



The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



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Unsplash.com

Alabamians receive ‘phishing’ emails all the time, some of which do a pretty good job of masquerading as legitimate banks, friends, family members or organizations. Recently, at least two Alabama Baptist groups encountered ‘phishing’ emails that seemed legitimate.

Phishing schemes

Watch out for scams, emails asking for money, personal information

Everyone’s gotten those emails. Some are more believable than others.

But the one that hit the inboxes of some state missionaries recently was a particularly good one, they say.

The email — which claimed to be from Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State

Board of Missions (SBOM) — asked the recipient to email him back because he had a favor he needed to ask from them. It closed with “Blessings,” something that could be a believable way for Lance to end an email.

But if you responded to it, you got an email asking you to send him iTunes gift cards as a Christmas present.

The email was a scam for sure, said Keith Hinson, SBOM associate for public relations and Christian ethics. It was the first one he knows of that’s gone out en masse in Lance’s name.

But Alabamians receive

these kinds of emails all the time, some of which do a pretty good job of masquerading as legitimate banks, friends, family members or respected organizations.

Protect information

And many of them are not immediately deleted. According to a report by Verizon, 30 percent of “phishing” emails — fraudulent emails looking for passwords or personal information — are opened by their recipient.

Here are some ways that you can spot those scam emails and protect your personal information.

► Look for out-of-character content or bad grammar.

In the email that claimed to be from Lance, the “Blessings” closing made it look more legitimate, but other things might have given it away — like poor spelling, lack of proper punctuation or bad grammar.

In addition think through the information before responding in any way. Have you actually ordered anything from the company that’s saying you have a delivery confirmation? If it’s a bank or credit card company, are they (See ‘Take caution,’ page 9)

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.”

Terry begins advisory role at Samford University

Bob Terry, longtime editor of *The Alabama Baptist*, has been named adviser to the president for faith networks at Samford University.

In this position Terry will work with university leadership to identify strategic opportunities to expand Samford's impact within the Christian faith community. He will regularly interact with Christian thought leaders and students to identify opportunities to increase Samford's engagement with and contribution to the greater community of faith.

'Uniquely suited'

Terry is uniquely suited for this new role according to Samford University President Andrew Westmoreland. Terry retired from his position as editor of *The Alabama Baptist* in December 2018 after

leading the ministry for more than 23 years. He previously served as editor of the Missouri Baptist paper, *Word & Way*, for 20 years and associate editor of Kentucky's *Western Recorder*. He has held numerous leadership roles in national and international organizations and has served Alabama's churches as an interim pastor on numerous occasions.

"I am humbled by Dr. Westmoreland's invitation to work with him to help increase the university's leadership in the Christian community," Terry said.

"I look forward to being a part of all God is doing in this historic place and helping others learn about and benefit from what is happening at Samford."

According to Westmoreland, the current era provides unique opportunities for Samford to develop greater significance among religiously affiliated universities and cooperating churches.



TERRY

"Samford is increasingly rare within the broader Christian world of higher education as a place that takes seriously both the highest standards of academic scholarship and a winsome, thoughtful approach to inculcating and sharing Christian faith," said Westmoreland.

"In the years to come, when people talk about the intellectual climate at Christian universities, I hope Samford's reputation is among the strongest in the world," Westmoreland added. "Dr. Terry's work will play a meaningful role in our efforts to accomplish this goal. We are extraordinarily blessed to have him at Samford."

Terry is a graduate of Mississippi College and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. His wife Pat serves as a professor of nutrition and dietetics at Samford and his daughter, Jean, teaches in the university's School of Public Health. (Samford)

Servant/Leader Appreciation Night to offer laughs across the state

It's January and you and your church leaders might already need to take a break and have a good laugh.

That's what Servant/Leader Appreciation Night is for — a one-night event featuring two Christian comedians and a musical guest. It promises 90 minutes of lighthearted Christian entertainment, and it's offered in multiple locations.

the opportunity to do just that in a fun and relaxed way."

Along with Bell comedian Aaron Wilburn will provide entertainment and gospel trio New Ground will sing. The event will be held at 7 p.m. at the following locations and dates:

- Monday, Jan. 28 — Dalraida Baptist Church, Montgomery
- Tuesday, Jan. 29 — Gardendale First Baptist Church
- Thursday, Jan. 31 — Lindsay Lane Baptist Church, Athens
- Friday, Feb. 1 — TBA.

The Alabama Baptist is a co-sponsor of the event. (TAB)

To purchase tickets, call The Alabama Baptist at 1-800-803-5201, ext. 118. Group rates available.

Fellowship and relax

"Every now and then you need to simply stop and enjoy fellowship with one another," said comedian Mickey Bell. "We are giving you



(augmented reality)

- Download the HP Reveal app from your app store.
- Tap the [] icon at the bottom of the screen.
- 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.
- 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.
- Each week when *TAB* arrives, look for the AR logo to watch the video extras through the app.



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

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MY RASHIONALE

By Jennifer Davis Rash
President and Editor-in-Chief

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Fireworks mark milestone moments, signal something new

Celebrating those special moments happening with *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) staff during the past 23 years has always meant a lot to me.

Along with cheering each other on as individuals, our staff rallies together in the major team milestones as well.

I remember assisting as we launched our first website in the early 2000s and debuted TAB on social media platforms a few years later.

We've worked through redesigns of the print edition, showcased a digital version of the paper in flipbook style and added an augmented reality element.

There have been high-fives and cheers around new systems, processes and computer setups that increased productivity and efficiency for the team.

Recently the staff produced the first-ever book telling the story of TAB and its rich history. And a new podcast and radio show now airs weekly.

Each time our team develops something new and exciting at TAB I imagine fireworks going off over our office building in Homewood when the product is launched. Sometimes I even say to "watch for the fireworks."

I may be at the office by myself figuring out the final details or working alongside several team members to make it happen. Either way the big moment deserves confetti, balloons — and fireworks.

On New Year's Eve, less than a month ago, my husband, Jason, and I worked at the office

for a few hours and happened to still be there when the clock struck midnight.

Along with our "Happy New Year" cheers Jason reminded me of the significance of this particular new year.

In that moment the reality and the responsibility of assuming the editorship of TAB washed over me. And then — fireworks.

After all these years I finally experienced real fireworks at the TAB office building going off at the exact moment we launched a new element — or in this case a new editor.

Granted, the fireworks weren't actually for me, but God used them to remind me that He has me where He wants me at this particular time.

We marked another major milestone in the life of TAB at 12 a.m. on Jan. 1, and I get to be part of what lies ahead.

What a privilege and honor to work with an incredible team of believers who are pouring so much of themselves into producing and distributing important content week after week.

As we settle into this new year and evaluate each part of what's

being done, explore new options and simplify all aspects, we hope you will help us tell the TAB story.

We are learning there are possibly more Alabama Baptists who are not familiar with TAB than those who are.

Would the information provided by TAB be helpful to them? What's the best way to introduce others to TAB?

How can we make sure all Alabama Baptists have access to the resources provided through the pages of the paper and various online platforms? 🌟

SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE SUNDAY IS JAN. 20.



Baby Mason, born at 24 weeks, holds his mother's finger.

"For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them."

PSALM 139:13-16

Your Voice



Share your comments, letters to the editor, blog excerpts, social media posts

Look for opportunities to share Christ

By **Kim Andrews**
BCM Campus Minister, University of Alabama

Zacchaeus was a wee little man
And a wee little man was he. ...”

If you attended church as a small child, chances are the words (as well as the motions) of this song are very familiar to you.

If I'm not careful, I find myself speed-reading my way through well-known passages like the story of Zacchaeus.

Here we have a man who so desperately wanted to see Jesus that he found a way around the crowd by climbing a tree to catch a glimpse of Him. When Jesus called him, Zacchaeus quickly responded. Joyfully.

And yet, those with a front-row view of the unfolding story — dis-

tracted by their own expectations of who Jesus should spend time with or what should have actually happened — grumbled.

Later in that same chapter in the story of the triumphal entry, the Pharisees once again displayed their short-sighted understanding of His ministry when they requested that Jesus rebuke His disciples for crying out praises to Him upon arrival.

