



The Alabama Baptist

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Vol. 184, No. 8
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



Revitalization requires more than strategies and programs

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FBC Wetumpka returns tornado-related donation from casinos

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 **AR**

NAMB photo by Daniel McCullough

Rob Warren, an Annie Armstrong Easter Offering 2019 Week of Prayer missionary, prays with students and volunteers ahead of a preview for Doxa Church's college ministry, The Salt Company, on the University of Wisconsin campus in Madison, one of the most secular cities in the United States.

'Next generation'

AAEO helps church planters in college communities

As seniors across Alabama look forward to high school graduation, many are deciding which college campus will be their home for the next few years.

For those who don't know Christ, their college years may be their opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel.

More than 200,000 students

in Alabama do not have a relationship with Jesus, making college campuses the largest missions field in Alabama, according to Chris Mills, student missions mobilizer for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Reach Every Student

That's one reason the Alabama Baptist State Convention and One Mission Students launched Reach Every Student at the annual meeting in November.

"We must not grow stagnant in our call to reach the next generation," Mills wrote at OneMissionStudents.org.

Baptist Campus Ministries in Alabama reported 61 professions of faith during fall semester 2018, which means good things are happening on college campuses and in college communities throughout the state.

But it's not just Alabama where missions and church planting efforts are seeing fruit. Efforts to reach college campuses with the gospel are expanding throughout North America.

The Salt Network is one such effort highlighted in the 2019 Week of Prayer for North American Missions. The Salt
(See 'Fast,' page 21)

Report sheds light on SBC sexual abuse

Seventeen men with Alabama connections are listed in a database of sex offenders published along with a series of articles by two Texas newspapers detailing sexual abuse in churches cooperating with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

And SBC President J.D. Greear planned to roll out his recommendations on how the convention should respond to the nationwide concern during the Feb. 18 Executive Committee meeting in Nashville.

A three-part investigative series by the *Houston Chronicle* and the *San Antonio Express-News* revealed approximately 380 instances of sexual abuse by pastors, ministers, youth pastors, Sunday School teachers, deacons and church volunteers at SBC churches nationwide since 1998 — including more than 250 since 2008.

The instances of abuse reported include "those who were convicted, credibly accused and successfully sued, and those who confessed or resigned."

Alabama ties

Of the 17 Alabama men listed in the database, eight are currently incarcerated in Alabama prisons for their crimes.
(See 'Sent,' page 13)

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."

Servant/Leader Appreciation Night events provide laughs, encouragement across state

Four churches and four nights filled with laughter as Servant/Leader Appreciation Night made its way across Alabama.

Comedians Mickey Bell and Aaron Wilburn provided entertainment and gospel trio New Ground performed. Michael English even dropped by for a special one-night performance at Calvary Baptist Church, Scottsboro, on Feb. 1.

Other churches that hosted the event were Dalraida Baptist Church, Montgomery; Gardendale First Baptist Church; and Lindsay Lane Baptist Church, Athens.

“I am thankful for the support and help of the churches to make this wonderful event happen,” Cynthia Watts, executive assistant for *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) and coordinator of the servant/leader events, said. “It was a blessing to me and I hope it was a blessing for everyone who got to come and enjoy the show. I hope we get to do more events like this in the future.”

Bell shared about life in the church through Christian comedy



Photo by Hannah Muñoz

The New Ground trio (left) is joined by Aaron Wilburn and Mickey Bell (right) to close out Servant/Leader Appreciation Night at Lindsay Lane Baptist Church, Athens.



Photo by Travis Frontz

New Ground

before sharing his personal story of redemption.

Aaron Wilburn, also a singer/songwriter, wowed the audience with comedy in song as he sang about Walmart after midnight, life as a grandparent and much more. He also shared his testimony through song. And New Ground led the crowd in hand-clapping, toe-tapping gospel tunes. The performers closed out two of the nights by coming together to sing Wilburn’s “What a Beautiful Day.”

“I think everyone who was at the events really had a great time,” Debbie Campbell, director of communications for TAB, said. “It’s always great to laugh and it’s refreshing to see good, fun entertainment that’s also clean and Christian.”

The events were co-sponsored by the hosting churches and *The Alabama Baptist*. (TAB)



Photo by Tracy Riggs

Mickey Bell



Photo by Tracy Riggs

Aaron Wilburn



(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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What does the power of the gospel look like in the muck?

There really are no words to add to the recent investigative report on sexual abuse issues in Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) churches released by the *Houston Chronicle*.

You'll find comments and concerns from leaders across the SBC on pages 1, 4 and 5 as well as a full report in the article starting on page 1.

It is truly heartbreaking on so many levels and obviously difficult to eradicate because of the number of churches from various polity structures having dealt with sexual abuse issues for years and years, possibly always.

And of course this is not a situation isolated to churches. It happens in schools and anywhere you find children.

I wish I had the answer as I'm guessing most of our denominational leaders do as well.

I have been impressed to watch the leaders encourage transparency and a willingness to deal with the situation head on rather than attempt to "manage the message."

As a journalist by trade, it also has been encouraging to experience an appreciation and respect for the investigative reporting taking place.

D. August Boto, interim president of the SBC Executive Committee, said in an interview with the *Chronicle* that the newspaper is "not the opponent of the Southern Baptist Convention."

"You're helping us," he said.

"I'm all for shining the light of day upon crime."

Randy Adams, executive director of the Northwest Baptist Convention and past president of the SBC state convention executive directors, affirmed the role of newspapers.

Organizations, entities and churches are only going to share what puts their group in a positive light — which is OK, he said, noting that is what he does in his role.

However, there are times when accountability is needed and that should be done by

trained professionals such as news reporters, he said.

Of course as believers we know that Numbers 32:23 tells us that "your sin will find you out." How we convince ourselves that we can truly get away with any sin in the end baffles me but we all do it.

When it comes to the sexual abuse situation we are now publicly addressing in the Church, we can see how the thought pattern decades ago of keeping it quiet was not the answer.

For whatever reasons the leaders at that time thought they

were making the right decision.

It is likely most of us who grew up in the church knew of or heard of one of those hush-hush situations. But I've also watched pastors bravely deal with the issue with transparency and quick action.

It really isn't a new issue. Sadly, it has been happening and very likely is taking place in one of your churches right now.

The question now is how are we as believers going to demonstrate the power of the gospel in the awfulness of this terrible brokenness? 🙏

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

Touching experience to walk through historical area, see work done by one of Baptists' missions matriarchs

It isn't often that I've had the opportunity to walk through an area and vividly experience a moment of history that I previously read about in a book.

I did get that opportunity in early February, however.

On my way to the Feb. 10-14 editor's meeting for state Baptist publications (my first time to attend this annual gathering as *TAB*'s editor), I added a side trip to the plans.

Our meeting was held in Charleston, South Carolina, so I traveled two days ahead of time to stay with friends on Edisto Island.

As we drove from the airport to the island, our friend who lives there pointed out historical notes and various places along the way.

The more she shared, the more



I felt like I had been there before — but I knew I had not. Still I couldn't shake the feeling and even started finishing my friend's sentences with details that only someone familiar with Edisto would know.

And then it hit me. I had been to Edisto Island before — through the pages of Rosalie Hall Hunt's book "Her Way: The Remarkable

Story of Hephzibah Jenkins Townsend."

Written in the form of a historical novel, "Her Way" shares the story of the woman credited for launching missions societies that helped fund various missions efforts. The development of Woman's Missionary Union of the SBC is one group that can be traced back to her efforts.

Being inside New First Missionary Baptist Church, which Hephzibah helped build as the first Baptist church established for African Americans there, made the pages of the book come alive.

The pew in the pulpit area is one of the original ones. And Hephzibah is buried in the church cemetery.

— Jennifer Davis Rash

Your Voice



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

Safety, restoration of trust must be priorities

By **J.D. Greear**
and **Brad Hambrick**
The Summit Church, Durham, N.C.

It is easy for church leaders to become self-centered and self-protective when news of churches' failures come to light. But it would be another tragedy and a reinforcement of the problem if we allow that to happen.

People in our churches and community need to know that we are concerned about their safety, not about our reputation. Until that confidence is restored, no one who has been abused will feel safe in our churches. The way we respond in this moment — either in protecting and caring for victims, or defending

ourselves and our institutions — will either obscure or adorn the gospel we claim to preach.

Pastors, let us also remember to be patient with those who are understandably slow to trust. Even if we are not individually guilty of the things being discussed, people in our roles who said the kind of things we say are guilty of these very things. For those who have been abused or are close to a survivor, trust will come slowly.

As leaders, we need to remember that trust should not be an assumed entitlement for those who hold positions of authority. When situations are suspicious, then mistrust is not a sin. It is, in fact, wisdom rather than

vice. For those who have suffered injustice and great harm from ministry leaders, their mistrust is something to be honored, not rushed.

Imagine it this way, if your child was abused by a teacher, wouldn't you want your child's next teacher to be patient with your child's fear? Sure, the teacher could easily personalize that fear as mistrust and respond defensively. But the only appropriate response — the one you would want for your child — is one of patience.

And one final word, this time to everyone: While it is not enough to "just pray," we absolutely should be praying for those who have been abused. Praying for the 700 people in the *Houston Chronicle* article. Praying for the many, many other victims who have not yet come forward. Praying for the abused in our very churches.

In addition to grieving and praying, we need to make sure, to the best of our ability, that those who are hurting in silence are cared for.

EDITOR'S NOTE — An excerpt from "700 is not the total number: How to get help," a blog post by J.D. Greear and Brad Hambrick. Greear serves as president of the Southern Baptist Convention and is pastor of The Summit Church. Hambrick is pastor of counseling at The Summit and an instructor of biblical counseling at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

A lot of people don't come to church because they don't know anyone there. They don't feel loved. My job as pastor is to teach people to love people. We stress the importance of loving, so love them, and invite them.

Jared Johnson, pastor
The Woodbridge Church
Ranger, Texas

We can only build a world face-to-face, working as real neighbors to solve our problems.

Joshua Mitchell
Professor of political theory
Georgetown University

The gospel eradicates racist ideas and prevents all forms of avarice and victimization from poisoning our hearts.

