



The Alabama Baptist

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Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



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To watch the videos from this week's issue, visit our YouTube channel or use the HP Reveal app on your phone or tablet and hover over the segments marked "AR."



Photo courtesy of Bethel Baptist Church

Tim Harris (left) and Khala Waites (center), assisted by Megan Tucker, smile at their fans after receiving their crowns at the Night to Shine prom at Bethel Baptist Church, Dora.

'Best night'

Night to Shine offers way to demonstrate worth to God

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Michael Trull said there wasn't a dry eye in the congregation the Sunday they showed a highlight video from their recent Night to Shine event.

"It's hard to describe if you've never been to one," said Trull, pastor of Thor-

ington Road Baptist Church, Montgomery. "But the main thing is — we were expecting it to be a blessing to the guests who came and they were a blessing to us instead."

God's love

The guests — all age 14 and up with some kind of special need — enjoyed a prom night experience centered on God's love for every person. Volunteers helped them with hair and makeup, then drove them in a limousine to the event venue where a crowd lined the red carpet waiting for them to arrive.

At Night to Shine, guests

are paired with a buddy and enjoy a night of dancing, karaoke singing and celebrating. At the end of the night, every guest is crowned prom king or queen.

"It was just an amazing experience," Trull said. "So many folks said it was the best night of their life, and we've gotten so many cards from parents who said, 'You made my kid feel like a regular kid for an evening.'"

It was Thorington Road Baptist's first time to participate in the event, which is sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation. This year's Night (See 'Tim Tebow,' page 11)

GracePointe Baptist starts special needs support group

Angie Gordon said she heard a statistic recently that hit her hard — more than 90 percent of families with special needs don't attend church because they feel like they don't fit in.

Not only that, she discovered no support group at all for parents of those with special needs in northeast Huntsville existed. She herself has daughters with challenges — two have a cleft lip and palate, and another has a learning disability.

A safe place

So Gordon, children and assimilation minister for GracePointe Baptist Church, Huntsville, decided to start a support group for family members and caregivers of people with special needs. The group meets on the third Tuesday night of the month with a snack supper at 6 and a program at 6:30.

"Right now we're just trying to get to know people and find out what their needs are," Gordon said. "We want to offer support and a safe place to share."

People facing any sort of challenge are welcome. The group has special speakers each month to share personal stories and topical information.

For more information email angie@gracepointbc.org. (Grace Thornton)

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So why should you take advantage of this complimentary access?

The website features the most up-

to-date news and popular stories, but also provides access to *TAB*'s archive of stories stretching back as far as 2000.

The website also provides access to the *TAB* News podcast, an easy way to contact us with news items, comments and questions and an option donate to *TAB*. Event promotions are often featured on the site, and downloadable resources that go along with some of our top stories also are available.

'Great resource'

"The website is a great resource for keeping up with our current stories as well as exploring the topics and events we've covered during the past 20 years," president and editor Jennifer Davis Rash said. (*TAB*)



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

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(augmented reality)

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



MY RASHIONALE

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

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@RashionalThts



Capturing, keeping our joy starts with our daily priorities

For all of you who took the challenge of the February fast from cable news networks, grab your remotes and start clicking. You are free to go back to your favorite shows.

Thank you for taking the opportunity to focus on this type of mental and emotional break. I heard from several people during the month and everyone agreed it was a positive move.

Only one reader reached out with a question to clarify my intentions. She was concerned I might be making a political statement with the suggestion of the fast. But after I explained my reasoning was to disconnect from the aggressiveness and intensity of the shows on cable networks, she agreed it would be good for our spirits and minds to have the break.

I do hope you found some serenity during the fast and will choose to put limits on how much of the cable news programming you absorb each day.

The less angry or agitated we are, the more we can focus on loving like Christ and showing Christ's love.

Love is deemed “the greatest” of the big three — faith, hope and love — mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13:13.

Love also is the first item listed in the fruit of the Spirit line up in Galatians 5:22 — “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.”

Now that we've checked love off the list and are headed into March, how about we focus a

bit on another fruit? Joy looks good to me.

I had the opportunity to chat with author, speaker and Bible teacher Richard Blackaby in mid-February. He encouraged me so much in the few minutes we chatted, that I quickly found his leadership podcast online to hear more from him.

The first podcast I selected focused on joy.

“No one can take your joy from you but you can surrender it,” Blackaby explained.

“Ultimately you've got to de-

side — am I going to surrender my joy because of what this person did? ... God can give you joy even in the midst of pain. ... You choose where you are going to focus.

“Get your eyes on God and His goodness to you,” he said. “Guard yourself. It's not fair (for) everyone around those who lost their joy to pay the price for it.”

Blackaby also shared tips for how to maintain joy such as getting enough sleep. Ouch. I needed to be reminded of that.

“It's hard to have joy if you

are tired. Get some of the negative news out of your head and go to sleep.”

Did you catch that? Blackaby also mentioned tempering the amount of negative news we allow into our minds each day, especially at the end of the day.

Another tip: Surround yourself with positive, joyful people and create margin in your life.

“You've got to guard your own joy,” Blackaby said. “That comes out of an abiding relationship with Christ. Commune with the Lord and enter into His presence every day.” 🌿

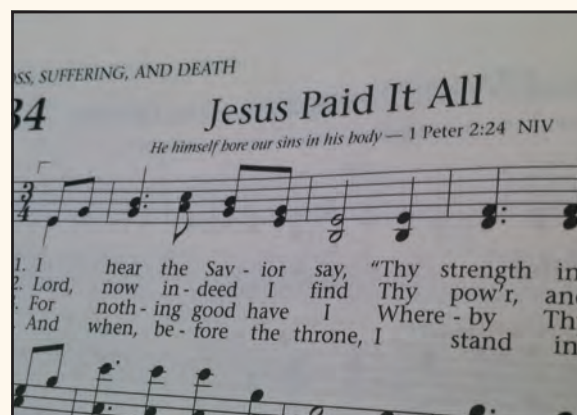
RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

Many of my giving-it-all-to-Him moments happened while singing hymns such as ‘I Surrender All,’ ‘Jesus Paid It All’

The elderly gentleman stepped up his pace to catch up with me following the event. I was zipping back and forth through the crowd following the Servant/Leader Appreciation Night event our TAB team co-sponsored recently when I felt his tug on my arm.

Turning around to see who was trying to get my attention, my heart melted as I saw the tears in his eyes. He merely wanted to thank me for making the event possible — mainly because of the music, he told me.

We combined a night of comedy with traditional southern gospel music — and it was the music that did his soul good, the gentleman said between breaths.



“It really lifted my spirit and I needed that,” he told me.

That wasn't the first time I've seen this type of reaction following a time of traditional worship by someone who has an emotional connection to the hymns or southern gospel-type songs.

After all, music provides an emotional experience for all of us.

The more contemporary style of music connects deeply with those coming to Christ and growing in Him today, while the hymns are many times the favorites of our more seasoned believers.

No matter the style, the words, tune and rhythm of particular songs connected to powerful moments in our lives will always draw those emotions back to the surface, even after many years have passed.

So for someone who desperately longs for a touch of the old hymns, it isn't because they are being difficult. It is because their soul longs for it. And for those more interested in the newer songs, it's because that's where their souls are filled. 🌿

Your Voice



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

What can your church learn from Chick-fil-A?

By Keith Shorter

Pastor, Mount Airy Baptist Church, Easley, S.C.

Nearly every time I go to Chick-fil-A, it makes me want to be a better pastor. The way they conduct their business and serve their customers fascinates me. The culture they have created is unlike anything I have ever experienced in any other fast food restaurant.

Maybe that's why their parking lot is typically full and the drive-thru is stacked two wide. I never see that at other restaurants.

I wish that my church were a bit more like Chick-fil-A. I am convinced that there are some things we can learn from the chicken company

that made the cow famous.

1. Develop a culture of serving others. Everyone's job at Chick-fil-A is to serve. Regardless of their title or job description, you will likely hear more than one person say, "My pleasure" in serving you.

2. Call people by name. When I go through the drive-thru, they ask my name as they take my order. At the window, someone hands me my food and calls me by name. That personal touch means something.

3. Develop systems for efficiency. Think about it. The busiest fast food restaurant in our community has the best customer service. They have developed systems to handle the crowds of people. They expect a

large crowd each day and plan for it.

4. Give back to the community.

Founder Truett Cathy always said that he wasn't in the chicken business but the people business. Chick-fil-A treats their customers like friends and serves their communities like neighbors.

5. Be creative. In 1995 a cow was seen painting three words on a billboard in Texas — "Eat Mor Chikin." A star was born.

6. Strive for excellence. According to the Chick-fil-A website, that capital A on the end of the name is deliberate. It stands for "grade A, top quality." They seem to work hard to live up to their name.

7. Honor the Lord. Every Sunday this popular national chain closes its doors and their restaurants sit still. They give every employee an opportunity to rest and worship if they so choose.

To be sure, there is a difference between the body of Christ and a chicken restaurant. We have a much higher calling — the gospel of Jesus Christ. But Colossians 3:23 says, "Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically, as something done for the Lord and *not for men*."

The task that God has given us is too important to do it halfheartedly. In whatever ways you go about sharing the gospel in your community, do it enthusiastically.

Let's strive to be the place in our community where people who are hungry for God feel welcome and wanted. (BP)

We urge the Cuban government to immediately cease all intimidation tactics and ... to ensure freedom of religion and conscience for Cubans of all faiths or none.

Kristina Arriaga
Vice chair
U.S. Commission on
International Religious
Freedom

The challenges before [Adam Greenway] require [Southwestern Seminary] alumni and others to pray with Proverbs 2:1–6 for wisdom, insight and understanding.

Thomas Wright, director of missions for Mobile Baptist Association and president of Alabama's SWBTS alumni group

Don't let the enormity of the problem overwhelm you. Start with caring for the person in front of you.