Instead of a rebuke, Jesus answered in verse 40,

“I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”

Enjoying Jesus' presence

My initial reaction? How sad for them to completely miss the point. But I must confess, I can do the same thing. I can allow distractions and unmet expectations to overshadow

the extraordinary of the day. I can allow doubts of my ability to silence boldness. I can allow thoughts of other insignificant things to distract me from enjoying the presence of Jesus.

Like Zacchaeus, there are people around us who are desperately longing to catch a glimpse of Jesus. They are searching for hope, for purpose, for identity and for answers.

In 2018, the BCM and First College partnered together for tables that would help us initiate intentional gospel conversations on campus. On the quad, students were invited to respond to the question on a large chalkboard, “What question would you ask God?”

Some students quickly replied and hurried to their next class. Others would linger momentarily to discuss possible answers to their questions with our volunteers.

Praise the Lord our volunteers were willing to engage them in conversation because one student literally asked how to go to heaven. This opened the door for the gospel to be shared and joyfully received that beautiful day!

As your days get busy, may you remember to take a deep breath and enjoy the presence of Jesus. And as you go, may you take advantage of the opportunities around you to introduce people to Him.

EDITOR'S NOTE — The original version of this blog post first appeared at OneMissionStudents.org.

From Moses to Paul, biblical examples abound of individuals who led and served God's people while raising new leaders to continue the work.

Todd Adkins
Director of Leadership
LifeWay Christian
Resources

It's right to sing God's praises. Even if it's not our favorite song, it's right to join the people of God in singing God's praises (Psalm 96). He delights in the singing of His people.

Chuck Lawless
Southeastern Baptist
Theological Seminary

My resolution for the new year is to do a better job maintaining an eternal perspective on what really matters — getting the gospel to as many people as possible.

Jeff Iorg, President
Gateway Seminary

Worship is giving God the best that He has given you. Be careful what you do with the best you have.

Oswald Chambers
“My Utmost
for His Highest”

Letters to the Editor

Martha Simmons' story about the success of mentors for troubled youth in Mobile County should be told all over America.

The article, “NEST of Mobile partners with court to mentor families,” ran in the Jan. 3 issue.

The program is called NEST, and it sprang from the heart of Juvenile Circuit Judge Edmond Naman. His NEST mentor teams have reduced repeat youthful offenders by nearly half.

All believers know the heart

of Jesus for the poor. By using a team for one youth, NEST has made a way for busy and inexperienced Christians to visit and lift up “the least of these.”

Thank you, Martha Simmons. May your diligent reporting begin a movement in America able to help “free the downtrodden” and maybe bring the words “well done” from our Savior.

Erk Ashbee
Spring Hill Baptist Church
Mobile, Ala.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“Ask your heavenly Father what He wants your parenting goals to be.”

DOUG MUNTON

Senior pastor, First Baptist Church, O'Fallon, Illinois

Football is important to me, obviously, but it is not my life. It is not like the biggest thing in my life. My faith is. That just comes from kind of knowing who I am outside of that. I just know, no matter how big the situation is, it is not really going to define me. ... I put my identity in what Christ says, who He thinks I am and who I know that He says I am.

Trevor Lawrence, Quarterback
“The Clemson Insider”

God won't amplify his voice, and the Scriptures won't beg for our attention like breaking headlines. They don't vie for our company like social media. But they will speak — if we quiet ourselves to listen. For us to hear God's voice, we have to turn

down the volume of the media noise. And this illustrates a crucial point about the nature of commitment and change. In order to *do*, we must leave *undone*.

Jen Pollock Michel, writer
“You're Not Too Busy for the Bible”
ChristianityToday.com

Embrace your anointing from God: Pursue the passion in your heart, face the reasons stopping you, listen to God, and always stand for Him.

R.A. Mathews
Author and faith columnist

There are far fewer people avoiding things on the Sabbath, like paid work and chores, than those who

say they keep the Sabbath by doing things, like attending church and spending time with friends.

Scott McConnell
LifeWay Research

Inviting teenagers into a lifetime of sexual holiness and purity, if consistent with Scripture, is a beautiful thing.

Richard Ross, Cofounder
True Love Waits (TLW)
sexual purity movement

I've enjoyed my life. There have been good times and bad, but I count it a joy to have my family and my church family around me.

Madeline Sullivan, 101
Member of Enon Baptist Church, Danville, Ala.



Photo courtesy of WMU
Sandy Wisdom-Martin is executive director of national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU).

Thriving in liminality

My friend Sylvia has a self-professed penchant for words.

I still remember a word she taught in a conference decades ago. It's now one of my favorites. The word is *phrontistery*. Do you know what it means? Look it up.

The most recent word she taught me is *liminality*. She says it means on the brink of what was and what will be. All the rules are changing. There is almost a constant sense of inadequacy and rapidly changing vocabulary. It is a place of passage. It is somewhere between now and not yet.

We may feel unsettled by the terrain that constantly shifts beneath our feet. Yet we need not fear the unknown of the future. We can thrive in liminality in spite of the chaos. It is in this liminal space that we have the opportunity to “ponder anew what the Almighty can do.” Even in the midst of despair, we can see God's hand at work.

Press on. Step through the doorway of the New Year, committed to walk by faith and not by sight. Go deeper in an unshakable pursuit of communion with our Creator. Sense the wonder and awe and majesty of our God at work in our world each and every day of 2019.

—Sandy Wisdom-Martin

From the *Twitterverse*

@JessalynHutto

If I didn't believe in God, I would still believe in beauty, which means I would still believe in God. I can't escape his mark on this world or explain the wonder that exists in my heart without him.

@BethMooreLPM

During a time of crisis, just choosing to shut your eyes & go to sleep at night can be an enormous act of trust in God. Rest is whispering “I can't fix it. It's on you” & letting Him stay awake all night with it instead & sometimes come morning, things don't look nearly so bleak.

@GoBGR

Pray for the hungry, the cold, the outcast and for wisdom to know how you can help.

@lecræ

Yes I'm a Christian. Yes I make hypocritical decisions. Yes I fall. I stumble. I struggle. I am a mess. But I'm God's mess. And he can turn a mess into a masterpiece.

@passion268

“God is not intimidated by your investigation ... He wants you to come with whatever questions you have.” -@louiegioglio #Passion2019

@lmc2712

More joy, more hope, more comfort, more goodness, more JESUS. You were created to do something AWESOME in this world that will leave a legacy of hope for others. So lean into the Lord today; ask Him to reveal what your MORE is and how you can show the world who He is.

@JSwedenburg

Alabama Baptists, you not only met our 2018 budget, you exceeded it by nearly a million dollars! Thank you!

@Ligonier

Any vocation that meets the need of God's world can be considered a divine calling. — @RCSproul

@deaninserra

A new heart, a new birth, a new creation. God is in the business of the new!

@bobgoff

God intended us to travel through life as a community. Think bus, not unicycle.

If you are on Twitter, be sure to follow @AlabamaBaptist.

'Fundamental to justice'

'First Step' federal criminal justice reform a move for society's common good

Criminal justice reform backed by both conservatives and liberals in the U.S. Congress has become a reality in federal law.

The First Step Act to promote the rehabilitation and societal re-entry of prisoners while maintaining public safety was signed by President Donald Trump on Dec. 21. The measure provides training for inmates and reforms some sentencing requirements, including certain drug offenses.

Trump's action followed the House of Representatives' passage of the bill Dec. 20 in a 358-36 roll call. The Senate approved the legislation Dec. 18 with an 87-12 vote.

The new law, which applies only to federal prisons, is an initial effort in what reform advocates hope will be an overhaul of the justice system in what has been described as the world's most incarcerated country.

Faith community support

The bill — which models state reforms — seeks to correct disproportionate sentencing while establishing risk-assessment programs for prisoners and enabling low- and minimum-risk inmates to earn time credits so they can potentially serve 12 months or less of their sentences in pre-release custody.

Prison Fellowship — the ministry started by the late Charles Colson — helped lead the effort to enact the First Step Act, which clarifies that faith-based organizations may provide training in prison.

"This legislation will increase the access of faith-based and nonprofit organizations, like Prison Fellowship, to provide desperately needed programming in the federal prison system and help reduce recidivism," Prison Fellowship President James Ackerman said in a written statement. "From our work in many states across the country, we can say without hesitation that these programs restore lives ... and eventually reduce crime."

