



The Alabama Baptist

Toll free 800-803-5201
www.thealabamabaptist.org

March 21, 2019

Vol. 184, No. 12
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



Growing old,
aging well —
Part 3

◆ Pages 6–7



Grant writing
basics for faith-
based
organizations

◆ Page 9



Vaughn Forest
Church's pastor
search process
takes unusual
path

◆ Page 14



Keep serving TOGETHER

iStock.com

Role of pastor, wife in church following retirement from pulpit

By Carolyn Tomlin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Like their counterparts in secular professions, most pastors will one day reach a certain age or face health reasons that prompt them to move into the phase of life known as “retirement.”

But being retired doesn't mean a minister's service to

God or to people is over. A retired pastor can continue to serve where needed.

Retired pastors and their wives often have many questions about their role as a former pastor or “first lady” of the congregation.

▶ “Where will we place our church membership?”

▶ “We want to stay at this church where we've served for years ... yet I want people to realize I'm not their ‘minister’ anymore. They now have another man in this position.”

▶ “I want to be supportive of the new pastor, but what is my role now?”

Now retired, a pastor's wife

says, “I've taught the ladies' Sunday School class for 20 years. I love these women. They are my friends. Should I step down from this position? I don't know what to do.”

Supportive attitude

How a pastor and his wife perceives this new stage in life can have either a positive or a negative effect on their former church, as well as on their own lives. Consider two scenarios:

When Pastor Jones retired from a large city church he met with the new, young pastor the church called.

He said, “I'm available to help you in any way possible.

If you need a supply call me. If you want someone to visit the hospital or shut-ins call me. You have my phone number and know my contact. Otherwise I'll be down at the pier fishing.”

Jones' attitude was to assist the new pastor during this transition period — not to interfere but to be supportive.

Is it any wonder the church continued to grow and serve God and people?

However, not all churches experience a smooth transition when a beloved pastor retires and another one is called.

(See ‘Planning,’ page 10)

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.”

Christian Life Commission hosts TAB editor

By Michael J. Brooks
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

The Christian Life Commission of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions (SBOM) held its spring meeting on March 12 in Prattville. SBOM communications associate Keith Hinson served as facilitator and host.

In introducing TAB editor Jennifer Davis Rash as the keynote speaker, SBOM executive director Rick Lance said, "I read that someone suggested the task of the leader is to define reality and to bring hope.

"This is what Jennifer is doing for us. I've watched her grow in this work," he said. "She has the right training, the right temperament and the right public relations skills. She is a friend to Alabama Baptists."

Rash shared a bit about her background and calling as well as what she and the team have been doing with the print publication.

'Freshen and declutter'

"We increased the font size, and people have appreciated that the paper is easier to read," she said. "We've tried to freshen, brighten and declutter."

Rash said she decided to move the editorial from page two to page three. Page two is now a "community bulletin board" intended to take care of housekeeping items among state Baptists.

"We also added 'Your Voice' on pages four and five," she said. "We live in a social media world with a lot of information coming at us, so we're gathering some of these messages from state Baptists and other Christian leaders and sharing with our readers."

Rash noted that state Baptist newspapers are in an "identity crisis."

"A number of state newspapers have stopped publishing and are



Photo by Doug Rogers

TAB editor Jennifer Davis Rash discusses recent changes in the design of the print paper intended to enhance readability and freshen the look.

trying to share content through a digital-only method with reduced staffs," she said. "Other changes include what's happening with Kentucky's *Western Recorder*. It's leaders decided to merge operations with the state convention's communications office."

Rash said she sees *The Alabama Baptist* continuing to play a major role in the state — what she called "a connection role."

"We're not calling for a movement but we're working to enhance our role as the main communication center for our people," she said. "We have some 3,200 churches and nearly 1 million members in Alabama Baptist life. There is so much passion (for the cause of Christ) among us and we need to talk to one another."

Rash spoke about a unique initiative when she suggested a "cable news fast" during February in order to tone down rhetoric.

"It was an idea I had in the 'month of love,'" she said. "Life can overwhelm us — it's complicated, so I suggested we take a breather and reconnect with God and one another. I got a lot of positive response from those who took the challenge."

Rash met with other editors in February through the Association of State Baptist Publications (ASBP). During the meeting, members elected David Williams, editor of

the *Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist*, as president for 2019–2020 and Rash as president-elect. She will serve as president of ASBP in 2020–2021.

Rash also talked about spiritual markers in her life and the peace she has felt at each point.

"I had absolute peace about giving two years of my life to missions through the International Mission Board," she said, noting she served following graduation from the University of Alabama in 1993. "I then came to *The Alabama Baptist* for what I thought was a short-term job, but it became a much larger mission."

"I also followed God's leadership to Beeson Divinity School for my theological degree," she added. "I've tried to listen and stay in tune with God, and I still have that absolute peace today with my new position as editor of *TAB*."

In other business

Lance also encouraged commissioners to support the "Is Your Ministry Safe?" workshop at Heritage Baptist Church, Montgomery, on March 26. "We've always tried to make church a safe place, and we're working harder now than ever before," he noted.

Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP) executive director Joe Godfrey also reported on legislative and moral issues.



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

(ISSN 0738-7741; USPS 011-080)

© The Alabama Baptist, Inc.

is published weekly except for one week in July and December by The Alabama Baptist, Inc., at 3310 Independence Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209. Phone: 205-870-4720. Statewide phone: 800-803-5201.

Website: www.thealabamabaptist.org

Email: news@thealabamabaptist.org or subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org
Periodicals postage paid at Hattiesburg, Miss.

ANNUAL TAB SUBSCRIPTION RATES
Includes print, digital and full web access

Group Rate per issue — \$16.25
(Need at least five in your group to qualify)

Individual — \$24.95 per year with 3-year plan

JENNIFER DAVIS RASH EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Cynthia Watts Executive Assistant	Janet Erwin Executive Editor
Carrie B. McWhorter Content Editor	Debbie Campbell Director of Communications
Lauren C. Grim Creative Services Manager	Bill Gilmore Director of Sales
Jessica Ingram Production Manager	Melanie McKinney Advertising Manager
Grace Thornton Special Assignments Editor	Pam Holt Sales Representative
Hannah Muñoz Digital Editor	Susan Stevens Sales Representative
James Hammack Digital Services Manager	Linda Harrison Financial Administrator
Haley Piersol Digital Services Associate	Deb Lowery Financial Assistant
Sarah Gill Customer Relations	Richard Maddox Computer Services
Amy Hacker Customer Relations	Correspondents and Interns

NEWS SERVICES

Baptist Press (BP), Baptist News Global (BNG), Religion News Service (RNS), Forum 18 (F18), Morning Star News (MS).

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to:
The Alabama Baptist
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209

ADDRESS CHANGE

Send old and new addresses, and name of church to:
Subscription Department
3310 Independence Drive
Birmingham, AL 35209
Allow two weeks.

To the best of our knowledge, all of the ads in *The Alabama Baptist* represent legitimate companies and offerings. However, one should always exercise normal business caution in responding to ads.

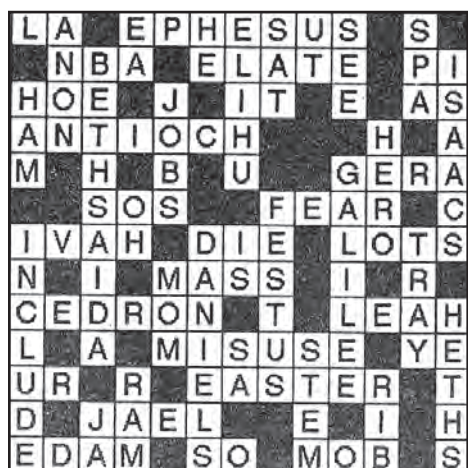
Full member of Alabama Press Association

Accredited member of Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability



'Nation's Top Regional Christian Newspaper'

1999, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017
as judged by Associated Church Press, Baptist Communicators Association, Evangelical Press Association or Religion Communicators Council



Special TAB sponsorship section

Thanks to The Baptist Foundation of Alabama for sponsoring several of our February and March TAB News podcasts. Your sponsorship helps us cover the production costs.

MY RASHIONALE

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

jrash@thealabamabaptist.org
@RashionalThts



Always better to give ring back as soon as you know it's not right

The image of a bride and groom both getting cold feet on their wedding day is what came to mind as I watched the recent events at Vaughn Forest Church, Montgomery, play out.

I really believe everyone involved meant well and thought they were doing what God was calling them to do (see story, page 14). But it seems they may have basically let excitement about the possibilities and a sense of intense urgency cloud their judgment along the way.

The church's leaders took responsibility for the confusion and vowed to work more transparently in the future.

Pastor Rob Singleton said he loved the aggressive and focused pursuit of those involved in recruiting him but sees now that he may also have gotten caught up in their excitement.

In the end both Singleton and the church leaders agreed that not moving forward was the best move.

The pastor selection team likely never dreamed it would be the topic of so many discussions across the state when it was named last fall.

And admittedly sorting through all the details is quite intriguing.

Still I give Vaughn Forest and Singleton props for being bold enough to pull the brakes when it became obvious something wasn't quite right.

It might have been easier from a public relations standpoint to go forward with the plan and

just deal with the internal confusion and potential fallout behind the scenes — like a bride and groom going through with a wedding they know isn't right.

But that would have been messier and caused more issues in the long run.

Yes a few months of discussions, dreaming and travel are now void — as I'm sure some financial resources were spent — but all of those investments are now rich lessons that will make the parties involved better prepared for the next step.

No need to be embarrassed

nor anxious. These things happen and tend to always help us grow if we let them.

The greater Alabama Baptist family also can learn from the experience, and we all can commit to pray for our fellow Baptists who are members of Vaughn Forest as they seek to find a pastor to lead their flock.

How often do we all attempt to help God out by moving ahead of Him in a situation that makes sense to us?

I remember grasping this concept for the first time right out of college when a Bible study

leader took our young professionals group through "Experiencing God" by Henry and Richard Blackaby.

"Watch to see where God is working and join Him," the Blackabys wrote.

What a simple concept — but I still waffle between doing my own thing then asking God to bless it and looking to join God then trying to take over.

Truly releasing my own desires and logic to Him is where I so often fail, but I'm determined not to give up. Together in Christ we can find our way. 🙏

WHAT'S NEW WITH TAB?

Ever think about how a gift over and above your tithe, such as a new computer, could boost your church staff's ministry efforts?

A new popular role for *TAB* finds our staff working directly with churches through their associational offices to meet specific needs related to their digital presence.

In fact, we've even organized these resources into a division labeled **Digital Services**.

As we work with churches, we also are looking for partners to help us meet the specific needs we are discovering.

Many times the churches, which have few if any full-time staff members, are in need of new technology to be more efficient in their ministries. Sometimes the needs are for improved quality or even safety. And other times the needs relate to a church's website or social media.

No matter which area, our

TAB team can assist churches as they figure out what they need and where they want to be.

We partnered with the Center for Congregational Resources (CCR) at Samford University in 2017, 2018 and the first quarter of 2019 to provide more than \$160,000 in funding for more than 50 churches and 10 associations across the state.

CCR provided the grant funds to churches and associations as part of its initiative to provide services and resources for congregations. Most of the center's programs are funded through the generosity of Lilly Endowment, Inc.

The funding helped provide new computers, microphones, projectors, websites and other items.

Along with the funding provided, representatives from CCR and *TAB* assisted with guidance on what

to buy, how much was needed, when and where to purchase, how to install, how to use, etc.

With more churches across the state needing help in the areas of technology, website development and social media, **TAB is looking for partners** to come alongside these churches.

We are offering the guidance and basic training but we need help with the funding to make the needed purchases.

