



# The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

## INSIDE



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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."



Photo credit: Bundesarchiv, Bild 101I-680-8283A-12A / Faupel / CC-BY-SA 3.0

Hungarian militia members and a German Tiger II tank occupy the streets of Budapest in October 1944, just a few months before the end of World War II in Europe. Fearing a Communist takeover of their country, Suzi Howle's family fled Hungary in October 1944.

## God's grand design

### Family's flight from Hungary during WWII put Howle on path to Jesus

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**M**ore than 70 years after she fled Hungary tomatoes are still Suzi Howle's main memory of her last home there.

They're tomatoes she never got to eat.

Howle remembers watching

her mother work hard at putting the homegrown fruits up in jars, sprinkling them with salicylic acid and sealing them with cellophane. It's a visual she has stamped on her mind.

But her mother carried a much more haunting memory with her through the years.

"She had disturbing memories of this house because it was in the Jewish quarter of the town and she could see the Jews being hauled away to concentration camps," Howle said. "It was at this house she decided, against our father's will, to flee Hungary before the communists took over."

So in October 1944, when

Howle was almost 7, the family tight-rolled small mattresses and some clothes and tucked them into small bags the little girls could carry.

#### Fleeing across Europe

Howle's mother stuffed flour, sugar and cigarettes into a secret compartment of her sister's large baby carriage.

"She would use the cigarettes to trade for food after the war," Howle said.

They left the tomatoes behind.

They also left behind Howle's father, who was in the army and planned to join up with them later. They

crossed Austria, sometimes walking, sometimes riding on army trucks in convoys and sometimes riding on trains so crowded that the children had to be handed up through the windows.

They rarely stayed anywhere for more than a few days at a time. The miles kept piling up and so did the hardships. Clothes and food were hard to come by. As the miles went on Howle and her next-oldest sister, Ada, had to share a pair of shoes. Once they were bombed out of a school building where they were staying with other refugees.

(See 'He knew,' page 8)

# SCWC, TAB to host book expo in Birmingham

Words are powerful. They teach, they inspire, they empower. They can change people's moods in a breath.

For more than 25 years the Southern Christian Writers Conference (SCWC) has embraced the power of words and encouraged writers to find their voice. And how do these writers find their voice? They write. They write devotionals, they write novels, they write children's books, they write poems, they write nonfiction. And now they are putting them on display.

This year SCWC is starting something new — a book expo. The annual conference isn't until

June, but the Southern Christian Book Expo is coming up soon.

On Feb. 2, First Baptist Church, Birmingham, will host the first annual Southern Christian Book Expo from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**For more information, search for the Southern Christian Book Expo on Facebook or email [cherylswwray@gmail.com](mailto:cherylswwray@gmail.com).**

This is a chance for readers to browse books written by local and regional authors, meet and have those authors sign the books, listen as authors read selections from their best works, explore the services offered by professional vendors and win door prizes.

There will be books for every taste and every genre — Christian living, mystery, humor, romance.

“We wanted to do something for those avid readers who especially love faith-based nonfiction and fiction books,” said Cheryl Wray, coordinator of the SCWC. “This will be a wonderful opportunity to meet authors, buy books from local, state and regional authors and enjoy time

with others who also love to read.”

Around 50 authors are scheduled to attend including Julie Sparkman and Jennifer Phillips (authors of “Unhitching the Crazy Train”), Todd Gerelds (author of “Wood-lawn”), Grace Thornton (author of “Unshakable Pursuit: Chasing the God Who Chases Us”), mystery novelist and Georgia Author of the Year Deborah Malone, young adult author and Birmingham blogger Chandra Sparks, romance novelist Vanessa Griggs, poet Wynne Huddleston, humor writer Kelly Kazek, and others.

## New reading list

“We’ve made great friends through the Southern Christian Writers Conference and wanted to expand our reach. The book expo will be the perfect time to get your reading to-do list going for the new year,” Wray said.

The Southern Christian Book Expo is sponsored by the Southern Christian Writers Conference and *The Alabama Baptist*. (TAB)

# Servant/Leader Appreciation Night to offer laughs across the state

While it's only January, you and your church leaders may 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 two musical guests. It promises 90 minutes of lighthearted Christian entertainment, and it's offered in four locations around the state.

just that in a fun and relaxed way.”

Along with Bell, comedian Aaron Wilburn will provide entertainment and gospel trio New Ground will sing. Michael English also will have a special one-night performance Feb. 1.

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 — Calvary Baptist Church, Scottsboro.

*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 good fellowship with one another,” said comedian Mickey Bell. “And we are giving people the opportunity to do

## Correction

In the Explore the Bible Sunday School lesson for Jan. 13, the sentence, “Then he presented Leah and her seven boys” should have read, “... Leah and her seven children.” (One of her children was her daughter, Dinah.)



“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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(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.



# MY RASHIONALE

By **Jennifer Davis Rash**  
President and Editor-in-Chief

[jrash@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:jrash@thealabamabaptist.org)  
@RashionalThs



## Bit of urgency, desire to help others strengthens the team

**D**o you ever find yourself wanting something for others more than they want it for themselves? It might be an advancement in their career, a more productive and giving life, or to stop self-destructive behaviors.

It could be anything really — even more discipline or that they would be more excited about the opportunities in front of them. It might even be to have a sense of urgency rather than choosing complacency and mediocrity in life.

Granted, there are plenty of stories about parents trying to live out their personal dreams through their children rather than supporting the children's dreams. That's not what I'm describing here.

And I'm not talking about true mental health struggles. Those are real and need to be addressed, not ignored.

I'm thinking of situations in which someone is choosing less than the best options and then complaining constantly or wearing out everyone around them with their internal chaos.

Or maybe their decisions mean others are consistently rescuing them or picking up the broken pieces behind them. It sometimes means negative stress rather than positivity added to those around them.

All of us will walk through seasons of sadness, pain, difficulty, frustration and all kinds of other weighty stuff. Life is messy and nowhere in the Bible are we promised a stress-free, perfect life here on earth. But as believers we know our strength to survive comes from the Lord.

Joshua 1:9 says, "Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Isaiah 43:1–3 says, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."

A quick Internet search will showcase the vast number of reminders in Scripture that God provides the strength and power we need in this life. We need only to embrace Him.

Still the darkness of life can sometimes beat us down enough that we need the help of fellow believers to pull us out. That's where prayer, encouragement and loving accountability play an important role.

I like to envision all of us holding a rope in each hand and staying observant to those around us, kind of like a life-guard at a pool. At any point,

someone in our midst might need a rope tossed their way.

But if we are so mired down in our own stuff all the time, we might miss an opportunity to help someone who is drowning.

A bit of urgency and desire to make a positive difference in the lives of others could change everything.

Sometimes the situation will be one in which we truly are only able to keep ourselves afloat. But when that is not the case, think of the difference we could make if we decided to look beyond ourselves.✝

## WHAT'S NEW WITH TAB?

### Subtle changes taking place in the print edition of *TAB*; let us know which content, sections you like the best

**Y**ou may have noticed the initial tweaks we have made with the print edition of *The Alabama Baptist* already.

Along with moving the editorial section from page 2 to page 3, we decided to tighten the space for sharing opinion pieces so we can cover two different topics each week.

We also aired out the main editorial copy so it is easier on the eye as you read through it.

Traditionally newsprint has needed to cram as many words as possible into the existing space on the pages, but we are now using a larger font size for all of our articles to see if that might be less tiring on you to read.

Our goal is to create a more relaxed and calm experience as you read through the paper, which



we hope also allows you to make it through the entire issue more quickly.

You know we don't want you to miss out on any of the special stories we are sharing, but we do understand time and energy restraints so we hope these subtle changes help.

You may have noticed we freshened up the paper's flag on the front. Again it is an attempt at a more simple presentation.

And we want to hear more from you, so we created a two-page spread called Your Voice that will run each week on pages 4 and 5. Be sure to check it out.

*The Alabama Baptist* newspaper has been an award-winning publication for more than 20 years now, so the changes we are making are not because there were concerns. We are merely attempting to build on the foundation that has been laid year after year throughout our nearly 176-year history. We are excited about sharing these new elements with you and look forward to receiving your feedback.✝

—Jennifer Davis Rash

# Your Voice



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

## Commit to spend time in God's word this year

By **Michael J. Brooks**  
Pastor, Siluria Baptist Church

About half of American adults make resolutions, but most are broken in a few months.

For believers, a better way is the covenant. People of faith made covenants to the Lord throughout biblical history.

The difference is the covenant is a faith-promise that asks for God's help in making it happen.

A covenant is seen as a binding relationship of dependence on God. A worthy covenant is to promise to spend time in Scripture.

Three things may be helpful.

First, begin with a readable translation, of which there are many

available at bookstores. Several websites offer electronic copies of the Bible with 30 or more translations.

