. "The fact that other states do not have as strong a partnership as Alabama does is their loss.

"Alabama Baptists give more to their Baptist paper ... and to the Cooperative Program than any other state," he said. "Thank you for allowing me to be your ministry partner for the past 23 years. It has been a joy and I am in your debt."

After lunch Jackson, executive director of the institute for global



Photo by Hannah Munoz

New Alabama associational mission strategist (AMS) officers are: president, Don Smith (center), AMS for Winston Association; president-elect, Thomas Wright (left), AMS for Mobile Association; and treasurer, Barry Cosper, AMS for Bessemer Association.

leadership at UM, and Blackwell, assistant to the president for church relations and executive director of the Ministry Training Institute at Samford, shared updates on their schools. Both also thanked the associational leaders for their continued prayers.

"I'm here to thank you for your partnership," Jackson said. "You're helping to resource churches in our state because our state and our nation need Christ. And you're sending students our way."

Jackson said Alabama Baptist

schools are growing because people are praying.

"Thank you for your prayers. You're making a difference in Alabama and you're making a difference in Mobile. Please keep praying for us."

Continued prayers

Blackwell also asked for continued prayers. "It's tough doing Christian education in the culture that we're living in right now," he said. "I really believe God is doing an amazing work and will continue to do it."

The meeting ended with Bob Smith, minister to senior adults at First, Trussville, providing special music. Smith, who served as a traveling music evangelist prior to joining the church staff in March, sang a variety of songs. He shared contemporary Christian hits and hymns as well as a reimagined version of the 1957 "You're Nobody 'Til Somebody Loves You" by Dean Martin, replacing the lyrics with the line "You're somebody 'cause God Almighty loves you." ✠

Samford alumni gather during state convention annual meeting



Photo by Jennifer Davis Rash

Samford University alumni gathered for breakfast before the Tuesday morning session of the Alabama Baptist State Convention. Vice President for University Advancement Randy Pittman (standing, far right) gave updates on the campus' upgrades and introduced the new chair of the religion department, Roy Ciampa, who joined Samford in August, and Scott Guffin, who recently began serving as executive director of Christian ministry. Timothy George also spoke on his upcoming retirement as founding dean of Samford's Beeson Divinity School. He will transition to a new role as a professor following his retirement.

Burdeshaw presented 2018 Paul Stewart Award

The Alabama Singing Women and Alabama Singing Men presented the 2018 Paul Stewart Lifetime Service Award to Jane Burdeshaw the evening of Nov. 12.

Burdeshaw is the founding director of the Alabama Baptist Children's Honor Choir, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. She is also part of Alabama Singing Women and served as its first president.

A graduate of Blue Mountain College in Mississippi, Burdeshaw taught school for 35 years and is a past recipient of Alabama's Teacher of the Year.

She also is a member of the Alabama State Teacher's Hall of Fame and wrote character curriculum that has been used in school

systems across the state.

Burdeshaw authored a book on praying for children and is a board member at Character at Heart.



BURDESHAW

Her contribution to music education was recognized by LifeWay Christian Resources. She has been a writer for children's music curriculum and has taught children's choir workshops in many states as well as overseas.

She is currently an active member of First Baptist Church, Montgomery, where she sings in the Sanctuary Choir and Ichthus Ensemble.

Burdeshaw and her husband, Ray, married in 1964 and have four children — three living and one in heaven. (*TAB*)



Across ALABAMA'S Associations

BESSEMER

► **Rodney Parker** is the new part-time minister to students at **The Church at McAdory, Bessemer**. ► **Dale Jones** is the new pastor of **First Church, McCalla**. He



JONES

holds a degree from University of Alabama at Birmingham. He previously served as music minister at Community Church, Maylene; and also has served as music and youth minister for several other Alabama churches. He has also served as editor of the *Western Star, Foley Onlooker* and *Trussville Tribune*. Jones has three children and three grandchildren.

CLEBURNE

► **Bill Brown** is the new pastor of **Happy Hill Church, Heflin**. He previously served at Beulah Church, Muscadine, and has served in pastoral and music ministry positions at several churches in Georgia. He and his wife, Carol, have five children, 17 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

COVINGTON

► **Westview Church, Opp**, will hold A Walk to Bethlehem on Dec. 14–16, 6–9 p.m. The event will include live animals

and a half-mile walk through recreations of biblical times from the birth of Christ to the cross. It is recommended to wear walking shoes and bring strollers or wagons for smaller children. They will be able to accommodate guests with disabilities. Gary Miller is pastor.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

► **Lookout Mountain Association** will hold a Christmas reception at the Baptist building Dec. 9, 1–3 p.m. to honor the association's pastors and their wives. Refreshments will be served. Everyone is invited. Lloyd Borden is associational mission strategist.

MARSHALL

► **Sardis Church, Boaz**, will co-host "Christmas Alive" on Dec. 2, 6:30–8 p.m. at Sardis City Park. The event will include live displays and reenactments of 10 moments in Jesus' life. Mike Goforth is pastor.

RUSSELL

► **Summerville Church, Phenix City**, will host The Kempter Family Christmas Concert on Dec. 9, 6 p.m. **Lakewood Church, Phenix City**, will co-host the concert. For more information call 334-298-4416. Robb Goodman is pastor of Summerville Church, and M.R. Hamilton is pastor of Lakewood Church.

ST. CLAIR

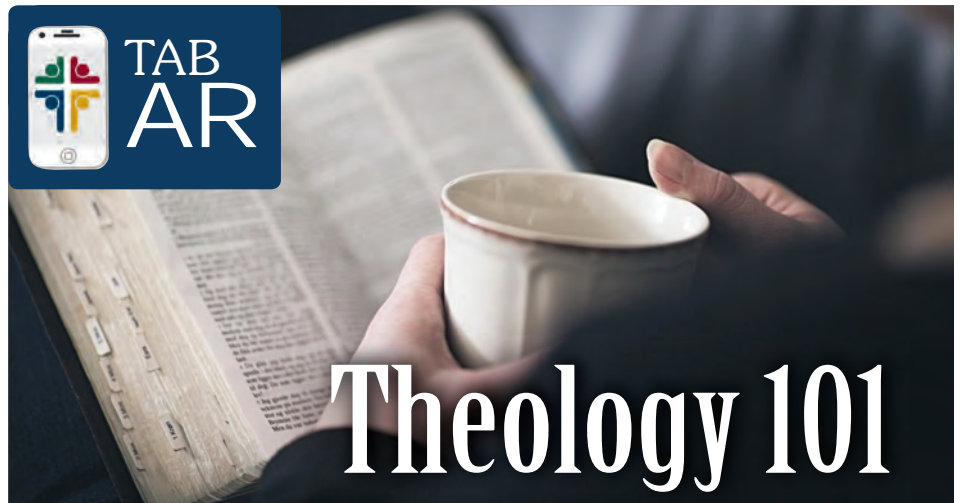
► **Mount Pisgah Church, Cropwell**, will host a Christmas concert featuring Three Bridges on Dec. 6, 6:30 p.m.✝

Huntsville churches minister to special needs adults



Photo courtesy of Carol Wells Barnette

On a recent Sunday afternoon, several Huntsville-area churches hosted a picnic for adults with special needs. Southside Baptist Church was one of the many churches to participate in the picnic. Allison Tofflemire, a member of Southside, teaches a special needs class in the area. 'God has given her a special gift of educating these adults to know Christ,' said Carol Wells Barnette, whose son Bob (center), is a part of Tofflemire's ministry. Bob spent the picnic with his friends Wendy (left) and Mat (right).



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

The Christ of Christmas

Jesus Christ the Son of David

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

Christmas music, Scripture readings and pageants remind us annually of some of the titles by which passages related to Christ's birth refer to Him. As we begin the countdown to Christmas, Theology 101 will explore some of the theological implications that flow from the titles found in the birth narratives. We begin this week with Son of David.

At the outset we note that Jesus was not a next generation son of David, but a son in the sense of a descendant born generations later. The opening verse of the New Testament reads "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). The following verses fill in the gaps between Christ and Abraham and between Christ and David with names in that genealogy.