Curtis A. Woods
Assistant professor
of applied theology
Southern Seminary

Jesus does not need the church to protect His reputation.

Russell Moore
Ethics & Religious
Liberty Commission

Letters to the Editor

Thank you, Martha Simmons, for writing the articles on Extended Family for the Jan. 31, 2019, issue of *The Alabama Baptist* to cover the important topic of families of prisoners, their children and returning citizens.

We appreciate your help in passing on the Extended Family purpose — teaching families of prisoners how to successfully adjust to a new way of life.

Laure E. Clemons
Executive Director
Extended Family
ExtendedFamilyHelp.org

EDITOR'S NOTE — The 10-part series, "A look at incarceration in Alabama," is now available as a downloadable resource so readers can share the information with local law enforcement officers, family members of the incarcerated, those involved in prison ministries and others who are interested in learning more about imprisonment, recidivism and efforts to help prisoners and their families in our state. To download the complete series go to www.TheAlabamaBaptist.org/resources.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“ [Jesus] wants us to experience the joy of the journey with Him. ”

KEVIN BLACKWELL

Director, Ministry Training Institute at Samford University

Strive to enter the presence of God on a regular basis. Surrender your entire life to God. Seek the Father through prayer and study of His Word. Be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Obediently pursue His will with passion. Make disciples of Jesus who live on mission.

Sandy Wisdom-Martin

Executive director, national WMU

As a Christian, I am commanded by God to forgive, and I do. I encourage others to forgive. Forgiveness doesn't mean that we forget, but we choose not to retaliate. Somedays it is hard to be a Christian. But, even as bad as this transgression is, I am still reminded of the great forgiveness that we experience in Jesus Christ. I think there

will be a special crown in heaven for those of us who forgive others. But in the meantime, I hope we learn from our mistakes and the mistakes of others.

Pastor Marshal Ausberry
President, National African American Fellowship, SBC

Five questions I ask myself most days to keep my life on POINT:

P: Who am I PARTNERING with today? Growing is not a solo effort.

O: How am I OWNING Christ's mission today? I must honor Christ and make his mission my mission.

I: How am I INVESTING in myself? I need to be learning so that I have something valuable to offer others.

N: Who am I NURTURING in

discipleship? Every Paul needs a Timothy.

T: Am I being TEACHABLE? Pride is the gateway to ruin.

Chris Crain

Executive director of missions
Birmingham Metro Baptist Association

We try to make sure clients feel loved and valued and that they know they are loved by Jesus. We use food and clothes to open the door for these conversations. We often get the opportunity to pray with clients as we're serving them, and make it a priority to share the gospel with everyone who comes in.

Josh Howell, director

Tuscaloosa Baptist Association
Christian Ministry Center

From the *Twitterverse*

@EdLitton

Lets be as serious as Jesus about the abuse of innocence. Matt. 18:6 "If anyone causes one of these little ones — those who believe in me — to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

@NationalWMU

No eloquently worded statement can assuage the grief of trauma endured at the hands of an abuser. Do whatever it takes to protect those entrusted to your care.

@rcollingsworth

Since @HoustonChron dropped their article Sat. night on sexual abuse in SBC churches, I've tried to reflect and listen. To survivors, who have spoken out in gratitude

that their stories are finally being heard — and to leaders, who have condemned this behavior and promised change.

@drjamesmerritt

The Southern Baptist Convention faces a crisis as great as any in our history. Now we must weep over the @HoustonChron article on sexual abuse and its coverup in our churches, repent and raise our membership standards to preclude churches who foment racism & ignore sexual abuse.

@marycwiley

Studying Southern Baptist History and Heritage this semester. It's been fascinating to read of early Baptist's unwavering commitment to purity and church discipline — and by it accountability — while

also reading heartbreaking news of abuse and complete lack of these foundations.

@DianeLangberg

Myth: Most abusers are not like us. They are strangers, odd, mean, monsters, and certainly not Christian, let alone in a leadership position. Truth: The majority of abuse victims know and trust the person who commits the abuse.

@jasonkeithallen

After 9/11 President Bush declared, "We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them." Perhaps this should be our response to clergy sex-abuse, seeking justice & punishment for perpetrators AND those who enable / cover it up.



Photo by TBFA

Barry Bledsoe is president of The Baptist Foundation of Alabama.

Impacting the future

We understand your need to impact the world for Christ. That's why we empower families like yours with multiple giving vehicles to do just that. At The Baptist Foundation of Alabama (TBFA), our passion is to help you connect the resources God has given you to the purposes He has laid on your heart. For many, that passion is to support the next generation of Christian leaders.

Through our scholarship funds at the Foundation, thousands of young, Christian leaders have been sent into the harvest field to advance the gospel. During last year alone, we were privileged to award over \$500,000 to more than 550 students on behalf of generous Alabama Baptists.

As a result, these students are able to graduate and enter into the ministry the Lord has called them to, with less debt and more time to focus on becoming a world-changer for Christ.

Imagine the Kingdom impact you could have.

If your heart is to leave a legacy and contribute workers to the harvest, we can help. Give us a call at 334-394-2000.

TBFA is currently accepting scholarship applications through March, 31. Visit <https://tbfa.org/scholarships/> to apply.

—Barry Bledsoe

Helpful resources

Books:

▶ **"Autopsy of a Deceased Church"**
by Thom Rainer

▶ **"Reclaiming Glory"**
by Mark Clifton

▶ **"Flickering Lamps"**
by Henry and Richard Blackaby

Podcasts:

▶ **Revitalize and Replant**
with Thom Rainer and Mark Clifton

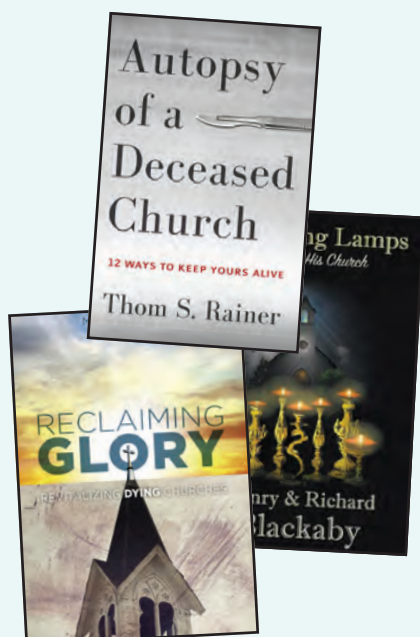
▶ **EST.Church** often addresses issues related to church revitalization.

Blogs/Websites:

▶ **The Exchange** (hosted by *Christianity Today*) features various topics including church revitalization.

▶ **ChurchRevitalizationResources.com** is written by Rob Paul.

▶ **alsbom.org/revitalization** by State Board of Missions for assessments and resources.



Rob Paul

Hope in Christ

Revitalization requires more than strategies and programs

By Rob Paul
Special to The Alabama Baptist

The statistics are in. Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) churches continue to baptize fewer people each year. More than 80 percent of SBC churches are plateaued, declining or growing at a rate less than the growth of their communities. Nearly a thousand of those churches will close their doors this year. Thousands more are only a few years from the same result unless something changes.

Jesus brings life. He brings life to dead people. He also brings life to dead and dying churches.

Revitalization requires more than strategies and programs. It is a supernatural work of God. But revitalization also requires change and hard work. The degree of change and the intensity of the work depends on whether the church is stuck, struggling or suffering.

Evangelistic fruit

Stuck churches feel like they are spinning their wheels. Attendance may be down. Growth may have slowed or even stopped. Members who were once passionate about serving seem to be going through the motions. Often a pastor or church member will recognize that something just does not feel right. Stuck churches may only need a boost to become unstuck.

Struggling churches have been spinning their wheels for a while. The church is either plateaued or declining in attendance. Little evangelistic fruit exists beyond the children of church members. Church members remember and long for a return to days gone by. They wish they could be like the "First Baptist Church of What's Happening Now." And almost ev-



Unsplash.com

eryone has an opinion about how to solve the problem. Struggling churches need to embrace change before it's too late.

Suffering churches have spun their wheels for so long they will need intervention in order to survive. They have dwindling resources and little energy. The church membership no longer reflects the

community. Entire generations are missing from leadership. In many cases entire generations are missing from the membership as well. Often these churches are well acquainted with conflict. Powerful individuals or groups have their way. Without dramatic change suffering churches are heading for imminent death.

Dawson Memorial to host church revitalization conference

The Church Revitalization/Replant Conference is an opportunity for church leaders and members of churches of any size who want to learn how to better engage their communities with the gospel.

The free conference will be held Feb. 25 from 1:30 to 4 p.m. at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham. The conference is organized by the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions.

Mark Clifton, senior director of replanting at the North American Mission Board and author of "Reclaiming Glory: Creating a Gospel Legacy throughout North America," is the featured speaker. The first 300 people to register for the Feb. 25 conference will receive a copy of Clifton's newest book.

To register for the conference, go to <http://bit.ly/CRRRCRegister>. (TAB)

Hope exists for churches that are stuck, struggling or suffering. The church is the body of Christ and Jesus wants His body to reflect His glory and accomplish His purposes. He wants to revive and revitalize His church. There is hope. Jesus will do His part. We must do ours.

Our part begins with accepting reality. I recently asked this question on social media: “Does the church you attend or lead need to experience revitalization?” Eighty-three percent of the respondents replied, “Yes.” They recognize the need. They accept reality. But some churches do not accept reality. They are in denial. They think if they just keep doing what they are doing, things will get better. If they get the right pastor, things will get better. They are in denial.

Reach out

Many resources are available for churches that are ready to accept reality and engage in the hard work of revitalization. I encourage you to reach out to a trained revitalization strategist.

In my role as a certified consultant and revitalization strategist I have the privilege of helping a church see its present reality with fresh eyes. As an outsider I often see things they have overlooked and help the congregation consider options they may not have known were possible.

If your church is stuck, struggling or suffering help is available. There is hope.

EDITOR’S NOTE — Rob Paul is a church revitalization strategist, certified church consultant and transitional pastor. For more information about Rob Paul Ministries visit www.robpaul.net.

