



The Alabama Baptist

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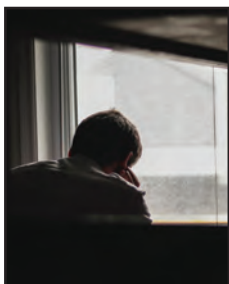
Vol. 184, No. 7
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



A look at mass incarceration in Alabama — tenth in a series

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Many families face the heartbreak of suicide as Church struggles to help

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Women of Joy holds first international conference

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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."

'Love one another'

"So now faith, hope and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

1 Corinthians 13:13

5 ways churches can be more loving to guests and each other

By Carolyn Tomlin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Sometimes it's the small things that say, "We're a loving church!" Or perhaps, "We're not so loving."

A friend tells of moving to a new community, attending a church and visiting a ladies' Sunday School class.

Entering the room she took a vacant chair. Immediately someone said, "You can't sit there!" No problem. She moved to another seat. No explanation — just "you can't sit there." Another woman spoke up and said, "You can't sit there either."

She moved, expecting to be told to move again. But this time a kindly lady spoke up and said, "Dear, you can sit there. She won't be here today." It seems each woman had made a cushion for her metal chair and that was her territory.

Another friend tells of visiting a new church and when she entered the Sunday

School room she was greeted with these words: "You can't come in. We have no more room." Evidently each chair was taken and no one offered to bring in another chair.

Message to others

Then there was the neighbor who attended a church while on vacation. She knew the pastor and wife, and he introduced her from the pulpit by saying, "I know you'll want to welcome our friend. We've known this family for years." After the service no one greeted her. She walked outside where others were engaged in conversation, thinking that someone would at least speak and say, "We're glad you're here. Please come back." Nothing. No exchange or even a kindly glance. "After a few minutes I went to my car and left," she said.

There are more than 3,200 Southern Baptist churches in Alabama and each sends a message to guests and to its community. What message is your church sending to others?

Consider these five ways your church can be more loving:

► **Encourage others.** What if your entire congregation (See 'Friendly,' page 9)



Inaugural Southern Christian Book Expo brings authors, readers together

The fellowship hall at First Baptist Church, Birmingham, was packed full of authors and readers Feb. 2 for the first ever Southern Christian Book Expo.

The expo, sponsored by the Southern Christian Writers Conference (SCWC) and *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB), provided a time for regional authors to showcase their books and for readers to shop the selections ranging from Christian living books to devotionals to children's books and fiction.

"We were so pleased with our first-ever Southern Christian Book Expo," SCWC director Cheryl Wray said. "And we were thrilled with the connections made between authors and readers."

Those at the book expo also got to meet the authors behind the books and even got to hear a few authors read excerpts from their own works.

It also provided the authors an



Glen Coffee Jr. reads an excerpt from the book he co-wrote with his father, 'There's More to Life than the Pursuit of Money.'

Readers from across the Birmingham area visit the Southern Christian Book Expo at FBC Birmingham on Feb. 2 to meet authors and browse books.

Photos by Jessica Ingram

opportunity to fellowship with other writers and share their experiences writing, publishing

and promoting books.

"The authors and the shoppers all really seemed to enjoy themselves," TAB editor Jennifer Davis Rash said. "I'm looking forward to seeing where this partnership between

TAB and the Southern Christian Writers Conference will take us in the future."

Up next

The next event up is the annual Southern Christian Writers Conference, scheduled for June 7-8 at First Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa.

For more information search Southern Christian Writers Conference on Facebook. (TAB)

Senior Spirit Expo 2019 to be held in Birmingham on Feb. 16

The Senior Spirit Expo will be held Feb. 16 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency-Wynfrey Hotel in Birmingham.

The expo will include educational workshops; health and wellness in-

formation; resources on activities, lifestyle and aging; special entertainment and guest speakers, plus an exhibition area.

Jerry Tracey, chief meteorologist with WVTM 13 in Birmingham, will be the keynote speaker.

Rebecca Turner, an author, registered dietitian and television personality, and Peggy Keebler, owner of PK Fitness and coordinator for HEAL Alabama, will be special guest speakers.

Clarissa Kenty, talk show host and philanthropist, will emcee the event. Shades Mountain Air acoustic band will perform. The event is open to the public.

The Alabama Baptist is a sponsor of the Senior Spirit Expo. (TAB)



(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.



"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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Forget flooding their offices with letters; call them up to chat

So how is the February fast from cable news networks going? Have you been able to tell a difference in your spirit since taking a break?

How are you choosing to use the extra time? Have you discovered anything new about yourself or those close to you?

I've been thinking about the upcoming state legislative session, which opens March 5. That gives us about three weeks to reacquaint ourselves with our state representative and senator.

You are right if you are thinking that keeping up with our state Legislature is one more thing to add to an already overwhelmed schedule. But I have a crazy idea. See what you think.

What if each of the nearly 1 million people in Alabama who claim Baptist as their denomination were to call up their representative and senator? That's getting close to a quarter of our state's population — and a whole lot of conversations.

In my mind, the phone calls would allow us to introduce ourselves and let them know we are interested in their work.

We could share specifics or keep it general, but either way the discussion would be encouraging and uplifting, not mean-spirited.

Before calling we would determine if we truly can commit to pray for our elected officials. If we can, then we also would share that with them.

Along with prayers for those who don't know Jesus to find Him and those who do to hold

on to Him, we can pray specifically about their work.

The prayers could be that those elected would maintain solid values, ethics and purpose; resist temptations for wrongdoing; and work for the good of the people, not for themselves personally. That means they need to work for what's best, not merely to get re-elected.

Of course, we have to help them have the confidence to make the tough choices by listening to their reasoning and assuring them we won't demonize them each time we are disappointed in an outcome.

We also have to keep them accountable and ask them to explain themselves on the issues they do and don't support. And we need to help them understand our concerns about the various issues.

All of this can be done with grace and gentleness. In fact, we really need to model how we want them to behave by how we treat them. We also should expect the best from them and not allow anything less.

All elected officials should step up and serve with honest commitment, careful action, defined purpose and a good dose

of kindness. Reaching out to our U.S. representatives and senators in this manner would also be a positive move for our state and nation.

The elected officials or someone from their staff will take your calls and should treat you well. If they don't, then call up your area newspaper editor and let him or her know because that needs to be known.

If you aren't sure how to find your representatives and/or senators, visit "Special Resources" on our website or call us here at *The Alabama Baptist* (800-803-5201) and we will help you. 🙏

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

Suicide rates rising in U.S., noted as 10th leading cause of death by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The close-knit community was recently rocked by suicide twice in one week's time — a student at the local high school and the father of two students in the school.

The deaths weren't related except for the school and community connection, and of course the timing.

One death would have been more than enough to process, but now family, friends and acquaintances are attempting to make sense of two.

In a somewhat hushed tone, one middle schooler shared how the students chatted about the suicides among themselves at school, not really sure what to say or do, and only referring to suicide as "it."

"We never really talk about it

and we don't use the word when we do," he said. "We just say, 'it.'"

I can certainly understand what he means. Discussing suicide isn't easy. And trying to comprehend how someone could end up feeling that alone, in so much pain and without any hope of finding a way out, is difficult.

But the pain is real for so many and I'd venture to say most if not all of us have either experienced the death of a loved one by suicide or have a close friend who has.

Suicide is no longer something that happens in other communities far away from us. It's nearby.

And it can't be undone. The lives of family and close friends are forever changed for those left behind. The what ifs and regrets will haunt the loved ones for the rest of their lives.

A topic that may have never been mentioned before will suddenly be seared in their minds forever.

If you are reading this and have suicidal thoughts, then please reach out to a

family member or friend.

Don't give up. The answer might be within arm's reach. After all, what do you have to lose?

—Jennifer Davis Rash

For help, call Pathways Professional Counseling at 866-991-6864 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255.

Your Voice



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

Falling out of love with God or others

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

Though Alcatraz Island was originally a lighthouse for San Francisco's harbor, the island is better known as the most feared penal colony in American history. Inmates called it "The Rock," and it was a foreboding place even for my wife and me to visit as tourists several years ago.

The Apostle John was sent to the Alcatraz of his day. Patmos was a penal colony for the worst of Rome's offenders. His crime? Being the apostle of love and preaching a gospel of peace. Tradition says John was pastor of the Ephesian church and constantly walked among the

people exhorting them to love one another. He was the St. Valentine of the New Testament.

John wrote words from prison that still impact the world. The book of Revelation gave hope to believers suffering under Emperor Domitian and reminds modern believers that though evil exists, it won't endure.

John began Revelation with seven letters to the churches of Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey. He addressed the first letter to his former church at Ephesus. He commended them for their ministry, tenacity and commitment to the truth, but he also criticized the church for having "left your first love." John didn't explain whether this meant the church had

lost their love for God or for one another. Either is sad.

If he meant the former, how strange it sounds that a congregation would serve God for any reason other than love for Him! Jesus warned in Matthew 6 that religious people could give money, pray and fast to earn the praise of others but in doing so forfeit the praise of God. We must be careful we don't serve God in order to get praise and commendation. As the old hymn says, "winning the smile of God brings its delight."

But could John have challenged the church because they fell out of love with one another? Sadly, this often happens in the body of Christ. Many have allowed a thoughtless word or deed to separate them from brothers and sisters in the faith and affect their relationship with the church.

Bill was once a parishioner. He stopped me one day to say he knew he wasn't the Christian he should be because he hated a man in our church. "God won't bless me until I deal with this, will he?" Bill asked.

This was what teenagers call a "no-brainer." As John wrote in an earlier letter: How can you say you love God, whom you can't see, if you hate your brother whom you know? (1 John 4:20).