Later in Matthew we read of a half dozen occasions when various people call Christ the "Son of David," such as two blind men who called out for mercy (9:27) and a Canaanite woman seeking help for her daughter (15:22). Then there was an amazed crowd who at one point asked, "Could this be the Son of David?" (12:23), as well as the joyous crowd that accompanied Christ during His triumphal entry into Jerusalem crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David" (21:9).

Messianic title

What's in a name when that name is Son of David, born in Bethlehem the city of David (Luke 2:11)? Rooted in the Old Testament, the title Son of David was commonly viewed as a messianic title. Thus, Son of David was a way of expressing the hope that Mary's son would prove to be the promised Messiah. The Old Testament is clear in presenting the Jewish hope for a promised Deliverer. This hope was not only the subject of prophetic proclamation but was also the focus of Jewish praise for generations as devout worshippers chanted songs of ascent while approaching Jerusalem and the temple for

annual celebrations. One such song was Psalm 132 with the refrain, "The Lord has sworn in truth to David; He will not turn from it: I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body" (v. 11).

Since David was the premier king of Israel, the prophetic hope was that one of his descendants would occupy the throne. Hence, the Son of David designation carried the overtone of royalty, albeit a royalty of a higher order than was that of King David. The ultimate expression of Christ's royalty awaits the end time when He will be acclaimed "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16).

Royal lineage

Being descended in the royal lineage that could be traced back to David and even further back to Abraham, the title Son of David also carried overtones of real humanity, such as could be traced back through the intervening generations. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph to reassure him about taking Mary as his wife, the angel addressed him, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife" (Matt. 1:20).

Subsequently, Joseph, being in the lineage of David, would become Jesus' legal and functional father, while Mary was Jesus' biological mother. Jesus was fully human with a real body that came from Mary. With Matthew 1:1–17 possibly recording Joseph's ancestry and Luke 3:23–38 possibly giving Mary's ancestry, Jesus was doubly a descendant of David, both legally and biologically.✝

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.



Death defeated

Taylor Road Baptist Church to offer service for those grieving during Christmas season

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Two years ago on a Sunday morning, Jeff and Penny Bonner saw life change in an instant.

Their middle child, Michael, was driving back to the University of Alabama after a weekend at home in Montgomery, and he never made it there.

“He was killed instantly in a car accident,” Penny Bonner said.

The Longest Night

In the years since, the couple has walked a painful road, leaning on God and trusting that He has purpose in their pain. And they’ve looked for ways to help other people going through the same thing.

“Holidays are always hard for

people who are grieving,” she said. “Ever since we lost him, we’ve talked about having some kind of service of remembrance not just for Michael but for so many people who have experienced the loss of a loved one — children, mothers and fathers, grandparents, brothers and sisters.”

That idea will become a reality Dec. 21 at 7 p.m. at their church, Taylor Road Baptist, Montgomery, through an event called The Longest Night. For people who are grieving, night is often the hardest time of the day, and the holidays are often the hardest time of year. Dec. 21 — the actual longest night of the year because of the winter solstice — embod-

ies that hard time, Pastor Daniel Atkins said.

He said the event’s purpose is to “minister to a segment of our population and our church culture in our city that seem to be the forgotten ones at Christmas.” For many Christmas used to be joyful, but now someone’s seat is empty at the table, and that makes people who are grieving want to retreat from all the holiday festivities.

The Longest Night service will acknowledge that, give people room to grieve and focus on the reason why Christmas exists — Jesus, the one who came so that death would be defeated.

“We are going to remember the loved ones that we lost and anticipate the Second Coming



Unsplash.com

of Christ, when He swallows up death,” Atkins said.

Purpose in pain

It’s one way the church can speak into a hurting world, he said — to offer those who are grieving the chance to come and “just be loved on” for the night. The songs and everything else will be geared toward those feeling the pain of loss. And the Bonners will share their story.

Jeff Bonner said they’re hoping The Longest Night will allow people who are at all different levels of grieving to come together and support each other during the dif-

ficult times they each are facing.

“That’s our goal — to let people know they are not alone,” he said. “We want people to be able to mourn in whatever way they want to and find comfort in meeting other people who are right where they are.”

The Bonners both say that they believe God has a purpose for their pain, and they believe part of it may be to encourage other people who are struggling through the death of a child or another loved one.

“We hope to see His kingdom glorified that night,” Jeff Bonner said.✝

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

2018 marks 125th anniversary of death of ‘O Little Town of Bethlehem’ writer

He is best known for writing the Christmas carol “O Little Town of Bethlehem.”

Phillips Brooks (1835–1893) was an American Episcopal clergyman, sometimes called “the most famous preacher of the 19th century.”

This year is the 125th anniversary of his death.

He was born on Dec. 13, 1835, to William Gray Brooks and Mary Ann Phillips Brooks in Boston, Massachusetts.

Dedicated champion

He attended Harvard University from 1851 until 1855. Then he studied at the Episcopal Seminary at Alexandria, Virginia, and was ordained there on July 1, 1859.

In August 1859 he started his ministry at the Church of the Advent in Philadelphia. With his commanding presence

and his eloquent preaching, he drew large crowds.

Three years later Brooks became rector of Holy Trinity in Philadelphia.

During the Civil War he became a dedicated champion of emancipation and later a defender of the right of former slaves to vote.

In 1865 he went to the Holy Land. On Christmas Eve he traveled on horseback between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. He wrote letters to the children of his church, telling them about his experiences: “Before dark we rode out of town to the field where they say the shepherds saw the star. ... As we passed, the shepherds were still keeping watch over their flocks.” Returning to Jerusalem, he joined in the traditional services at The Church of the Nativity.

The trip to Bethlehem left a strong

impression on him. In 1868, during the Christmas season, he wrote the lyrics of “O Little Town of Bethlehem” for the children of his church. Organist Lewis Redner quickly wrote the music. The children

sang the song at the Christmas program. The hymn was printed on a leaflet that December and appeared in The Sunday School Hymnal in 1871.

From 1869 to 1891 he was rector of Boston’s Trinity Church, the stronghold of Episcopalianism in America. At a time when Unitarianism was becoming a force in New England, Brooks defended his belief in the Trinity.

His many parishioners included Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan. Keller and Brooks corresponded via letters until the end of his life.

Brooks was a popular campus speaker at Harvard and served on the Board of

University Preachers, leading morning prayers and counseling students.

Queen Victoria invited him in 1880 to preach at Westminster Abbey and at the Royal Chapel in Windsor.

‘Sole desires’

In 1891 he became the Episcopal Bishop of Massachusetts.

On Jan. 23, 1893, he died of diphtheria. On the day of his funeral the Boston Stock Exchange and shops closed. Harvard students served as pallbearers as his casket traveled from Trinity Church to Mount Auburn Cemetery.

Brooks’ greatest legacy was his love of Christ. “To know in one’s whole nature what it is to live by Christ,” he said, is “to be His, not our own, to be so occupied with gratitude for what He did for us and for what He continually is to us that His will and His glory shall be the sole desires of our life.”✝

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).



BROOKS

‘Unhindered’

Rainsville-area Baptists organize communitywide event to share gospel, combat drug addiction

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

The week that Karin Millican and her friends got the idea, the area’s drug problem had come to a head in a local high school. There had been a situation and the drug dogs had been brought in.

It was a big deal, Millican said. She was brokenhearted.

“It’s a problem that’s prevalent across the state, but I’ve just been burdened about how it’s gotten worse in our area,” she said.

Her friend Julie Dabbs agreed.

“It blows my mind how much it’s changed since I was in high school,” Dabbs said. “In some form or fashion, drug addiction has probably touched every home in DeKalb County.”

Millican and Dabbs had been talking and praying about it for weeks, and then the Sunday after the drug dogs swept the high school, Millican said God spoke to her as she sat in the pew of Nazareth Baptist Church, Rainsville.

God’s vision

“I just kind of felt impressed that God wanted us to put on an event, something out of the ordinary, to share the gospel and address the issue,” she said. “But I’m not that kind of person — I’m very quiet, not very outspoken. I thought, ‘Maybe God will lay that on someone else’s heart instead.’”

Dabbs said God laid the same idea on her heart on the same day, and like Millican, she had plenty

of reasons not to follow through.