Raleigh Sadler, Author "Vulnerable: Rethinking Human Trafficking"

God's plan of redemption is for His children to travel throughout the world in obedience to the Great Commission.

Paul Kim
Asian-American relations
consultant, SBC

My Jesus Story

As I was reading one of my studies this morning a sentence captured my attention.

The study by Rick Warren is on restoring relationships and in it he said, "If you'll pray about the conflict first instead of gossiping to a friend, you'll often discover that either God changes your heart or he changes the other person without your help. ... As David did with his psalms, use prayer to ventilate vertically."

What a neat idea! Are you mad? Ventilating vertically. Are you frustrated? Lonely? Hurt-

ing? Mourning? Scared? Happy? At peace? In every aspect of our lives, we can literally ventilate vertically.

God tells us in Joshua 1:5 that "no one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Get it?

He will never leave us nor forsake us. Just another comfort of being a child of God.

Thank you, Jesus!

By Jenni Ingram
First Baptist Church, Gantt

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“Blessed and grateful for all that God is doing!”

JARMAN LEATHERWOOD

Pastor, House of Hope and Restoration Church, Huntsville, Ala.

Hollywood is finding its way more toward faith-based films and quite frankly, the more the faith-based community supports the films, the more the studios are going to be encouraged to do it.

Glenn Ross
President, Universal 1440
Entertainment

Nothing substitutes for meeting God regularly and often in the Holy Scripture. As water quenches thirst so God's word ministers to the thirst of heart.

Jerry Batson
Theology 101 excerpt
The Alabama Baptist

A local church planter was told by a Turkish professor, “We’ve

been eager to build relationships with Americans and hear more about Jesus and the gospel that you talk about.”

In the words of an international ministry leader, “What an opportunity we have here to serve Christ, and to serve others.”

**From the “Sharing Your Story”
blog of the Tuscaloosa County
Baptist Association**

Pastors are shepherds; we’re entrusted by God to protect His sheep. Part of that means getting your head out of the sand if you don’t think something bad can happen at your church.

But it also means leading your church members to get their heads out of the sand, too. Again, the goal

isn’t to make your congregation suspicious of everyone; it’s to help them realize the weight of being entrusted with a flock.

Matt Henslee
Managing editor
LifeWay Pastors

“That really stinks” is a very simple phrase that cuts right through it. It says, “I hear you and I’m just going to sit here for a moment and acknowledge that what you are up against isn’t that great.” ... Empathy goes very, very far in helping [others] contain what is upsetting them.

Dr. Lisa Damour, Psychologist
Author of “Under Pressure:
Confronting the Epidemic
of Stress and Anxiety in Girls”

From the *Twitterverse*

@brettmccracken

World: follow your heart
Jesus: follow me (Matt. 4:19)
World: you do you
Jesus: deny yourself
(Matt. 16:24)
World: live your best life
Jesus: lose your life to find it
(Matt. 16:25)

@jenniferwilkin

PSA Church Leaders: Your women won’t stop going to women’s Bible study if you decide not to offer it. They’ll just go where it’s being offered, leaving you zero idea of what they’re learning, and all the accountability for it. By prioritizing and resourcing it, you serve them.

@PaulTripp

We long to be comfortable, God has chosen for us to be holy and will sacrifice our comfort in order

to produce a greater conformity to his likeness and will.

@DerwinLGray

47% of American homes say pornography is a problem in the home. Pornography use increases the chances of marital infidelity by 300%.

@JaredcWellman

It became clear to me at last night’s @EC_SBC meeting that God’s providence was in @jdgrear graciously bowing out of the 2016 SBC race, and thus being available in 2018. He’s been elected for such a time as this. #sbctoo #churchtoo

@pbethancourt

In the midst of all the conversations about abuse, what may be lost on people is how significant it

is that these amendments include racism as an explicit grounds for disfellowshipping a church. An effort to do this failed 2–3 years ago. It is momentous that it will now happen.

@Grant_D_Taylor

I really enjoyed Abe Kuruvilla’s talk last night. Takeaways: 1) all of us, single or married, need Christ more than any other person. 2) Our churches must rethink singleness in light of the gift of celibacy if we want any hearing on sexuality, gender, etc.

@Jerry_Watts

Hueytown Baptist Church — “Happy Birthday” — the church that God allowed me to serve for 10 years turns 47 today. Congrats Bro. Chris Burns and many more godly people serving there.



Photo courtesy of Shocco Springs
Russell Klinner is executive director of Shocco Springs Conference Center in Talladega.

Solitude and silence

It humbles me every day to see how God has blessed Shocco with so much. Our staff, board members, guests, volunteers, donors and facilities are all gifts from God.

As an organization we desire to invest everything to see a return for God’s kingdom. One way we are investing is by providing a place for pastors to seek refuge from the turmoil of the world and spend time alone with God.

Daily life and ministry demands can quickly turn our passions into frustrations. To combat this, we need solitude and silence with Abba Father. We see Christ set this example in the gospel as He withdraws from the crowds to seek solitude with the Father.

Shocco wants to be a place of solitude for pastors. We have two fully furnished apartments ready and waiting for any pastor for a free, three-night retreat with us — no strings attached, no expectations. Sit by the lake, find a trail, hang a hammock, find solitude. Interested? Email eshadix@shocco.org or lcowart@shocco.org for details.

Please continue to support Shocco through your attendance and prayers. May God continue to give us wisdom as we invest God’s resources at Shocco.

—Russell Klinner

‘What if I forget about God?’



BP file photo by Kent Harville

Hymns, prayers linger in memory of those with dementia

When geropsychologist Benjamin Mast evaluates dementia clients at his University of Louisville research lab, there’s a question some people of faith ask: “What if I forget about God?”

It’s a query that reflects the struggles of people facing diseases like Alzheimer’s.

In his book, “Second Forgetting: Remembering the Power of the Gospel During Alzheimer’s Disease,” Mast describes a man who may not always remember his grown children’s names but “quickly joins in” when someone reads one of his favorite psalms.

‘Magical moments’

Mast said what remains intact is the part of the memory that’s held longest. In some cases that relates to faith: hymns and creeds that people may have recited for years.

“If you ask a person who’s been deeply affected by Alzheimer’s about something that happened yesterday, you’re going to their weakness in terms of memory,” he said.

“But if we can engage them, for example, in the context of faith services with older songs and hymns that they’ve known for many years, we’re meeting them where they’re strong.”

In congregations and chaplains’

offices there are stories of faith kept and questions about whether it has been lost. Experts and everyday individuals speak of “magical” moments, when people who usually stare into space are suddenly enlivened by worship, and tough times, when a loved one no longer avows a long-term belief.

Mast, a Southern Baptist elder, said clergy have often told him they grapple with how to help congregants whose families are coping with dementia.

“The common refrain is, ‘Seminary didn’t prepare me for this,’” Mast said.

He succeeded in having Southern Baptists adopt a 2016 resolution that called for pastors to seek training about Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia and churches to expand their ministries to meet needs of caregivers and the people for whom they are providing care.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that more than 5.7 million Americans have Alzheimer’s. Experts predict twice as many Americans 65 and older will have the disease by 2040.

Chaplains in senior citizens’ facil-

ities have long dealt with residents with dementia and have noticed how some residents may recall their religion more than other aspects of their lives.

“They will remember how to say the Lord’s Prayer when they won’t remember anyone’s name. They’ll remember the words to ‘Amazing

Grace’ when they don’t know what day it is,” said Rebecca Church, director of pastoral services at a United Methodist-affiliated retirement community in Louisville.

Some churches have found that special worship services may meet a need when a long-time congregant can no

longer manage the typical sermons and contemporary music that may be heard in a sanctuary.

Church memories

Jane Gumbiner, a member of Southeast Christian Church, a megachurch in Louisville, tears up when she speaks of how nice it is to hear her husband, Hal, sing at its “Classic Worship” service on Thursdays. She relishes the moments when his memory of church appears three and a half years after his diagnosis with dementia.

The Thursday gathering allows the retired veterinarian to sing “old-timey hymns” like “The Old Rugged Cross” and “I Surrender All.”

“He sings them, he knows them,” said the retired educator who wears a pendant with a fish next to her cross to underline her faith. She adds more softly: “As opposed to just being totally silent.” (RNS)

What remains intact is the part of the memory that’s held the longest.

Benjamin Mast geropsychologist

“They will remember how to say the Lord’s Prayer when they won’t remember anyone’s name. They’ll remember the words to ‘Amazing Grace’ when they don’t know what day it is.”

Rebecca Church

How to help, not hurt, congregants with dementia

When a congregant has dementia, what can a church do?

Though each person is different and advice varies depending on an individual’s condition, here are some basic tips from experts.

Congregations

- ▶ Visit people in homes or at care facilities
- ▶ Offer respite to caregivers
- ▶ Create support group or help families connect with established ones locally
- ▶ Host a hymn singing and recite traditional prayers
- ▶ Use name tags
- ▶ Don’t exclude (create accommodations instead)

Individuals

- ▶ Treat people with respect
- ▶ Reintroduce yourself
- ▶ Sing, create a playlist of favorite hymns and songs
- ▶ Listen
- ▶ Phone caregivers
- ▶ Don’t ask “Do you remember me?”
- ▶ Don’t be condescending (treat like adults, not children)
- ▶ Don’t try to correct (accept their reality)
- ▶ Don’t ask about recent activities

(Faith United Against Alzheimer’s, RNS)

What will wake me up?

Worship leader shares experience of singing hymns with his grandmother

By **Jeremy Moore**
Special to The Alabama Baptist

When you find yourself staring death in the face something special happens.

I shifted in my chair as I felt the hands of my grandmother, tired and calloused from years behind a piano. I turned around to see CDs filled with hymns and gospel music stacked next to the CD player in her room.

Ironically those CDs were more of her line holding to life than the oxygen tubes strapped around her nose.

My grandmother, Ella, was the textbook definition of joy. She loved music, she loved singing and she always had some tune she was humming.