The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) — which made criminal justice reform one of its legislative priorities in 2018 — also was part of the diverse body of First Step Act supporters that included liberals and conservatives both inside and outside Congress. The endorsing organizations extended from



\$65 BILLION
LOST ECONOMIC OUTPUT BY NOT ALLOWING THOSE WITH A CRIMINAL RECORD TO FULLY RE-ENTER THE WORKFORCE

prisonfellowship.org/secondchances

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the American Civil Liberties Union and Center for American Progress on the left to a host of conservative groups, including the ERLC, Prison Fellowship and other evangelical entities, as well as Koch Industries, Heritage Action, The American

Conservative Union and FreedomWorks.

ERLC President Russell Moore described the success of the First Step Act as a "tremendous victory" for criminal justice reform and cooperation across dividing lines for the common good.

"I can't find very many people who would argue that our criminal justice system is working fine as it is," Moore said in written comments. "Over the

past several years many of us, across the ideological spectrum, have realized that we share, on this, some common concerns.

"Monumental challenges remain on seeing to it that our country deals with ensuring justice for victims while at the same

time giving offenders, where possible, the opportunity for a second chance to reform and to contribute to society," Moore said. "May we see forward momentum toward a justice system that is truer to its name."

Rep. Doug Collins (R-Georgia) — a Southern Baptist who introduced the justice reform bill in the House with Rep. Hakeem Jeffries (D-New York) — said the First Step Act "shows us that reverence for human life is fundamental to justice."

"The First Step Act invests in what Americans value most fiercely — people," Collins said in a written statement. "We know that lives can be redirected and redeemed, and we're committing to doing that with tools that are proven to work."

Collins, who holds a master's degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, served as a pastor for 11 years in Gainesville, Georgia, before his election to Congress. He is a member of Lakewood Baptist Church, Gainesville.

Dangerous offenders exempt

Some Republican senators and outside organizations expressed concerns the First Step Act would threaten public safety by weakening mandatory minimum sentencing and not preventing some dangerous

inmates from release back into society.

The final Senate version sought to address at least some concerns by, among other provisions, barring firearm offenders and fentanyl traffickers from earning time credits.

The bill also disqualifies from earned time credits offenses such as smuggling foreigners into the country for prostitution, assaulting a law enforcement officer with a deadly weapon, failure to register as a sex offender and trafficking in heroin or methamphetamine.

Need for change

Statistics demonstrate the need for change in the justice system, reform advocates contend. According to Prison Fellowship:

▶ About 65 million Americans, or one-fourth of the adult population, have a criminal record.

▶ 2.2 million men and women are incarcerated in the United States.

▶ Nearly 700,000 prisoners return to their communities each year.

▶ Two-thirds of prisoners who are released are arrested again.

▶ 2.7 million children have a parent in prison. (BP)



A look at

MASS INCARCERATION in Alabama

Sixth in a series

Expanded employment options part of latest state reform efforts

By Martha Simmons
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Alabama's state prison system has for decades needed fixing. Recent reform efforts are gaining traction and making headway, said Alabama Sen. Cam Ward (R-District 14).

State prisons have substantially reduced their populations in the past five years.

"At the same time there has not been an increase in the overall crime rate," Ward noted.

As chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and the state Prison Reform Task Force, Ward is at the forefront of prison reform efforts in Alabama.

In 2014 he testified about the challenges faced by Alabama's "failed corrections system" at a congressional prison reform meeting of the House Judiciary Committee.

Breaking the cycle

Criminal justice reforms enacted in Alabama in 2013 and 2015 reduced sentences for many nonviolent offenders, Ward said.

"There are certain violent offenders you want to keep locked away and keep society safe from," he said. "But for those non-violent offenders we've got programs to help them get out of the cycle they're in."

Propelled by court orders and lawsuits Alabama prisons struggle to provide the training and services needed to improve inmates' ability to become productive citizens once they re-enter society.

Some 14,200 inmates were released from Alabama prisons in the 2017 fiscal year. Often they leave life behind bars only to find themselves shackled by unemployment.

It's not unusual for ex-offenders — and their families — to wind up homeless. It's a recipe for recidivism, with about 31 percent of inmates eventually reoffending and returning to prison.

Ward's latest reform effort is aimed at giving former inmates more opportunities to get a job once they leave prison. He is sponsoring a bill that would allow inmates to apply for hundreds of jobs, licenses and certifications currently prohibited under Alabama law.

Currently, there are 783 sections of the Code of Alabama barring formerly incarcerated people from all manner of professions and jobs, including some that inmates trained for while they were in prison.

"Here's a typical, ridiculous example," Ward said. "Someone who served their time for a simple drug possession and did everything they were supposed to do can't get a license to be an interior designer or a cosmetologist. We're telling people we expect them to do right, yet we put all those barriers in place. What we're really doing is setting them up to fail."

If the bill is passed a former state inmate would be able to submit an application to a judge who would decide whether the individual should

be granted a waiver and allowed to apply for certain jobs, licenses or certifications currently prohibited to ex-offenders.

Ward said this proposed legislation is the result of many meetings with

judges, prosecutors and other criminal justice and community leaders.

Faith leaders have been particularly receptive to the plan, said Ward, who spoke to a group of Baptist pastors last summer and found them to be supportive of such reforms.

Power of forgiveness

"We should care about our fellow man," Ward said. "The Bible doesn't teach us to love just those who have done good. We should want people to be successful and lead a good, happy life."

"It's about the power of forgiveness and what we're going to do to help them." ✝

"The Bible doesn't teach us to love just those who have done good."

**Sen. Cam Ward
Alabama District 14**

Going forward

Donations, time help inmates see a future after prison

By Michael J. Brooks
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Tuscaloosa resident Eddie Smith, now retired, remembers with gratitude his 10 years as chaplain at the Bibb County Correctional Facility (BCCF) in Brent.

"I had been in corrections for a number of years when I became the first chaplain in the new prison," he said. "The facility opened in 1997 and I began working there in 1998. We built the whole ministry program from the ground up."

Smith said the original chapel facility was small and he began raising money for a new worship center. The current facility was dedicated after his retirement.

Smith said a unique program he began was the hygiene ministry.

"We had inmates with no income from outside sources, so we began to stock basic personal care items like bar soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes and stick deodorant," he said. "We'd do a financial check to be sure there was a need, of course, and we solicited donations from interested people to help us get these items."

Chapel library

Smith said he also had the idea for the chapel library.

"Inmates have a lot of time so I began to think about a ministry of Christian books and reference materials for them," he said. "One day a businessman came

with his church to volunteer, and he got interested in my idea. He built shelves for us to get started. Another man, a retired Methodist pastor, asked me to come and take his entire library, so this helped us get started in a major way. When I left, we had about 9,000 volumes."

Current Bibb assistant chaplain Kervin Jones of Greensboro said the prison has continued both ministries.

"One large church brought hygiene packages for all our inmates, and this was great," Jones said. "But most of the time we never have enough items for the needy. When the shelves go empty we begin to publicize the need."



Photo by Michael J. Brooks

Clark Boyd (left) and Tim Storey (right) of Siluria Baptist Church, Alabaster, deliver boxes of books to assistant chaplain Kervin Jones at the Bibb County Correctional Facility.

For more information about needs at BCCF, contact Bysheen Tomlin at 205-926-5252.

BCCF was built for 900 inmates and now houses about 1,800.

Siluria Baptist Church, Alabaster, donated its church library to the prison about three years ago. The church also collects hygiene items each February.

When employees of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions moved from downtown Montgomery to Prattville in 2018 many had extra books to store or give away. State missionary Keith Hinson learned of the need at Bibb and drove a van filled with books to Brent. Chaplain Bysheen Tomlin has been at BCCF for two years. He said the prison is always looking for ministry volunteers.

"The Birmingham Theological Seminary has been with us for some time, and we have men enrolled in this program earning seminary degrees," Tomlin said. "They'll become ministers here at Bibb or in other state prisons."

Tomlin said when volunteers invest their time, it reduces crime and violence.

"This investment also empowers our men to go forward with new skills and new encouragement," he said.