These 3 priorities are a good place to start revitalizing a church

Leading a church to experience revitalization is often a journey into the unknown. There are no easy solutions. I wish I could give you a list of things to do — something like “10 Steps to Revitalize Your Church.”

Moving forward

But that’s not realistic. Every church is different. Every community is different. Consequently, every revitalization strategy is different.

While there is no set formula there are three priorities that will

get a church moving toward revitalization:

▶ **The priority of corporate prayer.** Call your people to the altar and call out to God for revival. Pray for repentance. Pray for your community. Pray for lost people by name. Talk to Jesus. The work of revitalization is a spiritual process. Make prayer a priority.

▶ **The priority of Bible reading.** Get your people reading the Bible. Enact a churchwide daily reading

For more resources go to Rob Paul’s blog at RobPaul.net.

plan. In a 2007 study, researchers discovered what should have been obvious. Reading the Bible is the number one characteristic of mature followers of Christ. Make Bible reading a priority.

▶ **The priority of evangelism.** Our churches have become inwardly focused. The Great Commission is often the Great Omission. Train your people to share the gospel (“Turning Everyday Conversations into Gospel

Conversations” by Jimmy Scroggins and Steve Wright is an excellent tool). As a leader, set the pace. Share your faith. Make evangelism a priority.

The work of revitalization is a long-term process. Our churches did not become unhealthy overnight and we will not fix them overnight. To borrow the cliché, “It’s a marathon, not a sprint.” But you have to start somewhere. Establishing the priorities of corporate prayer, Bible reading and evangelism is a good place to begin. (Rob Paul)

A simple question, a complex answer

Church health strategist helps guide churches toward turnaround

The majority of churches are plateauing or declining. That’s a fact backed up by a significant amount of data, George Yates said.

And with that sobering reality in mind, Yates has been asking dozens of churches from Baldwin County to Athens this question — what can we do to turn that around?

It’s a simple question, and the answer varies by church. But finding that answer is what Yates, a church health strategist with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), is all about.

Five phases of decline

“The quicker churches realize the need for a turnaround and ask for help, the easier it is and the stronger it is for that church to make the turn,” he said.

Yates wrote a book called “Reaching the Summit: Avoiding and Reversing Decline in the Church.” In it he outlines five phases of decline — loss of vision, lack of purpose, denial, grasping for survival and, finally, relinquishment of ministry.

“Many don’t reach out for help until they’re in phase four — grasping for survival,” Yates said.

What often happens then is that the church makes rash decisions



Photo courtesy of George Yates

George Yates (standing), a church health strategist with the SBOM, leads a coach training workshop for church revitalizers in Louisiana. Yates’ goal is to come alongside churches and help them move toward revitalization.

out of desperation. They might have knee-jerk reactions, waste valuable time or even get rid of things that they actually need to stop the decline, he said.

Yates’ goal is to come alongside them and help them know how to move toward revival.

“Together we evaluate every ministry in your church and how it’s fulfilling the Great Commission,” he said.

And together with Mike Jackson, director of the SBOM office of LeaderCare and church health, and Daniel Wilson, church health strat-

egist, Yates is working to build processes, resources and strategies the SBOM can use to help churches move toward revitalization.

Walking alongside

“We’ve got some things on the website already that can be of help, and we can come and walk alongside a church as a coach to help you work toward a turnaround,” Yates said.

For assessment tools and resources visit alsbom.org/revitalization or email Yates at gyates@alsbom.org. (Grace Thornton)

Haitian child meets Jesus, gets 'new life' after epilepsy diagnosis

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Jamile tried to go to school once when he was young, but to say it didn't go well is an understatement.

The first time he fell on the ground with a seizure his teacher left him there — and then she told his mom to never bring him back again.

Hidden away

That's the situation in Haiti, where hundreds of people suffering from epilepsy go undiagnosed. Voodoo is the prominent religion there, and people with seizures are seen as cursed or demon possessed. When they touch things people often take the items and burn them. They become social outcasts.

Jamile was just that — a prisoner in his own home. Children would spit at him and run away.

"Jamile was someone who was hidden away in his family," said Jared McCrory, executive director of Children's Hope, a ministry started in Haiti in 2010 by members of First Baptist Church, Montgomery. "His family was afraid to touch him, to embrace him."

He didn't have much hope — but all that changed when a medical team working with Children's Hope

came in with a portable EEG machine.

"We were able to come in and say, 'Here's what's going on — it's something in his brain, it's not contagious, and here's some medicine that can help him,'" McCrory said.

It wasn't too long after that Jamile started to improve. And a team including John Bush, a member of First, Montgomery, began sharing the gospel with him.

"We got to see him go back to school and embrace Jesus as his savior," McCrory said. "His life is on a totally new trajectory now. It has totally changed his life."

Bush said it was a miracle — one the people of Haiti desperately need.

"Children in Haiti need physicians and they need the Great Physician," he said.

Amazing initiative

It's part of an amazing initiative to bring in help to the community and share the gospel, he said.

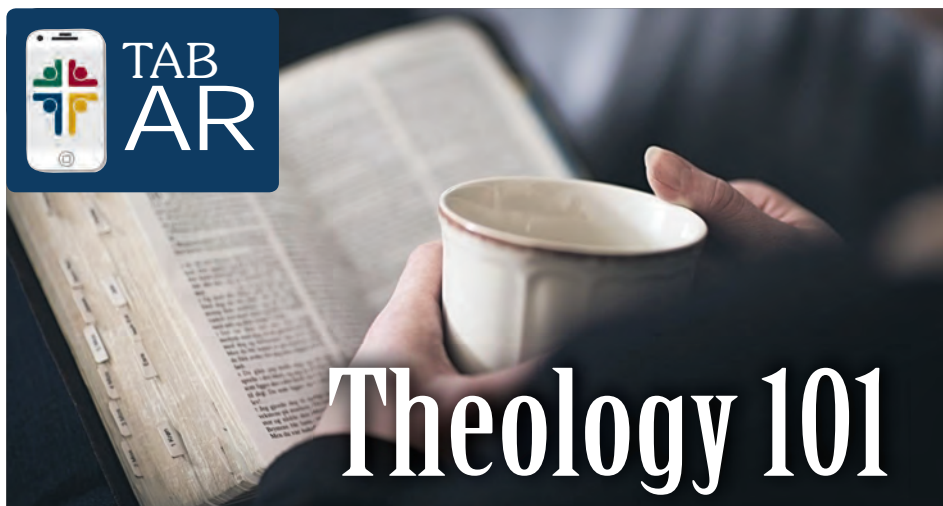
"We want to build local partnerships, and we would love for any Alabama churches who are interested in coming to use their vocation, gifting and passion to make a difference for the Kingdom," McCrory said. "We look around and see so many needs, so many hurts, so much of a need for restoration." ✝

For more information about Children's Hope visit childrens-hope.com.



Photo courtesy of Children's Hope

Jamile undergoes treatments with a portable EEG machine brought by Children's Hope out of FBC Montgomery. He has epilepsy and in Haiti, where Voodoo is the prominent religion, people with seizures are seen as cursed or demon possessed.



BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Insights Through Questions

A Question about Christ

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

During the past weeks Theology 101 has sought to glean truths about the Bible from various images by which Scripture refers to itself. This week we turn to questions raised in Bible passages and the truths conveyed in the answers.

If the question is carefully framed, then the answer given can convey essential theological truth. A good point of beginning is a famous question Jesus put to religious leaders in Matthew 22:41-42: "While the Pharisees were gathered together Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is He?"

This question calls for thinking about the person of Christ. Those who knew Him or knew of Him might have given a number of answers. The reply could be, "Is this not the carpenter's son?" (Matt. 13:55)

God in flesh

While not biologically accurate it would have been true in the sense that David's lineage was extended through Jesus as set forth in Matthew 1:1. The biological answer to the question could have been that He is Mary's son, as set forth in the Christmas story that "she was found with child of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 1:18).

In the historical or genealogical sense the answer to this week's question could have been, "Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1).

However, when Jesus posed the question to the Pharisees the

answer He sought was that He is God's Son. The correct answer to His question immediately introduces the truth of the divinity of Christ. He is fully God as the eternal second person of the Trinity, God come in the flesh.

The correct answer to this week's question also requires the doctrine of the incarnation since the divine Son of God possessed a body of flesh and bone. As a result Christians are right on target in declaring the truth of Colossians 2:9: "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the godhead bodily."

True and trustworthy

When we confess Him to be God's Son what are we to get from the answer? Among the truths that impact our lives is that if He is God's Son then His message is of utter importance. When He spoke He uttered words that are true and trustworthy.

Additionally if Christ is indeed God's Son, His mission is of unparalleled significance. His mission included revealing God and inviting sinners to become children of God. Given such significance, His parting commission to His followers must be taken seriously. We are to seek to make Him known to all people everywhere. ✝

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.



SPOTLIGHT ON CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

HEALTH

in focus

Faith-based medical training addresses physical and spiritual needs

By Carrie Brown McWhorter
The Alabama Baptist

Hospital hallways are places where values intersect and where profound decisions can be shaped by individuals' religion and spiritual beliefs."

Bioethicist and medical student Danish Zaidi wrote these words in the American Medical Association Journal of Ethics in 2018.

There are potential benefits of integrating patient religion and spirituality into clinical practice by improving empathy, building trust and understanding behaviors, Zaidi wrote.

She also noted that many

educators see the need for health care practitioners to better understand their patients' spiritual backgrounds.

Integrated approach

Christian colleges have long understood the connections between the physical and spiritual.

As the need for health care providers grows in Alabama and the nation, faith-based higher education institutions are in a unique position to train future professionals in a way that considers the whole person — body, mind and spirit.

Health care programs in Alabama Baptist colleges and other faith-based col-

leges also meet a tremendous need.

Like many states Alabama has an aging population, which brings a growing need for nurses, personal care aids, emergency medical technicians, physical therapists, medical assistants and other health professionals.

By most estimates more than half of the 25 fastest-growing jobs in Alabama are health care related.