EDITOR'S NOTE — From Reflections, a weekly devotional column written by Michael J. Brooks, pastor of Siluria Baptist Church in Alabaster, Ala., www.siluriabaptist.com.

If we are standing on a successful hilltop, we need to remember all the hard work it took to get there. Remember, and do it again and again, remembering what it takes to get to that sweet spot on that hilltop.

Billy Austin
Interim Director of Missions
Tuscaloosa Baptist Association

As you move about your circle of influence, be about loving people where they are and help move them a step closer in their understanding of who Christ is. Live in a culture and attitude of "we" instead of "me."

Steve Thompson
BCMLink.org

It is impossible to truly give thanks and be angry at the same time. Trials are God's training opportunities to see if you and I will quickly give thanks and turn the situation over to Him, so He can go about resolving the problem.

Dr. Bob Cosby
Birmingham, Ala.

It does not matter what we are going through or what decisions we have before us, God has it all under control.

Dan Harrison
Eastern Hills Baptist Church
Montgomery, Ala.

Letters to the Editor

Thank you for tackling the controversial tough cultural, social and political issues of our day. I look forward to your thematic approach featuring one of these issues weekly. So many times an article featured in *TAB* triggered additional research and prayer.

As a Christian nation we are at a pivotal crossroads. Socialistic ideas, immoral practices, evil, corruption, fake news and sensationalism are rampant. Nevertheless I know I can expect *TAB* to address these concerns from a biblical perspective.

Please do not be intimidated but continue to expose these issues and offer biblical solutions.

Keep *TAB* strong and relevant in today's world. God bless you in your endeavor.

Martha Chavers
Bethel Baptist Church
Dothan, Ala.

The new look and larger print is a great change to *TAB*! Thanks to all the folks involved in publishing this newspaper!

Kerry Sparks
Temple Hill Baptist Church
Empire, Ala.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“If God talks to your heart, listen to Him.”

GLEN COFFEE SR.

Co-author, “There’s More to Life than the Pursuit of Money”

As much as you may want someone to come into your life and love you and spend forever with you, there is someone who loves you 100 times more than a spouse ever could and quite literally wants to spend forever with you. God loves us so much that He was willing to send His only Son to the earth to be murdered so that we can live for eternity with Him. Jesus willingly sacrificed His life in a brutal, painful death so that we may have life. That is our epic love story.

Jessica Ingram
The Rope blog
theropetab.wordpress.com

When I was asked to teach a women’s Sunday School class (ages 65 to 101), I felt overwhelmed. I

did not see how I could ever “teach” them anything, but I stand amazed at what I have learned. Miss Madeline Sullivan (the previous teacher, now 101) and these other “prayer warriors” make such an effort to just get ready and come to church each Sunday. I am constantly inspired by their heroic effort, their caring spirit, their enduring love and their relentless prayer for others.

Cinda Young Preuit
Enon Baptist Church
Danville, Ala.

The majority of Christians in the world are not wealthy, are often mistreated for their faith by family and friends, consistently face suffering, and do not have the means, both economic and social, to actu-

ally fight for justice. They long for a just home ruled by a just Father.

Justin Burkholder
www.LifeWayVoices.com

If you want to be successful in this culture (at most anything) ...

1. Show up early
 2. Do what you tell people you’ll do
 3. Don’t play the victim
 4. Wake up early
 5. Be kind
 6. Tell the truth
 7. Don’t buy what you don’t need
 8. Stay late
 9. Work hard
 10. Say you’re sorry
- Try this; it works!

Dan Moran
Dan Moran Ministries
Birmingham, Ala.

From the *Twitterverse*

@WilliamRDavis9

I receive my *Alabama Baptist* from the Galilee Baptist Church in New Hope Alabama thank you Galilee Baptist Church for my subscription to the *Alabama Baptist* a very insightful newspaper in the Christian Life.

@SophiaLeeHyun

Each time before I look at the news or view my Twitter feed, I feel like I need to brace myself for another reminder that the world is a horrible, evil place ... and that God is still good, and He’s still sovereign. Amen.

@TGC

A true understanding of the gospel allows Christians to work for justice in the world in (ways) that does not undermine the centrality of the gospel.

@philwaldrep

Make it a point to invest in others’ lives — especially younger people. Though they may not tell you at the time, you are making a difference!

@DannyAkin

Those who are pro-life speak for those who cannot speak for themselves like the unborn, the poor, the widowed, the abused, the immigrant, the hurting and the needy (Prov 31:8–9). @ThabitiAnyabwil @CollegeSE @SEBTS #SEchapel

@LarryLNichols

The reason that I so regularly call upon my dearly beloved Brothers & Sisters in our precious LORD Christ Jesus to choose between being a PRAYER or a PLAYER when it comes to our personal relationship w/ GOD is because there is

NO SUCH THING as “Hidden / Secret Sin!” GOD KNOWS ALL!

@cortgatliff

Peter Leithart on pastoral identity: “If the pastor is a specialist, he is a specialist in death, in actual physical death and in all the lesser shocks of death that flesh is heir to.”

@Ed_Newton

The Holy Spirit doesn’t just give you UNDERSTANDING on HOW to follow Jesus, but the Holy Spirit gives you the UNCTION to even WANT to follow Jesus.
#thevoicecbc

@judahsmith

What we do on Sunday absolutely doesn’t matter unless it meets us on Monday. Changes us on Monday. Transforms us on Monday.



Photo by Alabama WMU

Candace McIntosh is executive director of Alabama Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU).

Investing in teen girls

On Wednesday nights at 5:25 you can find me at my home church hanging out in our missions discipleship group for teenage girls called Acteens. What do you do in a missions group for girls on a Wednesday night?

▶ Acteens provides a safe place for girls to be authentic. This group provides a buffer for them to decompress before they head to youth worship. We explore struggles, celebrate successes or listen and watch as they form community.

▶ Acteens introduces them to missions through Bible study, stories and projects. Girls are taught compassion for others and the need for every person to know Jesus. We pray for others, especially those who need a relationship with Jesus.

Acteens is one way Alabama WMU is committed to helping churches teach girls to live missionally. Call us at 800-264-1225, ext. 224, and let’s talk about how we can help you grow your teen girls to love Jesus and share that love with others.

Alabama WMU also hosts an annual event in March called Complete, for girls in grades 7–12. Complete speaks to the heart of teen girls. To register visit AlabamaWMU.org/Complete.

—Candace McIntosh

A prison tattoo of a cross reminds inmate Kevin Caraway that he is the hands and feet of Christ. Caraway was one of two inmates transferred from the South Carolina prison system to assist in the startup of a prison seminary and the Jump Start Alabama re-entry program at Bibb County Correctional Facility.

Walking alongside inmates



Photo by Martha Simmons

Church and community involvement critical for inmates' successful re-entry

By Martha Simmons
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Thousands of inmates are released from jails and prisons each year in Alabama.

Within two years of release, most will be back behind bars again,

repeating a cycle that leaves their families destitute and rudderless, while taxpayers continue to pay for incarceration but nothing that approaches real "correction."

What's a law-abiding, church-going citizen to do?

You could go to prison — there's always a need for

volunteers and mentors and teachers and chaplains. Or you could invite an ex-offender to your church supper or his kids to your child's birthday party. Or you could take a chance on giving an ex-felon a job so he or she can earn an honest living and gain the self-respect and trust to stay on track and provide for his or her family.

Why should you?

If one-on-one interactions with people who have been convicted of serious crimes aren't your thing, you can always donate supplies or books or Bibles or money to the organi-

zations that face those issues and people head-on.

But why should you?

Jesus mentions prisoners specifically when commanding people of faith to care for "the least of these"

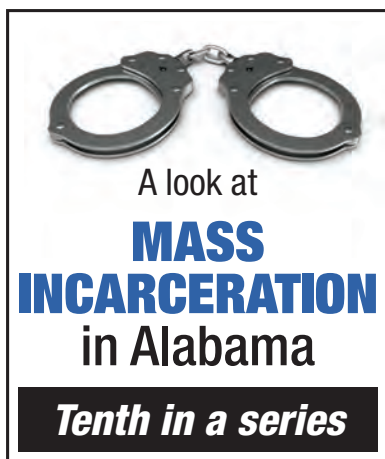
(Matthew 25). In purely pragmatic terms faith community involvement makes sense in the face of America's (and especially Alabama's) inordinately high rate of incarceration. The simple fact is that our society puts so many people in jail that in all likelihood you know somebody

servicing or likely to serve at least a few years in prison.

Ministers are certainly aware of the toll mass incarceration takes on their congregations and communities.

In a 2016 study of 1,000 mainline and evangelical pastors conducted by LifeWay Research almost 60 percent of pastors said they had church attendees with incarcerated family members, and 50 percent said they had church attendees themselves who had been sent to prison in the previous three years.

Nearly all of those surveyed said churches have a responsibility to care for families of prisoners and to



provide resources and support for youth and adults released from prison. However, only 1 in 5 churches is actually doing so.

Pitching in

Moreover 38 percent of pastors admitted they have never even talked about the growing prison population in a sermon. Many of the churches that are talking about and engaged in prison ministries are not doing so in an organized fashion. Mostly efforts are limited to individual members who feel called to become personally involved, the LifeWay poll revealed.

Yet faith-based ministries and re-entry programs can provide critical turning points in the life of an incarcerated person. For instance the Christian-based Jump Start Alabama re-entry program in the Bibb County Correctional Facility is modeled after a highly successful program that has operated for more than a decade in South Carolina.

For now it's being run primarily by a minister from a nearby Brent church and an inmate who voluntarily transferred from South Carolina to help "plant" the Jump Start program in Alabama.