“I could see the event, and I could see Casey speaking at it,” Dabbs said, referring to Casey Rice, a Rainsville-area resident who had overcome a drug addiction.

But Dabbs didn’t work with youth, and she didn’t even live in DeKalb County anymore — she had recently moved to Georgia.

“I told God, ‘Surely You’re not telling this to me,’” she said.

But as Dabbs and Millican talked and heard each other’s stories, they realized He was. And as they began to try to put the event

together, every obstacle melted away.

They were able to book the DeKalb County School Auditorium, which had never before said

“yes” to hosting an event during basketball season, Millican said.

And in eight weeks they were able to put together Unhindered, an event held Nov. 4 that drew nearly 2,000 people. A band made up of local musicians led worship, Rice shared her story and her father, Morris Hicks, pastor of the local Fellowship Christian Center, shared the gospel.

Ken Allen, associational mission strategist for DeKalb Baptist Association, said for Dabbs, Millican and others to pull an event of that size together so fast was “remarkable.”

“That really shows too that the vision for this was folks in the pew,” he said. “God just gave them a vision, and they ran with it.”

He said it was also encouraging to see people from all over



Photo by Ginny Jenkins

A band made up of local musicians leads worship for the nearly 2,000 people gathered at the Unhindered event on Nov. 4. The event was organized by Karin Millican and Julie Dabbs as a way to combat the area’s drug problem and share the gospel with teenagers.

the county coming together to be encouraged in the Lord.

“We can lose sight of that bigger body of Christ that’s out there,” Allen said. “These two ladies made a point to get people from different churches involved so that anyone who came through the door would see someone they knew.”

Getting involved

The result was an overwhelming response from churches of various denominations wanting to volunteer and be involved in the event.

And a large crowd was able to

hear the gospel, maybe for the first time, Allen said.

Dabbs said she and Millican were thrilled about the opportunity.

“We know Jesus is the only answer to the issues that DeKalb County faces,” Dabbs said. “God took care of everything to make this event happen all along the way.”

Some people who were at Unhindered made decisions to follow Christ that night. Others have reached out to Rice in the time since to thank her for sharing her story.

With that in mind Dabbs said

she’s glad they didn’t ignore the idea God planted in their hearts, even though it was uncharted territory for both of them.

“God’s calling us to do something all the time — the question is, are we being sensitive? Sometimes I think it’s possible we get so busy that we don’t stop to listen and do what He’s asking of us,” she said. ☞

Catawba Springs Baptist Church celebrates bicentennial

The bicentennial celebration at Catawba Springs Baptist Church, Brewton, in Escambia Baptist Association, lasted the whole weekend. It kicked off with a fish fry on Oct. 6 and concluded with a special service on Oct. 7.

Look forward

Lee Wright from the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions was the guest speaker.

Pastor Jeff Edwards presented the church’s bicentennial highlights.

Lonette Berg from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented a certificate to the church, and Sally Finlay, representing the Escambia County Historical Society, announced plans for a historical marker at the church. Alan Baker, state representative for District 66, presented a resolution from Gov. Kay Ivey.

“The celebration was not just a look back but also a look forward to what God is going to do,” Edwards said. “It was an outstanding worshipful day that exceeded expectations.” (TAB)



Photo by Lonette Berg

Know someone wanting a career change?

The White Shirt book is a must-read.

“Michael offers powerful nuggets of inspiration and clear instruction about how to choose the right path for you.”
—Neil Kinnaman, author of *1001 Spiritual Exercises*

THE WHITE SHIRT

Find Your Peaceful & Life-giving Career at Any Stage of Life

MICHAEL ALAN TATE

To purchase the book or for more information, visit whiteshirtbook.com.

Someone You

Should Know

Travis Coleman

By Leigh Pritchett
Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

In 2019, Travis Coleman, 69, will retire after 29 years as senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Prattville. He also serves as finance chairman for The Alabama Baptist's board of directors. An alumnus of Palm Beach Atlantic University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Coleman is a past president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

MINISTRY DESCRIPTION: Senior pastor

CHURCH NAME: First Baptist Church, Prattville,
in Autauga Baptist Association

LIFE VERSE: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."
(Phil. 4:13)

Q: Describe where you focus your greatest ministry efforts:

A: Discipling and mentoring people, particularly men.

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

A: My mother was one of the most influential persons. My dad was not a Christian when I was growing up. He did not become a Christian until I was a freshman in college. My mother made sure that we were, from a very young age, in Sunday School, church, children's choir, RAs and GAs. She taught Sunday School. She was the director of our Sunday morning preschool ministry. When God called me into ministry, I had a firm foundation in my mom.

Also a man named Johnny Cline. He was a Sunday School teacher in my youth years. Johnny provided the male spiritual leadership I needed in my life. My dad was a good father and loved his wife but he wasn't a church person (during those years).

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

A: I attended the University of Florida my freshman and sophomore year. I went on a pre-med program. When I was called into ministry, I rationalized that I would be a medical missionary. I flunked two classes and made a "D" in another. I had made good grades in high school but I wasn't in college. God got my attention, however. When I got back into His will, the good grades returned and I started dating Arlinda. When we married and moved to Palm Beach, I went to another college and my grades went up. Everything was fine after that.

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

A: I would have told myself, "Rest more in God's love." I would have reminded myself that the relationship with God is more important than the work. Like a lot of us, we get so involved in being successful; God wants us to rest in Him, not be so anxious and realize that our identity is found in Him and walking with Him. My identity is not found in my work.

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

A: "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine." They sang that on the night I was baptized as a nine-year-old boy in Homestead, Florida. I have had strong faith since I was a young boy. That has been an anchor for me that has kept me strong in my faith and kept me from having doubts.

"Half Time" by Bob Buford. He was one of the founders of Leadership Network in Texas that helps pastors and staff with leadership. This book meant a lot to me. My significance was my strong marital relationship with my wife, that my children and their spouses are involved in church, and that my six grandchildren are involved in church. That's going to last. All the other things are fleeting in life. Moving from success to significance — God really showed me that and I have shared that with other men through the years. 🙏



COLEMAN



JUDSON COLLEGE

► **Judson College Concludes Fundraising Campaign:** Judson College officially concluded Blessed Light: The Campaign for Judson College with a dinner at The Club in Birmingham on Sept. 20. The three-year initiative addressed several areas of priority, including capital improvements, annual operating and endowment support and capital debt reduction.

Blessed Light projects that have already been completed include soccer and softball field lighting, improvements to several buildings on campus and completion of the Piper Equine Complex. The campaign made possible the establishment of 14 new endowed scholarships. ► **Judson Students Volunteer with Legal Clinic:** Students in Judson's History and Criminal Justice departments volunteered with a free legal clinic given by attorney and Judson alumna Adele Baker Underwood of the Baker Underwood Law Firm. The clinic was held Oct. 13 at the Sowing Seeds of Hope Job Training Center in Marion.