She was a church musician and led the choir. She also had four sons she wrangled together to create a traveling quartet to churches around their hometown of Detroit, Michigan.

It's no shock that all of her sons and their families are in ministry now. Extended family gatherings for us would always include some type of song sung together. Singing is a way of life for our family, and singing hymns is purely essential to our family DNA.

Ella loved hymns and knew every alto line to any hymn in her hymnal. It's no shock that when she was diagnosed with dementia a few years ago and her mind started failing, music remained her only constant.

She would forget who was her

*Old hymns have stood
a test of generations
and will continue
to be a language
shared between fellow
brothers and sisters
in Christ.*



BP file photo by Najlah Feanny/Genesis Photos

'The songs we sing and the words we recite together in corporate worship are important because they will indeed carry us to our last day,' says Birmingham-based worship leader and musician Jeremy Moore.

'Pillars' hymn project features classic songs, original tunes

Jeremy Moore's experiences with his grandmother, Ella, along with studying classical music and hymnology in college, helped him fall in love with the depth and musical language of hymns.

That love inspired Moore to create "Pillars," a project that features 10 hymns, including "My Jesus, I Love Thee" and "O Worship the King."

Moore said he intentionally kept the same melodies, structure

and form of the original hymns but added a modern musical flair.

"They are an expansion of what is currently on a hymnal page without losing their original intent and penmanship," Moore said. "I hope these hymns sink their roots deeper into my heart and into the hearts of those who listen. Most importantly, I hope these melodies and words wake our hearts up now until our final breath." (TAB)



family, but she remembered her hymns. She could not make coherent words, but she remembered her hymns. She uneasily waved her arms and laughed like a child, but she remembered her hymns.

In her last days when Ella was lethargic from her medicine, someone would play a hymn to redirect her mind. She straightened up in her chair, sang her alto line and did not miss a word.

Being with her in those moments are moments I will never forget. What peace she must have felt in those moments.

Songs matter

The more I lead worship the more I am convinced that the songs I sing matter.

Maybe one day those songs will be the only thing that wakes my mind up.

As a result I've found myself entranced by the hymns Ella sang. In a way, I feel a connection with her and all of the saints before me

when I sing those glorious songs.

The songs we sing and the words we recite together in corporate worship are important because they will indeed carry us to our last day.

They give us a language that goes further than the body can control, and they will continue to carry our voices to future generations of Christians as an encouragement and exhortation to keep pressing on in faith.

Ever since I saw Ella's eyes light up in those moments I've been obsessed with preserving her past. To me those hymns communicate something unique only to them.

I find a sense of comfort in them; knowing they have stood a test of generations and will continue to be a language shared between fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Jeremy Moore is a Birmingham-based songwriter and musician. For more information, visit www.jeremymooremusic.com.

Montgomery Baptist language ministry receives national award

The Conversational English (CE) ministry of the Montgomery Baptist Association is the recipient of the 2018 Air Education and Training Command (AETC) International Student Support Award (ISSA).

The national award given by the U.S. Air Force recognizes community organizations who promote the success and wellbeing of international students affiliated with Air Force education and training programs.

Susan West, CE director, accepted the award at the Alabama Goodwill Ambassador Appreciation Night held Jan. 24 at the Maxwell Club at Maxwell Air Force Base (AFB) in Montgomery.

Goodwill Ambassadors are volunteers from the local community who assist international officers and their families as sponsors, English teachers and in other ways that help the officers and their families get to know American people and how they live.

West said the nomination was an honor, and “winning the award has given CE an opportunity to show others what faith-based ministry can offer when we work together.”

The weekly English classes began more than 30 years ago as an outreach to the wives of international officers training at Maxwell.

Since then thousands of students and hundreds of volunteers have been part of the program.

Bill McCrary, an Alabama Baptist and volunteer bus driver for the program, provides transportation for several women and their preschoolers each week.

The children are taught and cared for while their mothers are in class, he said.

“Most of my passengers are Muslim and it has been rewarding to build a relationship with them,” he said.

In addition to the national award, CE also received the ISSA for Air University at Maxwell AFB. (TAB)

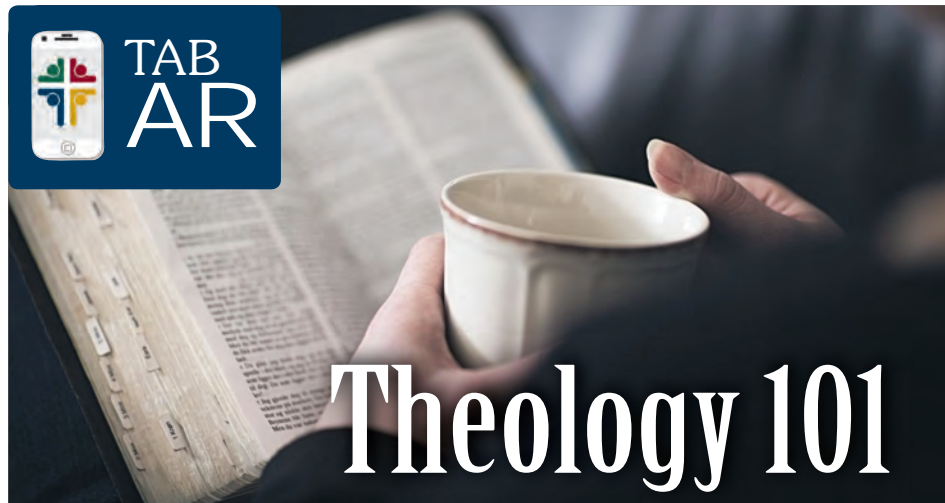
“Winning the award has given CE an opportunity to show others what faith-based ministry can offer when we work together.”

Susan West
CE director



Photo by Capt. Jessica Harris/Maxwell AFB

Susan West (center), director of the Conversational English ministry of the Montgomery Baptist Association, accepts the 2018 Air Education and Training Command (AETC) International Student Support Award (ISSA). Presenting the award were Lt. Gen. Anthony Cotton (left), commander and president of Air University at Maxwell AFB, and George R. Gagnon, director of international training and education for the U.S. Air Force.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Insights through questions

A Question about Man

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

Last week's question raised the topic of the nature of Christ as God's Son. This week's question opens for us the matter of the nature of man. The psalmist asked this question on an occasion of pondering the wonder of God's creation: “What is man that you are mindful of him?” (Ps. 8:4)

Of importance, both in the psalmist's question and in this week's topic, is the meaning of man. In both instances the term “man” is used generically as reference to a human being, not for distinguishing a male from a female. When we read the psalmist's question we think, “What is a human being?”

The answer to this question and its insight into human nature is found in Genesis 1 when God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (v. 26).

Thus the Bible directs us to answer the question about being human by considering the image of God. The image of God obviously does not refer to a physical form since “God is spirit” (John 4:24). The image of God has reference to our spiritual nature.

Right vs. wrong

Aspects of our spiritual nature that mirror God's likeness include the fact that we are personal beings. We possess individual existence and are capable of actions above mere animal instinct.

Human beings possess the ability to make decisions instead of living with a herd mentality. As

beings existing in God's likeness we possess uncanny intellectual power, albeit not unlimited power on par with God who knows all things from beginning to end.

Humans also mirror God's image in the possession of a moral nature that is capable of individual feelings of “right” and “wrong.”

However dimmed this distinguishing characteristic might be — because without exception we are all crippled by a sinful nature — people possess some sense of right and wrong, though we may turn from what is right.

Our essential kinship with God is also seen in what may be termed the perpetuity of existence beyond earthly life. We think of this as the immortality of the soul. Human likeness to the eternal God declares that physical death is not the end of spiritual life.

Nature of man

This brings up three truths about the nature of man: First, the image of God in humans has been distorted through sin. Second, the image of God can be restored through Christ. Third, the restoration of this image is partially possible now through spiritual growth in Christ but will only be perfected in eternity.✠

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.



Looking forward

Churches between pastors have three options for the interim time, Jackson says

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

So your church is between pastors right now. What's the best plan for your church to fill the pulpit while you search for a new pastor?

Mike Jackson, director of the office of LeaderCare and church health at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM), said there are three approaches to consider and decide which one best fits your church's needs.

1. Supply pastors

One way you can approach your church's interim time is to use supply pastors — basically a different guest speaker every week or for several weeks at a time.

This idea could be beneficial in some ways, Jackson said.

"For one, it gives a church an opportunity to hear different types of preaching that maybe they haven't been exposed to," he said.

It can also be a cost-saver for a church. But if your interim time is lengthy the congregation can become weary of the constant change, Jack-

son said. "Folks like to have some consistency and like to know who's going to be in the pulpit."

2. Traditional interim pastors

An approach with a bit more consistency is the traditional interim — pulling in one pastor to fill the pulpit during the entire pastor search.

"Every church can negotiate with that person what they want beyond the preaching aspect," Jackson said. "Some are available to do pastoral

care and administration and offer leadership and can work with staff and meet with committees. Others are basically a permanent pulpit supply."

But there is a third option, he said, one that offers a different approach to interim pastoral work — the transitional pastor.

3. Transitional pastor

In some ways the transitional pastor is the same as the traditional interim — he offers a permanent preaching supply and he can offer guidance to the church's staff and committees.

But a transitional pastor takes it a step further, Jackson said. "He has

"With a transitional pastor you can continue growing the church in Great Commission work."

**George Yates
church health strategist
SBOM**



Unsplash.com

been trained in a process to lead a church on a journey."

That journey is an eight-step process laid out in a model created by LifeWay Christian Resources and intended to help a church determine God's mission for their church.

'Helpful posture'

"They guide the church to look at past and present and look forward to the future," Jackson said. "This process puts them in a helpful posture so when a permanent pastor is called, the church has dealt with some issues, gone through some healing if necessary and gone through a visioning process of projecting where God would want them to be."

During this time the transitional pastor's sermons are also intentional, matching the stage of the process the church is walking through along the way.

