



The Alabama Baptist

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Vol. 184, No. 28
Informing. Inspiring. Connecting.

INSIDE



Southern Baptists respond to border crisis with compassion, share gospel

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Panel urges pastors to cross racial lines for gospel partnerships

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Judson holds first commencement under Mark Tew

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Transforming communities

Centershot Archery uses bow and arrow to illustrate God's power

By Lanell Downs Smith
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

Ron Huie believes every child can succeed as an athlete if he or she finds the right sport. That's why Huie has a passion for the Centershot Archery Program at Gardendale First Baptist Church. "Kids who might not be able to run fast or aren't big or naturally gifted athletes can do this," he said.

"It's a tremendous ministry

for kids. It gives them confidence and they can be a part of a team. Archery fits anybody that wants to do it."

Gospel tool

Centershot is an international ministry with a vision to inspire, serve and partner with local churches to share the gospel using archery to evangelize, disciple, mentor and grow the church family.

"Centershot is a tool to help churches transform their

community," said Centershot president Aaron Scheer. "We deliver the gospel message through the universal sport of archery. Archery is one of the fastest growing sports in the world and Centershot is a tool for churches, camps and missionaries to connect the gospel with that momentum."

Through the program Gardendale First has seen decisions for Christ and has also witnessed unchurched people joining the team and later be-

coming involved in the church. Huie said the discipline and focus required for archery helps children grow spiritually and emotionally while they develop as athletes.

Parent and church member Shawn Bell has witnessed that in her children.

"My kids are growing in leaps and bounds," Bell said. "They realize how important a personal relationship with God is. The most fabulous part is (See 'Growing,' page 17)



Photo courtesy of Ron Huie

Gardendale FBC helped pilot the Centershot Archery Program in 2006 and now Centershot 'delivers the gospel message through the universal sport of archery' in 47 states and 26 countries.

To watch the videos from this week's issue, visit our YouTube channel "TAB Media."

Want a copy of the special SBC issue?

Maybe you didn't make it to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Birmingham this year. Maybe you weren't able to pick up a copy of the special SBC edition of *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB).

Maybe you picked one up but accidentally left it under your chair in the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex Legacy Arena. Or maybe you still have your copy from the meeting but want another one to give to someone else.

Good news: we have extra copies and we want to make sure everyone who wants a copy of the special SBC issue has the opportunity to get one.

Not only is this special SBC edition a rare publication and a piece of Alabama and Southern Baptist history, it also holds information about Birmingham restaurants and places to visit.

Helpful tips, exclusive content

Whether you're a longtime resident of the metro Birmingham area or planning a weekend trip to visit the Magic City from somewhere else in the state, this special issue has helpful information for you.

The special issue of the newspaper also has exclusive content that can't be found anywhere else.



Submitted photo

Even the youngest readers of *The Alabama Baptist* love the special issue created for distribution at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting. Contact us at 205-870-4720 or news@thealabamabaptist.org to get your copies.

"With the SBC annual meeting coming to Birmingham for the first time since 1941, TAB wanted to do something special to commemorate it while also providing a helpful resource for conventiongoers," said TAB editor-in-chief Jennifer Davis Rash. "We were so excited to create this special SBC issue of TAB for the convention and I'm so glad we can now share this piece of history with everyone."

If you would like a copy of the special issue email us at news@thealabamabaptist.org or call us at 205-870-4720, ext. 103 and give us your name, address and how many copies you would like.

We can mail the copies to you or you are welcome to stop by the office in Homewood to pick them up.

Stopping by to pick them up is a great option because we'd love a chance to meet you. (TAB)

How should we celebrate the upcoming Read TAB Day, promote TAB overall?

Read *The Alabama Baptist* (TAB) Day is scheduled for Aug. 18 this year and we need your help in finding fresh ways to promote all that is happening in the world of TAB.

The purpose of Read TAB Day is to encourage Alabama Baptists to partner with TAB as a way to stay informed about issues important to people of faith, have access to resources for navigating all that life throws our way and stay connected to Baptists around our state, nation and the world.

We want to hear your ideas on how we can best promote *The Alabama Baptist* and Read TAB Day in general as well as within families of faith.

"We want to hear from our readers. They know their churches and congregations well so who better to

get ideas from?" said TAB director of communications Debbie Campbell. "We are open to all ideas. The options are endless."

Bulletin inserts, PowerPoint slides, videos, promo graphics, posters to display and social media memes are all options we can produce easily. TAB staff members also are available to come and share with your congregation or Bible study group about the ministries of TAB.

Let us know what you think works best. Email your ideas to news@thealabamabaptist.org or give us a call at 205-870-4720, ext. 103. (TAB)



The crossword puzzle can be found on page 17.

Correction

Eastern Shore Baptist Church was incorrectly stated to be in Montgomery on page 7 of the July 11 issue. Eastern Shore Baptist is located in Daphne.



THE ALABAMA BAPTIST

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

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MY RASHIONALE

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

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Serving others comes in a variety of expressions

Opportunities to serve can be as simple as sending a note of encouragement, providing a meal for a grieving family or sharing a smile and a hug with those you see today.

Serving can be done routinely through roles in our churches and preferred ministry outlets or in our places of employment, neighborhoods and children's schools and sports teams.

We might also share the extra vegetables from our garden with neighbors or pick fresh blueberries for that busy young executive trying to balance home and work life.

Maybe we call our home-bound friend when we have leftovers from a home-cooked meal and drop by to share lunch together.

We can invest in short-term missions projects in our communities and organize missions and ministry trips to help other areas in need across the nation and world — as countless Alabama Baptists have been doing this summer.

And we can look at more long-term investments such as pouring into the lives of those around us on a daily basis, the disciple making kinds of things that aren't always simple and take much more time than we think we have to give.

The opportunities are always available and sometimes even overwhelming. Some seasons in life will allow you to do more than others so don't feel guilty when you must limit your activities, but do take advantage of the times you can do more.

If we all make acts of service a priority even during the seasons of limited time and resources, then all actions — no matter how small — will make a major difference in some way or another.

And if we all focus on what God is calling each of us to do rather than being tempted to push others to do what we think they should do, then the acts of service will provide a more quality and fulfilling result.

We certainly should share opportunities to serve and recruit others to help but we should be careful not to pressure.

There are many good things to do so we must be careful to prayerfully select only the best.

After all if we spend all our energy doing all the things everyone else wants us to do then we might not be able to fulfill what we are truly called to do.

When it comes to missions and ministry experiences, churches and associations make it easy for individuals and families to participate without having to figure out the logistics.

We would love to hear about your church and/or association's experiences this summer. Send

us the details and a photo or two to news@thealabamabaptist.org.

If you are looking for ideas on short-term missions opportunities be sure to contact the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and/or Alabama Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) at 1-800-264-1225 for suggestions.

The articles on the border crisis on pages 6 and 7 also have suggestions for ways to make a difference in that area. And consider national WMU's World-Crafts fair trade artisan support ministry for some of your upcoming Christmas shopping — www.worldcrafts.org.

RASHIONAL THOUGHTS

Some days are tough, even for the most optimistic and energized among us — even for those who hide it well

My friend recently opened up about his three-year battle with deep depression. A few years on the other side of it now he finally feels confident to share — determined he isn't going back into the pit.

I'm not around him often so it's not surprising he was able to hide the debilitating experience from me. But I do remember contacting him once or twice during that time and receiving an oddly cold reception, almost as if he were annoyed at my call.

Instead of checking on him or acknowledging that something seemed out of character I determined I must have called at a bad time and let it go.

An interesting note about this particular friend is that he is the one who many years ago intro-

duced me to the concept of always being kind to others no matter how they behave because we don't know what's happening in their lives at that moment.

'Be kind'

There's a famous quote about this concept: "Be kind for everyone is fighting a battle you know nothing about."

For as long as I've known him my friend has used a version of this quote along with a Scripture reference at the end of his email messages after his name.

I haven't located the original source of the quote. It seems to have been attributed most often to a variety of Greek philosophers and on occasion to a handful of modern-day bloggers.

No matter who first said it the

point is clear and a good reminder to all of us.

And Colossians 3:12 says it even better: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

So when someone in the service industry is rude to us or our friend doesn't return our calls and texts we should respond with kindness and love, showing grace, rather than getting upset.

If someone close to us chooses not to share about a health concern or difficult situation he or she is facing, we can find other ways to support and care for him or her. We can still pray without knowing the specifics — and we can always be kind.

—Jennifer Davis Rash

Your Voice



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

Miraculous healing – physically and spiritually

By **Dominic Kendall**

Student pastor, Enon Baptist Church, Morris

You've been healed." Those were the words that came from my doctor's mouth — words that changed my life. How could this be? Only because of Jesus.

In April 2009 while playing goalkeeper for my high school soccer team I was going for a ball and was accidentally kicked in the face by the opposing team. I was taken by ambulance to the University of Tennessee Medical Center where they took scans of my face to see if I had hurt any of my facial bones.

During the scans doctors discov-

ered a small benign tumor deep in my brain. This diagnosis led to multiple follow-up scans and trips to a neurosurgeon. The doctors said the tumor wasn't cancerous but had to be dealt with because of its position and proximity to the short-term memory area of my brain.

So in July 2009 at the age of 17, I underwent brain surgery. Doctors were unable to remove the tumor due to its position in my brain so they created a safety shoot to help as the tumor grew to help the flow of brain fluid around my brain.

The expectation was that the tumor would continue to grow and frequent scans would allow them

to monitor it until a more invasive surgery would be needed.

For close to a decade I lived knowing I would one day have to have a risky and potentially deadly surgery. I was always aware of any symptoms and even carried around an envelope so no matter where I was in the country or the world I would be able to give that envelope to the doctors if necessary.