The holidays are especially hard at the prison, Tomlin said, and the institution was on suicide watch during Christmas.

"Many inmates have no family or friends who care about them, and they struggle with depression," he said. "Knowing someone cares is important."

Tomlin said volunteers can help in numerous ways other than collecting hygiene items and books.

"Whatever life skills a volunteer has can be helpful," he said. "It might be resumé-writing, financial planning, help for parenting

or blended families or music and arts. Our men are eager to learn."

Tomlin said he dreams of having congregations sponsor each of the 18 living areas at the prison.

"This means they'd have a relationship with 100 men," he said. "This ministry would be reclaiming and redirecting men who've stumbled along the way." ✝



Photo by Michael J. Brooks

Jim Lee (left) of Siluria Baptist Church, Alabaster, delivers hygiene items to Chaplain Bysheen Tomlin at the Bibb prison.

Installation service held for new *TAB* president

By Margaret Colson
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Close to 100 people gathered Jan. 4 at First Baptist Church, Birmingham, for the installation service of Jennifer Davis Rash as the new president and editor-in-chief of *The Alabama Baptist* (*TAB*).

During the service several prominent Alabama Baptists affirmed Rash in her new role. “God has shaped and formed” Rash for this opportunity — “the crowning moment for her to be a leader,” said Rick Lance, executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Lance affirmed her training, talent, team-player commitment and leadership temperament. She “loves God and loves Alabama Baptists,” he said.

Charles T. Carter, pastor-emeritus of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Vestavia Hills, where Rash and her husband, Jason, were members when they first moved to Birmingham nearly 25 years ago, urged Rash to “remember to forget.” Carter used the example of Joseph’s firstborn son Manasseh in Genesis 41:51 and encouraged Rash to forget her “past failures.”



LANCE



TAB editor-emeritus Bob Terry (left) and Arthur Williams (center), chairman of the *TAB* board of directors, present Jennifer Davis Rash with a framed montage of all previous 12 *TAB* editors with her portrait added among them as a nod to her new role.

Carter also urged Rash to forget her “past successes.” The Apostle Paul, “the most successful Christian I know of in the New Testament,” Carter said, wrote to the Philippians that he was “forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead” (Phil. 3:13). Carter affirmed that Rash has “been a very blessed young lady,” but he cautioned, “Success can lull us into complacency.”

Bill Wilks, pastor of NorthPark Baptist Church, Trussville, where Rash and her husband are current active members, described Rash as a “natural born leader,” with boundless energy, creativity, a positive perspective and a loving and compassionate spirit. “I have

great peace and great confidence that you are going to knock it (the *TAB* editor-in-chief role) out of the park. I can’t wait to see how God is going to use you,” he said.



CARTER

Rash to “build on the foundation that has been laid,” but then “lay the next layer on the foundation. Honor the past but don’t get weighed down by the past. You put

your own perspective, your personality, your passion — you put all of that on [*TAB*]. That will be your stamp.” He concluded his remarks by reminding Rash that she should do her “work heartily as for the Lord rather than for men” (Col. 3:23).

TAB editor-emeritus Bob Terry then stepped to the pulpit and offered words about the function of *TAB* being to “tell the truth and trust the people.” He told Rash, “You are called by God to the ministry of communication. You are ready for this opportunity. You are ready for this responsibility.” He and Arthur Williams, chairman of the *TAB* board of directors, presented Rash with a framed montage of all previous 12 *TAB* editors, an image on the back cover of the recently published book celebrating *TAB*’s 175th anniversary. Then with a nod to her ascension to the role of *TAB* president and editor-in-chief, the two men presented Rash with an image of the same montage, with her portrait added among all previous editors.

With that image in hand Rash said, “A lot has happened in 23 years at *The Alabama Baptist*.” One of her “go-to phrases”

through the years, she said, has been to “watch for the fireworks,” meaning to celebrate the milestones and big moments. On Dec. 31, 2018, Rash and her husband were at the office of *TAB*, doing end-of-the-year tasks. Time got away from them; before they realized it the clock was striking midnight. Fireworks filled the sky outside the building.

In that moment, on Jan. 1, 2019, Rash said, the “amazing opportunity God has provided” became reality as she stood in the place where she had described imaginary fireworks for other milestones and special moments through the years.

To conclude the service Debbie Campbell, *TAB* director of communications, invited all *TAB* staff to stand.

“This staff, Jennifer, stands behind you; we support you; we love you. We are all here for the fireworks,” Campbell said.

The installation service was opened in prayer by Jim Cooley, pastor of First Baptist Church,



WOOD

Birmingham, and was closed in prayer by Timothy George, founding dean of Beeson Divinity School of Samford University.



WILKS

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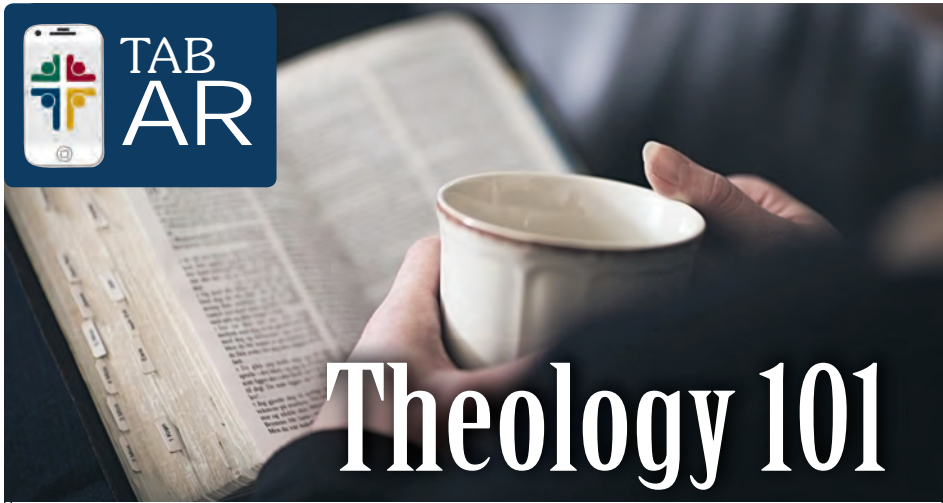
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Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Biblical Imagery

The Bible as a Sword

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

Not only does the Bible compare itself to fire and seed as we have noted in the prior two weeks, it also refers to itself as a sword.

This imagery was introduced to many of us early in life when we participated in sword drills. These drills encouraged familiarity with the Bible and facility in using it.

When listing the spiritual armor that belongs to believers Ephesians 6:17 includes “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” This imagery suggests that the Bible is an instrument or tool of the Holy Spirit who inspired the Bible’s writing and continues to enlighten the understanding of what is written in it.

The same imagery is employed in Hebrews 4:12: “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.” The imagery of a two-edged sword suggests either that the truth of the Bible cuts in more than one direction or that divine truth is doubly sharp.

The Prophet Ezekiel received a word from the Lord about divine judgment that he was told to proclaim: “Son of man, prophesy and say, thus says the Lord. Say: a sword, a sword is sharpened and also polished. Sharpened to make a dreadful slaughter, polished to flash like lightning” (Ezek. 21:9–10).

Like a sharpened and polished sword, the Bible is always ready as God’s instrument in human affairs. It sits waiting for us to open it, read it, believe it and apply it.

A mighty instrument

God’s instructions for Ezekiel included, “Swords at the ready! Thrust right! Set your blade! Thrust left — wherever your edge is ordered!” (Ezek. 21:16)

A single-edged sword can cut in either direction but in only one direction at a time, while a two-edged one can cut either to the right or to the left, making it a mighty instrument in spiritual warfare. God’s word is all edge,

striking accurately and powerfully at wickedness, ungodliness, error and falsehood.

Like a sharpened and polished sword, God’s word in the hand of His Holy Spirit is a penetrating instrument of divine truth. Its truth pierces to the inner conscience of humans. With penetrating effect biblical truth cuts and divides. It divides between good and evil, between what is of God and what is not of God, what is divine and what is merely human, what is of the Spirit and what is of the flesh.