Growing career path

Data provided by the Alabama State Nurses Association states that by 2020 there will be 1.6 million nursing job openings nationwide, 700,000 of which



Photo by Robin Parnell

Judson College nursing instructor Anna Marcia Smitherman (left) reviews respiratory assessment skills with a student.

will be newly created jobs. Alabama officials estimate the state will need about 6,500 more registered nurses in the next five years.

In recent years University of Mobile (UM), Samford University and Judson Col-

lege have expanded their offerings in health care fields, including nursing.

Last year UM opened the Center for Excellence in Healthcare Practice, which serves as the academic (See 'Innovations,' page 10)

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Innovations improve clinical opportunities

(continued from page 9)
home of state-of-the-art simulation labs and classrooms for the College of Health Professions.

In December, 16 students became the first to graduate from UM's new master's level family nurse practitioner program.

Rita Croom, dean of the College of Health Professions, called their graduation a "historic moment in the life of University of Mobile but also for our community, as these advanced practice nurses enter the workforce using the knowledge and skills they gained to improve patient care," she said.

Degree offerings like the doctor of nursing practice and the accelerated bachelor of science in nursing are giving students even more options to be "servants of

Christ ... prepared to go out and serve the community," said UM President Timothy Smith.

Realistic interactions

Samford's new post-master's doctor of nursing practice also provides advanced training for nurses and options for those desiring to teach or lead in a school of nursing.

Samford students benefit from the 22,000-square-foot Experiential Learning and Simulation Center in Samford's College of Health Sciences, which provides realistic interactions between instructors and students in a simulated clinical environment.

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Photo courtesy University of Mobile

The first graduates of UM's master's-level family nurse practitioner program received their degrees in December.

space gives our students the advantage of experiencing various clinical settings before stepping into practice," said Jill Pence, the center's executive director.

Rural healthcare

The two-year associate degree in nursing program at Judson College also emphasizes academic excellence in a Christian environment, as well as hands-on service opportunities and clinical experiences in medical facilities across the Alabama Black Belt, according

to Robin Parnell, director of Judson's nursing program.

Students learn new skills and practice them in labs with state-of-the-art computerized simulators.

The combination of simulated lab experiences and real-world clinical experiences "prepares Judson students to provide quality, compassionate care as registered nurses," Parnell said. "The low student-faculty ratio allows the student to get the individual attention and support needed to reach her highest potential." ✝

SPOTLIGHT ON CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION



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Samford's Hodges wins Walter Payton Award

Samford quarterback Devlin Hodges was named the winner of the 2018 Walter Payton Award at the annual NCAA Division I Football Championship Subdivision (FCS) Awards Banquet held Jan. 4. Hodges, a senior, is the first-ever Samford player and the seventh Southern Conference player to win the award.

The Walter Payton Award is awarded annually to the top FCS football offensive player.

Hodges, a Kimberly native, set a school record for single-season passing yards, throwing for 4,283 yards this season, breaking the old re-

cord of 4,088, set by Hodges himself in 2016. He led the nation in passing yards per game (389.4), total passing yards (4,283) and total offense per game (417.8).

Hodges' 14,584 career passing yards broke the old FCS national record of 14,496, set by Steve McNair of Alcorn State (1991-94). Hodges also set FCS records for career completions and attempts. Hodges will have earned 23 different

school records upon graduation.

The Walter Payton Award was first established in 1987. Hodges is the first Southern Conference award recipient since 2009. (Samford)



HODGES

Samford photo

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‘Sent from God’

Investigation is not an attempt to ‘destroy,’ Greear says; problem is real

(continued from page 1)

Eight live in Alabama or another state as registered sex offenders. One is deceased.

The database includes 220 individuals convicted of sexual abuse crimes. It is available online at the *Chronicle’s* website.

The crimes have left more than 700 victims, the newspaper stated.

Greear said he is “broken” over the revelations. “I join with countless others who are currently ‘weeping with those who weep,’” Greear stated, voicing resolve to mobilize the SBC in “stopping predators in our midst.”

Change must come

“The voices in this article should be heard as a warning sent from God, calling the church to repent,” Greear tweeted. “As Christians we are called to expose everything sinful to the light. The survivors in this article have

done that — at a personal cost few of us can fathom.”

Greear also tweeted:

▶ “There can simply be no ambiguity about the church’s responsibility to protect the abused and be a safe place for the vulnerable. The safety of the victims matters more than the reputation of Southern Baptists.”

▶ “We — leaders in the SBC — should have listened to the warnings of those who tried to call attention to this. I am committed to doing everything possible to ensure we never make these mistakes again. ... We must admit that our failures, as churches, put these survivors in a position where they were forced to stand alone and speak, when we should have been fighting for them. Their courage is exemplary and prophetic.”

▶ “The Baptist doctrine of church autonomy should never be a religious cover for passivity towards abuse.



BP photo by Scott Barkley/Christian Index

SBC President J.D. Greear talks with members of the Association of State Baptist Publications on Feb. 12 about an investigative report on sexual abuse at SBC churches by the *Houston Chronicle*.

Church autonomy is about freeing the church to do the right thing — to obey Christ — in every situation. It is a heinous error to apply autonomy in a way that enables abuse.”

D. August Boto, interim president of the SBC Executive Committee, said in an interview with the *Chronicle* the newspaper is “not the opponent of the Southern Baptist Convention.”

“You’re helping us. I’m all for shining the light of day upon crime,” Boto said.

‘Bring truth to light’

Speaking to members (including *The Alabama Baptist*) of the Association of State Baptist Publications on Feb. 12, Greear echoed those thoughts, saying now is a time for Southern Baptists “to lament and to grieve” but not to blame the newspapers that reported the story.

“I do not believe you can ... push this aside as an agenda-driven thing put out by the secular media to try to destroy us,” Greear said.

And even if that were the case Greear said it doesn’t allow Southern Baptists to ignore the damage.

“There’s a problem. ... If there is a time and a place to defend ourselves, maybe that will

come later, but it is not now. We’ll trust God to defend us; we’ll trust God to bring truth to light.”

Russell Moore, president of the SBC’s Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, wrote a commentary after the report was published: “No church should be frustrated by the *Houston Chronicle’s* reporting, but should thank God for it. The judgment seat of Christ will be far less reticent than a newspaper series to uncover what should never have been hidden.”

Moore referred to the Sex-

ual Abuse Presidential Study initiated by Greear last year, which is investigating how to best handle sexual abuse allegations within the SBC.

“Our approach is seeking to encourage policies and

The Alabama Baptist has posted resources for churches related to dealing with sexual abuse at www.thealabamabaptist.org.

www.thealabamabaptist.org.

practices that protect children and the vulnerable from sexual abuse ... all the while promoting compliance with laws and providing compassionate care for those

who have survived trauma,” Moore wrote.

“We have a priesthood of believers. And a key task of that priesthood is maintaining the witness of Christ in the holiness and safety of His Church. That means training churches to recognize sexual predation ... and equipping churches to stop the pattern.” (BP, TAB contributed)

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Photos courtesy of Ben Kiser

Started by John Yates, student pastor at FBC Gulf Shores, Refuel weekend gives the large-group worship feel of a conference along with the small-group feel of a DNow weekend.

Refuel student weekend offers discipleship event

When John Yates was a student he loved Disciple Now (DNow) weekends. And now that he's student pastor at First Baptist Church, Gulf Shores, he wants to bring that concept back stronger than ever for students all across the area.

He's doing that through Refuel weekend, an event that offers a two-night, stay-over youth discipleship experience. It gives the large-group worship feel of a conference along with the small-group feel of a DNow weekend.

Students gather together to hear a speaker and a worship band and participate in games

and breakout sessions. They also participate in projects to help Baldwin Baptist Association get ready for its summer missions projects.

Then each church group breaks off in the evenings to

stay in host homes or hotels or even go back home for the night, whichever they prefer.

"We want every student to be blessed by it," Yates said. "Churches can decide

whether they would like to use it just as a conference or use it as a Disciple Now

weekend."

In 2018, Yates got together with Ben Kiser at First Baptist Church, Foley, for a trial run. Then this year five church groups came

together for Refuel, held Jan. 18-20.

Kiser said it was a high-quality event.

"We put a lot of time into it and are really selective with who we choose for the speaker," he said. "I would encourage everyone to come. We are super excited

and ready for next year."

The next Refuel weekend event will be held Jan. 17-19, 2020.

For more information visit refuelalabama.com. (Grace Thornton)

The next Refuel event will be held Jan. 17-19, 2020. For more information visit refuelalabama.com.



The speaker for Refuel weekend was Beaux Hinote, pastor of FBC Justin, Texas.

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

CORRECTION: The FBC Tillman's Corner advertisement for a minister appearing in the Feb. 14 issue on page 12 was published by mistake. That ad has been withdrawn. Below is the correct advertisement.

SENIOR PASTOR

FBC Tillman's Corner in Mobile, AL (fbtc.org). Must have at least a master's degree from a Southern Baptist Convention seminary, theologically conservative and have at least seven years of experience as a senior pastor. Please send resumé with link to sermons to: kemyrick@fbtc.org.

SENIOR PASTOR

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

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

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

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Mount Olive Baptist Church is looking for a Bivocational Pastor. Send resumé to: Lindy Bayles at 243 West Pine St., Monroeville, Alabama 36460 or email to bayleslindy@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

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

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Gulfcreek Baptist Church is seeking a local bivocational pastor (church planter) to help a 109-year-old church grow. Please send resumé to: gulfcreekbaptistchurch@yahoo.com or gulfcreekbaptistchurch.com Attn: Pastor Position, 8415 Gulfcreek Road, Churchula, 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.gbca.org>.

WORSHIP LEADER

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

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER

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

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER

Stowers Hill Baptist Church is currently accepting resumé 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 resumé to jenny.russell@parkviewdecalur.org. This is a paid position.

OTHER POSITIONS

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Christian couple needed for full-time relief house parents with some light maintenance duties. Home and utilities provided. Salary, benefits and vacation. Call Baldwin Co. Sheriff's Boys Ranch: 251-989-6392.