Even our friends the Gideons who have placed Bibles in many places have online Scripture now!

Second, make a plan. Unless we schedule time for them, many good intentions fall aside.

Some call a Scripture-reading appointment a "quiet time," and this is a good descriptor.

In our busy and often noisy world, a time of quiet to commune with God is welcomed.

Most denominations offer devotional guides or suggested daily readings.

One plan, "Reading The Bible Through," asserts that reading three chapters each day will take us through the Scripture in one year.

Many like to keep a prayer list or prayer journal with them during Bible reading.

Third, consider technology. Several websites have apps that can be downloaded to one's phone for reading.

One site I'm familiar with has daily reading suggestions. Another site allows one to download audible copies of Scripture. This way we can hear the word of God while driving or working.

This method is probably closer to what the personalities of the Bible did, since copies of Scripture were rare in those days.

This is why the Bible doesn't exhort us to "read" the word of God but to "hear" the word of God (James 1:22).

President Nixon worshipped at the First Baptist Church in Moscow while visiting Russia in the 70s and found one full hour was devoted to the reading of Scripture since most worshippers didn't own Bibles.

We can be sure God will be pleased to help us with a covenant promise to read and obey His word.

*EDITOR'S NOTE — From Reflections, a weekly devotional column written by Michael J. Brooks, pastor of Siluria Baptist Church in Alabaster, Alabama. The church's website is [www.siluriabaptist.com](http://www.siluriabaptist.com).*

Corporate worship is one of the fundamental purposes and actions of the church. Unfortunately, that which should unite us together in praise of the triune God often serves as a wedge to divide the people of God.

**David Toledo**  
Southwestern Seminary  
[theologicalmatters.com](http://theologicalmatters.com)

When dealing with sin that is not our own, we should always do so from a place of loving humility, realizing none of us could cast the first stone.

**Vickey Weathers**  
Outreach ministry  
director and counselor  
Cleburne Association

Every lost sheep has value to God. And, it appears that the farther away a lost sheep has wandered, the more rejoicing there is when it is found!

**David Jeremiah**  
Pastor and author

We should praise God and continue to follow Him even when we don't understand. God will not fail and His love endures forever.

**Jessica Ingram**  
[theropetab.wordpress.com](http://theropetab.wordpress.com)

## Letters to the Editor

What will it take for churches to become intentional about evangelism? To do evangelism, you just have to do evangelism.

Alabama Baptists, we have one of the greatest evangelism offices in the whole SBC. Alabama has some of the greatest evangelists. Call them and allow them to encourage and come alongside you.

What's in your tackle box to fish for men? Discover it, use it and see what God will do in and through you and alongside you.

John Bush  
Across Festivals  
Montgomery, Ala.

I want to commend you for the recent story on The Church at Southside in the Jan. 8, 2019, issue!

What an inspiring story showing your readers that churches should be more than bricks and mortar.

Grace (Thornton), you are a fine writer. Jennifer (Davis Rash), if this is the way you are going to start your "editorship" (did I create a new word?) you are going to take *TAB* to new heights!

Robert Dewhurst  
First Baptist Church  
Wedowee, Ala.

Share online or email [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org)

“If church leaders want them back, they have to ask themselves: Are they willing to love their young people more than they do their political opinions?”

SCOTT McCONNELL  
Executive director, LifeWay Research

It's often said, "People don't follow titles; they follow courage." This is true. Being a real leader is not a title you hold, it is a trust you must earn. Unfortunately, our world today is in short supply of real leaders. There is an urgent need for men and women with great courage and character to rise up to lead our families, our churches and our nation.

**Pastor Bill Wilks**  
NorthPark Baptist Church  
Trussville, Ala.

When God saved you, He saved you into a family. In fact, some people are closer to their spiritual family than they are their physical family.

The church is God's answer to loneliness. As the church, you get to

laugh together and cry together. You get to rejoice together and mourn together. The most beautiful word in it all is "together."

**Shane Pruitt, evangelism strategist and author**  
www.shanepruitt.com

A study of the teachings and life of Jesus Christ will show that He understood people learn better when they discover answers for themselves.

Whether Jesus was asking questions, using illustrations (stories), object lessons, teachable moments, or practice, His aim was always to lead those in front of Him to discover the truth, the real answers.

Do you want to be a more effective leader? Learn and model the

leadership techniques of Jesus.

And as you use them, be certain you're leading people to discover the truth and needed answers to move them forward.

Jesus did and it still works today.  
**George Yates**  
Church health strategist  
Alabama Baptist  
State Board of Missions

We must be patient. It isn't possible to enjoy every moment. Jesus didn't do that. Jesus experienced grief, loss, pain, anger, fear. He wouldn't be who he is without those experiences and those emotions. This is also true for you.

**Christy Edwards**  
Hospital chaplain  
Kansas City, Mo.



Photo courtesy of ALCAP  
Joe Godfrey serves as executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP).

## Preying on the poor must end

Alabama has more payday lenders per capita than any other state. Payday lenders often draw underprivileged people into a debt trap by charging excessive and deceptive interest rates. The annual interest rate in Alabama can be up to 456 percent, making it challenging for any borrower to repay a payday loan.

A 2014 SBC resolution noted that, "All such predatory behavior ... fails to respect the dignity of the person created in the image of God and interferes with human flourishing." Alabama Baptists passed a similar resolution, but predatory lending is still a burdensome issue in our state.

As we approach the 2019 regular legislative session in Montgomery, ALCAP will be working to stop expansion of predatory gambling and alcohol and pushing for pro-life legislation. But predatory lending is another ethical issue that demands attention.

Other states have banned payday loans, put limits on the interest rates or required lenders to verify the borrowers' ability to repay. Our state legislators are in our church pews on Sundays. We must encourage them to push for reform so that we are no longer exploiting the poor.

—Joe Godfrey

## From the *Twitterverse*

### @KB\_HGA

God isn't just for getting you to your destination...He is the destination. To know Him better this year than last, will be our greatest accomplishment. Our greatest joy.

### @ThomRainer

Most churches are in meetings as much as five to ten times more than they need to be.

### @rayortlund

The way we came home to the Father is the way we live with the Father: our needs, His fullness. We get the endless care, He gets the endless glory. Perfect.

### @DBoneSnyder

Pastors, our stories are good for illustration and application. Yet, we must always remember the greatest story our people need is the story

of redemption. Highlight the Gospel in every sermon. This is what they need. This is what we need.

### @AndyStanley

The leader who refuses to move until the fear is gone will never move.

### @AshleyUnzicker

Awhile back, a pregnant young woman was diagnosed with placenta previa. She was told to abort by, not one, but two doctors in order to preserve her life. She didn't. Thanks Mom.

### @jerryvines

Dementia doctor said some people of faith facing dementia ask, "What if I forget about God?" Well, if we forget about God, rest assured He will never forget about us! "yet I will not forget thee. Behold, I

have graven thee upon the palms of my hands"(Isa. 49:15-16).

### @\_JakeBrown

I am not the church. \*We\* are.

### @umobilenews

The world of higher education is defined by degrees — the higher level degree a university offers, the more respected a university becomes in the world of academia. So when University of Mobile enrolled its first doctoral students... #beknown @umtorchlight

### @SEBTS

Student: You must stay connected with a body of believers who will motivate you & keep you accountable. You must pray & meditate on the Bible constantly. Do not think your introductions to Bible are themselves the Bible.

More than two-thirds of all prison and jail inmates in Alabama have a substance abuse problem. More than half are mentally ill. The two problems often occur together and are among the challenges of state prison officials.

# Criminalizing mental illness



U.S. Air Force photo illustration/Steven White

## Jails are now default mental health system because of lack of treatment programs

By **Martha Simmons**  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**T**hink everyone behind bars deserves to be there? Let this statistic sink in: There are now three times more mentally ill people in jails and prisons than in hospitals.

“America’s jails and prisons have become our new mental hospitals,” researchers asserted in a 2010 report issued by the National Sheriffs’ Association and the Treatment Advocacy Center, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to eliminating barriers to the timely and effective treatment of severe mental illness.

Mentally ill prisoners are, according to the report, more likely to:

- ▶ Reoffend and recidivate
- ▶ Cost more to incarcerate
- ▶ Have longer sentences
- ▶ Be more difficult for correctional staff to manage
- ▶ Commit suicide
- ▶ Suffer abuse.

### Alarming numbers

More than half of all prison and jail inmates are mentally ill, with local jails bearing the brunt of the problem.

The U.S. Department of Justice reported in 2006 that 45 percent of federal prisoners, 56 percent of state prisoners and 64 percent of local jail inmates were found to have a mental health problem.

Female inmates are more likely to be mentally ill than the general population: 61 percent in federal prisons, 73 percent in state prisons and 75 percent in local jails.