Biblical truth cuts to the heart of the matter, not merely to outward appearances. As Hebrews 4:12 declares, this sword of the Spirit is “a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Daily warfare

Like a polished and sharpened sword in the hand of a skilled warrior the Bible in the hands of the Holy Spirit is alive and powerful. Its truth can penetrate the heart to prune away impure thoughts and selfish motives. It is a mighty weapon in the daily warfare against spiritual enemies.

God’s truth in Scripture is a sure safeguard against the wiles and lies of the devil. Biblical truth can cut away the works of the flesh in order that we might be equipped to live in victory over the influences of the world around us.

However, if by neglect we allow this sword of the Spirit to become rusty its effectiveness is seriously curtailed. God’s call is for each of us to keep it polished and sharpened, ready for immediate use. ✠

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.



Take caution when opening, reading suspicious emails

(continued from page 1)

asking you for information that they already have on file? Banks and credit card companies will never ask you for account information via email. Neither will the IRS — they’ll always send you a letter in the mail.

▶ **Check the email address or web links.**

In the fraudulent Lance email the sender said “Rick Lance,” but if you looked more closely at the actual email address, it wasn’t from an alsbom.org email account. Make sure both the name and the email address itself match the person or business that claims to be the sender.

Sometimes it’s obviously not the person, but other times the scammer will be a little more creative and try to put the company’s name somewhere in the email address. If you’re unsure do an internet search on the real website of the company and compare it to the email address purporting to be from the company.

Threats and schemes

Even better, don’t follow any links from the email. If you get an email from someone saying they’re Amazon and there’s a problem with your payment method — and you actually did order something from Amazon — just go straight to your Amazon account from your web browser and address it on their secure website rather

than following the link from the email.

▶ **Don’t react to threats.**

Many phishing emails will say things like “Your account will be closed,” or “Urgent action required!” Don’t listen to them. Remember — for banks, government agencies and many others, mail is the way they handle this sort of important information.

▶ **Don’t buy in to get-rich-quick schemes.**

This one still gets people — the promise that they’ve won some sort of sweepstakes. Don’t listen to that either. Any sweepstakes that you’ve “won” that you haven’t entered isn’t real. And much like banking information, any sort of real sweepstakes that you’ve entered — if you won — would not notify you by email, and they wouldn’t require your personal information or a payment to deliver your winnings.

Phishing emails and scams can come in all forms and descriptions, but remember — if it doesn’t feel quite right, it probably isn’t. Check it out directly through your bank or other organization, and don’t click on any links in the email. Just hit delete and wait for your bank to send you an old-fashioned letter.

If it claims to be someone — like Lance — who wouldn’t normally ask you for a Christmas gift or a monetary loan because they’re in trouble, it almost certainly isn’t the person. And if it’s an offer that seems too good to be true — it most likely is. (TAB)

Phishing emails and scams can come in all forms and descriptions, but remember — if it doesn’t feel quite right, it probably isn’t.



William L. Leverette

Former Alabama Baptist pastor dies at 75

William L. Leverette, a former Alabama Baptist pastor, died Dec. 28. He was 75.

Throughout the years Leverette served as pastor or interim pastor of a number of churches in Alabama-Crenshaw Baptist Association — Joquin Baptist, Goshen; Mount Zion Baptist, Brantley; New Ebenezer Baptist, LaPine; New Harmony Baptist, Luverne; Bradleyton Baptist, Grady; and Weed Baptist, Brantley.

He also was pastor of Central Baptist Church, Greenville; Spring Creek Baptist Church, Honoraville; and Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Abbeville.

He was a member of First Baptist Church, Luverne, when he died.

During his years in ministry Leverette led many revivals in Crenshaw, Butler and Henry counties and the surrounding areas. He had a passion to serve others and enjoyed getting out in the community to visit and minister to those in need.

“Bro. Leverette was a faithful servant to the Lord through churches in this area for more than 50 years and was greatly loved by all who knew him,” said Jack Anderson, director of missions for Alabama-Crenshaw Association.

Leverette is preceded in death by his wife, Betty, who served alongside him in ministry for more than 50 years. He is survived by his daughters, Kathy, Kaye, Carol and Kim; son, Bill; eight grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren. (TAB)



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Alabamians among recent Baptist theological seminary graduates

Alabama Baptists graduated with degrees at the master's level or higher from Southern Baptist seminaries and divinity schools in December 2018. *The Alabama Baptist* was provided the following list of graduates by the schools.

► Beeson Divinity School:

Doctor of Ministry — Tommye Priest Lambert, Birmingham; Clayton King Speed, Hartselle
Master of Divinity — James Austin Braasch, Birmingham; Steven Connor Coskery, Birmingham; Victoria McCain Davis, McCalla; Joshua Richmond Hall, Gardendale; Raven ToMiece Moore, McCalla; Wyndell James Morris, Birmingham; Michael Perry, Birmingham; Colton Taylor, Parrish

► New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary:

Doctor of Ministry — Lisa Graves Davis, Birmingham; Brian Malone, Demopolis; Jesse Lawrence Nelson, Dothan
Master of Arts in Pastoral Ministry — Shannon Gregory Smith, Deatsville
Master of Arts in Christian Education — Ashley Ruth Holmes, Decatur; Joshua Paul Piper, Sylacauga
Master of Theological Studies — Charles Edwin Adams, Opelika

Master of Divinity — Travis Bryant Flannagin, Decatur; Justin Blake Law, Montgomery; Elaine E. Shaneyfelt, Decatur; Donald Heath Walton, Talladega; Josh Michael Watford, Marion

Master of Divinity with Specialization in Marriage and Family Counseling — Joseph Garrison Johnson, Birmingham

Master of Theology — Yungmin Lee, Mobile

► Southern Baptist Theological Seminary:

Doctor of Education — Joshua Alan Swindall, Cullman
Master of Divinity — Jeremiah Houston McElyea, Athens; Joshua Charles Motta, Dothan; Taylor Edward Pike, Northport; Austin Hunter Roe, Pell City
Master of Theology — Kenneth Chase Armstrong, Hoover
Master of Arts in Leadership — Jared Michael Pittman, Madison
Master of Arts in Discipleship and Family Ministry — Andrew Thomas Mullins, Montgomery
Master of Arts in Church Ministries — Gregory Lamar Barnett, Baileyton

► Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary:

Doctor of Ministry — Steven Wayne Barber, Scottsboro
Master of Arts — Teresa Ann

Ellison, Silverhill; Adrienne Robinson, Mobile

Master of Divinity with Advanced Standing — Quannah Irwin Spence, Tuscaloosa

Master of Divinity with Christian Ministry — James William Haynes, Tallahassee; Stephen Blake Johnson, Rainbow City; Corey Blake Tyson, Danville

Master of Divinity with Missiology — Nathan Joel Sergeant, Auburn

► Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary:

Master of Theological Studies — Justin Caton, Thorsby; Kevin Eugene Cobb, Florala; Justin Hall, Prattville; Stacy Stafford, Dothan; Stanley Mark Young, Athens
Master of Arts in Christian Education — Clay Errol Greathouse, Cottonwood
Master of Divinity — Paul David Carby, Alabaster; Samantha Elizabeth Helms, Wilsonville; James Allen Thomas, Gardendale

► Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary:

Master of Theological Studies, Discipleship Ministries — Jeremy Meetze, Decatur

► Gateway Seminary:

Doctor of Ministry — Brian Scott Harper, Hoover (TAB)

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Vernon, Alabama, is searching for a senior pastor. Please submit your resumé to: office@vernonfirstbaptist.org.

PASTOR

Westview Baptist Church, 809 Damascus Hwy, Enterprise, AL 36330, is prayerfully seeking resumé for a bivocational pastor. Please send resumé to church address, marked ATTN: Search Committee. For additional inquiries call 334-797-0798.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Ruhama Baptist Church is looking for a bivocational pastor. Resumé can be mailed to: Ruhama Baptist Church, 3310 County Road 81, Fort Payne, AL 35967, ATTN: Pulpit Committee.

WORSHIP LEADER

Bethel Baptist Church, Dora, Alabama, is searching for either a full-time or part-time worship leader to lead blended worship services. Please email resumé to: secretary@bbcdora.com, or mail resumé to: Music Search Committee, Bethel Baptist Church, 7000 Bethel Road, Dora, AL 35062.