The Jump Start Alabama pilot program is in its infancy, said Mitch Haubert, pastor of Brent Presbyterian Church and executive director of Jump Start Alabama.

"Basically in Alabama it's just me and Kevin right now," he said of in-

mate Kevin Caraway. "He's working on the inside and I'm advocating on the outside."

Local churches such as Brent Baptist Church and Six Mile Baptist Church have been pitching in with bringing meals to share with Jump Start participants.

A transition home in nearby Greensboro has been secured and is being renovated and furnished in anticipation of the participants.

Helping a program like Jump Start can be as one-on-one as becoming a mentor or volunteer in the prison, or as long distance as prayer and financial donations. The program is expected to cost about \$60,000 per year to operate.

Jump Start Alabama makes four promises to participants when they leave prison:

- ▶ A full-time job
- ▶ Transitional housing
- ▶ A community to embrace them
- ▶ Structured accountability.

But Haubert said church and community help is needed to deliver on those promises. An individual willing to befriend and mentor a soon-to-be-released inmate can make the critical difference between successful re-entry and the failure of recidivism.

"We need mentors to talk with these guys and tell them, 'Hey, I'm a father. Here's what Christian fatherhood looks like,'" Haubert said. "We need somebody to walk alongside of them." ✝

Helping a program like Jump Start can be as one-on-one as becoming a mentor or volunteer in the prison, or as long distance as prayer and financial donations.

***"The King will reply,
'Truly I tell you,
whatever you did
for one of the least
of these brothers of
mine, you did for me.'"***

Matthew 25:40

‘Mission from God’

Christian-based program helps inmates get jumpstart on life outside of prison

By Martha Simmons
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

When Joliet Jake is released from prison in “The Blues Brothers” movie his release is portrayed as the classic cliché: He leaves wearing the same suit of clothes and harboring the same bad attitudes he had when he entered the place. In the movie, as in real life, it’s a recipe for recidivism.

Successful release

In Bibb County Correctional Facility, in Brent, there’s a cadre of inmates who are “on a mission from God” long before they ever set foot outside the state prison.

The Christian-based Jump Start Alabama program combines Bible teachings with discipleship and around-the-clock accountability in an effort to grow participants’ spirituality and prepare them for successful release and re-entry into law-abiding society.

Alabama’s recently initiated pilot program is modeled after South Carolina’s Jump Start, which boasts tremendous success in reducing recidivism: a 5 percent reduction for program graduates versus national statistics showing 60 percent of inmates return to prison within the first two years.

Unlike South Carolina’s program Jump Start Alabama taps into another faith-based success story unfolding at Bibb County Correctional, the inmate seminary program operated under the Birmingham Theological Seminary (BTS) Prison Initiative.

Ten inmates graduated from the two-year seminary program last summer, and another 11 inmates are studying in the second seminary cohort that began last fall.

These students lead, minister to and live with nine teams of fellow inmates in the prison’s 106-man Character Based Housing Unit.

Two South Carolina state inmates — Adam Green and Kevin Caraway — volunteered to be transferred to Bibb County Correctional to help launch both programs.

‘Daily surrender’

Mitch Haubert, pastor of Brent Presbyterian Church, serves as BTS Prison Initiative coordinator and executive director of Jump Start Alabama.

One recent January morning in a small office down the hall from the prison chapel, Haubert was working



Photo courtesy of Jump Start Alabama

Inmate Kevin Caraway (left) and Pastor Mitch Haubert collaborate on a new brochure about Jump Start Alabama, a faith-based prison rehabilitation program designed to prevent recidivism.

For more information about Jump Start Alabama contact Mitch Haubert at 205-928-0364 or mhaubert@brentpc.org.

with Caraway to put the final touches on a new website being developed to educate churches and communities about the program.

Jump Start Alabama is organized in three phases, Haubert said. Phase 1 is a 10-month, in-prison discipleship and character development program teaching inmates how to live successfully on the outside.

In the year-long Phase 2 inmates who successfully complete Phase 1 will live in a transitional home in Greensboro. “It will be a structured environment intended to continue the Christian community, character and accountability fostered during the first ‘inside’ phase,” Haubert explained. “The structure will assist men who have been incarcerated to negotiate the greatly multiplied decisions and responsibilities of society.”

In Phase 3 graduates of the program will transition to the local community of their choice.

Jump Start Alabama needs the faith community’s involvement now and as it grows. And, as the inmate who is helping to establish the program in Alabama points out, it’s in the churches’ and towns’ best interest to do so.

“Ninety-five percent of us will get out of prison,” Caraway said. “I’m the guy who’s going to be your neighbor. Local churches, pour into

us now. Build a genuine community with us. Be involved. Show us how to do life on the outside.”

While Caraway says inmates do “have to have that daily surrender to Christ,” he also points out that average church and community members can help inmates readjust to life outside of prison by helping them with surprisingly pragmatic things, such as how to:

- ▶ Get a job
- ▶ Be a good employee
- ▶ Run a household
- ▶ Operate a computer
- ▶ Use a smart phone.

‘God’s way’

Perhaps the biggest thing that inmates need to know in order to stay out of prison, Caraway said, is how to have fun. Mentors help soon-to-be released prisoners realize that fun looks different in a Christian community, Caraway pointed out.

In the South Carolina Jump Start program, now in its 12th year, newly released participants’ “night on the town” was often at a local church, Haubert said.

“During a recent visit to the South Carolina Jump Start program, I saw them on a Friday night at the church, praying there, eating there, watching a movie together,” he said. “They were having fun God’s way.”



Photo courtesy of Jump Start Alabama

Mitch Haubert (center), pastor of Brent Presbyterian Church and Birmingham Theological Seminary Prison Initiative coordinator, partnered with inmates Adam Green (left) and Kevin Caraway to start Jump Start Alabama at Bibb County Correctional Facility.

Forever changed



Unsplash.com

Many families face the heartbreak of suicide as Church struggles to help

By **Grace Thornton**
The Alabama Baptist

Happiness. That's what Steve Marshall said he sensed in his wife, Bridgette, the night the family gathered for her birthday last year — more happiness than he had seen in her in a long time.

For the months and years prior she had struggled with mental illness. She had left Alabama to get away — not from her family but from the people she felt were following her and watching her every move.

“Because of the way she perceived her life, that was her only option,” Marshall, Alabama's attorney general, said in a June 2018 press conference. “Though we begged her not to go, we had no choice but to let her.”

Marshall didn't know where his wife's apartment was in Tennessee, but the two talked daily.

Making a difference

“Every day she reminded me of what I had the opportunity to do in this job and how I had the opportunity to make a difference,” he said.

They always ended their calls with “I love you.” And she had come back to celebrate her birthday with her family.

“We saw progress,” Marshall said, noting that she started making steps to get out of her lease and come back home. “And then for whatever reason something

changed and we don't know what.”

Not too long after her birthday she called him and said she was too tired to go on.

“As a guy who professionally is supposed to be able to convince somebody with words to do something, I couldn't reach her,” Marshall said.

She ended her life and it changed their lives forever, he said.

That's the story of the Marshall family — Steve, Bridgette and their daughter, Faith — a story they wish they hadn't had to share or live.

But Marshall said in the days that followed his wife's death, his church — Life-Point Church, Albertville — was a place where God met him with comfort. And he received texts and emails from people all over saying they understood, that their family

had walked through similar tragedies.

“Following her death I had a discussion about ways we could engage the community about mental health issues and the topic of suicide,” Marshall said.

That discussion led to organizations in Albertville and surrounding areas coming together to put on the Not Alone Conference, a two-day conference aimed at equipping the church and community to reach out to those who are hurting.

“In a positive way Bridgette's death became the genesis for an enlightening and rewarding conference,” Marshall said.

Kay Warren — who along with her husband, Rick Warren, co-founded Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California — has walked a similar road of heartache and carries a burden for the church to engage the topic of mental illness. The Warrens' son, Matthew, committed suicide in 2013.

“In the last five years hundreds of people have asked me how to help their loved one — particularly an adolescent or young

adult child — who is living with severe mental illness and/or substance use disorder,” she wrote on her blog at kaywarren.com. “They have a similar look in their eyes, a similar expression on their faces, a similar weariness that seems to come from their bones.”

‘Astonishing’ response

She's found that people see her as a safe place to ask those questions now. And she wrote that the first time her husband prayed publicly at church for those living with a mental illness, there was an “astonishing” response. He had prayed simply for God to bring them strength and comfort and for the church to support them in their suffering.

“That simple, grace-filled prayer instantly changed the atmosphere at Saddleback,” Warren wrote. “Those few short words, lovingly expressed, made it infinitely safer to talk openly about depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, eating disorders, schizophrenia and suicidal thoughts. Chains of hopelessness were broken and walls of stigma, misunderstanding, confusion and

prejudice began to melt away in the face of recognition, acceptance and love.”

People began to ask the questions at church that they hadn't before — questions like: Can a Christian experience mental illness? Does it mean I don't have enough faith? What happens to Christians who take their life?


“Many (congregations) are beginning to understand that mental illness is real and it is

common — 1 in 5 Americans will experience a mental illness in the coming year,” Warren wrote.

To help churches know how to support members who may be suffering from a mental illness, Marshall, Warren and others will share their stories Feb. 22–23 at the Not Alone Conference, which will be held simultaneously at two locations — Albertville Fine Arts Center and Willowbrook Baptist Church, Huntsville.

Not Alone Conference

According to its website, the conference aims to break down the stigma of mental health within the church and community, to equip the church and community to better identify and minister to those who may feel alone and to connect people to resources within their community.