UNIVERSITY OF MOBILE

► **UM Dedicates New Music Technology Lab:** Students preparing for careers as sound technicians, video producers or media specialists in churches and non-ministry settings will get hands-on experience with state-of-the-art technology in a new mixing and visualization lab at University of Mobile. The space, which already included

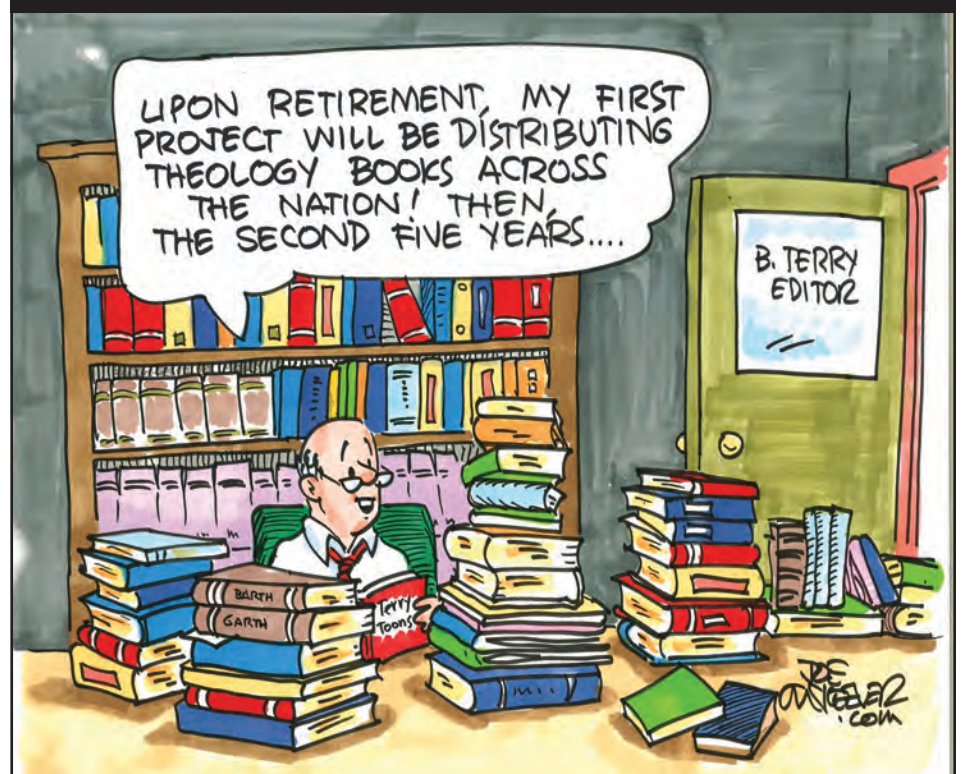
a stage, now includes a fully outfitted lighting rig, sound board and video capabilities. In the mixing and visualization lab students can remotely design lighting and mechanics for shows.

The new lab will prepare students for careers in worship technology, touring productions and other entertainment and conference positions.

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY

► **Samford Students Participate in Acute Care Simulation:** Students from the College of Health Sciences participated in the college's annual Acute Care Simulation held Oct. 23–24. Roughly 250 students representing programs in each of the college's four schools participated. The goal of the simulation is to provide a realistic clinical setting. The simulation uses a mix of interactive manikins and actors who serve as patients and family members. The simulation emphasizes both best practices for patient care and collaboration among health care team members. ► **Samford Alum Breaking Ground in Telemedicine:** Cole Sandlin, a 2008 alumnus of Samford University's McWhorter School of Pharmacy and a third-generation pharmacist in Hamilton, Alabama, was honored this year by the American Pharmacy Association with its 2018 Excellence in Innovation Award, citing his work to introduce the first telemedicine kiosk in an Alabama-based pharmacy. Sandlin installed the telemedicine kiosk at Fred's Pharmacy to allow patients to be evaluated by an off-site physician for diagnosis and treatment. 🙏

REFLECTIONS



Shelby Baptist Association welcomes two new churches

Shelby Baptist Association recently welcomed two new churches to its membership — North Shelby Vietnamese Baptist Church and Jesus the Good Shepherd Church, a Hispanic congregation.

The churches ended their watch-care status and became full members of the Shelby association by unanimous vote at the quarterly executive committee meeting in September. Moderator Michael J. Brooks presided.

Allan Murphy, chair of the association's credentials committee, said, "This is a wonderful day for us, and we're blessed to have these two great churches with us."

Murphy — retired pastor of North Shelby Baptist Church, mother church of the Vietnamese congregation — explained that the association's missions development council works to encourage new churches, then the credentials committee proceeds to encourage the new congregations in their development.

"We talked with both groups," Murphy said, "and both churches are theologically sound, committed to Baptist practice and cooperative in their approach. Both are

trying to bring people to Christ and grow their congregations in God's grace."

Associational Mission Strategist Hugh Richardson agreed.

"Their pastors have a strong commitment to evangelism and disciple making," he said. "I believe that God will use them to advance the Kingdom in our greater Shelby County community."

North Shelby Vietnamese Baptist is fulfilling a lend-lease agreement with the mother church, purchasing one of North Shelby's original buildings, and will own it in about two years, Murphy said. Jeremiah Doan is pastor of North Shelby Vietnamese Baptist.

Jesus the Good Shepherd Church meets in the choir room of First Baptist Church, Pelham, and Juan Carlos Castillo serves as pastor.

"The Pelham mission is long-established and legally recognized as a church but was without a pastor for a season," said Cary Hanks, director of the Central Alabama Baptist Hispanic

Ministry Coalition. "They have Bible study, morning worship and a Friday night worship," he said. "The church has a long-

range plan of owning their own facilities. They're self-supporting and providing 10 percent of their receipts to the mother church."

The two congregations joined CrossWay Christian Fellowship, currently meeting at the YMCA in Pelham,

as ethnic congregations in Shelby Association. Fred Muse is the pastor of CrossWay, which is about 75 percent African-American, according to Richardson. (TAB)



CASTILLO



DOAN

Want to get your news in **The Alabama Baptist?**

Call us! 1-800-803-5201

My JESUS Story

By Heather Bradley
Excel Baptist Church

I treasure the black rock with small holes given to me. It is a beautiful picture of my own heart, which has many holes, but those holes have a Healer. As I lay each void of brokenness before Jesus, He heals the void. When I allow Jesus' Holy Spirit to enter my brokenness, He heals each scar of my past. He allows me to grow in His truth and love.

I didn't understand this truth and love until I was married and pregnant with my second child.

My childhood was difficult. I do not know my father, my mother was unable to care for me, my adoptive mother and father struggled with alcoholism and the second husband of my adoptive mother physically abused me at 16. When I was 18, I met my husband, Duke. I noticed something different about his family. They were peaceful, kind and loving. They were Christians.

After Duke and I were married we started attending a local church. Soon we started having children. I took my daughter to Vacation Bible School. As she learned Bible stories, I would

listen carefully to the stories. After hearing Bible stories and other people's testimonies, I realized something was missing in my life.

I told my husband that I felt like there was a hole in my heart. He simply replied, "You need Jesus." I had no idea what that actually meant. After attending church and group Bible studies I learned that God created me. God loved me. He loved me so much that He sent His one and only Son to die for me. I thought, "Who would do that and why?"

When I was pregnant with my second child, I started to understand what all that meant. I asked Jesus to come into my life and be my Savior.

I was very emotional the day I was baptized. My adoptive parents attended church that day even though they had never attended church before.

Since Jesus came into my life, I am a new creation. He loves me. He has forgiven me of my past wrongs. He has guided and directed me in forgiveness of others who wronged me.

While my life is not perfect, I meet with my Lord each morning at the kitchen table over a cup of coffee. We discuss the issues of life. He guides me. He protects me and gives me peace within all circumstances. My prayer is that He can shine through my brokenness so that others see His love, peace and redemption. ✠

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

WORSHIP LEADER

First Baptist Church in Oxford, Alabama, is seeking a full-time worship pastor to lead dynamic, blended worship. This person must be a self-starter, have strong organizational/administrative skills and able to give leadership to a complete music and media ministry. Please send resumés to: stan@firstbaptistoxford.org, or mail to: First Baptist Church, ATTN: Worship Search Team, 95 E. Oak Street, Oxford, AL 36203.

PART-TIME INTERIM MUSIC WORSHIP LEADER

Seeking part-time interim music worship leader. Send resumés to: jenny.russell@parkviewdecat.org. This is a paid position.

SENIOR PASTOR

Seeking a senior pastor for contemporary and/or traditional services for Sherwood Baptist

Church, Huntsville, Alabama. Send resumés to: Dr. Sam Cooke, 513 Hermitage Wood Dr., Huntsville, AL 35806, DrHSamuelCooke@yahoo.com.

FULL-TIME PASTOR

College Heights Baptist Church, Glencoe, is searching for a full-time pastor. Send resumés to: College Heights Baptist Church, 411 Rabbittown Road, Glencoe, AL 35905.

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.

OTHER POSITIONS

DIRECTOR OF MISSIONS

Walton County Baptist Association in DeFuniak Springs, Florida, is seeking resumés for a director of missions. Please email

resumés to: wbaptistassoc@panhandle.rr.com.