The problem is arguably worse in Alabama, whose state prison system is mired in federal lawsuits

and operating under a federal court order to fix “horrendously inadequate” prison psychiatric care in state institutions.

In a 302-page opinion issued in 2017, U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson ruled that conditions for mentally ill state prisoners in Alabama were unconstitutional.

In his ruling, Thompson referred to a mentally ill inmate who hanged himself just weeks after providing testimony in the case.

“The case of Jamie Wallace is powerful evidence of the real, concrete and terribly permanent harms that woefully inadequate mental-health care inflicts on mentally ill prisoners in Alabama,” Thompson wrote.

The Treatment Advocacy Center gave Alabama a grade of D (no state received an A) for its treatment of mentally ill state prisoners, noting that the prison system had only 115 designated forensic (court-ordered) beds, and conducted mental health treatment at only one site in the entire state, the 144-bed Taylor Hardin Secure Medical Facility in Tuscaloosa.

That same year the annual report of the Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) reported that 75–80 percent of its more than 21,000 inmates in custody had a substance abuse problem.

While ADOC didn’t specify how many mentally ill inmates it incarcerated statistics show that substance abuse and mental illness

are often co-occurring conditions. ADOC boasted in 2017 that it had implemented “the largest substance abuse program within the State of Alabama,” citing 5,183 participants.

That’s still less than a third of the total number of inmates the system says are substance abusers.

While the Alabama Department of Corrections garners most of the headlines it’s important to remember that state prisons are just one slice of the correctional pie.

The U.S. Department of Justice reports a total 40,900 behind bars in Alabama state and federal prisons or local jails and another 60,700 on probation or parole.

That means that of the nearly 100,000 people under some form of correctional control in Alabama more than half are mentally ill, and more than three-quarters are substance abusers.

### Lack of programs

When they complete their sentences and are released, typically within one to five years, they are likely to find even fewer treatment resources available to them in the free world.

The dearth of community-based mental health services has been decades in the making.

In the early 1900s, social reformers were shocked at the treatment of the mentally ill who were warehoused in jails and prisons.

A movement launched by famous psychiatric reformer Dorothea

Dix led to a generally accepted understanding that the mentally ill should be treated not punished and many new state mental hospitals subsequently were built.

A move to deinstitutionalize mental patients in the 1960s and 1970s, however, resulted in the closing of many mental hospitals.

The community-based services that were supposed to take the place of those institutions never really materialized, and mental health funding has continued to contract.

### No place else to go

As a result prisons and jails became de facto mental institutions as there is often no place else to hold people who are a danger to the community or themselves.

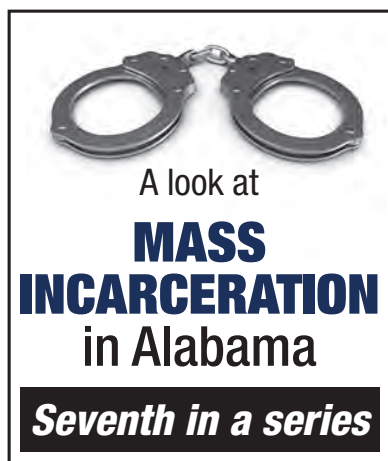
“In historical terms, we have returned to the early 19th century, when mentally ill persons filled our jails and prisons,” Treatment Advocacy Center researchers reported.

“In 1955 there was one psychiatric bed for every 300 Americans. In 2005 there was one psychiatric bed for every 3,000 Americans,” researchers said.

They also noted that most of the modern-day psychiatric beds are designated only for court-ordered patients.

In its 2016 book “People with Mental Illness in the Criminal Justice System: Answering a Cry for Help,” the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry called for compassionate change and advocacy for the mentally ill.

“There is something terribly wrong with a society,” the book’s authors wrote, “that is willing to spend more money to incarcerate people with mental illnesses than to treat them.”



# Last resort

## Local jails have few resources to help inmates who are mentally ill or addicted

By Martha Simmons  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

If the Mayberry jail were a modern-day reality Otis would probably be bipolar and drug-addicted, sharing a cell with three other mentally ill substance abusers, and Sheriff Andy would be asking the town council for money for more personnel and jail cells.

In real life, local jails largely serve as warehouses for the mentally ill and addicted, the last resort for communities that have no place else for them and insufficient resources to treat them or to help their families cope.

While more than half of all prisoners in U.S. correctional institutions suffer from mental illness, the problem is much worse in the nation's local jails, where 64 percent of the inmates are mentally ill.

### Much worse in Alabama

That problem is compounded in Alabama, according to a survey published by the American Jail Association, because "Alabama has virtually no jail diversion programs and is among the states spending the least on public psychiatric treatment programs."

As an example of the problems

faced by local law enforcement officials, researchers highlighted Tuscaloosa County: "In the Tuscaloosa County Jail, 40 percent of the inmates 'receive some form of psychiatric care.' The county sheriff stated 'the jail is the worst place for someone with a mental illness. ... The problem is someone [with mental illness] gets off their meds and a family member doesn't know what to do, so they call the sheriff's office. The [person] may end up in jail for 30 to 60 days or even six months for a \$300 misdemeanor most people would get out on in a day.'"

Addiction compounds the problem. A 2002 study cited by the American Jail Association showed that three-fourths of mentally ill jail inmates were either addicted to or abused alcohol or drugs, compared with half of inmates who had no mental health problems.

Such studies and statistics ring true for Baldwin County Sheriff Huey "Hoss" Mack, who has served as the county's chief law enforcement officer since 2007.

"The Baldwin County Sheriff's Office has definitely seen an increase in the number of individuals who come to us with drug issues

**Incarceration  
of the mentally  
ill carries a  
high price tag.**



Pixabay.com

When family members cannot cope with a loved one's mental illness the local police or sheriff's office often gets the call because of a lack of community-based services for the mentally ill. Addiction only compounds the problem.

and mental health issues," Mack said.

### Greatest impact

"It's hard to say how many of them are actually addicted, but I can say that a majority of them are at least users coming in. Right now our numbers appear to be somewhere around the 65 to 70 percent mark of those that come to us having drug or substance abuse issues. Meth and opiates are the number one drugs that we are combatting.

"We have also seen an increase in those individuals coming to us in mental crisis and are suffering from drug-induced mental illness. This is typically manifested in the form of paranoia as well as depression," Mack said.

Incarceration of the mentally ill carries a high price tag.

"We have had to expand our medical services and increase the amount of mental health observations that we offer in the corrections center over the past couple years," the sheriff said.

"One of the greatest areas that impacts us is the cost of various medications, as well as any counseling we may have to do within the facility. We currently work with the Baldwin County Drug Court, Baldwin County Mental Health and AltaPointe Health's hospital in addressing these issues," Mack said.

Many of the Baldwin County inmates are awaiting trial while those

who have been convicted of less serious crimes are serving sentences of anywhere from a few days to less than one year.

Baldwin County Jail also houses prisoners convicted of more serious crimes who await transfer to state or federal institutions.

With all that churning of the jail population it takes a lot of manpower and flexibility to address the mental health and substance problems among the inmates.

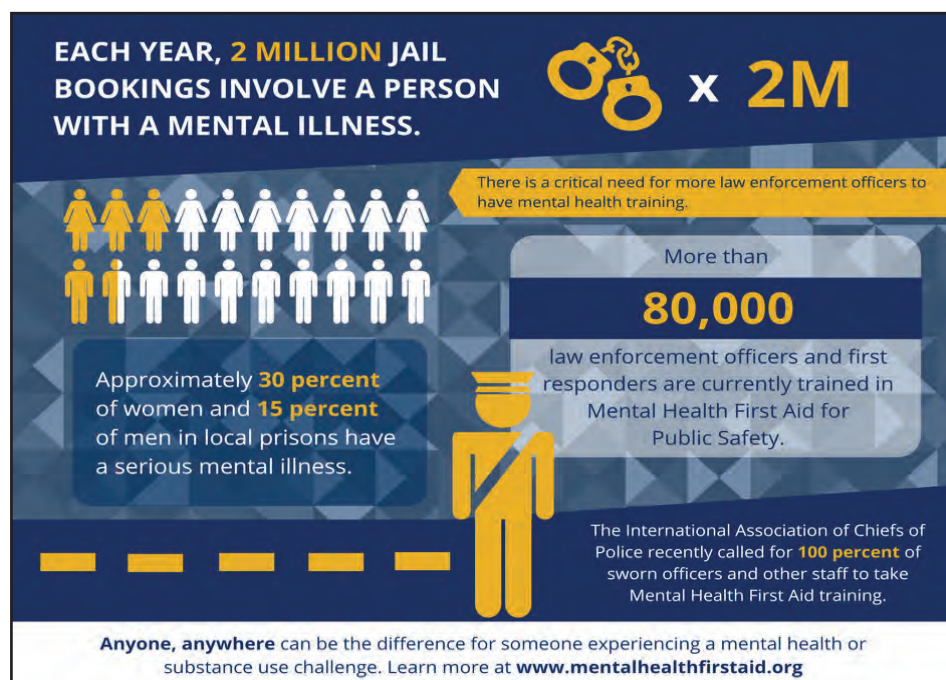
"Our medical unit — which is staffed by registered nurses and licensed practical nurses along with physicians — may have upwards of 200 medical calls or observations a day," Mack said. "Our numbers have also increased with working with the probate court on involuntary commitments which usually result in a 72-hour observation and evaluation before those individuals are released on medication."