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 be able to give leadership to a complete music and media ministry. Please send resumé to: stan@firstbaptistoxford.org, or mail to: First Baptist Church, ATTN: Worship Search Team, 95 E. Oak Street, Oxford, AL 36203.

MINISTER OF WORSHIP

Sisters Baptist Church is searching for a minister of worship. Sisters is a conservative Southern Baptist church in central Georgia. The position involves planning and leading worship services, as well as the other music ministries of the church. He will work closely with the pastor and other staff members. Resumé along with a cover letter may be sent to: SBC Search Committee, 1807 E. McCarty St., Sandersville, GA 31082 or office@sistersbaptist.org.

FULL-TIME ASSOCIATE PASTOR TO STUDENTS/ MISSIONS

Southside Baptist Church, An-

dalusia, Alabama, is seeking an individual with experience to provide full-time leadership and ministry to students and student families, as well as leading and working with the membership of Southside Baptist for providing local, state, national and international missions opportunities. Send resumé to: ATTN: Southside Baptist Church Search Committee, 1213 West Bypass, Andalusia, AL 36420 or southside@sbcandalusia.com.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER

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

OTHER POSITIONS

ASSOCIATIONAL MISSION STRATEGIST

St. Clair Baptist Association is receiving resumé for the associational mission strategist (AMS). Cutoff date to receive resumé will be Feb. 15. Please send resumé to: St. Clair Baptist Association, c/o Jimmy Hopkins, P.O. Box 160, Asheville AL 35953.

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PEOPLE, CHURCHES MAKING NEWS ACROSS THE STATE



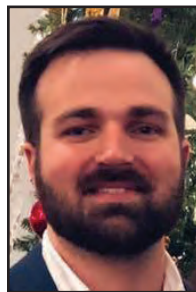
Across ALABAMA'S ASSOCIATIONS

BESSEMER

► **North Highlands Church, Hueytown**, will host Compassion International's "The Compassion Experience" on Jan. 18–21. To register for the event or for more information visit www.compassionexperience.com. Michael Wallace is interim pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Eric Roberts** is the new pastor of **First Church, Hoover**.



ROBERTS


He previously served as minister to senior adults and associate discipleship pastor at Valleydale

Church, Birmingham. He also is an assistant editor for *Radical: Resources* from David Platt. He holds degrees from Auburn University and Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Roberts is married to Morgan.

BLOUNT

► **Pleasant View Missionary Church, Holly Pond**, will hold its third Sunday night singing Jan. 20, 6 p.m. featuring 2nd Mile. Randy Burtram is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Circlewood Church, Tuscaloosa**, will host "Spiritual Awakening," a one-day revival featuring Bob Pitman on Jan. 19, 5 p.m. Dinner will be served. Pitman also will preach Jan. 20, 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. Herb Thomas is pastor. 

National Guard colonel dedicates retirement to full-time ministry

After 36 years of service in the Alabama Air National Guard as a colonel and chaplain Larry Layne (right) has committed to spend his retirement in continued full-time ministry serving as the eldercare chaplain with The Baptist Foundation of Alabama.



Photo courtesy of Larry Layne

He also will serve as a North American Mission Board-endorsed chaplain for disaster relief chaplaincy with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

On Nov. 15, Layne was honored by presentations from the 226th Combat Communication Group and Squadrons in Montgomery, 117th Air Refueling Wing in Birmingham and the 187th Fighter Wing in Montgomery. He also received the Legion of Merit Award for exemplary service while serving as Air National Guard assistant to the command chaplain of the air mobility command at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois.

Brigadier General Jeffery L. Newton (left), di-

rector of the joint staff Alabama National Guard presented Layne with the Alabama Commendation Medal alongside Layne's wife, Royce. (TAB)

Whitehead Baptist Church holds note-burning celebration service

On Dec. 30, Whitehead Baptist Church, Rogersville, in Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association, held a special service of thanksgiving. The church hosted a note-burning service in celebration of its early loan payoff on its Life Center building.

The church uses the Life Center to minister inside the church congregation and out in the surrounding community. The building includes classrooms, a gym, kitchen and dining hall.

Members of the building committee, Jeff Palmer (left), Lori Palmer (second from left), Riche Newton (third from right), Cathy Newton (second from right), Roland White (right); and Pastor Keith Hawk burned the note in front of the congregation. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of Whitehead Baptist Church

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

2019 marks 100th anniversary of Baptist missionary's death

Timothy Richard (1845–1919) was a Welsh Baptist missionary to China for 45 years. He made great contributions to Christianity and to China's modernization.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of his death.

He was born to Timothy and Eleanor Richard on Oct. 10, 1845, in Ffaldybrenin, a village near Carmarthenshire, Wales.

Missionary movement

He was saved during the Second Evangelical Awakening, and at 18 he was headmaster of the local school. He held a Bible class for the seniors, giving them lessons on the life of Paul.

With his savings from teaching, Richard studied at Haverfordwest Theological College from 1865 to 1869 and learned about the missionary movement to China.

He applied to the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) and was accepted as a missionary.

He left for China from Liverpool in November 1869 and arrived at Shanghai in February 1870. He was assigned to a small BMS mission in Chefoo in Shandong Province. He worked there until January 1875. He mastered the Chinese language and adopted Chinese dress to identify with the Chinese.

Since he didn't think a coastal town was a strategic location, he moved inland to Ch'ing-Chou-Fu, a major administrative capital and religious center. There he formed his missionary principles.

He believed that the Church in China should be self-supporting. He argued that itinerant evangelism should be the work of Chinese Christians, and missionaries should focus their attention on the leaders of soci-

ety — religious teachers and the scholarly.

In 1878, Richard married Mary Martin, a trained theologian, writer and translator. She became an active partner in his work. They had four daughters.

From 1876 to 1879 the Northern Chinese Famine affected northern provinces of China, including Shandon and Shanxi. Nine to 13 million people are estimated to have died. Richard first called international attention to the famine. He was deeply affected by it, and he and his wife were prominent in relief work.

The famine convinced Richard that only Western scientific expertise could help avert disasters. His answer was to target the educated and religious elite with a message that tied Christianity to the attractions of Western civilization. Many of his BMS colleagues regarded Richard's theol-



RICHARD

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).



ogy as liberal and his ideas unfounded.


In 1887 he left Shanxi and worked on a freelance basis. He became a contributor to the monthly paper *Review of the Times*. He wrote or translated 100 of the paper's 250 publications, including "The Prime Benefits of Christianity."

'Great gift'

Richard represented the British government to establish Shanxi University, one of the earliest modern universities in China.

He retired in 1915 and died in London on April 17, 1919. His ashes were placed in a London crematorium.

A plaque was erected in 1990 in Ffaldybrenin. It read in part: "He was the great gift of the Baptist Missionary Society and the Welsh nation to China."

This year a large exhibition and international conference in Wales will celebrate Richard's life and achievements. 

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North Jefferson Association working to build up disaster relief team

When tornadoes devastated Alabama in 2011, North Jefferson Baptist Association was “woefully unprepared,” Steve Loggins said.

“We began way back then to assemble equipment and train people for the next event, but we remained mostly unorganized as far as a team response,”

said Loggins, associational missionary for North Jefferson Association.

People stepped up to lead but either moved away or got sidelined by health issues before they were really able to get the disaster relief team going, he said.

But then Steve Knox got wind of it — and became burdened to see that change.

“I found out the statistics of how much we had been able to do when the tornados came through and that broke my heart,” Knox said. “We’ve got some decent-size churches, but we

were one of the least-contributing associations to disaster relief efforts.”

So now with Knox serving as associational disaster relief coordinator, North Jefferson

Baptists are rallying to prepare for the next time there’s a need for chainsaw teams, cleanup crews and other kinds of crisis volunteers. More than 100 volunteers

are signed up to participate in a Jan. 19 basic training course to be held at Gardendale First Baptist Church.

“If we can change someone’s life through disaster relief efforts then it’s all worth it,” Knox said.

“If we can change someone’s life through disaster relief efforts then it’s all worth it.”

Steve Knox
associational disaster relief coordinator,
North Jefferson Baptist Association

Knox also holds the title of “serve-out pastor” at Enon Baptist Church, Morris — a position that includes his work with associational disaster relief. He says it’s been a unique opportunity, one he’s grateful for.