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TAB PREVIEW

TAB Preview provides a sneak preview of the weekly stories featured in *The Alabama Baptist*. It is interactive with links to stories and easy access to TAB's social media sites. To sign up for TAB Preview email news@thealabamabaptist.org.

TAB DIGITAL

In addition to the print edition *The Alabama Baptist* also releases a weekly digital edition of the newspaper to digital subscribers' emails. The digital edition of TAB has the same content as the print edition — just in full color — and it can be accessed anytime and anywhere there is internet access. For information on subscriptions to the TAB digital edition email subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org.

Missions **heartbeat**

Selma Baptist Association lends help to church plants in 'pioneer' states

By **Grace Thornton**
The Alabama Baptist

Tom Stacey says he's long had a heart for the fringes of the country — the pioneer places that don't have much of a Baptist presence.

That's why during the past 29 years he's led team after team to Idaho, Wyoming, Montana, the Dakotas, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Maine and other places where Baptist churches are few and far between.

Vision begins

It was a habit he started in the late 1980s when he was in Randolph Baptist Association, and he kept doing it when he became director of missions (DOM) of Selma Baptist Association in 1997.

But the vision began even earlier than that.

When Stacey was getting ready to graduate from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, someone told him they had a job for him as a church planter in Ohio. So in 1983 he went.

"It was a county that had no Southern Baptist work," he said. "I went up there as a single guy and got married while I was up there, but we had no help."

So when he moved back to Alabama six years later he brought back with him a burden for the pioneer states. "My heartbeat ever since

has been pioneer missions," Stacey said.

In the years since he's gone on 103 missions trips, and he's taken people from his association with him. They've built buildings, engaged in roofing and disaster relief work, led Vacation Bible Schools and distributed the Jesus Film.

"We've had some unofficial partnerships with the folks up there," he said.

One of those is with Chris Baker, a former Clarke Baptist Association DOM who moved to Montana as a church planter.

Baker said partners like

"We've seen God do a lot of amazing things over the years."

**Tom Stacey
DOM, Selma Baptist
Association**

Selma Baptist Association have been a "tremendous blessing."

"We have some of the best partners in Alabama and it is vital to continue the work here," he said.

Stacey said it's been a blessing for Selma Baptists as well.

"We've gotten to see the people at work in those places over the long haul, and that's been a rewarding, fruitful experience," he said. "It's been very encouraging."

He's a hands-on kind of guy. He says he learned from the late Tommy Puckett, who retired as men's ministry strategist for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, that the best way to get men involved is to actually get out and do something.

"So we work," Stacey said. "We're not a big association but we work, and that has consistently resonated with the men here."

Various efforts

And what has happened on those trips has bled back into the association. Throughout the years the association has given more than \$69,000 toward various missions efforts.

They've partnered with Sav-A-Life, Teen Challenge and a local organization that offers ministries such as tutoring for children.

They've also had a very active disaster relief team that responds to needs on a regular basis.

"We've seen God do a lot of amazing things over the years," Stacey said. ✠

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

By **Joanne Sloan**

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



First female authorized to preach in A.M.E. Church 200 years ago

Jarena Lee (b. 1783) was the first female preacher in the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church. She also wrote an autobiography, the first one published by an African-American woman in America.

Profession of faith

This year marks the 200th anniversary of Lee's authorization to preach by Richard Allen, the founder of the A.M.E. Church.

She was born to a poor but free black family on Feb. 11, 1783, in Cape May, New Jersey.

Her spiritual life changed after hearing Allen give a powerful sermon at Philadelphia's Bethel Church. She professed faith in Christ.

In 1807 she felt God was commissioning her to preach the gospel.

She confided in Allen, but he refused to authorize her to preach because the A.M.E. Church banned female ministers.

Four years later she married Joseph Lee. They had two children. She experienced poor health and lost her husband after seven

years of marriage. Although her husband had not approved of her preaching she maintained a strong desire to proclaim the gospel message.

In 1819 a visiting minister struggled with his message and abruptly stopped preaching. Lee suddenly stood up and began preaching in his place. She impressed Allen so much that he gave her authorization to preach.

When Lee became a traveling minister she reached out to people in places such as New York, Mary-

land, Pennsylvania and Canada. In one year alone, she wrote, she traveled 2,325 miles on foot and preached 178 sermons.

In order to share her religious experiences she wrote an autobiography, "The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee."

Conflicting records

She is buried in an unmarked grave at the Mount Pisgah A.M.E. Church Cemetery in Lawnside, New Jersey. Records of the church indicate she died in 1855. Other sources say she died in 1857 or 1864. ✠



LEE



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Our complimentary Church Offering Materials, arriving in April, will serve to help raise awareness within your church about the needs of children and families around the state who are helped through Alabama Baptist Children's Homes. With these materials, you can help us reach our 2019 Church Offering goal of \$2.8 million.

All of our partnering churches will receive this package later this spring. Offering envelopes are not included but can be requested for free, along with additional bulletin inserts and posters at alabamachild.org/offering2019 or by calling (888) 720-8805.

FBC Wetumpka returns donation from area Wind Creek Casinos

Members of Wetumpka's First Baptist Church voted Feb. 10 to return a \$25,000 check from the Wind Creek Casinos, citing a conflict of interest.

The donation to First, Wetumpka, was one of three donations made by the casinos, which are owned by the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, following the storm.

The casinos also gave donations to the Wetumpka Police Department and First Presbyterian Church.

"We are tremendously moved that they cared enough to think of us in the community because we really don't have contact with the Poarch [Creeks] very much," said James Troglen, pastor of First, Wetumpka. The church's two-story multipurpose building received irreparable damage

in a Jan. 19 EF2 tornado.

However, First, Wetumpka, has long taken a stand against gambling and that stance meant that the donation was problematic. Troglen said he addressed the issue in his Feb. 3 sermon taken from Matthew 17.

A clear choice

Troglen said he is usually not so direct on a particular issue, but in this case he made his opinion clear — the uncashed check needed to go back to Wind Creek Casinos.

"I pointed out we can't keep this," he said. "If it keeps one person from listening to us with the gospel we can't keep it."

The uncashed check remained in a lockbox until Feb. 10, when the church held its regularly scheduled business meeting.

"Some 300 people were in attendance," Troglen said. "To have that many on Sunday night is unheard of. But this decision really helped our people understand Baptist polity more. Their vote did make a difference. What they said mattered."

The vote was not unanimous, he said, but an overwhelming majority agreed that the check should be returned uncashed.

Troglen emphasized the church is grateful for the generosity of the Poarch Creeks and the decision not to accept the donation was not meant to be a major statement on a moral issue.

Troglen said tornado damage is estimated at \$3.3 million and the church should settle with insurance soon. (Carrie Brown McWhorter)



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Ignoring Hearing Loss Poses New Risks

As the list of health concerns associated with untreated hearing loss grows longer, today's hearing aid technology gets better and better.



What if you had a medical condition that could lead to severe physical, cognitive and emotional problems, like social

isolation, depression, balance issues ... and even dementia? Rather than ignore it, you'd seek treatment, wouldn't you?

Not Necessarily.

The condition is hearing loss. And, even though it's almost always treatable with hearing aids, a majority of those affected wait ... and wait — on average for more than five years — before taking action!

33 Million Americans Have Hearing Loss.

Hearing loss is the third most common

chronic health problem facing older adults in the US. Surprisingly, only 30% of individuals with hearing difficulties actually wear hearing aids.

New Study: Hearing Aids Reduce Cognitive Decline.

The good news? People who address their hearing loss with today's advanced hearing aids live better lives. They're much less likely to feel depressed or isolated. And, a 2015 French scientific study concluded that hearing aids helped the hard of hearing stay mentally fit.

Today's Hearing Aids — Small, Smart, Super Effective.

Recent breakthroughs have enabled today's hearing aids to offer a remarkably natural listening experience. Instead of simply amplifying sounds, these tiny, smart devices include features that filter out background noise, helping the wearer focus on what they want to hear. Plus, phone calls and music can now be streamed wirelessly directly into the devices. And, smartphones can control hearing aids at the touch of an app, allowing wearers to easily personalize their hearing experience and discreetly adjust to different environments.

Your First Line of Defense — a Simple Hearing Screening

"Addressing hearing loss can reduce its impact on your overall health," says Dr. John Cariola, Audiologist. Experts urge anyone over 50 to make screenings a routine part of their medical care.

Beltone — a Legacy of Great Hearing Care.

Rated the most trusted name in hearing care among adults over 50, Beltone has been at the leading edge of innovation for over 75 years. Beltone also provides the industry's most comprehensive hearing care benefits program — Beltone Blue Benefits.



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Hearing Tests are given for the purpose of selection and adjustment of hearing instrumentation. Results may vary related to duration and severity of impairment. Early detection is important. All discounts are off MSRP. Discounts cannot be combined and do not apply to previous purchase. \$800 off a set of Amaze 9 or 17. \$400 off a single aid Amaze 9 or 17.

3 stories

you should know



Photo courtesy of FBC Sulligent

FBC Sulligent, in Lamar Baptist Association, held a note burning Jan. 13 for its Christian Life Center (CLC), dedicated in July 2009. The CLC can hold up to 500 people, has classrooms and a kitchen, and can serve as an emergency shelter. Participating in the note burning were (l to r) Pastor Byron Pickering, Ralph Harrison, Lee Mosley, Barbara Reeves, Tom Howell, Cindy Otts, Jeff Chaffin, Carolyn Trentelman (front, left) and Ronnie Guyton (front, right).

A few headlines from SBC-related groups

The new president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, should be announced within a few days after press time of this issue. *The Alabama Baptist* will release the announcement on its website the day it is released and follow up with a story in the next issue of the paper.

And it is anticipated the new president of LifeWay Christian Resources will be announced in March or April. LifeWay also confirmed Feb. 14 that “a significant number” of stores would be closing but which stores are not yet publicized.

During the Feb. 18 Executive Committee meeting in Nashville, Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) President J.D. Greear planned to roll out his recommendations for how the SBC should deal with the sexual abuse situation. (TAB)

BWA protests arrest of Venezuelan Baptist

The Baptist World Alliance (BWA) is mobilizing efforts to gain the release of Gregory José Pérez, a volunteer who serves as executive director of the National Baptist Youth Union of Venezuela.