If you know of an organization, foundation or individual who might be interested in partnering with *TAB* and the churches, then contact me at jrash@thealabamabaptist.org.

I love connecting people to fill needs while offering ministry opportunities at the same time. Thanks for helping me with this.

—Jennifer Davis Rash

Your Voice



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

Exercise caution when claiming God's will

By **Michael J. Brooks**

Pastor, Siluria Baptist Church

Someone took me to task for what I thought was a harmless quip. In a tongue-in-cheek article about how we Baptists “steal” pastors from one another, I remarked that though it’s a flawed system, God seems to help us through it most of the time.

“God helps us all the time!” someone responded.

Yes, I understand, but I know also that we frequently sidestep the will of God and mess things up.

A good example of this was a church in one of the Carolinas. A friend found the story and sent it to me years ago.

A noted pastor from Texas announced with great fanfare it was

God’s will for him to move from his flourishing church to a new ministry on the East Coast. He said he had no doubts God was leading him to a new and even more flourishing ministry.

In less than two weeks he announced it was God’s will that he return to his former church. The story didn’t explain any precipitating causes nor what negotiations occurred with the former church that would bring about his return.

My friend who sent me this story, a great mentor, was exhorting me to exercise caution in labeling everything God’s will. In this case it’s alleged God changed his mind!

I know a similar story. A pastor I knew well announced his move to Louisville to attend seminary

believing it was God’s will. He remained one week before convincing his former church to take him back as their pastor.

The prophet Jeremiah spoke God’s displeasure with false prophets who say “he says” when the Lord didn’t speak (Jer. 23:31). We need to seek His will to be sure, but it’s often best to say we *believe* a matter to be the Lord’s will if we’re still working our way through it. And it’s helpful to ask for the insights of others as we test our thoughts (1 Cor. 14:29).

Some Christians believe in the reform doctrine that everything which happens to us is due to the active and deliberate plan of God. Whereas I respect their belief, I’m of the Arminian mindset, believing God gives us freedom to choose, and often we make some really bad choices.

We see people all the time using tobacco, spurning their marriage vows, texting and driving, and being reckless in other ways. When these people hurt themselves or others, I really don’t believe it is God’s will. It’s His will that we exercise better judgment. God helps us if we let Him.

Fortunately, He’s a merciful God who can mend the bad choices we make.

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

If kids can, right now, understand the participatory nature of being in the body of Christ, then they will begin to own their own faith by God’s grace.

Michael Kelley
Director of Groups
Ministry
LifeWay Christian
Resources

Giving the unborn a chance to live by guiding the mother into a relationship with Christ often results in the mother’s salvation and also saves the precious life of the child.

Clara Molina
Southern Baptist
Hispanic Leaders Council

God has called us to do more and to be more at all ages and stages of life for His Glory.

Larry Hyche
Alabama Baptist State
Board of Missions
Office of Global Missions

God wants you to measure your life not by comparing it to someone else’s, but by constantly looking to Jesus as our example.

Pastor Jay Dennis
www.wingmannation.com

My Jesus Story

Trials in life make us stronger. God sustains us. All of my grown life I have had health issues. Through it all God was with me.

Even after having cancer in each of my kidneys, a rare form of stomach cancer, numerous other health issues, my dad murdered when I was 16 and losing my husband while he was on military active duty, I can honestly say my God is so good to me.

Every day is a blessing from God.

“I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Ps. 34:1).

I find myself praising His holy name daily. God always has a plan for our lives. He never makes mistakes.

I am thanking God for the gift of teaching Sunday School for the past 47 years. I would love to teach until God calls me home.

Sherra Claunch
Golden Springs Baptist
Church
Anniston, Alabama

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“We need to cultivate an ethic of biblical literacy.”

ALEX MCFARLAND

Evangelist and apologist

It's what the gospel is about. It's loving people and showing compassion. You do that out here. You don't do that between four walls.

**Cecil Harris, Chaplain
Tuskegee-Lee Baptist
Association disaster relief team**

In order to share the gospel effectively, we must be willing to let go of our assumptions and to sensitively ask lots of questions in order to examine the culture deeply. We have to forget what feels comfortable and natural in our own culture and embrace what works in the culture we're serving in.

**Melanie Clinton
“Salvation Bracelets in Africa?
No, Thanks.”
IMB.org**

Religion: “I messed up. My dad is going to kill me.”

Gospel: “I messed up. I need to call my Dad.”

**Tennessee Baptist Mission Board
Facebook post**

10 Friends Every Pastor Needs in His Church

1. A friend who is growing continually in the faith.
2. A friend who puts others first.
3. A friend who seeks the lost.
4. A friend who walks by faith and not by sight.
5. A friend who prays rather than faints in difficulty.
6. A friend who makes peace rather than conflict.
7. A friend who's self image is in Christ not in power or position.

8. A friend who is concerned about passing the baton to the next generation.

9. A friend who cares for and encourages the pastor's family.
10. A friend who loves the church and gives sacrificially to it.

**Chris Crain
Executive director
Birmingham Metro Baptist
Association**

Before we start hungering and thirsting for something, let's make sure that we know what it is we desire, and that we are happy with the right things.

**Matthew-Louis Hall
Geaux Therefore blog
New Orleans Baptist
Theological Seminary**

From the *Twitterverse*

@kristenpadilla

To all the women who are faithfully serving the Lord, who don't have a big platform, who often feel overlooked, unheard or alone, God sees you and your work, hears you and is with you. Continue in faithfulness and steadfastness working as unto the Lord and resting in his love.

@alabamawmu

What an encouraging morning and privilege to pray for North American Missions. Thankful for the reminder from Ken Weathersby that we may face valleys but we're in the hand of God. Expectant for what God will do through #AAEO19 — @NationalWMU — at WMU

@pastorjaycbc

When a person comes to know

Jesus, he will know change. If there is no change, there is likely no Jesus.

@Jeff_Noblit

Nothing wrong with new songs in the church provided they are sound. But it's a shame that this generation will not know so many of the great standards of the Faith. Our young people love the old hymns because they are learning to love the Truth they contain.

@timlbcchelsea

We do not meet Jesus halfway and trust Him to do the rest. Jesus does it ALL! He is the Savior — we are the saved! Thank you Jesus!

@Blackwell_Kevin

“The decision to grow always involves a choice between risk and comfort. This means that to

be a follower of Jesus you must renounce comfort as the ultimate value of your life.” @johnortberg

@DL_Staples

When you think of all the OT laws and sacrifices remember the “how much more” of the NT: “... how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” Hebrews 9:14

@paulwasher

The fact that Paul admonishes the professing Christians in Corinth to examine themselves (2 Cor. 13:5) and to look for evidence of conversion proves that God's work of salvation in the believer will not only result in justification but also in real and observable sanctification.



TAB photo

Joe Godfrey serves as executive director of Alabama Citizens Action Program.

The truth about alcohol

Alcohol is not just any commodity, and we shouldn't treat it like buying bread, milk or eggs. Alcohol is a mind-altering, addictive drug. It kills more people each year — 88,000, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — than all illicit drugs combined, including opioids.

Alcohol is a factor in a majority of violent crimes, including rape and murder. About half the suicides in our country are linked to alcohol.

I am especially alarmed by the great harm alcohol inflicts on families. Alcohol is a major cause of domestic violence, child neglect, unwanted pregnancies and divorce.

Some special interest groups — big-box retailers and liquor distributors — continue to push to privatize liquor sales in Alabama by closing state-operated liquor stores and handing over the sale of all liquor in the state to private businesses.

Who benefits from privatization? Those who sell liquor, particularly corporate-owned superstores and national chain retailers that see liquor as a way to further increase their profits — at YOUR expense.

It's time to reject the notion that we can make it easier to sell liquor without all of us paying a higher cost.

—Joe Godfrey

Finding home

Determining what living, care options work best for different situations

Maybe as you're getting older you are starting to wonder what it might be like to move into a different kind of housing, or maybe you are starting to look at options for a loved one.

You might have a lot of questions: What are the possibilities? What would it be like to live in a different place? Would it be good for me (or my loved one)?

Living arrangements for older adults fall into four general categories based on individual care needs.

1. Independent living

It could be that you're still active and healthy and just starting to feel like you're ready to downsize from the family home. Or maybe you'd like the opportunity to have more of a community of friends around. You might also like the idea of having someone else take care of things like yardwork, house cleaning and building maintenance.

If all of this sounds good and you're fully independent (aside from a few minor medical needs), independent living might be perfect for you. It can range from apartment complexes or condos to free-standing retirement homes.

Independent living can be a good option if you or your loved one is lonely after losing a spouse or likes



It's important to talk to health care professionals — as well as your loved one — about the best care options for him or her. There are many living options available for people with different needs. He or she may want to live somewhere that most closely fits his or her perception of home and provides some independence while still offering any care needed.

the idea of someone else cooking meals every now and then. Or maybe you still travel quite a bit and like the idea of your home being secure while you're away.

Jonathan Williams, director of marketing for the Oaks on Parkwood senior living in Bessemer, said one of the things independent

living residents love most is the community.

"Older adults who live alone often become isolated which isn't healthy for anyone," he said.

"Once they move to independent living they enjoy having the opportunity to create new friendships and social connections, have someone to share a meal with and the ability to participate in activities they used to enjoy."

2. Assisted living

If you think a little more help might be beneficial, assisted living may be the best option. In this setup you could have a private room or apartment (or share with a spouse or roommate, if you prefer) but have communal meals and activities. Assisted living facilities often also provide transportation and laundry services.

This can be a good option if you

need help managing your medications, if cooking has become too difficult, if you can't drive anymore or if you would feel safer knowing someone is there to respond 24 hours a day if you have a need. (Some retirement communities might also offer this kind of 24-hour response service.)

If you're helping your loved one make a decision about assisted living, be sure to involve him or her and consider his or her preferences —

assisted living facilities vary from place to place, and your loved one may want the one that most closely fits his or her perception of home.

Spend some time asking around and doing research, or perhaps even consider hiring a senior advocate to help you navigate and evaluate your choices.

Another good idea is to check

Where do we go from here?

Growing older, caring well

Part 3 of 4



Canva.com

out a facility's path for future care — such as what its long-term nursing care is like for when your loved one needs it one day. Many of these facilities also offer things such as Bible studies, art activities and scheduled outings for residents.

3. Specialty care assisted living (memory care)

If you or your loved one needs care for dementia-related needs this would be the best option to consider. It can offer structured activities geared for people with memory problems and secured areas to keep residents from wandering away.

4. Skilled nursing care

This type of housing can come as a private or shared room and offers the most involved level of care to its residents.

If you need assistance with eating or getting out of bed this might be the best option. This is also a good option if you need short-term rehab after a fall or illness or if you need need services like wound care or pain management.

If you are wondering if this might be the right kind of care for a loved one talk with his or her doctors to ask what kind of care they suggest based on your loved one's health needs.

Jamie Wise, administrator of the Oaks at Parkwood, said at their facilities the entire staff is actively involved to help residents and families know when they might benefit from a higher level of care.

"Whether this is housekeeping, dietary, maintenance, etc., if our staff sees someone who has shown any signs of decline, they report that to their department manager who brings that information to daily management meetings," she said. "As the administrator I then contact the family to initiate conversation on ways we can be of assistance — for example, resources such as sitters or discussion of a higher level of care in assisted living or memory care." (Grace Thornton)

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

All the articles in this series can be found online at TheAlabamaBaptist.org. Additional help may be found at:

- ▶ Aginginplace.org
- ▶ Ageinplace.org
- ▶ Care.com
- ▶ Alabamaageline.gov

'Never looked back'

How one daughter found the perfect fit for her aging mother

Jennie Gibbs promised her parents a while back that, whatever the future held, she would do the best she could to leave them in their home environment until she thought the risks were too great for them to stay.