“It’s not just about one church — one church can’t do it alone,” he said. “We need each and every church that’s associated with the association.”

‘Necessary ministry’

Loggins said it’s a “necessary ministry, a ministry of opportunity” that can bring the gospel to people when their hearts are open in time of crisis.

“We show them the love of Christ and tell them about the love of Christ,” he said. (Grace Thornton)

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 20

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

PROTECT AND SERVE

Genesis 1:27; 9:1-7; Matthew 5:21-22

As we recognize Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, we remember that every human being is created in the image of God. Every human being should be treated with dignity and respect from the womb to the tomb. For His glory God created the world to be inhabited by people who would love Him and be loved by Him.

In His Image (Gen. 1:27)

The pinnacle of God's creative work was humanity, making us in His own image. Think about it. A tiny baby girl or boy is the apex of God's creation. The greatest wonder of all is the child is created in the image of God. The child once was not. Now he or she is eternal.

How are we God's image? The image of God is God's investment in humanity of God-like glory and the moral capacity to rule and reign the earth as His representatives. Being created in the imago Dei means we are hearers. We can hear and receive God's word. We are enabled to relate personally to God. No other creature can do that. This also means we are responsible, moral, spiritual beings. Being created in the imago Dei also means we are rulers (Gen. 1:26, 28). God's image-bearers are to rule the earth for the glory of God and the good of humanity.

When we rightfully exercise the authority granted to us God is glorified and humanity flourishes. As Christ-followers we are to affirm the value of every person as being created in the image of God. We must oppose all forms of oppression and prejudice. This truth ought to eliminate racism and other forms of hatred as acceptable behavior for the people of God.

To Be Protected (Gen. 9:1-7)

God is the giver of life as well as the defender and preserver of life. The covenant

God established with Noah included the protection of human life by requiring the life of any creature, both human and nonhuman, who murders a human being. Verse 6 bases this protection of life on the fact that God created man in His own image. While the image of God was marred by the fall (Gen. 3), the image remained and is still valuable in God's sight.

God's covenant with Noah emphasizes the value and importance of human life. God desires that we as Christ-followers do everything we can to protect human life. We must care for the welfare of others, speak for the unborn, stand up for the persecuted and strive to stop abuse and enslavement.

We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Because human life is valuable to God and that every human being will live eternally either blessed by God or under the wrath of God we should be motivated to share the gospel and make disciples of all nations. We must get serious about being evangelistic and missions-minded.

In Action and Attitude (Matt. 5:21-22)

Jesus taught that while the law prohibited murder He expects Christ-followers to demonstrate both attitudes and actions that value other people. What is down in the well comes up in the bucket. In other words attitudes ultimately result in actions. Jesus focused on three attitudes that can lead to murder. He mentioned unholy anger against people, insulting a brother and calling a brother a fool. Each of these sinful acts flows out of an evil heart. The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart.

As we spend time with God in His word, prayer and fellowship with other Christ-followers, God creates a clean heart and a right spirit within us, which leads us to protect and serve others.✠

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

WHEN LIFE IS EXPENDABLE Exodus 1:16-17, 22-29

The fear of God leads us to respect all human life. (1:16-17)

An outright attempt at genocide is the Pharaoh's response to the growing Israelite population. Pharaoh commands two midwives to kill all male children born to the Israelites. The midwives do not cooperate because they "fear God" more than they feared the new king. "Shiprah" and "Puah" are nowhere else named or known, yet we remember them by name because of their courageous faith. These women obeyed God's will and they were blessed with families themselves (see v. 21). This is the first sign of the triumph of God over Pharaoh, and it is from this initial victory that Moses, the great deliverer, comes on the scene.

The New Testament parallel to this passage is "the Slaughter of the Innocents," when Herod sets out to eliminate all the young boys who are potential rivals for power (see Matt. 2:16-18). This story, therefore, points to the Christ story, for the baby Jesus is born exactly in such jeopardy. This jeopardy for our Lord persists until carried out on Good Friday in a state execution.

We should do what we can to protect others. (1:22-2:3)

A nameless mother looks at the baby and sees "that he is a fine baby." The word for "fine" is more often translated in the Old Testament as "good" and is the same word used in the creation account (see Gen. 1:31). The birth of this baby is a new act of creation. The world begins here again, emerging out of the chaos that "the new king" had decreed. The woman makes a waterproof basket out of bitumen and pitch. "Reeds" were often used as papyrus for writing material, but they were also used for baskets and vessels of various kinds,

particularly boats. The word used here for "basket" is frequently used in the flood account. The basket therefore looks back to Genesis. This new "ark" floats on the Nile, the river that had been intended for baby Moses' death.

We should do what we can to provide for others. (2:4-9)

The reaction of the unnamed princess to the baby is surprise and immediate recognition: "A Hebrew!" Moved with compassion, she spares the baby entering into an alliance with him and prepared to be his protector. The princess knows what she is doing, rescuing a child from the slave community and under a death sentence from her father. By her grit and savvy, she delivers the baby who would one day deliver his people. The baby is formally returned to his own biological mother to be weaned, for which she was paid.

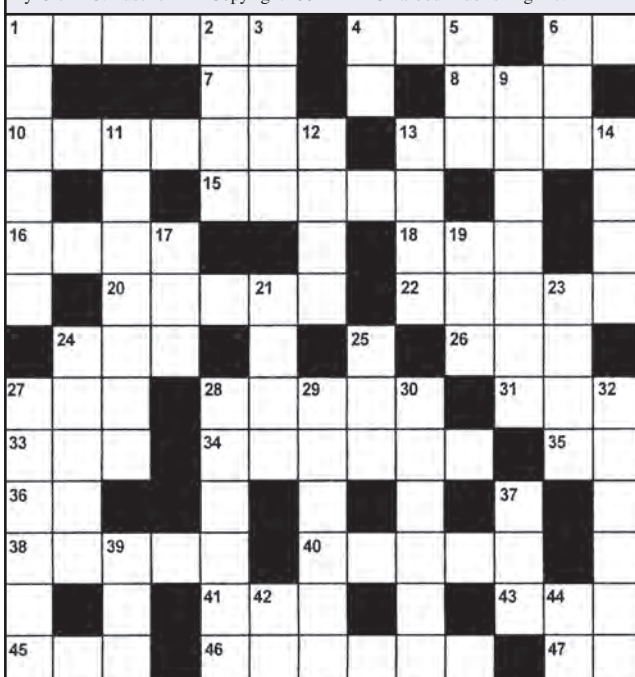
There might be a bit of humor to the narrative here: Jochebed is being paid from royal funds to look after her own child. After this period of nursing the baby was to be adopted by the royal princess — the daughter of Israel's oppressor. Moses came to be educated in Egyptian lore (see Acts 7:22) and the faith of his parents.

Though raised in an Egyptian household the fact that Moses was nursed by his Hebrew mother establishes an ethnic solidarity with his Israelite people. Because Miriam went immediately to Jochebed and we can know that the entire experience was a deliberate scheme to secure Moses in the care of the princess. For her providential savvy Jochebed is portrayed as a woman of superior wisdom and courage.

Of course the ultimate wisdom of the entire plan must be laid at the feet of the Almighty God whose hand was moving through all of the endeavors of these feeble humans.✠

Christian Crossword

By Glenn G. Luscher Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. Day of rest.
4. Adam was the first.
6. Southwest. (abbr.)
7. Another name for Mother.
8. Stand fast in _____ spirit. (Phil. 1:27)
10. The strength of an _____. (Num. 23:22)
13. Nighttime movie.
15. A sleeping noise.
16. Saul's father. (1 Sam. 10:21)
18. Used for hearing.
20. Built rugged.
22. The _____ of wisdom is above rubies. (Job 27:18)
24. It _____ upon each of them. (Acts 2:3)
26. Automobile.
27. Cooling device.
28. Abraham's original name. (Gen. 17:5)

31. What rabbits do.
33. Uninvited picnic guest.
34. _____ the Arbite. (2 Sam. 23:35)
35. Another name for Father.
36. Road. (abbr.)
38. Province of Asia Minor. (Acts 16:7)
40. With your _____ girded. (Ex. 12:11)
41. Frozen water.
43. Container used for cooking.
45. Move quickly.
46. Mary's sister. (Luke 10:38, 39)
47. A preposition.