The benefit of this option is that when the new pastor arrives, the church is ready to move forward without a lot of delay, Jackson said. This approach turns an interim time from a period of waiting to a time of "productive advancement."

George Yates, church health strategist with the SBOM, said that can be a healthy thing for a church.

"With a transitional pastor you can

continue growing the church in Great Commission work," he said. "This type of pastor wants to have you not only ready for the new pastor, but wants him to have to hit the ground running just to catch up with you. It's an effort to keep the church moving forward or get it moving forward and reverse declining trends."

It's something to consider as you're planning for a transition and thinking through which of the three options would be best for your church, Jackson said. Some churches shy away from committing to a transitional pastor because of the time commitment — it's a nine-to-12-month process and many want to find a pastor more quickly than that.

"But we're finding that across the board in all situations, it's taking most churches a year to 18 months to find a pastor anyway," Jackson said.

'Pray intently'

These are all factors to consider as you're praying about how to handle an interim time, he said. "I would encourage churches to pray intently about where God will have them. Some churches could be well serviced with one of the first two options — the supply pastor or the traditional interim pastor. But I also think any church could be a prime candidate for a transitional pastor." ✝

Transitional Pastor Training will be held April 8-10

The Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) will hold a three-day training for pastors and associational missionaries who are interested in working with churches during a transitional period to provide wise counsel and experienced leadership through the stages of transition between the end of one pastor's ministry and the beginning of another's.

The conference will be held April 8-10 at the SBOM office in Prattville.

Guest speakers will be Henry Webb, consultant for the LifeWay transitional pastor ministry, and Marcus Merritt, lead state missionary for church minister relations at the Georgia Baptist Mission Board.

Register for the conference at <http://bit.ly/registerfortpt>. (TAB)

Clarke Association hosts church and sexuality event

You want me to come to what?" That seemed to be a common response as Clarke Baptist Association spent the better part of a year in prayer and planning for its church and sexuality event. And the effort paid off.

On Jan. 25–26 more than 120 people gathered for "The Church and Sexuality: Helping to Define what Christ has to say about Real Issues Facing Real People," facilitated by Joe Godfrey, executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program.

'Life is messy'

Tray and Melody Lovvorn of Undone Redone were the speakers for the event.

They have a motto: "Life is messy, bring your boots." This motto emphasizes the need for the church to address real life issues.

Clarke Association's goal in presenting the program, which was held at Tompkins Baptist Church, Grove Hill, was to give rural communities insight into the battle raging in the world today.

"By sharing the truth of God's

word, we can all make a difference, even if it's just one baby step at a time," Nancy Gill, ministry assistant for Clarke Association, said.

The Lovvorns shared their testimony of how God brought healing and forgiveness to their marriage that previously ended in divorce. They also shared about Tray's redemption from a life of pornography and sexual addiction.

The Lovvorns provided insight about what the world makes readily available for everyone, including children.

The Lovvorns introduced tools such as My Secure Family, which may be utilized to protect children in the digital age. They also shared many practical resources to aide in the difficult task of raising children in

a safe environment and preparing them for the world as they leave the nest.

"The ironic truth is that even in our homes we must seek to protect not only ourselves, but especially our children from the detrimental effects of cyber bullying, sexting and many other types of attack," Gill said.

Tommy Littleton also was a keynote speaker for the event.

Littleton, a Southern Baptist minister and evangelist, has over 40 years of experience working on university campuses, coastal resorts and inner city streets.

He focused on the importance of the Church maintaining a faithful biblical witness while confronting today's cultural issues.

Alerting the hearer to be aware of the push against the truth of God's word, Littleton encouraged the church to remain faithful to God's word and its gospel principles.

Gospel principles

Littleton shared the Church's response to this divided culture needs to be modeled after the response of Jesus as He engaged with the woman at the well in John 4.

Jesus addressed her thirst for the Living Water as He confronted the sin and revealed Himself to her. The result was a transformed person.

"This is the only hope for our culture," Littleton said.

"It is the hope of Clarke Baptist Association that those who took part in this relevant and timely event will take back to their family, their church and their community a renewed knowledge of the truth about what God's word says concerning our sexuality," Gill said.

"May we have a new resolve to stand firm on the word of God while exposing the fallacies of Satan." (TAB)

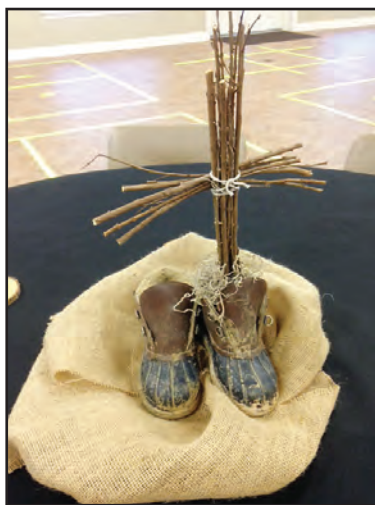


Photo by Nancy Gill

Tray and Melody Lovvorn of Undone Redone have a motto: 'Life is messy, bring your boots,' which emphasizes the need for the church to address real life issues.

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Southside's special needs ministry is 'huge blessing'

More than 20 years ago, Allison Tofflemire started learning sign language at church and got interested in ministry to the hearing impaired.

But she quickly learned God had something slightly different in mind.

"We had two members of our congregation who were special needs and one of them was deaf, but they would both come to the class every week," Tofflemire said.

So one day she decided to broaden the scope of the ministry — she threw a banquet and told them to invite their friends.

The next thing she knew, they had 98 people with special needs in attendance.

"I remember saying, 'OK God, I got it — this

is a special needs ministry,'" Tofflemire said.

And this year's banquet, held over two nights in order to accommodate the crowd, drew more than 350 people to Southside Baptist Church, Huntsville, on Feb. 8–9. They served homemade chili, peanut butter and jelly and ham and cheese sandwiches, and they played bingo with prizes for everyone.

Not forgotten

It's not just a once-a-year ministry. Every Sunday night Southside's special needs class draws around 60 people to sing, assemble crafts and hear Bible stories.

"It's a huge blessing," Tofflemire said. "It allows us to interact with a part of the world that is often left out." (Grace Thornton)

Tim Tebow Foundation prom event hosted in 655 churches

(continued from page 1) to Shine was hosted Feb. 8 by 655 churches across all 50 states and 24 countries, including seven Alabama Baptist churches and Baptist partners in Lebanon.

Angela Washington, who coordinates Night to Shine at Bethel Baptist Church, Dora, in Sulphur Springs Baptist Association, said the event is her favorite night of the year.

'Moment of joy'

"It's such a great way to show the guests love and let them know their worth to God," she said, noting that this was Bethel's third year to host Night to Shine. "Regardless of what our abilities are, we each matter to God. That's what I love about the crowning — it's that moment of joy to say, 'You matter to God.'"

The caregivers also get to relax that night in a respite room where they're served a meal and can enjoy conversations with each other while watching the event from a big screen.

"It gives them a break and lets them know the church supports them, that it's a place of refuge and restoration," Washington said. "Several parents also said, 'I can't believe all this is being done for our child.' You can see the joy and excitement in



Photo courtesy of Thorington Road Baptist Church
Melissa Roldan (left) and Jesse Wood enjoy a dance together during Night to Shine at Thorington Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, one of seven Alabama Baptist churches that hosted an event.

everyone who's involved."

And a bonus to the night is that the youth and adults who volunteer "come away seeing how they can minister in ways they might not have thought of before," she said.

Other Alabama Baptist churches that participated were:

"Regardless of what our abilities are, we each matter to God."

**Angela Washington
Bethel Baptist Church**

- ▶ Agape Baptist Church, Scottsboro
- ▶ Central Baptist Church, Decatur
- ▶ CrossPoint Church, Trussville

- ▶ Dayspring Baptist Church, Mobile
- ▶ Valley View Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa.

And in Lebanon, Night to Shine was part of local Baptists' efforts to change the culture around the care of people with special needs.

The event "was yet another step towards raising awareness, preserving the

dignity of special needs people in our country and giving them back the joy that they offer so innocently and graciously to others," said Nabil Costa, head of the Lebanese Society for Educational & Social Development (LSESD), which includes a Baptist seminary and school. "We are grateful to Tim Tebow's vision and heart that extended across oceans to bring joy to our own people."

Full potential

At Night to Shine, LSESD welcomed 81 guests — just one more way to show local churches and the nation that Beirut Baptist School cares about the dignity of every person, Costa said.

It's part of LSESD's initiative to address "issues of poverty and vulnerability and the right to education for all as a practical reflection of God's love for the vulnerable and the marginalized, that they may attain their full God-given potential," Costa said.

For more information about Night to Shine visit timtebowfoundation.org.

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Photo courtesy of Trish Jackson

Those at the Children's Missions Explosion listened to missionaries, heard about local ministries and three missions offerings, and learned a gospel presentation using a paper airplane.

Children's event gives glimpse into missions-centered life

Sometimes missionaries are people who are doctors or teachers. Sometimes they can't tell the people where they live that they're missionaries.

And they always have to be flexible.

These are just some of the things 872 children in grades 1-6 learned about missionaries as part of the interactive games at Children's Missions Explosion (CME), held in four locations around the state in February.

Missions learning

"It was great," said Trish Jackson, missions lifestyle

strategist for preschool through students at Alabama Woman's Missionary Union. "They heard from three missionaries, learned

"It was a wonderful event and they learned a lot of teachable truths about missions ..."

Trish Jackson
missions lifestyle strategist
Alabama WMU

about a local ministry, learned a gospel presentation using a paper airplane and learned about the three missions offerings."

They did all this using their nametag as a passport.

Each participant was assigned a tour guide who took different "airlines" to take them to six "continents" for an immersive learning experience.

"It was a wonderful event and they learned a lot of

teachable truths about missions through the games," Jackson said.