That's what they'd said they wanted, and Gibbs — an only child — wanted to respect their wishes.

But then it got to a point where her mother, Ruth Vaught, needed more care and security than Gibbs was able to offer her at her home. Six years after Gibbs' father died her mother fell and broke her hip.

Finding the right place

"When mother returned to her home we were faced with the fact that she was no longer safe," said Gibbs, who along with her parents has been a lifelong member of Hueytown Baptist Church in Bessemer Baptist Association.

After talking with people and researching all of their options Gibbs decided the Oaks at Parkwood in Bessemer was the right place for her mom to live — independently, but cared for.

"When the day came for her to go she was very upset and unwilling," Gibbs said.

But as the family prayed for peace of mind and comfort and continued to step forward with the plan the day went smoothly.

"As soon as we walked in the door she was invited to eat lunch," Gibbs said. "She has never looked back. Mother loves the fact that she has almost total independence ... but that someone else does the cooking and cleaning and provides activities for her as she chooses."

Vaught says she feels like a queen and comments constantly on how blessed she is.

"You just know when it is time



Photo courtesy of Jennie Gibbs

Ruth Vaught now lives at the Oaks at Parkwood in Bessemer. 'She has never looked back,' Vaught's daughter Jennie Gibbs, said. 'Mother loves the fact that she has almost total independence ... but that someone else does the cooking and cleaning and provides activities for her as she chooses.'

for a parent to move," Gibbs said. "During this time, you have to stay open and honest and explain everything."

'Great move'

It's turned out to be a great move for their family, she said. Vaught has made many new friends and enjoys the benefits of her assisted living situation — things like weekly housekeeping and laundry,

transportation, cooked meals and planned activities and cultural and recreational programs.

"Mother's health, demeanor and all-around behavior speaks for itself. At 85 years old she is fantastic," Gibbs said. "Since mother is good I am at peace. It allows me to go to work every day and bed every night knowing she is well taken care of."

(Grace Thornton)

"Since mother is good, I am at peace. It allows me to go to work every day and bed every night knowing she is well taken care of."

**Jennie Gibbs, mother of Ruth Vaught,
resident at the Oaks at Parkwood in Bessemer**

‘Love and compassion’ keys to winning people for Christ

By the time Dennis Watson was a teenager he’d decided he knew better than his parents. And by the time he was 18 he was dealing drugs.

“Somehow my mama found out what was happening with me,” Watson said.

She confronted him on a Sunday afternoon, shared with him how important Jesus was to her, then got him to go church with her.

“Then she went down and asked the whole church to pray for me,” he said.

Watson didn’t change that day, but almost a year to the day later some friends convinced him to go with them to an Andraé Crouch concert.

“He sang ‘Jesus is the Answer,’ and I realized I had a void and vacuum in my life that no person could fill,” Watson said.

Jesus found him at the moment when he was hurting and transformed him, he told the crowd gathered at the Alabama Baptist State Evangelism Confer-

ence at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, on Feb. 26.

That’s where we should look for people too, he said — at their point of need.



WATSON

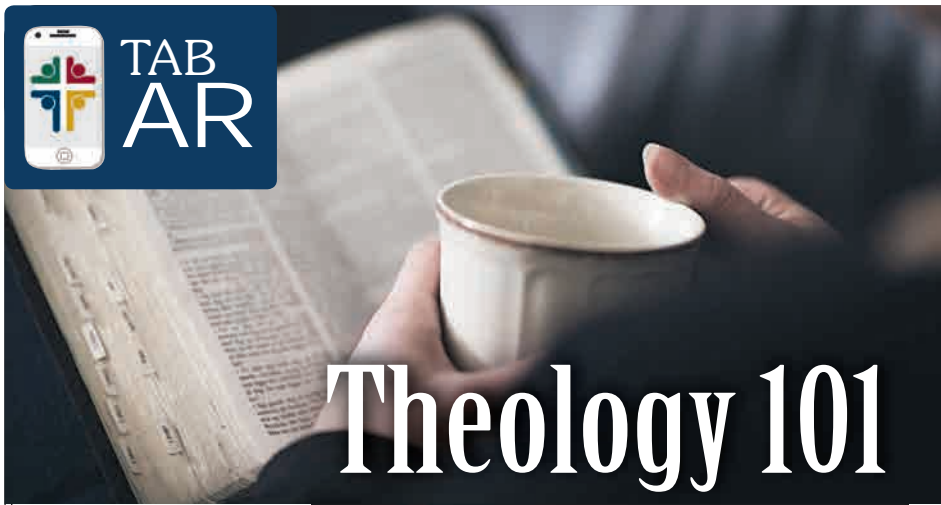
“The primary focus of Jesus’ ministry was those who were hurting and those who were needy because that’s when people are more open to the message of Jesus,” said Watson, pastor of Celebration Church, New Orleans.

“People are more open than we think they are,” Watson said. “There are so many people out there just waiting for an invitation.”

But people aren’t focusing on evangelism, he said — it takes 59 Baptists to win one person to Jesus.

When Christians show Jesus’ genuine love to the hurting, “we will see the changing power of Jesus at work and we’ll

see people flooding into our churches because they can’t resist that kind of love and compassion,” he said. (Grace Thornton)



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Insights through questions

A Question of Lordship

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

This week’s question puts a practical application to the truth of the nature of the lordship of Christ.

We commonly refer to Him as Lord in our songs and prayers.

In fact the outset of the Christian life is connected with the confession that Jesus is Lord, according to Romans 10:9: “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Jesus put this question to His disciples: “Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46)

This probing question suggests confession must be matched by conduct. How often does a Christian’s life say something different from his or her verbal confession?

If He were to appear before us and pose this week’s question how would we answer? What excuses might be forthcoming from many confessing Christians about conduct that does not match their confession of Christ as Lord?

Total obedience

Some might respond by saying, “I am weak and still learning about being a follower of Jesus.” Sadly some believers might have to simply acknowledge ignorance of what Christ commands and expects from His followers. Still others might reply, “I am afraid of others’ opinions” or “I would stand out from my friends if I render total obedience to Christ’s

teaching and standard.” Another answer might be of a gentler sort: “I know better but I have simply been careless and unthinking.”

Jesus had a descriptive term for those who are content to live with a mismatch between their confession and their conduct. He used that term in Luke 6:42–45: “Hypocrite!”

Christ also had an illustration of the mismatch of hypocrisy. He drew it from the natural order, saying, “For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush.” Such mismatches do not occur in nature.

Good and faithful servant

Jesus concluded His teaching with the disciples on a positive note, with an architectural analogy for those whose conduct matches their confession of Him as Lord. Such persons are “like a man building a house who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock.” Sturdy Christians are those who live out their confession that Jesus is Lord. These will one day hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

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.



‘Replanting’ conference brings large crowd



Photo by Tracy Riggs

More than 350 people registered for the church revitalization conference held Feb. 25 at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham — so many they had to move the conference from the church’s choir room to the main sanctuary. George Yates, church health strategist with the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, said the event took off greater than they ever expected. ‘I think more people are realizing that it’s OK to ask for help. It’s no longer seen as a negative,’ he said. ‘We just have to ask the right questions and think of practical solutions.’ Mark Clifton, senior director of replanting at the North American Mission Board, led the conference. ‘I am so honored to stand in this pulpit in front of you to share about revitalizing churches,’ he said. ‘Thank you for being here.’

Project funding

Grant writing basics for churches and faith-based organizations

By Carolyn Tomlin
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Your church has a project idea — maybe age-appropriate playground equipment, a serenity or prayer garden, computer equipment or software or materials for an afterschool program. The project will benefit both your church and the community. Are there funding sources outside the church as well?

For small projects and larger ones millions of dollars are available for faith-based and non-profit organizations in all 50 states; Alabama has its share.

Foundations and corporations are located in small towns and communities and large cities as well. Large cities often combine foundations under one umbrella and offer

community grants. The key to funding is to provide programs that benefit the area or community — not only your church or faith-based organization.

Gifts and donations

According to a report from the Foundation Center, 86,726 foundations are registered in the United States. Each year these foundations disburse billions of dollars to organizations, individuals and causes.

Alabama has 936 foundations who distribute more than \$210 million annually in independent, corporate, foundation and community grants. Many corporations also give back to the communities where they do business. Their gifts include sponsorship programs, in-kind donations, volunteer programs and matching gifts.

Alabama churches and faith-based organizations often overlook the

best opportunity for funding — money available locally. However, these simple suggestions may help your church receive funding:

▶ Become highly visible in your community. Networking is vital.

▶ Check with the local chamber of commerce for a listing of businesses and industries located in the same region as your church.

▶ Identify the CEOs, community resource personnel or plant managers as your contacts. Are these people members of your congrega-

tion or is there a connection with a board member? Make an appointment and discuss your grant needs.

Virtually all grants require detailed information in certain key areas. Always follow the prescribed format and place the required information within the appropriate section.

Use the headings and subheadings of the form.

Typically a grant application will include a cover letter, title page and summary, along with the following elements:

▶ **Introduction** — Explain what is needed and why. Has the church experienced something that indicates a need for funds, such as a natural disaster? Low test scores in local schools? Low poverty rate in the community?

▶ **Needs or problem statement** — What do you need to run a successful program that you don't have? For example, if the problem is transporting children working below grade level to an after-school, church-sponsored class, the grant could purchase a van for transporting children. Then it also can be used for church or community related events.

▶ **Goal** — Write a broad general



Pixabay.com

statement of the intended outcome of receiving the grant.

Example: The children in XYZ community need after-school transportation for remedial educational.

How and why?

▶ **Objectives** — What are you trying to do? Objectives should connect to the other sections of the grant; be written in measurable terms; provide a specific time frame and identification of the group(s) involved; contain answers to who, what, when, where and how much and include words like increase or decrease, reduce and expand.

▶ **Implementation or methodology** — How will you accomplish this project? What methods will you use, and why are you choosing this approach?

▶ **Evaluation** — How will you measure your success? Include both qualitative (surveys, interviews) and quantitative (numbers, data) methods. How will you know if the project accomplished the goals and objectives? How can it be replicated for other churches?

▶ **Future funding** — How will the project be continued after funding from this grant ends?

Be specific. Grantors want to know what plans the church has for the future of the project they are funding.

▶ **Budget** — Present your proposed budget using a table or spreadsheet. Document each item and be realistic. Grant readers will know the approximate cost of budget items. If a match is required use in-kind services or volunteer hours. Always count space, utilities, janitorial ser-

vices, phone services and secretarial services as part of the matching funds.

▶ **Budget narrative** — Include all required documentation such as letters of support from collaborative partners, copies of research or news clippings referred to in the narrative data, statistics and a copy of the church's annual budget. Stay within the specified page limit for the narrative and add additional material in the appendices. However, limit the amount of material in the appendices. The reader is not required to read any pages that go beyond the maximum specified.

Expression of thanks

Once the process is complete write a thank-you letter whether you receive funding or not. Thank the grantor for reading your proposal. If you did not receive funding, indicate that you will reapply in the

next funding cycle. Sometimes it takes several proposals to receive funding from a grantor. Persistence pays off. Realize there may have been many reasons why your proposal was not

funded and some may have been beyond your control.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Carolyn Tomlin, M.Ed., has been a public school teacher, university professor and grant writer for the Jackson-Madison County Schools in Jackson, Tennessee. She teaches grant writing workshops and is the author of "Writing Grants for Faith-Based Organizations and Community Non-Profits." ☪

Additional resources available at TABonline.org/church-grants.