Pérez was arrested Jan. 23 after evacuating a communications center where he was working because of protests in the area. He was subsequently arrested, though there is no evidence linking him to the protests, according to BWA.


Another 30 people were arrested along with him, including numerous children ages 12 to 14.

“Brother Pérez has dedicated his life to serving others, most especially the children and youth of Venezuela,” BWA General Secretary Elijah Brown said in a Feb. 6 news release.

Brown urged prayers for peace in Venezuela. (BNG)

— NEWSBRIEFS —

Birmingham pastor Todd Lafferty elected IMB executive vice president

 RICHMOND, Va. — International Mission Board (IMB) trustees unanimously elected Todd Lafferty as the entity’s executive vice president during their Feb. 6–7 meeting in Richmond, Virginia.

Lafferty most recently has served as pastor of mobilization for Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Birmingham. He and his wife, Susan, previously served with the IMB for nearly 29 years.

IMB President Paul Chitwood described Lafferty as a strong leader, humble servant, and sincere Christ-follower with a burning passion for the lost.

“The Lord is kind to bring him back to the IMB,” Chitwood said.

Lafferty said he was honored and humbled to be considered as the candidate for executive vice president.

“Many have not asked, ‘Why are you going back to the IMB?’ Almost to a person they have

said, ‘This makes perfect sense. God has been preparing you for this all of your life,’” Lafferty told the trustees. (BP)

Pro-life concerns mount over high court’s ruling in Louisiana case



WASHINGTON — Pro-life Americans are wondering where the U.S. Supreme Court stands on abortion regulations after an order issued Feb.

7 blocked enforcement of a Louisiana law to require abortion doctors to have admitting privileges at a nearby hospital.

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans had upheld the 2014 law, which is intended to protect the health and lives of women who suffer complications from abortion, but seven justices, including Chief Justice John Roberts, favored blocking its enforcement.

Some legal experts postulate that the high court’s stay means a compelling possibility exists that a majority will ultimately decide a lower-court decision was in error.

The action follows the court’s refusal to review lower court opinions rejecting decisions by Kan-

sas and Louisiana to remove Planned Parenthood as a Medicaid provider.

Both actions left pro-life advocates questioning the court’s will to overturn the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion after two justices named by President Trump have been added in the last two years. (BP)



U.S. Supreme Court

Evangelicals watchful after Jehovah’s Witness receives 6-year sentence



MOSCOW — A Russian court has sentenced a Danish member of the Jehovah’s Witnesses to six years on extremism charges in a case that has rekindled memories of the Soviet-era persecution of Christians and triggered widespread international criticism.

Dennis Christensen, a 46-year-old carpenter who has lived in Russia for more than two decades, was sentenced Feb. 6 by a court in Oryol,

News near you

BALDWIN

► **Hamilton Baptist Church, Robertsdale**, will host Fish Fry and Wild Game Day on Feb. 23 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. All donations will go toward the church's building fund. For more information call 251-931-3037. Drayton Smith is pastor.

CHILTON

► **First Baptist Church, Thorsby**, will host the Voices of Mobile on March 10 at 6 p.m. Everyone is invited. Marc Hodges is pastor.

COVINGTON

► **Victory Baptist Church, Andalusia**, will celebrate its 28th anniversary with a homecoming service March 3 at 10:30 a.m. Richard Collier will be the speaker, and Byram and Bobbie Lambert will bring special music. A covered-dish lunch will follow the service.

ETOWAH

► **Union No. 3 Baptist Church, Gadsden**, will hold the Building Men of Strength Conference on March 1-2. The Friday night service will include dinner, and the Saturday service will include breakfast. Steve Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee; former North American Mission

Board president Bob Reccord; and David Blanton from Realtree Outdoors will be the guest speakers. For more information on tickets call at 256-494-9180. Joey Hanner is pastor.

FAYETTE

► **Carson Windle** recently resigned from **First Baptist Church, Fayette**, where he served as youth minister. He accepted a position as the middle school pastor at Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola, Florida. Windle holds degrees from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and the seminary's Leavell College. He is married to Heather.



WINDLE

GENEVA

► **New Hinson Baptist Church, Slocomb**, will hold the seventh annual community-wide Barbeque Cook-Off for Christ on March 2. The judging will be held at 5 p.m. and supper will begin at 6 p.m. Door prizes will also be given away. For more information call 334-886-3097. Bryan Klobe is pastor.

MARION

► **First Baptist Church, Winfield**, will host the Marion County Baptist Association Pine-wood Derby on Feb. 24. Weigh-in will begin at 1 p.m., and the race will begin at 2 p.m. Paul Murphy is pastor.

MOBILE

► **Rob Jackson** is the new interim pastor of **First Baptist Church, Tillman's Corner**, in Mobile. Rob Jackson serves at University of



JACKSON

Mobile (UM) as associate professor of Christian studies and is executive director of the Institute for Global Leadership at UM. He also has served as pastor of churches in Alabama and Kentucky. He holds degrees from Samford University in Birmingham and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in

Louisville, Kentucky. He and his wife, Tonya, have one child.

MONTGOMERY

► **Frank Pruden** is the new pastor of **Cloverdale Baptist Church, Montgomery**. He was ordained to the gospel ministry Feb. 10 in a special service that included a time of prayer over Pruden and his wife, Paula. Pruden is the inaugural "apprentice" pastor placed by Montgomery Baptist Association's (MBA) new Operation Revitalize.



Photo by Neal Hughes

Operation Revitalize is a one-year ministry plan that connects churches in need with pastors who don't have the necessary senior pastorate experience. They will then work together under the mentorship and guidance of a MBA team to advance the gospel in the church's community. Pruden and Paula have five children.✝

— NEWSBRIEFS —

a city some 200 miles south of Moscow.

The Danish national was detained two years ago by officers from Russia's federal security service during a raid on a Jehovah's Witness prayer hall in Oryol in May 2017.

In 2017, Russia's Supreme Court declared the Jehovah's Witnesses an "extremist organization" for promoting the "exclusivity and supremacy" of their beliefs.

Christensen is the first to be sentenced since that decision though at least 49 others are being held awaiting trial or are under house arrest.

The Kremlin has spoken out against "foreign religions" amid tensions with the West.

In 2016, President Vladimir Putin approved a law that outlawed missionary work carried out in Russia by non-Russian Orthodox Church groups, including Baptists.

Human rights organizations have warned

that Christensen's imprisonment could trigger a wave of arrests of members of other minority religious groups in Russia, a country with a long history of discrimination against Christians. (RNS)

Two Alabama Baptists named to 2019 SBC Committee on Committees

BIRMINGHAM — Two Alabama Baptists were named to the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) 2019 Committee on Committees.

Terrence Jones, pastor of Strong Tower at Washington Park, Montgomery, and Whitney Alexander, member and lay leader of First Baptist Church, Gadsden, were named to the committee by SBC President J.D. Greear.

The Committee on Committees will assemble in Birmingham, just prior to the SBC annual meeting to nominate members of the Committee on Nominations. The Committee on Nominations will nominate

trustees for the boards of SBC entities in 2020.

The Committee on Committees has 68 members, two from each of the 34 states and regions qualified for representation.

"Many of the members ... are in churches that were started in the past decade," Greear said. "It's critical that we engage those new to our processes early in the life of their churches so that they develop a clear understanding of the importance of cooperation toward our common mission as Southern Baptists."

"This committee represents churches of all sizes, ethnicities and theological persuasions involved in the Southern Baptist Convention."

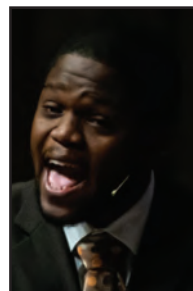
"It was my goal to select Southern Baptists who would represent their fellow Southern Baptists well, and while [Cooperative Program] giving wasn't used as a measure for these appointments, the average Cooperative Program giving percentage of this group is higher than the average Southern Baptist church." (BP)



ALEXANDER



RNS photo



JONES

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

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FEBRUARY 25 - 26

MONDAY, 1:30-3:30 p.m.
CHURCH REVITALIZATION/REPLANT CONFERENCE
Featuring **Mark Clifton**, North American Mission Board. Admission is free but registration is required at alsbom.org/crconference. The first 300 to arrive will receive a complimentary copy of Mark's book, *Reclaiming Glory: Revitalizing Dying Churches*.

4:30 p.m.
STRATEGIES FOR REACHING MILLENNIALS
Led by **Alex McFarland**
A Banquet for Pastors, Staff and Wives
Registration is required at alsbom.org/sec.

6:15 p.m.
STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE BEGINS
THEME: **Praying for Crossover Birmingham**

TUESDAY, 8:45 a.m.
STATE EVANGELISM CONFERENCE CONTINUES THROUGH EVENING
Featuring **Jeremy Morton**, co-pastor, FBC Woodstock, special music by vocalist **Lynda Randle** during the day and a concert by **Sandi Patty** in the evening. Visit alsbom.org/sec for details.

NOON
MINISTERS' WIVES LUNCHEON
Featuring minister's wife and author **Diana Davis**. This event is free but registration is required at alabamawmu.org or **1-800-264-1225**, ext. **325**. Space is limited. This event is open to ministers' wives only. Thank you for your understanding.

 **Alabama Baptist**
STATE BOARD OF MISSIONS
This conference is made possible by gifts of Alabama Baptists through the Cooperative Program.

Is there a Wolf in Your Sheep Pen?

"Is Your Ministry Safe?" Workshop for All Church Leaders
March 26, 9 a.m - 2 p.m.,
Heritage Baptist Church,
1849 Perry Hill Rd, Montgomery

Did you know that 1 out of 4 girls and 1 out of 6 boys will be sexually abused before age 18? Screening ministry applicants and volunteers is an important responsibility for every church, but how can we distinguish between a dangerous individual and an appropriate candidate ready to serve?

Is it possible to keep the wolf out of the sheep pen?