That changed in March. I went for a checkup and had all the routine scans. I sat in the doctor's office and waited for him to tell me whether there had been any growth.

When the doctor finally came in the first words out of his mouth were, "Well, son, you've been healed."

I was caught off guard. I asked a slew of follow-up questions to make sure they had the right brain scans for the right person.

The doctor told me that not only was the tumor gone but the safety shoot they had put into my brain was also healed. The only evidence I had even had surgery in the first place was the little metal cap that sealed the hole where they went into my brain.

The Lord healed me. The God of the universe looked down and healed me. I was prepared at the age of 17 to give all the glory to God no matter what this tumor did.

Now all the more I will declare the glory and praises for the God who not only has saved me spiritually but has healed me physically as well.

I hope that I never get over the amazing grace of our God. As long as we never get over it, we will continue to serve Him the way He desires.

Keith Box

Director of missions

Marion Baptist Association

Continue to pray for churches doing Vacation Bible School. I've attended 18 to date and have seen good attendance. Pray for the gospel to penetrate young hearts.

Ken Allen

Associational missions

director

DeKalb Baptist Association

Have you grasped — really, truly grasped — the depth of God's love for you? Not just for humanity but for you personally?

Grace Thornton

"Unshakable Pursuit"

God was up while you slept. Now that you're up, trust that He'll have just as much control of your day as He did of your night.

Jackie Hill Perry

Author

My Jesus Story

Have you ever felt like an outsider? Maybe when you started a new school or a new job. The feeling definitely comes — at least for me — when visiting a new church.

This got me thinking about Mary and Joseph. I know, I know, Christmas is five months away but hang with me if you will.

Mary and Joseph traveled a long distance for the census to Bethlehem. They went to the normal places like the inn and they didn't have any room for them. They were outsiders.

Mary was probably scared and in pain. I'm sure Joseph was frustrated. He was out of his comfort

zone but he had a mission — to find a safe place for Jesus to be born — and he succeeded with God's provision.

He didn't give up, he didn't stop when things got embarrassing or difficult. He pressed on. He knew God would provide and God did. We must have this kind of faith today.

As Christians we are outsiders in this world just as Scripture tells us we will be. Take comfort. We are chosen to be outsiders — just as Mary and Joseph were — to fulfill a greater purpose.

Jenni Ingram

Gantt Baptist Church

Gantt, Ala.

Share online or email news@thealabamabaptist.org

“Your journey ... reveals how God has worked in your life.”

KANDI GALLATY
Author and trainer at Replicate Ministries

In these summer months, we are praying for all Southern Baptists to practice generosity faithfully so our churches can maximize their evangelistic opportunities through ministries like Vacation Bible School, student and children camps, as well as local, national and global mission experiences. Our world desperately needs each of us to live and breathe gospel urgency every single day.

Ronnie Floyd
President and CEO
SBC Executive Committee

No doubt, you've heard the voice of fear. It says the task in front of you is impossible. ... Fear plays a broken record in your mind of all the worst possible outcomes.

... If you listen to fear, it will tell you to run when you should take a stand. It will urge you to keep quiet when you should speak up. Fear will prompt you to quit when you should stay and linger when you should leave. It's no wonder the Bible addresses the topic of fear so much. Over 300 times God commanded us in so many words to stop being afraid!

When you know God has called you to a purpose, you can step into that role — no matter how frightening — because you are confident that God is in control. Fear may not disappear but that's when courage becomes stronger than fear.

**Jackie Green and
Lauren Green McAfee**
Authors of “Legacy”

Confess your sins to one another, friends. Not the fake real ones but the really real ones. It's worth it.

Veronica Greear
The Summit Church
Raleigh-Durham, N.C.

I've never preached a sermon on immigration. I have, however, preached many a sermon on human needs and our call to serve Jesus by meeting human needs.

I have no idea how to fix a border crisis, immigration policy or anything that falls within the galaxy of issues in these areas. But I do know how to provide help and assistance to those in need. I'll stick with the latter.

William Thornton
SBC Voices

From the *Twitterverse*

@macbrunson

No matter how desperate we feel or how defeated we may be, there is no need for despondency. God never lacks a means for our deliverance nor the power in effecting our salvation.

@JohnAShepherd

I am profoundly thankful for the blessing of Sunday. #itsmyfavoriteday The gathering of the saints on the 1st day of the week is needed medicine for my soul; a glimpse of the coming kingdom. See you at the meeting house #Siloam!

@KB_HGA

The healthiest thing we can do is tell God how we feel. Bring your anger. Bring your fear. Bring your question. Bring your sin! He is not insulted or intimidated by those that run to Him! Christ will HEAL!

@Jeff_Noblit

We are all great sinners in need of a great Savior. All sinners need our love and compassion. But the wrath of God is severe and the call to all must vividly point out their sin and even more so the Savior, urging all to join us as humbled repenters clinging to Christ in faith.

@TellaGraham

In our Christian walk, we need to completely surrender. We need to give God our relationships, our work, our finances and our passions; our future, our present and our past. We need to seek His direction and pursue His plan for us with every step.

@hannatchka

I wish more American believers realized that there is a place for holiness to occur in secular venues.

@RevKevDeYoung

We do not understand Jesus if we think he's simply a good teacher, a good example and a good man. Jesus' singular purpose and mission in life was to die for sinners.

@PSChadBurdette

The spiritual man will stand next to his brother, not over him.

@bcmlink

Be in prayer for students who are searching for answers right now. Pray that they will rely on the truth of Scripture. Pray that God will give them the understanding they need and the heart to accept what they don't. #ReachEveryStudent

@BGEA

Making disciples of all nations starts in your backyard.



Photo by TBFA

Barry Bledsoe is president of The Baptist Foundation of Alabama.

Leaving a ministry legacy

Maybe you know *what* a Legacy Ministry is ... but do you know *why* your church should offer one?

Before Jesus left this earth He gave what is known today as the Great Commission — to “go and make disciples.”

Discipleship, simply put, is helping people trust and follow Jesus. But where does a Legacy Ministry fit in? It's an often overlooked but key component to discipleship. Helping your members trust and follow Jesus with everything God has entrusted to them even after the Lord calls them home.

But here's what we've discovered: the majority of your committed givers have never considered how creating a plan for what they've accumulated in this lifetime is an act of stewardship.

At the Foundation we equip churches just like yours to offer a Legacy Ministry to their members. That means hundreds of families are considering leaving a gift in their Legacy Plan, making an impact that can only be measured in eternity.

By offering a Legacy Ministry in your church you're giving each family the opportunity to continue making disciples even after they leave this earth ... now that's a legacy!

If you would like to offer this opportunity to your members, call 334-394-2000.

—Barry Bledsoe

'Tangible expression of GOD'S LOVE'

Southern Baptists respond to border crisis with compassion, necessities

While state and national officials craft responses to the humanitarian crisis along the Mexico border, Southern Baptist entities, churches in the border states and believers across the nation are actively engaged in addressing the migrant influx.

Ronnie Floyd, president and CEO of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee, said the border crisis "has the attention of Southern Baptists."

"I am grateful for churches and ministry groups in New Mexico, Texas and California helping in a variety of ways, such as serving hot meals and non-perishable lunches and providing other ministries of compassion as they are able," Floyd said. "The hands-on ministry being done through local churches working in partnership with one another and in their associational and state networks is what Southern Baptists are all about."

The border crisis is nothing new to Southern Baptist churches in Texas' Rio Grande Valley, West Brownsville Baptist Church pastor Carlos Navarro explained.

Decades of ministry

Navarro, a native of Guatemala, has been involved in ministry to migrants since his arrival in the Valley 25 years ago.

The church formed Golan Ministries in 2018 after the Mexican Consulate in Brownsville contacted Navarro for help with that summer's migrant crisis. Since then Golan has provided water, clothing, food and Spanish Bibles to migrants on both sides of the border.

In April 2019, West Brownsville Baptist began serving as an overflow migrant respite center when the city's two other emergency shelters, operated by the Catholic

Church, reached capacity, and the mayor and city commissioners approached Navarro for help.

Navarro said yes and West Brownsville members converted Sunday School rooms and other parts of the building — approximately half the church's space — to shelter migrant families.

It is his duty to help, Navarro told San Antonio news outlet KENS.

"If I want to show my true colors as a Christian this is the moment to do it," he said. "Otherwise it's just a show."

Up to 50 families per day have been dropped off at West Brownsville after being released by U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP). Numbers have ranged from 75–100 individuals per day initially to 35–

50 individuals coming in daily now.

"They are sending us the most vulnerable, moms and dads with children and single moms with children," Navarro said.

Navarro believes migrants will continue to journey north until living conditions in Central America improve.

While the city of Brownsville has financed efforts at the other respite centers West Brownsville has received no city funding and has relied upon donations, including

significant grants from the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention (SBTC) and North American Mission Board (NAMB). The Red Cross donated 1,000 toiletry kits, some blankets and 20 cots, and SBTC Disaster Relief has a shower/laundry unit at the church.

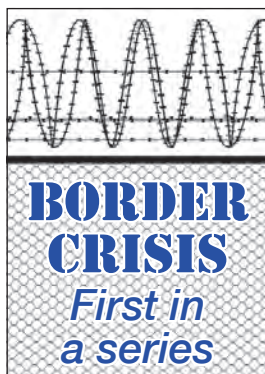
West Brownsville needs funds for supplies and has created a wish list at Amazon as a way to ask for specific needs and not overwhelm storage limitations (see sidebar, next page).

Following the law

In addition to the work of churches like West Brownsville along the border, SBTC Disaster Relief volunteers have teamed with the Salvation Army in El Paso and Del Rio this spring and summer to serve migrants who have passed through security, been vetted by CBP and undergone medical screening before arriving at temporary shelters.