On Feb. 2 the CME event was hosted by First Baptist Church, Pleasant Grove, and Southside Baptist Church, Andalusia, and on Feb. 9 it was hosted by Mount Zion Baptist Church, Huntsville, and First Baptist Church, Prattville.

To learn more visit alabamawmu.org/CME. (TAB)

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CHURCH POSITIONS

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.

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

Seventh Street Baptist seeks God's man to serve as a bivocational pastor for a traditional service. Please send resumé to: Pastor Search, 513 Seventh Street South, Bessemer, AL 35020.

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@bbcadora.com, or mail resumé to: Music Search Committee, Bethel Baptist Church, 7000 Bethel Road, Dora, AL 35062.

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 INTERIM WORSHIP LEADER

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

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.

RECEPTIONIST/MINISTRY ASSISTANT

First Baptist Church of Birmingham is seeking someone for the front desk position. Duties include answering the phone, membership, atten-

dance, publications and assisting the associate pastor. Part-time, 29 hours a week. Please send resume to: Cyndy James - cjames@fbcbbm.org.

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MINISTRIES

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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 assessed anytime there is internet access. For information on subscriptions email subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org.

Through the storm

Rebuilding communities, planting gospel in Puerto Rico through AAEO

When Jorge Santiago left Puerto Rico as a young man, he never thought he would return. His family sent him to the U.S. mainland in a last-ditch effort to shake him loose from a lifestyle of doing and dealing drugs.

“I never thought that I was going to come back to Comerío,” recalled Santiago of his hometown, “and I didn’t want to come back.”

In 2007, Santiago left behind a community that was struggling economically, whose people wrestled with hopelessness. Santiago did not know then that God was authoring a much larger story than he could possibly imagine.

Fast forward 12 years and Santiago is a 2019 Week of Prayer missionary for the

Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (AAEO) who is ministering in his hometown.

He lives and serves among men and women who endured one of the worst natural disasters to hit Puerto Rico. They also experienced the same desperation Santi-

ago attempted to overcome through substance abuse.

His family raised him with good values, but drugs dragged him into a life of addiction and legal trouble.

Facing a 30-year prison sentence Santiago thought

about his life and God started working.

“I ran to my bedroom, got onto my knees and called out to God, ‘If you save my life from jail I will give you my life forever and I will serve you forever. I will never go back again,’” Santiago said.

A few weeks later his case was miraculously dis-

SENDING HOPE

Week of Prayer is March 3–10.
National goal: \$70 million
Alabama goal: \$6 million

ANNIE ARMSTRONG EASTER OFFERING

FOR NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS

North American Mission Board



NAMB photo by Casey Jones

A group of kids rally around Jorge Santiago during a Vacation Bible School (VBS) meeting in Comerío, Puerto Rico. Events like this are one way that Santiago and One Church Comerío ministers to their community. Santiago has been putting on VBS events in his hometown since 2016.

missed. Santiago gave his life to Christ at Primera Iglesia Bautista (First Baptist Church), Groveton, Virginia, and things started to turn around. He met his wife Rebecca and answered a call to ministry.

Laying groundwork

Whenever he traveled back to see family in Comerío he couldn’t help but notice how little had changed in his old neighborhood. The economic need and spiritual discouragement still permeated the town. As he remembered his past life on the island Santiago could not recall ever hearing anyone tell him, “Jesus is the answer.”

Seeing and understanding that need led Santiago and his family to decide to start a new church. Less than 80 Southern Baptist churches exist on the island with a population of about 3.3 million people, which equates to roughly one church for every 42,000 residents.

As he was laying the groundwork for the new church Santiago found himself back in his hometown, staring down one of the worst hurricanes ever to pound the Caribbean — Hurricane Maria.

The monster storm struck a few months after Santiago

moved to Puerto Rico with his family, and a disaster many might have predicted would derail Santiago’s ministry actually accelerated the process.

With electricity knocked out, simple, day-to-day tasks, such as washing clothes, became extremely difficult. Santiago and his family desired to reach out and aid their neighbors.

After help arrived from families on the U.S. mainland and Send Relief, the compassion ministry arm of the North American Mission Board, Santiago and his wife received funds to purchase washing machines and a generator that enabled them to start a makeshift laundromat. They welcomed people to come and wash their clothes for free.

After a couple of months Santiago realized that, while the physical aid was a good thing, he also needed to start preaching the good news.

“God spoke to me through

His Word, saying that, ‘It’s good to serve the people ... but the reason you are here is for the gospel,’” Santiago said.

On Nov. 12, 2017, Santiago preached the gospel after serving a hot meal with his neighbors and he never stopped. One Church Comerío was born. In March of 2018, Santiago held the church’s first baptism service.

Jorge Santiago realized that while the physical aid was a good thing, he also needed to start preaching the good news.

first baptism service.

Faithful preaching

God has continued to move through One Church, allowing them to secure a building of their own and become a fixture in the community because of the church’s service to their neighbors and faithful preaching of the gospel.

The physical and spiritual need remains great, and gifts to the AAEO help to make ministries like Santiago’s possible.

To learn more about NAMB ministries, visit www.anniearmstrong.com. (NAMB)



NAMB photo by Casey Jones

A missions team with NAMB’s Send Relief and Jorge Santiago (white shirt) pray over a family in Puerto Rico after helping them repair their homes from storm damage.

3 stories you should know



Photo by Morris Abernathy

In a rare invitation to address the SBC Executive Committee (EC) during its Feb. 18–19 meeting in Nashville, 10-year-old Zak McCullar spoke in support of his 2018 motion to add Children's Ministry Day to the SBC calendar of events. The EC voted to recommend the addition to messengers at the 2019 annual meeting in Birmingham. McCullar is a member of First Baptist Church, Carbon Hill, in Walker Baptist Association, where his father Scott is pastor.

Gateway to offer all master's degrees online

Gateway Seminary will become the first Southern Baptist seminary to offer all its master's degrees completely online in the fall of 2019.

"Having all of our master's degrees online means that more than ever before, Gateway students have optimum flexibility to hone their ministry skills as they expand God's kingdom around the world," said Kristen Ferguson, Gateway's director of online education.

The online master of divinity degree includes concentrations in biblical studies, Christian counseling, educational leadership, global missiology, women's ministry and youth ministry.

Several master of arts programs also are available. For more information contact enrollment@gs.edu or call 888-442-8701. (BP)

Christian mother forced to move after arrest

A Christian mother of three arrested in northern India for trying to convert another woman to Christ has been transferred 130 miles from her home by her government employer.

Archana Jaiswal, a state education board employee and former Hindu who put her faith in Christ, says the accusations against her are false and her decision to follow Christ is a personal one.

Jaiswal must begin work in Dharamshala as soon as possible, even though her employers have withheld her pay since she converted to Christianity.

Jaiswal said her husband is a policeman in a neighboring district and a supporter of the Hindu extremist party. She added she is praying for the salvation of her husband and children. (MS)

— NEWSBRIEFS —

FBC Florence to host Refresh 2019 women's Bible conference March 16



On March 16, First Baptist Church, Florence will host Refresh 2019, a Bible conference designed especially for busy women.

Katie Orr and Teri Lynne Underwood will teach at the Refresh Bible conference. With more than 30 combined years of teaching, mentoring and writing experience, Orr and Underwood are experienced at helping women study and apply biblical truth.

During the four sessions of the 2019 conference Katie and Teri Lynne will teach through Colossians. Throughout the study women will uncover meaningful aspects of God's character and learn how to embrace the calling He places on our lives.

Refresh is an invitation to press pause on the demands of life and spend six hours connecting with the Lord, the Word and other women.

Refresh will be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the chapel at First Baptist Church, Florence.

Tickets include conference notebook, discussion questions, Bible study ideas and resources, and a follow-up reading plan of Colossians. Participants

are encouraged to enjoy lunch at one of downtown Florence's many restaurants.

For more information about Refresh or to purchase tickets visit RefreshBibleConference.com or call 256-764-4921. (TAB)

EC presidential search committee has found 'God's candidate' for position



NASHVILLE — The search committee seeking the next president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee (EC) has "identified God's candidate for such a time as this" and will announce the nominee "very soon," search committee vice chairman Adron Robinson reported Feb. 19.

Reporting to a meeting of the EC in Nashville, Robinson, pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church, Country Club Hills, Illinois, said the search committee cannot announce the candidate's name yet because they have not officially notified the person of their intent to nominate him.

When the search committee is ready to announce the name of the nominee it will be released first to the full EC and then made public.

Responding to questions about the diversity of candidates being considered for the position, EC chairman Mike Stone, an ex officio member of the search committee, said the committee's choices reflected diversity in age, ethnicity, gender and experience.

A special called meeting of the EC is likely to take up the search committee's nomination before the EC's next scheduled meeting in June, Stone said. (BP)



Photo by Morris Abernathy

ROBINSON

After threats on his life Sri Lankan Christian pursued, arrested



NATTANDIYA, Sri Lanka — Police in Sri Lanka arrested a Christian who reported a Buddhist mob's threat on his life, according to an advocacy group in the island country.

On Jan. 26, in Nattandiya, in Sri Lanka's North Western Province, six area Buddhists

News near you

ALABAMA-CRENSHAW

▶ **Thaxton Mark Perry** is the new pastor of **Mount Zion Baptist Church, Brantley**. He previously served at Red Oak Baptist Church, Florala, and with Iron Works Men's Ministries.



PERRY

BALDWIN

▶ **Bayside Baptist Church, Lillian**, will host special guest speaker **Wayne McMillian** on March 10 at 10:30 a.m. McMillian was a church planter with the International Mission Board for 10 years in Africa and also served with the North American Mission Board in the Dakota Baptist Association. For more information call 251-256-0226. Tom Harris is pastor.