### No changes in sight

Sheriff Mack doesn't expect such challenges to change any time soon.

"The lack of treatment facilities is definitely contributing to the revolving door of acute mental illness," he said.

"Until the state builds, or allows to be built, long-term in-house mental health facilities that will be able to treat these individuals, I am not optimistic of any lasting, positive change."✠



# 'He knew what I needed'

## God weaves journey of young girl through WWII Europe, Brazil, then finally to Alabama

(continued from page 1)

At some point Howle's father caught up with them on the road. But not too long after he was recognized as a soldier because of the boots he was wearing, sent to a prisoner of war camp in France and then imprisoned in Hungary.

They didn't know if he would ever come back — others from the army were getting tried and sentenced all the time. So Howle and her mother and siblings moved on across Germany. They traded cigarettes for eggs and other things they needed. They didn't have faith in God so they clung to each other.

But Howle says God was at work even then getting her to where she was supposed to be.

"I didn't know yet that I needed Him, but He was getting me to the exact place and time where I could hear about Him," she said.

As her family traveled God slowly put that path together. Months later Howle and Ada were digging up potatoes by the train tracks when they saw a figure walking toward them.

"It did not take us long to recognize our dear daddy. Oh, what hug-

ging went on in that potato field," Howle said.

He had escaped and he'd been searching for them ever since. Now with the family reunited, they could start looking for a place to build a new life.

It took a while but Brazil finally accepted the family's application after the immigration officer met Howle and her younger siblings. He said he would take them because of the "beautiful" children.

"That was a miracle from God," Howle said. "We embarked on a three-week voyage from Bremerhaven in January 1949, and our lives were never the same again."

She said it was yet another part of God's grand design to get her to where she could know Him one day.

But that wouldn't happen yet — not in Brazil.

After the three-week-long ship ride there, Howle's father became a night watchman at a brick factory.

Howle's mother made furniture for their apartment from shipping crates.

The older girls started first grade with no knowledge of Portuguese. "Our first teacher was Doña



Photo courtesy of Suzi Howle

In 1944 — when Suzi Howle was 7 — WWII was underway, and her family fled Hungary.

It was a hard journey to make their way across Europe, and five years later the family of six got word they could immigrate to Brazil. They're shown here in 1949 on the General Stewart ship — (from left, front row) sisters Suzi, Kati and Ada and (back row) their parents holding baby brother Gabi.



Photo courtesy of Suzi Howle

Suzi Howle (center) — pictured here with former Sunday School students Claire Fuller (left) and Blake Thomas — taught fifth and sixth grade Sunday School classes at First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, for 41 years before she recently retired.

Isabella. She was an angel sent by God. I remember her coming over to our desks and helping with our reading," Howle said. "We managed somehow."

During the next decade as Howle grew in her studies new opportunities came along — one of which was to study in the United States.

### Second great journey

"The time had come for me to embark on the second great journey of my life," she said. "Leaving Europe had been a turning point and now, unknown to us, the trip to the United States was to change my life forever. At 20 years of age I was ready to venture out on my own."

The group of 39 students and two chaperones landed in Miami first then went to Mobile by Greyhound bus. From there they traveled on to Jacksonville State College (now Jacksonville State University).

What they found there, they liked — a bunch of American students who wanted to get to know them and see what Brazilians were like.

"Some invited us to picnics and some to their homes," Howle said. "They took us shopping and sight-seeing. We went to a recreation area near the college quite often. There we could sun on the beach, eat hamburgers at the snack bar or dance to the jukebox."

And soon she found she had one dance partner she liked better than anyone else — a young man by the name of Bob Howle. He was a senior and an ROTC cadet, and after he graduated he was stationed in Georgia.

Most of the Brazilian students went back home at the end of the study abroad semester, but Howle stayed in the United States. Hoping to continue her studies she moved in with some family friends in New



Photo courtesy of Jacksonville State University

A group of students, including Howle, traveled from Brazil to the U.S. to study at Jacksonville State College (now Jacksonville State University). Howle met her husband while in Jacksonville, and their family ended up returning to Jacksonville after several years away. She's now been there for more than 40 years.

York and became their babysitter.

And she and the young army second lieutenant wrote letters to each other.

"He decided to visit me during his end-of-the-year leave," Howle said. "He had bought a brand-new light green Mercury. He told everyone later that he had to impress me. Impress me he did, but not because of the car. My heart was his by this time."

### Epicenter of God's plan

The two married Feb. 17, 1959. For years the two traveled with the army, including living in Germany again for a couple of years. But by the 1970s, and with three children in tow, they were back in Jacksonville — and at the epicenter of God's plan for Howle.

"My husband was still in the army at that time and our two oldest ones were teenagers," she said. "The youth from First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, kept inviting

them to their functions and they went and really liked it and said we should go too."

So the family started attending worship services.

"The pastor was very kind, and he would just say how happy he was to see us there and that we were welcome to come to Sunday School," she said. "At that time I was not a Christian and I thought Sunday School was just for children, so that did not appeal to me at all."

But something else did — the love of the people.

"The love of the people got to me. God used the people of the church to draw me to Himself," she said. "I didn't know who He was because I had never heard that there was such a thing as Jesus our Savior. I knew that there was a God and that there was a Jesus who died on a cross, but I didn't know that we had to have a personal relationship with Jesus."

**"No matter what changes come into my life, His grace is enough and readily available. He has always been at work, even when I didn't see it."**

**Suzi Howle**

But God was evidently drawing her through His people, she said, and one day she went forward to join the church.

"He knew my heart. He knew what I needed," Howle said. "And He knew I didn't just need to join the church — I needed Him. And immediately — immediately — there was a change in my heart."

She was hungry for God's word so she went to the grocery store, bought a Bible and devoured its words.

"It still gives me the shivers how God changed my heart," Howle said.

Not only that — He changed her whole family. She and her two oldest

children were baptized together on Feb. 4, 1975, and the rest of her family has followed. The fourth Howle child, born in 1978, is a follower of Jesus now too.

"I had so many beginnings in my life," she said, but finding Jesus was "the most important one."

In the decades that followed, Howle stayed deeply involved in her church and committed to sharing the story of her journey to faith with others. In 2018 she stepped back after teaching

fifth and sixth grade Sunday School for 41 years.

### Finding Jesus

Angie Casey, children's director at First, Jacksonville, has been there the whole time and said she's watched Howle impact a lot of children and families throughout the years.

"She's done a lot of things in our church," Casey said. "She's always faithful to serve in Sunday School and Vacation Bible School and is a big part of Woman's Missionary Union and missions. She's played a role in the spiritual formation of a lot of people."

Howle said it's the kind of story only God could write.

"No matter what changes come into my life His grace is enough and readily available," she said. "He has always been at work even when I didn't see it." ✝



Photo courtesy of Suzi Howle

After they arrived in Brazil, the three sisters (from left) Ada, Kati and Suzi started elementary school with no knowledge of Portuguese. A teacher helped Suzi with her reading and over time she excelled academically, eventually earning the opportunity to study in the U.S.

## Displaced persons then and now

Pivotal World War II victories by the Allied forces in 1944, including the invasion of Normandy on June 6 and the liberation of Paris on Aug. 25, would eventually lead to Victory in Europe Day on May 8, 1945.

But for many countries in Eastern Europe, including Hungary, that aligned themselves with Germany, a new era of communist rule was soon to begin.

Many families fled their homelands to escape communism. Thus

began the largest population movement in European history with Germans, Jews and refugees from every country in Eastern Europe scattering across the globe.

### Mass migration today

Today mass migration is at its highest level since WWII and continues to be a topic of national and global concern.

According to the United Nations, the number of migrants worldwide has continued to grow rapidly in re-



Photo credit: Ggia, CC BY-SA 4.0, curid=45246844

Volunteers assist immigrants arriving at the Greek island of Lesbos.

cent years reaching 258 million in 2017, up from 220 million in 2010 and 173 million in 2000.

Drought, natural disaster, disease and war/conflict are the top reasons for mass migration. (TAB)

## in Loving Memory

of Alabama Baptist leaders



### Stacey Evens McVay

#### Andalusia pastor McVay dies at 49

Stacey Evens McVay, pastor of Victory Baptist Church, Andalusia, in Covington Baptist Association, died Jan. 7. He was 49.