Planning & prayer

How pastors can look ahead to retirement, prepare for what comes next

(continued from page 1)

Pastor Smith came to a small-town church when it was struggling to keep the doors open. He visited prospects, attended community meetings, supported local sports events, performed weddings and funerals and served many others in the area. Instead of a 40-hour-week, his work exceeded this many times over.

The congregation grew and built a beautiful new auditorium. It's no wonder the church loved this man.

Upon retiring Smith had a difficult time giving up his role as pastor. He had no hobbies because he never took time for leisure pursuits.

A few weeks after he left he continued to walk into the new pastor's office unannounced. When the secretary asked if he had an appointment, he felt offended. After all this had been "his" church.

In Smith's case his struggle with the transition to retirement has the potential to hurt the church he shepherded so well.

'Calling never changed'

After serving as a pastor for 45 years, the last 23 years at Eastern Hills Baptist Church, Montgomery, Rick Marshall has used the months since retirement to focus on several things.

"These months have given me time to reflect," he said. "I look back to those happy memories, good relationships and blessings we've had during my active ministry."

Another reward of retirement is the ability to choose.



Photo by Tracy Riggs

"Usually preaching twice on Sunday morning (and) being involved in the Alabama State Convention, a daily radio ministry and writing ... well, my schedule was very tight," said Marshall. "Now I can have morning coffee with my wife, enjoy books I've wanted to read and spend more time with our three married children and seven grandchildren."

The Marshalls continue to live in Montgomery and attend Eastern Hills.

"I've learned what it means to be a 'regular member' and I see things from the lay person's side. My wife has always been active in

my ministry, working in Sunday School, Vacation Bible School and missions.

"However, we can ride in the same car and go to church at the same time. She was always a member of a women's class; now we belong to a couple's class.

"As a pastor my head and heart has not changed," Marshall said. "God called me to be a minister."

Gary Fenton served as senior pastor of Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham, for more than 25 years.

"Retirement takes planning," Fenton said. "I prayed about this stage in my life long in advance. During this time I developed a general plan that included my calling, my role and my position.

"For me my calling never changed. God called me to be a pastor and to serve Him and others.

"As we age our role becomes different. I compare it to going from being a quarterback to now being a cheerleader," he said. "My role now is to encourage young pastors and churches. Today in my position people in the community often

Options for service

Each one of us is different. God made us that way. Retired pastors and ministry leaders have choices when it comes to how they spend their retirement years. Here are some of the options:

- ▶ Interim pastor
- ▶ Supply pastor
- ▶ Sunday School teacher
- ▶ Write-to-publish for Christian publications
- ▶ Ministry to nursing homes and assisted living centers
- ▶ Prison ministry
- ▶ Volunteer missions
- ▶ Start a men's or women's coffee club
- ▶ Hospital visitation to support the pastor
- ▶ Work in church clothes closet
- ▶ Serve in centers that feed the homeless and low-income households
- ▶ Chaplain to industrial companies and businesses
- ▶ Write grants to support church programs (see story page 9)
- ▶ Sing in church choir or play in the church orchestra
- ▶ Start or maintain a church library.

Source: Carolyn Tomlin

Helpful books

▶ *"Positive Retirement Preparation for Pastors"* by Lloyd Manning

▶ *"Retiring with Grace: A Baptist Pastor's Journey from the Pulpit to Retirement"* by Kenny Smith

▶ *"Out of the Pulpit, Into the Pew: A Pastor's Guide to Meaningful Service After Retirement"* by Gene Williams

▶ *"Pastor's Wife: Blank Journal with Inspirational Bible Quotes"* by Joyful Blessings

Source: Carolyn Tomlin

reach out as they need someone to talk to."

Fenton serves as senior advancement officer at Samford University in Birmingham, leads conferences and preaches in churches.

"During my time as senior pastor I never took a sabbatical," Fenton noted. "Now I have time to read, to study and to learn new skills. When you retire you really must have something to do that fits in with your life." ✝

God-honored finances

Four ways ministers might be sabotaging their financial well-being

By Don McLeod, CFP
Special to The Alabama Baptist

People who answer God's call to the ministry don't always consider financial know-how to be one of their job descriptions. But too little financial knowledge can cause ministers to make mistakes that can impact their security in retirement.

Here are four of the biggest financial mistakes those serving in ministry make:

1. Failing to plan

Planning doesn't have to be complicated. Use a resource you are comfortable with to establish a plan for how your money will be used. Be sure to include savings — both an emergency savings account for short-term needs and a retirement savings plan to reach long-term goals. Contribute to each one every time you get paid.

2. Accepting a lump-sum compensation package

With the "package" approach to financial support, ministers are provided a lump-sum salary. With this approach you pay taxes on the lump-sum salary and then pay for your own medical coverage and expenses out of the remainder — meaning you pay more taxes than necessary. To learn more download a free copy of GuideStone's "Compensation Planning Guide" at GuideStone.org/CompensationPlanning.

3. Opting out of Social Security

New ministers are often advised to opt out of Social Security to lower their tax burden. According to the IRS this decision should be made solely based on theological beliefs involving the receipt of publicly financed benefits. Once the exemption has been granted it can never be changed and the minister loses a ma-

ajor element of the retirement savings equation.

To understand more about Social Security and the unique tax status ministers may encounter, download and review GuideStone's publication "Social Security Considerations: Why Opting Out Is Not the Answer" at GuideStone.org/DontOptOut.

4. Planning to earn income until God calls them home

Ministers tend to view retirement in one of two ways. Either they plan not to retire, expecting to work their entire lives, or they look to retirement as an opportunity to pursue a new phase of ministry, namely missions opportunities. They expect to fund their golden years through paid post-retirement ministry and as a result fail to plan ahead.

While God's call to ministry doesn't have to have an end date, it may be unrealistic to assume you

will be healthy enough to serve as a pastor in your later years.

Plenty of faithfulness

It doesn't take too many wrong decisions to affect our financial well-being. But in the same way it takes only a small amount of know-how — and plenty of faithfulness — to build a strong financial foundation for the rest of your life. And remember, God is honored by good management of all our resources including finances.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Don McLeod is a certified financial planner with GuideStone Financial Resources. GuideStone serves churches and ministries by providing retirement and investment services, group and individual insurance plans, and property and casualty coverage. Visit GuideStone.org for more information.

Famous Christians from previous centuries

Heroes of the Faith

2019 marks 225th anniversary of missionary's birth

Allen Francis Gardiner (1794–1851) was a faithful missionary who endured numerous difficulties and failures.

This year is the 225th anniversary of his birth.

A mother's prayers

From 1810 to 1826, Gardiner served in the Royal Navy. While in Malaysia in 1820 he received a letter about his mother's death. After reading about her prayers for him he accepted Christ.

Gardiner married Julia Reade in 1823. They had five children. Julia died May 23, 1834.

He volunteered to serve in

South America with a missions organization. He was not ordained, however, and was rejected.

He then went to Tahiti, but the island was not receptive to the gospel. He then set out to evangelize the Zulus in South Africa. He was unsuccessful there as well.

When he returned to England he married Elizabeth Marsh, who became a faithful partner and mother to his children.

He journeyed again to South Africa to evangelize the Zulus. His oldest daughter ended up dying and was buried there. He also unsuccessfully tried to witness to the Mapuches in

Rio de Janeiro and New Guinea.

His next missionary effort was in Patagonia. Since he couldn't persuade any missions societies in England to help him he started his own — the Patagonian Missionary Society. He and another missionary went to Patagonia in 1844. The natives were hostile. Fortunately, a passing British ship rescued them.

Back in England, Gardiner raised enough money to buy two sailboats to go to Tierra del Fuego, an archipelago off the tip of South America.

On Dec. 17, 1850, Gardiner and his companions landed at Tierra del

Fuego to evangelize the Yagan Indians. It wasn't long before scurvy broke out among them.

'God is here'

Gardiner recorded in his journal: "Poor and weak as we are ... we feel and know that God is here."

The temperature was 20 degrees below zero when the men began dying in 1851. "Whether I live or die," Gardiner wrote, "may it be in Him. I commend my body and soul into His care and keeping." He was the last to die.

In 1856, Allen W. Gardiner, the missionary's only son, went to Patagonia as a missionary.

By Joanne Sloan

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



GARDINER

‘Immeasurably more’

Crossroads Church sees major change as it turns toward disciple-making culture

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Buel Harms says he remembers reading a book decades ago about all the stages of change a church goes through when the community changes.

He says in hindsight it was like reading the future because since he joined Mount Hebron West Baptist Church, Elmore, in 1975, all of it has happened.

But then just a few years back a different kind of change started happening — one he said began to push them in a good direction. They were headed for a re-launch, a new vision — even a new name.

At a crossroads

Harms remembers the day he said it out loud in a staff meeting.

“We were discussing the state of the church and I mentioned that it might be time to change the name of the church,” he said. “Things progressed from there. I guess I would have to say the Lord planted that thought.”

Pastor Robert Mullins said he would have to say the same thing because for months he felt like the church was at a crossroads. The day after that meeting he jotted in his journal a

name he felt was God-given — Crossroads Community Church. He believed God was at work in the people who were converging on that spot in Elmore, and in the years since he’d been called as their pastor in 2012 he felt like the church was ready to be turned loose.

So in January, when the church celebrated 175 years since its founding, it celebrated a whole bunch of other things too, one of which was a new name.

“We’ve just really tried to pour ourselves into the word of God and what He’s been doing,” Mullins said. “The style of how we’ve done it hasn’t mattered as much.”

All people are welcome to come worship how they want and follow Jesus with their whole heart, he said.

The church’s new mission statement is “everyone disciplined, everyone disciples.” They’re pouring tremendous effort into learning how to share the gospel and how

to disciple others personally through D-groups that meet for a year, then multiply to start others. And church members are being equipped to use their homes as missions outposts, Mullins said.

“We’re a huge disciple-making culture,” he said. “Our people made the conscious decision that we were going to be disciples who made disciples. You don’t come to Crossroads and have the option of sitting and soaking.”

But the process of change hasn’t been without some pain. For instance, in the

process of changing the name some church members decided to leave.

‘There’s hope’

Mullins doesn’t take that lightly — but he said the church feels compelled to walk forward on the path where God is leading them in order to turn things around and reach their community.

“We just want other

churches to know that there’s hope,” Mullins said. “A lot of churches are going to be at a crossroads and if they don’t make changes they’re going to die. ... Sometimes God wants to change the way we’re doing things.

“It’s been amazing just to see God fulfill the vision He gave us,” Mullins said. “It has Ephesians 3:20 all over it — He’s done more than we could ask or think.”



Photo courtesy of Crossroads

LEEDS STAINED GLASS & CHURCH FURNITURE
SINCE 1995

Toll-free: 888.699.9679
AL local: 205.699.9679
Call for **FREE** on-site consultation
Ask for Terry Barnes, Owner
information@LeedsStainedGlass.com
Visit www.LeedsStainedGlass.com
for an online gallery of windows and church furniture!



MEDICAL SIGNS

Reliable SIGN SERVICES

Livingston, AL

Alabaster, AL

Gardendale, AL

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS
1994 - 2019

www.reliablesigns.com
1.800.729.6844 • 205.664.0955



903.792.2783 or 800.264.2482 /bogardpress /bogardpressVBS bogardpress/

FARM FRESH FAITH
God's Faithfulness to Joseph

Lessons for preschool to adult

VBS 2019

Sample Kit \$185.95

T-shirts \$10.95 - \$12.95

bogard press
Always True to the Word
www.vbs.bogardpress.org

“Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.” Psalm 36:5



VOICE YOUR OPINION

SPEAK UP on issues in the Baptist world by writing a letter to the editor of *The Alabama Baptist*.