BETHEL

▶ **Providence Baptist Church, Gallion**, will hold a revival March 3–6 featuring guest speaker **Brad Miles**, pastor of Olive Baptist Church, Lumberton, Mississippi. The Sunday service will begin at 6 p.m. and Monday through Wednesday services will begin at 7 nightly. Special music will be sung nightly,

and a love offering will be taken at each service. **David Stidham** is pastor. ▶ **Sunny South Baptist Church, Pine Hill**, will hold a wild game fellowship March 11 at 6:30 p.m. There will be food, fellowship, testimonies and a Bible devotional. **Matt Kelley** will be the guest speaker. **Denny Couturie** is pastor.

BIGBEE

▶ **Christian Valley Baptist Church, Livingston**, will host a wild game supper March 9 at 5:30 p.m. The guest speaker will be **Sammy Gilbreath**, director of evangelism with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. **Wayne Smith** is pastor.

BUTLER

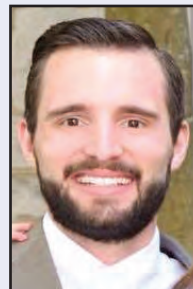
▶ **First Baptist Church, Greenville**, will hold a revival March 11–13 at 7 nightly. **Chase Clower** is pastor.

COFFEE

▶ **Bethany Baptist Church, New Brockton**, will hold a revival featuring guest evangelist **Scott Smith** on March 10–13. Sunday services will be held at 10 a.m. and 6:30 p.m., and Monday through Wednesday services will begin at 6:30 nightly. For more information call 334-488-0904. **Greg Cotter** is pastor.

MONTGOMERY

▶ **Justin Law** is the new associate pastor of discipleship at **First Baptist Church, Montgomery**. Law joined the First, Montgomery, staff as a college intern in 2013, but most recent-



LAW

ly served full time as the church's associate minister to college students. He holds degrees from Auburn University at Montgomery and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, **Ansee**, have one child. **Jay Wolf** is pastor.

MUD CREEK

▶ **Smithville Baptist Church, Bessemer**, and its Victory Outfitters ministry will host a wild game feast March 2 at 5 p.m. **Mike Simpson** is pastor.

NORTH JEFFERSON

▶ **Gardendale First Baptist Church** will host open practice and auditions for **Almost as Good as the Original (AAGATO)** on March 9. AAGATO is a Christian parody music ministry that uses original lyrics in place of secular lyrics in songs. For more information call or text **Duke Stogner** at 501-413-1994. **Kevin Hamm** is pastor.

TENNESSEE RIVER

▶ **Shiloh Baptist Church, Scottsboro**, will hold its homecoming March 10 at 11 a.m. Pastor **Kenneth Wells** will preach and music will be brought by **Danny McNeal**. Lunch will be served following the service. Everyone is invited.

TUSKEGEE LEE

▶ **Farmville Baptist Church, Auburn**, will hold a revival March 3–6 featuring guest evangelist **Tom Kinchen**. The Sunday service will begin at 5 p.m. and Monday through Wednesday services will begin at 6 nightly. **Tom McClendon** is pastor. 🇺🇸

— NEWSBRIEFS —

threatened to attack the Christian if he refused to stop inviting a pastor to lead Bible studies at his house, the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL) reported.

The next day the Christian, whose name was withheld for security reasons, filed a complaint about the threat on his life at the Marawila police station in Puttalam District. This upset the six Buddhists and with others they formed a mob Jan. 29 that headed toward his house with intent to assault him, the NCEASL reported.

A friend notified the Christian of their approach and tried to stop them, resulting in a fight in which one of the Buddhists was slightly injured and received hospital treatment, a source said.

The Christian was not present at the fight, but the injured Buddhist filed an assault complaint against him, the source said. Police arrested the Christian, who was released on bail Jan. 28.



Photo by Wikipedia

Violence and harassment against Christians have been persistent in Sri Lanka, where the population is about 70 percent Buddhist and 13 percent Hindu, with attacks by Hindus on the upswing. Sri Lanka ranked 46th on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2019 World Watch Listing of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. (MS)

Harris retires as pastor of Linden Baptist after three stints on staff

When you ask **Billy Harris** how long he's been at Linden Baptist Church, he laughs and says, "Which time?"

He served there 1974–1976 as the church's minister of music and youth, then came back as the pastor for 2002–2006. Then after a stint as an interim pastor and as an associate in the office of evangelism at the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions he came back to Linden in 2015.

"It's been a wonderful journey with some wonderful people," Harris said.

And it's one that's been full circle in a lot of ways, he said — his wife, **Patty**, started her faith

journey growing up at Linden Baptist.

"She's been by my side every inch of the way, and we've seen God do some amazing things," he said.

In their second stint serving at Linden, Harris led the church through a capital campaign that saw a building built — but even more importantly built up the church with people who came to know the Lord.

"There was a lot of buy in from the church and we saw a lot of growth," he said.

"They are a people of passion and a people of vision."

It's a precious church and leaving is hard, Harris said. "I look back over the years and it puts a smile in my heart," he said. "It's been a joy."

Still, he's excited about the opportunity to serve as a transitional pastor and lead more revivals and men's ministry events. Contact Harris at his new phone number, 334-357-2226, or 251-754-9722. (Grace Thornton)



HARRIS



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



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Topics:

Building a Youth Ministry That Makes Disciples, led by Larry Hyche, state missionary for men's spiritual development, State Board of Missions



Teaching Students to Study and Read the Bible, led by Matt Rogers, pastor of The Church at Cherrydale in Greenville, S.C. and author of *Seven Arrows: a 52-Week Devotional for Teens*.



And Coming in April

INTERLINK YOUTH MINISTERS RETREAT

April 15-17 at Shocco Springs featuring Steve Rohrlack, Church Strengthening & Discipleship Team Leader for the South Carolina Baptist Convention



For cost information or to register for these events, visit ymlink.org. Questions? Contact Lauren House, lhouse@alsbom.org, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 262, (334) 613-2262.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

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

MARCH

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

APRIL

- 4-6 **State Disaster Relief Chaplaincy Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 5 **State Disaster Relief Cleanup/Recovery Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 5-6 **State Disaster Relief Mass Feeding Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 5-6 **State Disaster Relief Chainsaw Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 5-6 **Mom & Me Spring Fling**, WorldSong, Cook Springs, Amanda Armstrong, ext. 223
- 8-9 **Church Planter Assessment Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Lamar Duke, ext. 332, or Lynn Graham, ext. 244
- 8-10 **Transitional Pastor Training**, SBOM Office Facility, Prattville, Mike Jackson, ext. 210, or Debbie Dickey, ext. 218
- 8-10 **Fulfill (formerly Senior Adult Retreat)**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Eileen Mitchell, ext. 221
- 11 **North Regional Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, East Highland, Hartselle, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 11 **South East Regional Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, Ridgecrest, Dothan, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 11 **South West Regional Bible Drill and Speakers' Tournament**, Tillman's Corner First, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 12 **Pastor/Spouse Date Night**, Grace, Fayette, Mike Jackson, ext. 210, or Debbie Dickey, ext. 218
- 12-14 **Deaf Men Zone**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Kristy Kennedy, ext. 311
- 13 **State Disaster Relief Shower & Laundry Unit Training**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Mark Wakefield, ext. 267
- 14 **Palm Sunday**
- 14 **Cooperative Program Sunday**, Lori Lockett, ext. 304
- 14 **North Central Regional Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, Meadow Brook, Birmingham, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 14 **South Central Regional Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, Prattville First, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 15 **South West Regional Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, Spring Hill, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 15 **West Central Regional Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, Fairhaven, Demopolis, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 15-17 **Interlink Youth Ministers Retreat**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Scooter Kellum, ext. 280
- 16 **North East Regional Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, Mt. Zion, Alexandria, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 19 **Good Friday**
- 21 **Easter Sunday**
- 26-28 **OneVoice Tour, Shocco Springs**, Talladega, Keith Hibbs, ext. 217
- 27 **State Bible Drill & Speakers' Tournament**, Montgomery First, Belinda Stroud, ext. 255
- 30 **Get Acquainted Day**, SBOM Office Facility, Prattville, Sandy Harmann, ext. 266

MAY

- 3-4 **Church Weekday Education (CWE) Leadership Training**, Shocco Springs, Talladega, Linda Hicks, ext. 263, or Lee Wright, ext. 241
- 4 **State Pinewood Derby Race**, Disaster Relief Center, Prattville, Monica Thompson, ext. 227
- 4 **North Alabama Spring Library Workshop**, Shoal Creek, Deatsville, Marty Woodall, 334-569-3854

Culture must **change**

SBC Executive Committee takes action on sexual abuse, racism in churches

Meeting for the first time since a report exposed hundreds of instances of sexual abuse in Southern Baptist churches, the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) Executive Committee (EC) heard about plans for change at its Feb. 18-19 meeting.

Abuse is "not a fabricated

story" with an agenda, SBC president J.D. Greear said in remarks Feb. 18, referring to articles published in the *Houston Chronicle* that revealed approximately 380 instances of sexual abuse by pastors, ministry leaders and lay leaders at SBC churches nationwide since 1998 — including more than 250 since 2008.

A searchable database

also was published online.

Some Southern Baptist churches have "ignored" or "silenced" victims, Greear said. The SBC's culture needs to change, he said.

'Match the gospel'

"We've got to look deeply at our culture," see how abuse has been allowed and make sure it doesn't happen again, Greear said.

"Our goal is for our response to abuse to match the gospel we proclaim with our mouths," he added. The gospel declares Jesus laid down His life for the vulnerable. We need to defend them.

Greear said the initial recommendations of the Sexual Abuse Advisory Study group he formed in July 2018 include repentance for decades of inaction, the distribution of a free training resource, greater emphasis on background checks, a reexamination of the ordi-

nation process and the possibility of an SBC database of sexual offenders.

"It is time for change. The world is watching,"

Greear said. "... If we do not get this right, our churches will not be a safe place for the lost."

Before adjourning Feb. 19, the EC adopted several recommendations, including two proposed amendments to the SBC Constitution.