McVay's family was well-known in the area so when he answered the call to become the pastor of Victory Baptist in 2015 it was "a tremendous blessing" to the congregation, said Otis Corbitt, director of missions for Covington Association.



McVAY

"Victory is a small church and had been without a pastor for about four years," Corbitt said. "We need more men like Stacey to answer God's call to pastor bivocationally and love their church the way Stacey did."

McVay is survived by his wife, Kathy; daughters, Leslie and Katon; sons, Evens, Avry and Ethan; and eight grandchildren. (TAB)

### Robert 'Bob' Covington

#### Pastor and international missionary dies

Robert "Bob" Covington, a longtime pastor and international missionary, died Jan. 12. He was 90.

A native of Montgomery, Covington graduated from Sidney Lanier High School then served in the U.S. Navy. After returning to Alabama he earned bachelor's and master's degrees in education from the University of Alabama and a doctorate in theology from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Covington served as a pastor of churches in Louisiana and Mississippi before serving as a missionary to Singapore, Malaysia and Australia, teaching seminary classes in each country. After he retired from his work overseas he served as an interim pastor for a number of churches in Alabama.

He is preceded in death by his wife of 52 years, Gerry. He is survived by his second wife, Ann; sons Dan, John and Timothy; daughter, Jennifer; and four grandchildren. (Grace Thornton)



COVINGTON

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

#### PASTOR

Camellia Baptist Church, 201 Woodvale Rd, Prattville 36067 prayerfully seeking God's choice for a full-time pastor. All applicants should have previous senior pastor experience and have earned a master of divinity. Resumé with photo, may be mailed Attn. Pastor/Search. [www.cbcprattville.org](http://www.cbcprattville.org)

#### PASTOR

Young, energetic candidate needed to help small church grow in Marshall County. Seminary desired, but not required. Salary small, outside job needed. 3-bedroom parsonage, not utilities. Call Jeff at 256-582-1301 or e-mail [butler.bob.120@att.net](mailto:butler.bob.120@att.net).

#### BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Wayside Baptist Church is looking for a bivocational pastor. Send resumé to: Chris Baker 2935 Campground Road Alexander City, AL 35010 or email to [search4pastor@gmail.com](mailto:search4pastor@gmail.com).

#### 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](mailto: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](mailto:office@sistersbaptist.org).

#### 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](mailto:secretary@bbcdora.com), or mail resumé to: Music Search Committee, Bethel Baptist Church, 7000 Bethel Road, Dora, AL 35062.

#### BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER

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

#### FULL-TIME ASSOCIATE PASTOR TO STUDENTS/ MISSIONS

Southside Baptist Church, Andalusia, 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](mailto:southside@sbcandalusia.com).

#### PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER

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

#### MINISTER OF OUTREACH & MISSIONS

FBC Vincent, Alabama, seeking part-time minister of outreach and missions. Will work with the pastor giving coordinating leadership to current mission endeavors. Design/organize/facilitate an outreach ministry to Vincent/Harpersville area. Minimum 20 hours/week. Send resumé to [admin@fbcvincent.org](mailto:admin@fbcvincent.org).

### OTHER POSITIONS

#### ASSOCIATIONAL MISSION STRATEGIST

St. Clair Baptist Association is receiving resumé for the associ-

ational 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, Ashville AL 35953.

### BUSINESS

#### 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](http://www.reliablesigns.com). 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955.

#### 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.

### TRAVEL/VACATION

#### LOG CABIN RENTAL

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

### MINISTRIES

#### TAB PODCAST

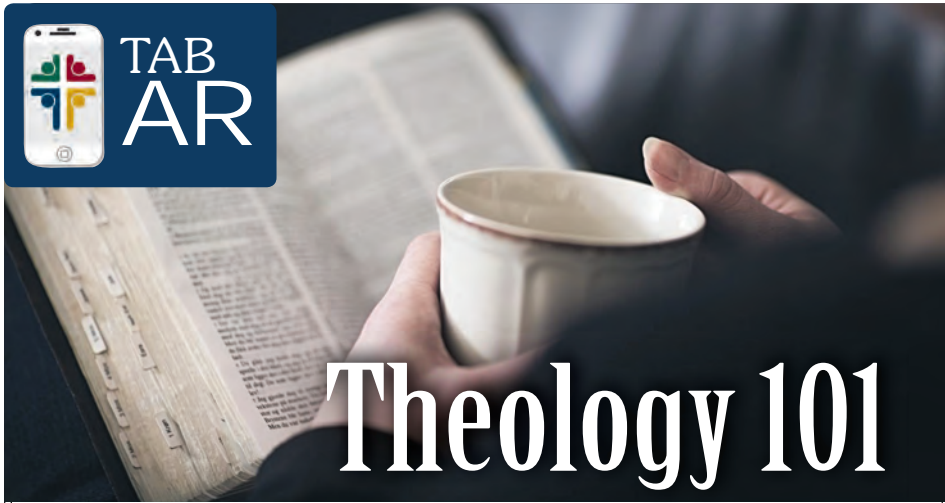
The TAB News podcast provides content from *The Alabama Baptist* each week in a radio-show-style format for listeners to download and listen to at their convenience. Listen to the TAB News podcast anywhere you get your podcasts or visit [www.thealabamabaptist.org/explore/podcasts/](http://www.thealabamabaptist.org/explore/podcasts/). New episodes are released weekly.

#### TAB PREVIEW

TAB Preview provides a sneak preview of the weekly stories featured in *The Alabama Baptist*. It is interactive with links to stories and easy access to *The Alabama Baptist's* social media sites. It also features ads that are clickable and link directly to websites. To sign up email [news@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:news@thealabamabaptist.org). For ad information, email [ads@thealabamabaptist.org](mailto:ads@thealabamabaptist.org).

Listen to the TAB News podcast anywhere you get your podcasts such as iTunes and iHeartRadio or visit [thealabamabaptist.org/explore/podcasts/](http://thealabamabaptist.org/explore/podcasts/).





# Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

## Biblical Imagery

# The Bible as Food

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

**A**s Theology 101 continues to seek truths about the Bible in various images by which the Bible refers to itself, our attention is drawn to that of food. This imagery has roots in the Old Testament in God's call to prophets to become His spokespersons.

For example Ezekiel heard the voice of God speaking to him, saying, "Open your mouth and eat what I give you," and when he looked, the prophet reported, "There was a hand stretched out to me; and behold, a scroll of a book was in it" (Ezek. 2:8-9).

God continued His instructions to Ezekiel, saying, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll and go, speak to the house of Israel." In response the prophet reported, "So I ate and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness" (Ezek. 3:3).

### 'Sweeter than honey'

Psalm 19:10 draws upon this same imagery in declaring God's truth is "sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb" and Psalm 119:103 exclaims, "How sweet are Your words to my mouth, sweeter than honey to my mouth."

The imagery of God's word as food appears again in two New Testament passages of special emphasis. The first of these passages refers to this food as milk. With words addressed to believers 1 Peter 2:2-3 instructs, "As newborn babes desire the pure milk of the Word that you may grow thereby if indeed you have

tasted that the Lord is gracious." The Bible is necessary nourishment from the time of a person's spiritual rebirth just as milk is to a newborn infant.

The second New Testament passage refers to the food of God's word as solid food. In a reprimand to some no longer making progress in spiritual growth, Hebrews 5:12-14 declares, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the Word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age."

### Biblical nourishment

From this dual imagery of milk versus solid food we discern that God's word speaks meaningfully to those who are new to the Christian faith. It also nourishes those who are quite advanced in Christian experience and spiritual understanding. No one is too young in the faith to profit from Bible reading. Neither is anyone so advanced as to no longer need the nourishment of biblical truth.

*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.*



# Book-Link collects Bibles, hymnals, study materials for pastors overseas

By Grace Thornton  
The Alabama Baptist

**P**aul Reitzer remembers one letter that stuck with him. "He was a Baptist pastor, and he had gotten a Bible and was rejoicing," Reitzer said. "Before he got it there was one Bible in the whole town and it was owned by the Seventh Day Adventist pastor. That pastor would use it on Saturdays then this pastor would use it on Sundays."

But then a shipment from Book-Link International arrived and changed everything. Book-Link — a ministry more than 30 years old — receives donations of Bibles, hymnals and Christian study materials and ships them to pastors all over the world at no cost to them.

### Preaching and teaching

"We ship materials to about 40 countries," said Reitzer, a past president of the Fellowship of Baptist Educators, which started Book-Link in 1988. "Pastors in many countries can read English but have almost no materials to help them in their preaching and teaching ministries — things like Bible studies, Bible atlases and commentaries."

Reitzer lives in Marion where he serves as part-time pastor of two churches — Mount Olive Baptist

Church, Sprott, and Newbern Baptist Church, Marion. Together he and Tom Stacey, director of missions for Cahaba and Selma Baptist associations, gather books and materials from churches in the area.