PERFORMING ARTS SCHOOL TEACHERS

North Shelby Baptist School of Performing Arts is seeking teachers for the winter term beginning Jan. 7, 2019. If interested, please send your resumé to: arts@northshelbybaptist.org.

BUSINESS

ELROD MOBILITY — GREAT PRICES

Stair-lifts, walk-in tubs, lift-chairs and lightweight take-apart scooters. Saving people a lot of money on walk-in tubs, stair-lifts and showers. Our lift-chairs and scooters are near internet pricing. A+ rating with BBB. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658.

NEED A NEW CHURCH SIGN?

Reliable Sign Services — a Christian operated, full service, lighted

sign company located in Pelham, Alabama, for 23 years — is ready to help you expand your church sign ministry. From digital message boards to traditional signs, Reliable Signs will design, fabricate and install statewide. www.reliablesigns.com. 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955.

TRAVEL/VACATION

TWIN RIVERS RESORT — RETREAT CENTER — NE GEORGIA

Churches/families/weddings. 10 fully equipped cabins and lodge. Room for 65 to meet, eat and sleep. 866-754-2010. www.TwinRiversResort.net.

LOG CABIN RENTAL

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



(augmented reality)

- 1 Download the HP Reveal app from your app store.
- 2 Tap the icon at the bottom of the screen.
- 3 You will see pulsating dots, which indicate the app is searching for a target. Once it finds a target the dots will turn to a bull's-eye. The bull's-eye will remain until the augmented reality image loads.
- 4 Look for *The Alabama Baptist (TAB)* augmented reality logo (example shown above). Hold your device over the logo and watch the paper come to life.
- 5 Each week when *TAB* arrives, look for the AR logo to watch the video extras through the app.

‘Platform for the gospel’

Tanzanian missionaries, Baptist hospital beneficiaries of LMCO gifts

At the end of a beaten-up road in Tanzania, the Baptist Hospital in Kigoma occasionally gets as full as it can get and then runs on empty.

That’s what Ben Hale, missions pastor at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, learned several years ago when he visited the hospital to see what his church could do to help.

Hale saw sick children sleeping two or three to a bed because there wasn’t enough space. He found out that sometimes the hospital ran out of medications and supplies.

Hale was moved and he began to talk with Larry Pepper, an International Mission Board (IMB) doctor who serves at the hospital. There in that crowded hospital, the two men began to dream. Hale saw the vast needs — both medical and spiritual — and Pepper shared how the hospital has been a vehicle for getting the gospel into area villages, some of which had no believers yet.

“Long story short we were able to help them build a pediatric wing,” Hale said. “We’re hoping it will be a platform for the gospel, not only for the patients, but that it would open up doors for more church planting and gospel sharing in the area.”

So far it has. Five construction workers came to Christ as the pediatric unit was being built. And with a quarter of the facility dedicated to maternal health, Pepper’s wife, Sally, has been able to start new ministries to mothers. The new wing also paved the way for the IMB to send a pediatrician to join the hospital’s work.

Opening doors

“It has been a really great partnership with the Dawson congregation,” Larry Pepper said. “We’re grateful.”

Over and over churches have stepped up to cover the hospital’s needs — needs like Ketamine for C-sections and suture materials for surgeries.

“Churches of all sizes have helped,” he said.

They have supported the Peppers’ work through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, the funding source that keeps them on the field. They have provided equipment like wheelchairs and oxygen concentrators, a vital resource in a place where oxygen tanks are sparse. They have sent construction teams to make repairs on the facilities. They have led their children’s ministries to raise funds to feed malnourished children at the hospital.

“We’re just two people,” Larry Pepper said. “But we find that when other people get a passion to come alongside us, God uses it to further His kingdom.” (*Missions Mosaic*)



IMB photo

TAB board member Scott Swedenburg (right), a member of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, visits with a patient at Kigoma Baptist Hospital in Tanzania. After seeing the hospital’s great need for more space a few years ago, the church helped build a new pediatric wing to further the hospital’s ministry.

Help reach every nation with gospel through prayer

(continued from page 1)

local and global for a church in Atlanta.

These stories represent the more than 3,600 missionaries supported by the LMCO. Each story featured in the prayer guide provides a glimpse into the ways missionaries are called to go and serve and also how churches and individuals are called to serve alongside them through short-term missions, giving and prayer.

The Week of Prayer is an opportunity for all Southern Baptists to be part of reaching every nation with the gospel. Each day’s missionary story includes specific ways to pray

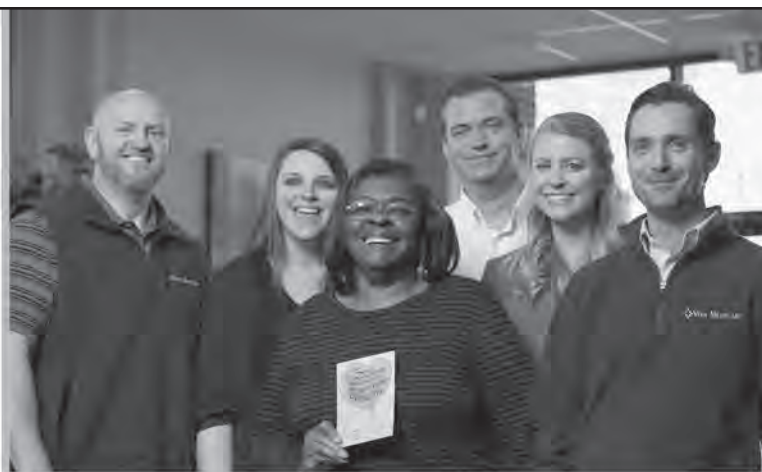
during the Week of Prayer for International Missions. Videos are also available.

For more information and to order resources for your church’s LMCO emphasis, contact Alabama WMU at 1-800-264-1225 or order online at AlabamaWMU.org. Resources, including in-depth prayer stories, are also available at IMB.org/lmco and in the December 2018 issue of *Missions Mosaic* from WMU at wmustore.com.

To receive daily prayer reminders via email during this year’s Week of Prayer, sign up at imb.org/subscribe. (IMB, *Missions Mosaic*)

VIVA MEDICARE

We treat you like a neighbor, not a number.



Call us today for *easy-to-understand answers* to your Medicare questions.

Toll-free: **1-888-830-VIVA (8482) | TTY: 711**

www.VivaHealth.com/Medicare

Hours: Mon - Fri, 8am - 8pm | Oct 1 - Mar 31: 7 days a week, 8am - 8pm

VIVA MEDICARE is an HMO plan with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in VIVA MEDICARE depends on contract renewal. VIVA HEALTH complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística.

Llame al 1-888-830-8482 (TTY: 711).

注意: 如果您使用繁體中文, 您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電 1-888-830-8482 (TTY: 711).

H0154_mcdoc2040A_M_09/15/2018

imb | LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING®

National goal:
\$160 million

Alabama’s goal:
\$12 million

The 2018 Week of Prayer for International Missions is December 2-9.

Looking for the perfect CHRISTMAS GIFT?

Give the gift that GIVES BACK!



You can honor a special loved one in your life by making a donation in their name! Your gift will help provide Christmas gifts and meet other needs for children in foster care across the state.



We'll even send them a card that will let them know how much you appreciate them with the gift you made.



To make a donation in honor of someone you love, visit alabamachild.org/Christmas, select "Make a Tribute," and enter their information. You can also mail a check to P.O. Box 361767, Birmingham, AL 35236.



Alabama Baptist
CHILDREN'S HOMES
& Family Ministries

ALABAMACHILD.ORG // 205.982.1112 //



GRACE gifts

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

Andrews, Dusty, Ozark: Rusty Andrews
Barnett, Kenneth, Brenham, TX: Faye Miller
Clements, Cecelia L., Rainsville: Zoe Benefield
Gross, Frank, Providence: Providence BC of Gallion

Dodd, David L., Birmingham: Mr. & Mrs. J. Wray Pearce
Galyean, Bettye, Pensacola, FL: Eureka BC of Franklin
Gibbs, Melvin, Linden: Providence BC of Gallion
Kidd, Marie, Ardmore: Mr. & Mrs. Walter R. Neeley
Livingston, Jamie Dial, Livingston: Mr. & Mrs. Larry Crow
McNair, Sandy, Gadsden: Zoe Benefield
Morgan, Kevin, Gadsden: Zoe Benefield & Angela Sims
Stokes, Wynell Glass, Linden: Providence BC of Gallion
Walston, Carrie, Repton: Faye and Wayne Parker

THANK YOU!