Amendments

One of the proposals would amend the constitution to deem a church "not in friendly cooperation with the Convention" if it has "acted to affirm, approve or endorse discriminatory behavior on the basis of ethnicity."

The other would deem

a church not in "friendly cooperation" if the EC determined the church has "evidenced indifference in addressing sexual abuse."

To amend the SBC Constitution SBC messengers must vote to approve an amendment in two consecutive SBC annual meetings.

The earliest the proposed amendments could become part of the SBC Constitution would be at the 2020 annual meeting in Orlando.

The EC declined recommendations to prohibit elected officials from speaking at SBC annual meetings. The issue arose after criticism of a speech by Vice President Mike Pence at the 2018 meeting in Dallas, which many criticized as too partisan. (Compiled from BP)

"It is time for a change. The world is watching."

J.D. Greear
SBC president

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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 Mrs. Chester Vance Jr. Copyright 1994 ©Barbour Publishing Inc.

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|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
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| 46 | | | | 47 | | | | | | | 48 |
| 49 | 50 | | | 51 | | | 52 | 53 | | 54 | |
| 55 | | | | 56 | | | 57 | | | | |

Across

1. _____ I pray you. (Gen. 37:6)
4. King of _____, and Tidal. (Gen. 14:1)
7. _____ shall judge. (Gen. 49:16)
10. _____ of the Chaldees. (Gen. 15:7)
11. The king of _____. (Gen. 40:5)
12. Plane surface having bounds.
13. Alcoholics Anonymous. (abbr.)
14. _____ light.
15. Who shall _____ thee. (Gen. 49:25)
17. A _____ of money. (Ex. 21:30)
19. _____, and Naphtali. (Ex. 1:4)
20. The hole of the _____. (Isa. 11:8)
21. Prepaid. (abbr.)
24. Intensive care.
26. _____ of the house. (Gen. 43:19)
27. My _____ shall not go down. (Gen. 42:38)
29. Called their name _____. (Gen. 5:2)
32. Oklahoma. (abbr.)
34. Red Cross. (abbr.)
35. Gone six _____. (2 Sam. 6:13)
37. _____ wept. (Gen. 50:17)
39. Chief male character in story.
40. On top of.
41. _____ sinful nation. (Isa. 1:4)
42. Nickname of Deborah.

44. Skin or husk of grain.
46. Roman numeral for fifty.
47. East Indies. (abbr.)
48. There was _____ water in it. (Gen. 37:24)
49. Poti-pherah, priest of _____. (Gen. 41:45)
51. But _____ Joseph's brother. (Gen. 42:4)
55. What he sayeth to you, _____. (Gen. 41:55)
56. English. (abbr.)
57. These _____ words. (Gen. 44:6)

Down

1. _____ the Archite. (2 Sam. 15:32)
2. Descendant of Judah. (1 Chron. 4:21)
3. They do _____. (Ruth 2:9)
4. _____ were dim. (Gen. 27:1)
5. Low pressure.
6. Music term.
7. What will become of his _____. (Gen. 37:20)
8. Thousands and thousands of years. (English spelling.)
9. Girl's name.
12. _____ it shall come to pass. (1 Sam. 2:36)
13. Swiss mountain.
16. The servant which is _____ from his master. (Deut. 23:15)
18. Put sackcloth _____ his loins. (Gen. 37:34)
22. Sink or drop down.
23. Measure equal to 1/12 of a foot.
25. Joseph's father. (Gen. 46:19)
28. Child that has lost his parents.
30. _____ stir him up. (Job 41:10)
31. Dealt ye so ill with _____. (Gen. 43:6)
33. Kansas.
36. Judah spake unto him, _____ ... (Gen. 43:3)
37. Patience of _____. (James 5:11)
38. Give _____ to his commandments. (Ex. 15:26)
43. Place where his tent had _____. (Gen. 13:3)
44. _____ of the water. (Josh. 3:15)
45. There is _____ that can interpret it. (Gen. 41:15)
46. Ono, and _____. (1 Chron. 8:12)
50. Thy son's coat or _____. (Gen. 37:32)
51. Upon me _____ thy curse. (Gen. 27:13)
52. _____ one of us. (Gen. 3:22)
53. _____ and Pa.
54. Northeast.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For March 3

Explore the Bible

By Robert E. Jackson, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



CALLS Mark 1:9–20

Affirmed (9–11)

The Messiah's entrance is surprisingly not flashy. Jesus was relatively unknown and from a non-impressive town in Galilee. Out of obedience to the Father and to fulfill Scripture the sinless Jesus was baptized by John. The significance of this event transcends merely a "dunking" in water.

First, the heavens are torn open, signifying the Messiah has come from heaven and nothing can "close" this door. Second, the Spirit descends in a dovelike "hovering" fashion. The connection can be made that the same Spirit who hovered over creation now hovers and lands on Jesus, endorsing the new creation in Him.

The Father affirms Jesus in announcing He is the one true Son. In these verses we see an implicit working of the Trinity: the Son is obedient in baptism, the Spirit descends and lights on Him and the Father declares Him as Son.

Tested (12–13)

The Spirit did not direct Jesus to enter a place of ease but conflict. Similar to God leading Israel into the wilderness Jesus is led into the wilderness to face both the temptation of Satan and dangers for 40 days. This time of intense temptation was not the only spiritual battles the Messiah would suffer. The final victorious battle is yet to come.

Through this epic battle Jesus emerges victorious over the tempter. Moreover we note that Jesus was not alone; the Father was present and angels cared for Him. We are not alone in our spiritual battles. Our all-powerful Lord understands our struggles and grants the power and comfort to enable us to experience victory.

Heard (14–15)

Jesus' public ministry begins with John's arrest. In a few short years Jesus will suffer the same

fate. The emphasis, however, is upon the truth that the Kingdom is revealed and everyone is commanded to repent and place all trust in Christ.

Jesus and His early followers were quick to announce the Kingdom had come and the time to respond was short. And yet we must ask ourselves if we are living with such urgency? Do we believe the time is at hand? Examining our lives, are we sharing Christ with others like it might be their last chance?

In agreement with Charles Spurgeon, "Oh, my brothers and sisters in Christ, if sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies; and if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay. If hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for."


Followed (1:16–20)

Unlike the religious leaders of the day whose mantra was for a student to only learn from them, Jesus told His early disciples to leave everything and follow Him.

Concerning these disciples, this call to be fishers of men thrust them into a struggle between good and evil. In essence they would be in the very epicenter of a cosmic battle.

This call to be fishers of men points to the Old Testament prophets who used the fishing metaphor relating to judgment (Jer. 16:14–16; Ezek. 29:4; Hab. 1:14–17).

The kingdom of God was at hand and it would involve transformation.

Life will never be the same for a fish once it is caught. Similarly everyone who responds to the gospel will be changed beyond his or her imagination. This transformation is promised to everyone who turns from sin and follows Jesus as an expression of trust. 

Bible Studies for Life

By James Riley Strange, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of New Testament, Samford University



WHEN LIFE FEELS EMPTY Ecclesiastes 1:1–14

Today we begin a series on the Book of Ecclesiastes. It is one of God's gifts to the Church yet it is a difficult book.

The author calls himself "the teacher" or "the preacher" and says he was king in Jerusalem. Many Jews and Christians understand that to be a reference to Solomon.

The book is difficult because the teacher expresses despondency at the futility of life. People are powerless to change their circumstances, which are bleak. All people, good and bad, suffer the same fate, he says. All die and while alive both good and bad people have the same experiences. The teacher isn't sure people can discern God's purpose in creation.

Some Jewish leaders disputed the book's status as Scripture in the second century AD and as late as the fifth century some Christian leaders still debated the issue.

But God gave Ecclesiastes to the Church and we will use our best, prayerful reading. Isn't that one of the purposes of Scripture — to bring us into the presence of the One who gave it? Before beginning the series read the entire book; it isn't very long.

Throughout the study, look for these repeated refrains:

1. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." In his new translation Robert Alter renders this phrase, "Merest breath, all is mere breath." Nothing exists for long, says the teacher, including our lives. "Breath," or hebel ("Abel") in Hebrew, is also the name of the murdered son of Adam and Eve.

2. All [human deeds] are a "chasing after the wind." Alter translates this phrase "herding the wind." Both are metaphors of futility: you can neither catch the wind nor make it blow where you wish.

3. The teacher often says nothing is new "under the sun" or "under heaven." Others have already experi-

enced everything we experience. If "heaven" is a circumlocution for God the author is saying, "God has seen it all before."

The passages we read in this first lesson come from what some call the poetic prologue, in which the teacher introduces himself and some of the refrains. He distills the wisdom that he has gathered.

Without Christ, what we do in life can feel pointless. (1–7)

The teacher speaks of creation's cycles. This is an expression of human futility, for what can mortals do to change the rising and setting of the sun, the direction of the wind, the flow of rivers?

The implication is that all of life's contingencies are like these: we can change nothing and we must enjoy life while we can.

Without Christ, what we do in life does not satisfy. (8–10)


Not only can we change nothing, we also experience nothing new, says the teacher. All things are too wearisome to express, he says, and people find no satisfaction in what they see or hear.

Without Christ, what we do in life is a miserable task. (11–14)

Some might answer the teacher by saying that at least we will be remembered for our deeds. Not so, he says. He then shifts from poetry to prose to tell a little bit of his story.

Futility should not have the last word in today's lesson. Why not? First, when we fall into despondency the teacher would understand. Second, he hints at a solution at the end of the book, which we will cover in a future lesson.

For now we can ask the question, "Would there be a reason to live righteously if we received no reward for doing so?"

I hope it is not spoiling the end to suggest that the teacher says, "Yes there would be. Righteousness is its own reward." 

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



Media reviews

Updated 'Carmen Sandiego' leads new streaming options

By Michael Foust
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

My four young children love cartoons. All cartoons.

I, on the other hand, only like certain cartoons — you know, the ones that are largely void of potty humor and violence. And if it teaches them something educational that's even better.