Breakouts will also address topics like supporting special-needs families, helping people with post-traumatic stress disorder, assisting people suffering from chronic pain and reaching out to people facing unexpected pregnancy or a past abortion. 

For information visit
notaloneconference.com.

Can a Christian experience mental illness? Does it mean I don't have enough faith? What happens to Christians who take their life?



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Biblical Imagery

The Bible as Water

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

For a number of weeks Theology 101 has been thinking about various common images that the Bible uses to refer to itself. This week the image is water.

The words of the Lord to Isaiah made a connection between His word and water by saying, “As the rain comes down and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth” (Isa. 55:10–11).

Renewed and refreshed

How then is God’s word like water? As water assists living things to grow physically so God’s word helps us grow spiritually. We know what a drought can do to plants. Persistent drought leads to deprivation and ultimately to famine.

In the same way a Christian life that attempts to survive without recourse to the Bible will begin to shrivel up, resulting in spiritual famine and fruitlessness.

How then is God’s word like water? As water refreshes the weary traveler so God’s word brings refreshment as we journey through this pilgrim land. An attempt to live a Christian life without the intake of God’s word will become stagnant and wearying. When we regularly meet God in His word, life is renewed.

Jeremiah declared the mind of God for his generation writ-

ing, “My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns — broken cisterns that can hold no water” (2:13). Nothing substitutes for meeting God regularly and often in the Holy Scripture. As water quenches thirst so God’s word ministers to the thirst of heart.

How then is God’s word like water? As water channeled through a turbine can generate power so God’s word is a primary source of spiritual power for a believer’s life and ministry. Jesus took religious leaders to task over “not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matt. 22:29).

A divinely established link exists between spiritual power and the Scriptures. God’s word in our lives generates power for meaningful and abundant lives.

Authoritative declaration

How then is God’s word like water? As water cleanses away dirt and grime God’s word promises cleansing and forgiveness when sin besmirches our lives. As imperfect followers of Christ we need the authoritative declaration of the Bible that those sins and failures can be rinsed away.✠

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.



Friendly churches make ‘powerful impression’ on guests, community

(continued from page 1)
was committed to lifting people up? What if church members strived to build up and encourage everyone they meet?

‘Son of encouragement’

Paul, a converted Pharisee, instructs Christians to become like Barnabas, whose name means, “son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36). We live in a world that is often unfair, difficult and depressing. Imagine what could happen if churches adopted being an encourager as part of their outreach?

► **Appreciate people.** Look for the good in others. All people have something to admire. Do they have a beautiful voice? Do they have a gift for working with children? Does their smiling face greet you at the door? What a boring world it would be if everyone had the same talent.

Find that special ability and tell people in a sincere way that you are grateful for their willingness to share their gifts at church.

► **Love unconditionally.** The highest form of love in the Bible is agape, which is the type of love demonstrated by God. This divine love does not judge others. It is not critical. If we want our churches to exhibit agape love it must start with us. How can we be more generous? Forgiving? Compassionate?

► **Build others up.** Don’t be critical of people or condemn them. Instead, sympathize. Put yourself in their place.

Part of the mission statement at many Southern Baptist churches is to

be a family of faith. The word “family” is used to describe this collection of imperfect, flawed and messy sinners bonded together by the extravagant love and unending grace of Jesus Christ.

These congregations model a loving church through the practice of radical hospitality and compassionate service — with one another, with the community and with the world. In doing this, they are reminded how much God loves and forgives because loved people love and forgiven people forgive.

► **Treat guests like you want to be treated.** When guests attend your church for the first time, will they want to return? A young family moved to a small town and attended one of the larger congregations in the community.

They smiled. They shook hands and introduced themselves. The next Sunday they returned. No one even remembered their names. It was like a “first” time all over again.

‘Only one chance’

Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, and author of “The Purpose Driven Church,” says, “You may have only one chance to make a first impression. Cover your church with people who love the Lord and who show it in their faces. Give a welcome handshake, a smile.”

If a church is filled with love, nothing can stop its growth. Every member of the congregation can contribute to the spirit of the flock. A loving church makes a powerful impression in your community.✠

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

1 Thessalonians 5:11

What does the Bible say about a loving church?

The Bible talks about welcoming, loving and serving one another numerous times. Here are a few Scripture references on love:

- John 13:14–17
- Romans 5:8
- Romans 15:7
- 1 Corinthians 13:13
- 2 Corinthians 5:14
- 2 Corinthians 9:6–7
- Galatians 2:10, 20
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11

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Chitwood installed as new IMB president Feb. 6

Paul Chitwood was formally installed as the 13th president of the International Mission Board (IMB) on Feb. 6 in Richmond, Virginia, at a service that included the appointment of 19 new Southern Baptist international missionaries.

Chitwood said he was honored to speak for all those who have the “privilege of serving in this one sacred task — to help Southern Baptists take the gospel to the ends of the earth.”

Citing 2 Corinthians 7:2, Chitwood thanked Southern Baptists “for making room for us in your hearts” through their prayers, their giving, their going and their sending.

**“Thank you
for making room
for the good work
the Lord has given
to all of us to do.”**

**Paul Chitwood
IMB President**

“Thank you for making room for the good work the Lord has given to all of us to do,” he said. “You made room and together we will strive with all that is within us to carry out that work, to lead in a way that would honor those who have made room for us and the Lord whose

ambassadors we all are in the privilege of doing His work.”

173 years of missions

The IMB’s board of trustees unanimously elected Chitwood president of the 173-year-old organization on Nov. 15, 2018. Chitwood, who previously served as executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, took office immediately.

The IMB is the largest denominational missionary-sending body among American evangelicals with more than 3,600 missionaries serving globally

The combined installation service and Sending Celebration was held at Grove Avenue Baptist Church, Richmond. The service included testimonies by several missionaries, some of whom “are going to some of the most difficult and resistant places on the planet,” Paul Akin, IMB assessment and deployment team leader, said.

Tom Elliff, IMB president from 2011 to 2014, delivered a charge to Chitwood



Facebook photo

IMB President Paul Chitwood, alongside his wife, Michelle, thanks Southern Baptists for their missions support during an IMB sending and installation service in Richmond, Virginia.

and the new missionaries. “How wonderful it is that we have the privilege of joining in this incredible mission of God, sending these people around the world,” he said.

‘Humble ourselves’

Elliff challenged those listening to “humble ourselves before the Lord and before one another” to see the Great Commission fulfilled.

Others who participated in the service included IMB President Emeritus

Jerry Rankin, who served as IMB president from 1993 to 2010; J.D. Greear, president of the Southern Baptist Convention; Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director/treasurer of the Woman’s Missionary Union in Birmingham, Alabama; Chuck Pourciau, chairman of the IMB trustee presidential search committee and senior pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport, Louisiana; and Clyde Meador, IMB’s interim executive vice president. (IMB, TAB)

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Alabama bill proposes Bible literacy classes

Alabama public schools could have more options when it comes to teaching the Bible if a recently filed bill passes.

Sen. Tim Melson, R-District 1, introduced Senate Bill 14, which would allow elective courses focusing on the study of the Bible in grades six to 12.

The bill would also “allow public schools to display artifacts, monuments, symbols and texts related to the study of the Bible if displaying these items is appropriate to the overall educational purpose of the course.”

The Alabama State Board of Education would develop and implement the course.

Legal protection

Melson said he proposed the bill because teachers in his district want to teach the Bible and don’t feel comfortable doing it without a law.

Alabama Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh expressed support for Melson’s bill, saying he looks forward to working toward its passage in the upcoming legislative session.

“If students choose to study biblical literacy as an elective in school then there is no reason why that should not be allowed,” Marsh said.

At least six other states — Florida, Indiana, Missouri, North Dakota, Virginia and West Virginia — have introduced similar bills this year with legislators citing the Bible’s role in American history.

Many officials, including President Donald Trump, have expressed support for such classes.

However, the Alabama chapter of the ACLU said the bill has “no useful purpose and is an invitation to lure school districts into a false sense of security to

take unconstitutional actions.”

Americans United for Separation of Church and State also has voiced opposition to the bills.

Interpretation matters

Rob Boston, senior adviser for Americans United for Separation of Church and State, wrote in a blog post that “so-called ‘Bible literacy’ courses” are often “just a cover to bring a fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible into public schools. Essentially they’re Sunday School lessons masquerading as legitimate instruction,” he wrote.

But Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP), believes the classes are a good idea and said he will encourage legislators to support Melson’s bill.

“In the early 60s, we took Bible reading and prayer out of schools and I think we see the result of that in the increase in violence and other problems within the schools,” Godfrey said. (TAB)

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SENIOR PASTOR

First Baptist Church, Tillman’s Corner in Mobile, AL (fbtc.org). Must have at least a master’s degree from a Southern Baptist Convention seminary, be married, theologically conservative, preferably 35-50 years old and with at least seven years of experience as a senior pastor. Please send resumé with link to sermons to kemyrick@fbtc.org.

PASTOR

Camellia Baptist Church, 201 Woodvale Rd, Prattville, AL 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. Resumés with photo may be mailed to: Attn. Pastor/Search. www.cbcprattville.org.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

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

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Mount Zion Baptist Church in Hartselle, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor. Please send resumés to: Mount Zion Baptist Church Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 679, Falkville, AL 35622.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Gulcrest Baptist Church is seeking a local bivocational pastor (church planter) to help a 109 year old church grow. Please send resumés to: gulcrestbaptistchurch@yahoo.com or Gulcrest Baptist Church Attn: Pastor Position 8415 Gulcrest Road, Chunchula, AL 36521.

MINISTER OF PRAISE AND WORSHIP

Grandview Baptist Church in Anchorage, Alaska, seeks full-time, experienced minister of praise and worship. For more information please visit <http://www.gbcaak.org>.