Disaster relief laundry/shower units and SBTC Disaster Relief personnel are stationed on location supporting the migrant shelters and volunteers working in those cities.

In New Mexico serving asylum-seeking migrants is as simple as "a



A group of asylum-seeking migrants from Guatemala and El Salvador wait for a bus in Deming, New Mexico. Robert Hamilton, pastor of FBC Deming, said as of July 1 the church has distributed more than 1,000 sack lunches to migrants.

Photo by Xchelzin Peña/Deming Headlight via BP

cup of cold water in Jesus' name," said Freida Adams, a 20-year veteran Southern Baptist missionary and current coordinator for medical personnel in Doña Ana County.

Adams is one of many Baptists in New Mexico providing humanitarian assistance to asylum-seeking migrants released by CBP agents en route to approved immigration sponsors in other parts of the U.S.

Many of those seeking asylum are acting in accordance with current United States asylum laws (8 U.S.C. 1158).

According to Scott Wilson, Baptist Convention of New Mexico (BCNM) missions mobilization team leader, asylum-seeking migrants "are vetted, have ankle monitors and sponsors somewhere in the U.S."

Asylum seekers, Adams noted, typically spend less than 48 hours in their host city before boarding a bus or plane to connect with their sponsors. Serving migrants is "about obeying Matthew 25. It's about being the hands and feet of Jesus," Adams said.

In the nearly three months since CBP began releasing asylum-seeking migrants in New Mexico several churches affiliated with BCNM have provided, or are currently providing, assistance to migrants in three communities — Albuquerque, Deming and Las Cruces. Several New Mexico Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers have also provided assistance and some churches have provided housing.

Churches in Albuquerque provided facilities for meal preparation and assisted in serving hundreds of meals to migrants.

'Not political'

Stephen Baum, pastor of First Baptist Church, West Albuquerque, said the response is not political. Rather the priority is to "put food in hungry bellies and do that in the name of Christ and just show the love of Jesus to these folks," he said.

Dennis Garcia, a NAMB church planting catalyst in Las Cruces, said in April that the situation provides "an opportunity to be light to our neighbors."

"They may not be our physical, tangible neighbors for long," he said, "but during the time that they are in our city they are the people God is bringing and we have an opportunity to be a tangible expression of God's love and grace and mercy in their lives."

Longer detentions

In a July 3 written statement Garcia said, "right now the number of families coming to Las Cruces [is] much lower than just a few weeks ago. This is good in the sense that aid workers have a more manageable situation. However, it also means these families are being held at the federal detention centers longer."

In Deming released migrants are being housed temporarily at the Southwestern New Mexico State Fairgrounds and at a hangar at a nearby nonoperational airport.

Robert Hamilton, pastor of First Baptist Church, Deming, said as of July 1, the church had distributed more than 1,000 sack lunches to migrants. Hamilton said the situation is not ideal but his congregation has responded with compassion. He said he has been vocal from the pulpit about separating the political from the

personal and showing love to those in need.

Hamilton, who is currently preaching through the Gospel of Luke, said he has emphasized "it's never wrong to show compassion and often that's the avenue that we have to then share the gospel."

Connie Dixon, New Mexico state director for Woman's Missionary Union, said "Deming would be a great place to go" for anyone looking to plan a missions trip over the summer.

"We're called to minister to them, and what better place to do that than here?" she said. (BP, TAB)



Photo courtesy of West Brownsville Baptist Church

Following their release from U.S. Customs and Border Protection asylum-seeking migrants receive temporary shelter, food, clothing and other essentials during their stay at West Brownsville Baptist Church in Texas.

WAYS TO HELP

Currently U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) facilities are not accepting any donations of supplies to help migrant families and children.

Government officials have refuted accusations that children in custody are not provided safe and sanitary conditions including essential hygiene items, but the CBP refusal policy has a legal foundation, according to Theresa Cardinal Brown, former policy adviser for CBP and now head of immigration and cross-border policy for the Bipartisan Policy Center in Washington.

Federal barriers

Brown told CNN the federal Antideficiency Act prevents CBP from accepting donations.

"That law is a law passed by Congress that says the government cannot accept goods and services without remuneration because it cannot spend or use things that have not been appropriated to it by Congress," Brown said. "If (CBP) was able to accept donations outside of that it would be overspending what it was authorized to spend."

In addition Brown said ethical considerations would come up "if the executive gets to decide from whom it gets to accept donations and for what."

U.S. Rep. Chip Roy (R-Texas)

has proposed changes to the law that would allow charitable donations to be used for care of migrant children in U.S. custody.

In the meantime many organizations and churches on both sides of the border are providing aid to migrants.

How to give

Baptist organizations accepting relief donations include:

► **West Brownsville Baptist Church:** Purchase items from the Amazon wishlist for Iglesia Bautista West Brownsville Respite Center at <https://tinyurl.com/WBBCrespite>

► **San Diego Southern Baptist Association:** Choose "Juvenal Gonzalez-Tijuana" fund (church planting catalyst missionary in Tijuana serving migrants) and give online at <https://app.easytith.com/App/Giving/sdsba>

► **Baptist Convention of New Mexico:** Choose "Disaster Relief" fund and give online at <https://bcnm.com/give/>

► **Southern Baptists of Texas Convention:** Choose "Disaster Relief" fund and give online at <https://www.shelbygiving.com/App/Giving/sbtc>

► **Arizona Southern Baptist Convention:** Specify an amount, then choose "AZSBC Disaster Relief" to give online at <https://azsbc.org/give/>.

Conference teaches church leaders about proper policies

By Michael J. Brooks
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

In any given year more than 50 of our 3,200 Alabama Baptist churches find themselves in litigation, according to Jim Swedenburg, director of Cooperative Program and stewardship development for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. This is one reason churches need to exercise care in administrative documentation, he said.

“Most of these are disputes with insurance companies, but we do need to have policies in place to protect our people,” Swedenburg told those gathered for the Church Administrative Guidelines Conference in Prattville on June 25.

Mission statements

Churches should have mission statements mapping out a clear purpose, Swedenburg said, and then write policies to remove confusion, save time and ensure all things are done “decently and in order” as the Apostle Paul counseled in 1 Corinthians 14:40.

The first major document a church must have is articles of incorporation. At one time known as a constitution, articles of incorporation is a requirement of Alabama law and a prerequisite to owning or purchasing property, Swedenburg said.

“Filing articles of incorporation identifies us as a church but also as an ‘entity’ rather than being represented in court by only two or three leaders,” he said. “In the event of a lawsuit we don’t want certain individuals singled out, perhaps because they’re known to have money, unless

they’ve been personally negligent, of course. Incorporation offers a layer of protection for the church.”

The Alabama Secretary of State’s website offers a search to verify articles of incorporation under the “Business Entity Records” page.

The second major document according to Swedenburg is bylaws.

Swedenburg recommends bylaws be nonspecific in order to give the church flexibility.

“For example bylaws might mention four or five major committees such as building and property and nominating but state that other groups will serve as determined by the church,” he said. “The main idea is we don’t want to constantly change the bylaws as the needs of the church change.”

The third set of documents is church policies written by employees or team leaders, depending on the nature of the policies.

“What do you do in the church office if the ministry assistant is out?” he asked. “She would be the one to outline a daily schedule, so it makes sense for her to originate this policy.

... Policies define authority, set boundaries, explain responsibilities and establish guidelines.”

Another much-needed policy involves the handling of money.

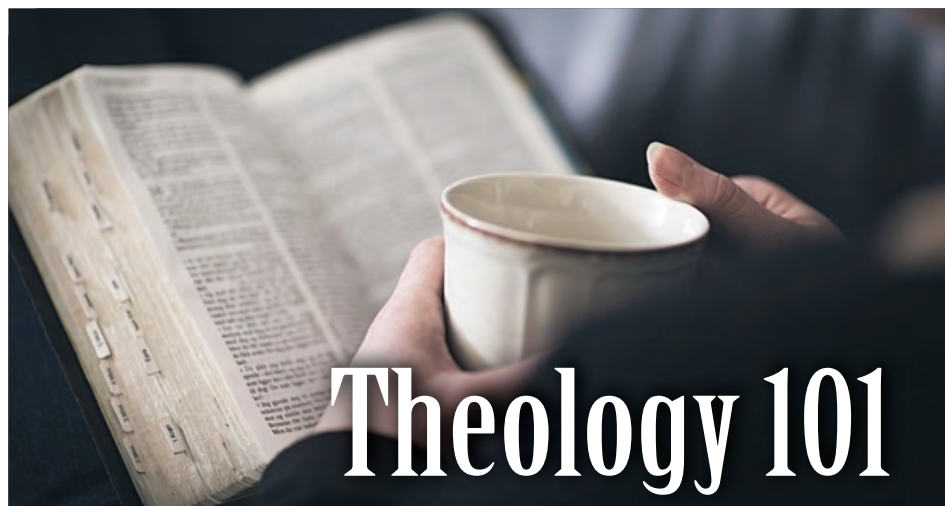
In miscellaneous matters Swedenburg cautioned against rental of church facilities since this is viewed by the IRS as a taxable benefit.

Additional documents and videos are available at alsbom.org or by contacting Swedenburg at 800-264-1225, ext. 283. ☞



Photo by Michael J. Brooks

Jim Swedenburg, director of Cooperative Program and stewardship development for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, leads a conference for church leaders discussing proper church policies and legal documentation.



Theology 101

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FOR PEOPLE IN THE PEW

Thinking about images

An Image Disclosed

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

Last week we gave thought to the diminishing of God’s image in His human creation caused by sin. Continuing to think about images this week Theology 101 turns to Christ’s role in revealing the image and likeness of God.