The result: They watch PBS cartoons and typically stay away from Netflix's animated shows, which for the most part lack the educational value I cherish.

But that may be changing. Netflix recently launched a new animated series, "Carmen Sandiego," that meets my approval.

It doesn't contain inappropriate humor. It's not too violent. And it teaches them something they'll use the rest of their lives, no matter what they choose for their

future careers: geography.

The series continues the tradition started by the 1980s- and 1990s-era video game franchise and television shows.

Here's the story: Sandiego is a bad thief-turned-good who travels the globe to stop the evil organization V.I.L.E., which is comprised only of people who want to steal.

Each episode spotlights a region of the world.

For example, the fourth episode focuses on Ecuador and children learn about its location, its capital, its exports and its terrain. They even learn about the equator.

The first two episodes aren't very educational — they're more about Sandiego's backstory — but that's OK. I'm simply glad to have a PBS-worthy show on Netflix.

Also streaming now:

For adults/teens

▶ **"Old-time movies" (Amazon Prime)** — More



Photo courtesy of Netflix

'Carmen Sandiego'

than 50 old-time movies from the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and 1950s are entering Amazon Prime's lineup in February. Search for specific keywords, such as "old-time movies" or "classic movies."

▶ **"The Promise" (Amazon Prime)** — It's the story of the "forgotten genocide" — the time when the Ottoman Empire turned on its own people and killed an estimated 1.5 million Armenian Christians during World War 1. Rated PG-13 for thematic material including war atrocities, violence and disturbing images, and for some sexuality. (The film's lone bedroom scene contains no nudity and can be easily fast forwarded. The film contains mild language, too.)

▶ **"Little Women" (Netflix)** — It's the popular 1994 movie based on the Louisa May Alcott novel. It

received high marks from critics and was one of the top 30 grossing films of the year. Rated PG for two uses of mild language.

▶ **"Jeopardy!": Collection 2 (Netflix)** — Sure you could just DVR this popular game show, but why do that when Netflix has it pre-packaged for you? I learn something every time I watch.

▶ **"Old Fashioned" (Hulu)** — It's among the best faith-based romantic films of all time and contains a marvelous message about romance that swims against the cultural tide. Rated PG-13 for some thematic material.

For children

▶ **"Dolphin Tale 2" (Netflix)** — The popular dolphin that had her tail amputated after an injury gets a friend. It's based on a true story. Rated PG for

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.

some mild thematic elements.

▶ **"Space Jam" (Hulu)** — Former NBA star Michael Jordan gets caught up in a Looney Tunes battle in this 1996 film. It's not a perfect movie — for example, it contains one "h-ll" — but it has plenty of funny scenes. Parental caution is advised. Rated PG for some mild cartoon language. 🌈



'Old Fashioned'

Photo by Freestyle Releasing

Social interaction

Facebook expands Arizona church plant's community connections

Everyone craves connections — a truth Living Stone Community Church has embraced by using Facebook to minister to their community.

Facebook can be an important tool in getting to know neighbors and pointing them to Christ, said

Ali Clayton, wife of church planter Whitney Clayton.

“We mainly use social media to get a pulse on our community,” she said. “People will put what they care about, what they’re going through, how they’re hurting on Facebook. So we’ve used it to connect personally to people.”

Sometimes Facebook opens up opportunities for ministry.

Her husband met a man in their area of Mesa, Arizona, and made it a point to add him as a friend on Facebook. Later he learned through Facebook that the man was going through some traumatic events — a death in the family and a car accident.

The Claytons were able to take the family a meal and as Whitney helped the man process his grief, he was able to share the gospel on three different occasions.

Church members have used



Photos courtesy of Ali Clayton/BP

Whitney and Ali Clayton, church planters in Mesa, Arizona, with their four children, reach out to their community through Facebook using neighborhood and club pages, a weekly dinner for neighbors and a community Bible study.

neighborhood pages and interest-based clubs on Facebook, such as fitness groups or book clubs, to meet people.

Ali joined a mom’s group through Facebook when her family first moved to the area three years ago.

Building friendships

She built friendships during weekly gatherings while their children played together and became especially close to one of the women in the group.

One day the woman told Ali her father had died and her son was

asking questions about heaven that she wasn’t prepared to answer.

Knowing Ali was a Christian she asked if she could attend church with her.

The woman subsequently became a follower of Christ and has remained active in their church.

“Facebook can be used best when we have a posture of listening and hearing from the lost people in our lives,” Ali said.

Don’t just listen and be a “passive observer,” she counseled. If someone is struggling, reach out and offer Christ’s love to the person in need. (BP)

How to pray:

► Pray for the Claytons to rely on God’s strength as they open their home to community members.

► Pray for strong relationships to grow out of social media connections the Claytons make.

(TAB)



Building on their Facebook contacts, Ali and Whitney Clayton organize a block party for their neighborhood, assisted by a missions team from First Baptist Church, Mount Juliet, Tennessee.

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Thursday, February 28, 2019

Dr. Chris Crain, Executive Director • 750 Montclair Road, Birmingham, AL 35213 • P: 205-599-3245, F: 205-599-3246 • www.BMBAOnline.org

Keeping Your Church a Safe Place

by Dr. Chris Crain



Dear Birmingham Baptists, The Houston Chronicle released a series including a list of 380 Southern Baptist church leaders and volunteers accused of sexual abuse or misconduct. Tragically, some of those predators moved from one church to another. These stories grieved me to the core of my being. With over 15 million SBC church members and 51,000 local churches, even a single case of sexual abuse is a tragedy.

Recently, the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention gathered with SBC President J.D. Greear to formalize recommendations to SBC churches. A *Sexual Abuse Presidential Advisory Group* has made initial recommendations and will continue to work on helping Southern Baptists prevent sexual abuse. Greear called Southern Baptists to take ten action steps regarding abuse.

(The following list of recommendations was adapted from "10 Calls to Action" by Phillip Bethancourt of the ERLC, posted February 19, 2019.)

1. Enter a season of sorrow and repentance. Southern Baptists should lament abuse in our churches and repent of our failure to address the issue.

2. Embrace a new curriculum for holistic care in the early stages of learning of abuse. *Becoming a Church that Cares Well on Abuse* is a free video-based curriculum created by a diverse team of survivors, advocates, and experts. Contributors to the curriculum include Rachael Denhollander, Diane Langberg, Andrea Munford and more. Greear encouraged people to sign up at the curriculum's web-

site to stay informed about its launch.

3. Affirm three separate "Statement of Principles" documents. Three different documents were ratified by (1) all six SBC seminaries and (2) all 41 SBC State Conventions, and (3) SBC Associational Leaders signal a collective commitment to addressing abuse at every organizational level of the SBC.

4. Take immediate action on abuse prevention and care. Churches, associations, state conventions, and entities should seek to strengthen their policies and practices on abuse.

5. Consider requiring background checks, at a minimum, for all SBC standing committees and trustee appointments. The Executive Committee should consider integrating background checks into the standard process for evaluating appointees and trustees in a manner that fits our polity. Our goal is to be vigilant to make sure that predators have no place at any level in our structure.

6. Re-examine the ordination process. Churches should evaluate how to strengthen screening and background efforts in the ordination process.

7. Update the Annual Church Profile to ask about abuse. Questions related to updated abuse policies and occurrences of abuse should be considered for inclusion in the Annual Church Profile completed by SBC churches.

8. Prepare to address abuse at the 2019 SBC Annual Meeting. The 2019 SBC Annual Meeting (in Birmingham) will address abuse through prayer, reports, events, and resources.

9. Explore possibilities related to

a database solution. A study group will continue to evaluate options for a registry of offenders.

10. Request that the Executive Committee enhance governing documents on disfellowshipping churches and evaluates several churches. The Executive Committee should strengthen language in the SBC's governing documents related to mishandling abuse as grounds for disfellowshipping churches. They should also do due diligence on several churches specified in media reports on abuse to evaluate if their standing aligns with our faith and practice.

I urge all Birmingham Metro Baptist Churches to minister to people in our fallen, broken world by making the local church a safe, compassionate environment; to do this, a church must never cover up abuse. Church leaders must cooperate with the authorities in making sure that abusers—laity or clergy—are dealt with according to the law. The prevention and reporting of sexual abuse are non-negotiable for those caring for a flock of people—especially the vulnerable.

When I served as pastor, we installed cameras in classrooms, held strict policies about on and off-campus activities and events, and conducted background checks for all staff and volunteers working with minors. Doing all of these things did not guarantee that abuse could never happen. As we do our due diligence, we must pray for the Lord to provide His divine protection. Likewise, we pray for church families who are ministering in the wake of abuse. Please call on me if I may provide any assistance in keeping your church a safe place.

Thank you for your prayers and generous support for the Birmingham Metro Baptist Association.

Sincerely in Jesus,

Chris Crain, BMBA

BMBA Calendar

Visit us online for more events at <http://www.facebook.com/Birmingham.Baptist.Association>

Ministers Conference

The Ministers Conference meets every Monday at 11:00 a.m., for a time of fellowship, inspiration, and prayer.

March 5 - Glen Sandifer - Deerfoote Baptist Church

March 11 - Tony Cooper, Executive Director of Jimmy Hale Mission

BMBA Pastors Roundtable

April 4, 2019, at 11:30 a.m.

Grille 29

Brookwood Village
971 Brookwood Village
Birmingham, AL 35209

Reservations required.

Please email megh@bmbaonline.org or call her at (205)599-3245 to make your reservations.

BMBA Church Events

February 27-March 3 - Global Impact Conference at First Baptist Church of Trussville

March 1 - Disaster Relief Feeding Unit Clean Up at Valleydale Baptist Church, at 8:00 a.m.

March 1-2 - COMPLETE, A Gathering for Teen Girls at First Baptist Church of Birmingham, \$35 Registration fee, Deadline to register is 02/05/19. Register at AlabamaWMU.org/COMPLETE.