MINISTER OF WORSHIP

Sisters Baptist Church in Sandersville, Georgia, 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.

Resumés along with a cover letter may be sent to: SBC Search Committee, 1807 E. McCarty Street, Sandersville, GA 31082 or 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 resumés to: secretary@bbcdora.com, or mail resumés 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 resumés to: eedhart@yahoo.com or Hopewell Baptist, P.O. Box 423, Hanceville, AL 35077. ATTN: Ed Hart.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER

Stowers Hill Baptist Church is currently accepting resumés for a bivocational music minister. If interested, please email resumé to stowershillbaptist@gmail.com or mail to 407 9th Avenue SW Attalla, AL 35954.

PART-TIME MUSIC DIRECTOR

Beulah Baptist is seeking a part-time music director. Mail resumé to 5500 Lee Rd 270, Valley, AL 36854 or email to Ltodd3549@charter.net. For more information call 334-705-0538.

PART-TIME INTERIM WORSHIP LEADER

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

MINISTER OF OUTREACH & MISSIONS

First Baptist Church, Vincent, Alabama, seeking part-time minister of outreach and missions. Will work with the pastor giving coordinating leadership to current missions endeavors. Design/organize/facilitate an outreach ministry to Vincent/Harpersville area. Minimum 20 hours per week. Send resumés to admin@fbcvincent.org.

ASSOCIATE PASTOR / YOUTH AND CHILDREN’S MINISTER

Mount Zion Baptist Church in Warrior is searching for a God-called associate pastor/youth and children’s minister. This is a full-time position to lead our youth and children’s ministries and to assist our senior pastor on an as needed basis.

The preferred qualifications are: Formal academic degree and three to five years of experience in ministry to youth, children and their parents. Please send your resumé and references to Mount Zion Baptist Church 2427 Corner Road, Warrior, AL 35180 Attention: Dewayne Ehlers or you may email to mzbcyouth@gmail.com.

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Energized souls

Women of Joy holds first international conference in Dominican Republic

By **Martine Bates Fairbanks**
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

There was a deafening sound of worship and broken hearts crying out to God," said Debbie Waldrep, "and it was beautiful."

The first ever international Women of Joy conference, sponsored by Phil Waldrep Ministries, was held Jan. 19, in the Dominican Republic (DR).

More than 6,000 women gathered in the Juan Pablo Olympic Volleyball Arena in Santo Domingo, the capital city. For most of the women, it was the first time they had experienced anything like the conference. Many of the eager participants had traveled over four hours to attend.

The conference, titled "To the DR with Love," came about as a result of a conversation between Debbie Waldrep and a representative of Compassion International, which has a presence in the DR already.

Hosting an international event outside the United States can be difficult and Compassion International's access to lighting, sound, translators and facility teams in the country made the partnership a good choice, Debbie Waldrep said.

Even with the partnership the ministry faced some challenges with the language barrier and having to rely on others.

Rely on God

"When we do our events in the United States we are more in control of what happens. If something breaks or goes wrong we pretty much know how to fix it. In the Dominican we had to rely on other

people and God. It was out of our hands," Phil Waldrep said.

Women of Joy invited girls sponsored by Compassion International, their mothers and their mentors at no cost to them. The ministry also provided lunch, a Bible and a backpack to each of the participants, and a program lineup comparable to the Women of Joy conferences in the United States.

Bathed in love

"It was very important that we gave them a quality event with the big stage, screens, music and speakers just like we do at our events back home," said Debbie Waldrep. "I think we did just that."

For one day the women had the opportunity to leave the struggles of daily life behind and get bathed in love and encouragement. Women in the Dominican Republic are often subjected to sexual abuse, human trafficking, poverty and even murder.

"To these women, the conference is like a well. This water will energize their souls, their hearts," said Jonathan Altamonte, youth specialist for Compassion International in the Dominican Republic.

Phil Waldrep noted the gratefulness of the women for the conference.

"They don't have a sense of entitlement," he said, "but a very deep sense of gratitude."

Translators frequently relayed the message from the attendees, "Thank you for coming to our country."

Senator Cristina Lizardo, the first woman elected to serve in the Dominican Senate, attended the event and echoed the same sentiment.



Photos courtesy Phil Waldrep Ministries

More than 6,000 women gathered in the Juan Pablo Olympic Volleyball Arena in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, for the Women of Joy conference Jan. 19.

"It is a huge satisfaction for our country to have Women of Joy on our stage," she said.

The speakers included writers and speakers Liz Curtis Higgs, Lisa Harper and Margaret Feinberg; popular Dominican singer Lilly Goodman; and Christine Cain, founder of the anti-human trafficking organization A21.

More than 1,200 women accepted Christ at the conference.

"Knowing that many women committed their lives to Christ made every part of the event worth it. Hearing the women worshipping and seeing how grateful they were was life changing," said Debbie Waldrep.

Fertile field

The first church built in the Americas was located in the Dominican Republic and the country is the only one whose flag includes an emblem of the Bible. Even so the culture is strongly steeped in voodooism; ap-

proximately half of the women attending the conference were hearing the gospel for the first time.

With such a fertile field for evangelism the ministry plans to return to the Dominican Republic in 2021, but this time the team is looking for a larger venue with the hope they can reach even more people.

Compassion International is a global child sponsorship organization working "to release children from poverty in Jesus' name." For the last five years Phil

Waldrep Ministries has partnered with the organization and gained sponsorships for over 1,900 children through its Women of Joy, Gridiron and Celebrators' conferences.

Phil Waldrep Ministries, located in Decatur, also holds speaking engagements, online devotionals and pastors' encouragement retreats.

Phil and Debbie Waldrep are members of Central Baptist Church, Decatur, in Morgan Baptist Association.



Phil Waldrep Ministries provided lunch, a Bible and backpacks to every woman who attended the Women of Joy conference in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

"Knowing that many women committed their lives to Christ made every part of the event worth it."

**Debbie Waldrep
Phil Waldrep Ministries**

3 stories you should know



Photo by WESMINCOM Armed Forces of the Philippines

At least 22 people were killed and more than 100 others wounded when a worship service at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Cathedral in Jolo, Philippines, was bombed Jan. 27. Two bombs went off, one as worshippers met and the other as they were fleeing. Several soldiers were killed in the second blast. Members of the Islamist rebel group Abu Sayyaf, which claims allegiance to the Islamic State, took responsibility for the bombings in online postings. (MS)

GuideStone releases ministers' tax guide

GuideStone Financial Resources has released its 2019 Ministers' Tax Guide for 2018 Returns.

The guide, which is edited to ensure that it addresses the tax issues directly affecting Southern Baptist ministers, includes tax highlights for 2018 — including changes based on the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 — along with step-by-step filing instructions for ministers' personal taxes and comprehensive examples and sample forms.

Additionally GuideStone participant churches and church administrators have access to the annual Federal Reporting Requirements for Churches. This publication is included in the full tax guide or as a separate electronic copy.

The 2018 guide can be downloaded at www.GuideStone.org/TaxGuide. (BP)

Religious expression in La. schools limited

A settlement filed Jan. 23 will strictly limit the religious expression of Bossier Parish, Louisiana, public school employees.

A complaint filed in 2018 cited religious activities endorsed by school officials, including holding school events in churches, allowing student-led prayers at school events and promoting student participation in Christian organizations.

The complaint also cited religious content in choir performances and teachers who expressed religious beliefs in class or at sporting events.

The new policy limits school officials in several ways, including participating or leading prayers at school events. Schools are also required to use their best efforts to secure secular venues for large school events. (BP)

— NEWSBRIEFS —

Greear says racial diversity an important consideration in current searches

 NASHVILLE — Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President J.D. Greear says he is urging search committees to keep racial diversity in mind as they seek new leadership for several top vacancies, including the presidents of two seminaries, LifeWay Christian Resources and the SBC Executive Committee (EC).

In an interview with Religion News Service, Greear noted that he does not have direct control over the selection of the new leaders. But he said he has not “received resistance from any of the search committees that [he’s] talked to.”

In January three prominent pastors inquired in a letter to the EC presidential search committee whether any minority candidates had been interviewed for the position. James Merritt, Bryant Wright and Vance Pitman asked, “If not, we respectfully ask why not?” The search committee declined to respond, Merritt said.

In 2015, Southern Baptists passed a statement urging “Southern Baptist entities and Convention committees to make leadership appointments that reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the body of Christ and of the Southern Baptist Convention.”



RNS photo

Dhati Lewis, the sole African-American vice president at the SBC's North American Mission Board, said he is not optimistic about diversity being accomplished soon in the top ranks, though he believes it should occur.

“They’re going to choose people that they trust,” he said of selection committees. “And when your relationships aren’t diverse it’s hard to find people that you can trust that don’t look like you, talk like you and act like you.” (RNS)

Birmingham meteorologist and children's volunteer receives award



Birmingham meteorologist James Spann has been named the 2019 National Weatherperson of the Year by the

Federal Alliance for Safe Homes. Spann is chief meteorologist for ABC 33/40 and a well-known personality throughout the state.


He also leads children's worship every Sunday at Double Oak Community Church, Mount Laurel, in Shelby Baptist Association, and is a big part of the church's Vacation Bible School every June, said Sandy Stephenson, Double Oak's children's minister.