Down

1. Peanut coverings.
2. Native of Tekoa. (Amos 1:1)
3. Tale or heavy thread.
4. Another name I call myself.

5. A conjunction.
6. Galilee is one.
9. Name of a Simeonite captain. (1 Chron. 4:42)
11. Without delay.
12. Lamech's son. (Gen. 5:28, 29)
13. Extending far downward.
14. Unable to speak.
17. Exceedingly warm.
19. A bowl-like curved line.
21. A city of Benjamin. (Josh. 21:17)
23. Collected agricultural product.
24. Little Orphan Annie's dog.

25. Opposite of near.
27. One who raises livestock.
28. Son of Nadab. (1 Chron. 2:30)
29. One who speaks to cause injury. (1 Cor. 5:11)
30. A miry place. (Ezek. 47:11)
32. A mother or father.
37. A snake. (Job 20:16)
39. Male offspring.
42. California. (abbr.)
42. Alcoholics Anonymous. (abbr.)

Looking for the answers to this week's crossword? Those are now on page 2 so we can make the puzzle clues larger and easier to read. Happy puzzling!

MOVIES



Media reviews

'Series of Unfortunate Events' leads new streaming entries

By Michael Foust
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

My children aren't allowed to watch horror movies. Or scary movies. Or anything that might possibly give them nightmares.

I have theological problems with many films in that genre and practical problems too. I like to sleep.

But in recent months my 10-year-old son and I have discovered a quirky series on Netflix — "A Series of Unfortunate Events" — that could be labeled "scary" but is more appropriately labeled "goofy" and "hilarious."

It's a mostly family-friendly dark comedy that tells the story of three orphans — Klaus, Violet and Sunny Baudelaire — who are sent to live with their strange uncle Count Olaf but soon find themselves on the run from him. Olaf wants their inheritance. They just want a normal life.

The third and final season of "A Series of Unfortunate Events" is now streaming on Netflix.

The series is based on the popular children's books by Daniel Handler (pseudonym: Lemony Snicket) and is aimed at tweens. My tween son loves it. I do too. In fact, I may laugh at it more than he does. It's

funny. And weird. And entertaining.

Neil Patrick Harris stars as Count Olaf, who undergoes so many disguises that you'll lose count. The orphans are the smartest people on the show, although few adults trust them.

The series is wacky but nevertheless provides multiple life lessons. Among them: perseverance and gratitude.

It is rated TV-PG, but it's not perfect. Most of the problems concern immodest dress and scenes that are a bit too scary. The good news:

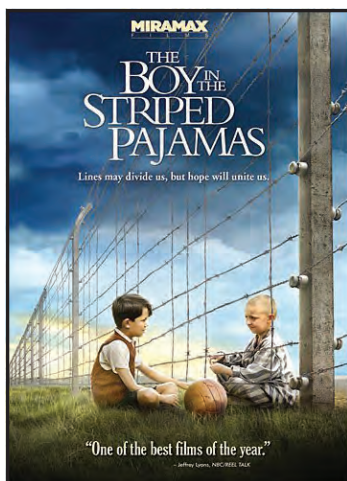
"A Series of Unfortunate Events" is available through the filtering service VidAngel.

Also streaming this month:

For adults/teens

► **"The Indiana Jones series" (Netflix)** — Beginning with "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and its search for the Ark of the Covenant, Netflix began streaming all four Indiana Jones films in January. The first two films in the series are rated PG, but that's only because the PG-13 rating had not been created. All four movies are PG-13-worthy. Caution is advised for some language, disturbing scenes and sensuality.

► **"The Boy in the Striped Pajamas" (Netflix)** — A German boy and a



'Series of Unfortunate Events'

Photo courtesy of Netflix

Jewish boy become friends through a concentration camp fence. Rated PG-13 for some mature thematic material involving the Holocaust.

► **"Forever My Girl" (Hulu)** — A country singer tries to win back the hometown girl he abandoned years earlier. Rated PG for thematic elements including drinking, and for language. (Outside of three OMGs, I caught no coarse language.) There aren't many romantic movies as clean as this one.

For children

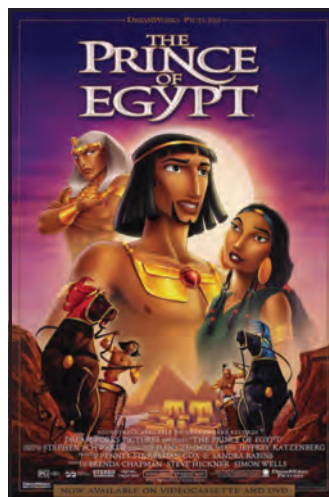
► **"Happy Feet" (Netflix)** — A tap-dancing pen-

guin who can't sing learns to cope in a world where singing is essential for survival. Rated PG for some mild peril and rude humor.

► **"The Incredibles 2" (Netflix, Jan. 30)** — Elastigirl goes on an undercover mission while Mr. Incredible stays home and takes care of the kids. It's a fun film but also has some problems. First it has mild language, including a "h-ll" and a "d--ned." Second it's a bit too scary at

times. Rated PG for action sequences and some brief mild language.

► **"Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory" (Amazon Prime)** — A boy from a poor family visits a magical



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.

chocolate factory. This film — the 1971 version — stars Gene Wilder. Rated G.

► **"Prince of Egypt" (Hulu)** — The story of Moses is told through this inspiring and entertaining DreamWorks animated film. Rated PG for intense depiction of thematic elements.

Other notables: Hulu fans, rejoice! DreamWorks' films are moving to the platform. "Antz," "Chicken Run" and "Shrek" are among the movies now streaming on Hulu.

‘A privilege and a joy’

Ukrainian believers minister to those displaced by war in eastern Ukraine

Imagine if you lived in Texas and on a day’s notice you had to leave and go to Florida. “All your belongings, your home, your job, your friends — they’re back in Texas, but you can’t go back there because it’s too dangerous,” Russell Woodbridge said.

“You have to start life all over again. Where is your hope? Where are you going to look for answers?”

This is the climate in Ukraine, where Woodbridge serves as an International Mission Board (IMB) missionary. He encounters people all the time who fled their homes when war broke out a few years ago. And in the midst of that heartbreak he and other Ukrainian believers want to help them find a hope that transcends the uncertainty of war.

“A year and a half ago, with the help of Ukrainians, we started a new church plant that specifically tries to reach these people who have been displaced and lost everything,” Woodbridge said. “We’ve seen people come to Christ and be baptized.”

Through the seminary where Woodbridge teaches he’s been able to mobilize displaced believers to plant churches among other displaced Ukrainians. He’s even



IMB photos
IMB missionary Russell Woodbridge (left) talks with a student at Ukrainian Baptist Theological Seminary. Through the seminary Woodbridge trains Ukrainian believers to plant churches among the unreached.

seen them plant churches beyond Ukraine’s borders. One student traveled to Central Asia and led people there to faith in Christ. Another planted a thriving church in Poland.

Go to the nations

“This is what we’re about — training Ukrainians to go with the gospel to the nations,” Woodbridge said. “It’s been a joy and a privilege for me to come alongside them.”

Back in North Carolina Woodbridge’s home church feels the same way about his work. J.D. Greear, pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, says their partner-

ship with Woodbridge and his wife, Ingrid, encourages the church and enlarges their faith.

“We pray, we give, we go — not because we have to, but because of what God has promised He’s going to do among the nations,” Greear said. “We get to have a front-row seat in what was formerly one of the most closed places in the world. It’s our honor to be connected.”

Woodbridge agreed. “It takes all of us — American churches, IMB missionaries and Ukrainian believers,” he said. “It takes all of us working together to reach the nations for Christ.” (*Missions Mosaic*, IMB)

How to pray:

► For Ukrainian believers to plant strong, healthy churches that spread rapidly among the lost in their country and beyond.

► For churches to come alongside the work overseas and support them with prayer, funding and volunteer help.

(Source: IMB, *Missions Mosaic*)



J.D. Greear (standing, right), pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, talks with a congregation planted by Pastor Elisey Pronin (left) made up of people who were displaced by the war in eastern Ukraine.