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

Baptist NEWS BRIEFS

COMPILED FROM WIRE SERVICES

Chitwood elected head of IMB

RICHMOND, Va. — Paul Chitwood was unanimously elected as the 13th president of the International Mission Board (IMB) on Nov. 15, during the trustees' regularly scheduled meeting.

Chitwood, 48, who previously served as executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, took office immediately as IMB president.

Clyde Meador, former missionary and IMB executive vice president who has served as IMB's interim president since September 2018, will remain in the president's office as interim executive vice president for several months during the transition at Chitwood's request. (BP)

Historic church receives grant

BIRMINGHAM — The Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham has been named one of 11 U.S. sites to win grant funding from this year's annual Partners in Preservation: Main Streets campaign.

The church will use the \$150,000 grant to restore the church's historic windows, cupola and bell towers installed in 1911.

In 1963, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church was the target of the infamous, racially-motivated bombing in which four young girls were killed. It still functions as a house of worship and gathering space as well as a tourist destination. (TAB)

2019 SBC theme announced

BIRMINGHAM — Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President J.D. Greear announced Nov. 14 that "Gospel Above All" will be the theme of the 2019 SBC annual meeting in Birmingham on June 11–12, 2019.

In his first presidential address to the SBC Executive Committee, Greear said the supremacy of the gospel — "the source of our renewal" — will motivate him as he leads Baptists to evangelize, plant churches and mobilize college students for the Kingdom. (BP)

Composer Kaiser dies at 83

WACO, Texas — Kurt Kaiser, pianist and composer of familiar Christian songs including "Pass It On" and "Oh How He Loves You and Me," died Nov. 12 after a long illness. He was 83.

Kaiser had a six-decade-long career in composing, playing, arranging and producing Christian music. Kaiser was co-founder of Word Music and served as vice president and director of music during his years there. (TAB)

IMB sends 42 new missionaries

RICHMOND, Va. — Southern Baptists celebrated the appointment of 42 new missionaries in an International Mission Board (IMB) Sending Celebration held Nov. 14. The next IMB Sending Celebration is scheduled for Feb. 6, 2019. (IMB)



Northside Baptist marks 75 years in ministry

On Oct. 7, Northside Baptist Church, Selma, in Selma Baptist Association, celebrated 75 years in ministry.

Northside Baptist began as a mission outreach of First Baptist Church, Selma, on Sept. 8, 1943.

Former members and guests returned to make the day truly special. Former pastor Bill Gardner brought the message.

Music was presented by Melissa Thompson, Kay Jones, the Northside choir and former pastor Kenny Hatcher.

Afterward, the congregation filled the fellowship room for lunch. "Thanks to everyone who attended, and to the staff and leadership of Northside for a memorable time," said Pastor Ken Blake. (Jessica Ingram)

FBC Peterman marks 150-year milestone

First Baptist Church, Peterman, in Bethlehem Baptist Association, celebrated its 150-year anniversary Oct. 14.

Jack West, pastor of First, Peterman, 1979–1984, was the guest speaker for the service.

Eleanor and Candice Stabler, Charla and Interim Pastor Craig Hayles and Jack West brought the special music.

Dalton Campbell from the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission presented the congregation with a certificate commemorating the milestone.

"It was a wonderful day with a lot of laughter and good memories," said member Wanda Green. (TAB)



Photo by Dalton Campbell

Riverside celebrates 75-year anniversary

Leading up to Oct. 21 members of Riverside Baptist Church, Mobile, worked together cleaning and painting to prepare the building for the 75th anniversary celebration.

Former pastor Royce Dubose was the guest speaker. Former minister of music Ron Turner led congregational singing.

Chuck Davis, director of church development for Mobile Baptist Association, presented the church with certificates on behalf of Mobile Association and the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission.

A covered-dish lunch followed the service and a birthday cake for interim pastor Billy Burt was served.

"It was a wonderful day," church member Carolyn Ellis said. (Jessica Ingram)

Compiled by the Alabama Baptist Historical Commission and TAB

GUIDESTONE

PROPERTY & CASUALTY

What do you do when trouble walks into your church?

GuideStone® and Brotherhood Mutual want to help you take a proactive approach to security as you hope for the best — and prepare for the worst.

Download our 5 free security fact sheets to help you learn how to:

- CREATE A PLAN
- TRAIN YOUR PEOPLE
- SECURE KEY AREAS
- PATROL YOUR CHURCH
- PROTECT WITH CHURCH INSURANCE

GuideStone.org/AlabamaSecurity

GuideStone®



Pastor Charles Lewis recommends Jimmy Dixon



The Benefits of a Reverse Mortgage

- Get cash
- Erase mortgage payments
- Start a growing line of credit
- Purchase a home

Contact Jimmy Dixon

205-567-4800

jdixon@mcgowinking.com



NMLS #207518

Like *The Alabama Baptist*, Jimmy covers our state helping seniors improve the quality of their lives.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For December 2

Explore the Bible By Jay T. Robertson, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile

Bible Studies for Life By Jim Barnette, Ph.D.
Samford University and Brookwood Baptist Church, Mountain Brook

THE DECEIVER
Genesis 27:18-29

As we return to our study in Genesis we find Isaac quite old. His spiritual edge has dulled. He is visually impaired and dependent upon his family. Most notably he has come to oppose the revealed will of God concerning Jacob and Esau. He was well aware of the battle that had taken place between the twins in Rebekah's womb. He knew God said, "The older shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23). Isaac was also irritated that Jacob manipulated Esau into giving his birthright to him. But Isaac was determined that though Esau lost his birthright, he would give him the firstborn's blessing. He was determined to have his way despite God's word.

Isaac sent Esau out to hunt game and prepare a meal for them so he could bless Esau. But Rebekah overheard their plan. (Tent walls do not hide much, especially in the midst of domestic strife.) As soon as Esau had left, Rebekah jumped into action. She prepared Isaac's favorite food and disguised Jacob as Esau.

A Deceitful Son (18-23)

Jacob set his hesitations aside, put on his clever disguise and approached his father. A product of his mother's love and his own self-promoting heart, Jacob acted despicably. He lied to his father three times. First, he lied when he said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn." Second, he lied when he named the Lord as the reason for his successful hunting. This was blasphemy. Jacob made God his accomplice. Isaac then asked his son to come near him. Isaac recognized Jacob's voice but felt hands hairy like Esau's. Third, Jacob lied when his father asked him one more time, "Are you really my son Esau?" And Jacob answered, "I am."

A Deceived Father (24-27)

Believing Esau was standing before him, Isaac commanded him to bring the food so he could eat and bless him. Isaac ate the game and drank the wine. After eating the meal he asked his son to come near and kiss him. Isaac recognized the smell of Esau before him. The kiss was actually a fourth lie. How could Jacob claim to love his father when he was in the act of deceiving him? Since the smell of the garments finally convinced Isaac that it was indeed Esau, the stage was now set for the giving of the blessing.

A Stolen Blessing (28-29)

Isaac's blessing of pseudo-Esau is in the form of four poetic stanzas. The first stanza said, "The smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed." The stolen garments, smelling of the country, called forth from Isaac the promise of the land, which produces abundantly.

The second stanza said, "May God give to you — from the dew of the sky and from the richness of the land — an abundance of grain and new wine." Dew is a Hebrew metaphor for God's goodness in providing abundance. "Dew," "fatness" and "plenty" formed an invocation of refreshment and prosperity upon his son.

The third stanza said, "May peoples serve you and nations bow in worship to you. Be master over your relatives; may your mother's sons bow in worship to you." Isaac longed for Esau to have an empire. He utterly rejected God's word to Rebekah that "the older shall serve the younger." Isaac blessed pseudo-Esau with universal dominion.