“James is just a great influence and very passionate about children's ministry,” said Stephenson. “He's active in whatever we ask him to do.” (TAB)



SPANN

National CP giving under budget projection for the 2018–19 fiscal year

 NASHVILLE — Contributions to Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) national and international missions and ministries received by the SBC Executive Committee (EC) in January were 0.18 percent below the projected budget for the first four months of the current fiscal year and 3.03 percent below

News near you

BETHEL

► **Linden Baptist Church** will hold a retirement celebration for **Pastor Billy Harris** on Feb. 24 at 11 a.m. There will be a special service followed by a covered-dish luncheon and time of sharing and fellowship. Harris has served at Linden Baptist three separate times: first as minister of music and youth in the 1970s, then as pastor from 2002 to 2006. Harris then returned to Linden more than four years ago to serve again as pastor. He also served as a state missionary for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Following his retirement Harris will begin doing transitional interim work and will be available for speaking engagements. To contact him call 334-357-0480.



HARRIS

COFFEE

► **County Line Baptist Church, Enterprise**, will hold a revival Feb. 24–26. Sunday services will begin at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday and Tuesday services will begin at 7 p.m. The guest speaker will be Larry Hyche, associ-

ate for men's ministry with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Tim Addy, worship pastor at First Baptist Church, Pooler, Georgia, will lead worship. Danny Wiggins is pastor.

ETOWAH

► **Union No. 3 Baptist Church, Gadsden**, will start classes through the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary extension Feb. 21. The biblical certificate in Old Testament survey class will be from 6 to 8 p.m., and the church ministry certificate in counseling class will be from 8 to 10 p.m. Joey Hanner is pastor.

MARSHALL

► **Sardis Baptist Church, Boaz**, will hold its spring revival Feb. 24–27. Sunday services will begin at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday–Wednesday services will begin at 7 p.m. Sam Moore will be the guest evangelist, and Nathan Burns will lead worship. For more information call 256-593-7762. Mike Goforth is pastor. ► **Union Grove No. 1 Baptist Church, Albertville**, will hold a special churchwide weekend celebration Feb. 16–17. Saturday activities will begin with a banquet at 6 p.m. featuring Bill King as Billy Bob Bohannon. King also will preach Sunday morning at 11 a.m. Whitt Hibbs is pastor.

PICKENS

► **Robert Heard** is the new pastor of **Carrollton Baptist Church**. He previously served as pastor of Brooks Memorial Baptist Church, Atmore, for more than seven years. He holds degrees from University of Mobile and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He also has served at First Baptist Church, Pelham. He and his wife, Kim, have three children.

ST. CLAIR

► **Billy Hunt** is the new interim associational mission strategist for **St. Clair Baptist Association**. He previously served as the director of missions for St. Clair Association from 1983 to 2003. He also served as interim pastor of churches in Etowah, Cherokee and St. Clair counties. He and his wife, Shirley, have three children and several grandchildren. ► **Dan Moran** is the new transitional pastor of **North Valley Church, Odenville**. Moran has served 10 churches as transitional pastor and is trained to partner with churches in transition and help them in their search for their next pastor.



HUNT

WEST CULLMAN

► **Scott Carlin** has joined the staff of **First Baptist Church, Cullman** as executive pastor. He will begin on Feb. 17. Carlin previously served as associate pastor for family life at First Baptist Church, Lubbock, Texas. He also has served at First Baptist Church, New Orleans; and as the Baptist campus ministries director on university campuses in Mississippi and Louisiana. He and his wife, Sheila, also served with the International Mission Board in Istanbul, Turkey, for two years. They have three children. ☪



CARLIN

— NEWSBRIEFS —

the amount received during the same period last year, according to a news release from SBC EC Interim President and Executive Vice President D. August Boto.

Cooperative Program allocation receipts for SBC work for the month of January totaled \$18,233,412.37. Designated gifts received in January amounted to \$22,547,898.38.

The January year-to-date total is \$117,999.59 below the \$64,666,666.67 year-to-date allocation budget projection to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America. (BP)

Born-alive abortion survivor protection bill blocked in U.S. Senate on Feb. 4



WASHINGTON — An effort in the U.S. Senate to require health care for a child born alive during an abortion failed Feb. 4 after a single Democratic member objected.

Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) blocked approval of the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act (S. 130) when the proposal's sponsor, Sen. Ben Sasse (R-Neb.) (pictured), asked the

Senate for unanimous consent in support of the measure. Sasse told the Senate he was giving all 100 members “an opportunity to condemn infan-



BP Photo

ticide.” Defeat of a unanimous consent agreement requires an objection from only one senator.

Sasse has initiated the process to bring his bill to the Senate floor for a roll-call vote. Sasse's bill was announced a week after New York enacted a law that legalizes abortion until birth for the mother's health and one day after Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam (D) expressed support for allowing babies to die if they survive abortion. Sasse and many other pro-life advocates charged the governor with defending infanticide.

The Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act not only says a child who survives an abortion or attempted abortion is a “legal person” deserving protection, but it mandates a health care provider give the same degree of care offered “any other baby born alive at the same

gestational age.” Under the proposal an infant who survives an abortion must be admitted to a hospital after the initial treatment. A violation of the measure could result in a fine and/or a prison sentence of as many as five years. (BP)

Retired Alabama Baptist pastor Samuels dies at 82



Retired Alabama Baptist pastor Franklin Delano “Frank” Samuels died Jan. 31. He was 82.

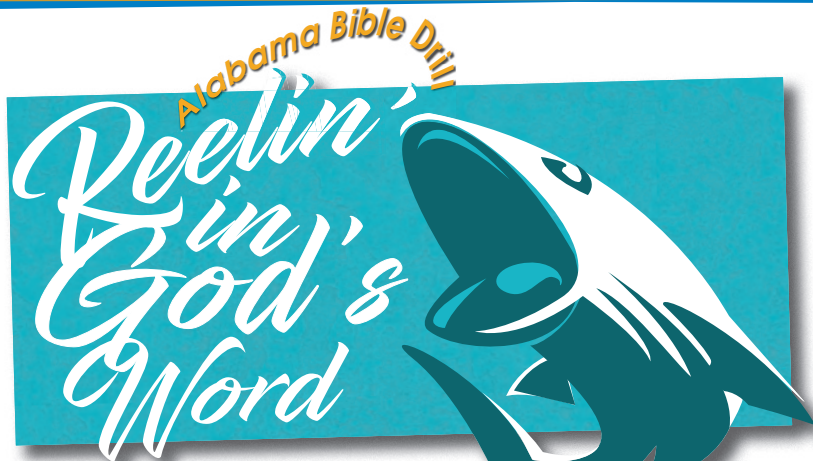
A native of Baxter, Kentucky, he earned a bachelor's degree in business education from Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond. He taught high school business classes until 1964 when he enrolled in Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

After earning his master of divinity Samuels served as pastor of a number of churches in Kentucky, Indiana, Tennessee and Alabama, including two stints at College Heights Baptist, Glencoe, where he was serving when he retired.

He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Frances; daughter, Susie; son, Joel; six grandchildren and one great grandchild. (TAB)



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



Bible Drill helps increase Bible knowledge

With spring just around the corner, Bible Drill is in full force for hundreds of students across Alabama.

A ministry undergirded by Alabama Baptists' gifts through the Cooperative Program, Bible Drill gives students in grades 4-12 the opportunity to increase their knowledge of the Bible through memorization, application and discipleship.

In the coming months, students from more than 80 churches throughout the state will compete in church and associational competitions. The winners will move on to regional competitions in April.

To help students and leaders prepare for Bible Drill competition, the State Board of Missions recently held its annual Bible Drill Retreat. Centered on the theme "Reelin' in God's Word," the retreat

focused on the endurance of scripture taught in 1 Peter 1:25.

Around 160 students gathered at Shocco Springs on Jan. 25-26 to ready themselves for this year's drills. Using a variety of activities, including crafts and games, students learned how to memorize their verses and apply what they're learning in their daily lives.

Rusty Chastain, a Bible Drill coordinator for Huffman Baptist Church in Birmingham, said the retreat has always been his favorite weekend of the year. Having worked with Bible Drill since 1987, Chastain said it is gratifying for him to see students take God's Word seriously.

"Kids get so excited to learn their Bible verses and books of the Bible," Chastain said. "I enjoy seeing how proud they are of themselves and how they are hiding God's Word in their hearts."

Samford University student Ellie Morris, a former Bible Driller, said Bible Drill still impacts her life today. She helps coach at Meadow Brook Baptist Church in Birmingham and attended the retreat to help teach high school students key Biblical passages they need to learn before their associational conferences.

"Bible Drill was a great way for me to memorize God's Word," Morris said. "The verses I learned still impact my daily life and make it easier to live out my faith. In fact, I'm even on a Bible Drill scholarship at Samford right now."

For more information on Bible Drill, please contact State Missionary Belinda Stroud at 1-800-264-1225, ext. 271, or (334) 613-2271, bstroud@alsbom.org.



By Sydney Basden
SBOM Intern

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.