Remember to:

- Include your name and address
- Focus on issues, not people
- Be as concise as possible



Someone You

Should Know

John Brock

By Leigh Pritchett
Correspondent, *The Alabama Baptist*

John Brock, 56, of Florence has been in ministry for more than 30 years. For about 17 years he has served at Highland Baptist Church, Florence. Brock serves on the board of directors for The Alabama Baptist. He and his wife of 29 years, Charman, have two adult children, Elizabeth and Johnathan.

MINISTRY DESCRIPTION: Senior pastor

CHURCH NAME: Highland Baptist Church, Florence, in Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association

LIFE VERSE: "To whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27)

Q: Describe where you focus your greatest ministry efforts.

A: I am blessed to serve the Highland family of churches, which includes two community church campuses (Seven Points and Broadway Fellowship) and two collegiate church plants (The Well Church, Florence, and The Well Church, Huntsville). Our staff team is an amazing group of men and women. They are deeply committed to Christ, creative, hard-working and passionate about the mission God has given our church. ... The greatest way a pastor can serve his people is to be prepared to stand and regularly feed them from the Scripture.

Q: Tell about a "turning point" in your life and how God was involved.

A: We moved in the middle of my junior year in high school. Although it felt like the end of the world to me then it was that move that put me in position

to hear and respond to God's call to ministry. The other big moment came when I met my wife, Charman, while serving my first church in south Mississippi.

Q: If there was one thing you could tell your younger self about faith, what would it be?

A: Looking back on it, my younger self needed to know many things. But if I had to name just one it would be that Christ is enough.

Q: Does your church have any special traditions that mean a lot to you? What are they?

A: We are not a church driven by a lot of traditions. But our silent Lord's Supper service on Christmas Eve has become very special to our family, as it has to many other Highland families.✠



BROCK

'Not going to destroy us'

Robinwood pastor, wife rebuild life after apartment fire took everything

By Grace Thornton
The Alabama Baptist

Louise Geiger says she wishes she could remember the girl's name.

The smoke was getting thicker in the apartment, so black that Louise couldn't really see, only feel around as she looked for her husband's wallet on the dresser.

"She just kept yelling at me, 'You need to get out of here,'" Louise said.

'Like an angel'

She and her husband, Ron — pastor of Robinwood Baptist Church, Birmingham — had been sitting in their apartment watching a game on TV on Jan. 20 when he saw flames out the back window. He yelled and they went outside.

But as Ron ran from door to door telling people about the fire in their building Louise decided to go back for her scooter and her purse.

"I can't walk very well so I need that scooter to get around," she said.

The young college-aged girl had gone back in with her, and as the smoke thickened she told Louise it was time to go.

"She was like an angel," Louise said. "She knew I had a wheelchair and I needed help. She got me outside and we went across to get away from the smoke and the flames."

If she hadn't Louise might've stayed longer — how do you know what to leave behind when you've been married 59 years?

Everything they owned, including wedding pictures and her hus-

band's wallet and hearing aid, went up in flames that day. But God has cared for her and her husband in ways from small to big, she said.

"It was cold outside that day, and as we were out in the parking lot, a man from an apartment nearby came running over with two bedspreads to wrap me up in them," she said.

The Geigers have been able to stay with their son while they look for a house, and other family members and people from Robinwood Baptist have brought them clothes and other items to help them get going.

Ron said Romans 8:28 has taken on a whole new depth of meaning for him.

"I always believed that verse but it's become very personal," he said. "It's very reassuring and strengthens you to have that reality even when things look very dark and confusing."

Before coming to Robinwood Baptist a year and a half ago he and his wife had a long ministry together in Montgomery and in Arizona, where he served with the North American Mission Board as a director of missions.

Stronger than before

After Louise developed health issues they moved back to Alabama and settled in Birmingham.

"We thought we were settled but then Jan. 20 came along and everything changed," Ron said. "That's kind of our story I guess. But it's not going to destroy us. We expect to come out on the other end stronger."✠

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."

Romans 8:28

DO YOU KNOW A PERSON WHO SHOULD BE FEATURED AS
Someone You Should Know?

TAB CLASSIFIEDS

For information on placing a classified ad call 205-870-4720, ext. 102 or email ads@thealabamabaptist.org.

CHURCH POSITIONS

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

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

PART-TIME INTERIM WORSHIP LEADER

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

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER

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

MINISTER OF MISSIONS AND OUTREACH

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

STUDENT MINISTER

FBC McCalla is seeking a part-time student minister. Church is located in the western part of Jefferson County, close to McCadory High School. Send resumé to: P.O. Box 268, McCalla, AL 35111 or email it to: tdjproductions1@gmail.com. We will accept resumés through March 31.

CHILDREN'S DIRECTOR

FBC Centre, Alabama, is looking for a full-time children's director. This person will have a calling to share the gospel with children, he or she will oversee programs for birth to 11 years old and recruit and organize volunteers. Please send resumé to: FBCCentreKids@gmail.com.

OTHER POSITIONS

SECRETARY/BOOKKEEPER

Position available for a Christ-centered, self-motivated and organized individual with excellent communication skills. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to: filing, answering phones, screening calls, taking/delivering messages and packages, assisting administration with scheduling, student enrollment, recording/reporting attendance and basic bookkeeping. Previous experience in an office environment preferred. Knowledge of

QuickBooks and MS Office is a plus. Please send resumé to the attention of Gail Sammons at Cahawba Christian Academy and Daycare, 2415 Montevallo Road, Centreville, AL 35042, or via email at gsammonscca@gmail.com.

RESOURCES

YOUTH GROUP FUNDRAISING

Youth group need a great fundraising idea? Backpack promise clip-ons — colorful and decorative scripture verses attach to boys and girls backpacks, lunch boxes, sports bags, etc. Contact Debbie Ingle: 205-412-1970 or debbieingle5@yahoo.com.

BUSINESSES

NEED A NEW CHURCH SIGN?

Reliable Sign Services — a Christian operated, full service, lighted sign company located in Pelham, Alabama, for 23 years — is ready to help you expand your church sign ministry. From digital message boards to traditional signs, Reliable Signs will design, fabricate and install statewide. www.reliablesigns.com. 1-800-729-6844 or 205-664-0955.

ELROD MOBILITY — GREAT PRICES

Stair-lifts, walk-in tubs, lift-chairs and lightweight take-apart scooters. Saving people a lot of money on walk-in tubs, stair-lifts and showers. Our lift-chairs and scooters are near internet pricing. A+ rating with BBB. We service Alabama. 1-800-682-0658.

TRAVEL/VACATION

LOG CABIN RENTAL

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

MINISTRIES

TAB PODCAST

The TAB News podcast provides content from *The Alabama Baptist* each week in a radio-show-style format for listeners to download and listen to at their convenience. A host will guide the show, along with readers and guests who will talk about some of the story topics in depth. Listen to the TAB News podcast anywhere you get your podcasts or visit www.thealabamabaptist.org/explore/podcasts. New episodes are released weekly.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting the wonderful people of Vaughn Forest and seeing their faith to do great, big things for God."

Pastor Rob Singleton
Summit Church, Colorado



Photo courtesy of Vaughn Forest Church

Vaughn Forest Church's pastor search process takes unusual path

Pastor Rob Singleton said he enjoyed dreaming with leaders of Vaughn Forest Church, Montgomery, during the past several months but has decided not to accept the position offered to him as lead pastor.

The church's governance board said it is in agreement with the decision.

What would have been a move to form a network of churches, starting with the nondenominational church in Colorado where Singleton serves as pastor, also is negated with this decision.

Singleton and the new network were both affirmed March 10 by the congregation (for more details visit, www.thealabamabaptist.org). But within hours of the vote, both Singleton and several Vaughn Forest members had questions and concerns.

Mutual decision

"This decision is mutual between our leadership and Rob," a March 14 letter to the congregation from the church's governance board says. The board met the evening of March 13.

Singleton told *The Ala-*

bama Baptist he initiated a conversation with several of the church leaders the morning of March 13 to explain he didn't feel the church was ready for a national vision. "I shared with them that perhaps sometime in the future we could revisit it," he said.

The letter from the governance board reads, "Through the process of affirmation and in the subsequent days, many questions regarding the vision and future of Vaughn Forest Church arose. We want you to know we hear and understand your questions and concerns. ...

"We, the Governance Board, fully acknowledge that our communication to the congregation regarding the lead up to the affirmation Sunday, information about Rob and the affirmation vote itself were all not done as they should have been.

"The Governance Board takes full responsibility for this and we as a leadership team profusely apologize for these oversights."

Vaughn Forest's method of selecting a pastor is a mixture of traditional and non-traditional (see story, page 15). The church functions

under a governance board, which serves to keep the church focused on its mission and vision and oversees the hiring and accountability of the pastor.

Search team process

When the pastor position is vacant, the governance board appoints a pastor selection team of seven to nine church members, including at least two members from the governance board. The team is to be nominated by the congregation, reviewed and selected by the governance board and then affirmed by the congregation.

A two-thirds recommendation is required by the selection team for a candidate to be presented to the governance board, which then decides whether to move the candidate to the next step of asking the congregation for affirmation.

At least 75 percent of church members present on the day of the vote must affirm the proposed candidate.

Singleton received unanimous votes from the selection team and governance board and near unanimous affirmation from members. (TAB)

Different approach, same goal

Southern Baptist pastor search committees vary based on each congregation's style

By Margaret Colson
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

If your church is searching for a new pastor, it's not alone. Just like Vaughn Forrest Church, Montgomery (see story, page 14), many other Alabama Baptist churches are currently going through a pastor search process.

With Southern Baptists' bedrock foundation of the autonomy of the local church, the pastor search process is as unique as each church, but the ultimate goal is the same.

Traditional search

"Traditionally, Southern Baptist churches have utilized search committees made up of church members when a pastoral transition occurs," said Bo Rice, dean of graduate studies and assistant professor of evangelism and preaching at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

"Once the committee is chosen by the church, typically there is some time of spiritual preparation (special attention on prayer) and general equipping (often by the state convention or local association)," Rice said.

The pastor search committee, as it begins its task, often uses a survey, he explained, "to gain a better understanding of what the people desire in a pastor."

Then, the committee begins to receive and review resumés of potential candidates, sometimes receiving in excess of 100 resumés. Then begins the process of narrowing the field before scheduling interviews and

presenting a selected candidate to the church for a vote.

One benefit of the traditional process, Rice said, is "it keeps members actively involved in the search process. ... The committee members have direct access to the church as a whole. This allows for feedback, suggestions and interaction among the church body."

Yet this benefit can also become a challenge. "It's not unusual for search committee members to get overwhelmed with the constant input from church members," Rice said.

Sometimes, it becomes difficult for a search committee to reach consensus, which can lead to "burnout of the original search committee with the church deciding to enlist a new team, only to see the process start over from the beginning."

Nontraditional search

Beyond the traditional search approach, however, some Southern Baptist churches utilize new or different approaches, including "pastors choosing their successor as well as churches using consulting firms," Rice said.

Some believe that pastors choosing their successor is not a new model, with some biblical and historical examples, Rice said. Although this process is still not the "norm" in Southern Baptist life, "I hear of this happening more often."

Larger churches tend to turn to consulting firms to help with the pastor search process, Rice explained. Consulting firms use resources to "help assess pastoral candidates' overall



Unsplash

personality and interests" and often conduct "thorough social media checks on candidates as well."

Using a consulting firm that can consider "the emotional health and relational aspects of candidates helps churches consider important aspects of a minister's life that occasionally are missed in the traditional model," he said.