Christ came into the world to show us what our invisible God is like. Those who first encountered Him came to believe and declare “the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God” (2 Cor. 4:4).

Although God made mortals in His own image and thereby bestowed on us the dignity of being His image bearers, the concept of godlikeness never reached a higher level than when Christ came into the world as the perfect image of our invisible God.

Visible manifestations

No one has seen God at any time since God is Spirit. It took the incarnation for the invisible God to become visible to human eyes. God had previously manifested His glory in visible manifestations such as wind, fire or clouds. But those visible manifestations were not essential or exact images of God Himself. Visible manifestations of divine glory were not in themselves representations of God but manifestations of His presence.

Christ understood a part of the purpose of His entry into the world was that He might display what the image of God looks like in human flesh without any di-

minishing and distorting of that image by sin. In light of this purpose Christ declared on one occasion that He and the Father were one, saying at the conclusion of His claim to be the Good Shepherd, “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30).

‘From glory to glory’

That being true He was also able to declare anyone who had seen Him had seen the Father (John 14:9). Early followers of Christ confessed Him to be “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15), even “the express image of His person” (Heb. 1:3). In the days of His flesh Christ portrayed what God is like — in conduct, in words and in character.

The advent of cellphones has put into the English language the word “selfie.” A selfie is a picture that includes the phone’s user.

God’s “selfie” was His Son made flesh in order to dwell among people thereby enabling us to gain insight into what God is like. The glory in this truth is we can be “transformed into that same image from glory to glory just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18). We’ll think more about this next week. ☞

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.



‘Blessed are the peacemakers’

Racial reconciliation panel urges pastors to cross racial lines for gospel partnerships

By **Carrie Brown McWhorter**
The Alabama Baptist

Though racial strife has been part of Birmingham’s past, racial reconciliation can be part of its future if pastors are willing to build relationships and partnerships across racial lines.

That was the vision shared by participants in “Blessed are the Peacemakers,” a panel discussion on racial reconciliation held June 10 as part of the 2019 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Pastors Conference.

Moderated by Fred Luter Jr., pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, and the first African-American president of the SBC, the panel featured seven speakers, five from Alabama.

Buddy Gray, pastor of Hunter Street Baptist Church, Hoover, and Mike McClure Jr., pastor of Rock City Church, Tuscaloosa, began with the story of how God used their friendship to help the community after Thanksgiving night gunfire at the Riverchase Galleria mall ended with the police shooting of a young African-American man.

As protests disrupted holiday shopping and sent workers home without pay, Gray and McClure brought 130 pastors together to create Pastors for People.

Churches raised \$30,000 to help local families and in mid-December 250 families received groceries and toys for Christmas. Seventy employees received financial help.

‘Just love each other’

McClure said identifying the problem and how God could get glory had to precede finding solutions. Gray said McClure helped white pastors better understand what they could do to help.

“It all came down to let’s just love each other,” Gray said. “When that happened things began to change.”

The friendship between McClure and Gray made a difference.

“Once the tragedy broke out it was easy to come to Pastor Buddy



Photo by Travis Frontz

A panel discussion on racial reconciliation held June 10 as part of the 2019 Southern Baptist Convention Pastors Conference featured several pastors and church leaders, including (left to right) Fred Luter Jr., Danny Wood, Michael Wesley, Tracy Higgs, Buddy Gray, Mike McClure Jr., Noe Garcia and John Shillington.

because we had already established a relationship,” McClure said. “We had come to the table before there was something on the table.”

In 30 years of working in community development ministries Tracy Higgs, now executive director of Christian Service Mission in Birmingham, had learned the value of multicultural pastoral relationships.

So when he got to Birmingham he introduced Danny Wood, his pastor at Shades Mountain Baptist Church, to Michael Wesley, pastor of Greater Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church, a predominantly African-American congregation in west Birmingham.

The two spent time together serving in missions and developed a relationship built not around money but around the gospel.

It is a relationship built in peace time, Wesley said. “No issues, just two pastors ... talking about their vision and common mission.”

Wood invited Wesley to speak at a deacons’ retreat, which led to stron-

ger connections between the two churches.

“We’re not writing checks, not jumping in on projects,” Wood said. “Our tendency is to want to do something to someone. We need to do (something) with someone.”

Wesley said he tells all pastors there is someone they can partner with to build bridges between segments of the community.

And “if it can happen in Birmingham it can happen anywhere in America,” Luter commented.

Noe Garcia, pastor of North Phoenix Baptist Church in Arizona, spoke about the challenges many churches face as the community around them changes.

North Phoenix Baptist, which started out 99% Anglo, Garcia said, is now one of the most diverse congregations in America. But the path was not easy.

“I realized quickly the church (body) didn’t match the community,” Garcia said. “The church was surrounded by diversity but I was

the only minority in the church. I felt I had the right calling in the wrong color.”

Garcia said he realized if change was going to come, people of color and people across generations had to have a voice in leadership.

Live intentionally

North Phoenix executive adviser John Shillington said there’s been pain in the effort, but the phrase he hears over and over in the church is the desire “to be a place to worship and serve that looks like heaven is going to look like.”

Wood said racial reconciliation is possible for every church.

“Every pastor here can take the initiative to intentionally try to build relationships (with pastors of different races) and introduce those relationships into your church,” he said.

Garcia urged pastors to listen and to “be willing to get uncomfortable for matters for Christ.”

“If we’re willing to break down the walls of hostility for gospel purposes God can do amazing things,” he said. 🌈

2019
SBC
pastors
conference

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

FINANCIAL ISSUES WORKSHOPS OFFER HELP TO CHURCHES

I recently signed up for Medicare. I began by using the online application right up to the point of submission and then due to a question, made an appointment. This gave me the opportunity to experience both methods of applying for Medicare.

Both methods were very easy and quick. Concerning the appointment, the worker was right on time, very helpful and kind. Under normal circumstances, each method would take no more than 30 minutes. My question related to my desire to delay Medicare, but because I am a minister, I was told, "You are self-employed, so you cannot have a large group health care plan. If you do not sign up now, you will be penalized."

My issue is resolved, but my experience demonstrated the most fundamental principle of ministers' compensation and taxes – and one that almost no one understands: Ministers are employees for Federal purposes and self-employed for Social Security purposes. Ministers have a "dual tax status."

This one fact certainly has a bearing on the minister's taxes, but it also has numerous

ramifications for the church treasurer or financial secretary concerning 941s, W-2s, withholding and housing allowance.

The implication of "dual tax status" is one of many topics that will be covered at this summer's Financial Issues Workshops provided by the State Board of Missions. A one-day event (10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with lunch provided), the workshops are being offered at locations around the state to make it as convenient as possible for you to attend, and are specifically geared toward church treasurers, financial secretaries and other financial leaders in your church.

In addition to dual tax status, other topics to be discussed will include the housing allowance court case, new W-4 instructions, new Department of Labor overtime rules coming in January, mission trip donations and sending money abroad, financial controls, payroll, IRS forms, designations of employee or self-employed, taxable wages, FLSA, housing benefits, accountable reimbursement, expense vs. compensation, personnel issues, retirement planning and more.

By Lee Wright
State Missionary



Please check the schedule below to make note of the remaining workshops to be held this summer, then visit alsbom.org/ChurchFinancialIssues to register for the location of your choice.

- Tuesday, July 23, Calhoun Baptist Association, Anniston
- Thursday, July 25, Mobile Baptist Association, Mobile
- Tuesday, August 6, Dale Baptist Association, Ozark
- Thursday, August 8, SBOM Office Facility, Prattville
- Tuesday, August 13, CrossPoint Church, Trussville
- Tuesday, August 20, Northbrook Baptist Church, Cullman
- Thursday, August 22, Tuskegee Lee Baptist Association, Opelika

For more information about church financial issues or these workshops, contact State Missionary Lee Wright, 1-800-264-1225, ext. 241, (334) 613-2241, lwright@alsbom.org.



ALABAMA BAPTIST

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order your 2019-2020 RESOURCE DIRECTORY

THIS 16-MONTH CALENDAR (Sept. 2019–Dec. 2020) has State Board of Missions events and emphases already printed with plenty of room for you to add your church's events. It also includes an alphabetical listing of ministries and services along with directories of associational, state and SBC contacts.

Limit 20 copies per church. To order, please call, fax or e-mail your request to Rita Goldman at **1.800.264.1225**, ext. 249; direct at **334.613.2249**; **334.288.2693** (fax); rgoldman@alsbom.org; or order online at alsbom.org/rd.

Be sure to include your name, church name, mailing address and number of guides needed up to 20.



Samford's Ministry Training Institute adds women's leadership certificate

This fall the Ministry Training Institute (MTI) at Samford University in Birmingham will offer a new online certificate in women's leadership, thanks to a partnership with the Christian Women's Leadership Center (CWLC) of national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU).

The women's leadership certificate track consists of four courses:

- ▶ Introduction to women's leadership: missions, ministry, spiritual formation and God's call to service
- ▶ Foundations of women's leadership: theological foundations and history of missions and women leaders who have led by spreading the gospel, working for justice, using their talents and overcoming obstacles
- ▶ Women's leadership essentials: communication,

conflict management and time management

▶ Influencing transformational ministries: leading intentionally and with integrity, praying purposefully and working with multiple generations.

"Consistent with God's Word, the certificate program will equip participants to influence and empower others to accomplish the mission of a group or an organization," said MTI director Kevin Blackwell.

'Lifelong learners'

CWLC was founded in 1999 through the collaborative efforts of Thomas Corts and Wanda Lee, who served as Samford's president and national WMU executive director, respectively, at the time. Much of the center's initial funding was given in memory of Eleanor F. Terry,

the late wife of Bob Terry, editor emeritus of *The Alabama Baptist*.