### 'Tremendous contribution'

Once they're collected Reitzer spends time dividing the books and materials into boxes of 40 pounds or less so volunteers can carry them more easily. And in December Stacey made his annual trip to deliver them all to the Book-Link warehouse in Eubank, Kentucky.

Olin Williams, director of Book-Link, said the ministry is grateful for the help.

"Many Alabama Southern Baptists have been and are involved in sharing their printed Christian materials with fellow Christians located in foreign countries," he said.

Up until around 15 years ago Alabama also had its own collection hub and shipping center housed in a Baptist church. Williams said it would be great if Alabama could have one again some day.

"I am truly grateful for the tremendous contribution of prayers, materials, labor and funds," he said.

For more information about Book-Link, visit [thefellowshipofbaptisteducators.org/book-link](http://thefellowshipofbaptisteducators.org/book-link).

**Donations may be sent to Book-Link International, Inc., 100 Book-Link Way, Eubank, KY 42567.**



Photo courtesy of Selma Baptist Association

Tom Stacey, director of missions for Cahaba and Selma Baptist associations, loads his truck with books prior to his trip to the Book-Link warehouse in Kentucky.



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



**Food.  
Medicine.  
Heat.**  
Which one would  
you do without?



Every winter, 50% of Alabama's senior adults must make that decision.\* You can help by giving to the Hunger Offering.

February is the new suggested emphasis month for the Hunger Offering in Alabama, and February 17 is the suggested Sunday for the offering. But you can choose any date that works well for your church. The State Board of Missions receives hunger relief funds every week.

**For each dollar you give, a dollar goes out to feed the hungry, both in Alabama and around the world.**

For more information about the hunger problem in our world, the Hunger Offering, or resources to promote the offering in your church, visit [alsbom.org/hunger](http://alsbom.org/hunger) or contact Lori Lockett at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 304; (334) 613-2304; [llockett@alsbom.org](mailto:llockett@alsbom.org).

\* SOURCE: [feedingamerica.org](http://feedingamerica.org)



**MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

Event and location is followed by SBOM contact person and extension. For more information on these events, call 1-800-264-1225 or (334) 613-2 + the extension, or visit [alsbom.org](http://alsbom.org).

**JANUARY**

29 **Church Tax Conference**, Andalusia First, Linda Hicks, ext. 263

**FEBRUARY**

- 1-2 **Activators Training**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Laura Glass, ext. 226
- 2 **Children's Missions Explosions**, Pleasant Grove First & Southside, Andalusia, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 223
- 5 **Minister's Tax Conference**, SBOM Office Facility, Prattville, Linda Hicks, ext. 263
- 8-9 **Bivocational Minister/Spouse Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Mike Jackson, ext. 210, or Linda Hicks, ext. 263
- 9 **Children's Missions Explosions**, Mt. Zion, Huntsville, & Prattville First, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 223
- 10 **Racial Reconciliation Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 289
- 11-17 **Focus on WMU Week**, Kathryn Helms, ext. 325
- 12 **Minister's Tax Conference**, Woodward Avenue, Muscle Shoals, Linda Hicks, ext. 263
- 14 **Minister's Tax Conference**, Tennessee River Baptist Assoc. Office, Scottsboro, Linda Hicks, ext. 263
- 15-16 **Parish Nurse Training I**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Kathryn Helms, ext. 325
- 16 **Children's Ministry Day**, Trish Jackson, ext. 224
- 17 **Hunger Sunday**, Jim Swedenburg, ext. 283
- 19 **Minister's Tax Conference**, Northport BC, Northport, Linda Hicks, ext. 263
- 21 **Minister's Tax Conference**, Calhoun Baptist Association Office, Anniston, Linda Hicks, ext. 263
- 21-23 **Alabama Church Planting Basics**, Southeast Alabama Baptist Association Office, Dothan, Lamar Duke, ext. 332
- 22-23 **Pursue Conference**, Eastmont, Montgomery, Mike Nuss, ext. 276
- 22-23 **Together at the Springs**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Eileen Mitchell, ext. 221
- 23 **Renew...a day away with friends**, NorthPark, Trussville, Laura Glass, ext. 226
- 25 **Church Revitalization/Replant Conference**, Dawson Memorial, Birmingham, Daniel Wilson, ext. 343
- 25 **Pastors and Wives Banquet**, Dawson Memorial, Birmingham, Lori McGough, ext. 245
- 25-26 **State Evangelism Conference**, Dawson Memorial, Birmingham, Amy Nelson, ext. 258
- 26 **Ministers' Wives Luncheon**, Dawson Memorial, Birmingham, Kathryn Helms, ext. 325
- 28 **Minister's Tax Conference**, Andalusia First, Linda Hicks, ext. 263

**MARCH**

- 1-2 **COMPLETE... A gathering for teen girls**, Birmingham First, Kathryn Helms, ext. 325
- 1-3 **Children's Honor Choir Tour**, Panama City, Florida & Enterprise, Alabama, Karen Gosselin, ext. 318
- 8-10 **Alabama Baptist Conference of the Deaf**, Coosada BC, Coosada, Kristy Kennedy, ext. 311
- 3-10 **Week of Prayer for North American Missions and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering**, Laura Glass, ext. 226
- 7 **Uplink on the Road**, SBOM Office Facility, Prattville, Scooter Kellum, ext. 280
- 7-8 **Public Safety Chaplaincy Training**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 8 **Uplink on the Road**, SBOM Office Facility, Prattville, Scooter Kellum, ext. 280
- 8-10 **Parish Nurse Training II**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Kathryn Helms, ext. 325
- 10 **Daylight Saving Time Begins**
- 10-13 **Alabama Association of Baptist Secretaries Conference**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 12 **2019 Singin'**, Eastmont, Montgomery, Eileen Mitchell, ext. 221
- 17 **Substance Abuse Prevention Sunday**, Keith Hinson, ext. 289
- 21-23 **Spanish Alabama Church Planting Basics**, Tuscaloosa County Baptist Association, Northport, Lamar Duke, ext. 332
- 22-23 **Adventure Weekend**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Monica Thompson, ext. 227
- 26 **Ministry Safe Workshop**, Heritage, Montgomery, Lee Wright, ext. 241, or Linda Hicks, ext. 263



# Across ALABAMA'S ASSOCIATIONS

## BUTLER

▶ **Ronnie Boulware** recently resigned as pastor of **Antioch East Church, Greenville**. He served at Antioch East for more than 15 years.

## COVINGTON

▶ **Jimmy Williamson** is the new youth pastor of **Adellum Church, Andalusia**. Billy Boles is pastor.

## DEKALB

▶ **First Church, Rainsville**, will host a concert featuring Austin French on Jan. 27, 6 p.m. For more information visit [www.rainsvillefirst.com](http://www.rainsvillefirst.com) or call 256-638-3141. David Cofield is pastor.

## ETOWAH

▶ **Immanuel Church, Hokes Bluff**, will hold a retirement celebration for music minister Will Smith on Feb. 3, 2-4 p.m. Smith has served at Immanuel Church for more than 30 years. Anthony Copeland is pastor.

## TUSCALOOSA

▶ **Carrolls Creek Church, Northport**, will host an evangelistic men's conference Jan. 26. Dinner will begin at 5:30 p.m. and the main session will begin at 7 p.m. Ted DiBiase, a former professional wrestler, will be the guest speaker. Reservations are required for dinner. Alan Roggli is pastor. †

# PERSECUTED CHURCH

Compiled from Wire Services



## Muslim attacks, harassment at Coptic church prompts closure

**MANSHIYET ZAAFARNA, Egypt** — Police evicted Coptic priests and shuttered the church building of Mar-Giris (St. George) after Islamist protests.



Egyptian Coptic Church

Muslim villagers attacked the church, located about 155 miles south of Cairo, after mosque noon prayers

Jan. 11, according to a statement by church officials.

The next day a mob descended on the church and demanded it be closed. Manshiyet Zaafarna village is home to about 1,000 Copts.

Harassment against the church started on Coptic Orthodox Christmas Eve when Muslim protesters barged into the church building after a special service, according to church officials.

Three churches have recently been closed in Minya Governorate. (MS)

village, Vilabouly District in Savannakhet Province, local police arrested the 78-year-old woman identified as Grandma Bounlam and three men for believing in Jesus. Police also evicted the worshippers from their homes and property. The four Christians have since been released from prison.

Area Christians said police have threatened more severe punishment if the Lao Christians do not renounce Christianity, which is considered an enemy of the single-party, Marxist-Leninist country.

Laos ranks 19th on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2019 World Watch List of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)

## Officials in Belarus continue to deny church registrations

**MINSK, Belarus** — The Pentecostal Your Will Be Done Church has felt unable to meet for worship for fear of punishment, as officials have rejected its four registration applications since 2017.