Still "no firm will have knowledge of every gifted and qualified candidate" and a firm may "miss the uniqueness of a local congregation," Rice said.

Unique search

Sometimes a pastor search that is a unique combination of the various approaches is a good fit for a church.

"The traditional approach supplemented by some of the new approaches has much merit," Rice said.

First Baptist Church, Woodstock (FBCW), Georgia, recently called Jeremy Morton to serve as co-pastor alongside longtime pastor Johnny Hunt before Morton eventually becomes lead pastor. The church used

a unique process in its pastor search.

Hunt, who had served the church for 33 years, announced his intention to transition out of his role as senior pastor. With the affirmation of the congregation, Hunt appointed a transition team that he would help in finding a new senior pastor.

After a few meetings, Hunt "suggested the person (Morton) he felt like the team should meet with to investigate," said Jim Law, now with the North American Mission Board (NAMB) but executive pastor at FBCW at the time of Morton's call to be co-pastor.

Hunt, who now serves as NAMB senior vice president of evangelism and leadership, told Georgia's *Christian Index*, "In praying through this ... I asked the Lord to show me His man. I feel that Jeremy fits every quality I felt [was] needed to lead FBCW to its best days."

The team met with Morton several times before inviting him to preach in view of a call. The church voted unanimously to call Mor-

ton as co-pastor, to serve alongside Hunt for up to 15 months. The transition started in October 2018 and will be completed no later than Dec. 31, 2019, Law said.

"I do not think it (the nontraditional pastor search approach used by FBCW) would work in every situation. It depends on the health of the church and the degree of trust the church has in their leader," Law said.

Prayer foundation

Whether a church uses a traditional, nontraditional or unique approach in selecting a new pastor, prayer must undergird the search, Rice noted.

"Ultimately every search for a new pastor must be bathed in prayer from beginning to end," he said. "Churches must trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Search committees must be patient in seeking God's man. Seeking God's direction will always result in Him placing His desired undershepherd to lead the congregation to grow up in every way into Christ, the head of the church." ❧



RICE



"Is Your Ministry Safe?" Workshop for All Church Leaders

March 26, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.,
Heritage Baptist Church,
1849 Perry Hill Rd, Montgomery

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

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

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

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



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

*ministrysafe.com

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

- 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
- 5 **Senior Adult Sunday**, Eileen Mitchell, ext. 221
- 6 **Senior Adult Evangelism Conference**, Lakeside, Birmingham, Amy Nelson, ext. 258
- 7 **Church Insurance: Protecting People and Property**, Dale Baptist Association Office, Ozark, Linda Hicks, ext. 263
- 12 **Mother's Day**
- 12 **Children's Homes & Family Ministries Sunday**
- 12-18 **Christian Home Week**, Eileen Mitchell, ext. 221
- 14 **Church Insurance: Protecting People and Property**, Northbrook, Cullman, Linda Hicks, ext. 263

Davis encourages wives of church ministers to focus on remaining joyful

Diana Davis, minister's wife and author, spoke at the 2019 Ministers' Wives Luncheon, hosted by Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), as part of the Alabama Baptist State Evangelism Conference held Feb. 25-26 at Dawson Memorial Baptist Church, Birmingham. She focused her message on one word — joy.

Davis addressed a stereotype she has faced in many communities that pastors' wives are miserable.

"I've heard, 'we're the most miserable people in the world,'" she said. "We need to talk about the positive side of [being a minister's wife] and the joy of being in the ministry."

"Joy changes everything,"

Davis said. "It changes the way you look, it changes your marriage and family and home, and it changes your personal ministry."

She also encouraged the women to find a ministry outside of the church and give it their all.

Davis said she found "when Scripture tells us to be joyful it's a command."

"It's not your job to be the best dressed on Sunday," Davis said. "It's your job to love God with a joyful heart and to show that joy to others."

Davis reflected on her early years as a pastor's wife when she "knew nothing" about ministering to

women. But with different backgrounds and stories, she said she focused on the "one common element we all share, that God saw the pleasure of putting you with your husband who God called to ministry — making you a minister's wife."



DAVIS

Candace McIntosh, executive director of Alabama WMU, closed the event by inviting everyone to register for the Ministers' Wives Luncheon taking place at the Southern Baptist Convention in Birmingham on June 11. The event will be hosted by LifeWay Christian Resources and will feature guest speaker Lauren Chandler.

The theme will be "Steadfast Love," based on Chandler's book and Bible study. (Hannah Muñoz)

**2019
STATE EVANGELISM
CONFERENCE**

"UNLIMITED MILEAGE WARRANTY COVERAGE?"

"CAN'T BE!"

It's true!

Carpenter Bus, and only Carpenter Bus, now offers FREE 7-YEAR/UNLIMITED MILEAGE Warranty coverage on all new buses sold to churches!

That means worry-free maintenance for your church year after year!

Why do we do it?

We just love helping churches get to where they're going!



America's #1 Church Bus Dealer

www.carpenterbus.com
Nationwide Delivery • 800-370-6180

Advertise in *The Alabama Baptist*

Contact Bill Gilmore
at 1-800-803-5201, ext. 107 or bgilmore@thealabamabaptist.org.

IS IT GETTING HARDER TO HEAR?

Hearing care — it's what we do. It's all we do.

beltone.com



BELTONE. EXPERTS IN HEARING FOR 78 YEARS!

We believe your hearing is too important to trust to just anyone. It's important to choose a qualified provider who offers award-winning technology along with compassionate care — like Beltone.

You always get more ... more care, more benefits and more guarantees at Beltone, including:

- FREE lifetime care — a Beltone exclusive
- FREE annual check-ups
- Lost, stolen or damaged coverage
- Virtually invisible styles

All at prices that fit your hearing loss, lifestyle and budget.

Call for an appointment today!



Look! She's wearing it. ➔



Beltone Amaze™

\$800 off

a set of Beltone Amaze 9 or 17 hearing aids or \$400 off a single Beltone Amaze 9 or 17*. Offer good March 25-29, 2019.



FREE

in-office trial of Beltone Amaze 9 or 17

Offer good March 25-29, 2019



CALL YOUR NEAREST BELTONE LOCATION FOR AN APPOINTMENT

Bessemer: 205-267-4767
Cullman: 256-841-4518

Decatur: 256-274-4296
Florence: 256-263-5417
Gadsden: 256-485-4040

Gardendale: 205-413-8867
Grove Hill: 251-275-4901
Jackson: 251-247-0071

Jasper: 205-282-4529
Mobile (Airport Blvd.): 251-342-7000
Mobile (Sage Ave.): 251-479-9409

Trussville: 205-383-3094
Vestavia: 205-238-6201
Winfield: 205-487-4300



*\$400 for a single instrument. Cannot be combined with any other offers, coupons or insurance plans. Previous purchases excluded. Participation may vary. See stores for details. Benefits of hearing aids vary by type and degree of hearing loss, noise environment, accuracy of hearing evaluation and proper fit. Beltone Hearing Care Centers are independently owned and operated. Participation may vary. © 2018 Beltone Apple, the Apple logo, iPhone, iPad and iPod touch are trademarks of Apple Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries.

3 stories you should know



Photo by Eddy Garner

Robert Penny, a member of Morgan Baptist Association's disaster relief team, hauls a load of wet drywall from a flooded home in Muscle Shoals. The Shoals area experienced flooding after heavy rains in late February. Disaster relief teams from several associations assisted Colbert-Lauderdale Baptist Association's team in mudout and flood recovery work in about 30 different homes, said Colbert-Lauderdale director of missions Eddy Garner.

Oregon's 'suicide crisis' continuing to increase

Assisted suicides continued to rise in Oregon in 2018, and Lois Anderson, director of Oregon Right to Life, says legislators in the state are calling it a "suicide crisis."

Oregon, which legalized assisted suicide in October 1997, saw its highest number of such deaths (168) in 2018, according to a recent report issued by the Canada-based Euthanasia Prevention Coalition. That is up from 158 in 2017.

So far, 2,217 Oregonians have died by assisted suicide since the practice became legal.

Anderson said the report comes with a special irony: the legislature is considering bills to help prevent suicide in young people ages 10 to 24 while also considering bills that would broaden assisted suicide access. (BP)

Survey shows support for LGBT protections

A new report from the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) finds that strong majorities within all religious groups, including white evangelicals and Jehovah's Witnesses, show sustained support for LGBT nondiscrimination policies.

The newly released data from PRRI's 2018 American Values Atlas, an annual survey of more than 40,000 Americans, showed that 69 percent of all Americans are in favor of enacting laws shielding LGBT people from discrimination in jobs, public accommodations and housing.

Though least likely to support these policies, small majorities of white evangelical Protestants (54 percent) and Jehovah's Witnesses (53 percent) were in favor of laws protecting LGBT people. (RNS)

— NEWSBRIEFS —

Ragsdale celebrates 30 years as pastor of Mount Zion, Alexandria



When Garry Ragsdale first came to Mount Zion Baptist Church, Alexandria, in 1989 he was the church's only staff member.

"It would take me two hours just to sort through the mail every week," he recalls with a laugh.

Now the church is a thriving hub of evangelism — in the past 30 years, they've celebrated nearly 2,700 baptisms and built new educational space, a new worship center and a building for middle school and high school worship.

They've been doing Evangelism Explosion for 30 years and every fall 35 to 40 teams get ready to go out and share the gospel again.

Roger Willmore, director of missions for Calhoun Baptist Association, said it's an amazing story.

"Garry is homegrown," he said. "He came to



RAGSDALE

a little country church and has grown it into one of the largest in our association. He has stayed the course."

The church celebrated Ragsdale's three decades of ministry Feb. 3 with a tea in the Family Life Center. The event was attended by friends and family, as well as current and past members, many of which have gone on to leadership positions in other churches.

It's been a wonderful 30 years, Ragsdale said. "The Lord has just blessed and blessed." (Grace Thornton)

Churches in southern India attacked after years of peaceful meetings



TAMIL NADU, India — Hindu extremism is spreading and churches in Tamil Nadu, India, that had never experienced opposition now find themselves forced out of their places of worship, sources said.

In one case Hindu extremists called praying women "prostitutes" and threatened to kill them; in another case near Chennai the state capital police went door-to-door with a radical

Hindu telling people not to meet for worship; in a third case the owner of the property where the church met had to order them to vacate the property after opponents set a fire inside the building (see photo below).

The targeting of house churches in Tamil Nadu seems to be politically motivated, said Nehemiah Christie, Tamil Nadu coordinator for Alliance Defending Freedom-India, who said districts and villages where Christians had previously held peaceful prayer services were now "under the radar of Hindu extremist violence."

India is ranked 10th on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2019 World Watch List of the countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. The country was 31st in 2013 but its ranking has moved higher and higher each year since Narendra Modi of the Bharatiya Janata Party came to power in 2014. (MS)



Photo by Morning Star News

News near you

AUTAUGA

► **First Baptist Church, Prattville**, will host the Empowered to Connect Conference simulcast from April 5 at 9 a.m. to April 6 at 5 p.m. The conference will provide practical teaching in a supportive environment and bring insight and wisdom to foster and adoptive parents, social workers, ministry leaders, field professionals and teachers. The deadline to register is March 31. The registration fee includes conference materials, lunch both days and snacks. For more information call 334-365-0606. To register for the event visit www.fbcprattville.org/events and click on "Empowered to Connect Conference." Travis Coleman is pastor.

CALHOUN

► **Parker Memorial Baptist Church, Aniston**, will host the County Bible Drill and Speakers Tournament on April 7 at 1:30 p.m. Mack Amis Jr. is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM

► **Birmingham Metro Baptist Association (BMBA)** will host the BMBA Pastors Roundtable on April 4 at 11:30 a.m. at Grille 29 in Brookwood Village. Reservations are required. Email katieh@bmbaonline.org or

call 205-599-3245 to make reservations. Chris Crain is executive director.