The fourth stanza said, "Those who curse you will be cursed and those who bless you will be blessed." The final blessing invoked divine protection. Isaac thought he had thwarted God's plan but Jacob, in Esau's clothing, had displaced Esau again. †

ISAIAH'S PROPHECY
Isaiah 7:10-14; 9:6-7; 11:1-5

Advent reminds us that God's Son is the answer to all of our trials and travails. Isaiah predicts a coming, mysterious somebody who will be our ultimate deliverer. That coming somebody would be Immanuel, God with us.

God promised a son — Immanuel — would be born of a virgin. (Isa. 7:10-14)

Our world, as in Isaiah's time, is troubled because there is no relief without belief. "If you do not stand firm in your faith," warns the prophet, "you will not stand at all" (Isa. 7:9). God reminds us that our belief is the only relief from fear. To assist us in our faith the Lord God invites us to look for a sign from Him "whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights" (v. 11). His ultimate assistance to our faith is the sign of Immanuel, a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger. The birth of this baby is the visible promise that God will save His people. John Wesley commented on the power of this sign as the ultimate answer to all of our battles: "This promised birth supposed the preservation of that city, and nation and tribe, in and of which the Messiah was to be born, and therefore there was no cause to fear that ruin which their enemies now threatened."

God promised a child would be born who is the mighty God. (Isa. 9:6-7)

In Isaiah 7, Immanuel is a baby more potent than all of our battles. In Isaiah 9, He is the prince of the four names. He will be "wonderful" in that His person and His performance excite awe and amazement. He will be "Counselor" in His office as the ultimate administrator of God's truth and the fountain of all wisdom. He will be the "Everlasting Father" as the One who made

and gives eternal life. His principality will be one of peace. In summary, He is the "Mighty God," sovereign over all things created.

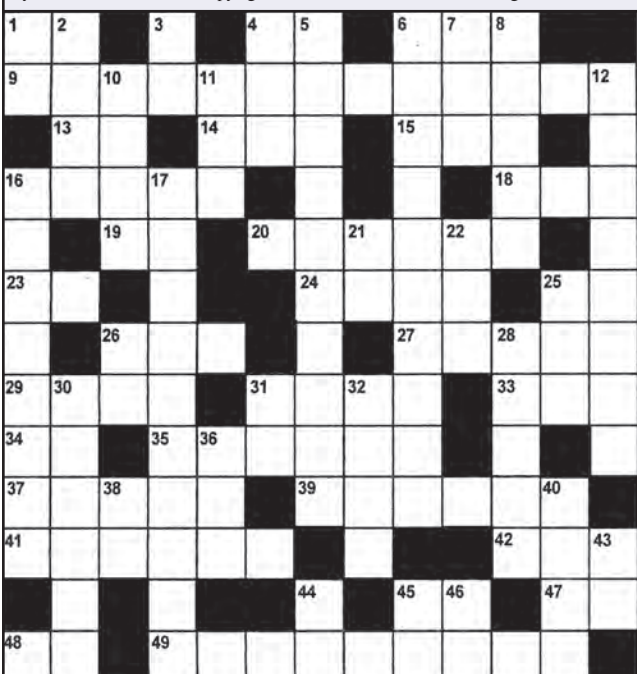
The birth of the Prince of Peace is accompanied with the promise of universal peace, proclaimed both in Isaiah and in the Gospel of Luke. The prophet declares that "every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning" (Isa. 9:5). The Christ child is our only hope for peace. His coming means the rejection of all instruments of war. While humans parade them and put them in museums, Isaiah assures us that these tools of destruction will be "fuel for the fire."

God promised a descendant of David would judge with righteousness (Isa. 11:1-5)

At least six of the Old Testament prophets are quoted in the stories of Jesus' birth recorded in Matthew and Luke. Among them Isaiah offered some of the most powerful words about how this infant would restore hope and save those who confess faith in Him. In this passage Isaiah exhibits both insight and foresight. He had the insight that David's mighty dynasty would fall, becoming as hopeless as the rotting stump of a cut-down tree. But Isaiah also had the positive foresight that out of this deteriorated stump would someday come a new tender shoot of life. As David was taken from the house of Jesse to usher in a period of greatness in Israel's history, so a second David would spring forth and transform all history. Just as God's Spirit was upon David, so will His Spirit rest upon this second David. The coming Christ would have faculties of perception, practical application and insight into the character of God that no one else ever could possess. Furthermore, the Christ child would identify with the poor and the meek. For the oppressed and downtrodden, He will advocate for their deliverance. †

Christian Crossword

By David Greenlee Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. I _____. (name of God)
4. Father.
6. A deity or idol.
9. Fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22)
13. Satan went ____ and fro. (Job 1:7)
14. Small, humanlike mythical being.
15. Prefix of negation.
16. ____ from God the Father. (Gal. 1:3)
18. Moses' second book. (abbr.)
19. ____, every one that thirsteth. (Isa. 55:1)
20. ____ fell from Saul's eyes. (Acts 9:18)
23. Peter wrote ____ the scattered Jews. (1 Pet. 1:1)
24. I will ... have mercy on _____. (Jer. 33:26)
25. Indefinite singular article.
26. Hiram's navy brought this animal to Solomon. (1 Kings 10:22)
27. Traveled with Rebekah.

(Gen. 24:59)

29. Ancient city.
31. The Spirit descended in this form. (Matt. 3:16)
33. This animal spoke to Balaam. (Num. 22:28)
34. In him is ____ darkness. (1 John 1:5)
35. Used to kill Stephen. (Acts 7:58)
37. Pilate found no ____ of death in Jesus. (Luke 23:22)
39. Relationship of Martha and Mary to Lazarus. (John 11:1)
41. ____ his money. (Gen. 42:27)
42. Built the ark. (Luke 17:27)
45. Peleth's son. (Num. 16:1)
47. Year of the Lord. (Latin abbr.)
48. Ye shall be ____ gods. (Gen. 3:5)
49. Love thy _____. (Matt. 5:43)
3. King of Bashan. (Num. 21:33)
4. King of Assyria. (2 Kings 15:19)
5. Set your ____ on the things above. (Col. 3:2, plural)
6. Fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22)
7. Gold. (Spanish)
8. Eats.
10. A just and perfect man. (Gen. 6:9)
11. The pure in heart ... shall ____ God. (Matt. 5:8)
12. Fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22)
16. Sound in faith, charity and _____. (Titus 2:2)
17. Jesus was moved with _____. (Matt. 9:36)
21. ____, Lord God! (Jer. 4:10)
22. Ostrichlike bird.
25. Donkey.
26. Alabama. (abbr.)
28. Brought food to Elijah. (1 Kings 17:6)

Down

1. Albert. (short form)
2. Something small in the eye.
30. My soul ____ in the Lord. (Ps. 34:2)

31. It is lawful to ____ well. (Matt. 12:12)
32. Rebekah's face covering. (Gen. 24:65, modern spelling)
36. Golf ball supporter.
38. Opposite of down.
40. Lion's call. (1 Pet. 5:8)
43. Name of an altar. (Josh. 22:34)
44. See 3 down.
45. 21-verse prophet. (abbr.)
46. If we say we have ____ sin. (1 John 1:8)





Media reviews

MOVIES/TV

Wonderful 'Wonder' leads November's online streaming lineup

By Michael Foust
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Teaching children not to bully is part of good parenting, but sometimes it helps to have a good book or movie to make the case.

One of the best films on the subject of bullying — 2017's

"Wonder" (PG) — began streaming in November on Amazon Prime and Hulu. It tells the story of a boy named Augie Pullman who was born with facial differences and must learn how to navigate life while transitioning from homeschooling to public school.

Some of the kids treat him with kindness but others don't. By the end of the movie though even the mean kids have a change of heart.

Based on a novel that is read by schoolchildren across America, "Wonder" does a masterful job of walking a fine line between showing too much bullying (which would make it too painful to watch) and not enough (which would lessen its emotional impact).

It helps children understand what it's like to be bullied. Faith is never mentioned, but Jesus' command in Luke 6:31 — "Do to others as you would like them to do to you" — is reflected throughout the story. That's one reason I took my 10-year-old son to watch it in the theater.

It stars Julia Roberts as Augie's mom and Owen Wilson as his father.