Pastor Vyacheslav Novakovsky said the church wants to comply with the law, but a city official said an order was in place to refuse registration of new religious communities because they were not needed.

In Belarus the state closely controls all public exercise of freedom of religion or belief. Those who meet without state registration risk police raids and fines, and many churches have given up efforts to register. (F18)

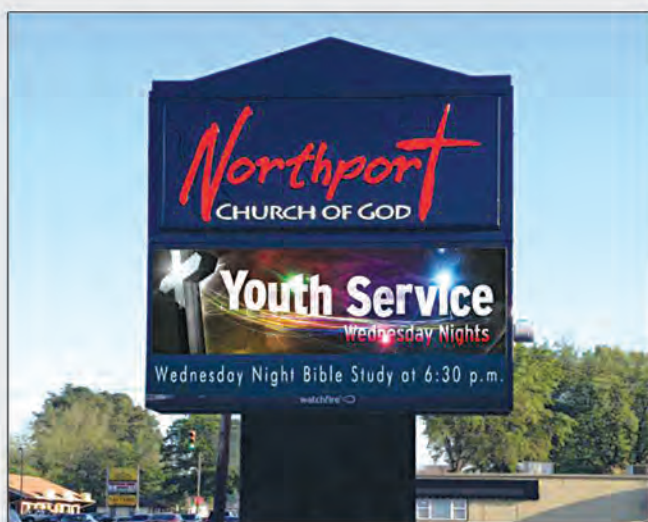
## Police arrest grandmother, three other Christians during worship

**KEOVILAI, Laos** — Police in Laos arrested a grandmother and three other Christians while they were worshipping, according to the advocacy group Human Rights Watch for Lao Religious Freedom.

Raiding a church service in Keovilai



# DIGITAL SIGNS



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— Zachery Smith, worship pastor, Northport Church of God

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**01**  
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# SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For January 27

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

### ASSURANCE Genesis 35:1-15

Following his escape from Laban, Jacob willfully spent a decade doing much as he pleased. He first dwelt outside the promised land and when he crossed over into Canaan he settled in prosperous Shechem instead of traveling the 20 miles further to Bethel. Jacob's half-hearted obedience (which is actually disobedience) resulted in tragedy. The desecration of Dinah, the desecration of Israel's most holy sign (circumcision), the massacre of the Shechemites and the degradation of his own children rendered Jacob a stench in the land and ready to hear God's voice.

#### Purify Yourself (1-4)

God commanded Jacob to arise, go up to Bethel, live there and build an altar. This was a call to a religious pilgrimage, which would culminate in the building of an altar at Bethel, an established site of Canaanite worship. God wanted Jacob to declare His name and drive a stake into the heartland of Canaanite worship.

Jacob charged his family with three duties. First they must put away everything that hinted of idolatry. The people gave Jacob all of their foreign gods and earrings associated with pagan worship. He buried them under a terebinth tree near Shechem.

Second they must clean themselves. Later Israelite tradition emphasized the importance of purification rituals symbolizing the cleansing of all sin from their lives and preparing them for their encounter with God. Third they must change clothes, signifying a departure from their old culture and a readiness for a new way of life.

#### Obey God's Directives (5-8)

After Simeon and Levi had massacred the Shechemites and plundered their prop-

erty (34:25-29) Jacob angrily scolded his sons for their actions, not because they were immoral but for fear that their deeds would bring the surrounding Canaanites upon them to annihilate them. Instead "a terror from God" fell upon the Canaanites. God protected Jacob and his family.

At Bethel he obediently built an altar and called the place El-bethel ("the God of Bethel"). Thirty years after God had appeared to him there Jacob worshipped at the newly built altar, offering joyful sacrifices to God and reconfirming his allegiance to God.

Now with Jacob in Bethel, God began to effect a transition to a new generation with the death of Deborah.

#### Remember God's Promises (9-13)

The obedience and worship of Jacob and his people was followed by a theophany and a blessing direct from the mouth of God. The event was divinely orchestrated to parallel what had happened to his grandfather Abraham when he received the covenant of circumcision. First, just as Abram's name ("exalted father") had been changed to Abraham ("father of a multitude"), Jacob's name ("deceiver") was now changed to Israel ("he strives with God"). Second, God Almighty had blessed Abram and He now blessed Jacob. This divine name, El Shaddai, emphasizes God's power and sovereignty. Third, God Almighty blessed Jacob in terms similar to those used to bless Abraham in respect to fruitfulness, a nation, kings and land.

#### Treasure God's Promises (14-15)

Jacob responded to God's promises by setting up a pillar and offering the Lord a drink offering. The offering symbolized his life being poured out in dedication to God. Jacob treasured God's promises. He learned that God was not only a promise maker, He was also a promise keeper. ✠

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

### WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES OVERWHELM Psalms 42:1-3, 6-8; 43:3-5

**There are times when we experience a longing for God because we feel abandoned. (42:1-3)**

In these psalms David is despairing. He has the blues. Many think the blues started with the St. Louis blues or on the Mississippi Delta, but they actually began in Jerusalem with the King David blues. This is his song. This psalm, like some others, is called a "maskil," which is the Hebrew word for "teaching." Maskil psalms are identified because not only are they songs but they also are known to impart wisdom. This maskil offers us insight as to how to handle overwhelming circumstances that challenge us.

This psalm was written during Absalom's rebellion. Late in David's reign his son Absalom rebelled against his father and temporarily took over the kingdom. David was driven into exile outside Jerusalem.

Unable to return home and with his life in danger David is despairing. However, he refuses to succumb to it.

In the first nine verses David is transparent about symptoms he is battling. The symptoms echo many that people face today as they wrestle with depression. David is longing for God's presence, and he experiences crying and loss of appetite. He is emotionally drained, grieving and alone.

**When we experience overwhelming circumstances remember God is in our lives. (42:6-8)**

"Remember" is a powerful word in the Hebrew thought and life. Remembering God's blessings is a powerful weapon against despair. Remembering is an expression of determination. David is determined to remember how God has helped him in the past. When facing trials, we must prac-

tice the spiritual discipline of remembering how God has been faithful to us "through many dangers, toils and snares." David reminds us that "each day" God pours His love and grace upon us. Each evening the king sings songs about the God who gives new life each morning. In life's trials each morning we can join in the song of Psalm 118:24, "This is the day the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

**We need to trust God's guidance, knowing He is the source of hope. (43:3-5)**

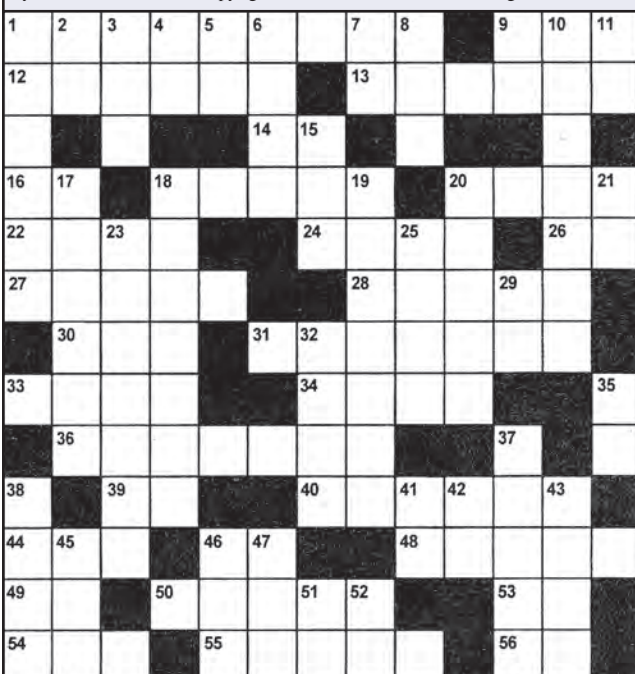
Psalms 42 and 43 are to be read as a unit and in verses 1-2 of 43, David begins speaking to God rather than himself. He goes directly to God with his petition. He calls for God's active intervention. With this move in his Lord's direction, things begin to change. This is where David's outlook becomes truly hopeful.

David envisions a yearned-for visit to the temple, where he will be led to the "holy hill" by God's "light" and "faithfulness." Verse 4 articulates the joy of arriving at the temple, where the king will respond with praises on the harp. What made the difference? In part he stopped talking to himself and began talking to God. Further he expected God was already in the process of lifting him up and out.