CAREY

► **Olive Branch Baptist Church, Ashland**, will host the Faces of God Women's Conference on April 6. Registration and breakfast will be held from 8 to 8:45 a.m. and the program will be from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Jamie Langley Henderson, Brenda Ladun and Cassie Shields will be the featured speakers, and the Allen-Flora Band will lead worship. To register or to order a T-shirt call 256-276-0674. Richard Farrow is pastor.

MOBILE

► **First Baptist Church, Tillman's Corner, in Mobile**, will host the iParenting Conference with Matt and Amy Day on March 23 from 9:15 to 11:30 a.m. Learn how to protect children from the dark side of technology and social media, and how to successfully integrate it into their lives. Snacks will be provided. Rob Jackson is interim pastor.

MONTGOMERY

► **Grace Community Church, Montgomery**, held its launch service March 10 with more than 200 people in attendance. Grace Community is one of Montgomery's newest Southern Baptist Convention church plants. For more information visit www.gracechurchal.com. Marcus Collins is pastor.



Photo by Neal Hughes

MADISON

► **Sherwood Baptist Church, Huntsville**, will host the Madison Baptist Association Prayer Conference on March 28 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. The conference will be led by Edwin Jenkins, interim pastor of Sherwood Baptist.

PLEASANT GROVE

► **Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Vance**, will host its annual women's conference March 30 at 10 a.m. This year's theme will be "Past, Present, Future." The Maharrey Trio will lead worship. Norma Blackstock and Treasure Clolinger will be the guest speakers. Lunch will be provided. Jonathan Blackstock is pastor.

TUSCALOOSA

► **Circlewood Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa**, will host a men's conference and revival featuring evangelist Steve Hale on March 29–April 3. The men's conference will be held March 29–30. Friday night will begin with a meal at 6 p.m. and Saturday will begin with light breakfast at 8:30 a.m. The revival will be held March 31–April 3. Sunday's services will be at 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. and Monday through Wednesday services will be at 6 nightly. Nursery will be available. The youth will hold a "gigantic" pizza gathering in the Christian Life Center at 5 p.m. on Wednesday. Herb Thomas is pastor. 🇺🇸



HALE

— NEWSBRIEFS —

Elderly Bible study leader threatened with eviction after discussion of hell



YOUNTVILLE, Calif. — Officials with the California Department of Veterans Affairs are threatening to evict an 84-year-old widow from the California Veterans Home unless she halts longtime Bible studies she has been leading for fellow residents.

A press release from the Pacific Justice Institute (PJI) said Artis Breau, a widow who has led voluntary Bible studies at the veterans home for nearly a decade, began encountering opposition from officials in September when someone claimed that her teaching on heaven and hell had caused another resident to lose sleep and therefore was elder abuse and emotional abuse.

Breau and her late husband moved to the veterans home about nine years ago. Her husband had served as a Merchant Marine in World War II, served in the 82nd Airborne Division overseas and then served in the Air Force during the Korean War. Breau worked as a civilian employee at the Pentagon during the Korean War.

Breau said she believes the real issue is that

she is an evangelical Jewish believer in Jesus, "which does not sit well with some of the chaplains," the PJI release stated. (TAB)

Kenyan pastor attacked by Muslim extremists after prayer service



GARISSA, Kenya — The Somali pastor of an underground church in Kenya near the Somali border suffered a broken thigh bone and other injuries after Muslim extremists beat him with wooden clubs March 8, sources said.



Photo by Wikipedia

Pastor Abdul, a 30-year-old father of three who leads an underground church of 30 former Muslims, finished leading a prayer gathering at 9 p.m. on the outskirts of Garissa and was on his way back to his house when several ethnic Somali Muslims attacked, he said from his hospital bed.

He did not know the assailants but said they

told him they were aware of his "evil plans" to convert Muslims to Christianity.

The population of Garissa, about 100 miles from the Somali border, is predominantly ethnic Somali. Several attacks on churches and Christians have taken place in Garissa.

Somalia is ranked 3rd on Christian support group Open Doors' 2019 World Watch List of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian; Kenya is ranked 40th. (MS)

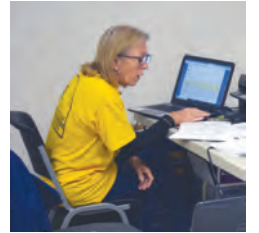
New Zondervan imprint will focus on leadership, faith and culture



GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Zondervan announced March 11 the official launch of Zondervan Reflective, a new imprint featuring the voices of Christian ministry leaders and pastors like Andy Stanley, Clay Scroggins, J.D. Greear and Peter Scazzero.

Zondervan said the goal of the new imprint is to focus on deep yet applicable content related to leadership, the intersection of faith and culture and growing and exploring a reader's ministry in the Christian community. (TAB)

Thank You!



Your gifts through the Cooperative Program and to the Myers-Mallory State Missions Offering have allowed Alabama Baptists to minister and have a continual presence in Lee County following the March 3 tornadoes and in other areas affected by winter storms.

To give directly to Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief and for updates and upcoming training opportunities, visit SBDR.org.



Servant/Leader Appreciation Night

90 minutes of Christian light-hearted entertainment from comedy to music

30
MARCH

Calvary Baptist
Church, Wetumpka

Time: 6-7:30 p.m.

Featuring



Aaron Wilburn
Comedian



New Ground
Musical guest



David Garrard
Magician



Mickey Bell
Comedian

Free Event

Come and enjoy the fun, laughter and praise!

For more information, call The Alabama Baptist at 1-800-803-5201, ext. 118 or visit www.thealabamabaptist.org/entertainment



Co-sponsored by TAB Media. No infomercials, no love offering.

Want to see your news in *The Alabama Baptist*?

Email your information to news@thealabamabaptist.org or call 1-800-803-5201.

Burton encourages pastors to equip their congregations for gospel sharing

One in 10 people you share Christ with will be born again.

That's an encouraging statistic, David Burton said, because if no one's responding keep trying — eventually they will. The problem is so few people are trying to share their faith, often because they don't know how, he said.

Preaching from Hebrews 5:11, Burton challenged pastors at the Alabama Baptist State Evangelism Conference on Feb. 26 to do the work of equipping the saints. Mature Christians need to hear solid food from the pulpit — they need to be taught the truths of their faith and be equipped in how to share it, he said.

Evangelistic messages are good and pointing back to the cross is necessary, but people in the pews don't grow to go out and share their faith if every message

is aimed at the unbeliever, said Burton, an evangelist from Jacksonville, Florida. Pastors can get in the rut of "preaching to the choir," or preaching "milk" Sunday after Sunday when the congregation needs "meat."



BURTON

"If you and I preach a salvation message every week, your church is finally going to become very, very anemic," he said. "They're not buzzing about Jesus outside the walls of the church. We like to hope they are, but they aren't."

Burton told a story about a sermon he preached once about how hell is hot, heaven is sweet and

Jesus can save. He had passionately charged the congregation to go out and share their faith that very day.

The people left energized. But he got a phone call

later that day from a church member who said the message was encouraging and he and his family were excited to go share their faith. But when they got in the car his son said from the back seat, "I'd love to do that. But ask Brother David to show us how."

"If you're not equipping your people to do the work of [the] saints you're missing it," Burton said.

Sharing intentionally has nothing to do with a person's energy level, education or personality — it has everything to do with his or

her obedience,

Burton said. "Pastors, you need to teach and equip the saints to do the work of the ministry out there. They

would gather to scatter in the early church days. Teach them how to share the good news on Sunday mornings so that they can do that at home." (Grace Thornton)

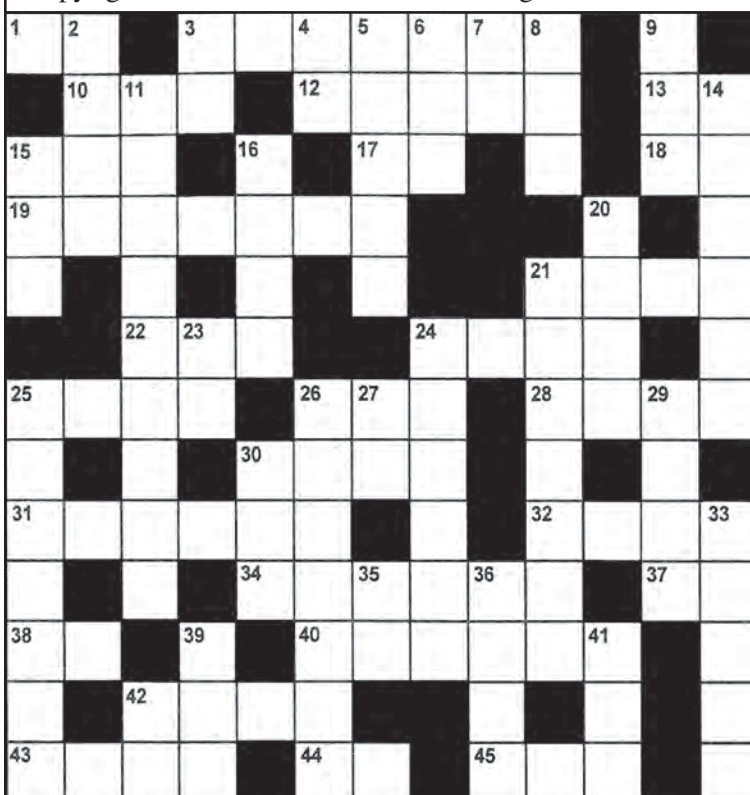
2019
STATE EVANGELISM
CONFERENCE

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

Copyright 1994

©Barbour Publishing Inc.



Across

1. Los Angeles. (abbr.)
3. Paul came to _____. (Acts 18:19)
10. National Basketball Association. (abbr.)
12. To make joyful.
13. 3.14159265.
15. Tool for weeding.
17. This is the way, walk ye in _____. (Isa. 30:21)
18. Even _____ Christ forgave you. (Col. 3:13)
19. They ... travelled as far as ... _____. (Acts 11:19)
21. Ehud the son of _____. (Judg. 3:15)
22. Distress signal.
24. _____ not.
25. Where is the king of... _____? (2 Kings 19:13)
26. Ready ... also to _____ at Jerusalem. (Acts 21:13)
28. Cast _____ between me and Jonathan. (1 Sam. 14:42)
30. Catholic service.
31. Over the brook ______. (John 18:1)
32. Jacob called Rachel and ______. (Gen. 31:4)

Down

2. Unknown author. (abbr.)
3. Each. (abbr.)
4. Art thou _____ that should come? (Matt. 11:3)
5. _____ and Semachiah were strong men. (1 Chron. 26:7)
6. Jesus ... wearied ... _____ thus on the well. (John 4:6)
7. Western state. (abbr.)
8. All flesh shall ______. (Luke 3:6)
9. A relaxing pool.
11. Now Philip was of ______. (John 1:44)
14. Belonging to Abraham's son.
15. _____ is the father of Canaan. (Gen. 9:18)
16. A person may have many _____ in his life.
20. We would call Samson a _____.
21. Shall Christ come out of _____? (John 7:41)
23. Exclamation.
24. Porcius _____. (Acts 24:27)
25. To make part of a group.
26. Belonging to the man who did not fear the lions.
27. Exists.
29. Used to carry other objects.
30. Mother.
33. Belonging to Canaan's son. (Gen. 10:15)
35. South America. (abbr.)
36. Out of the _____ of Jesse. (Isa. 11:1)
39. Take ... a _____ for a burnt offering. (Lev. 9:2)
41. Adam's _____.
42. Yes in German.