Sandy Wisdom-Martin, national WMU executive director, said the new certificate program goes hand in hand with WMU's desire to challenge women to "deliberately and purposefully stretch and reach."

"We are intentional in our quest to be lifelong learners to make a bigger impact on the Kingdom," Wisdom-Martin said. "We are delighted to partner with Samford University to provide opportunities to gain knowledge, insights and understanding so we can grow and be more intentional in making disciples of Jesus who live on mission in today's context."

The first course starts Aug. 20. For more information, visit samford.edu/go/mti. (Grace Thornton)

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3 stories you should know



Photo courtesy of Immanuel Baptist, Ridgecrest

Volunteers at Immanuel Baptist Church, Ridgecrest, California, cleaned up damage to the church following a 6.4 earthquake on July 4 only to see their work undone when a 7.1 earthquake struck July 5. The most powerful quakes in California in 20 years have created a sense of dread for some residents. Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers have visited Ridgecrest to assess the needs and provide aid to those affected by the tremors. (BP)

CP giving 2.8% more than budget projection

Cooperative Program (CP) contributions received by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee (EC) in June were 2.8% above the projected budget through nine months of the current fiscal year and 0.13% above the amount received during the same period last year, according to a news release from SBC EC President Ronnie Floyd. CP funds are used for SBC's national and international missions and ministries.

CP allocation receipts for SBC work for the month of June totaled \$15,754,420.34. Designated gifts amounted to \$23,528,476.07. As of June 30 gifts received by the EC for distribution through the CP Allocation Budget totaled \$149,580,020.95. The full report is available at cpmissions.net/CPreports. (BP)

VA policy change will aid religious liberty

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) updated its policies recently to better protect the religious liberty of U.S. military veterans and their families, particularly relating to Christmas celebrations.

The revised rules, effective July 3, assure that religious displays and pastoral care remain accessible and protected from discrimination.

The revision is intended to clear up the confusion and inconsistency that led to the limitations on Christmas celebrations, including restrictions on handmade Christmas cards from schoolchildren intended for VA hospital patients and singing Christmas carols in VA facilities.

The revision will create one uniform standard for all VA facilities, said Mike Berry of First Liberty Institute. (BP)

— NEWSBRIEFS —

Autaugaville Baptist pastor retiring after more than 45 years in ministry

After more than 45 years in ministry Garner Clark, pastor of Autaugaville Baptist Church in Autauga Baptist Association, retired July 14. Clark served as pastor of Autaugaville Baptist for 35 years and also served at McGehee Road Baptist Church, Montgomery, and Millville Baptist Church, Frankfort, Kentucky. He holds degrees from Auburn University and Troy University as well as a master's degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and a doctorate from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Clark also worked as a counselor at various Montgomery public schools and later became the coordinator of school counseling for all Montgomery middle schools.

Clark has served in numerous volunteer leadership roles within Autauga Baptist Association including moderator from 1991 to 1992.

"Dr. Clark has led with distinction and vision during his 35 years at Autaugaville and the blessing of his faithfulness is evidenced in both

his church family as well as our Autauga Baptist Association churches," Mel Johnson, lead mission strategist for the association, said. "His ministry has remained true to the Great Commission spirit of Alabama Baptists."



CLARK

Clark and his wife, Jo, have two children and two grandchildren. Though Clark is retiring from the pastorate he plans to continue his counseling practice and is available to fill pulpits, serve as transitional pastor and speak to churches or church groups on the scriptural approach to mind, body and spiritual well-being. He can be reached at 334-300-5973. (TAB)

China tariffs could lead to a 'Bible tax' in the US, say Christian publishers



Buying a print-edition Bible could get more expensive if government tariffs on Chinese goods proposed by the Trump administration are implemented, according to publishers.

The parent company of the two largest Bible publishers in the United States has warned that proposed tariffs on \$300 billion in Chinese-made products would affect books and other printed materials, including Bibles, which are overwhelmingly printed in China because of the specialized technology and skills they require to produce, according to Bloomberg.

"We believe the administration was unaware of the potential negative impact these proposed tariffs would have on the publishing industry generally and that it never intended to impose a 'Bible Tax' on consumers and religious organizations," said Mark Schoenwald, president of HarperCollins Christian Publishing, in a written statement.

"However, if printed books, including Bibles, are not removed from the fourth list of products from China to be subject to tariffs and the tariffs go into effect, publishers will reduce investment in their businesses, consumers and religious organizations will face higher prices and churches, schools, ministries and nonprofit organizations will have fewer resources to educate others and connect them with the Holy Bible." (RNS)

News near you

AUTAUGA ASSOCIATION

▶ **Peyton Hill** is the new pastor of **First Baptist Church, Prattville**. He will begin Aug. 18. He previously served as pastor of Highland Baptist Church, Grove City, Ohio, and on staff at First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Georgia. He has a doctorate in preaching from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, and a master of divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He and his wife, Jordan Lee, have three children with a fourth on the way.



HILL

BESSEMER ASSOCIATION

▶ **Raimund Heights Baptist Church, Bessemer**, will host a homecoming service July 21 at 10:30 a.m. Former pastor Arzell Hyche will be the guest speaker and Earl Norris will lead worship. A covered dish lunch will follow the service. Tommy Chesser is pastor.

BIRMINGHAM METRO ASSOCIATION

▶ **Deerfoot Baptist Church, Trussville**,

will celebrate its 25th anniversary July 28 at 10:30 a.m. A covered dish luncheon will follow the service. Glenn Sandifer is pastor.

BETHLEHEM ASSOCIATION

▶ **Todd Plunkett** is the new pastor of **Eastwood Baptist Church, Monroeville**. He holds degrees from Mississippi State University in Starkville; Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; and Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tennessee. He previously served as associate pastor at First Baptist Church, Amory, Mississippi. He and his wife, RaShel have two children.



PLUNKETT

ESCAMBIA ASSOCIATION

▶ **Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Atmore**, will hold a homecoming service July 21 at 11 a.m. The McPherson Family will bring special music. Interim pastor Larry Beauchamp will bring the message.

CAREY ASSOCIATION

▶ **Corinth Baptist Church, Cragford**, will host revival services July 28–31. Sunday and Wednesday services will begin at 6 p.m. and Monday and Tuesday services will begin at 7 p.m. Scott Jordan will be the guest speaker. Special music will be presented each night. Kenneth Fuller is pastor.

COFFEE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Newbia Baptist Church, Elba**, will host a concert featuring The Cavaliers Quartet on July

27 at 5 p.m. A love offering will be taken. Refreshments will follow the service. Will Jordan is pastor.

COVINGTON ASSOCIATION

▶ **Jack Armstrong** is the new pastor of **Carolina Baptist Church, Andalusia**. His first Sunday was June 23. He and his wife, Terri Leigh, have two children.



ARMSTRONG

TUSKEGEE LEE ASSOCIATION

▶ **Salem Macon Baptist Church, Notasulga**, will host a homecoming celebration July 21 at 10 a.m. The Gospel Strings Quartet will bring special music and former pastor Charles Worthy will be the guest speaker. A covered dish meal will follow the service. There will be no evening services. For more information call 334-539-2072. Greg Pate is pastor.

WINSTON ASSOCIATION

▶ **New Prospect Baptist Church, Haleyville**, will host its 24th annual revival celebration July 28–30. Sunday services will be held at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. featuring Sammy Gilbreath, director of evangelism for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. Monday and Tuesday services will begin at 7 p.m. Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, will preach Monday evening and evangelist Jackie Kay will preach Tuesday evening. Ron Horton is pastor. 🇺🇸

— NEWSBRIEFS —

Former Alabama Baptist pastor, R.F. 'Bob' Roberson, dies at 90



R.F. "Bob" Roberson, a former Alabama Baptist pastor, died June 26. He was 90.

A Birmingham native Roberson moved to Montgomery for high school then graduated from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham.

After being ordained as a Baptist minister Roberson studied at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Between 1956 and 1971 he served as pastor of four churches, three of which were in Alabama — Pepperell Baptist, Opelika; First Baptist, Fairfax, in Valley; and Goodwater Baptist.

He also served as vice president at United Way of the Chatahoochee Valley for more than 20 years.

Roberson is preceded in death by his daughter, Wendy; and stepson, Greg. He is survived by his wife, Shirley; sons, Mike and Jeff;



ROBERSON

six grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren. (Grace Thornton)

Bessemer Association votes to enter partnership with Birmingham Metro



Bessemer Baptist Association's executive committee voted July 9 to enter into a one-year partnership with Birmingham Metro Baptist Association.

If approved by Birmingham Metro Association's executive board July 29, the agreement will bring the 177 churches of the two associations, along with their ministries, resources and volunteers, into partnership to engage in the gospel, said Chris Crain, executive director of Birmingham Metro Association.

Crain said Bessemer Association associational mission strategist Barry Cosper was instrumental in making the partnership possible.

Under the one-year agreement Bessemer Association will maintain its existing governance with the goal of establishing a permanent arrangement by September 2020.

Crain noted the Birmingham Metro Association was formed in 1833 in Bessemer and said

the reuniting of the two associations in missions partnership "will set an example for other associations across the Southern Baptist Convention." (TAB)

Fort Payne's Ruhama Baptist Church celebrates early debt payoff



On June 9, Ruhama Baptist Church, Fort Payne, held a homecoming service to celebrate paying off the newest addition to the church in eight years — half the time it was supposed to take.