These two psalms were used by early Christians as symbols for baptism. The panting deer represents thirsting souls. Immersed in the cool waters of the baptistery new believers "drank" deeply of the fountain of eternal life. These psalms were sung when Augustine was baptized on Easter Sunday in 387 A.D. Hence we recall his famous words of yearning in his "Confessions": "The thought of You (God) stirs [a person] so deeply that he cannot be content unless he praises You, because You made us for Yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in You." ✠

## Christian Crossword

By Debra Michaels Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



### Across

- Birthplace of our Lord. (Matt. 2:1)
- Ye know how that a good while \_\_\_\_\_. (Acts 15:7)
- Maternal grandfather of King Josiah. (2 Kings 22:1)
- Gamaliel, a \_\_\_\_\_ of the law. (Acts 5:34)
- Original home of Abraham's family. (Gen. 11:28)
- Kilogram. (abbr.)
- City destroyed by fire from heaven. (Gen. 19:24)
- Her clothing is \_\_\_\_\_ and purple. (Prov. 31:22)
- Let \_\_\_\_\_ esteem others better than themselves. (Phil. 2:3)
- A plain in Babylon. (Dan. 3:1)
- Cain asked, \_\_\_\_\_ I my brother's keeper? (Gen. 4:9)
- Prepare a table for that \_\_\_\_\_. (Isa. 65:11)
- Was in prison with Paul

at Philippi. (Acts 16:25)

- The lot is cast into the \_\_\_\_\_. (Prov. 16:33)
- The Lord \_\_\_\_\_ is my strength. (Isa. 12:2)
- God, who is \_\_\_\_\_ in mercy. (Eph. 2:4)
- To wound with the teeth.
- Two-wheeled vehicle used for travel and war. (Gen. 41:43)
- Prefix meaning "in."
- Son of David. (2 Sam. 5:13-15)
- Singular of the verb "have."
- Symbol for the chemical element barium.
- Elder brother of Moses and Miriam. (Num. 26:59)
- King of Bashan. (Num. 21:33)
- Twig broom for sweeping. (Isa. 14:23)
- Symbol for the chemical element chlorine.
- Long period of time.
- A sleeveless linen garment worn by priests. (Ex. 28:4)
- Yard. (abbr.)

### Down

- Disciples let Saul down by the wall in a \_\_\_\_\_. (Acts 9:25)
- Nickname for Edward.
- To make lace.
- Greeting.
- Los Angeles. (abbr.)
- Son of Bilhan. (1 Chron. 7:10)
- Children of Gad called the altar \_\_\_\_\_, meaning witness. (Josh. 22:34)
- A bushy head of hair.
- The time is \_\_\_\_\_ hand. (Rev. 1:3)
- Hungarian stew.
- Oregon. (ZIP code abbr.)
- Thy \_\_\_\_\_ and thy staff comfort me. (Ps. 23:4)
- Bulb with a strong smell.
- Atroth, \_\_\_\_\_, and Jaazer. (Num. 32:35)
- Descendant of Mushi. (Num. 3:33)
- Healing ointment.
- Kilometer. (abbr.)
- Trainers in athletics.
- To disturb the peace.
- Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Black.
- Job's country. (Job 1:1)
- Leniency shown to a guilty person.
- Footwear.
- Pennsylvania. (ZIP code abbr.)
- Exclamation of derision.
- How is the \_\_\_\_\_ become dim! (Lam. 4:1)
- Past.
- Insect.
- Hooded venomous serpent. (Rom. 3:13)
- Ohio. (ZIP code abbr.)
- Missouri. (ZIP code 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

## Hulu streaming service makes big move for more family customers

By **Michael Foust**  
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

**A** 2018 poll showed that nearly 60 percent of Americans watch streaming television, and most of them have Netflix.

But Netflix's dominance over streaming television could be changing soon. Disney will launch its own streaming service in 2019 — called "Disney+" — and eventually will pull all its content from Netflix. Walmart is getting into the game in a partnership with Vudu and Apple is expected to roll out its own streaming service as well.

Then there's Hulu, which had only 14 percent of the streaming pie according to that 2018 poll but has made moves in recent months to attract new customers — including families with kids.

Hulu signed a deal with DreamWorks Animation last year that takes effect this month, when several popular movies make their debut on Hulu.

Hulu's family-friendly content tops this month's family-friendly entertainment spotlight.

Leading the way is the 1998 movie "Prince of Egypt," which tells the story of Moses and still ranks on my list of favorite movies of all time. Also streaming are "Antz" (1998), "The

Road to El Dorado" (2000), "Chicken Run" (2000) and the less kid-friendly "Shrek" (2001). All are now streaming.

It's a big coup for Hulu, which has lagged behind Netflix and Amazon Prime in theatrical family content.

More DreamWorks is forthcoming, according to a Hulu press release, which said the service is the "exclusive streaming home to future slates of DreamWorks Animation feature films, as well as iconic DreamWorks library films."

"In addition," the press release said, "Hulu will work with DreamWorks Animation Television to develop original kids and family series for exclusive streaming based on the company's popular franchises and upcoming feature films."

"This marks the first time Hulu has partnered with a major studio in a multi-series commitment to debut original kids and family content."

Families that have Hulu are the winners.

### Worth watching

Also worth watching this month:

► **"God's Not Dead: A Light in Darkness"** — Now on Netflix, this film is the third installment in the "God's Not Dead" series, but has a different tone than



Photo courtesy of Pure Flix

'God's Not Dead: A Light in Darkness'

those earlier films. It seeks to build bridges in the culture war. It has a conciliatory ending. It's the best "God's Not Dead" yet.

► **"The Riot and the Dance"** — If you've ever wished someone would make a nature documentary without an evolutionary framework, then you likely will enjoy this film.

The faith-based "Riot and the Dance" is hosted by Gordon Wilson, who travels the globe to show viewers God's amazing creation. Wilson is senior fellow of natural history at New Saint Andrews College, a Christian school in Idaho. "Riot

and the Dance" is streaming on all major platforms.

► **"Indivisible"** — This faith-based film about a military chaplain earned an "A" Cinemascore rating at the box office. It releases on

DVD, Blu-ray and streaming platforms Jan. 29, telling the true story of a chaplain whose marriage nearly crumbled after he served overseas. It stars Sarah Drew and was directed by the same man (David G. Evans) who



helmed "The Grace Card."

► **Ken Ham on PureFlix.com** — Answers in Genesis (AIG) and PureFlix.com announced an agreement last year that will al-

## 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.*

low subscribers of the faith-based streaming service to watch AIG videos. Many of the teaching videos from AIG founder and president Ken Ham are now on the platform. Among them: "Genesis 1:1: The Foundational Verse of the Foundational Book," "Rescuing Our Kids from the Lie" and "The Great Delusion."

Learn more at [PureFlix.com](http://PureFlix.com).

# ‘Piece of the puzzle’

## Missions partnership connects Kentucky Baptists to Brazil

In their home in São Paulo, Brazil, Scott and Joyce Pittman have plastered a giant map of the city across their wall. It’s a picture of the work still to be done in the metro area of 22 million people. And now that image is plastered across the hearts of the members of High-

land Baptist Church, Shelbyville, Kentucky, too. Ever since they partnered with the International Mission Board city strategy leaders several years ago they haven’t been able to get São Paulo out of their minds.

“When you see that map you can see the vision Scott and Joyce have for the city. They do a great job of explaining what it will take to reach it,” said Chris Platt, pastor of Highland Baptist.

“Then when you go out into the city and meet the people, your love for missions just comes alive. You give more, you pray more and you think more about missions.”

Ever since the Kentucky Baptist Convention kicked off a partnership with the Pittmans in São Paulo, teams from Highland Baptist have traveled regularly to the city to participate in a “variety pack” of ministry. They arrange basketball



IMB photos

Bible studies like this one are cropping up in the darkest corners of Brazil’s big cities. That’s the kind of thing members of Highland Baptist Church, Shelbyville, Kentucky, saw for themselves when they visited Brazil for the first time a few years ago and their hearts grabbed hold of the vision.

### How to pray:

▶ Pray for missionaries like Scott and Joyce Pittman to be effective in strategizing ways to reach big cities with the gospel.

▶ Pray for church partners to rise up and become a piece of the missions puzzle through praying, giving and going.

(Source: IMB, *Missions Mosaic*)

campus, children’s clubs and women’s events, all through a partnership with a specific local church. It’s a relationship forged for the sake of offering encouragement and support to the believers there.

### A face to missions

“We’ve been able to model for them how to go door to door, how to share the gospel and how to show the love of Christ to the community, and they seem to be embracing what we’re doing,” Platt said.

Highland Baptist is “no superstar missions church,” Platt points out, but the trips have made the church

see it is “one piece of the puzzle.”

“God’s leading the way and we are really growing in missions,” he said. “You’ve got missionaries doing what they can and the church doing what we can. I think our partnership has created something tangible. It puts a face on missions.”

Scott Pittman said it makes a big difference. “Hundreds if not thousands of churches need to be planted in order to reach the people of our city,” he declared. Their partnership with Highland Baptist “builds long lasting relationships ... and makes it possible to multiply ourselves,” Pittman said. (*Missions Mosaic*, IMB)



São Paulo, Brazil