The "Is Your Ministry Safe?" Workshop will focus on how a predator selects and grooms victims. Participants will be taught the Skillful Screening Process, which gives those in the hiring process information and tools to recognize high-risk responses on applications, on reference forms and during an interview. An applicant with inappropriate sexual motives carries with him or her various indicators and life patterns that help identify him or her as one who may not be appropriate to work with children or youth.

The conference will be led by attorney Kimberlee Norris of Ministry Safe. Kimberlee is an expert in legal standards of care related to child sexual abuse, providing crisis response to ministries and churches nationwide.

Register today for this all-important workshop by visiting alsbom.org/ministry-safe-workshop or contacting State Missionary Lee Wright at lwright@alsbom.org or calling (334) 613-2241.

*ministrysafe.com

‘Fast and radical’

Giving provides ‘hope only Jesus can bring’ on ‘largest missions field’ in Alabama, country

(continued from page 1)
 Network is a group of like-minded Southern Baptist churches with a mission to see churches planted near college campuses across the Midwest.
 The North American Mission Board (NAMB) helps resource The Salt Network through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (AAEO).
 “When people give to North American missions, they’re literally giving to the future of reaching the next generation of North America,” said Rob Warren, a NAMB church planting missionary in Madison, Wisconsin.
 Home to a population described by some reports as

less religious than Los Angeles, Madison has become a hub of secularism in the United States. In the middle of the city lies the University of Wisconsin where 40,000 college students navigate a campus intertwined with the state’s capital.
 Rob Warren and his wife, Lisa, who are 2019 Week of Prayer missionaries for the AAEO, recently uprooted their family and moved to Madison to start Doxa Church and reach the community in and around the university.
 “When we think about Madison,” Rob said, “we think about a place that, like so many other places, just needs the hope that only Jesus can bring.”

“I can’t think of a more strategic group of people than college students to share Jesus with.”

Lisa Warren

Before Rob grounded his life in the glory of God, he was a football player at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, seeking satisfaction in worldly pursuits. Then his best friend, Andy, became a Christian.

Sensed conviction

Andy shared the gospel with Rob, and he began to feel God working. It took three years for the lessons Rob learned about Jesus to sink in, but after one particularly rough night of partying, Rob sensed conviction of sin for the first time.
 “Waking up after a terrible night I felt so bad but couldn’t explain it,” Rob remembered. “Not knowing what to do I decided to go to church for the first time.
 “That night I gave my life to Jesus, and God began a fast and radical transformation of my life ... which landed me in full-time ministry.”
 The transformation that



NAMB photo by Daniel McCullough

Rob Warren speaks with those who attended Doxa Church’s first service in September 2018 in Madison, Wisconsin. The word ‘doxa’ is a Greek word used in the New Testament meaning ‘glory.’

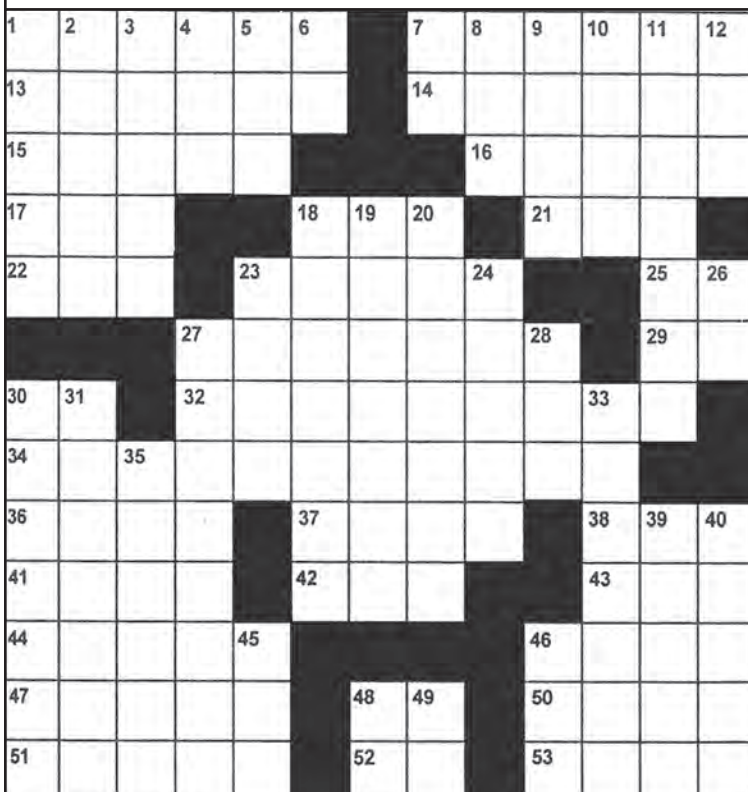
took place in Rob’s life is one the Warrens hope to see duplicated in the lives of countless college students.
 “We’re super passionate about seeing young people meet Jesus and have that change the entire trajectory of their life and take it into their towns, new states and new countries,” said Lisa. “I can’t think of a more strategic group of people than col-

lege students to share Jesus with.”
Flourishing churches
 Doxa Church is one among dozens of collegiate church plants that are flourishing. Gifts to the AAEO help to make that movement possible.
 To learn more visit www.AnnieArmstrong.com. (NAMB, TAB contributed)

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

By Diana Rowland Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. I will raise unto David a righteous _____. (Jer. 23:5)
7. If any be a _____ of the word. (James 1:23)
13. An ocean-edge lake.
14. _____ for thy life. (Gen. 19:17)
15. Ivory and _____. (Ezek. 27:15)
16. Of _____ shall there be _____ like weight. (Ex. 30:34)
17. That I might not _____ against thee. (Ps. 119:11)
18. Who walk in the _____ of the Lord. (Ps. 119:1)
21. Pay _____ view.
22. Temporary duty. (abbr.)
23. Could not drink of the waters of _____. (Ex. 15:23)
25. And I will walk _____ liberty. (Ps. 119:45)
27. Accompanied him into Asia _____ of Berea. (Acts 20:4)
29. Delayed not _____ keep thy commandments. (Ps. 119:60)
30. Thy law _____ my delight. (Ps. 119:77)
32. _____ Naomi’s husband died. (Ruth 1:3)
34. And _____ them, and _____ them down with ease. (Judg. 20:43)
36. Halah, and Habor, and _____. (1 Chron. 5:26)
37. _____ Jerusalem ... as a _____ doth gather. (Luke 13:34)

38. And Peleg lived after he begat _____. (Gen. 11:19)
41. _____, and Shema, and Moladah. (Josh. 15:26)
42. Nickname for Edward.
43. _____ and feather.
44. They assigned _____ in the wilderness. (Josh. 20:8)
46. Three wise men of Christmas.
47. Hear _____ Israel: ... to _____ in ... _____ shalt thou drive them out. (Deut. 9:1, 3)
48. I shall keep _____ unto the end. (Ps. 119:33)
50. A little _____ in _____ cruse. (1 Kings 17:12)
51. The region of _____; ... daughter of Solomon _____. (1 Kings 4:11)
52. They also do _____ iniquity. (Ps. 119:3)
53. And for our little _____. (Ezra 8:21)

Down

1. Hallowed.
2. Furious.
3. And being in an _____ he prayed. (Luke 22:44)
4. Prefix meaning “not.”
5. Shy.
6. Head nurse. (abbr.)
7. And _____ heard me. (Ps. 120:1)
8. East-southeast. (abbr.)
9. Not a hat, but _____ baseball _____. (Eccles. 9:11)
10. The _____ is not to the swift.
11. Caleb took unto him _____. (1 Chron. 2:19)
12. Rural Electrification Administration. (abbr.)
18. Deborah ... the wife of _____(h). (Judg. 4:4)
19. Geshur, and _____, with _____ towns. (1 Chron. 2:23)
20. And _____ the whole face of the ground. (Gen. 2:6)
23. The snail, and the _____. (Lev. 11:30)
24. Eliab the son of _____. (Num. 2:7)
26. _____ day.
27. Child’s TV program.
28. Bright color.
30. Eli’s grandson. (1 Sam. 4:21)
31. Whither shall I cause my _____ to _____? (2 Sam. 13:13)
33. A _____ man had two sons. (Luke 15:11)
35. Not come _____ upon mine head. (Judg. 16:17)
39. Doth the _____ mount up? (Job 39:27)
40. That had been the wife of _____. (Matt. 1:6)
45. Kanga’s child.
46. Sound made by a cow.
48. Thy word have I hid _____ my heart. (Ps. 119:11)
49. Make me _____ understand. (Ps. 119:27)

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For February 24

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

REUNITED Genesis 45:1–15

Revealed (1–4)

Judah's heartfelt plea for Benjamin so moved Joseph that he ordered everyone except his unsuspecting brothers to leave the room. He could no longer control his emotions. As his assistants, interpreters and other officials left the room he declared to his brothers that he was Joseph and immediately asked them if his father was still alive.

His brothers could not answer him. They stood before Joseph silent in speechless terror. They were

overcome with disbelief in their minds and fear in their hearts. They must have wondered what Joseph would do to them.

Through his tears Joseph noticed their paralyzing fear. He invited them to come closer to him. He told them that he was the one whom they had sold into Egypt. By clarifying his identity he intended to comfort his brothers but instead he must have increased their fear. The family secret was no longer a secret.

Remnant (5–8)

Noticing the absolute terror on his brothers' faces Joseph sought to calm them. He stated that it was actually God who had sent him to Egypt to preserve for them a remnant on earth. Joseph understood that God had been orchestrating the circumstances of his life to fulfill His purposes. His brothers were responsible for Joseph's suffering, but God had used his suffering to accomplish His divine plan.

Not a hint of reproach was spoken, only encouragement. It was evident Joseph had already forgiven his brothers. Four times Joseph stated God sent him to Egypt. Joseph had spent the last two decades praying, thinking and rethinking what had been going on in his life. And God had granted him wisdom. God had given him wisdom to interpret Pha-

raoh's dreams and God had given him wisdom to discern the divine plan in the actions of his brothers.

Joseph believed God works His will in and through the actions of all people. He understood that every episode of his life's story was under God's direct rule. This is the doctrine of divine providence.