FEBRUARY

- 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
- 9 **State Disaster Relief Admin Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 9 **State Disaster Relief Child Care Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 9 **State Disaster Relief Communications Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 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

APRIL

- 4-6 **State Disaster Relief Chaplaincy Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 5 **State Disaster Relief Cleanup/Recovery Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 5-6 **State Disaster Relief Mass Feeding Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 5-6 **State Disaster Relief Chainsaw Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 5-6 **Mom & Me Spring Fling**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 223
- 8-9 **Church Planter Assessment Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Lamar Duke, ext. 332, or Lynn Graham, ext. 244
- 8-10 **Transitional Pastor Training**, SBOM Office Facility, Prattville, Mike Jackson, ext. 210, or Debbie Dickey, ext. 218
- 8-10 **Fulfill (formerly Senior Adult Retreat)**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Eileen Mitchell, ext. 221
- 11 **North Regional Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, East Highland, Hartselle, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 11 **South East Regional Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, Ridgecrest, Dothan, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 11 **South West Regional Bible Drill and Speakers' Tournament**, Tillman's Corner First, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 12-14 **Deaf Men Zone**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Kristy Kennedy, ext. 311
- 13 **State Disaster Relief Shower & Laundry Unit Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 14 **Palm Sunday**
- 14 **Cooperative Program Sunday**, Lori Lockett, ext. 304
- 14 **North Central Regional Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, Meadow Brook, Birmingham, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 14 **South Central Regional Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, Prattville First, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255

SENIOR SPIRIT EXPO
Sponsored by **BH**

Jerry Tracey
Keynote Speaker
Chief Meteorologist
WVTM NBC 13

Clarissa Kenty
Event Emcee
Media Personality and
Host of Online Show
Ladies Room

Peggy Keebler
Special Guest Speaker
NASM Certified
Personal Trainer
Owner, PK Fitness, LLC

Rebecca Turner, RDN, CSSD
Special Guest Speaker
Author of *Mind Over Fork*
Radio Host & TV Personality

Featuring **Shades Mountain Air** acoustic band.

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Enjoy **educational workshops, guest speakers and special entertainment.** Browse through the exhibition area of more than **60+ organizations** with resources on senior activities, lifestyle, wellness and more.

The first 500 receive an insulated shopping tote!

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The Wynfrey Hotel
9am to 4pm
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Shelby Association garden keeps growing

Back in 2018 something fairly miraculous happened in Shelby Baptist Association — out of the blue, a lady from Texas offered the association a two-acre plot of land to build a community garden.

“It was an answer to years of prayer for us,” said Keith Brown, church and community ministries director for Shelby Association, noting that they had wanted a garden to grow fresh food for the community.

“For those who are food insecure, this will help them have a well-balanced diet. We serve a lot of people across the county through our food pantry and mobile

food pantry. This will help us do that in an even better way.”

So they got to work, planned out the space and built grow beds that will

hold vegetable plants this spring. They’ve also taken soil samples and gotten ready to plant fruit trees.

But the story doesn’t end there, Brown said — when Crossroads Baptist Church, Montevallo, heard about what they were do-

ing, they offered their three-acre plot to plant a garden for that area too.

“We’ve also had a third church talk to us about it, so we’re looking at working on that this summer too,” Brown said. (Grace Thornton)



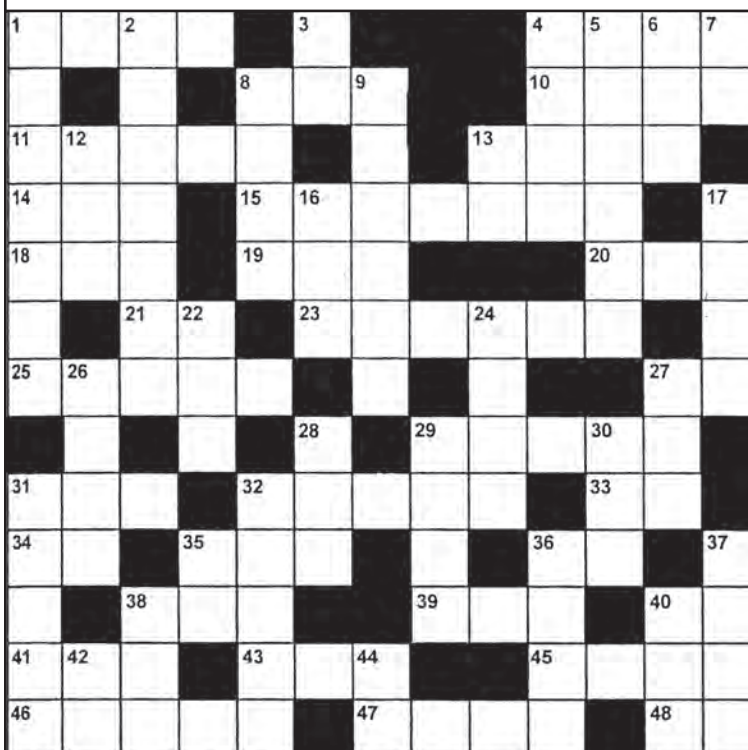
Photo courtesy of Unite Students serving with Unite, a missions camp in Shelby County, help prepare the garden’s grow beds for planting.

Listen to the TAB News podcast anywhere you get your podcasts or visit thealabamabaptist.org/explore/podcasts/.

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!

Christian Crossword

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Across

- To carry something.
- Call thy land ___ah. (Isa. 62:4)
- Shish ___ob.
- Seen his star in the ___. (Matt. 2:2)
- Him only shalt thou ___. (Matt. 4:10)
- To go on a ____.
- Also.
- Thy word ... I will ___ it. (Ps. 119:105-106)
- Anna. (var.)
- Just a little bit.
- Samuel ran unto _____. (1 Sam. 3:5)
- Printer’s measure.
- That my joy might ___ in you. (John 15:11)
- Gives medicine to.
- In the country of _____. (1 Kings 4:19)
- Praises.
- A little while, and ye shall not ___ me. (John 16:16)
- To tie a rope off.
- As he ___ pure. (1 John 3:3)
- Not B.C.
- They ___ the ship aground. (Acts 27:41)
- To exist.

- Give ___, all ye inhabitants. (Joel 1:2)
- Parent Teacher Association. (abbr.)
- A two-year college degree.
- Medical specialty. (abbr.)
- To rest.
- Better ... he were ___ into the sea. (Mark 9:42)
- Or the ___, be not darkened. (Eccles. 12:2)
- I have fed you with _____. (1 Cor. 3:2)
- Professional engineer. (abbr.)

Down

- To sit or ___ _____. (Two words)
- For there are set ___ of judgment. (Ps. 122:5)
- Mommy. (var.)
- Thou shalt not ___ false witness. (Ex. 20:16)
- What cannibals do.
- Teach Judah the ___ of the bow. (2 Sam. 1:18)
- Light. (abbr.)
- When I ___ silence. (Ps. 32:3)
- Or touch the ___. (Ex. 19:12)
- Length of time.
- To perform something.
- Cut off his right ___. (Luke 22:50)
- Lord of lords, and ___ of kings. (Rev. 17:14)
- Cast the ___ on the right side of the ship. (John 21:6)
- When fowls came Abram drove them _____. (Gen. 15:11)
- Ephlal begat _____. (1 Chron. 2:37)
- Office of Strategic Services. (abbr.)
- ___ men that were lepers. (Luke 17:12)
- Thy word is a ___ unto my feet. (Ps. 119:105)
- That we may ___ with him. (John 11:16)
- Jesus ____.
- So shall thy ___ be filled. (Prov. 3:10)
- Egyptian sun god.
- Rolled ___ the stone. (Matt. 28:2)
- Jesus also suffered without the ___. (Heb. 13:12)
- Estimated time of arrival. (abbr.)
- Snake.
- New Testament. (abbr.)
- Not A.M.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 17

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

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS Genesis 41:15–21, 33–40

A Problem (15–21)

Egyptian Pharaohs were thought to live on the edge of the divine realms. Their dreams were considered to be significant. One night Pharaoh had two disturbing dreams. He had no clue what they meant nor could any of the Egyptian magicians explain the dreams to Pharaoh.

The cupbearer remembered Joseph. He told Pharaoh how Joseph had interpreted both his and the baker's dreams. Pharaoh summoned Joseph from the prison and shared his dreams with him.

Pharaoh told Joseph no one had been able to interpret his dreams. Joseph humbly explained he could not interpret the dreams either but God could. The Lord revealed to Joseph the meaning of the dreams.

In the dreams God was revealing to Pharaoh what He was about to do in the next 14 years. Egypt would first experience seven years of abundance in grain harvests and then seven years of devastating famine.

Joseph remained faithful to God and God never abandoned Joseph. God had him in the right place at the right time to do the right thing. Whatever problem you're facing, remember God is sovereign and at work in your life.

A Plan (33–36)

God also revealed to Joseph a plan. First, Pharaoh should select a discerning and wise man who could prepare Egypt for the famine that would come. Second, Pharaoh should appoint overseers over the land who would make sure the details of the plan were carried out. Third, the overseers should collect one-fifth of the produce during the seven years of abundance and store

it up in select cities across the land.

The 20 percent times seven years saving plan was brilliant. The decentralization of the stored grain would allow for easier distribution. Joseph's plan called for dynamic action. This dynamic call to action was based on Joseph's knowledge of what God was about to do. The knowledge of what God is going to do does not lead to passive resignation but aggressive action. The knowledge of God's plan is not the end of human planning and action but the basis for it.

*The knowledge
of God's plan
is not the end
of human planning
and action but the
basis for it.*

God is truly sovereign but we are truly responsible to act in a way that glorifies God.

Joseph stood before Pharaoh for such a time as this. God

places His people where He wants them to represent His interests. Be aware of God's presence in your life, God's purpose for your life and God's power at work through your life. What does God desire to do through you where He has strategically placed you? Look for these open doors of opportunity and stand up for the Lord.

A Place (37–40)

Joseph's proposal pleased Pharaoh and his servants. His action plan called for sound leadership and the gift of administration. But he never dreamed he was commending himself.

What happened next must have shocked everyone, including Joseph. Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of implementing the plan. Pharaoh understood that only Joseph's God could have devised such a plan to save the nation. He believed that Joseph, in whom was the Spirit of God, was the wisest man in Egypt.