Four families signed their names to the note so the money could be borrowed. Present for the note burning were (left to right) Chris Murdock, who was pastor of Ruhama Baptist while the building was being built, and the families whose names were on the note: Cynthia Teague, Jack and Christine Ashley, Larry and Judy McCallie, and Annette Wright. (TAB)



Photo courtesy of Ruhama Baptist

'Utterly faithful'

Litton uses personal loss to preach 'blessed condition' of grief, sorrow

In 2018 more than 6 million people visited the Grand Canyon. People spend a lot of time and money to go and gaze at its glory and grandeur, but then when they get there most only stay about 15 minutes.

"After all the expense, energy and time they get a 15-minute glance," Ed Litton, pastor of Redemption Church, Mobile, told those present

at the Southern Baptist Convention Pastors Conference in Birmingham on June 9.

That's what Litton said he thought he wanted when it came to the valley of the shadow of death — just a quick glance. But when his wife, Tammy, died in a tragic car accident in 2007, God invited him to hike through it instead.

'Crushed in spirit'

"When I was standing at the trailhead of the valley of the shadow of death I was frightened; I was terribly afraid," Litton said.

He asked, "Lord, how long is this going to take?" But God didn't answer him, Litton said.

"The more I traveled with Him I discovered He is utterly faithful to us," he said. "He draws near to those who are brokenhearted and crushed in spirit."

As Litton saw more and more of God's glory and grandeur, he told Him he could live in the valley forever "because and only because You're with me."

If you skip the walk, "the reality is you miss the beauty that is hidden in those dark trails of tears," Litton said. "We miss the beauty and the God who says I will never leave you or forsake you."

This "blessed condition" for those in grief and sorrow is "only possible because of the Lord Jesus Christ," he said as he spoke on Matthew 5:4, "Blessed are those who mourn."

But mourning in the Beatitudes doesn't just mean grief because of the loss of a loved one or an ability or ministry.

"I'm talking about a greater kind of loss, the kind of loss when we drift from the Lord or depart from the Lord," he said.

Godly sorrow is a paradox, he said. When Christians see their sin the way God sees it — how spiritually bankrupt they are — it leads to mourning.

True godly sorrow in repentance is "not a fantasy, it's not a quick fix, it's not an escape from reality," he said — it's a blacksmith in Christians' hearts beating out the sin that keeps us from God. It's this kind of repentance that can truly bring revival, Litton said.

"I'm becoming an old man but as a young man God called me to preach this gospel," he said. "We need to stop just saying we want revival ... we've got to start filling the hole in our repentance which brings what we long for." (Grace Thornton)



LITTON

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TAB CLASSIFIEDS

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

CHURCH POSITIONS

SENIOR PASTOR

Parkview Baptist Church in Eufaula, Alabama, is taking resumés for the senior pastor position. Please email resumés to: john.robinson@westrock.com. Contact information is John Robinson, 706-573-5102.

SENIOR PASTOR

FBC Tillman's Corner in Mobile, Alabama. Must have at least a master's degree from an SBC seminary, theologically conservative and with at least seven years of experience as a senior pastor. Average 850-900 in worship. Please send resumés to: FBTCsearchcommittee@gmail.com.

PASTOR

Camellia Baptist Church, 201 Woodvale Rd., Prattville, AL 36067, prayerfully seeking God's choice for a full-time pastor. All applicants should have previous senior pastor experience and have earned a masters of divinity. Resumés with photo may be mailed: ATTN: Pastor/Search. www.cbcpattville.org.

BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR

Greensport Baptist Church in Ashville, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational pastor with previous experience who is missions-minded and has been called by God. We are a small country church trying to make a difference in our community. The church has a 3 bedroom/2 bath parsonage. We are seeking a pastor with excellent preaching and pastoring skills, able to lead us in reaching younger families and individuals while maintaining a good relationship with our senior members. Our church follows guidelines set forth in the Baptist Faith & Message 2000. Candidates should be willing to be involved in the SBC and the local St. Clair Association. Potential candidates should email resumés to: retrofied51@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC DIRECTOR

Oak Bowery Baptist Church in Ohatchee, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational music director. For details and/or apply, send resumés to: Susan Williamson, smwathome@gmail.com.

BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER & PIANIST

Southside Baptist Church, Monroeville, Alabama, is seeking a bivocational music minister and a pianist. Send resumés to: P.O. Box 9, Monroeville, AL 36461 or email to: sbch@frontiernet.net.

STUDENT MINISTER

Central Baptist Church in north Little Rock, Arkansas, is accepting resumés for the position of full-time student minister. The deadline to submit a resumé is Aug. 8. Please email your resumé to: cbcstudentresume@gmail.com.

STUDENT PASTOR

Mauldin First Baptist Church, Mauldin, South Carolina, is seeking to hire a full-time student pastor. Primary duties include overseeing the ministries of students and their families from sixth grade through college. Applicants must possess a bachelor's degree, and three years of experience is preferred. Please submit resumés and/or questions to: wleonard@fbcmauldin.org.

YOUTH MINISTER

Cottage Hill Baptist Church (Bessemer Association) is seeking candidates to restart the youth ministry. Please email resumés to: lorettamcconnell@gmail.com.

CHILDREN'S DIRECTOR

The First Baptist Church of White Plains is seeking a part-time children's director for birth through grade six. Interested individuals may submit resumés to the church address: 160 White Plains Road, Anniston AL 36207, or contact church office at 256-237-7849. Job description available upon request.

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MINISTRIES

BEAUREGARD STRONG BENEFIT NIGHT

Aug. 2 at 6 p.m. Providence Baptist Church, 2807 Lee Road 166, Opelika. Come enjoy a night of comedy, magic and music benefiting families impacted by the March 3 tornado in the Beauregard area. Free admission. Donations and gifts cards are appreciated to help the people of Beauregard rebuild their lives. Doors open at 5:15 p.m. For more information, visit www.thealabamabaptist.org/entertainment.

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 several readers and guests who will be invited in to talk about some of the story topics in depth. Listen to the TAB News podcast anywhere you get your podcasts such as iTunes, Stitcher, etc., or visit www.thealabamabaptist.org/explore/podcasts. New episodes are released weekly.

TAB DIGITAL

In addition to the print edition *The Alabama Baptist* also releases a weekly digital edition of the newspaper to every subscribers' email. The digital edition now comes complimentary with all subscriptions to TAB. The digital edition has the same content as the print edition — just in full color — and it can be accessed anytime and anywhere there is internet access. For information on the TAB digital edition, or to update your email address on file email subscribe@thealabamabaptist.org.

Judson College President Mark Tew presents Erin Brown with the 2019 Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award at the 181st commencement exercises June 29.

‘To be a leader is to serve others’



Photo by Katlin Bailey/Judson College

Judson holds first commencement service under new president Mark Tew

A day of elegant pomp and circumstance steeped in rich tradition marked the 181st commencement exercises for the 49 graduates of Judson College in Marion on June 29.

An occasional outburst of cheers from proud family members along with a new president who added the ringing of the triangle

— Judson’s historic symbol for how students from the 19th century were awakened each morning — to the start of the processional also enhanced the experience for the several hundred in attendance.

“To the graduating class of 2019, your future is limited only by the extent of your ambition and creativity,” said Mark Tew, Judson’s newly elected

23rd president. “Since 1838, Judson has graduated young women who have been leaders in industry, jurisprudence, research and teaching and model citizens with every imaginable responsibility.

“By definition you are world leaders today as you join the 6% of the world’s population that has a college degree,” Tew said. “Graduates as we began our ceremony you followed your faculty into this auditorium. During your time at Judson they were your mentors, your examples and your instructors.

“As we depart today you will assume the position of leadership and we will all follow your example as you become the mentors and teachers of another generation,” he said. “Accept my final words of exhortation and remember Paul’s instruction in 2 Timothy 1:14 to guard your good intentions.”

Graduation address

Sharon Curry Thompson, a 1991 Judson alumna, delivered the commencement address.

Thompson, president of United Community Bank’s central Atlanta region, challenged graduates to “love the Lord your God with

all your heart, mind, soul and strength and love your neighbor as yourself” as they move to the next step in their journey.

Seasons of life

“Life isn’t going to work out exactly as you have planned,” Thompson said as she shared highlights of her life since moving her tassel from the right to the left that June day 28 years ago — seasons of life as a military wife, mother and career woman.

“To be a leader is to serve others,” Thompson said. “Jesus set a great example for us.

“God will do crazy things in your life if you will let Him. He wants to show out. ... Remember the greatest commandments.”

Along with the degrees awarded in the areas of arts, science, nursing and social work, three students received special honors and five students — Kacie Adams, Erin Brown, Logan Lanier, Nicole Smith and Valentyna Trull — were highlighted for maintaining a perfect 4.0 grade point average.

Those receiving special honors were:

► **Erin Brown** (summa cum laude) — 2019 Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award

In cooperation with the Sullivan Foundation this award is presented to a student who displays noble character, love of learning, helpfulness, kindness and the ability to apply a variety of spiritual qualities practically to daily living.

► **Megan Matthews** — Faulkner Award

Established in 1981 to honor the memory of former trustee and successful businessman J.C. Faulkner, this award is presented annually to the senior who has achieved a superior academic record and who has distinguished herself as an outstanding student and an enthusiastic supporter of Judson.

► **Kayla Oliver** — Bible Award

The Bible Award is presented each year to the senior rendering the most outstanding Christian spirit and service to the college during her years at Judson.

Following commencement and the traditional activities around the school’s senior oak tree, graduates and guests were invited to a reception on campus and a tour of the president’s home, where Tew and his wife, Ann, now reside. (TAB)

Be among the first to see one of this year's **Week of Prayer** videos at **Equip, July 26-27**. Register at alabamawmu.org/equip today!



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Growing 'momentum' of archery fuels gospel spread

(continued from page 1)
we do this as a family. My husband and kids have all stepped in. This is our family time.”