Joseph was not giving his brothers a theological lecture to set them straight but rather sought to comfort their fearful hearts.

It is encouraging to know the sins of his brothers, though they had caused great harm to Joseph, their father and themselves, had not thwarted God's plan but had been used to bring it about.


Reunion (9–13)

Having calmed his brothers with the comfort of the knowledge of God's providence and forgiveness, Joseph told them to go to Jacob and bring him down to him quickly. Joseph set in motion plans for a reunion with his father. He arranged for them to live in the very fertile land of Goshen.

Joseph instructed his brothers to tell his father about how God had made him lord over all of Egypt. He wanted his father to know that he could take care of him and all of the family.

Restored (14–15)

Here we see emotional reconciliation with all 11 brothers. It was time for honest expressions of love and forgiveness. Joseph embraced his little brother Benjamin and wept on his neck as Benjamin also wept on Joseph's neck. Tears of joy flowed as Joseph kissed all his brothers and wept upon them.

Because hidden sin had been exposed and dealt with and forgiveness had been granted, mercy and truth met together. The guilt departed. A joyful love enveloped all of them. And they talked and talked and talked. The 12 of them had 20 years of time to make up for. 

Joseph believed God works His will in and through the actions of all people.

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

WHEN FALSE RELIGIONS DECEIVE 1 John 2:18–29

A false religion will have nothing to do with the fellowship of the church. (18–20)

Various understandings exist about what John means by "last hour." Some note that there is no article preceding the word "hour." John is not saying "it is the last hour" but rather "it is a last hour." This view sees history as proceeding by slow periods of relative calm until a crisis is reached, an age is ended and a new age begins. This new age signals that things can never be the same again. John is affirming such a last hour has come.

Others suggest that in spite of the nearly two millennia between John's day and ours, we are a part of the same "last hour" in which the early Christians found themselves. Given the reality of time from God's perspective and not our own, it is quite easy to conceive of ourselves living in the last days since the time of John's letter.

"Antichrist" is a term peculiar to 1 John and 2 John. John confirms that the antichrist challengers "went out from us." It is possible there are teachers within the Christian community who were once a part of the fellowship, or at least appeared to be so. But though they claim a connection with the church John warns that "they were not of us."

John is confident that his readers know this and are standing by the real truth of the gospel's teachings, as his readers have an "anointing from the Holy One." The word "anointing" is a reference to the imparting of the Holy Spirit to followers of Jesus.

A false religion denies Jesus is the Christ. (21–25)

Here John reveals the central tenet of the heresy he is opposing.

The false teachers are denying the reality of the Incarnation — that God was in Christ (see 2 Cor. 5:19). They are denying that "Jesus is the Christ," that is, God in the flesh.


John sees this as the fundamental lie. The consequence of such a view is utterly tragic: Without a right view of the Son, one cannot possess a right view of the Father. If Jesus is not the Son of God and one with the Father, then it is not the love of God we see revealed in His life, death and resurrection. It is only when we receive Christ that we become sons of God (see John 1:12).

"What you heard from the beginning" points back to the simple gospel John's readers received. The word "abide" or "remain" appears 24 times in 1 John alone. If John's friends will immerse themselves in the good news then they will "abide in the Son and the Father." To this day, just as the best protection against a cold is to stay healthy, the best protection against heresy is a robust and healthy relationship with God and His people.

We avoid deception by remaining in Christ and relying on His Holy Spirit. (26–29)

Having confirmed their special anointing by the Spirit, John turns to the future coming of Christ.

Those who abide in Christ now will welcome Christ's coming with "confidence," (boldness) and without shame. "Born" is an important word here.

Christians are not simply worldly people who are trying to live a little better. Christians are a people who have been radically renewed. They have been born all over again. The day in and day out practice of righteousness is evidence of Jesus having transformed us into new people. At our best as God's children we bear resemblance to the Father. 

Without a right view of the Son one cannot have a right view of the Father.

The crossword has moved! It is on page 21 this week and can now be found on the page before the Sunday School lessons each week. Happy puzzling!



Media reviews

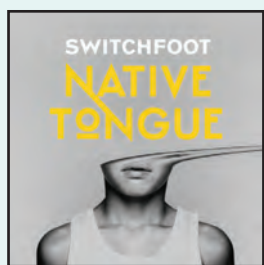
Switchfoot

Native Tongue
Fantasy, 2019

Switchfoot albums typically aren't for shallow thinkers, and that's true with "Native Tongue," a musical joyride with

lyrics that make you reflect on life.

Although Switchfoot has won Dove



Awards they aren't a Christian band in the modern sense. The words "God" and "Jesus" aren't even heard on the album, although — like the book of Esther — God's presence is evident. One example — "Joy Invincible" — tells of a tragedy at a hospital that led the singer to declare "hallelujah."

Most of the songs, including "Prodigal Soul," have double meaning that could apply to a marriage or a romance.

TobyMac

The Elements
ForeFront, 2018

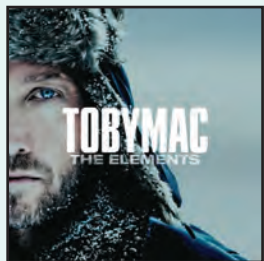
It's the eighth solo album from TobyMac, and one of his best yet, featuring his unique blend of rock, R&B and hip hop.

The bass-heavy title track describes his battle with the "elements" of the world and his desire to live a godly life.

In "Starts With Me" (with Aaron Cole), he

sings about racial diversity.

There was a time I was neutral about TobyMac's music. But after I went to a concert, I became a fan. (Michael Foust)



Lauren Béa

Photo courtesy of Lauren Béa Music

Meet the reviewer

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

What God says

Lauren Béa's music spotlights finding identity in Christ

By Michael Foust

Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Christian singer and songwriter Lauren Béa didn't have to dig very deep for inspiration for her debut album, "Wildflower," produced by Otto Price.

Béa simply looked back to her time in middle school, when her family moved from Phoenix to Dallas. Béa, who is biracial, was bullied four straight years.

In Christ

Béa co-wrote most of the songs on the album, which features music with a mixture of pop and R&B. It also includes a rendition of "What a Beautiful Name."

"I was picked on a lot at school for being biracial," Béa said. "I never felt like I was beautiful or I was enough for anybody. I was

always trying to mold myself into who I thought those kids wanted me to be."

Béa's feelings of inadequacy extended to adulthood, when she worried if she was a "good enough" singer and if she would be accepted.

"It came to a point where I realized it stems from childhood and wanting to be loved and being accepted," she said. "... I went through a process of

letting go of what happened in my past and accepting and embracing what God says about me instead of what people say about me. And so that really has been the inspiration for the album — just identity and loving and accepting yourself and who you are in Christ."

That message is spotlighted in the album's title track, "Wildflower," which is addressed to women who struggle with feelings of inad-

equacy: "You wonder if you're lost / Feeling like a fraud / Surrounded by the thoughts / That you're not good enough." The chorus answers, "Cause you know you're a wild, a wildflower/ You don't have to change the way you are / You know you're a wild, a wildflower / You're beautiful just the way you are."

'Beautiful blessing'

The song and the album come at a time when many teens are trying to find their worth on Instagram and through other forms of social media.

Béa said the song's message is this: "What's so beautiful about you is who you are naturally in your unique self because God created you for a specific purpose ... And if you're not living in that purpose and if you're trying to be someone else, you're missing out on that beautiful blessing."

Visit LaurenBeaMusic.com for information about her album and tour.✝



‘Miracle’ mobilization

Hispanic pastors partner with IMB missionaries in Southeast Asian city

Daniel Tucheze remembers the day he got the call. “Jason called me and said, ‘I need you to pray about this city in Southeast Asia because it is going to be opening up and maybe there are opportunities,’” Tucheze said.

It was a big deal. But the call it-

self wasn’t a surprise. In the years before, Tucheze had accompanied Jason Carlisle, the International Mission Board’s (IMB) director of Hispanic mobilization, on many trips.

“The very big blessing is that Carlisle is not just challenging us to go to Latin America,” said Tucheze, who is pastor of Iglesia Bautista El Shaddai, Jackson, Tennessee. “He wants us to be cross-cultural people who reach people in the last frontier.”

So Carlisle encouraged Tucheze and offered him training through the IMB, and Tucheze started going on trips and partnering with IMB workers in different parts of Southeast Asia. Then Tucheze started encouraging other Hispanic pastors to go too — he’s taken pastors from several states with him over the years.

“He has a real calling and a burden for Asia,” Carlisle said. “He’s very good at mobilizing other pastors and giving them a vision.”

How to pray:

▶ Pray for IMB workers and churches to continue to form partnerships to take the hope of Christ to unreached people all over the world.

▶ Pray for God to continue to call Hispanic churches to engage the world with the gospel.

(Missions Mosaic, IMB)



IMB photos

The people of Southeast Asia have worked their way into the heart of Daniel Tucheze, pastor of Iglesia Bautista El Shaddai in Jackson, Tennessee, as he has taken trips to partner with IMB church planters there.

So four years ago when IMB worker Edwin Feather set out to plant churches in every part of a large city in Southeast Asia, Tucheze was there.

Amazing things

His team wasn’t just the first Hispanic missions team to come partner with Feather — it was the first team period. And in the years since, they have seen God do amazing things. Six pastors travel to the city each December and host a Christmas party and do outreach.

And in this tough-to-reach city more than 200 have professed faith

in areas of the city where the gospel hadn’t made it before.

“God is moving Hispanics to America so that they can know Him, then He is mobilizing them to go on mission to the world,” Tucheze, who is originally from Guatemala, said. “He is using our church to reach Tennessee and plant churches here, but He is also using us to reach Asia. God is wonderful, and we are thankful for what He has done. It really is a miracle.”

EDITOR’S NOTE — Names changed for security reasons. (Missions Mosaic, IMB)

For centuries the people of Southeast Asia have lived and died under the influence of religions like Buddhism and Islam. Daniel Tucheze, pastor of Iglesia Bautista El Shaddai, Jackson, Tennessee, said he’s grateful for Jason Carlisle, the IMB’s director of Hispanic mobilization, who challenged him to take the hope of the gospel to the other side of the world.