God had prepared Joseph for his new position. God used each trial Joseph had endured to equip him to serve. Believer, God is with you and He is preparing you to exalt Christ through your life. 🌟

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

WHEN MATERIALISM CONSUMES (1 John 2:12–17; 3:16–18)

Christ-followers are those who know and love God. (2:12–14)

In chapter 2, John has already addressed his readers as little children (v. 1), as beloved (v. 7) and as brothers and sisters (vv. 10–11). Now he addresses three groups: children, parents and young people. These three groups are addressed "because" they have behaved in a commendable way. Many suggest that since all of the qualities that John mentions ought to be found in all believers, it is best to regard the division as a stylistic one. As C.H. Dodd notes, "All Christians are by God's grace children in innocence and dependence on the heavenly Father, young men in strength, and fathers in experience."

John points out that his readers have forgiveness of sins, knowledge of God, the word of God abiding in them and victory over the evil one. They are a people whose sins have been forgiven; they have fulfilled the call to genuine confession of sins (see 1:9), and now they know the joy of forgiveness. This forgiveness is granted "on account of His name," a

phrase that directs us back to what John has said about the blood of Jesus and His role as advocate and offering for sin (1:7; 2:1).

Loving the things of the world is the opposite of loving God. (2:15–17)

Here John uses one of his signature techniques of emphasizing a word ("world") by repeating it.

John admonishes the readers: "Do not love the world." Some might see a contradiction with "God so loved the world" in John 3:16. But that passage refers to

God's saving love for people, whereas here John is concerned with people who set their hearts on worldliness.

John does not equivocate here: love of God and love of the world are mutually exclusive. In no way can the created world replace the Creator as the source of identity, meaning and purpose. Everything created is transitory, as is the appetite for it. Three appetites specified in verse 16 are "the lust of the flesh," "the lust of the eyes" and "the pride of life." It is worth comparing these three appetites with those which led Eve to disobey God (see Gen. 3:6).

Loving God is reflected in our attitude toward our possessions. (3:16–18)

We can "know love" in the specifically Christian sense only because of what Jesus did for us at the cross where "He laid down His life for us." Since believers owe their lives to Christ who died for us, they in turn are called "to lay down" their lives for their "brothers and sisters." In many parts of the world martyrdom is a rare event. However, there are more available, repeatable and practical expressions of love that must be carried out — including to share one's goods with those in need.

When it comes to generosity talk is cheap. By the actual sharing of our resources with others we exude the love of God that lies within us and our lives are enriched.

If we want to experience and savor the love of God in our hearts, we must love others, even to the point of sacrifice. Being indifferent to the needs of others means robbing ourselves of having even more of God's love in our hearts. In a sense, then, loving others as Christ loves us is a matter of love or death. Let us choose love! 🌟

*Being indifferent
to the needs of a
brother or sister
means robbing
ourselves of having
even more of God's
love in our hearts.*

The crossword has moved! It is on page 17 this week and can now be found on the page before the Sunday School lessons each week. Happy puzzling!

TOP 8

best-selling Christian books

NONFICTION

1. **Everybody, Always**
By Bob Goff (Thomas Nelson)
2. **The 5 Love Languages**
By Gary Chapman (Moody)
3. **Girl, Wash Your Face**
By Rachel Hollis (Thomas Nelson)
4. **Jesus Calling — Hardcover**
By Sarah Young (Thomas Nelson)
5. **There is More**
By Brian Houston (Waterbrook)
6. **Embraced**
By Lysa Terkeurst (Thomas Nelson)
7. **The Rock, The Road, and The Rabbi**
By Kathie Lee Gifford (Thomas Nelson)
8. **Total Money Makeover — Classic Edition**
By Dave Ramsey (Thomas Nelson)

Source: Christian Book Expo at press time

Want your book considered for a review?

Mail a copy to:
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Media reviews

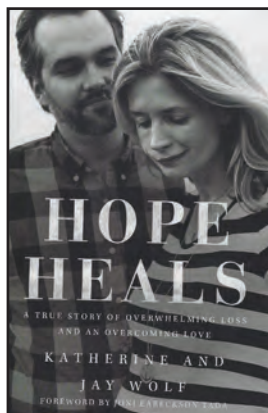
Hope Heals: A True Story of Overwhelming Loss and an Overcoming Life

Katherine and Jay Wolf. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016. 250 pp. (Hardback)

I don't think this world will work for me ... it won't work." These are the words of Katherine Wolf as she described her thoughts following a brain stem stroke at just 26. A part of her brain had been removed, the muscles in her face didn't work and she was unable to care for herself or her 6-month-old baby. The future looked difficult at best.

Katherine and Jay have a strong Alabama connection. They both graduated from Samford University in Birmingham, and Jay's dad — also Jay Wolf — is senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Montgomery. Many of you have heard the story of Katherine's stroke and her valiant fight to survive, but this book — this book — what a story of faith, love and determination.

Faced with the worst possible odds and years of recovery, Katherine and Jay discovered the amazing truth that hope does indeed heal. Their story is an example of God's grace. You will be blessed by reading it. But make sure you have tissues handy. You'll need them.



The White Shirt: Find Your Peaceful & Life-Giving Career at Any Stage of Life

Michael Alan Tate. New York, NY: Morgan James Publishing, 2019. 142 pp. (Paperback)

Until I picked up this book, I had never heard the term "career parable," but I quickly understood what that meant once I began reading. The book is built around Cyrus, a young man who, 2,500 years ago, faced the same dilemma young (and not-so-young) people face today: what career to pursue.

Author Michael Tate says most people of all ages don't know what career they want, but they are pretty sure they don't have it. Something like 80 percent of people are not happy with their current jobs and would like to change.

Tate, a long-time career counselor, has done a masterful job of weaving timeless truths into a story set in the distant past. In the first part of the book Cyrus musters the courage to reject the career chosen for him, then goes on a journey of discovery as he seeks the right path for his life.

The second part of the book focuses on the reader, presenting a step-by-step guide for mapping out a career strategy in as little as one week.



This would probably be a great book for any of the 80 percent of the population who are not thrilled with their present occupations, but if I had a child or grandchild about to embark on the quest of finding a career, I would see to it that they got a copy of this book.

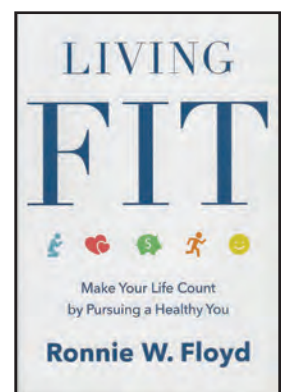
Living Fit: Make Your Life Count by Pursuing a Healthy You

Ronnie W. Floyd. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2018. 193 pp. (Paperback)

Before you skip over this review thinking you are not interested in another exercise book, stop for a minute. You might be interested in this book after all — it relates fitness to several aspects of life and physical fitness is only one of them. The other areas of living fit are spiritually, relationally, financially and emotionally.

In "Living Fit," pastor and author Ronnie Floyd issues a challenge to the reader: "While the length of your life is out of your hands, the quality is not. God has given you the responsibility, in large part, to make your life count by pursuing a healthier you."

I love the way this book is organized and written. It's a near-perfect blend of wisdom, quotable lines, illustrations, Scripture and challenge. It's a keeper — or a pass-along to a friend. 🙌



Meet the reviewer

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



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‘Fortunate and blessed’

Kentucky couple meets needs as they share ‘God’s love from a diaper bag’

By **Trennis Henderson**
WMU National Correspondent

Bessie and Lester McPeek are known throughout eastern Kentucky as the Diaper Lady and the Diaper Man. And they wouldn’t want it any other way.

The McPeeks, who have been

married for 24 years, started a unique diaper distribution and parent education ministry in Jenkins, Kentucky, in 2001. Since then they have given away more than 2 million diapers to single moms, unemployed families and others who are struggling to make ends meet in the economically troubled region.

The McPeeks’ ministry, aptly named God’s Love from a Diaper Bag, provides diapers, food, baby showers, parenting classes, Bible studies and other resources to help ease families’ day-to-day challenges. Perhaps more significantly, it also offers hope, acceptance and a sense of worth for program recipients.

Their ministry efforts “are hard sometimes,” Bessie McPeek acknowledged, “but I feel fortunate and blessed to be able to help these mothers.”

“We’ve been doing it for 18 years



WMU photos by Pam Henderson

Bessie and Lester McPeek, founders and directors of God’s Love from a Diaper Bag in Jenkins, Kentucky, hold the infant simulators they use to teach pregnant women and mothers about prenatal and infant care.

and it gets better each day,” she added. “We’ve had some ups and downs but God has always brought us through. Just at the time when we’ve needed something, He’s always supplied it.”

New resources

Among the McPeeks’ newest ministry resources are a pair of high-tech infant simulators. One dramatically depicts the effects of babies who suffer from shaken baby syndrome and the other one shows the multiple physical complications for infants whose mothers used drugs while pregnant. Bessie

McPeek uses the donated dolls to help teach pregnant women and mothers how to take care of their babies and guard their safety and health.

Churches, missions groups or individuals interested in volunteering with the McPeeks’ ministry may contact Lester and Bessie McPeek at 606-213-6302 or diaperministry@gmail.com.

The McPeeks emphasized they make sure ministry recipients “know that everything we give them comes from God.” Bessie McPeek added, “We want God to shine in everything we do.”

How to pray:

► Pray for the parents the McPeeks reach through the ministry and that they will experience God’s love and the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

► Pray the ministry will continue to thrive and God will send volunteers and supporters for the ministry.

(TAB)



Bessie McPeek, co-director of God’s Love from a Diaper Bag ministry, speaks at the 2018 Baptist Nursing Fellowship (BNF) annual meeting at Shocco Springs Baptist Conference Center in Talladega. BNF is making plans to sponsor a missions trip for nurses and other volunteers to serve the eastern Kentucky ministry in May 2019.