Churches that partner with Centershot are provided with equipment, training and cur-

riculum. Centershot’s team assists in training and instructor certification.

Safety is a primary concern, with students learning all safety requirements before they ever touch a bow. According to Scheer archery

is ranked as the second safest sport according to the National Insurance Institute.

The program offers three league levels. Life Leagues are available to archers of all ages, from 5 to 95, and for singles, couples and families, Scheer said. Centershot Blue Leagues is a pilot program for first responders and law enforcement professionals. Competition Leagues support fourth through twelfth-grade students and children of all ability levels are welcome, Scheer said.

“We have kids with disabilities. We find a way to get them shooting and to empower them,” he said.

Classes at Gardendale First meet once a week for eight weeks and are offered two or three times a year. Sessions include archery lessons and a devotional.

Bible lessons draw a correlation between archery and God’s word with at least one session featuring the gospel message.

Huie uses the bow and arrow to show students how they need God’s power in their lives, just as the bow

and arrow must combine to be effective.

Scheer says the program utilizes tools like the Centershot wordless bow to explain the gospel message, drawing on the many archery terms in Scripture.

Wordless bow

“Sin is an archery term. It means missing the mark,” he said. “A bow has all the power and forgiveness in the riser. Jesus was a riser as well — He rose on the third day. These are examples of how the wordless bow is used to share the gospel.”

The Gardendale team is part of the North Jefferson Archers Club. Through Scholastic 3-D Archery students participate in tournaments where they compete against other groups, earning awards for their level of achievement.

“We are not the typical team,” Huie said. “We are competitive and disciplined

but we do it with love.”

Huie and the Gardendale First ministry were involved with Centershot Ministries almost from its inception. Huie approached church leaders about using the gym for an archery program about the same time Centershot Ministries was beginning to develop an archery program and approach churches to implement the program.

Alabama became the pilot state and in 2006 the Gardendale First program became the state’s pilot, helping to name the ministry and to review the curriculum.

More than a dozen Alabama churches now host an archery program. Centershot operates in 47 states and

26 countries. The program is strong in sub-Saharan Africa and the Dominican Republic. Centershot Romania was launched in June 2019 and there are plans to bring the program to Cuba and Latin America this fall. ✠

For more information, visit www.centershotministries.org. Interested groups also may contact Ron Huie at 205-910-1993 or Aaron Scheer at aaron@centershotministries.org.

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Christian Crossword

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Across

1. Son of God.
6. The book of the generation of Jesus _____. (Matt. 1:1)
12. Nebuzar-____, captain of the guard, ____ servant. (2 Kings 25:8)
13. Thou mayest prosper and be in _____. (3 John 2)
14. And flee into _____. (Matt. 2:13)
15. Published throughout all his _____. (Esther 1:20)
16. Behold, there came a _____. (Matt. 8:2)
17. I have given ____ into the children of Lot. (Deut. 2:9)
18. Knockout. (abbr.)
19. _____, the chamberlain of the city. (Rom. 16:23)
22. Blessed are the pure _____ heart. (Matt. 5:8)
23. _____ it is not _____. (Acts 22:22)
25. If ye then, _____ evil. (Matt. 7:11)
27. Did _____ lightness? ... that with _____. (2 Cor. 1:17)
28. Put off all these; _____, wrath. (Col. 3:8)
30. Party after a wedding.
33. Do, _____, Mi.
34. In the very _____ Moses ... us, _____ (John 8:4,5)
36. The sons of Caleb, _____, Elah and Naam. (1 Chron. 4:15)
37. Day after Monday. (abbr.)

Down

38. By faith, _____, being warned of God. (Heb. 11:7)
41. City that is _____ on a hill. (Matt. 5:14)
42. And when the _____ heard it. (Matt. 20:24)
43. Whosoever shall _____ me before men. (Matt. 10:33)
44. They did all _____. (Matt. 14:20)
47. As a _____ lappeth. (Judg. 7:5)
49. The son of _____. (Luke 3:36)
50. Let your light _____ shine. (Matt. 5:16)
51. They may appear unto men _____ fast. (Matt. 6:16)
52. Registered nurse. (abbr.)

- worse _____. (Dan. 1:10)
10. Weakness of God is _____ than men. (1 Cor. 1:25)
11. Blessed are _____ merciful. (Matt. 5:7)
17. Heaven is _____ hand. (Matt. 3:2)
20. If my _____ hath turned _____ of the way. (Job 31:7; reverse order)
21. Zidon: for the _____ hath spoken. (Isa. 23:4; reverse order)
23. Fe, _____, Fo, Fum.
24. For _____ lamps _____ gone out. (Matt. 25:8)
26. Brought him to an _____, _____. (Luke 10:34)
29. Do, _____, Mi.
31. Wool fabric.
32. Groweth of _____ own ... shalt _____ reap. (Lev. 25:5)
35. As the _____ of the feet. (Dan. 2:42)
36. Theirs _____ the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5:3)
39. _____, Eshcol and Mamre. (Gen. 14:24)
40. And when they had sung a _____ (Matt. 26:30)
45. Ye shall be _____ gods. (Gen. 3:5)
46. Think not that I am come _____ destroy the law. (Matt. 5:17)
48. _____ and search diligently. (Matt. 2:8)

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS

For July 21

Explore the Bible

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



FOCUSED 2 Timothy 2:1–13

Future Focused (1–2)

Paul wrote to exhort Timothy to finish strong. He wanted Timothy to abide day by day depending on the enabling grace that flows from our union with Jesus. Paul did not tell Timothy simply to “be strong” or “pull yourself up by your own bootstraps.” Rather he told Timothy to be inwardly strengthened by the grace that is in Christ. The grace of Christ empowers all the exhortations in chapter 2.

If Timothy was to finish strong in Ephesus, the city with blatant heresy, widespread disbelief and an overall difficult church, it would be by the strength of Jesus. Our strength is in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Our strength comes from our union with Christ and is supercharged by our daily communion with Christ.

One sure way to be strengthened in grace is to transmit to others the truths that have embedded themselves in one’s heart. Timothy was to be a teacher. Even more he was to produce teachers. Timothy needed this experience and more importantly the church needed the teachers. Paul was about to depart from this life. He had carried the gospel torch and now he handed it to Timothy who in turn must pass it on to others.

The deposit that had been entrusted to Timothy must be deposited with faithful men who could teach other faithful men. This critical process involves three components. First, careful observation is required. Pastors need to find some “faithful men.” Second, relationships must be developed. Third, pastoral coaching is necessary.

Pastors need to help these faithful men teach and lead well by helping them discern their calling, cultivate godly character and increase their level of competency by providing feedback and support in their training.

Mission Focused (3–7)

The ministry of entrusting the gospel to faithful men involves hardship. Paul exhorted Timothy

to endure for the gospel. He was to be like a faithful soldier. Christians should expect opposition and persecution. We are at war. The soldier must not get distracted by things that do not really matter. Wholehearted devotion is required to be faithful in gospel ministry. Are any good things keeping you from doing the main things?

Likewise Timothy was to be similar to a disciplined athlete. Christians should desire to walk in godliness in accordance with God’s word. If athletes can train and compete for trophies and man’s applause, how much more should Christians train and sweat for Christ?

Timothy also was to resemble a hardworking farmer. Farming is not glamorous or exciting. No one calls a press conference to bale hay. Farming involves sowing, planting, plowing and monitoring. Farming is endless. Ministry is the same. It is hard work. Disciple making takes time and entails energetic toil. Stay focused on the mission.

Christ Focused (8–13)

In view of raging persecution and opposition comfort was certainly needed. Faithfully proclaiming and preserving the gospel meant hardship. Timothy must not lose courage or fear death. If we are going to finish strong we must never lose sight of Jesus Christ. Israel had suffered from spiritual memory loss (Ps. 106:19–22), and so does the church. We are prone to forget whose we are and whose mission we have been called to join.

When your tank is empty remember the tomb is empty and the throne is occupied. Keeping your eyes on Jesus will keep you in the war, in the game and on the farm. While the messenger may be bound the message can never be bound successfully. A lofty vision of the person and work of Christ will empower us to finish strong. The gospel of Christ will triumph. It will perform its preordained mission on earth. No enemy can thwart it. We must stay focused on Christ. 🌿

Bible Studies for Life

By Roy E. Ciampa, Ph.D., S. Louis and Ann W. Armstrong
Professor of Religion, Samford University



PURSUE GODLINESS 2 Chronicles 14:1–8

While the books of 1 and 2 Kings explain how it is that Israel and Judah found themselves in exile despite being God’s chosen people (it is due to their stubborn disobedience and unfaithfulness to God and His covenant), the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles were written to give hope to the nation once it had come to grips with its failures and their consequences.

It retells the story in a way that often (although not always) focuses on God’s promises and all the signs of God’s continuing mercy towards His people and His commitment to protect them from ultimate destruction. Those serve as reasons for them to maintain hope despite their failures.

In a history that was known to be marked by and full of disobedience and apostasy Asa’s early rule is highlighted as a time of remarkable faithfulness to God and served as an example of godly leadership when too few such examples had been seen.

Seek to live a life that pleases God. (1–2)

Asa had seen how, through his father Abijah, God protected Judah from an attack from the northern kingdom of Israel (see 2 Chron. 13).

His father remained firm in his faith in the Lord (see 13:4–12) and now Asa wisely established his reign on a foundation of a radical commitment to put God’s will, the Lord’s commands, above whatever others might have considered good and right.

As king his relationship with God was crucial for guiding and protecting the nation and its relationship with the Lord. He lived his life for an audience of One, seeking to please God above everyone else. We would do well to follow that example.