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For March 24

Explore the Bible

By Robert E. Jackson, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Christian Studies, University of Mobile



RESTORES Mark 5:21–24, 35–43

Willing (21–24)

In today's study we begin with Jesus' return to Galilee where His popularity is soaring. Earlier in the chapter the Gerasenes beg Jesus to leave (v. 17).

Jairus, a synagogue leader, now begs for His help to save his daughter's life. You have heard the statement, "there are no atheists in foxholes." Although this statement is an overstatement, experience teaches that hopeless people often seek God. Jairus was no different. His daughter was extremely sick and he knew that apart from the healing touch of Jesus she would probably die.

The synagogue leaders, many of them Pharisees, were not especially kind to Christ. Often they attacked Him and sought to bring about His demise. For many people it would be difficult to help someone like this. However, Jesus is perfect and willingly helps all people who seek Him.

Undeterred (35–40)

On the way to heal Jairus' daughter Jesus' garment is touched by a woman unclean from a bleeding disorder. Since she was considered unclean, she was prohibited from worshipping in the temple and was cut off from intimate relationships. Anyone she touches becomes unclean (Lev. 15:19–23).

But Jesus is not "anyone" — He is the spotless Lamb of God. In faith she touches His garment and is healed.

At the same time news arrives that Jairus' daughter is dead. Imagine the fear and grief in hearing this news. The antidote to the emotions of the unclean woman and Jairus is resolute faith in Jesus, who is who He says He is and does what He says He will do.

Peter, James and John were selected by Jesus to travel with Him on this divine assignment. As they arrive at the house the mourning

turns to laughter when Jesus proclaims the girl is asleep.

They know she is dead but what the crowd doesn't know is they are mocking the One who holds power over death. Undeterred at the crowd's unbelief Jesus put the doubters outside and brought the parents to their child.

Able (41–43)

I often gather with family members around the bed of a deceased loved one. Perhaps you too have cried, prayed or sung around a death bed. Showing compassion and love is all I can do. Not Jesus. He is able to restore life.

To the astonishment of the parents Jesus took Jairus' daughter by the hand and commanded her to get up. She did! Once again Jesus showed that He is able. He is able to heal a woman with a bleeding disorder. He is able to bring life to one who is dead. "Is Jesus still able?" is a question we must ask ourselves.

Last year Cole Burton was studying rock formations for a college class when a driver lost control and hit him. Things looked bleak. Cole was in a coma and his parents were told they might consider terminating life support.

Knowing the power of prayer they were unwilling to make this drastic decision so soon. One day the family and a few church friends gathered around Cole's bed to pray. As they prayed the Burtons felt the presence and power of Jesus.

Soon Cole came out of his coma and was admitted to the Shepherd Center in Atlanta. He is doing great. UAB physicians claim Cole is a living miracle.

Even though God doesn't choose to physically heal everyone, to doubt that He can heal puts us in the camp of the laughing crowd.

Be encouraged by the biblical accounts. Be encouraged by God's present-day workings. Jesus is able. Our God restores. 🙏

Bible Studies for Life

By James Riley Strange, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of New Testament, Samford University



THE PROBLEM WITH WORK Ecclesiastes 2:18–23; 3:9–13

Today's passages should be read in light of what we have read in Ecclesiastes so far. The teacher has been conducting experiments to learn what will bring satisfaction during his lifetime.

On one hand, will he find lasting pleasure if he behaves like King Solomon? No. The pleasure he feels is mere gratification of his desires.

On the other hand, will he prosper in this life if he becomes wise like Solomon? One Israelite theological idea says, "Yes, for God prospers the righteous while causing the wicked to suffer."

But in the teacher's experience both the wise person and the fool meet the same fate. The answer again is no.

So it is time for a third experiment: will work bring satisfaction?

Without God our work can feel futile. (2:18–23)

In Exodus 20:8–11 we learn a theology of work that says when Israelites labor six days and rest on the Sabbath they are behaving like God.

The teacher, by contrast, finds that he despises his toil. Work yields vexation and pain. He is even annoyed others who did not work with him will get to enjoy the results of his labor when he is dead.

His aggravation poisons his pleasure. It does not allow him to think of his good work as a legacy to leave for others.

In verses 22 and 23 the teacher is on the edge of concluding that nothing is to be gained from what he calls "toil and strain."

If we read further in this passage to verses 24 through 26, however, we see he has learned that God Himself supplies the way to find satisfaction in work. "There is nothing better," he discovered.

See your work as a gift from God. (3:9–13)

After the famous interlude of

3:1–8 the teacher fleshes out this idea it is God who gives enjoyment in the most basic of life's activities.

Verse 9 returns to the question of work's value (see also Eccles. 1:3 and 6:7).

Notice that the teacher calls people "workers" or "doers," but in the verses that follow it is God who is acting. The subtle message is that people may work, but God is in control.

God makes true pleasure possible.

The original Hebrew language of verse 11 is difficult. Some translations say God has put "eternity" in the human heart, others say "the world," and at least one "a sense of past and future."

This is another source of vexation: unlike other creatures humans can comprehend something of eternity: time extends to both an unseen past and a hidden future. They can even learn God's deeds endure forever.

But like all creatures humans can act only in the present. What then should they do?

As long as they live humans can do nothing better than to be joyful, to do good, to eat, to drink and to take pleasure in their work. But how, when they so keenly feel their limitations? To do so is a gift from God.

Indulging the appetites is pleasurable but limited. Wisdom is good, but also it opens our eyes to exasperating realities. And work? It brings no pleasure on its own.

What is required is God. If we are willing to receive it God grants the gift of enjoying food, drink and work during our limited days.

We should not let the importance of this lesson escape us. It seems trivial but the teacher tells us that it is a miracle. Our own strivings cannot bring what God offers in His grace. Do good? Yes. But rely on God for joy. Thanks be to God. 🙏

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

MOVIES

'Little House on the Prairie' leads new streaming lineup

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

Sometimes it's helpful to look back at our ancestors' world and consider how times have changed.

It can spark a sense of gratitude for our many blessings. It also can cause us to slow down and question why our lives have become so congested.

Each time I watch "Little House on the Prairie" I feel these emotions — and more.

The Golden Globe-nominated series ran from 1974 to 1983 and tells the story of Charles and Caroline Ingalls and their children: Laura, Mary and Carrie.

Set in the 1800s, the series follows this pioneer family as they fight for survival in a world void of supermarkets, cars and electricity. For modern-day children it may be the next best thing to visiting a living history museum.

All nine seasons of "Little House on the Prairie" are now streaming on Amazon Prime.

The series was based on

the children's books and exploits of Laura Ingalls Wilder, who was born in 1867 and lived in Walnut Grove, Minnesota, as a child.

Some of the episodes include adult themes but most contain lessons we all should learn.

Also streaming in March:

For adults/teens

▶ **"I Can Only Imagine"** (Amazon Prime, Hulu)

— It shocked Hollywood observers in 2018 with a top five opening and it remains one of the best faith-based films of all time. The story follows the childhood and young adult years of MercyMe's Bart Millard, whose abusive father came to Christ. Rated PG for thematic elements including some violence.

▶ **"Nacho Libre"** (Amazon Prime, Hulu) — The same team behind the 2004 cultural phenomenon "Napoleon Dynamite" was behind this movie, which tells the story of a monk who becomes a professional wrestler. Rated PG for some rough action and crude humor including dialogue.



TAB AR

'Little House on the Prairie'

Photo courtesy of NBC

▶ **"Disney's Christopher Robin"** (Netflix) — A stressed out and workaholic British father rediscovers the simple joys of life thanks to his childhood friends: Winnie, Eeyore, Tigger, Piglet and Roo. This film is enjoyable for the whole family and includes valuable life lessons. Rated PG for some action.

▶ **"Emma"** (Netflix) — A young woman named Emma Woodhouse enjoys the art of matchmaking but fails miserably at her own romantic relationships. Set in the early 1800s, it's based on a Jane Austen novel. Rated PG for brief mild language.

▶ **"Disney's Saving Mr. Banks"** (Netflix) — The real-life Walt Disney works to obtain the movie rights to P.L. Travers' novel "Mary Poppins." Rated PG-13 for thematic elements, it

contains minimal language but one unnecessary "GD."

▶ **"Free Solo"** (Hulu) — A daring (and perhaps crazy?) rock climber sets a goal of scaling Yosemite's El Capitan without a safety rope. It won an Oscar for Best Documentary. Rated PG-13 for brief language (including one f-word).

For children

▶ **"Stuart Little"** (Netflix) — An American family adopts a teenage mouse as their son. A few mild curse words spoil what could have been a film appropriate for young children. Rated PG.

▶ **"Astro Boy"** (Hulu) — A scientist living in the futuristic Metro City designs a robot to look like his deceased son. Unfortunately the president of Metro City tries to recruit the robot to use for evil. Rated PG for some action and peril and brief mild language.

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.

▶ **"The Stinky & Dirty Show" Season 2** (Amazon Prime, beginning March 22) — The exploits of Stinky (a garbage truck) and Dirty (a backhoe loader) continue in the second season.

▶ **"Spy Kids 2: The Island of Lost Dreams"** (Netflix) — Carmen and Juni, the world's most famous children spies, save their parents from the bad guys. Rated PG.



'I Can Only Imagine'

Photo courtesy of Roadside Attractions

'Stand for Christ'

University of Alabama pitcher uses baseball as platform for faith

By Bill Sorrell
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Motivated by a coach who told him in the eighth grade he would not amount to anything in baseball, Connor Shamblin was named 2018 Tennessee Mr. Baseball in Division 2-AA.

Completing his senior year at

Briarcrest Christian School in Memphis, Shamblin enrolled at the University of Alabama in July 2018.

"That was one of my goals at the beginning of the year," he said. "I wanted to win a state championship ... but to win Mr. Baseball shows how God can move in anyone's life. To win something like that means a lot, to be considered the best player in this division. I know the amount of work I have put in and to see it pay off is a relief — that I did not do all that to come up short. I accomplished my personal goal."

With a fastball that hit 95 mph and a slider, his favorite pitch, he had 63 strikeouts in 53 innings his senior year.

"He is the best player on the field, the best pitcher, the best hitter," said Briarcrest head baseball coach Craig Hopkins. "I don't know of a time when there was somebody else who was a better athlete."



Connor Shamblin

Photos courtesy of Alabama Athletics Photography

A right-handed pitcher, Shamblin originally committed to Mississippi State University. But after two weeks he couldn't shake the pull to Alabama, his "dream school" since he was a young boy, he said.

'What He calls me to do'

"I had to go to Alabama. I love the coaches and everything."

He is now focused on his goals at Alabama and his future.


"I feel like God wants me to be a baseball player," Shamblin said. "If that is what He calls me to do then I will be the best player I can be. God's sovereignty is what ultimately drives my life."

Hopkins expects Shamblin "to

shine at Alabama. ... Once he commands all his pitches he is going to be a special player."

Ben Cowell, Shamblin's youth pastor at Germantown Baptist Church, told him baseball can be a platform for expressing his faith.

"I try to use my platform for God," he said. "If His light shines on you, if you have all these eyes on you, what do you want to be known for? Do you want to be known for your career or spiritual walk with Jesus like Tim Tebow?"

Shamblin's spiritual goal is to lead someone to Christ. "I have the right material to do it. I have got to build up the nerve and not be timid," he said. 

How to pray:

► Pray for Shamblin to continue to use his platform at the University of Alabama to shine the light of Christ.

► Pray for those Shamblin comes into contact with to have their hearts and minds opened to the gospel. (TAB)



Sewell Thomas Stadium, University of Alabama