The movie is mostly family-friendly, although there are a few caveats. It contains one misuse of "Jesus" (said by a bully) and three or so OMGs.

It also shows two fights that could give the impression that violence is OK. But that can

be corrected with a post-movie discussion.

Other new releases on Amazon Prime, Netflix and Hulu:

For adults/teens

► *"Christmas With the Kranks"* (Amazon Prime) — A family that often wins holiday-themed yard-decorating contests decides to skip Christmas. Their neighbors — who love decora-



Photo courtesy of Lionsgate

TAB AR

'Wonder'

tions — aren't pleased. Tim Allen stars in this comedy that is hated by some, loved by others.

Rated PG for brief language and some suggestive content.

► *"Hoosiers"* (Hulu) — A high school boy's basketball team from a small Indiana town reaches the state championship.

Rated PG and contains some language.

► *"Transcendence"* (Netflix) — A brilliant researcher in artificial intelligence is shot and nearly killed but is saved (sort of) thanks to his creation.

Rated PG-13 for sci-fi action and violence, some bloody images, brief strong language and sensuality.

► *"The Great British Baking Show"* (Netflix) — Some of Britain's best cooks face off in a competition to design delicious sweet treats. Rated TV-PG.

For Children

► *"Angela's Christmas"* (Netflix) — A young girl is inspired with an extraordinary idea while attending church.

An animated Netflix original. Appropriate for all ages.

► *"Treehouse Detectives"* (Netflix) — Young bear siblings explore nature and learn about

the world. My 3-year-old enjoys this series. Rated TV-Y.

► *"Wild Kratts: Creatures of the Deep Sea"* (Amazon Prime) — Brothers and animal explorers Chris and Martin Kratt teach children about deep-sea ocean life. Appropriate for all ages.

► *"Big Hero 6"* (Hulu) — A genius boy name Hiro designs robots to help heal from his brother's death.

Rated PG for action and peril, some rude humor and thematic elements. †

Meet the reviewer

Michael Foust covers the intersection of faith and entertainment as a media reviewer for The Alabama Baptist. He also is the husband of an amazing wife and the father of four young children.



Photo courtesy of Lionsgate

'Wonder'

YOUR HOME FOR 24/7 CHRISTIAN MUSIC
in the Alabama River Region: Montgomery, Prattville, Wetumpka, Millbrook and Troy.

www.wrvfmtheriver.com



IMB photo

The lyrics of worship songs cement themselves into memory, encouraging believers like Pavan, who experienced persecution from his family and his village after accepting Christ.

Eternal security with Christ

How worship songs brought a Buddhist to Christ

Pavan grew up feeling unsettled in his destiny. As the firstborn son in his family he thought he would have to follow in his father's footsteps and become a Buddhist monk.

But music intervened into this cultural tradition that should have dictated his future.

Pavan, now a Christian pastor, recounted his past and the persistent fear that once plagued him: He had been afraid of dying.

"There was no peace. There was no meaning in life," Pavan said in an interview in Nepal. "It compelled me to ask the question, 'What am I here for? And how long? And what happens after I leave this earth?'"

He didn't have answers so he turned to local religious leaders for guidance. When he voiced his concerns Buddhist monks tried to assuage his fears by telling him that it was natural to go through storms. "You may have to go through lonely places," they counseled. "You may have to go a very dangerous way. But do not be afraid. Just keep continuing. Carry on your journey."

But Pavan wasn't buying into the "keep calm and carry on" mantra. Buddhist teaching says that some people are born into suffering, live in suffering and die in suffering. This way of understanding existence seemed hopeless to Pavan. What if his destiny was defined by continual suffering?

Peace through song

The turning point in Pavan's story happened deep in the jungle when he went for a walk with a friend. As they walked his friend started singing and asked him to close his eyes and listen to the words.

Pavan thought it a bit strange, but he obliged.

As he listened a sense of peace overcame him. He wondered if the songs themselves brought peace so he began spending more time with his friend and listening to him sing. Along the way his friend shared the gospel while explaining the meaning behind the songs. His friend told him if he received Jesus as

his Savior, he'd have freedom — spiritual peace and eternal security.

"Thinking nothing about my family or any other thing, I just decided to follow Jesus," Pavan said. "This is what I'm looking for. This is what I need. So I accepted the Lord as my personal Savior."

A smile spread across Pavan's face as he spoke of his transformation. "My heart filled with joy I never experienced before," he said. "I was so delighted. I forgot all of my questions and all my fears, everything. My whole life was completely changed then."

Facing persecution

Pavan had a premonition that trouble was ahead, but that didn't keep him from sharing the message behind the Christian worship songs with others.

While believing in Jesus gave Pavan spiritual peace with God, it didn't shield him from persecution. Almost immediately his family and his village began persecuting him for turning his back on Buddhism.

Pavan remained faithful. He went on to plant churches and now he serves as pastor of a church where music is an integral part of the worship services. In Pavan's church worship songs continue to bring people to a closer understanding of Jesus, just like they did for him.

Music has a way of weaving itself into the fabric of people's memories, into their present-day realities and into their hopes for the future. While we may struggle to remember a Bible verse we memorized, song lyrics seem to cement themselves into our long-term consciousness. We can often remember the songs we began singing as children in church, the songs that encouraged us during dark days in our lives and the songs that were symbolic of God's faithfulness through difficult seasons.

And for Pavan the songs he plays give persecuted believers the courage to remain strong in their faith. (BP)

EDITOR'S NOTE — Pavan's name was changed for security reasons.

PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



Church in Nepal forced to close its doors

PALPA, Nepal — High-caste Hindus, Brahmins, who have been harassing a church in Nepal forced it to shut down in November and issued threats against anyone found to be meeting anywhere, including houses.

The Brahmins in western Nepal's Palpa District had disrupted worship of the Pakhluwa Eternal Life Church in Palpa each week and accused pastor Tufani Bhar of converting villagers.

Bhar established the church about nine months ago. Initially the Brahmins objected to the use of guitars and drums in the church service, so the church worshipped silently. Then they objected to the Lord's Supper, so the church began traveling to Butwal to partake of the sacrament.

Opposition grew until Bhar and his congregation were no longer allowed to gather together.

Bhar said there had been no opposition in his 38 years of ministry in Butwal and nearby areas, but Hindu extremist groups from India have influenced Nepal's Hindus.

Evangelizing is a criminal offense in Nepal, which is ranked No. 25 on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2018 World Watch List of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)

Tribal leaders join forces with extremists

DURULA, India — Five Christian convert families in eastern India were at a worship service in October when their homes were vandalized by tribal leaders under the influence of Hindu extremists.

When the families returned they were verbally abused and threatened with expulsion from the village and seizure of their farmland. Three of the five families converted back to the tribal religion, Sarnaism, a source said. One family filed a formal complaint.

In other villages tribal leaders have locked church-owned buildings, prevented farmers from accessing their lands and even barred individuals from areas used as restrooms. One tribe told their male members they were permitted to rape Christian women.

India ranked 11th on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2018 World Watch List of countries where Christians experience the most persecution. (MS)

Islamist terrorist ambush kills 7 Christians

CAIRO — Seven Coptic Christians, including six from the same family, were ambushed and killed Nov. 2 in an attack on their bus by Islamist terrorists.

The Coptic Orthodox Church reported an additional 19 Christians were wounded in the attacks, which took place near St. Samuel the Confessor monastery, about 90 miles south of Cairo. On one of the attacked buses, 6 of 28 members of a family reportedly traveling to a baptism of one of its children were injured.

An Egypt-based Islamic State affiliate claimed responsibility for the attack.

Egypt ranked 17th on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2018 World Watch List of the countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)

Fear spreads in India following attacks

NEW DELHI — Attacks on Christians that began in the Jaunpur District of Uttar Pradesh in July have spiked and spread, instilling fear in congregations throughout the state, sources said.

By the end of October persecution of Christians had spread to 32 of Uttar Pradesh's 75 districts, rights activist Dinanath Jaiswar said, with some of those districts seeing assaults earlier in the year. September and October were among the worst months for aggression against Christians in Uttar Pradesh.

India ranked 11th on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2018 World Watch List of countries where Christians experience the most persecution. (MS)