Remove any barriers to godly living. (3–5)

The references to foreign altars, high places (of foreign worship), sacred stones and Asherah poles

are a reminder the culture as a whole strongly leaned towards preferring pagan gods and idols, or syncretism (the tendency to merge the worship of God with pagan elements) over wholehearted commitment to the God who had rescued and redeemed Israel and established His covenant with them.

Asa recognized the extreme dangers posed by such compromises. He knew they undermined the nation’s relationship with God as well as the security and well-being of the nation.

The temptation to do what was right in their own eyes rather than in the eyes of God was a constant threat then as it is today as well. Asa sought to remove as many temptations as possible and to lead his people to seek God above all else.

Guard against temptations and spiritual attacks. (6–8)

Some periods of Israel’s history were marked by peace and opportunity and others by conflict and a scarcity of resources. When Asa found himself in a time of respite from conflict and war he did not simply let his guard down. Rather he took the opportunity to strengthen his nation’s position for the future.

Asa prepared in times of peace and tranquility for the inevitable arrival of times of conflict and difficulty. He trusted wholly in the Lord. But trusting in the Lord does not justify neglecting one’s responsibilities to prepare for the future as responsible leaders and disciples of the Lord.

Asa combined a wholehearted trust and obedience to the Lord with prudent judgment about the use of the time and opportunities God provided him to prepare for the challenges of the future.

We do well to follow his example in taking whatever opportunities God gives us to strengthen those things which God has entrusted to our care, whether our family, our church, our spiritual gifts or whatever it might be. 🌿



Media reviews

MOVIES/TV

‘America’s Got Talent’ leads July family-friendly lineup

By Michael Foust
Correspondent, The Alabama Baptist

I’m always looking for something to watch with my children that doesn’t involve animation, superheroes, princesses or sports stars.

Those four categories are great but they’ve slowly become my children’s go-to for entertainment.

My goal is to broaden their horizons beyond the typical child-themed stuff while staying within the family-friendly realm.

NBC’s “America’s Got Talent” fits that requirement — as long as my remote is always in hand.

The summer series, in its 14th season, is a televised talent show for any act, including singers, dancers, illusionists and comedians.

The winner receives \$1 million and the chance to perform in Las Vegas.

Nine out of 10 acts are entertaining and even inspiring. The other ones — often dancers or comedians — are inappropriate and get skipped in my home.

“America’s Got Talent” leads this month’s family-friendly lineup.

The show was created by Simon Cowell (“American Idol”), who also serves as a judge alongside Howie Mandel, Gabrielle Union and Julianne Hough. Terry Crews, a professing Christian, is the host.

Among this year’s new acts: a group of singing and dancing children from Detroit (the Detroit Youth Choir), a 12-year-old South Carolina girl who shocked everyone with her radio-worthy voice (Anselly Burns) and a military quartet that’s good enough to give you goosebumps (Voices of Service).

“America’s Got Talent” airs Tuesday nights. Replays are available through NBC.com and Hulu.

Worth watching

Also worth watching this month:

► **“Breakthrough”** — The excellent faith-based film that opened in the top three and grossed more than \$40 million is now available on digital platforms and on DVD/Blu-Ray/4K.

The film tells the miraculous true story of a boy who fell through a frozen pond



Photo courtesy of NBC

Voices of Service on ‘America’s Got Talent’

and was thought dead until his mom began praying. His heart finally started beating again — 45 minutes after the accident.

Chrissy Metz stars as the mom. Rated PG for thematic content, including peril. It contains minor language (two instances each of h-ll and OMG).

► **“Good Sam”** — Now on Netflix this feel-good film tells the story of a local television reporter who is searching for the mysterious “Good Samaritan” who is dropping bags of \$100,000 on the doorsteps of strangers. News about this selfless action sparks other good deeds around the city.

“Good Sam” is a Netflix original and contains only two coarse words (and a kiss). Its message about

selflessness and helping one another is much-needed in our society.

► **“Aliens and Demons”** — Author and Bible scholar Michael Heiser examines



modern-day UFO sightings, including the Roswell incident, from a biblical and scientific perspective. (If you’re curious he lands on the humans-are-alone perspective.) It’s fascinating, entertaining and Christ-centric.

Heiser is a scholar in residence for Logos Bible Software and previously taught at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri. “Aliens and Demons” is available through FaithLifeTV.com.

► **“Dumbo”** — Perhaps mainstream critics were

Meet the reviewer

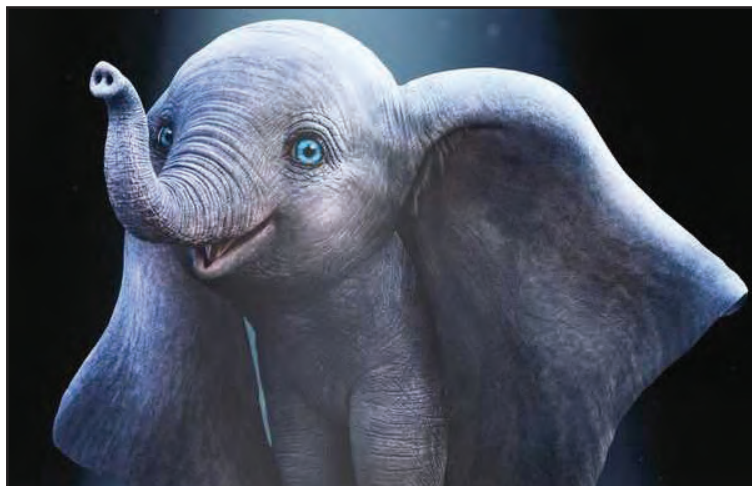
Michael Foust covers the intersection of faith and entertainment as a media reviewer for The Alabama Baptist. He also is the husband of an amazing wife and the father of four young children.

split on this Disney live-action remake but moviegoers gave it an A- CinemaScore and it remains among the best family-friendly films of 2019.

The movie tells the story of a young elephant who overcomes the teasing about his larger-than-normal ears.

The film has a great lesson about disabilities and is now out on all home entertainment platforms.

Rated PG for peril/action, some thematic elements and brief mild language.✝



‘Dumbo’

Photo courtesy of Disney

Pivotal moment of HEALING

Second VBS since shooting at Texas' FBC Sutherland Springs continues what first one started

When First Baptist Church, Sutherland Springs, Texas, kicked off its annual Vacation Bible School (VBS) the week of June 3 it looked profoundly different from two years ago.

On Nov. 5, 2017, a gunman entered the church sanctuary, opened fire and took the lives of 26 people. Several of those who lost their lives were instrumental in the VBS ministry of the church.

"VBS takes up a large portion of our year because we do VBS big," said Sherri Pomeroy, wife of Sutherland Springs pastor Frank Pomeroy. "Everybody around here knows this church produces an amazing VBS event every year and all the kids want to go to it."

Among those killed was the Pomeroy's 14-year-old daughter Anna-belle.

"VBS was her favorite event of the year," Sherri said. "She loved having the DVD after VBS was over and being able to do the moves along with it. She loved playing with the other children and was excited about being a helper for the first time [the following summer]."

Tough decision

As the early months of 2018 rolled around the leadership of Sutherland Springs had to make a tough but necessary decision: They would once again host VBS despite the painfully obvious voids.

"We didn't want their work in the years past to be in vain," Sherri said. "But it was tough. We had all new teachers — people who stepped up to stand in the gap. We knew we had to do it not only for the Lord but to honor the memories of those who were gone."

Jennifer Holcombe is one of the Sutherland Springs members who stepped up. She lost her husband, her



Sherri Pomeroy, wife of FBC Sutherland Springs pastor Frank Pomeroy, helps lead the church's Vacation Bible School in 2018, only months after the church suffered a devastating tragedy. 'We knew we had to do it not only for the Lord but to honor the memories of those who were gone,' she said.

18-month-old daughter and several other family members in the attack.

"I knew we had to keep going and not stop doing these things to be able to heal," Holcombe said. "Some of what we do is to keep it going for them. For me, if I could do it I wasn't going to say 'no.' I had to do it to keep myself going."

Karla Holcombe, Jennifer's mother-in-law — described by Sherri as the "creative genius" behind the VBS décor year after year — was among those lost during the attack.

Karla Holcombe's daughter, Sarah Slavin, recalls a pivotal moment of healing during the 2018 VBS week — an event that seemed impossible to carry out given the searing loss of her mother, father and brother who all died in the shooting.

"My mom was very involved in Vacation Bible School when she was alive," Slavin said. "And my dad (Bryan) would always make lots of

props and my brother (Danny) always made props. I couldn't imagine VBS without them. But I realized the Holy Spirit was the one doing all this that I gave them credit for."

Pastor Frank Pomeroy noted the Holy Spirit has not only been working in the church and the surrounding community to heal them but He's also been working through VBS to bring healing — and maybe a little joy.

Between 40 and 50 children attended VBS at Sutherland Springs last summer — the same number that had attended in years past, Sherri said.

Reaching the community

This year attendance doubled — they ran out of 100 nametags.

"VBS — at least in our church — has been an outreach to the community," Frank said. "Not only have we reached children, parents and grand-

parents — and had parents come to know Christ through VBS — but people came together [to pull it off].

"You could be in here every morning during the worship rally," he said. "You could feel the Spirit moving in these kids. But I would even venture to say [the 2018] VBS was more for the adults of Sutherland Springs than for the kids."

And while the VBS leaders, volunteers and kids of FBC Sutherland Springs were in a new facility this year Pomeroy noted it's the same Holy Spirit who will continue to heal hearts.

"It lets us see ... we can hold to the hem of His garment and still move forward," he said.

"The tragedy that inflicted so much heartache can still be healed if we hold on to the Lord and look at [our situation] through the laughter of these children." (BP)